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29 March 2024

The Missing Piece of Peace: Arab Signatory Countries' Media Perspectives on the Abraham
Accords and Their Role in Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Cassidy McGoldrick

The Abraham Accords represent a historic shift in Middle Eastern diplomacy, marking the first time since 1994 that an Arab state has newly normalized relations with or publicly recognized Israel. The establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel signifies a geopolitical realignment in the region, with Arab countries acknowledging a relationship with Israel as an integral part of a broader strategy for regional stability. However, this recognition has profound implications for the Palestinian cause, as it alters traditional dynamics of pan-Arab support and prompts complex negotiations about the future of Palestinian statehood and Israeli-Palestinian relations. When signing agreements with the State of Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Morocco, each included a provision claiming to work toward a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the Accords have facilitated some progress toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, the lack of substantial peace-building reflects the alternative priorities of the Abraham Accord countries.

This thesis identifies the priorities in advancing the Abraham Accords by analyzing how the media of signatory countries of the Abraham Accords, excluding Sudan, report on their progress. Focusing on the period following the Accords' signing (September 15, 2020, for the UAE and Bahrain and December 22, 2020, for Morocco) to three months following the outbreak of the Israeli-Hamas war (January 7, 2024), the research examines the extent to which these outlets discuss the progress made in Israeli-Palestinian peace as a result of the Accords. Utilizing qualitative content analysis, the study reviews prominent Arab media from each signatory country, excluding Sudan, to identify dominant themes and narratives. The findings reveal that while some outlets do address the impacts on Israeli-Palestinian relations, there is a notable diversity in the topics covered. These range from diplomatic and economic developments to promoting regional religious and cultural acceptance. This study illustrates how the Abraham Accords are framed in the media of the signatory Arab countries and highlights the varying degrees of emphasis placed on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It concludes with an analysis of how these media narratives shape public perception and policy-making in Middle Eastern politics.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2020, the leaders of Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and later Morocco and Sudan deviated from decades of animosity and entered a new era of cooperation and coexistence. The announcement of the Abraham Accords came after highly publicized telephone discussions between the United States, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates in August 2020, aimed at initiating diplomatic relations between the two Middle Eastern nations. The groundbreaking exchanges resulted in the signing of agreements known collectively as the Abraham Accords, one of the most significant political advancements in the region over the past 25 years.¹ In September 2020, Bahrain announced it would sign a similar agreement to forge ties with Israel. The official signing ceremony occurred on September 15, 2020, with then-United States President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, gathered on the South Lawn of the White House. Subsequently, in December 2020, Morocco joined the Accords and established diplomatic relations with Israel; in January 2021, Sudan became the latest country to sign.² While the Abraham Accords marked a significant shift towards greater cooperation and normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states in the region, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be a substantial source of regional tension, even among signatory countries.

¹ Meir Ben-Shabbat, and David Aaronson, "The Abraham Accords, Two Years On: Impressive Progress, Multiple Challenges, and Promising Potential," *Institute for National Security Studies*, (2022): 1-2.

² Sudan's agreement does not include a reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and it has made very limited progress in its bilateral relationship with Israel as a result of the Sudanese civil war, so I will not be covering Sudan within this thesis.

Signing the Abraham Accords diverged from the principles set by the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and signed by members of the Arab League, which stipulated that Arab states would establish diplomatic relations with Israel only after Israel withdrew from territories occupied since 1967 and acknowledged an independent Palestinian state.³ However, the Accords, involving the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Morocco, signaled a move away from pan-Arab and pan-Islamic solidarity with the Palestinian people. The signatory countries instead prioritized their national interests and formalized relations with Israel before resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: “Although the Gulf nations may wish to present themselves as the Arab protector of Palestine, they clarify that ‘every tub must stand on its own bottom.’”⁴ The signatory countries’ departure from the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative’s principle of strictly conditional normalization may reflect impatience with the Palestinian leadership, as it has made very little progress in negotiations for an independent Palestinian state in recent years. Nonetheless, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco included provisions in their agreements with Israel that vaguely underscored their commitment to pursuing a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and publicly stated their unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people upon signing the Accords. Yet, in the three years following the Abraham Accords, progress toward resolving the conflict has been limited, with the countries focusing more on advancing economic, diplomatic, and cultural cooperation, leading to criticisms that the signatory nations are neglecting the Palestinian cause.

This thesis explores how prominent English-language media outlets based in the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Morocco — signatory countries of

³ The Arab Peace Initiative, March 28, 2002.

⁴ Polen Bayrak, “Abraham Accords: Palestine issue should be addressed for a peaceful Middle East,” *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies* (2021): 107.

the Abraham Accords that explicitly included a vague provision committing to find a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — portray and report progress made by the Abraham Accords. Examining articles from *The National* (UAE), *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), and *Morocco World News* (Morocco) published from the dates of the countries' official signing date of the Accords (September 15, 2020, for the UAE and Bahrain, and December 22, 2020, for Morocco) until three months after the outbreak of the Israeli-Hamas war (January 7, 2024), the media sources provide a unique perspective on how the Accords are framed within the signatory countries, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study explores whether these outlets discuss the progress made in Israeli-Palestinian peace as a result of the Accords and the extent to which they address or overlook the Palestinian perspective. This analysis reveals the shifting priorities within Middle Eastern and North African politics, illustrating how media narratives in the region reflect and influence evolving public perceptions in the context of the Abraham Accords. It questions how the Abraham Accords are depicted in these countries: Are they portrayed as a step towards peace and stability or as a move away from traditional support for the Palestinian cause? What does this portrayal reveal about the priorities and geopolitical strategies of these Arab nations in the contemporary Middle Eastern landscape? Have signatory states' perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed as a result of the Abraham Accords?

Why the Abraham Accords?

The signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 represents a pivotal moment in the geopolitics of the Middle East, as the agreements formalize relations between Israel and various Arab countries and provide the foundation for collaboration in various sectors. Symbolically, the

Accords aim to resolve the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Arab world by establishing a stable and mutually beneficial relationship. As the Abraham Accords Declaration states, “We believe that the best way to address challenges is through cooperation and dialogue and that developing friendly relations among States advances the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and around the world.”⁵ This statement encapsulates the Accords’ aspiration not only to forge a lasting peace between Arab nations and Israel but also to foster Israel’s regional integration to bring enhanced prosperity and stability across the region.

While the Abraham Accords demonstrate a notable shift in Arab Muslim countries’ relationships with Israel, the region before the signing of the Accords could be divided into two groups: status quo and revisionist.⁶ Amr Yossef, a fellow at the Modern War Institute, describes the “status quo alignment” as Middle Eastern states that maintain a close relationship with the United States or embrace collaboration with the West.⁷ Evolving since the mid-1950s, these states, presently including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, and Bahrain, have typically supported a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and are committed to respecting the sovereignty of other countries by avoiding involvement in their internal issues.⁸ Egypt and Jordan, members of the “status quo alignment,” had previously signed agreements with Israel; Egypt became the first Arab country to formalize diplomatic relations with Israel with the 1979 peace treaty, and in 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty that initiated cooperation in water security and formed a defense and intelligence-sharing relationship.⁹ Although no other countries in the region established diplomatic relations with Israel until the Abraham Accords,

⁵ Abraham Accords Declaration, September 15, 2020.

⁶ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” *Modern War Institute Report*, no. 2 (March 2021): 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹ “Israel-Egypt Relations: A Review of Bilateral Ties,” Jewish Virtual Library, January 2003, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/overview-of-israel-jordan-cooperation-2>

status-quo states have increasingly aligned with Israel on shared interests, and “in June 2020 the US Air Force Global Futures Report foresaw that the Arab Quartet of ‘Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain are increasingly converging on shared interests with Israel.’”¹⁰ This trend of pragmatic engagement with Israel culminated in the Abraham Accords.¹¹

By contrast, Yossef notes that the “revisionist alignment” states, primarily including Iran, Turkey, and Syria, perceive Western influence as an attempt to dominate the region. He claims, “Falling under either Arab nationalism or Islamism, revisionists are also more tolerant of engaging in armed conflict to confront Israel and seek to export revolutionary policies to the status quo powers.”¹² Although Turkey recognized Israeli statehood in 1949 and engaged in diplomatic relations with the state, its relationship with Israel was strained in the 2000s with the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002. Turkey has increasingly grown closer to the revisionist alignment and strengthened its support of Israeli adversaries, like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³ The revisionists’ stance on Israel plays a crucial role in distinguishing them from status quo states; they oppose peace initiatives with Israel and support continued armed conflict against what they view as an illegitimate state.¹⁴ Therefore, a substantial division among the states in the region was already in place before the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan signed the Abraham Accords.¹⁵

The Arab Spring, encompassing a wave of anti-government protests across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, shifted power dynamics in the region. Following these uprisings, the revisionist position notably strengthened, as Iran and Turkey viewed these protests and the

¹⁰ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 7.

¹¹ Cassidy McGoldrick, “Hopeful or Hoax?: Evaluating the Success of the Abraham Accords,” JS 471W (2023).

¹² Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 4.

¹³ Ibid, 8.

¹⁴ Ibid, 5.

¹⁵ Cassidy McGoldrick, “Hopeful or Hoax?: Evaluating the Success of the Abraham Accords,” JS 471W (2023).

emergence of Islamist-led governments in Egypt and Tunisia as a sign of an Islamic resurgence, anticipating the rise of governments with stronger Islamist leanings in the area; as Yossef notes, both Iran and Turkey actively sought to capitalize on this opportunity by expanding “their influence, directly or (mostly) by proxy in the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya.”¹⁶ However, while Iran and Turkey supported opposing parties in the Syrian conflict, the two countries maintained the sentiment of the revisionist alignment: each wanted to establish a government in Damascus without US influence. They also support “conflict with Israel.”¹⁷ At the same time, the influence of the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the region grew. Egypt, which had previously been a leading regional power, experienced destabilization during the Arab Spring, rendering it more dependent on the GCC for economic support.¹⁸ Furthermore, the GCC leveraged its abundant financial resources, media empires, and positions in transnational networks to exert regional influence.¹⁹ Thus, the Arab Spring not only reshaped the political landscape of the Middle East but also redefined the dynamics of regional competition and influence. The period of shifting power dynamics laid the groundwork for new forms of regional engagement.²⁰

As the GCC states emerged more influential, their readiness to engage in pragmatic cooperation with Israel, driven by shared interests, became increasingly apparent. Hoping to deter potential Israeli annexation of the West Bank, the United Arab Emirates initiated the Accords, soon joined by Bahrain, with Morocco and Sudan, two North African countries, entering the agreement months later. Notably, none of the signatory Arab nations shares a border with Israel, nor have they engaged in direct combat in any of the seven Arab-Israeli wars from

¹⁶ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 5.

¹⁷ Ibid, 8.

¹⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁹ Ibid, 6.

²⁰ Cassidy McGoldrick, “Hopeful or Hoax?: Evaluating the Success of the Abraham Accords,” JS 471W (2023).

