



# The Abraham Accords and the Regional Security of the Persian Gulf

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## Original Research

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## Abstract:

The regional security of the Persian Gulf has always stood at the intersection of geopolitical rivalries, interventions though extra-regional powers, and ideological tensions among key actors. This security dynamic has led to the emergence of diverse approaches for crisis management and establishing stability, among which one of the most notable is the Abraham Accords between the Zionist regime and several Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region. This study, using library-based tools and note-taking for data collection, along with a descriptive-analytical method and qualitative content analysis for data analysis, and also drawing on the Copenhagen School of security studies, seeks to answer this question: What is the role of the Abraham Accords in the regional security of the Persian Gulf? The findings indicate that the Abraham Accords, by providing a framework for the normalization of relations between Israel and some Arab countries bordering the Persian Gulf, have in a way initiated fundamental transformations in the security structure of this region. This agreement has facilitated Israel's military, intelligence, and security penetration into the geopolitical domain of the Persian Gulf and, as a result, disrupted the traditional balance of power in the region. Such a change has not only increased the dependency of Arab countries on extra-regional actors like Israel, but has also laid the groundwork for an arms race and intensified strategic confrontations between conflicting axes. Furthermore, the aforementioned accord has deepened the ideological and political rifts among Islamic countries-particularly on the issue of Palestine-and has destabilized the prior consensus regarding the Palestinian cause. This situation has further threatened regional cohesion and exposed the Persian Gulf's security to even more complex challenges.

**Keywords:** Abraham Accords; Zionist regime; United Arab Emirates; Bahrain; Regional security; Persian Gulf

## Introduction

The Persian Gulf region has always been one of the most tense and sensitive areas in the world from geopolitical, security, and energy-oriented perspectives. This region, not only due to its vast oil and gas reserves but also because of its geostrategic location and the presence of regional and extra-regional powers, has consistently been subject to political and security transformations. Traditionally, security arrangements in the Persian Gulf were based on a form of balance of power among the main regional actors-such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries-alongside the interventions of foreign powers like the United States.

However, the signing of the "Abraham Accords" in 2020, in which some Arab countries such as the UAE and Bahrain normalized their official relations with the Zionist regime,

introduced a new challenge to the previous equations. This agreement, initially introduced as a step toward regional peace and tension reduction, in practice carries dimensions beyond a diplomatic agreement and can be considered one of the significant turning points in redefining regional alliances and threats. Israel, taking advantage of this opportunity, has managed not only to gain a foothold in the field of economic diplomacy in the Persian Gulf but has also increased its intelligence, military, and security presence in the region.

On the other hand, the Arab signatory countries seek to create a form of deterrence against common threats-particularly from the Islamic Republic of Iran-by relying on advanced technologies and Israel's security support. While this trend outwardly suggests a kind of new stability and convergence, it inherently may also plant the seeds of deeper

geopolitical rivalries.

The shift in the balance of power in the Persian Gulf due to Israel's entry into the region's security dynamics may lead the previous order—which, though fragile, was somewhat predictable—toward a kind of structural instability. Israel's direct or indirect presence in the Persian Gulf and the intelligence and military cooperation between this regime and some Arab countries can provoke heightened sensitivities and stronger reactions from opposing actors, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran. Under such conditions, the Persian Gulf may transform from a space of managed tension into a stage for more aggressive rivalries—rivalries that could lead to the possibility of proxy conflicts, counterintelligence operations, and increased internal dissatisfaction in some Arab countries.

One of the main concerns of the researcher, which formed the motivation for writing this study, is that among the official and political narratives of the Abraham Accords, there is a lack of more precise analyses regarding the long-term impacts of this accord on “the regional security of the Persian Gulf.” In particular, the essential question of what impact the conclusion of the Abraham Accords between the Zionist regime and several Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region will have on the security of this region is one that must be answered not only at the level of bilateral relations but within the broader framework of regional security.

The hypothesis is that the Abraham Accords, by creating security and intelligence cooperation between Israel and some Arab countries, have in the short term helped to strengthen these countries' deterrence against common threats. However, in the long term, it has disrupted the balance of power, intensified geopolitical rivalries, and increased regional tensions—rendering the security of the Persian Gulf more fragile instead of stabilizing it.

## 1. Research background

Torkashvand et al. (2024) in an article titled “Security Implications of the Abraham Accords for the Defensive Strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran” argue that the rapprochement of the southern Persian Gulf countries with the Zionist regime—considered one of the major geopolitical developments in West Asia—represents a direct and strategic threat to the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This trend creates grounds for Israeli intelligence, security, and even operational presence near Iran's borders. Based on the findings of this study, such a change in the regional order inevitably forces the Islamic Republic to reconsider its defensive, political, and security strategies—especially in circumstances where the balance of power has shifted and the role of Iran's regional allies has weakened. One of the shortcomings of this study is the lack of practical solutions or counter-scenarios for managing these threats.

