

The Strife of Middle East (West Asian) Geo-Politics: A Study through the lance of Normalization of  
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**The Strife of Middle East (West Asian) Geo-Politics: A Study through the lance of  
Normalization of UAE-Israel-Bahrain**

**Joinal Hussain Laskar**

Independent Researcher (Political Science)  
Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh  
Email: [jnlaskar@gmail.com](mailto:jnlaskar@gmail.com) Mobile No:8876792474

**Alamgir Hussain**

Independent Researcher (Political Science)  
Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh  
Email: [alamgirhussainamu@gmail.com](mailto:alamgirhussainamu@gmail.com) Mobile: 8272881439

**Abstract:** On 15 September 2020 the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel signed the Abraham Accords, a U.S. brokered peace pact, to normalize their diplomatic relations. The Accords normalise Israel-UAE and Israel-Bahrain relations, normalization with Israel is often promoted on the grounds that it will provide technology, stability, and economic progress to those who participate in the peace process, as well as favourable spillover effects for the region. Israel's accord with two Gulf states marks a significant shift in West Asian geopolitics, which has long been defined by Arab Gulf states' refusal to engage in talks with Israel. The deal symbolizes a geopolitical shift in West Asian security, and a significant step in the gradual sustainable peace in the region. This study aims to find out the potential of the Abraham Accord to become the basis of peace in West Asia owing to its economic, and political implications. The methodology of the paper is descriptive and analytical which will critically reveal the roots of the Abraham Accord and how it will bring prosperity to the region through the normalization process.

**Keywords:** Abraham Accord, Arab-Israel Relations, Geopolitics, Peace, West Asia

## **I. Introduction:**

The term "Middle East" was initially used in the early twentieth century as a subjective construct with a political connotation rather than a cultural or geographical one. Throughout history, the region that is now known as the 'Middle East' or 'West Asia' has hosted major civilizations and has always been connected with the rest of the world. But, the emergence of Middle East politics has getting attention in the field of international politics during the Cold War period. The first hero entry into the field of global politics was Iranian Revolution (1979) and popular through Arab Spring. One of the great shaking waves of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Middle East politics is the normalization agreement between UAE-Israel-Bahrain. The Israeli-Arab peace treaties are officially dubbed the Abraham Accords and denote the agreement between the state of Israel and The United Arab Emirates. Adding to this there has also been the initiation of diplomatic normalization between Israel, Bahrain and Sudan to make relationships amicable and allow a trade to ensue.

The Abraham Accords begin by declaring the vision of a peaceful, stabilized and prosperous the Middle East, for the benefit of all its states and peoples. The Abraham Accord also aims to foster good cooperation between the two states. The Accord notes most noteworthy: "Believing that the further developments of friendly relations meet the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and that challenges can only be effectively addressed by cooperation and not by conflict" (Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, 2020). The Accord also makes mention of the Christians, Jews and Muslims as common ancestors of Abraham as per the Abrahamic belief, and thus recognizes the aim to engender peaceful coexistence for all faiths, denominations and nationalities in the region.

The Accord finalizes its introduction by also noting the mutual desire of Israel and the UAE, Egypt and Jordan to work towards a "negotiated solution", to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that observes the needs and visions of the two parties. Then comes the official guidelines on 15 September 2020, a general declaration of principles, termed "The Abraham Accords", was signed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, the foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), HE Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Bahrain, HE Abdullatif Al Zayani, and former US President Donald J. Trump".

The Accords declaration represents a normalization of relations between Israel and the two Gulf

UAE-Israel-Bahrain

states for the purpose of realizing a shared vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East. The Abraham Accords declaration was followed by a joint communique from Israel and the UAE welcoming the bold vision embodied in the Accords and Israel's agreement to suspend further extension of sovereignty in line with the former US President's "Vision for Peace" document. A formal treaty between Israel and the UAE has been signed setting out their agreement to chart a new path for the Middle East to realize its full potential as a stable, peaceful and prosperous region. Bahrain and Israel signed a further political declaration of intent for supporting the Accords and promoting security connections. Following on from the further agreements, embassies have been opened and greater cooperation is being pursued. Morocco and Sudan have also followed with pronouncements of support for the Abraham Accords declaration and pursuing normalization with Israel.