1948 to 2006, with the brief exception of Morocco during the October 1973 war, simplifying the path toward normalization.²¹ Despite this lack of direct conflict, each signatory country is a member of the Arab League, a collaborative group of states to which the Palestinian issue is one of the main concerns. The Arab League organized the boycott of Israel in 1948 and, in 1967, issued the Khartoum Resolution, which established the “‘Three Nos’: ‘no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it.’”²² With their historical adherence to the Arab League’s stringent stance against formal relations with Israel, the Abraham Accord countries’ agreements with Israel marked a departure from decades of boycotts and non-recognition policies. Despite forging bilateral ties with Israel, however, the four countries remain members of the Arab League; according to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, “although the league did not outright support the accords, it did not explicitly condemn them, leading to protest from the Palestinian Authority and several other members.”²³ This response marks a notable shift from the Arab League’s more severe reaction to Egypt’s normalization with Israel in 1979, which included an “economic and diplomatic boycott of Egypt,” passed by a resolution at a 1979 ministerial meeting.²⁴ Suspending Egypt from the Arab League led to the relocation of the Arab League’s headquarters from Cairo, where it had been since 1945, to Tunis and the closure of embassies in Egypt by member states. Egypt was only readmitted to the Arab League in 1989.²⁵ Thus, the Abraham Accords demonstrate a notable shift in regional relations, showcasing the

²¹ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 3.

²² Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, “Sudan: Expanding the Tent of the Abraham Accords,” *Jewish Press*, February 26, 2023, <https://jcpa.org/article/sudan-expanding-the-tent-of-the-abraham-accords/#:~:text=Sudan's%20full%20entry%20into%20the,to%20the%20wastebasket%20of%20history>.

²³ Jonathan Masters and Sergie Mohammed Aly, “The Arab League,” Council on Foreign Relations, May 25, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/arab-league>.

²⁴ Don Schanche, “Arab Sanctions Leave Egypt Unshaken,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 1979, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/04/02/arab-sanctions-leave-egypt-unshaken/c6468b0d-1abf-41ac-99ce-601df3b4b14a/>.

²⁵ Masters and Mohammed Aly, “The Arab League.”

Gulf States' strategic move towards normalization and challenging the Arab League's long-standing strict policies against forging relations with Israel.²⁶

Along with shifting regional dynamics, the United States played a critical role in incentivizing Arab countries to sign onto the Abraham Accords. In pushing Arab countries to form bilateral ties with Israel, the United States hoped to strengthen regional alliances and create a united front to counter perceived security threats, particularly from Iran. The United States secured specific compromises for the signatories to persuade them to join the Accords; “for the UAE, the United States approved extensive arms sales; Sudan was removed from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism; and for Morocco, the United States recognized its sovereignty over the western Sahara.”²⁷ By altering the cost-benefit balance, the Accords made it more costly to maintain the former stance of hostility toward Israel and advantageous to pursue full diplomatic relations. The Abraham Accords, facilitated by the United States, shifted Arab countries' perception of Israel as “anti-Arab” to an asset in the region.²⁸ They signified a paradigm shift, suggesting that Arab nations could explore peace with Israel independently of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, the signatory countries maintained that establishing diplomatic relations with Israel would not diminish their steadfast support for the Palestinian cause. Although each signatory nation reiterated its support for the Palestinian cause in their agreements and public statements, Palestinian leadership unequivocally dismissed any claims that the Accords were beneficial to them and criticized the signatory countries for their actions. President Mahmoud Abbas's administration, representing the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, articulated its

²⁶ Cassidy McGoldrick, “Hopeful or Hoax?: Evaluating the Success of the Abraham Accords,” JS 471W.

²⁷ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 16.

²⁸ Petra Dachtler, “From New to Normal: Two Years after the Abraham Accords,” *German Institute for Global and Area Studies*, no. 5 (2022): 3.

disapproval through strong statements. Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a senior adviser to President Abbas, emphatically expressed their stance: “The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and US trilateral, surprising announcement.”²⁹ Similarly, Hamas, the governing party in the Gaza Strip, condemned the signatory countries for establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. On August 15, 2020, *Al Jazeera* reported a statement issued by Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem:

This agreement does absolutely not serve the Palestinian cause, it rather serves the Zionist narrative. This agreement encourages the occupation [by Israel] to continue its denial of the rights of our Palestinian people, and even to continue its crimes against our people, ... What is required is to support the legitimate struggle of our people against the occupation and not to establish agreements with this occupier, and any annexation we will face by a Palestinian confrontation that is supported by the Arabs and internationally, and not by signing normalisation agreements with them [Israel].³⁰

While Hamas acknowledged that the agreements deterred Israeli annexation ambitions in the West Bank, they still condemned any normalization with Israel. They posited that any approach to preventing Israeli annexation of land should center on mobilizing Palestinian and international opposition to the occupation, advocating for confrontation over compromise to uphold the Palestinian cause. However, despite the vehement opposition from Palestinian leadership, the signatory countries of the Abraham Accords remained committed to deepening their ties with Israel, viewing the Accords as an opportunity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from within. The countries maintained that their established relations with Israel could coexist with a steadfast commitment to the Palestinian cause, aiming to leverage the Accords as a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution.

²⁹ “How the World Reacted to UAE, Israel Normalising Diplomatic Ties,” *Al Jazeera*, August 15, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/15/how-the-world-reacted-to-uae-israel-normalising-diplomatic-ties>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The Abraham Accords signify a substantial shift in Middle Eastern geopolitics, driven by evolving regional conditions and strategic interests, but the sentiment that the normalization of relations with Israel constitutes an abandonment of the Palestinian cause remains among Palestinian leaders. In fact, numerous sources credit the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel as a move to deter Saudi Arabia from signing onto the Abraham Accords. In the months leading up to the attack, Saudi Arabia publicly declared that it was “getting closer” to forging ties with Israel, though the state’s leadership asserted that the Palestinian cause remained a priority in its negotiations.³¹ Continuing to disapprove of cooperation with Israel to advance peace, Hamas staged the deadliest attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust, prompting Israel to respond with an intense military campaign.³² Hamas hoped that showcasing Israel’s “disproportionate” military response would prevent Saudi Arabia from continuing its conversation with Israel. While Hamas’s continued discontent over the Abraham Accords is likely a product of its extremist ideology against Israel, it may also reflect the feeling of abandonment from signatory countries as they have failed to progress in advancing the Palestinian cause in their first three years of diplomacy with Israel. Thus, through an analysis of progress reported on the Abraham Accords through Arab signatory countries’ media outlets, this thesis aims to uncover the extent to which the Abraham Accords are perceived as a betrayal or a pragmatic step towards peace and stability in the region.

³¹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Saudi-Israeli Normalization and the Hamas Attack,” Arab Center Washington DC, October 11, 2023, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/saudi-israeli-normalization-and-the-hamas-attack/>.

³² Joe Biden, “Remarks by President Biden on the October 7th Terrorist Attacks and the Resilience of the State of Israel and Its People | Tel Aviv, Israel,” The White House, October 18, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/18/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-october-7th-terrorist-attacks-and-the-resilience-of-the-state-of-israel-and-its-people-tel-aviv-israel/>.

Methodology

In selecting media outlets for this research, the focus was placed on Arab media sources from each signatory country of the Abraham Accords.³³ This choice is rooted in the understanding that privately owned media outlets, as a reflection of societal interests and concerns, often mirror what the public cares about since media outlets operate on the premise of profitability, which is closely tied to their audience's interests and priorities.³⁴ This study aims to reveal the underlying priorities of the Abraham Accords within these nations by analyzing how various media sources report the progress in bilateral relationships with Israel. The content and focus of the articles serve as indicators of what is deemed important in the context of the Abraham Accords. To conduct my analysis of each article, I recorded the title, publication date, link, and relevance to the Abraham Accords in an Excel sheet. Additionally, I noted whether the article discussed developments in the following areas: Israeli-Palestinian peace process, diplomatic relations, economy and trade, tourism, education and coexistence, climate and agriculture, and regional security. Then, I identified the four most prevalent topics for each country to analyze, in addition to their reports on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how the Abraham Accords are presented within the domestic landscapes of the signatory countries, offering insight into the broader implications of the agreements.

Examining the progress of the Abraham Accords from the perspective of the United Arab Emirates, I selected *The National* (UAE), an English-language newspaper based out of Abu Dhabi. Since international migrants comprise 87.9% of the total population as of 2022, English-

³³ Excluding Sudan

³⁴ Erick Elejalde, Leo Ferres, and Rossano Schifanella, "Understanding News Outlets' Audience-Targeting Patterns," *EPJ Data Science* 8, no. 1 (December 2019): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-019-0194-8>.

language newspapers serve as a highly relevant resource in the UAE.³⁵ Along with *The National*, *Gulf News*, *Khaleej Times*, and *Gulf Today* are widely read news sources.³⁶ *The National* was founded in 2008 originally as a state-owned source established as part of Abu Dhabi Media, but the publication was relaunched in 2017 as a private entity.³⁷ As of 2018, *The National*'s digital platform is estimated to have 10,000,000+ page views per month.³⁸ According to an Emirati blog, Dubai Local, "*The National* stands out for its excellent reporting, in-depth investigations, and analytical pieces. Since the newspaper offers a fair outlook on various topics like politics, business, and culture, it appeals to a wide audience."³⁹ Therefore, *The National* is an effective English-language source for understanding the UAE's perspective on the Abraham Accords, as it reports progress made in a variety of sectors and is a prominent news source in the Emirates. To gather information on how *The National* covers the Abraham Accords, I searched "Abraham Accords" on their website and further refined it to include only results related to the UAE, yielding 209 articles since September 15, 2020. While reviewing each article, I observed that 195 of the articles were actually related to the Abraham Accords, whereas 14 were unrelated to the topic.

To understand how the Abraham Accords are reported in Bahrain, I analyzed articles published by the Bahraini news source *Gulf Daily News*, an English-language news source founded in 1978, which is the oldest daily newspaper in the Gulf region.⁴⁰ It is known to be a pro-government publication, with the owners, Dar Akhbar Al Khaleej, also owning an Arabic

³⁵ "United Arab Emirates - 2022 World Factbook Archive," accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/about/archives/2022/countries/ united-arab-emirates/>.

³⁶ Alma Kadragic, "Commentary: Media in the UAE: The Abu Dhabi powerhouse," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* (2010): 247.

³⁷ "About Us," *The National*, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/about-us/>.

³⁸ "Sales Information and Rate Card 2018," *The National*, accessed February 7, 2024,

<https://www.omnesmedia.com/en/download-media-kit?slug=the-national#:~:text=The%20National%20is%20the%20choice,via%20a%20strong%20digital%20presence.>

³⁹ "Most Popular Daily Newspapers in Dubai," *Dubai Local* (blog), May 31, 2023, <https://blog.dubailocal.ae/most-popular-daily-newspapers-in-dubai/>.

⁴⁰ "About Us," GDN Online, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.gdnonline.com/AboutUs.>

language publication. *Gulf Daily News* is a prominent news source in the region; as of 2022, the online platform drew approximately 8,000 unique users each day, contributing to roughly 14,000 daily total readers when combined with print subscribers.⁴¹ However, the broader reach of the online edition is part of an estimated overall readership exceeding 30,000, encompassing both regular and occasional online readers, with more than 1.8 million page views each month.⁴² Revered as the leading English-language news source in Bahrain, *Gulf Daily News* serves as a valuable English-language resource for understanding Bahrain's perspective on the Abraham Accords. To access the entire webpage, I obtained the *Gulf Daily News* articles through Factiva, an online research tool collecting content from various sources. When searching "Abraham Accords" and "Abraham Accord" on their digital platform, GDNonline.com, 64 articles appeared, all of which relate to the accords.

