



GROWING CLOSE RELATIONS OF ISRAEL WITH ARAB NATIONS: INTENTIONS, PROSPECTS, AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The creation of Israel surrounded by Arab states raised the hostility in the region. Since 1948 this establishment resulted in multiple wars, agreements, and socio-political unrest. The region initially rejected Israel completely, they wanted expulsion of the Jew state and the creation of a Palestinian state but a gradual realization of reality started, and Egypt was the Muslim State who recognize Israel in 1978 in Camp David Accord. It was the beginning of a new era where Arabs start thinking of their benefits rather than the miseries of poor Palestinians. The advancement in friendly relations between Arab nations and Israel has appeared as a substantial new dynamic of the 21st century in the politics of the Middle East. After Egypt and Jordon, now Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and UAE recognized Israel and made multiple deals transforming the outlook of regional politics. It will also shift the strategic imperatives of the region. The region which was known as the bone of contention and suffered from every kind of war faced rivalries based on sectarian, racial, territorial, and political confrontations now ready to change its approach and initiate a path of diplomatic peace. The particular essay intended to focus on present revolutionary changes in some Arab countries' policies and the reasons for these deviations. The research is also impending to



find the future consequences on the region of this change and what will be the prospects of regional peace in forthcoming years.

KEYWORDS: Regional Peace, Power Politics, Sectarian rivalry, Strategic Hegemony, Rapprochement, Unacceptance rage, Substantial Gain.

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is known for its conflicts, cataclysms, civil wars, crisis, etc. The region is always in the news and grasps global attention. It never goes low from history to the present date all the time world witnessed something happening gigantic, traumatic, debated issue waiting for their consideration. One of the major reasons for these constant upheavals is all sorts of religious unrest as well as ancient racial strife. There is not only Muslim-Jew animosity existed but also Shia-Sunni rivalry featured many wars as well as Arab and non-Arab/Ajam enmity creating disputes which become the core reason for unprecedented hatred among the people.

The creation of Israel on 14th May 1948 was a shock and had never been accepted by the Muslim World. It created extensive outrage against the West and the newly born state because of the way it was formed. The secret conspirative efforts of the British colonial Empire and France made it dirty, as well as the unprecedented miseries of the Palestinian people marked the unacceptance rage further. The foundation of the Jew state on Arabian soil also became a matter of prestige for Arabs therefore they attacked without knowing of their own and their enemy's strength thus, resulting in a humiliating defeat. But they didn't realize their weak capabilities and again and again attacked Israel. Every time Arab countries not only lost the battle with more humiliation and lost their lands but also become a reason for more and more support for Tal Aviv by the West on one hand and the other hand, the possibilities of formation of a Palestinian State were further reduced. At last, they learn the selfish lesson of world politics "Might is Right" and Egypt becomes the first Arab country that recognizes the existence of reality. The Arrogance of Arabs and their foolish policies made the lives of poor Palestinians hell. They dispersed all over the world without any savior. No one asked them what they want and made the decisions for their future. The non-Muslim world treated them as a fierce aggressive nation whereas Muslims looked at them with pity. The Palestinian lost everything because of neighboring Arab countries' policies and now one by one they are recognizing Israel for their benefits forgetting poor Palestinian miseries and their future.

Each Arab country has its distinct agenda of pursuing an opening with Israel. Some of them wanted peace on their borders like Egypt but recent regularization is more related



to economic gain rather than security and strategic concerns. Development in relations with the United States is a common factor apart of other factors that will discuss exclusively in the respective research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The respective research intends to identify the real reasons behind this U-turn of Arabs states and the impact of their shift on the region. It also discusses the future intentions of Tal Aviv not only regarding Palestinian and the region but also envisaging aims behind strengthening their ties with Arabs.

1. Why did Arabs shift their policies to Israel?
2. What is the role of the West in this major shift?
3. What are the intentions of Tal Aviv behind these overwhelming diplomatic and financial deals with Arabs?
4. What is the role of the United States in recent developments in the Middle East?
5. What will be the future impact of pro-Israel policies on Gulf states?