The tripartite agreement as a "historic normalization agreement and a win-win situation since the UAE and Bahrain will benefit from Israeli technology, and Israel will shift audience attention away from problems such as the tattered economy" and high unemployment rate. Former US President Trump described the agreement as the "dawn of the new Middle East and a foundation for a comprehensive peace across the entire region".

## II. Background:

Prior to the Abraham Accords, two states in the Middle East formally recognized relations with Israel – Jordan and Egypt. Israel's relations with Egypt and Jordan have been peaceful but have led to only limited normalization. Egypt and Israel were the first to sign a peace treaty in the Arab world. The Middle Eastern strip of land adjacent to the Mediterranean known today as Israel boasts a history that has its genesis 2000 years back. But the rule of Israel has been torn between an array of different powers from the Jews to the Arabs, to the crusaders, to once more being controlled by Arabic caliphates, to the Ottoman Empire and finally after being under the domain of the British Empire, return to Jewish/Israeli control, (Gilbert, 2014). After the end of the Second World War, the global empire of that time Great Britain oversaw the historic edict of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. This edict in effect absolved British control over the province of Palestine and granted the Jewish diaspora all over North America and Europe a national home for themselves. Returning to their ancient lands in a massive migration, the modern Israeli state

was thus formed in 1948 (Bryant, 2001).

The six-day-war, was an extremely brief altercation between June 5-10, 1967, between the fledgling nation of Israel and a coalition of Arab countries, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Also known as the “June War”, (Kochavi, 2018) or alternatively the “Third Arab-Israeli War” (Machairas, 2017), at its conclusion, Israel had incapacitated all her enemies and won a decisive victory, “capturing the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights on the Syrian border, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Israel itself was structured as a parliamentary democracy wherein “significant religious influence” was detectable, as well as a unique form of a welfare state. Internationally, following the establishment of the Israeli state in 1947 which was the result of Zionist efforts spanning decades and with the support of both superpowers. Israel began its international conduct with a nonalignment policy. This, however, changed as of the 1950s where Israeli foreign policy now held a strong pro-western stance, which was largely due to growing tensions with the Soviet Union who backed hostile Israeli neighbors and thus created a clear threat against the balance of threats (Yossef, 2018).

The Sinai Interim Agreement was signed in September 1975 and was followed by the Camp David Agreements in 1978, and finally the Peace Treaty in 1979. Prior to it, Egyptians and Israelis had only had regular interaction on the battlefield in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. (Freeman, 2009). According to the framework of the agreement, the peace treaty is meant to serve as a basis for peace not just between Egypt and Israel, but also between Israel and its Arab neighbours, each of whom would be willing to negotiate peace on this basis.

### **III. Geopolitics of West Asia and The Abraham Accords:**

The Israeli-Arab peace treaties are officially dubbed the Abraham Accords and denote the agreement between Israel and the UAE. Adding to this there has also been the initiation of diplomatic normalization between Israel, Bahrain and Sudan to make relationships amicable and allow a trade to ensue. The Abraham Accords begin by declaring the vision of a peaceful, stabilized and prosperous Middle East, for the benefit of all its states and peoples. The Abraham Accord also aims to foster good cooperation between the two states. The Accord notes most notably: “Believing that the further developments of friendly relations meet the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and that challenges can only be effectively addressed by

cooperation and not by conflict” (Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, 2020). The Accord also makes mention of the Christians, Jews and Muslims as common ancestors of Abraham as per the Abrahamitic belief, and thus recognizes the aim to engender peaceful coexistence for all faiths, denominations and nationalities in the region. The Accord finalizes its introduction by also noting the mutual desire of Israel, UAE, Egypt and Jordan to work towards a “negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” that observes the requirements and visions of the two parties.