I similarly analyzed articles from the Moroccan English-language news source, *Moroccan World News*. With headquarters in Rabat, Morocco, and Washington D.C., the publication was founded in 2011 and is privately owned.⁴³ The online publication covers a wide range of topics, including politics, economics, international relations, lifestyle, technology, culture, sports, and issues related to the Western Sahara. While their readership statistics are not publicly available, it is listed among the most prominent English-news sources in Morocco and covers the most comprehensive array of topics.⁴⁴ Serving as an important source of news about Morocco, *Morocco World News* is an effective English-language platform for gaining insights into how the Moroccan government and its population view the Abraham Accords. The online

⁴¹ "GDN 2022 Rate Card," accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.gdnonline.com/pdf/GDN_2022_rate_card.pdf

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "About Us," Morocco World News, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/about-us>.

⁴⁴ "Morocco Newspapers and News Sites," World-Newspapers.com, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://www.world-newspapers.com/countries/africa/morocco>.

news source extensively covers the developments and advancements in various sectors that have arisen as a result of the Abraham Accords. When searching “Abraham Accords” on their webpage, 174 articles appeared. However, after removing articles unrelated to the Abraham Accords, *Morocco World News* published 171 articles since Morocco officially signed the Abraham Accords on December 22, 2020.

Limitations

While analyzing articles from prominent English-language Arab media sources offers valuable perspectives on the Abraham Accords as perceived in the signatory countries, there are limitations to this approach. Although readability rates of English-language media are still significant within the publishing countries, media outlets in the native languages of the signatory countries might offer a more in-depth and nuanced view. However, my lack of Arabic language skills prevents me from including those news sources in my research, potentially omitting a critical dimension of local perspectives and interpretations. The language barrier restricts my research to English-language sources, which may not fully capture the breadth of views and critiques available in the signatory countries. Further, English-language publications cater to an international audience, which may cause slight bias in favor of the Abraham Accords as they hope to increase Western readership.

Despite the language barrier, a more pressing limitation exists: the countries that have signed the Abraham Accords tend to exert significant censorship over their media, which would exist regardless of the language of a publication. Freedom House, a United States non-profit organization focused on political freedom, gave the United Arab Emirates an internet freedom

score of 28 out of 100, determining that it is “not free.”⁴⁵ Relating to content freedom in the UAE, Freedom House states that the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority requires internet service providers “to block content related to . . . political speech that threatens the ruling order, in practice authorities also commonly block websites that criticize the government or address social taboos.”⁴⁶ Journalists in the UAE may be fined or imprisoned for publishing critical pieces of government decisions. The Kingdom of Bahrain is similarly “not free,” scoring 29 out of 100 for internet freedom.⁴⁷ Freedom House notes that “content deemed critical of the government is regularly removed from websites, and authorities employ pressure on users through intimidation, interrogations, and arrests to force the removal of content.”⁴⁸ Morocco, however, received a score of 51 out of 100, with internet freedom described as “partly free.”⁴⁹ Regardless, the Moroccan government exercises control over the media by implementing various restrictions that can lead to the shutdown of media outlets and forced deletion of online content.⁵⁰ As a result, the limitations on publishing content in each country present a significant obstacle in accurately gauging the possible negative perceptions of the Abraham Accords through the media of the signatory countries.

Despite the limitations outlined, researching the Abraham Accords through English-language Arab media sources remains valuable. The English-language news outlets cater to a diverse audience, including the international community residing in these countries. The Arab media sources from signatory countries offer a unique perspective that reflects both local and

⁴⁵ “United Arab Emirates: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report,” Freedom House, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/united-arab-emirates/freedom-net/2022>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Bahrain: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report,” Freedom House, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahrain/freedom-net/2022>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Morocco: Freedom on the Net 2022 Country Report,” Freedom House, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/morocco/freedom-net/2022>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

global viewpoints on the Accords. Moreover, these English-language media outlets, even under censorship, can (and do) subtly convey underlying sentiments and opinions about the Abraham Accords, adding depth to the analysis and overcoming the barriers posed by language and censorship. Further, it is difficult to find public opinion data about the Accords in the countries examined, with the exception of Morocco. As a result, researching media outlets can approximate local attitudes and concerns. Thus, while acknowledging the limitations, this research contributes significantly to the broader discourse on the Abraham Accords and their reception in the signatory countries.

Literature Review

While Arab-Israeli relations have been explored extensively in academic literature, there exists a notable gap when it comes to the specific examination of media coverage of bilateral ties formed by the Abraham Accords. This thesis aims to contribute to this area by analyzing how the Accords have been presented and interpreted on signatory countries' media platforms. By focusing on this aspect, this work adds a new dimension to the existing body of knowledge on Arab-Israeli diplomacy, providing insights into how the media has depicted the Accords and the underlying priorities of the countries that signed them.

One existing source, the Arab Barometer, has released survey data that capture public perceptions in the Middle East and North Africa regarding the Abraham Accords, including one question to uncover how many respondents follow news related to the Accords. Their website shows two surveys to quantify public perception of the Abraham Accords within the Middle East and North Africa - one in December 2020 and the other in September 2022. The former, which conducted its survey in October 2020 before Morocco signed the Accords, found that only 9

percent of the Moroccan respondents “strongly favor” or “favor” “normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel and Bahrain and Israel,” and 13 percent “agree” or “strongly agree” that “it is good for the Arab region that countries started coordinating their foreign policies with those of Israel.”⁵¹ While very few notable advancements stemmed from the Abraham Accords at the time of this survey, the low level of Moroccan support before their government signed the Accords is notable. Even of the survey respondents in Jordan, which established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994, only 3 percent supported the UAE and Bahrain's decision to normalize relations, and 14 percent perceived foreign policy cooperation with Israel as “good.”⁵² Egypt, which established diplomatic ties with Israel in 1980 after signing the Camp David Accords in 1979, was excluded from the initial survey question regarding views on the UAE and Bahrain normalizing relations with Israel. However, 23 percent of Egyptian participants in the second survey question expressed that Arab nations’ collaboration with Israel in foreign policy is beneficial for the region. The second survey, published two years after the UAE and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords, reveals an increasingly positive perception of the Abraham Accords in Morocco. According to the survey results, 31 percent of respondents “favor” or “strongly favor” the “normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel.”⁵³ The change in Moroccan sentiment is particularly significant given that they became more favorable as advancements were made as a result of normalized relations. This starkly contrasts Egypt and Jordan’s 5 percent favoring normalization in the same survey.⁵⁴ However, this survey question is coupled with the percentage of respondents saying they “follow news on the Abraham Accords”

⁵¹ Micheal Robbins, “Taking Arabs’ Pulse on Normalization of Ties with Israel – Arab Barometer,” accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2020/12/taking-arabs-pulse-on-normalizing-ties-with-israel/>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “How Do MENA Citizens View Normalization With Israel? – Arab Barometer,” accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2022/09/how-do-mena-citizens-view-normalization-with-israel/>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

“a great deal” or “a fair amount,” with Moroccan respondents at 27 percent and Jordan at only 10 percent (Egypt excluded from results).⁵⁵ While the work of the Arab Barometer presents interesting information, their surveys do not encompass perceptions within Bahrain and the UAE, key signatories of the Abraham Accords. Since media and social media are heavily regulated in these two countries, survey data pertaining to public perception of the Accords is not readily available. Thus, analyzing the countries’ media sources to fill this gap is a practical substitution.⁵⁶

Additionally, some studies have already been done on media depictions of the Abraham Accords. The study, “Normalization Through the Visual: How International Media Depicted the Abraham Accords” by Mohamed Magdy Abdel Fattah Salama, a Master of Arts student at the American University in Cairo, analyzed 413 images published on international news websites to determine whether they present the Abraham Accords positively.⁵⁷ The study found a predominant use of positive and pro-normalization frames in the portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict, indicating that news outlets significantly shape public perception through their choice of images and captions. While this study provides valuable insight into how the international community presents advancements guided by the Abraham Accords through images, it does not demonstrate how the media of the signatory countries specifically portray advancements in their bilateral relationship with Israel, nor does it examine written discourse on the subject.

Similarly, another Master of Arts thesis from the American University in Cairo, “The Influence of The Abraham Accords on the Visual Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Arab Media: A Comparative Analysis,” by Mona Alsaba, examines the impact of the Abraham

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ While media analysis serves as a potential solution to lack of survey data on public perception of the Accords within signatory countries, it is significant to note that the countries’ censor the press as well. See limitations.

⁵⁷ Mohamed Magdy Abdel Fattah Salama, “Normalization Through the Visual: How International Media Depicted the Abraham Accords,” *The American University in Cairo School of Global Affairs and Public Policy* (2021).

Accords on Arab media's visual portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyzing human-interest versus technical and peace versus war frames.⁵⁸ The thesis compares visual coverage from three Arab TV stations before and after the Accords, revealing significant differences in the portrayal of the two Gaza wars in 2014 and 2021, thus contributing to understanding conflict framing in media. While the study provides insight into the Accords' influence on the signatory countries' perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it does not indicate ways in which the newly formed bilateral relationships are being utilized to resolve the conflict or advance cooperation on other fronts. While the current studies on how the Abraham Accords influence media coverage are relevant, a notable gap persists in research related to the effectiveness of the bilateral relationships in fulfilling their intended purpose as outlined in the formal agreement the countries signed and the portrayal of the Abraham Accords in written media sources.

Therefore, my study is the first to use textual media coverage to uncover the objectives behind advancing the Abraham Accords through an analysis of how media outlets in the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco report on their progress. Analyzing media coverage of the Abraham Accords in Arab signatory countries provides insights into how these agreements align with national interests and public expectations, enabling a more informed evaluation of the Accords' effectiveness and potential areas for improvement in fostering regional peace and cooperation.

Structure

This thesis will analyze how the media in the Arab signatory countries, excluding Sudan, report on the progress of the Abraham Accords, particularly focusing on their impact on the

⁵⁸ Mona Alsaba, "The Influence of The Abraham Accords on the Visual Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Arab Media: A Comparative Analysis," *The American University in Cairo School of Global Affairs and Public Policy* (2023).

Israeli-Palestinian peace process and other various sectors since the signing of the Accords. This introduction aims to highlight the Abraham Accords as a historic shift in Middle Eastern diplomacy and provide a foundation for understanding their potential implications for the Palestinian cause throughout the complex geopolitical realignment in which the media narratives are analyzed.

The subsequent chapters are dedicated to a detailed analysis of media coverage in the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Morocco. Each of the chapters focuses on the period following the signing of the Accords (September 15, 2020, for the UAE and Bahrain and December 22, 2020, for Morocco) until three months after the outbreak of the Israeli-Hamas war in 2023 (January 7, 2024). Through a qualitative content analysis, these chapters aim to uncover how these media outlets discuss the Accords' impact on Israeli-Palestinian relations and other regional matters, such as advancements in diplomatic relations, economy and trade, tourism, education and coexistence, and regional security.

Finally, the concluding chapter synthesizes the findings from the country-specific analyses. It discusses the varying emphasis placed on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in media narratives across these countries and describes the other ways in which signatory countries leverage their bilateral relationship with Israel. This chapter demonstrates how these narratives might reflect or shape public perception in the Middle East, especially concerning the future of the Abraham Accords and their broader regional implications.