THE ARAB-ISRAEL RAPPROCHEMENT

In the last two years, Gulf states initiated a major shift in their policies related to Israel and from Sep 2020 to Jan 2021 signed four normalization deals with Tal Aviv. UAE, Bahrein, Morocco, and Sudan signed agreements to regularize their relations. The normalization process started in the last days of Trump's presidency. He was very keen and active to bring gulf states close to Israel, even he offered recompenses to Morocco and Sudan as a reward for recognizing Israel. His efforts fruitfully get successful and many states proceeded their lose relations with the one and only Hebrew state of the world. It is a very unusual development in the Gulf and a 360-degree change in the policies of Arabs. This change not only transformed the face of the region but also brought further division in the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East.

ABRAHAM ACCORDS 2020

The Abraham Accords of 2020 become the key instrument of growing relations of some Arab states with Israel. These Accords were signed on 15 September 2020 at the White House, the official residence of the US president (Norlen & Siniai Oct 2020). The Trump administration played a vital role as a mediator between UAE, Bahrain, and Israel and brought them close to reaching some mutual agreements. The process of normalization has begun with the signatures of Heads of the governments of Israel and UAE, and Bahrain and Israel. These Accords indicate a major shift in the Middle East geopolitics because



before these agreements Israel faces complete refusal from the Arabian peninsula. The Abraham Accords Declaration asserts that respective set of agreements intended to maintain peace and promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue in the Middle East for all three Abrahamic religions. It also addresses the challenges faced by the region and is envisioned to promote relations in Science, art, medicine, commerce, etc (The Abraham Accords Declaration by US State Department).

The Accords' terms were not completely published, it has many secret clauses which only in the knowledge of the high officials of respective states. Thus both sides scholars have a different opinions regarding the nature and future impact of these diplomatic, security, peace, and economic agreements. Initially, it was presented as a major shift in Gulf politics on the Palestine issue and an opening for Tal Aviv. Later it represents more than one understanding such as can motivate other Arab Nations to normalize relations with Israel by bilateral means. The realists are less hopeful of its success because of clear ignorance of core regional issues. The last and worst opinion was the fear of Isolation of Tehran and Palestine resulting in future fierce unrest. Trump, represented it as the first real foreign policy achievement by their administration. Itamar Rabinovich, former Israeli ambassador to Washington, said in an interview with Friedman one month before Abraham Accord;

Netanyahu managed to “turn lemons into lemonade:” “Instead of Israeli annexation for a Palestinian state, they made it Israeli non-annexation in return for peace with the UAE” (Friedman, **New York Times**, Aug 13, 2020).

While the famous observation of Kessinger again echoed that Israel has no foreign policy only a domestic policy that is accepted by others now. Many Israeli observers also believed that Netanyahu’s normalization policy with Arab nations is more a diversion stunt from legal challenges and corruption charges rather than an actual willingness to get regional peace. Hence, the agreement gradually looks like a high-level Middle Eastern horse trade which only brings an assortment of international, regional, and personal issues along with more dangerous security issues in danger. Nonetheless, the accords have major diplomatic achievements regardless of victors and losers in short and long-term goals.

ISRAEL’S BENEFITS IN NORMALIZATION WITH ARAB NATIONS

The Abraham accords are in favor of Israel in all aspects. These agreements provide them acceptance in Arab nations, the UAE and Bahrain's recognition of Tal Aviv can create a domino effect, and prospects of normalization in relations with other Arab nations. Netanyahu’s doctrine of “*Peace for Peace, and Peace through Strength*” (Lord, Aug 17,



2020) has worked and consensual negotiations with Saudi Arabia and Oman proved that Israel will achieve their goals in the coming years. The normalization of relations with the Gulf States without forming an independent Palestine state is the diplomatic victory of Netanyahu's administration and foreign policy achievement.

On a domestic ground, the Accords gave him a required distraction of cases of corruption charges and success stories for future national election campaigns because on every forum he presented the deal as his effort and victory.