Then comes the official guidelines to which the parties much conform in a numeric system. The first tenet of the Accord introduces the establishment of diplomatic relations and normalization between the UAE and Israel, as well as the enactment of bilateral ties. The second point outlines the general principles, or guidelines of the terms of the Accord. Firstly, the relations between the two states shall be guided by the charter of the UNO and they shall both abide by international law. Most prominently both states will recognize the sovereignty of the other and respect their right to peace and security. All disputes and quarrels furthermore, are to be settled in peaceful manners. In line with these principles, the third point ascertains that emphasizes to be erected on both states and resident ambassadors are exchanged (Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, 2020).

As a more concrete measure towards the goal of peace and stability between the nations, Israel and the United Arab Emirates are stipulated in the Accord to establish bilateral cooperation in spheres of national affairs. These include trade and investment, healthcare, visas and consular advice, maritime agreements, legal cooperation as well as science, technology and “Peaceful Uses of Outer Space”. In the section on mutual understanding and coexistence, it is outlined that both parties are to work towards cultivating people-to-people programs, interfaith dialogues and various exchanges of cultural, academic, youth and scientific natures. Both parties are also to work towards combating extremism, most prominently in the form of terrorism which is stated to promote nothing but, “hatred and division”, (The Abraham Accords Peace Agreement, 2020). Both parties are to prevent radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations and combat discrimination and incitements of extremist/radical natures. The two parties are conclusively on this point, to establish a “High-Level Joint Forum for Peace and Co-Existence”, purposed to advance and realize these purposes.

There is also a “strategic agenda for the Middle East” as a whole. In this section, Israel and the UAE are to align with the USA with the aim of expanding regional diplomacy, financial stability and additional forms of cooperation. “Both parties are to be committed to working with the US and others, as appropriate in order to pursue the goals of peace, stability and prosperity both in the bilateral relations between themselves and for the region of the Middle East as a whole” (Harb, 2020). In this commitment, both Israel and the UAE are also to seize upon regional economic prospects, “promote a culture of peace across the region and consider joint aid and developmental programs” with other nations of West Asia.

Apart from the Abraham Accords proper, there is also an endorsement of the treaty issued as a “joint statement”, between the United States of America, the State of Israel, and the Kingdom of Bahrain. Israel and Bahrain herein signed a “joint communique aimed at the establishment of “Diplomatic, Peaceful and Friendly relations”. Bahrain furthermore signed the “Memorandums of Understanding”, revolving around cooperation with trade and economy, air services, postal and telecommunication, agriculture and financial services with the state of Israel. The state of Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain are described in the statement as “two of the most dynamic nations in the Middle East” and that their agreement will contribute to a more secure and prosperous future for the parties and for the Middle East as a region (Joint Statement by the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the State of Israel, 2020).

#### **IV. Abraham Accords As a Framework for The Development of Sustainable Peace in West Asia:**

The Abraham Accords declaration was followed by a joint communique from Israel and the UAE welcoming the bold vision embodied in the Accords and Israel’s agreement to suspend further extension of sovereignty in line with the former US President’s “Vision for Peace” document. A formal treaty between Israel and the UAE has been signed setting out their agreement to chart a new path for the Middle East to realize its full potential as a stable, peaceful and prosperous region. Bahrain and Israel signed a further political declaration of intent for support the Accords and promoting security connections. Following on from the further agreements, embassies have been opened and greater cooperation is being pursued. Morocco and Sudan have also followed with pronouncements of support for the Abraham Accords declaration

and pursuing normalization with Israel.