Chapter 2

United Arab Emirates

Emirati-Israeli Relations Before the Abraham Accords

While the Abraham Accords formalized the bilateral relationship between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel, the two states previously navigated a nuanced, unofficial relationship. As a member of the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the United Arab Emirates adhered to the Arab League's boycott of Israel in 1948, which prohibited any economic or diplomatic interactions with Israel.⁵⁹ Despite the collective decision by GCC members in 1996 to lift the official boycott, the United Arab Emirates did not engage in diplomatic or economic affairs with Israel until signing the Accords. Rather, in 2002, the UAE endorsed the Arab Peace Initiative, which prioritized the Palestinian cause as a prerequisite for establishing diplomatic relations with Israel; in line with the Arab Peace Initiative, the UAE held that it would consider diplomatic relations with Israel following the Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied since 1967 and Israeli acceptance of an independent Palestinian state.⁶⁰

Over time, the UAE made gradual changes to its approach towards Israel, primarily due to the increasing threat posed by Iran. While they began to engage in unofficial discussions, the suspected Israeli assassination of Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai in 2010 caused a temporary diplomatic rift, halting discussions between Israel and the UAE.⁶¹ However, in September 2012, during a meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) Al Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister

⁵⁹ Martin A. Weiss, "Arab League Boycott of Israel," *Congressional Research Service* (April 2007): 2.

⁶⁰ The Arab Peace Initiative, March 28, 2002.

⁶¹ Sanam Vakil and Neil Quilliam, "Israel-UAE Rapprochement Leading to the Abraham Accords," Chatham House, March 28, 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/03/abraham-accords-and-israel-uae-normalization/02-israel-uae-rapprochement-leading-abraham>.

Netanyahu found common ground, sharing concerns regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions, seeing "eye to eye on the Iranian nuclear issue."⁶² Despite this, the UAE Foreign Minister maintained a stance consistent with the broader Arab world, emphasizing to Netanyahu that his country would not move closer to forging relations with Israel unless there were significant advancements in the peace process with the Palestinians.⁶³ Nevertheless, the UAE began to distance itself from the Arab League's collective viewpoint, engaging in discreet and unofficial dialogues with Israel. Continuing to share mutual concerns over regional security, Israel and the UAE each criticized the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed between the US and Iran, bringing them closer to collaboration. Israel argued that the JCPOA's terms were too lenient, failing to adequately prevent Iran from nearing a nuclear breakout capability.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the UAE felt overlooked by the United States, its primary security ally, since it had not been consulted about the deal, leading the UAE to criticize the JCPOA and lobby against it in Washington.⁶⁵ The 2015 public opposition by Israel and the UAE to the JCPOA became a pivotal moment for Israel-UAE relations, as the UAE identified with Israel's position. Further advancing toward collaboration, in November 2015, Israel opened a diplomatic office tied to the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi.⁶⁶ While the UAE and Israel progressively enhanced cooperation through a series of discreet yet significant steps over the years leading to the Abraham Accords, they did not establish formal diplomatic ties.

Despite common security interests, the UAE consistently made its willingness to formalize relations with Israel contingent upon progress on the Palestinian issue. In 2016, during

⁶² Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu Secretly Met with UAE Foreign Minister in 2012 in New York," *Haaretz*, July 25, 2017.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Sanam Vakil and Neil Quilliam, "The Abraham Accords and Israel-UAE Normalization," 11.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁶ Steven A. Cook, "What's Behind the New Israel-UAE Peace Deal?," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whats-behind-new-israel-uae-peace-deal>.

a lunch in New York City honoring Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ), the foreign minister similarly stressed to former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni that Gulf Arab countries would be more open to enhancing their relationship with Israel if it made greater efforts towards a two-state solution with the Palestinians.⁶⁷ Yet, at the time, the potential of Emirati diplomatic relations was not sufficient for Israel to make substantial progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Instead, according to a Chatham House report, it was “Netanyahu’s election victory in March 2020 and his pledge to annex parts of the West Bank that galvanized the UAE into action, leading to the Abraham Accords.”⁶⁸ Emirati officials argued that normalizing ties with Israel would serve the Palestinian cause by stalling Israeli annexation of the West Bank and preserving the potential for a Palestinian state. However, the Palestinian leadership condemned the UAE’s move towards normalization, withdrawing their ambassador from the UAE and stating “that the UAE legitimized Israel’s annexation threats by bargaining over them, and thus acquiesced to a West Bank status quo that some observers label ‘de facto annexation.’”⁶⁹ Despite this criticism, the UAE positioned the Palestinian cause as a central consideration in its decision to normalize relations with Israel.

Additionally, the development of ties between the UAE and Israel aligns with their shared interests and similarities. A Chatham House report highlights that the Accords were “the result of 10-15 years of discreet interactions between the UAE and Israel... involving considerable dialogue and mutual advantages, though it was not formally acknowledged, it was an open secret.”⁷⁰ Both nations are characterized by their small size, high levels of inward

⁶⁷ Sanam Vakil and Neil Quilliam, “The Abraham Accords and Israel-UAE Normalization,” 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁶⁹ Jim Zanotti and Kenneth Katzman, “Israel-UAE Normalization and Suspension of West Bank Annexation,” *Congressional Research Service* (August 2020): 2.

⁷⁰ Sanam Vakil and Neil Quilliam, “The Abraham Accords and Israel-UAE Normalization,” 7.

immigration, and significant investment of their GDP in research and development.⁷¹ Also, the UAE seeks to be a critical player in regional security, as demonstrated by its increased interventionism in Libya, Syria, Yemen, and the Horn of Africa.⁷² Thus, the UAE's interest in forming an alliance against the growing Iranian threat fits naturally into its strategic objectives. Although the UAE cited the prevention of Israeli West Bank annexation as its primary reason for normalizing relations, emphasizing its commitment to the Palestinian cause, underlying factors such as economic opportunities and security considerations likely played a significant role as well.

The United Arab Emirates and Israel signed the “Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between The United Arab Emirates and Israel” on September 15, 2020, in Washington D.C., in addition to the collectively signed *Abraham Accords Agreement*. The agreement reflects a mutual commitment to fostering peace and diplomatic relations to maximize the potential of their countries and the wider region. The agreement sets forth an expansive framework for bilateral collaboration across a variety of sectors, as described in Chapter 5; the treaty details cooperation in areas including “Visas and Consular Services; Innovation, Trade and Economic Relations; Healthcare; Science, Technology and Peaceful Uses of Outer-Space; Tourism, Culture, and Sport; Energy; Environment; Education; Maritime Arrangements; Telecommunications and Post; Agriculture and Food Security; Water; Legal Cooperation.”⁷³ By formalizing diplomatic ties and establishing a comprehensive framework for bilateral collaboration across various sectors, the Emirati-Israeli agreement offers a pragmatic approach to addressing long-standing regional challenges.

⁷¹ Ibid, 15.

⁷² Ibid, 15.

⁷³ Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel, September, 15, 2020.

However, in the seven-page document, the treaty only makes only two vague references to the Palestinians, each time in the context of aiming to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁷⁴ Notably, the treaty does not include specific steps to promote a two-state solution for the Palestinians, which is peculiar given that the UAE began talks on normalization to halt Israeli intentions to annex settlements in the West Bank. However, during the treaty signing ceremony, the UAE's Foreign Minister, Abdullah bin Zayed, openly declared, "This accord will enable us to continue to stand by the Palestinian people and realize their hopes for an independent state within a stable and prosperous region."⁷⁵ The explicit commitment voiced by the UAE's Foreign Minister at the signing event starkly contrasts the treaty's ambiguity and its omission of clear backing for a two-state solution. Nonetheless, the Abraham Accords represent a notable diplomatic breakthrough between the UAE and Israel and lay the foundation for the Emirates to play a role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The National

Based in Abu Dhabi, *The National* is a prominent English-language news outlet in the United Arab Emirates that offers comprehensive coverage of domestic, regional, and international affairs. *The National*, as a leading source of journalism in the Gulf region, provides valuable reporting and analysis on the Abraham Accords that reflect the nuanced priorities and perspectives of the Emirates. Systematically reviewing articles published by *The National* on the Abraham Accords reveals the Emirates' diplomatic and strategic interests and contributes to a broader understanding of how signatory countries' media sources perceive ties with Israel.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Tovah Lazaroff, "Did UAE, Bahrain Betray Palestinians by Ignoring Two-States in Accords?" *The Jerusalem Post*, September, 16, 2020.

Further, financially motivated to increase readership, the topics discussed in the articles published by *The National* may reflect the interests of readers in the progress of the Accords in place of reliable public perception data.

Searching for “Abraham Accords” on *The National*’s website and refining the search to include only “UAE” pieces presented 209 results; however, omitting unrelated articles yielded 195 relevant articles. The articles, for the most part, present the Abraham Accords positively with very little criticism of Israel. They cover a wide range of topics, reflecting the various priorities in advancing Emirati-Israeli collaboration. While only 43 articles refer to the Palestinian cause, *The National*’s published articles on the Abraham Accords also discuss economic and diplomatic advancements, as well as collaboration in tourism and cultural initiatives. *The National*’s broad array of articles reveals the multifaceted interests of the UAE in the Abraham Accords.

Topic	Mentions in articles published by <i>The National</i> (Total: 195)*
Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process	43
Supporting Palestinian statehood	7
Preventing Israeli annexation of West Bank	13
Abraham Accords to facilitate peace	22
Discussion of the conflict	7
Diplomatic Advancements	125
High-level officials' visits and meetings	47
Diplomatic statements	33
Signing deals/agreements	13
Establishing embassies	13
Economy and Trade	58
Trade relations	36
Private-sector business ties	18
Other	15
Tourism	54
Tourist rates	25
Government initiatives to boost tourism	20
Flights	7
Other	3
Education and Coexistence	68
Religious toleration	39
Culture	22
Education	10
Other	5

* Some articles discuss more than one topic and/or subtopic

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Of the 195 articles on the Abraham Accords published by *The National* UAE, 43 mention the Palestinians. This count includes any article referencing terms such as “Palestinian,” “Palestine,” “two-state solution,” “Palestinian Authority,” “West Bank,” “Hammas,” or “Gaza,” as

well as additional articles that refer to Israeli-Palestinian conflict without using specific terminology. Generally, these articles address several key topics: the UAE's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, efforts to prevent Israeli annexation of the West Bank, the role of the Abraham Accords in improving Israeli-Palestinian relations, and the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Some of the articles discuss more than one of these topics, which are described below.

Seven of the 43 articles discuss the UAE's firm stance on supporting Palestinian statehood. The first article to emphasize the UAE's unwavering position on the Palestinian cause specifically was published in November 2020, two months after the UAE signed the Abraham Accords. The article featured Dr. Anwar Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Entitled "Gargash: UAE does not seek confrontation with Turkey or Iran," the article discusses the Abraham Accords in the context of broader regional security initiatives, reporting that Dr. Gargash "reaffirmed the Emirates' position towards the Palestinian cause."⁷⁶ This commitment has consistently been echoed in subsequent coverage, irrespective of the progression in other areas facilitated by the Abraham Accords. For instance, in July 2021, less than a year after the Accords' signing, *The National* covered a statement by Philip Frayne, Consul General of the US Embassy in Abu Dhabi, asserting that the Abraham Accords demonstrate that "prosperity and peaceful relations with Israel can be achieved while still championing the Palestinian cause."⁷⁷ The same article focused on the US sale of F-35 jets to the UAE, indicating that advancements stemming from the Abraham Accords are viewed as distinct from the UAE's position on the Palestinian issue. Even two years after signing the Abraham Accords, in the article entitled "We

⁷⁶ "Gargash: UAE Does Not Seek Confrontation with Turkey or Iran," *The National*, November 9, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/gargash-uae-does-not-seek-confrontation-with-turkey-or-iran-1.1108546>.