The deals allowed Israel to take over the West Banks territory without any violence as the Trump administration's peace plan suggested in their abstruse language. The annexation of The West Bank is the major security demand of most of the electorates in Israel. Although the Arab world is not ready publicly as UAE's Ambassador for the US, Yousef Al-Otaiba warned Tal Aviv to overturn the normalization agreements if this venture will ensue (*Ynet News*, June 12, 2020) but lavishing missile security deals calm their emotions and will restrict them only verbal condemnations when it will happen. The same gestures will show by US Administration.

The major gain with these deals is the end up of Arabs straight "No" for Israel and the instinctive support for Palestine by their fellow beings instead of their material gain. The change in Arab interest began in 1978 when Egypt became the first nation to recognize the Hebrew state in Arabian Peninsula and prefer their national interest over the brotherhood claims. Since then Tal Aviv was hopeful that sooner or later its existence will be accepted by others. Israel preserved its Ideological and territorial status quo with the policy of normalizing with neighbors.

Israel also wanted to contain and isolate Tehran from ample support from the Arab region, the deal with Bahrain is important in this scenario because of its sectarian ties with Iran. From day one Israel wanted a strong stance against Iran's nuclear program but the former US administration was not in favor of resentment for their interest. They wanted peace and favor in Gulf therefore unwanted bitterness was harmful to their diplomatic strategy. With these Accords now Israel can move its military to the heart of the Persian Gulf and can shift the balance of power in its favor whenever it requires.

The defense deal with UAE fortified Israel to reach the Arabian Sea with its high-tech security and defense system. The range of its technology covers the entire region under its guard. Whereas deals with Bahrain gave him control on the nearest coasts of Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia which means Israel can get strategic control of the region. By this arrangement, Israel will not need US assistance in the Gulf region anymore in the future.



The Accords with UAE and Bahrain move Saudi Arabia closer to Tal Aviv. Particularly UAE deals are the key element of this open proximity. The secret security association between them against Tehran is an open secret (**Middle East Eye** (August 21, 2020). The ethnic and sectarian differences have become the source of military and intelligence collaboration as well as the stake of the Palestinian future. The deals adjacent to Israel to reach more such kinds of agreements with its desired nations.

The Accords are also beneficial for Israel as it can now reach new markets and its high-tech security equipment is now more in demand. The UAE is the hub of consumers from around the world. Industrialists wanted to reach its market to make more and more fortune. The financial deals between the two countries will provide future profit gain to Israel's high-tech and others industries which will be resulting in less dependency on US aid.

Israeli investors are not only looking for profit by selling their products but they are willing to enter the Arab region to invest in developing infrastructure in deserted states to involve in their lives and socialize with the masses. This is another aspect of interest of Israel in such deals because socialization makes them acceptable to common Arab who still hate them because they believe them, foes, and fierce. In other words, Israel wanted access to Arabs and the Abraham Accords provided their desire, thus completely in its favor.

UAE BENEFITS IN NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL

The August 13th combined statement of Israel & UAE's Statesman open up the new gates of formulating peaceful strategic, politico-economic relations between two unlikely nations. They are not unlikely but formerly hostile nations because of the long bitter approach to the Palestine conflict but the new millennium brought new political rapprochement in the region. The UAE's approach today is related to more on its security concerns rather than regional collective will. This change in strategy gave the policymakers reasons to pursue good relations with Tal Aviv. Due to the wider geostrategic concerns, the complete picture of agreements is not revealed but some of the important approving Emarati demands are revealed, Such as;

- Abu Dhabi wanted to build a wide-range partnership to control the regional domination of Turkey and Iran.
 - It sought to develop commercial and technological links.
 - The UAE also wanted to increase defense assistance in the field of missile development and cyber and supersonic warfare.
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- UAE eager to acquire airfield assistance from the White House exclusively wanted to be equipped their Air Force with 5th generation fighter jets like F-35.
- The regime wanted to develop extensive diplomatic ties with Biden Administration which become feasible if it can maintain good relations with Tal Aviv.