Ravid (2023), in an article titled “Trump's Peace: The Abraham Accords and the Reshaping of the Middle East,” demonstrates that Israel's diplomatic initiative with the support of the Trump administration has laid the foundation for a fundamental reconfiguration of the Middle East's geopolitical order. The Abraham Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain not only led to the

establishment of formal relations among them but also created a model for other Arab countries to approach Israel and expanded economic and military cooperation between the parties. The findings of this study show that the accord, while accelerating the formation of a new regional order based on shared interests, also led to heightened confrontations with Iran and its affiliated groups. Although the research carefully analyzes Trump's pivotal role and presents a comprehensive picture of the agreement's consequences, it neglects to examine the internal challenges faced by Arab countries and the international responses to this geopolitical shift.

Phillipps (2023), in his article titled “Middle East Defense: The Role of the Abraham Accords,” emphasizes that although the Middle East and North Africa region has always faced structural instability and prolonged conflicts, the signing of the Abraham Accords between Israel and some Arab countries represents a significant transformation toward rebuilding the region's security order. The research findings indicate that the accord, while opening the door for extensive investments and deepening defense cooperation, has introduced concepts such as a joint security alliance or “Arab NATO” to counter regional threats. One of the highlights of this article is its precise assessment of the diplomatic and economic impacts of the accord and its role in strengthening security coalition-building in the Middle East, although it lacks a deeper analysis of the reactions from opposing countries and the implications for regional divides. Johnson (2021), in his book titled “The Abraham Accords: Rewriting the Middle East,” demonstrates that these agreements have not only fundamentally transformed Arab-Israeli relations but have also had a profound impact on the power configuration in the Persian Gulf and the prevailing security patterns. Focusing on the political and economic consequences of the Abraham Accords, he analyzes the shift in Arab countries' defensive strategies and Iran's aggressive response to their rapprochement with Israel. The study's findings suggest that while these agreements have strengthened economic cooperation between the parties, they have also laid the groundwork for new security bloc formations and intensified regional divides. A notable shortcoming of this study is its failure to examine the social impact of these developments on public opinion in the region and its limited attention to crisis management solutions.

## 2. Theoretical framework: Copenhagen school of security

Traditional security studies focused solely on the military dimension as the only option within the scope of security, and this emphasis on the military aspect had a profound impact on making security studies military-centered. As a result, security studies mainly turned into the study of war, particularly within the field of strategic studies. This situation remained the dominant approach in strategic and security studies until the late 1970s. However, from the early 1980s, this approach was challenged. These critiques were initially made by Julian Richard Ullman and then by Hufendorn, and subsequently by David Baldwin. Barry

Buzan, as a neorealist, questioned narrow security in a much more detailed and reasoned manner (Buzan, 2000).

The term “Copenhagen School” was coined by Bill McSweeney to refer to the works and viewpoints of a group of researchers from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in Denmark, such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (Abdollahkhani, 2004). This school is one of the approaches that focuses exclusively on security studies and opened new thoughts and horizons on this concept. It seeks to challenge traditional security issues and add new topics to them. Unlike traditional theories such as liberalism and realism, this theory does not have a narrow-minded view of security and does not reduce security issues merely to military matters, war, and peace. On the other hand, like new theories such as critical theories and postmodernism, it is not solely focused on critiquing and challenging old thoughts (Adami, 2012). The Copenhagen School can be considered a reaction to the realist and liberalist views on security. While realists centered security on military power, liberals optimistically considered achieving peace as the key to securing safety. In fact, the narrow and limited framework of security in their view has been revised in the Copenhagen School (Abdollahkhani, 2004).

This school equates security with freedom from threat and believes that security is understood in the absence of another issue called threat. The thinkers of this school believe that a single security system cannot be prescribed for all countries. It is possible that some countries prioritize military threats while others consider political and economic threats as more important. The Copenhagen School, by offering an expanded interpretation of security in contrast to its narrow approaches, has rightly taken a valuable step in more accurately defining the concept of security (Linklater, 2006). Accordingly, the Copenhagen School, in order to explain existential threats within the scope of security, first divides the security of human communities into five dimensions: military, political, economic, social, and environmental. It then presents the existential threats of each of the five dimensions and explains the referents and subjects of each considered dimension (Buzan, 2000). Barry Buzan believes that studying a country’s security considerations solely at the national or global level is insufficient, because on one hand, states do not live in a vacuum and are in interaction with their environment, and on the other hand, the logic that the security of each state is related to the security of all means that nothing can be understood without understanding everything (Buzan and Waever, 2003).

The use of the Copenhagen School of security as a theoretical framework to analyze the role of the Abraham Accords on the regional security of the Persian Gulf is important because this school, by focusing on the process of “securitization” and emphasizing the non-material and discursive dimensions of security, provides the possibility for a deeper analysis of how political issues are transformed into security concerns at the regional level. By highlighting regional security and the interactions of state and non-state actors, the Copenhagen School has the capacity to explain how the normalization of relations between Arab countries and the Zionist regime affects threat perceptions, the redef-

inition of security identities, and the reactions of regional actors like Iran. Therefore, this theoretical approach, with a structural and transnational view of securitization processes, is well able to examine the political, social, and strategic consequences of the Abraham Accords within the framework of security interactions in the Persian Gulf.