⁷⁷ Dahlia Nehme, "US Consul General in Dubai 'optimistic' about F-35 Deal," *The National*, July 28, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/gulf-news/2021/07/28/us-consul-to-dubai-optimistic-on-f-35-deal/>.

can't just keep firefighting in the region,' says UAE's UN ambassador Lana Nusseibeh," published in September 2022, Nusseibeh is quoted saying, "In terms of the UAE position, it's the same position that we have had since the founding of our foreign policy, the parameters exist for the just resolution of this conflict...It's a two-state solution that should be negotiated between the two sides, with whichever partners they wish to bring to the table to help support that."⁷⁸ The article also notes that the UAE's UN Ambassador does not believe that the Abraham Accords stand in place of the negotiations and discussions that need to occur between Israelis and Palestinians; however, they exemplify the possibility of establishing Arab-Israeli peace. The seven articles, published throughout the three years since establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, reiterate the UAE's support for the Palestinian cause through vague statements, often interwoven in articles with alternate focuses.

Thirteen articles highlight the Abraham Accords as the strategy employed by the United Arab Emirates to thwart Israeli annexation efforts in the West Bank. Several of the earlier articles published by *The National* surrounding the Accords characterize them as primarily aimed at deterring Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu from annexing Palestinian territory in the West Bank. Just two days following the UAE's initial announcement of the Abraham Accords on August 13, 2020, the agreement was simplified as the UAE's direct intervention to prevent Israeli encroachment on West Bank territories. The piece, "Historic UAE-Israel peace accord hailed as 'breakthrough,'" published on August 16, 2020, claims:

"The historic agreement reached by the UAE to stop Israel from further annexation of Palestinian territory has been hailed as a breakthrough to promote peace" ... "Nikolay Mladenov, the UN's Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East Peace Process said the deal

⁷⁸ Mina Al-Oraibi and Adla Massoud, "'We Can't Just Keep Firefighting in the Region,' Says UAE's UN Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh," *The National*, September 19, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2022/09/19/we-cant-just-keep-firefighting-in-the-region-says-uaes-un-ambassador-lana-nusseibeh/>.

would stop Israel’s annexation plans in the West Bank that the UN had consistently called for.”⁷⁹

Retrospectively, the portrayal of the Abraham Accords as a straightforward arrangement to block Israeli annexation of the West Bank is oversimplified. However, the perspective is reasonable since the articles were published in the absence of further diplomatic developments; notably, 10 of the 13 articles attributing the prevention of West Bank annexation to the Accords were published within a year of the UAE’s signing of the agreement in Washington, D.C. However, three pieces by *The National* persist in acknowledging the UAE’s role in safeguarding Palestinian territories through the Abraham Accords, even after significant diplomatic progress between Israel and the UAE.

Additionally, 22 articles present the Abraham Accords as a platform for the United Arab Emirates to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace and make progress toward Palestinian statehood, but none discusses explicit initiatives. On the day that the UAE signed the Abraham Accords in 2020, *The National* published a feature on Omar Ghobash, UAE Assistant Minister for Culture and Public Diplomacy, in which he stated: ““We will be able to stand inside the tent of the Palestine issue and put pressure in favour of Palestinians.””⁸⁰ One way in which this is demonstrated in a later article published by *The National* is in an article published in May 2021, which reports Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, discussing the tension between Israel and Gaza with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.⁸¹ While the articles do not share concrete instances of UAE intervention, they do reveal

⁷⁹ The National, “Historic UAE-Israel Peace Accord Hailed as ‘Breakthrough,’” *The National*, August 16, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/historic-uae-israel-peace-accord-hailed-as-breakthrough-1.1063540>.

⁸⁰ John Dennehy, “Omar Ghobash: UAE Deal with Israel Removes Huge Taboo in Arab World,” *The National*, September 15, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/omar-ghobash-uae-deal-with-israel-removes-huge-taboo-in-arab-world-1.1077697>.

⁸¹ “Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed and US Secretary of State Blinken Discuss Developments in Israel and Palestine,” *The National*, May 18, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/sheikh-abdullah-bin-zayed-and-us-secretary-of-state-blinken-discuss-developments-in-israel-and-palestine-1.1224594>.

a more significant influence the UAE has on Washington's Middle East initiatives. *The National* articles also reveal the Abraham Accord countries discussing Israeli-Palestinian directly with Israel; as one article notes, "The six countries will meet following an increase in tensions in Jerusalem after a controversial visit by Israel's new national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to Al Aqsa mosque compound."⁸² The Abraham Accords not only grant the UAE access to conversations addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but *The National* also depicts them as a means to enhance the lives of Palestinians beyond the scope of the conflict. In an article reporting on the United States' participation in the Negev Forum, a recurring high-level gathering of leaders from each signatory country aimed at enhancing cooperation rooted in the Abraham Accords, *The National* reports, "This framework for regional co-operation also aims to strengthen the Palestinian economy and improve the quality of life of the Palestinian people, the State Department said."⁸³ Although the UAE has gained a more present voice in discussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a result of the Abraham Accords, the UAE's actual contributions to advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and Palestinian statehood remain primarily hollow, as concrete initiatives are notably absent from *The National's* coverage of the Abraham Accords.

Interestingly, only seven of the articles published by *The National* on the Abraham Accords directly discuss the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The earliest articles to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were published following the May 2021 rocket exchange between Hamas and other armed resistance groups in Gaza and Israel. Despite significant Israeli-Palestinian tension, the UAE remained committed to its bilateral relationship with Israel and its

⁸² Isameel Naar, "Negev Forum Working Groups in Abu Dhabi for First Meetings with New Israeli Government," accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2023/01/09/negev-forum-to-meet-in-abu-dhabi-amid-jerusalem-tension/>.

⁸³ Simon Rushton, "US Sending Team to the UAE for Negev Forum Meetings," *The National*, January 7, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2023/01/07/us-sending-team-to-uae-for-negev-forum-meetings/>.

desire to facilitate peace. One of the three articles published on the conflict states, “The UAE has welcomed the recent ceasefire that halted the 11-day conflict between Israel and Gaza’s militant Hamas movement last month. The government has said the violence was a reminder of the urgent need for dialogue and a long-term solution to relations between Palestinians and Israelis.”⁸⁴ As the first major escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian tension since the signing of the Abraham Accords, the 2021 11-day war demonstrated the durability of the Accords as the UAE and Israel remained committed to the principles of their agreement. However, in October 2021, *The National* reported the UAE’s firmer stance in support of the Palestinian cause. One article refers to the May 2021 conflict as “Israel’s latest war against Hamas in May, which killed at least 243 Palestinians and 12 Israelis while devastating the Gaza Strip,” asserting Israeli responsibility for the escalation.⁸⁵ Another article from October 2021 further emphasizes Israel’s role in the 11-day war while “calling for an end to the construction and expansion of settlements, the confiscation and demolition of Palestinian property, and the forced displacement of residents” at a UN Security Council meeting.⁸⁶ The same article also highlighted that, between 2013 and 2021, the UAE contributed more than \$883 million to Palestinian aid organizations, like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).⁸⁷

Despite its more critical stance on Israel after the 2021 escalations, the UAE’s commitment to its bilateral relationship with Israel reveals its intent to remain engaged in

⁸⁴ Ramola Talwar Badam, “Meet the First Emirati to Study at an Israeli University,” *The National*, June 13, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/education/meet-the-first-emirati-to-study-at-an-israeli-university-1.1240373>.

⁸⁵ Bryant Harris, “UAE, Israel and US to Launch Religion and Energy Working Groups,” accessed February 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2021/10/12/uae-israel-and-us-to-launch-religion-and-energy-working-groups/>.

⁸⁶ Holly Aguirre, “UAE Urges International Community to Support Palestinians,” accessed February 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/2021/10/20/uae-urges-international-community-to-support-palestinians/>.

⁸⁷ Holly Aguirre, “UAE Urges International Community to Support Palestinians,” accessed February 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/2021/10/20/uae-urges-international-community-to-support-palestinians/>.

seeking a fair resolution to the conflict alongside advancing diplomatic ties with Israel. Notably, discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in articles published by *The National* on the Abraham Accords declined until the Israeli government's formation of its right-wing coalition in December 2022. *The National*, in February 2023, reported a conversation between Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in which they discussed increased Israeli-Palestinian tension following the formation of the far-right Israeli government and ways to promote "de-escalation," though the article remained vague on the nature of the conflict.⁸⁸ Most notably, however, *The National* published only one article that discusses the Abraham Accords in the three months following the Hamas terror attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent Israel-Gaza war. The article, published on October 8th, reports the suspension of flights between Israel and the UAE following Israel's declaration of war on Gaza.⁸⁹ Although *The National* has published numerous articles on the Israel-Gaza war, none have explicitly discussed the war's implications on the Abraham Accords.

While 43 of the 195 articles (roughly 22 percent) published by *The National* that focus on the Abraham Accords discuss the Palestinians while reporting on progress made by forging bilateral relationships with Israel, the articles do not discuss any concrete initiatives made to better Israeli-Palestinian relations since preventing Israeli annexation of the West Bank at the time of signing the Accords. The lack of reported progress may indicate the UAE's declining commitment to the Palestinian cause as a key aspect of the Abraham Accords.

Diplomatic Advancements

⁸⁸ The National, "Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Meets US Secretary of State in Washington," *The National*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2023/02/14/sheikh-abdullah-bin-zayed-meets-us-secretary-of-state-in-washington/>.

⁸⁹ Anjana Sankar, "Flights to Tel Aviv Cancelled as Gaza-Israel War Escalates," *The National*, October 8, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2023/10/08/flights-cancelled-to-tel-aviv-as-palestine-israel-war-escalates/>.

Within the collection of the relevant 195 articles on the Abraham Accords published by *The National*, a significant proportion discuss progress in diplomacy between the United Arab Emirates and Israel. In total, 125 articles report bilateral diplomatic advancements, highlighting a series of notable events that represent the Accords' influence on enhancing regional cooperation. Specifically, the articles discuss instances of progress, such as state visits from ministers, opening embassies, signing supplementary agreements, and issuing supportive diplomatic statements, with some articles highlighting more than one of these advancements.