Anwar Gargash, the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, explains the regularization with Tal Aviv in his interview with CNBC, he said; There will never be a "*perfect moment*" for the UAE to normalize relations with Israel: "*If*

we wait for that perfect moment, it is a call for ... standing still and letting developments sort of bypass you, and unfortunately, this has been the case with the Palestinian issue historically" (CNBC, August 14, 2020).

However, both countries have their reasons two making changes in their policies. The importance of these developments needs comprehensive analysis for future potential implications which only can be possible when complete agreements can be approachable. The normalization receives mixed reactions because of the past.

Israel always wanted good relations with Arab nations since its birth but Arabs refused to welcome its efforts. Thus, the recent developments are susceptible to most of the region at the same time for the West it is inevitable for the global peace.

BAHRAIN IN NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL

Bahrain becomes the 4th Arab nation to recognize Israel although it took decades to reach this decision. September 2020 was the month when after UAE, Bahrain also saw normalization with Israel as the best way to achieve its future goal in the region and become an apple of the eye of the US administration (Hoffman, 24 Sep 2020) The kingdom of Bahrain announced complete normalization of strategic, diplomatic, financial, and other viable, relations with Tel-Aviv. Moreover, it occurs without any assurance or a word from Israel toward the formation of a Palestinian state.

The supporters of normalization claimed that it was quite some time since both the nations started normalization and they reach this position with a steady process of financial and strategic cooperation. Both had joined in progressively top-level public meetings on common regional grounds.

Bahrain joined the party with its reasons which are different from the rest of the Gulf nations that made ties with Israel. Such as;



- The Island state is ruled by the Sunni Al-Khalifa family over a majority Shi'a population and they are consistently facing massive protests since 2011, reports suggested that these protests were conducted by Iranian support. Thus they acquired a powerful, influential ally in its fight against domestic opposition.
- Bahrain entre in normalization process more for fortifying its relations with the US rather than for any other interest wanted to please Washington.
- Manama looking forward to advancing its technological capabilities in the fields of security and intelligence from Israel as it already made deals to acquire Pegasus spyware, which the regime used against political activists who seems as internal threats (Alhadid, 25 Jan 2022).

Most scholars believed that Bahrain never enters into normalization if the UAE and Saudi Arabia had not become part of this process. Some of them argued that Bahrain is the weakest state in the Gulf region and it always follows the policies of Saudi Arabia thus same happened in the case of Recognition of Israel.

SUDAN IN REGULARIZATION WITH ISRAEL

Sudan pursued a similar policy to Israel since the creation of a Jew state like other Arab nations of MENA. Khartoum continued its policy to say “*no to peace with Israel, no to recognition of Israel, and no to negotiations with Israel*”(Wicaksono, 31 May 2021). **This policy continued till 2016 when it cut its ties with Iran and its foreign minister first time showed some indications to change its policy directions, *Ibrahim Ghandour*** the Sudani Foreign Minister illustrated that their regime could contemplate regularizing its relations with Israel. This was the first time a Sudanese official had publicly stated a probable change with Israel (Ibid). It was further growing stronger when Israeli Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* met with the Head of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, *Major General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan* in February 2020. Both the dignitaries agreed on the normalization of bilateral relations, soon after this Sudan opened its air space to Israeli aircraft.

On October 23rd, 2020 the regulation plan was declared after dialogs between the Prime Minister of Sudan Abdalla Hamdok, former President Donald Trump, and Netanyahu. This made Sudan the 5th Arab nation, after Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, and Bahrain, which regulate its relations with Israel. In December of the same year, the United States officially removed Sudan from its SSTL (State Sponsor of Terrorism) list (Ibid).