### 3. The Persian Gulf security complex

Since the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1971, due to the high level of interdependence in security among the regional states, we have witnessed the formation of an independent security subcomplex in the Persian Gulf, whose prominent feature is a long-standing pattern of mistrust interwoven with contemporary hostility between Tehran and the Arabs. The possibility of identifying the Persian Gulf regional security complex based on Buzan and Wæver’s definition of a regional security complex means that the failure of the Persian Gulf states in pursuing regionalism has not prevented regionalization of the Persian Gulf (Mousavi et al., 2021).

Regionalization in the Persian Gulf has a long history, and historically, social and economic ties among coastal communities of this region have formed spontaneously and independently of state control. Even during times when political tensions and intergovernmental rivalries were at their peak, these economic and human interactions have not stopped and have continued. This historical dynamism indicates that regionalization in the Persian Gulf—unlike regionalism—has been more based on non-governmental social, cultural, and economic factors than on formal state decisions. Among these, the strong familial, ethnic, tribal, linguistic, religious, and cultural connections among the residents of the coastal areas of this region are so deep-rooted that even the most intense political differences and rivalries have not been able to fully sever or affect these ties. The establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 by the Arab countries on the southern shores of this region can be seen as one of the official efforts to advance regionalism in the Persian Gulf. However, the composition of the members and the functioning of this council indicate that regionalism in this region is still at an immature or incomplete stage. Regionalism in the Persian Gulf has been influenced more than anything else by security concerns and perceptions related to internal and external threats (Miller, n.d.).

Despite all the efforts made to strengthen regional cooperation, and despite the deep cultural, social, and religious commonalities among the eight coastal states of the Persian Gulf, this region still remains in a state that can be described as “regionalization without regionalism.” In other words, although economic, social, and human interactions among the communities of this region have long been ongoing, formal and institutional regional structures that could elevate these interactions beyond scattered cooperation have not yet been established (Valbjørn, 2016).

### 4. The Abraham Accords

The relations between Arab countries and the Zionist regime have always been among the most complex and controversial issues in the realm of international politics, and over

different decades, they have undergone numerous fluctuations and transformations influenced by various factors such as geopolitical developments, ideological conflicts, and interventions by extra-regional powers. These relations, on the one hand, have been shaped by historical hostilities resulting from the occupation of Palestinian territories, the expansion of illegal settlements, and deep doubts regarding the legitimacy of Israel in the eyes of Arab nations-factors that over the years have led to bloody conflicts, the severance of diplomatic relations, and the strengthening of a confrontational atmosphere. On the other hand, a gradual and sporadic trend of interaction and dialogue has also emerged, in which some Arab states, considering security, economic, and geopolitical interests, have moved toward de-escalation and normalization of relations with Israel. This process, which began with the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel in the 1970s and continued with subsequent agreements such as the Oslo Accords and the peace treaty with Jordan, has in recent years taken on new dimensions with the Abraham Accords, indicating a gradual shift from a discourse of confrontation to pragmatic diplomacy in some Arab countries-a shift arising from shared regional threats, economic calculations, and changes in the balance of power.

#### **4.1. The Beginning of the normalization process: From the Camp David Agreement to the Abraham Accords**

##### **4.1.1 The Camp David Accords**

The Camp David Accords, signed in September 1978 between Egypt and Israel with the mediation of the United States, marked a turning point in Arab-Israeli relations and were one of the first successful attempts to end the ongoing wars between the two sides. This agreement was formed at a time when the Middle East, after four major wars between Arab countries and Israel (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973), remained in an unstable and tense state. The 1973 war, which began with a simultaneous attack by Egypt and Syria on Israeli positions, showed that the Arabs still had the ability to pose a serious threat to Israel, and that Tel Aviv was no longer fully immune from military attacks. On the other hand, although the war did not bring a decisive military victory for Egypt and Syria, it managed to somewhat restore Arab national pride and paved the way for political negotiations. In this context, Anwar Sadat, the then-president of Egypt, decided to pursue the return of the Sinai Peninsula-which had been occupied by Israel in the 1967 war-through diplomatic means. This decision marked the beginning of complex negotiations that ultimately led to the signing of the Camp David Accords (Quandt, 2015). The agreement had wide-ranging consequences in the Arab world. Many Arab countries accused Egypt of betrayal and expelled it from the Arab League. Anwar Sadat also faced widespread opposition inside the country for this action, which ultimately led to his assassination in 1981 (Ajili and Nasiri Payravand, 2021).

##### **4.1.2 The Oslo Accords**

The Oslo Accords, signed on September 13, 1993, between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli

regime with the mediation of the United States, are considered one of the most important turning points in the history of the Palestine-Israel conflict. This agreement, as the first official accord between Palestinian and Israeli leaders, led to mutual recognition by both sides and paved the way for the establishment of a Palestinian autonomous government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Ajili and Nasiri Payravand, 2021). Despite initial hopes, the Oslo Accords faced numerous obstacles in practice and ultimately failed to provide a comprehensive solution to the conflict. On one side, Israeli extremist groups regarded the agreement as a threat to Israel's security, and on the other side, groups such as Hamas considered it a betrayal of the Palestinian cause (Chou, 2023).