Of the 125 articles that highlight some form of progress in strengthening diplomatic ties between Israel and the UAE, 47 articles discuss high-level officials' visits and meetings. The first article published by *The National* that explicitly reports a meeting between Emirati and Israeli leaders was published in October 2020, almost a month after the signing. The article reports:

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi spoke to Israel's prime minister about co-operation and stability in the region. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, also Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, on Sunday said he had spoken to Benjamin Netanyahu by phone. The two leaders talked about strengthening ties and 'examined prospects for peace and the need for stability, co-operation and development in the region,' the Crown Prince wrote in a tweet.⁹⁰

In the three years following the signing of the Abraham Accords, senior government officials from both the UAE and Israel have visited each other's nations and held in-person and virtual discussions to evaluate and advance their bilateral ties. Notably, 19 articles discuss the UAE extending an invitation to or hosting high-level officials from Israel, whereas 16 articles describe Emirati leaders invited to or hosted in Israel. The articles reporting Israeli leaders visiting the UAE describe impressive Emirati hospitality; the article reporting President Herzog's first visit

⁹⁰ The National, "Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed and Benjamin Netanyahu Discuss Co-Operation in Phone Call," *The National*, October 12, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/sheikh-mohamed-bin-zayed-and-benjamin-netanyahu-discuss-co-operation-in-phone-call-1.1092174>.

to the UAE accounts, “At Qasr Al Watan, the presidential palace, artillery fired 21 rounds as Mr. Herzog was greeted by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The national anthem of both nations was played as guards saluted the Israeli president...”⁹¹ Additionally, articles that detail Emirati leadership visiting Israel describe officials stopping at significant cultural sites in Israel, like the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed’s visit to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in honor of the Abraham Accords’ second anniversary, signifying a symbolic commitment to understanding Israel’s history and culture.⁹² *The National* also reports that the meetings held during officials’ visits, as well as those conducted virtually, covered discussions on a broad range of sectors, including economic, environmental, and cultural initiatives. In addition to promoting Israeli-Emirati relations through meetings, five articles highlighted the UAE’s dedication to participating in the Negev Forums, gatherings of leaders from all Abraham Accord nations to explore advancements in their relations, and establishing specialized working groups targeting key sectors. The visits and meetings reported by *The National* are significant, as each one contributes to the advancement of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Furthermore, 33 articles published by *The National* report diplomatic statements by the Israeli and Emirati governments that represent warming bilateral relations. These statements encompass visions for the Abraham Accords, expressions of congratulations or condolences between the governments, greetings for national holidays, and acknowledgments of awards. For instance, upon the formation of the new Israeli government after the 2022 elections, *The*

⁹¹ “Isaac Herzog Hails UAE-Israel Friendship and Looks Forward to Expo 2020 Visit,” *The National*, January 30, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/01/30/israeli-president-isaac-herzog-arrives-in-uae-for-first-visit/>.

⁹² “Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Visits Holocaust Memorial in Israel,” *The National*, September 16, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2022/09/16/sheikh-abdullah-bin-zayed-visits-holocaust-memorial-in-tel-aviv/>.

National reported, “President Sheikh Mohamed congratulates Israeli PM Netanyahu on formation of government. During a phone call on Saturday, Sheikh Mohamed expressed his hope that the nations would further strengthen their ties across all fields, focusing particularly on matters of development, as well as advancing the path of partnership and peace for the benefit of the two countries and the broader region.”⁹³ While the statements are largely symbolic, they indicate a growing public friendship between Israel and the UAE on an international stage. Also included in this count are invitations extended by the governments to partake in prominent conferences held in their nations. These include the invitation for Israel to participate in the UAE’s Expo 2020 Pavilion,⁹⁴ the 2021 Dubai Airshow⁹⁵, and COP 28 hosted in the UAE.⁹⁶ Thus, the vast quantity of diplomatic statements and gestures reported by *The National*, ranging from congratulations and condolences to invitations for significant international events, reflects a commitment to the principles of the Abraham Accords and demonstrates a proactive engagement in fostering a partnership that extends beyond formal agreements, aiming to influence regional stability and development positively.

In addition to diplomatic statements, 13 articles discuss signing new deals to deepen and expand collaboration between Israel and the UAE. The articles by *The National* report on the UAE and Israel entering into agreements for cooperation across various sectors, including healthcare, space exploration, maritime transport, tourism, media and news sharing, and economic initiatives. The most notable of these agreements is the Comprehensive Economic

⁹³ “President Sheikh Mohamed Congratulates Israeli PM Netanyahu on Formation of Government,” *The National*, December 31, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/12/31/sheikh-mohamed-israel-government/>.

⁹⁴ Neil Halligan, “Israel Unveils Pavilion for Expo 2020 Dubai,” *The National*, June 10, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/israel-unveils-pavilion-for-expo-2020-dubai-1.1238193>.

⁹⁵ Georgia Tolley, “Dubai Airshow Lifts the Covid-19 Aviation Gloom,” *The National*, November 14, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/transport/2021/11/14/dubai-airshow-lifts-the-covid-19-aviation-gloom/>.

⁹⁶ “UAE Invites Israeli Leaders to Cop28,” *The National*, May 23, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/climate/cop28/2023/05/23/uae-invites-israeli-leaders-to-cop28/>.

Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed by the UAE and Israel in 2022 and became effective on April 1, 2023. The article “UAE and Israel complete talks on comprehensive economic partnership agreement” states that the agreement is “expected to boost non-oil trade and investment between the two countries” and “paves the way for a ‘new era of collaboration’ in priority sectors such as agri-tech, med-tech, new energy solutions and advanced technology.”⁹⁷ The UAE-Israel CEPA is significant, as it marks the first major trade deal between Israel and an Arab country. In addition to signing deals that enhance specific sectors, in March 2021, *The National* reported that the UAE and Israel established a \$10 billion investment fund to finance collaboration in “strategic sectors.”⁹⁸ The signing of numerous deals between Israel and the UAE, as reported by *The National*, reflects their commitment to the Abraham Accords and demonstrates both countries’ desire to expand their relationship beyond the initial agreement.

Another indication of the warming bilateral relations between Israel and the UAE is *The National’s* 13 articles on the opening of embassies in Israel and the Emirates. In January 2021, Israel appointed Eitan Na’eh as the head of mission to the UAE, where he held the position until July 2021 before becoming Israel’s Ambassador to Bahrain. Following his appointment as head of mission, *The National* reported Eitan Na’eh, claiming, “Due to Covid, we arrived with a skeleton staff. So everybody’s doing everything. We’re jack of all trades at the moment; busy setting up appointments, learning about the place, setting up an embassy from scratch, organising the embassy residences. All that takes a bit of an effort.”⁹⁹ However, in February 2021, the UAE

⁹⁷ Deena Kamel, “UAE and Israel Complete Talks on Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement,” *The National*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/2022/04/01/uae-and-israel-complete-talks-on-comprehensive-economic-partnership-agreement-minister/>.

⁹⁸ Soraya Ebrahimi, “UAE Announces \$10bn Investment Fund with Israel,” *The National*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/uae-announces-10bn-investment-fund-with-israel-1.1182620>.

⁹⁹ Georgia Tolley, “Peace Deal with Other Gulf Countries Only ‘matter of Time’ Says Israel’s Ambassador to UAE,” *The National*, February 16, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/peace-deal-with-other-gulf-countries-only-matter-of-time-says-israel-s-ambassador-to-uae-1.1167426>.

appointed its first-ever ambassador to Israel, Mohamed Al Khaja, and opened its embassy in Tel Aviv in July 2021.¹⁰⁰ Also in July 2021, Ambassador Amir Hayek became the first permanent Israeli ambassador to the UAE.¹⁰¹ Establishing embassies in each country soon after establishing ties is a clear indication of the countries' commitment to fostering a closer diplomatic relationship; as the article "How Abraham Accords changed people's lives in UAE and Bahrain" states, "One of the most visible and symbolic signs of the normalisation of relations is the establishment of embassies in each country."¹⁰² The establishment of embassies and the appointment of ambassadors between Israel and the UAE, as reported by *The National*, symbolize the significant warming of bilateral relations and the countries' commitment to deepening diplomatic ties.

With 125 of the 195 articles (roughly 64 percent) published by *The National* on the Abraham Accords touching upon diplomatic advancements, it is evident that the Emirates seeks to solidify its relationship with Israel on the global stage. Through arranging meetings between officials, signing further agreements, and establishing embassies, it is clear that the UAE is committed to expanding its newly formed ties with Israel in the future. Further, issuing public diplomatic statements and inviting Israel to participate in their global conventions signifies the Emirates' confidence and pride in its decision to normalize relations with Israel. Thus, while instances of escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have occurred since the UAE signed the Accords, the lack of reports questioning the Emirates' diplomatic stance indicates the solid nature and permanence of the UAE's bilateral relationship with Israel.

¹⁰⁰ Shireena Al Nowais, "Who Is Mohamed Al Khaja, the UAE's First Ambassador to Israel?," *The National*, February 15, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/who-is-mohamed-al-khaja-the-uae-s-first-ambassador-to-israel-1.1166426>.

¹⁰¹ Taylor Heyman, "Amir Hayek Appointed Israel's First Permanent Ambassador to the UAE," *The National*, July 25, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2021/07/25/amir-hayek-appointed-israels-first-ambassador-to-the-uae/>.

¹⁰² Gillian Duncan, "How Abraham Accords Changed People's Lives in UAE and Bahrain," *The National*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/08/12/how-abraham-accords-changed-peoples-lives-in-uae-and-bahrain/>.

Economy and Trade

Of *The National's* 195 published articles on the Abraham Accords, 58 articles report economic collaboration between the UAE and Israel since the establishment of bilateral ties. These pieces predominantly focus on growing trade relations between the two nations. However, they also discuss other economic developments, such as private-sector business collaboration and public and private investment. The emergence of Israeli-Emirati economic cooperation, previously nonexistent before the Abraham Accords, represents a significant regional development.

Since signing the Abraham Accords, the UAE and Israel have made significant strides toward establishing impressive trade relations, as 36 of *The National's* articles report. With no pre-existing trade relations before signing the Accords, the two countries established impressive trade ties relatively quickly; within 10 months of officially forging bilateral ties, *The National* reported that trade reached Dh 2.48 billion (\$675.2 million).¹⁰³ Numerous articles describe the increase in trade relations between the two countries over time. The article, "Davos 2022: trade between UAE and Israel exceeds \$1bn in first quarter of this year," states, "In the last two years, the trade volume between UAE and Israel exceeded \$2.5bn, this [in less] than two years. And only in the first quarter of 2022, we already exceeded \$1bn, which means that this year, we're going to exceed the \$2bn."¹⁰⁴ The importance of growing trade ties between Israel and the UAE is demonstrated by their commitment to signing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in May 2022. According to *The National*, the UAE's Minister of State for

¹⁰³ Neil Halligan, "Yair Lapid: We Want to Expand the Abraham Accord to the Entire Region," accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/06/30/yair-lapid-we-want-to-expand-the-abraham-accord-to-the-entire-region/>.

¹⁰⁴ "Davos 2022: Trade between UAE and Israel Exceeds \$1bn in First Quarter of This Year," accessed February 1, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/2022/05/26/davos-2022-trade-between-uae-and-israel-exceeds-1bn-in-first-quarter-of-this-year/>.

Foreign Trade, Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi, predicted the agreement “will push the value of non-oil bilateral trade to more than \$10 billion within five years.”¹⁰⁵ The impressive establishment of trade relations between the UAE and Israel, spurred by the Abraham Accords, is celebrated consistently throughout *The National*’s coverage of the Abraham Accords.

Along with the increasing trade relations, *The National* reports progress on private-sector business cooperation between the two countries as a sign of progress in the Abraham Accords. Eighteen articles discuss partnerships formed between private companies in Israel and the UAE as a result of the Accords. As reported in an article published in August 2021, “Dorian Barak, one of the region’s leading fund managers and co-founder of the UAE-Israel Business Council, estimates there has been \$500 million of business done in the year since the accords were signed.”¹⁰⁶ Subsequent articles continue to highlight business collaboration, specifically in the high-tech industry. Published in September 2023, one article shares the story of an Emirati citizen seeking business ties in Israel: “Emirati entrepreneur Reem Al Musabbeh, a chemical engineer, has founded several companies including Retch, which builds mobile applications, websites and provides business consultancy services. Her trip to Tel Aviv’s non-profit Start-Up Nation Central was only the start of an interest in Israel, giving an insight into how businesses can tackle problems together.”¹⁰⁷ By highlighting individual examples of business relations and reporting the rising collaborative trends, *The National* highlights the significant strides in private-sector business cooperation between the two nations as a hallmark of the Abraham Accords’ success.