Prior to the Abraham Accords, two states in the Middle East formally recognized relations with Israel – Jordan and Egypt. Israel’s relations with Egypt and Jordan have been peaceful but have led to only limited normalization. It has been no secret that many of the Gulf states were engaging with Israel in different ways. The UAE and Israel have been participants in joint military training with the US, Israel has a representative to the International Renewable Energy Agency based in Abu Dhabi, and various Israeli ministers have visited the UAE and Oman to attend events. The Accords mark a new step in the pursuit of Middle East peace in an innovative way. By invoking the spirit of Abraham as a common point of heritage amongst the societies, the Accords remove politics and security as the starting point for cooperation. Typically, any discussion of Middle East peace hinges on resolving the situation of Palestine through military or political means, with the political often being highly confrontational based on “all or nothing” options.

The Accords seek to “de-secure” the matter and instead the focus is on socio-cultural-religious bonds as a starting point in support of developing people-to-people links. Concerns over and attention to the security issues are not removed as Israel is expected to halt the extension of settlements as a major step in seeking to resolve the ongoing conflict. It is necessary to find ways to build trust between the Palestinians and Israel and the Accords can be a foundation for further action in this regard. The Accords seek to place the matter in a wider frame with action directed in a more holistic way to address other security matters such as water, climate, and food security. These issues have a direct impact on the lived experiences of everyone, making them a significant area for action. It is clear the Abraham Accords represent a major development for the Middle East region, provided that concrete measures follow that lead to peace. The Accords demonstrate how views and approaches to sustainable peace in the region are changing and that a new approach is necessary. The Accords have opened up and will continue to support new opportunities for bringing about lasting peace to the region that tenets everyone. The people-to-people approach of the Accords widens the discussion about sustainable peace in the Middle East region. Encouraging more exchanges between individuals and groups in the societies supporting the Accords works to ensure that the challenges to peace and security are viewed in a new way that will seek to achieve resolution and not the retrenchment of divisive

positions. A key step to resolving tensions and opposing views is the building of trust and understanding, an important result that will now flow from the increase in people-to-people contacts.

It is also stated that the three nations share the same view on the challenges, threats and opportunities present in the region of the Middle East and that through closer cooperation on security, public diplomacy and economic engagement, they can together “unlock the potential of the region”, which is to be understood as the general development of peace, stability, cooperation developmental and military aid, (Joint Statement by the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the State of Israel, 2020). Bahrain will also aspire toward an enduring resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict alongside the other nations of the Accord.

#### **V. Conclusion:**

Normalization with Israel is frequently promoted on the grounds that it will provide wealth, stability, and economic progress to those who participate in the process, as well as favorable spillover effects for the region. It can be argued that “The Abraham Accords’ most enduring feature in the Gulf may then be geopolitical by creating a new block premised on the fact that most of the Gulf regimes and Israel share an identical position that seeks to contain the perceived Iranian threat to the region.” After all, by disregarding the peace process and giving Israel unprecedented access to the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf, the accords cause a geopolitical shift in the region. This new axis has the guidance of the US, which sees Israel and the Gulf states forming a new geopolitical axis to confront Iran's strength in the region.

The positive contributions made by the Abraham Accords to sustainable peace in the Middle East are not inevitable and continued efforts to build upon this start will be necessary. Greater interaction amongst various parties in the region will open up lines of communication so that the issues of the region can be discussed in a more constructive fashion. From the current engagement with the Accords and celebrations surrounding the positive benefits it brings, things will not always be easy going forward. There are differences in cultural approaches and attitudes that may create tensions or cause dissatisfaction. This should be seen as part of the normal processes for diplomacy and engagement. It is important for all those concerned with peace in the region that action is taken on real and tangible measures supportive of the desire for peace in West Asia. The positive benefits of the Accords have been recognized widely since its signing in September 2020. Reaching the point where Israel and a number of GCC states were sharing a



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common stage signing an agreement to work together was a significant achievement. The next step is to pursue concrete ways to build trust for long-lasting peace with all of Israel's neighbours, which includes the Palestinians.

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