##### **4.1.3 The Jordan Peace Treaty**

The peace treaty between Jordan and the Zionist regime, signed on October 26, 1994, in the Wadi Araba region, was the second official agreement between an Arab country and Israel after the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel (Lukacs, 1997). In the 1990s, after the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and Israel, the Jordanian government concluded that improving relations with Israel-especially under U.S. sponsorship-could secure the country's strategic interests. Thus, King Hussein of Jordan entered into negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, which ultimately led to the signing of the peace treaty. This treaty established official diplomatic relations between the two parties and led to border delineation, economic and security cooperation, and an end to military hostilities between them. Nevertheless, the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel faced serious opposition within Jordanian society. Many Jordanian citizens, especially the large population of Palestinian origin in the country, considered the treaty a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and a surrender to Israeli occupation (Hamdi, 2023).

##### **4.1.4 The deal of the century: A failed peace plan**

After the peace agreements between Egypt and Jordan with Israel, other Middle Eastern countries maintained their declared stance regarding the Zionist regime and did not enter into direct and open interaction with it until the rise of Donald Trump. However, Trump's peace plan, known as the "Deal of the Century," changed this situation. The term "Deal of the Century" referred to a political and geopolitical plan proposed by the administration of Donald Trump, the then-President of the United States, which ostensibly aimed to end more than seven decades of conflict between Palestine and the Zionist regime.

This plan consisted of economic and political components. On June 22, 2019, the White House released the economic part of the Deal of the Century under the title "Peace to Prosperity," and in late January 2020, it published its political section (Maleki and Mohammadzadeh Ebrahimi, 2020). The so-called "Deal of the Century," instead of providing a foundation for a fair and lasting peace, effectively became a tool for reinforcing the Zionist regime's dominance and consolidating the occupation of Palestinian lands. Under this plan, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority were supposed to agree on the creation of a Palestinian state com-

posed of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, connected by a bridge. In return, all illegal Zionist settlements would be annexed to Israel. Furthermore, key parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which are considered Palestinian territory according to international resolutions, would fall under full Israeli control. The result of this plan would have been the formation of a Palestinian state with limited powers and lacking real independence, as security and many key affairs would remain under Israeli control. This proposal not only disregarded the Palestinian people's right to self-determination but also legitimized Israeli occupation. The Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was also a clear sign of America's one-sided bias, which triggered a wave of global protests, including opposition from Islamic countries and condemnation by international organizations. Following these events, the Palestinian Authority withdrew from U.S.-sponsored negotiations and deemed the United States unqualified to act as an impartial mediator—an issue that led to a deadlock in the peace process and increased tensions in the region (Babaei and Mir Yousefi, 2022).

#### 4.1.5 Formation of the Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords can be considered a turning point in Middle Eastern diplomatic relations, opening a new path for the normalization of relations between Israel and some Arab countries. This agreement, signed on September 15, 2020, with the mediation of the United States, is essentially a set of peace treaties designed to reduce regional tensions and create political, economic, and security cooperation among the parties. The choice of the name “Abraham” for this agreement is a symbolic reference to the shared figure in the three religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and it aims to emphasize the cultural and historical commonalities of the peoples of the region (Ahmed, 2022).

#### Phase one: Normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates

The agreement known as the Abraham Peace Accord, signed with the goal of normalizing relations and establishing peace between the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime, is considered one of the significant geopolitical developments in the region. This agreement was first announced on August 13, 2020, through a joint statement by the United States, the UAE, and the Zionist regime, and was finally signed on September 15 of the same year at the White House. Through this action, the UAE became the third Arab country after Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) to officially normalize its relations with Israel (Maghoumi and Javdani Moghaddam, 2022). Under the side agreements of this treaty, the Emiratis formalized the relations by opening embassies in each other's territories (Babaei and Mir Yousefi, 2022).

The most important points of this agreement, which is more comprehensive than Israel's agreements with Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, are as follows:

1. Transforming the Middle East through the establishment of peace and the complete normalization of relations between the parties, aimed at enhancing economic growth, advancing technological innovations,

and strengthening connections among peoples;

2. Establishing sustainable peace and formal diplomatic relations, and the complete normalization of bilateral interactions;
3. Stabilizing relations based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and affirming national sovereignty;
4. Expanding friendly relations between the peoples and citizens of both parties;
5. Opening embassies, exchanging ambassadors, and establishing consular relations;
6. Preventing any terrorist acts or hostile behaviors against each other, both within and outside the territories under their sovereignty;
7. Signing bilateral agreements in financial, investment, civil aviation, consular services and visas, economic and trade cooperation, and the development of modern technologies;
8. Cooperation in health, science and technology, peaceful use of space technology, cultural and sports tourism, energy security, environmental protection, education, maritime transport, communications and telecommunications, agriculture and food security, water resources, and other legal interactions;
9. Implementation of people-to-people programs including interfaith dialogue, cultural exchanges, scientific, academic, and youth cooperation;
10. Joint cooperation in combating extremism and terrorism;
11. Both parties' commitment to cooperate with the United States in the development and implementation of a strategic program for the Middle East aimed at strengthening diplomacy, commercial prosperity, stability, and expanded cooperation (Abraham Accords, 2020b).