This normalization gets a diverse reaction from all over the world some of them appreciated and believed that it is timely and some of them call it a false play with Palestinians but Sudan has its reason for this shift. Such as;

- This normalization is majorly related to financial reasons, such as the country is facing serious fiscal inflation which is reaching 170%. The removal from SSTL will revive its drowning economy as well as get debt relief and foreign loans from IMF and the World Bank.
- The removal from SSTL will increase foreign investment and the restoration of the country into the global economy after three decades. The US economic assistance is confirmed, The IMF has also signed off on Sudan's economic reform program which shows the prospects for finances of the country will receive.
- Sudan wanted now to focus more on its own country, its development, internal peace, and poverty alleviation rather than on regional politics, therefore now focused on bilateral relations with Israel which can help its agricultural development, and aviation modernization and can solve migration issues.
- Sudan also searching for a new accessible market for its products, Israel could be the new suitable target for its raw export products, such as sorghum, cotton, groundnuts, sesame, millet, wheat, sugar cane, Arabic gum, and livestock (Ibid).
Thus, Sudan sighted SSTL removal and normalizing relation with TalAviv will be the key to its future economic development and prosperity.

MOROCCO IN REGULATION WITH ISRAEL

Morocco signed a normalization agreement with Israel, on December 10, 2020, and became the second North African country after Egypt (Mezran & Pavia, 7th Oct 2021). The agreement between the two nations glinted a series of connected proceedings in bordering North African states. These events have lasting significance on the financial, strategic, and socio-political relations in the region.

Morocco and Israel pursue a silently recognizing pathway before Abraham Accord and developed diplomatic relations that allowed many Israeli visitors in the country also made many informal official visits but Rabat allegedly waited until Washington recognize their claims over Western Sahara, (a disputed territory since 1975 between Morocco and the pro-Algerian Polisario Front after leaving of Spain from the territory).

The normalization gives Morocco not only Western Sahara but also a new opening for the West and friendly relations with the United States. Tal Aviv and Rabat have long



rooted connections because after Holocaust mostly Jews who migrated from Germany rested in Morocco and gradually shifted to Israel. Today Israel has 1 million Moroccan Jews. After the agreement, Morocco opened its air space to Israeli Planes and also signed a formal cybersecurity agreement to share information, research, and development on cyber warfare (Ibid). Morocco set to open its embassy in Israel as well as looking forward to more financial and security deals in the future which illustrated that both nations streaking on a winning path and forgetting the bitterness of their past.

PROSPECTS OF OTHER ARAB STATES OF NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL

Other Arab states also looking forward to following the path of normalization but are reluctant to announce it openly because of their domestic, ethnic, and sectarian reasons. Some of them discussed in this portion

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is the most important country in the Arabian Peninsula and the leader of Arab Politics for many decades. It continues edifying its diplomatic relations with Tal Aviv but using covert mode because of domestic, regional, and national pressures. Since Muhammad bin Salman the crown prince and the foreign Minister took charge of the regime unlocking many gates and breaking many taboos in his country. He opened the entertainment industry, as well as sports events starts organizing in the country on a mass scale. Lift many restrictions on women and allows many basic rights to pursue by them. These initiatives create a great impact on Saudi culture. He also cracked many barriers in the economic sector and made many unprecedented deals within the region. Analysts presumed that all such actions are the preparation for future normalizing with Israel. On the 4th of November, some US Jewish visited Riyadh and met High officials of the Royals including some ministers. Some Israeli newspapers reported it as a sign of future regulation in relations between two hostile nations. Reports also claim a high-level Israeli official covert visit to the bordering city of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia wanted to develop cyber defense capabilities for the protection of its territory as well as wanted to be equipped with artificial intelligence, machine learning, biotechnology, and many other advanced technologies, only Israel in the region has all of the high-tech advanced capabilities thus Riyadh gradually making it feasible (Tahir, 3 November 2020). Washington also has its aims linked with the normalization such as it wanted to minimize its presence in the Middle East, and peace and security for its stations in the region, etc, which only can be achieved with the absolute regularization among them. Although the process is very slow but indicated the surprise will come in near future.



QATAR

It is a small wealthy country obstructed between two arch-rivals that still manages independent foreign policy. Instead of the geopolitical hegemony of Riyadh, Qatar obtains a flexible approach and remains to open its all channels to regional and international actors, particularly Iran, Turkey, and the USA. Therefore, Doha holds a very important place in world politics not only for Gulf states but also as becoming a new neutral venue for peace negotiations like it holds US-Taliban peace talks. Similarly, Qatar maintains cordial relations with Tehran and owned the world's largest gas field jointly. In other words, it played the role of a balancer in the region.