¹⁰⁵ Deena Kamel, “UAE and Israel Sign Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement,” *The National*, May 31, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/2022/05/31/uae-and-israel-sign-comprehensive-economic-partnership-agreement/>.

¹⁰⁶ Gillian Duncan, “How Abraham Accords Changed People’s Lives in UAE and Bahrain,” *The National*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/08/12/how-abraham-accords-changed-peoples-lives-in-uae-and-bahrain/>.

¹⁰⁷ Ramola Talwar Badam, “Emiratis and Bahrainis on What the Abraham Accords Mean to Them,” accessed February 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/09/13/emiratis-and-bahrainis-on-what-the-abraham-accords-mean-to-them/>.

Additionally, other articles discuss Emirati and Israeli investment and overall economic growth more vaguely as a result of the Abraham Accords. The development of economic relations formed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, as 58 articles of *The National's* 195 articles (roughly 30 percent) report, demonstrates an advantage of normalizing relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords. Abandoning the Arab League's collective economic boycott of Israel has significantly contributed to the Emirati economy. The continuous momentum in advancing economic cooperation demonstrates the resilience of trade relations between the two countries despite ongoing Israeli-Palestinian tension. Further, unlike the articles discussing the UAE's role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the explicit initiatives to promote economic cooperation demonstrate the countries' commitment to collaboration in this sector.

Education and Coexistence

The National also highlights an increase in religious toleration and cultural appreciation, along with educational reforms, as a product of the Abraham Accords. Before the Accords, the UAE had not publicized initiatives promoting Jewish culture, but it indicated an increasing willingness to foster religious toleration. In 2016, the UAE founded its Ministry of Tolerance, which was renamed the Ministry of Tolerance & Coexistence in 2020, with the following mission:

By fostering a spirit of tolerance and promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among all people of the UAE and building bridges of understanding, communication and dialogue, our mission to renounce violence, discrimination and hatred, and encourage interfaith dialogue where the true image of Islam through local, regional and global initiatives is highlighted, becomes systemically feasible.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ "Ministry - Ministry of Tolerance & Coexistence," March 9, 2022, <https://www.tolerance.gov.ae/ministry>.

However, since establishing relations with Israel, there has been a growing Jewish population living in the UAE, with 300 to 500 actively involved in fostering a Jewish community as of January 2022, and the Emirati government has taken substantial measures to engage with Jewish culture and promote educational collaboration.¹⁰⁹ *The National* highlights this progress 68 times throughout its coverage of the Abraham Accords. The articles discuss progress in religious toleration, education reform, and cultural initiatives that reduce the stigma surrounding Israelis and Jewish community members.

Thirty-nine of the articles published by *The National* feature Emirati initiatives to foster religious toleration with respect to the Jewish community. Within a year of signing the Accords, *The National* highlighted the increase of religious toleration in the UAE as a result of the newly formed diplomatic ties; as one article states, “The community in the UAE can now be proud of being Jewish. The regular Jew who wishes to wear a kippah, a head covering, can wear it in the street without any fear of repercussion or having to look over their shoulder. And certainly visit places of worship that are known to the public and sanctioned and authorised by the government.”¹¹⁰ As Jews have become more widely accepted in the UAE, synagogues and kosher food have also emerged. In a symbolic act of religious tolerance, the Emirati government built the “Abrahamic Family House,” a complex comprising of a church, mosque, and synagogue, each constructed from the same type of stone with equal dimensions. As noted by *The National*, the complex, which opened to the public on March 1st, 2023, also marked the opening of “the first purpose-built synagogue in the UAE.”¹¹¹ Along with opening the first

¹⁰⁹ Mina Aldroubi, “Jewish Community Looks at Dubai Synagogue as Population Doubles,” accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/01/31/jewish-community-in-uae-growing-rapidly-says-senior-rabbi/>.

¹¹⁰ Gillian Duncan, “How Abraham Accords Changed People’s Lives in UAE and Bahrain,” *The National*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/08/12/how-abraham-accords-changed-peoples-lives-in-uae-and-bahrain/>.

¹¹¹ Anjana Sankar and Sarah Forster, “First Glimpse inside Abu Dhabi’s Abrahamic Family House,” *The National*, February 21, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2023/02/21/first-glimpse-inside-abu-dhabis-abrahamic-family-house/>.

synagogue, the Emirati government incentivized restaurants and hotels to serve kosher food within months of signing the Abraham Accords. As the article “Kosher food in Dubai and Abu Dhabi: What is it,” published in October 2020, states, “in Dubai, kosher meals and restaurants have begun cropping up, including at Burj Khalifa’s Armani hotel.”¹¹² The article further elaborates on the concept of kosher food, illustrating an effort to promote an understanding of Jewish practice. The initiatives to promote religious toleration in the Emirates have led to substantial growth in the Jewish population there, as highlighted by *The National*. An article published in January 2022 reports, “‘The Jewish population has already doubled [since the signing of the Abraham Accords], it’s happening and will continue to happen,’ Dr Elie Abadie, the Emirates’ senior rabbi in residence told *The National*.”¹¹³ Along with *The National*’s coverage of the UAE’s effort to promote religious toleration with regard to Judaism, it also published one article about Israeli engagement with Islam; in July 2022, the article reports, “President Sheikh Mohamed has received messages of congratulations from the leaders of Pakistan and Israel on the occasion of Eid Al Adha.”¹¹⁴ While this article reveals Israel’s engagement with Islam with respect to the Abraham Accords, *The National* primarily highlights the increased toleration of Judaism in the Emirates.

In addition to pieces emphasizing religious tolerance, 22 articles focus on how Emiratis and Israelis are increasingly embracing each other’s cultures. The articles detail various instances of cultural exchange and mutual appreciation, showcasing efforts from both sides to understand and respect their differing traditions and heritage. The articles cover a wide array of examples,

¹¹² Ramola Talwar Badam, “Kosher Food in Dubai and Abu Dhabi: What Is It?,” *The National*, October 21, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/kosher-food-in-dubai-and-abu-dhabi-what-is-it-1.1097065>.

¹¹³ Mina Aldroubi, “Jewish Community Looks at Dubai Synagogue as Population Doubles,” accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/01/31/jewish-community-in-uae-growing-rapidly-says-senior-rabbi/>.

¹¹⁴ *The National*, “President Sheikh Mohamed Receives Eid Al Adha Messages from Pakistani and Israeli Leaders,” *The National*, July 8, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/07/08/president-sheikh-mohamed-receives-eid-al-adha-messages-from-pakistani-and-israeli-leaders/>.

illustrating the diverse ways Emiratis and Israelis engage with and appreciate each other's cultural heritage. For instance, in an article published in February 2023, *The National* reports, "Dubai's Crossroads of Civilisations Museum put on display a Torah scroll that survived the Holocaust. It was unveiled during an event to mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day."¹¹⁵ The Emirati acknowledgment of International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the inclusion of a Jewish scroll in a local museum clearly demonstrate the acceptance of Jewish and Israeli culture in the UAE. Furthermore, *The National* reported on the launch of a Hebrew news service by the state news agency WAM, a strategic move to make Emirati news more accessible to Hebrew-speaking audiences.¹¹⁶ Further, *The National* celebrated momentous cross-cultural events for Israelis and Emiratis, like the largest Jewish wedding in UAE since the Abraham Accords were signed¹¹⁷ and the first Israeli baby born in the Emirates.¹¹⁸ *The National* also reports on sports competition between the two countries, symbolizing a growing camaraderie and shared interests. For instance, one article discusses tennis competition: "As the sport gains popularity in the UAE, teams met for the first time to take part in the #AbrahamAccordsGames. Organised by the UAE embassy in Tel Aviv, two teams of six took to the courts in the Mobility District at the world's fair. For many of the Israeli players, it was their first time in the UAE."¹¹⁹ Such initiatives illustrate the UAE's incorporation of Jewish and Israeli cultural elements and

¹¹⁵Anjana Sankar and Chris Maxwell, "UAE's Abrahamic Family House Opens to the Public," *The National*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2023/02/17/uaes-abrahamic-family-house-to-open-on-march-1/>.

¹¹⁶The National, "UAE and Israeli Official News Agencies to Strengthen Ties," *The National*, April 7, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/uae-and-israeli-official-news-agencies-to-strengthen-ties-1.1199173>.

¹¹⁷Nick Webster, "Abu Dhabi Plays Host to Largest Jewish Wedding in UAE since Abraham Accords Were Signed," accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2022/09/15/abu-dhabi-plays-host-to-largest-jewish-wedding-in-uae-since-abraham-accords-were-signed/>.

¹¹⁸Georgia Tolley, "Diplomat Tells of Joy as First Israeli Is Born in UAE since the Abraham Accords," accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/08/16/diplomat-tells-of-joy-as-first-israeli-is-born-in-uae/>.

¹¹⁹The National, "UAE and Israel Compete in Padel Tennis Match at Expo 2020 Dubai," *The National*, February 3, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/02/03/uae-and-israel-compete-in-padel-tennis-match-at-expo-2020-dubai/>.

provide a foundation for nurturing robust people-to-people relations, facilitating cultural appreciation and understanding.

In addition to reporting cultural milestones as a result of the Abraham Accords, *The National* discusses education reform and exchange. The articles highlight exchange programs that allow Israelis and Emiratis to study at each other's institutions and build stronger people-to-people connections. In August 2021, *The National* reported:

Mansoor Al Marzooqi became the first student from the UAE to join an Israeli college this year and said he had gained both knowledge and friendship" ... "The most important factor in achieving peace is people-to-people connections,' the 19-year-old said. 'It's about brotherhood between one culture and another. To achieve peace, there must be family relationships between people' ... 'I have been invited for Shabbat dinners and joined in cultural activities. I'm not the last (Emirati) student, there will be more coming to Israel.'¹²⁰

In addition to education exchanges, in January 2023, *The National* reported the UAE's inclusion of Holocaust education in their school curriculum, making them the first Arab country to do so; the article states, "Education strongest weapon against hate'... 'In the wake of the historic Abraham Accords, [the UAE] will now include the Holocaust in the curriculum for primary and secondary schools..."¹²¹ Holocaust education is significant as it is critical to understanding the history of Israel and the Jewish people. The Abraham Accords support the UAE's initiatives to foster coexistence by catalyzing educational exchanges and reform.

In addition to the articles explicitly highlighting instances of religious toleration, educational collaboration, and cultural initiatives to reduce the stigma surrounding Jewish community members and Israelis, five articles mention the Negev Forum's working group on Culture and Coexistence. However, they do not discuss the group's explicit initiatives.

¹²⁰ Ramola Talwar Badam, "Abraham Accords: UAE Student and Israeli Family Forge Lifelong Friendship," *The National*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2021/08/12/abraham-accord-uae-student-and-israeli-family-forge-life-long-friendship/>.

¹²¹ Shireena Al Nowais and Nick Webster, "Holocaust Teaching in UAE Schools a 'Welcome Step,'" *The National*, January 9, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/education/2023/01/09/holocaust-teaching-in-uae-schools-a-landmark-moment/>.