According to the analysis by Fulton and Yellinek (2021), the normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates can be seen as a response to the increasing instability and uncertain conditions in the international political order, an order that in recent years has been challenged by unexpected developments and shifts in power balances. The policymaking of Middle Eastern countries is not only influenced by global macro developments but is also specifically dependent on internal dynamics and regional threats. Within this framework, the rapprochement between the UAE and Israel is more a result of strategic calculation to confront shared security and economic challenges in the region, rather than merely a product of external pressures (Fulton and Yellinek, 2021).

One of the key factors contributing to the strengthening and expansion of relations between Israel and the UAE has been economic considerations and logical incentives for

trade and investment cooperation. Even before the signing of the normalization agreement, there was a level of economic exchange between Israel and some Gulf countries, including the UAE, estimated at around one billion dollars. These relations were mostly conducted indirectly through Israeli companies based in Europe or other third countries. However, after the signing of the agreement, the process of bilateral exchanges entered a new phase, so much so that by the end of 2021, the volume of trade between Israel and the UAE, excluding tourism revenues and other investments, reached the figure of one billion dollars. This development indicates an acceleration of economic cooperation and the removal of trade barriers between the two parties (Bayrak, 2021).

The leaders of the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime considered this agreement a diplomatic achievement and an effective political structure for both countries. They believe that this agreement allows them to pursue their national priorities in a more favorable and improved environment (Faheema, 2023). In fact, the normalization agreement between the UAE and the Zionist regime has created unprecedented opportunities for bilateral cooperation in various fields, including economic, technological, security, and cultural areas. This has been a significant transformation in the relations between the two countries, especially in recent years, and has elevated their bilateral ties to a new level (Vakil and Quilliam, 2023).

### **Phase two: Normalization of relations between Israel and Bahrain**

On September 11, 2020, Bahrain and Israel reached an agreement to normalize diplomatic relations and develop bilateral ties. This agreement, which was officially signed on September 15 of the same year at the White House, made Bahrain the fourth Arab country to officially recognize the Zionist regime. This event was part of a broader process of forming political and economic ties between Israel and Arab countries under the framework of the Abraham Accords, which came to fruition with the mediation of the United States (Abraham Accords, 2020a).

This agreement was defined as a significant step toward the complete normalization of relations between the two parties and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. However, unlike the agreement between the UAE and Israel which was a comprehensive peace treaty with numerous annexes-Bahrain's agreement was merely in the form of a one-page joint statement that only outlined the general principles of the agreement between the parties and lacked detailed annexes (Singer, 2021).

In addition to security and diplomatic cooperation, Bahrain and Israel agreed to expand their relations in several areas, including tourism, investment, energy, and telecommunications. The centrality of the security issue in this agreement is clearly evident; the word "security" appears six times in this one-page document, indicating that the primary concern of both parties was addressing shared threats and strengthening security coordination. (The White House, 2020).

Security cooperation between Manama and Tel Aviv en-

tered a practical phase following the signing of this agreement, such that in February 2020, the Israeli Minister of Defense traveled to Bahrain and signed a security cooperation agreement. This agreement was the first official security document between Israel and one of the Arab Gulf states and was signed at a time when tensions between Iran and Arab countries in the region, including Bahrain, were on the rise. (Harmoush, 2022).

The text of this agreement outlines key points and shared commitments between the two parties, including:

1. Mutual recognition of the national sovereignty of both countries and respect for each other's territorial integrity;
2. Continuing efforts to find a comprehensive, just, and sustainable solution to the long-standing conflict between Palestine and Israel;
3. Establishing formal diplomatic relations, reinforcing lasting security, and adhering to non-aggression and non-use of force in resolving disputes;
4. Promoting a culture of peaceful coexistence and advancing the values of peace and mutual understanding in both societies;
5. Expanding bilateral cooperation in various fields including investment, tourism, establishing direct flights, security, information technology, energy, health, the environment, and other economic and social sectors;
6. Opening official embassies in the capitals of both countries as a symbol of formal and diplomatic bilateral relations (Abraham Accords, 2020a).

### **Stage three: Normalization of Israel-Sudan relations**

On October 23, 2020, Donald Trump announced that Sudan and Israel had reached an agreement to normalize bilateral relations. This development continued a process that had previously begun with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and once again resulted from U.S. mediation. In a joint statement issued by the three countries, it was stated that their leaders had agreed to normalize diplomatic relations between Khartoum and Tel Aviv, and to end the state of hostility between the two sides. On the other hand, on September 14, 2020, the United States officially removed Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism-an action that seems to have been part of Washington's incentives to gain Khartoum's approval for this agreement. Continuing this process, on January 6, 2021, the Sudanese government announced that, as part of its normalization of relations with Israel, it had signed the Abraham Accords with the United States (Maleki and Mohammadzadeh Ebrahimi, 2020). This agreement was not only a step toward the normalization of diplomatic relations, but also placed Sudan-as a country returning to the international community-on a new path in global relations (U.S. Department of State, 2020a).