Qatar was the first Gulf nation who opened trade relations with Israel in 1996 but later it was halted due to an uprising in Palestine in 2000. Doha is usually playing a silent role in regional conflicts due to its policy of nonpartisan and its economic interests which suggested that it might be the next nation to enter into normalization with Israel because TalAviv has a significant interest to engage with Qatar as it is a largest liquid gas exporter of the world. The Kingdom has its reservations in forwarding toward a major change in diplomatic relations, hence not officially referent any criticism on Abraham Accord but declared that Doha will not be made any change its policy until a comprehensive settlement of Palestinians.

OMAN

The Kingdom of Oman took a cautious stance on the normalization venture. Muscat gave a very vigilant reaction to the Abraham Accord indicating its future ambiguous intentions. The Omani regime took a careful approach and commented almost after one month on Accord;

“...this new strategic path taken by some Arab countries will contribute to bringing about a peace based on an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and on establishing an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as capital”(Rabi, 5th April 2021).

Since 1970, after sultan Qabus came into power Oman maintained mutual relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia and balanced between Tehran and Riyadh. Sultan Qabus died in January 2020 and brought Sultan Hatim bin Tariq into power. He brought significant changes in the regime officials as well as in policies but remained on a careful stance in relations with Israel. The behavior of Muscat suggested that it would pursue rather “wait and watch” policy than open its cards but most analysts believed that Oman will be the



next nation to follow normalization because of its domestic concerns like public health, dropping oil prices and other economic benefits.

Respective states have shown a bit of reluctance in their approach to reaching their desired decision but the future will show their intentions in their actions.

CONCLUSION

The Abraham Accord is designed in maximum favor of Israel. It will gain socio-economic, diplomatic, political as well as cultural benefits with the normalization. Now it has not only a new wealthy market for its high-tech products but is also beneficial for its Arm Industry. They are also seeking cooperation in technical military assistance in the region. They are now not bothered to ask for cooperation from the US to reach the Bay of Gulf because now they are there themselves. The red sea is also safe for Israel Marine now and with more international support they will reach beyond one can imagine. Everything seems to be in favor of TalAviv as its trade will increase, its hegemony will grow, and its reach inside Arab will surge, its intelligence will penetrate inside Gulf which increase its control over the entire region. It can further weaken regional support for Palestine and gradually isolate it into the hopeless island that it dreamt of. In short, Accord is a win-win agreement for Israel and seems to be fulfilling its dreams.

The Arab states also gain many substantial strategic and financial benefits such as the UAE can improve its security and trade, Sudan can get off the tag of extremism, already been delisted by the US from the terrorism sponsor state list. Morocco gets the legal acquisition of Western Sahara and Bahrain will also get considerable strategic and economic benefits. All respective states also reach the Israel rich market where they can sell their oil products and gain diplomatic relief. The Arab and non-Arab rift can also be controlled with the help of a new friend of Arabs and can achieve the dream to isolate Iran. On the other side of the picture, the accord is the landmark in the politics of MEANA and opened a new peaceful chapter in the land of disputes. It could have happened at the time when Israel was formed with better terms and conditions and with the formation of the independent Palestinian state. After 74 years, leaving Palestinians alone and seeking only their interests are the most ruthless and shameless actions done by their fellow Arabs and many are ready to follow the same steps as them. It is not Jews who have done anything wrong to them but their Muslim cultural brothers who never asked them there will not in the past when they attacked a newly born Israel on the very next day of its creation with sheer arrogance, not today when they made their decisions to recognize it and open the gates for all sorts of relations. Arab states can give multiple reasons for their actions but everyone is aware that these are for their national interest. Their happiness when they were



signing the Accord proven the old phrase that International relations are the relations of interest and no permanent friend and foe in the world politics.

Analysts suggested that Israel will never stop on a substantial gain, it has the power to achieve all its dreams and now Arabs are also on its side the world will see the ample rise of greater Israel soon and all East and West will only be the spectator when it will occur.



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