### **Stage four: Normalization of Israel-Morocco relations**

On December 22, 2020, a trilateral joint statement was signed between the Kingdom of Morocco, the United States

of America, and Israel, whereby Morocco officially joined the process of normalizing relations with Israel and became another signatory to the Abraham Accords (Faheema, 2023). Notably, in the initial sections of the statement, there is no direct reference to the normalization of relations between Israel and Morocco. Instead, the primary focus is on the U.S. recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. This region, long a source of tension due to disputes between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front, was introduced — with U.S. support and the decision to establish a consulate in the city of Dakhla-as part of Washington's strategy to strengthen financial, economic, and social support for Morocco and Western Sahara. This suggests that the normalization agreement between Morocco and Israel was more than merely a diplomatic decision — it was the result of a broader political deal centered on the geopolitical and economic interests of the three countries (Warshel, 2021). The second part of the statement emphasizes the expansion of diplomatic and economic relations between Israel and Morocco and declares that the establishment of full and friendly diplomatic ties will not only serve the common interests of the two countries but will also pave the way for greater security and stability in the region (U.S. Department of State, 2020b).

Continuing their security cooperation, in November 2021, Israel's Minister of Defense made his first official visit to Morocco and signed a defense agreement with officials of that country. This agreement, considered the first official document of defense cooperation between Israel and Morocco, was signed with the aim of enhancing intelligence exchange, security cooperation, and the expansion of military arms sales between the two countries (Harmoush, 2022).

### 5. Reasons for the Arab World's changing Approach to Israel

The increased geopolitical weight and regional influence of the Resistance Axis, led by Iran, and the shift in the balance of power in favor of this axis- as well as the conflict of interests between the United Arab Emirates and the Resistance Axis in many regional files, such as Yemen-pushed Emirati leaders toward publicly normalizing relations with the Zionist regime. This was an attempt to establish a power balance against the Resistance Axis. In reality, the perceived threat from Iran led to the emergence of a new strategic outlook on regional geopolitical developments in the UAE's foreign policy (Aghajari et al., 2022). Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi both consider the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey as threats to their national security, and this shared perception of threat has created the groundwork for political and security proximity between them.

With the gradual reduction of U.S. military presence in the Middle East, the shared concerns of these two regional actors about the power vacuum resulting from America's withdrawal have intensified, leading them to increasingly pursue strategic convergence. In such circumstances, the normalization agreement between Israel and the UAE is not merely a diplomatic development; it is also a targeted measure to counter shared threats from Tehran and Ankara. In other words, this agreement has effectively positioned the

two countries as official and public allies against regional opposition axes (Abbasi and Chaharmehali, 2024).

Another significant factor in this change of approach is economic developments and the Arab countries' need to diversify their economies. Many Arab states, especially those in the Persian Gulf, have in recent years concluded that excessive dependence on oil revenues makes them vulnerable to global economic fluctuations. As a result, they are seeking ways to strengthen their non-oil economies, and cooperation with Israel in areas such as technology, cybersecurity, advanced agriculture, renewable energy, and international trade can help achieve this goal (Ahmed, 2022).

Another key factor contributing to the Arab world's change in approach toward Israel is the diminished political weight of the Palestinian issue in the foreign policy of some Arab countries. In the past, support for the Palestinians and opposition to Israel were considered fundamental principles of Arab foreign policy. However, gradually — due to the failure of peace negotiations, growing internal divisions in the Arab world, and the lack of a cohesive strategy from Palestinian leadership — some Arab governments concluded that they could no longer tie the fate of their foreign policy to the Palestinian issue (Faheema, 2023).

In summary, the Arab world's shift in approach toward Israel can be seen as the result of broad regional and international changes, including shifts in national priorities, security concerns, economic developments, and the diminished political importance of the Palestinian issue in the foreign policy of some countries.

### 6. Regional and global reactions to the signing of the Abraham Accords

Some Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, reacted cautiously to the Abraham Accords. Although Saudi Arabia officially refrained from signing the agreement, it did not express strong opposition and even opened its airspace to Israeli flights, which was perceived as an implicit endorsement by Riyadh of the process. In contrast, Arab countries such as Qatar, Kuwait, and Algeria criticized the Accords and considered them a breach of the Arab consensus on Palestine. Algeria explicitly announced its opposition to any normalization of relations with Israel, and Kuwait emphasized that no agreement with Israel would be legitimate without the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, the Resistance Axis countries-including Iran and Palestinian groups-viewed the Abraham Accords as a betrayal of Palestine and a step toward weakening anti-Israel resistance movements in the region (Abbas, 2024). The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Hamas movement considered the agreement a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and a blatant violation of the Arab Peace Initiative, which had stipulated that Arab countries would normalize relations with Israel only after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (Guzansky and Marshall, 2020).

On a global level, reactions to the Abraham Accords were generally positive and supportive. The United States, which played a key role in the formation of the agreement, described it as a historic achievement in its foreign policy.

The Trump administration presented the Abraham Accords as a step toward lasting peace and sought to encourage more Arab countries to join the process. The European Union also welcomed the agreement, viewing it as an opportunity to reduce tensions in the region, but stressed that peace would be incomplete without resolving the Palestinian issue. Russia and China adopted relatively neutral positions; however, Moscow expressed concern over increasing U.S. influence in the Middle East, while China focused more on the economic and trade dimensions of the agreement (Chou, 2023).

## 7. The impact of the Abraham Accords on regional security in the Persian Gulf

### • The Erosion of the Taboo Surrounding Normalization Between Persian Gulf Arab States and Israel:

The breaking of the taboo of normalizing relations between the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Israel by the UAE and Bahrain within the framework of the Abraham Accords indicates a strategic shift in the foreign policy of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and a redefinition of their geopolitical priorities at both regional and international levels. For decades, closeness to Israel among the Arab countries of the region was not only considered a political issue but was regarded as an ideological and identity-based red line, the crossing of which could challenge the internal legitimacy of Arab rulers. However, the UAE and Bahrain, by adopting a pragmatic approach, crossed this historical limitation and demonstrated that national interests—particularly in economic, technological, and security fields—can take precedence over traditional discourses (Hosseini and Niakouei, 2024)

### • Containing and Weakening the Regional Role of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

The formation of the Abraham Accords was adopted by the Hebrew-Arab blocs to redefine security arrangements, deterrence, and, if necessary, the neutralization of the Islamic Republic of Iran's defensive and offensive capabilities. This is because, in the perspectives and perceptions of the leaders of the Hebrew-Arab blocs, it has always been emphasized and continues to be emphasized that the regional behaviors of the Islamic Republic and its influence in West Asia are considered a potential threat to the interests of these countries—especially since the threats of the Islamic Republic of Iran have brought the territorial elimination of the Zionist regime to an actual stage (Aghajari et al., 2022). In this context, the Abraham Accords, by creating a strategic alliance between the Zionist regime and some Arab states of the Persian Gulf, have enabled broader security, intelligence, and military coordination among these actors against Iran's regional influence.

### • Geopolitical Shift in Energy and Goods Transit Routes in the Persian Gulf:

One of the important results of the expansion of relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime, as well as the proliferation of normalization processes among other Arab states with this regime, has been providing Israel

with access to transportation infrastructure and distribution networks for goods and energy in the region. According to Meir Elran, senior researcher at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies, transit and transportation are among the key factors that can transform the geopolitical balance in West Asia in Israel's favor. Currently, the majority of exported goods from the Persian Gulf to Europe are transported by sea, passing through the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz. However, the continuation of normalization may pave the way for the establishment of new land routes that connect the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf via the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel to the Eastern Mediterranean and eventually to Europe—a route that could gradually diminish the strategic role of the Strait of Hormuz. (Maghoumi and Javdani Moghaddam, 2022)

### • Facilitation of Security and Military Penetration of the Zionist Regime in the Persian Gulf:

The Abraham Accords have significantly facilitated Israel's security and military penetration in the Persian Gulf region. These accords have enabled Israel to be officially and structurally present in the region's security and military arenas. Through these agreements, Israel has effectively participated in joint security projects with the Gulf states and taken major steps in areas such as intelligence sharing, surveillance of regional activities, technological cooperation, and the deployment of joint defense systems (Hedayati and Babaei, 2021)

### • Dependence of Arab States on Tel Aviv's Military and Intelligence Technologies:

Today, security cooperation in the form of contracts for purchasing advanced weaponry, deployment of joint defense systems, and provision of advisory and training services has created increasing dependence for Arab states and caused them, in many intelligence and military areas, to rely not only on Western technologies but also on the operational infrastructures and even analytical algorithms of Western powers (Fakhro, 2024). In this context, the Abraham Accords have paved the way for the Arab states of the Persian Gulf to become dependent on the Zionist regime's military and intelligence technologies, to the extent that these countries have now increasingly become reliant on Tel Aviv in vital security and defense areas.

### • Exacerbation of Political Divides among Islamic Countries:

The Abraham Accords, by establishing a new axis of political, security, and economic cooperation between some Arab countries and the Zionist regime, have led to the polarization of the Islamic world concerning the issue of normalizing relations with Israel and have changed the balance of diplomatic interactions in the region. This agreement, which was signed without broad consensus among Islamic countries and without regard to the traditional positions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the Palestinian issue, has created the ground for deeper divisions between countries that continue to adhere to anti-Tel Aviv positions and those that have moved toward cooperation and alliance with Tel

Aviv. This divergence in approach has not only caused a rift between the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and other Islamic countries, but even within the Arab countries themselves, it has generated conflicting views on how to engage with Israel and the consequences of this cooperation for regional security.

- **Change in Regional Economic and Trade Equations to Iran's Detriment:**

The Abraham Accords should be considered beyond merely a security pact, as its broad economic dimensions and multi-lateral cooperation in various fields constitute key elements of it. Evidence shows that the participating parties pursue shared economic goals and have entered into diverse collaborations in areas such as air transport, finance, health, tourism, and regional investment. So far, the most significant economic achievements of this agreement have manifested in relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain, showing that these ties have transformed the previous patterns of economic interaction in the Middle East. In fact, just as the Abraham Accords have led to a change in the region's diplomatic and military alignments, they are also redefining the region's economic structure (Lotfi and Koohkan, 2024).

Given the widespread presence of Iranian entrepreneurs and companies in the UAE and the high level of economic relations between Iran and this country in 2019 (\$3.8 billion), the UAE's close relationship with the Zionist regime could be economically damaging for Tehran. This issue is particularly important considering the UAE's position as one of the main points of export and import of goods to Iran, especially under sanction conditions, and could pose challenges to the economic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UAE. On the other hand, the formation of extensive Arab relations with the Zionist regime creates significant economic potential for Israel in various fields, including trade, tourism security, finance, communications, technology, health, and climate change (Maghoubi and Javdani Moghaddam, 2022).

- **Marginalization of Indigenous Security Mechanisms such as the "Hormuz Peace Initiative":**

Following the signing of the JCPOA in July 2015 and the opportunity it gave Iran to escape international and regional isolation, Tehran sought to present regional initiatives aimed at reducing tensions in the Persian Gulf. In this regard, Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's Foreign Minister, in August 2015 published a note titled "Al-Jar Thumma Al-Dar" in the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir*, revealing Tehran's proposal to establish a "Regional Dialogue Forum" with the participation of all Persian Gulf coastal states. In February 2018, he published a note in the *Financial Times* providing more details about this unprecedented proposal, which aligned with Barry Buzan's approach under the theory of regional security complexes (RCST). In May 2019, during a trip to Iraq, Zarif also spoke of Iran's readiness to sign a "non-aggression pact" with Arab governments in the Persian Gulf. Although none of these plans succeeded in gaining the favor of regional governments, the diplomatic team of Hassan Rouhani's administration unveiled the "Hormuz Peace

Endeavor" known as the "HOPE initiative" or "Coalition of Hope" in September 2019 (Mousavi et al., 2021).

The Abraham Accords, by focusing on forming new security alliances with the participation of extra-regional actors, have drawn an alternative path for intra-regional security cooperation based on the presence and influence of the Zionist regime in the Persian Gulf. With the signing of this agreement, Israel's influence in the security policies of the Persian Gulf has become more pronounced, and indigenous security structures have been pushed to the margins.

## Conclusion

In recent decades, the issue of regional security in the Persian Gulf has faced numerous challenges and developments, among which the emergence of new actors, changes in alliances, and the normalization processes of relations between some Arab countries and the Zionist regime are considered the most significant. The present article, titled "The Abraham Accords and Regional Security in the Persian Gulf", seeks to analyze the developments following the signing of the Abraham Accords and their impact on the security dynamics of this sensitive region by utilizing the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, which emphasizes inter-subjective structures, discursive actions, and securitization. This research, by adopting a descriptive-analytical approach and using data and information gathered from library sources and related documents, along with qualitative content analysis of these materials, provides a clear picture of the trends and consequences arising from this accord.

The findings of the research indicate that the Abraham Accords, as a turning point in the history of Arab-Israeli relations, led to the breaking of the long-standing taboo regarding the normalization of relations between Arab countries and the Zionist regime. From the perspective of the Copenhagen School, this matter can be explained as a process of "de-securitization" of Israel in the official discourse of some Arab governments. In this regard, Arab countries such as the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco have defined the primary threat not in Israel but in Iran's regional power and influence by changing their strategic calculations. A shift that has clearly redirected security priorities from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to countering the axis of resistance and Iran's influence.

Following this shift in approach, the dependency of these countries on Israeli technologies and military and intelligence infrastructures has increased, and Tel Aviv's presence in the Persian Gulf has practically gained legitimacy. This presence, while challenging the balance of power in the region, has laid the groundwork for the formation of new alliances and weakened indigenous security initiatives such as the "Hormuz Peace Initiative."

In addition, the Abraham Accords have left profound consequences on the Islamic world and regional conflicts. This agreement, by deepening political and ideological rifts among Islamic countries, has effectively undermined previous cohesion in support of the Palestinian cause and has marginalized the discourse of resistance. From an economic standpoint as well, changes in the region's trade and security

dynamics have resulted losses in investments, technological cooperation, and security agreements for Iran. In addition, Zionist regime has increased pressure on Iran in geopolitical and geo-economic spheres.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Abraham Accords have not only failed to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace in the region but have also created new threats and instabilities in the Persian Gulf by altering security structures and strengthening divergent fronts—a situation that makes reconsideration of indigenous collective security mechanisms and region-focused dialogues more necessary than ever.

#### Authors contributions

Authors have contributed equally in preparing and writing the manuscript.

#### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

#### Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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