Regardless, the substantial reporting on explicit instances of progress in education and coexistence, as reported in 68 of the 195 articles (roughly 35 percent), as a product of the Abraham Accords demonstrates the Emirati commitment to fostering tolerance and promoting cultural ties. Given the more explicit and continuous reporting on religious toleration, cultural initiatives, and education exchange and reform, it is evident that the UAE remains committed to fostering collaboration in these sectors despite the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Tourism

The National has also published 54 articles discussing tourism between the UAE and Israel as an impressive product of the Abraham Accords. Before formally establishing relations, travel between the UAE and Israel was not officially permitted. However, since signing the Abraham Accords, the two countries have collaborated to enhance tourism, allowing interpersonal relationships and cultural understanding among people to form. Although tourism initiatives initially stalled due to the global COVID-19 pandemic breaking out just months before signing the Abraham Accords, the UAE and Israel have made impressive strides toward promoting tourism between the two countries. As a result, *The National's* articles on the Abraham Accords highlight tourism as a sign of progress 54 times. These articles include reports on tourism rates, government initiatives and discussions to boost tourism, establishing direct flights, and other vague references to tourism as a sign of enhancing bilateral relations.

Twenty-five articles by *The National* report rising rates of tourism between Israelis and Emiratis. Although international travel was restricted due to the pandemic, travel between the two countries emerged at an impressive rate. In August 2021, *The National* reported that over

200,000 Israelis had visited Dubai despite COVID-19 restrictions.¹²² The increasing rate of Israeli tourism to the Emirates has positively impacted their economy; the article “Dubai more than doubles international visitor numbers in first 10 months of 2022” notes, “the number of visitors from Israel jumped 239 per cent in the January to October period to 171,000, placing it 14th in Dubai’s top 20 source markets, after the signing of the Abraham Accords.”¹²³ While progress in tourist travel primarily reflects Israeli travel to the Emirates, some articles also report Emirati tourism to Israel. An article published in September 2023, three years since signing the Abraham Accords, reports: “Emiratis and Bahrainis and who have visited Israel say they have found common interest and friendship — not to mention high-tech businesses and a bustling economy. Shared cuisine and occasionally common language can only help, too, they say.”¹²⁴ Although *The National* portrays Emirati tourism to Israel positively, the actual number of Emiratis visiting Israel remains relatively low. According to Abraham Accords Peace Institute, only 1,600 tourists have traveled to Israel from the UAE in 2022, whereas 268,000 Israelis visited the Emirates that same year.¹²⁵ Despite the limited enthusiasm among Emiratis to visit Israel, *The National* highlights the influx of Israeli tourism to the Emirates as a sign of the progress made under the Abraham Accords.

In addition to reporting tourism rates, *The National* highlights government initiatives to promote tourism in 20 articles. Most notably, in October 2021, the UAE and Israel signed a mutual visa waiver agreement that allows Israelis and Emiratis to travel in each other’s country

¹²² “One Year on: What Are the Abraham Accords?,” *The National*, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2021/08/11/one-year-on-what-are-the-abraham-accords/>.

¹²³ Deena Kamel, “Dubai More than Doubles International Visitor Numbers in First 10 Months of 2022,” *The National*, December 15, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/travel-and-tourism/2022/12/15/dubai-more-than-doubles-international-visitor-numbers-in-first-10-months-of-2022/>.

¹²⁴ Ramola Talwar Badam, “Emiratis and Bahrainis on What the Abraham Accords Mean to Them,” accessed February 5, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/09/13/emiratis-and-bahrainis-on-what-the-abraham-accords-mean-to-them/>.

¹²⁵ Steve Postal, “Trade and Tourism on the Rise among Abraham Accords States,” accessed March 1, 2024, <https://www.aapeaceinstitute.org/latest/trade-and-tourism-on-the-rise-among-abraham-accords-states>.

for up to 90 days without a visa, as reported by *The National*.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the two countries signed an agreement in February 2022 to promote tourism to each other's countries; as the article "UAE and Israel strengthen tourism and economic ties" states, "Under the agreement, both sides will implement policies to advance their tourism sectors. This will include working more closely in marketing and promotional activities and hosting events for travel agents and others in the tourism industry."¹²⁷ The articles published by *The National* present tourism as a priority for the Israeli and Emirati governments, each hosting several discussions on how to promote tourism further. Further, the Negev Forum established a dedicated working group to enhance tourism initiatives.¹²⁸ The UAE prioritizes tourism in its bilateral relationship with Israel, as demonstrated by the publicized governmental support for increasing tourism between the two nations.

In addition, seven articles highlight direct flights between the UAE and Israel. Before the Abraham Accords, flying directly between Israel and the UAE was impossible. However, the first commercial flight from Israel to the UAE occurred in December 2020, soon after signing the Accords. As *The National* reports, the inaugural flight "arrived in Dubai with 166 passengers on board. The airline had received permission to operate via Saudi Arabian airspace only a few hours before its maiden flight to Dubai."¹²⁹ Subsequent articles highlight the growing number of direct commercial flights between the two countries. However, on October 8th, 2023, *The National* published an article announcing the suspension of UAE flights to Israel as a result of

¹²⁶ "Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Invites Israeli President to UAE," accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/sheikh-mohamed-bin-zayed-invites-israeli-president-to-uae-1.1113318>.

¹²⁷ The National, "UAE and Israel Strengthen Tourism and Economic Ties," *The National*, February 11, 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/2022/02/11/uae-and-israel-strengthen-tourism-and-economic-ties/>.

¹²⁸ Isameel Naar, "Negev Forum Working Groups in Abu Dhabi for First Meetings with New Israeli Government," accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2023/01/09/negev-forum-to-meet-in-abu-dhabi-amid-jerusalem-tension/>.

¹²⁹ Hayley Skirka, "Israil's Inaugural Flight from Tel Aviv Lands in Dubai," *The National*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/travel/israil-s-inaugural-flight-from-tel-aviv-lands-in-dubai-1.1121596>.

Israel's declaration of war on Hamas.¹³⁰ While the suspension lasted only a few weeks, it is notable that the only article published about the Abraham Accords after the outbreak of the war focused on the flight suspension. Establishing direct flights between the UAE and Israel is a significant example of progress in their bilateral relationship.

Tourism is also discussed more broadly in other articles as indicative of momentum in Emirati-Israeli relations as a result of the Abraham Accords. With 52 articles discussing tourism (roughly 28 percent), it is evident that, despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the countries' commitment to advancing tourism initiatives remains a focal point for the Emiratis in their relationship with Israel. However, the limited interest in visiting Israel may demonstrate the lack of excitement among Emirati citizens for the opportunities presented by the Abraham Accords. Nonetheless, at the governmental level and within Israeli culture, tourism is a key aspect of Emirati-Israeli relations.

Conclusion

With only 43 of 195 articles published by *The National* discussing the Palestinian cause, it is evident that the UAE has various interests in its pursuit of diplomatic relations with Israel. While the UAE contends that the Palestinian issue remains a critical aspect of their diplomacy, the UAE's diversified focus in its media representation indicates a strategic approach to broadening its cooperation with Israel, reflecting a multifaceted foreign policy approach. Notably, the articles that discuss Emirati support for the Palestinian cause remain vague and do not report concrete initiatives to reach a two-state solution. However, articles that discuss

¹³⁰ Anjana Sankar, "Flights to Tel Aviv Cancelled as Gaza-Israel War Escalates," *The National*, October 8, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/2023/10/08/flights-cancelled-to-tel-aviv-as-palestine-israel-war-escalates/>.

economic cooperation, tourism, and education report explicit examples of bilateral achievements and milestones. Thus, while the UAE publicly maintains the Palestinian cause as a central tenet of its diplomacy, its engagement in various sectors with Israel suggests a pragmatic approach aimed at maximizing national interests across economic and cultural domains. As a result, the predominance of articles focusing on sectors such as economic cooperation, tourism, and education over those addressing the Palestinian cause suggests Emirati interest in the domestic benefits of the UAE-Israel relationship. Additionally, the fact that the Abraham Accords remained intact despite escalations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and shifts in the Israeli government's ideological stances may indicate the UAE's commitment to a long-term, stable relationship with Israel. This resilience underscores the accords' significance and the UAE's ability to maintain diplomatic progress, even amidst regional tensions and political changes. Most significantly, *The National* has not published an article reporting an Emirati reaction to the outbreak of the 2023 Israel-Hamas war and its implications on the Abraham Accords. Thus, the articles published by *The National* demonstrate the UAE's commitment to leveraging its relationship with Israel for broader, mutually beneficial outcomes while making limited progress on the Palestinian issue.

Chapter 3

The Kingdom of Bahrain

Bahraini-Israeli Relations Before the Abraham Accords

Before the Abraham Accords, Bahrain's position on Israel mirrored the collective Arab League stance. Bahrain initially adhered to the Arab League's directive to boycott Israel following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and endorsed the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which called for Israeli land concessions to facilitate Palestinian statehood in return for normalized relations. The kingdom consistently criticized Israeli policies concerning Palestinians, especially related to the occupation of the West Bank. Additionally, Bahrain has made significant financial contributions to support Palestinian causes, committing \$5.5 million to Gaza's reconstruction in 2014 through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA).¹³¹ Despite its history of solidarity with Palestinians and reluctance towards Israeli normalization, Bahrain's stance evolved due to shifting regional and strategic contexts, leading to diplomatic engagements with Israel.

Similar to the United Arab Emirates, unofficial diplomatic ties between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain began to develop before the establishment of the Abraham Accords. The first notable instance of Israeli-Bahraini dialogue occurred in 1994 when Bahrain hosted the Israeli Minister for the Environment for an unofficial visit to discuss environmental issues and to meet with Bahrain's Foreign Minister, indicating openness to engage with Israel after the Oslo I Accord.¹³² However, significant movement toward recognizing Israel did not occur until 2005, after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; in 2005, Bahrain repealed its commitment to the

¹³¹ "Bahrain Stands with Gaza," *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, August 12, 2014.

¹³² Nimrod Goren, "When Bahrain Once Welcomed Israelis," *Haaretz*, December 22, 2015.

Arab League boycott of Israeli goods as a condition to establish a Free Trade Agreement with the United States.¹³³ Despite the agreement not directly leading to immediate improvements in Bahrain-Israel relations, the “issue was discussed in the negotiations leading to the pact” with the United States, signaling an increasing openness from Bahrain toward establishing ties.¹³⁴ In 2019, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Bahrain’s Foreign Minister, conveyed his willingness to improve relations with Israel, asserting that it is “there to stay” and emphasizing the necessity of building trust and confidence between the two countries.¹³⁵ He also conveyed his eagerness to visit Israel in the future. Although Bahrain was once an active member of the Arab League, the evolving relationship between Bahrain and Israel, highlighted by various diplomatic interactions and policy shifts, ultimately led to Bahrain signing the Abraham Accords.

On September 15, 2020, Bahrain joined the UAE and Israel at the White House to sign the Israel-Bahrain “Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations.” The treaty, signed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani, sought to “establish full diplomatic relations, to promote lasting security, to eschew threats and the use of force, as well as advance coexistence and a culture of peace.”¹³⁶ Following the signing ceremony, both nations affirmed their commitment to cooperate to enhance regional stability and security. Bahrain’s Interior Minister explicitly stated that the Abraham Accords would facilitate the building of a stronger alliance against Iran, justifying the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel in

¹³³ Raphael Ahren, “Bahrain Won’t Have to Abolish Israel Boycott Law – Because It Did So Years Ago,” *The Times of Israel*, September 14, 2020.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Raphael Ahren, “Bahrain’s FM Tells ToI He Hopes ‘To Visit Israel, When It’s All Open, Peaceful,’” *The Times of Israel*, June 27, 2019.

¹³⁶ Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations, September 15, 2020.

security terms.¹³⁷ Concerns surrounding Iranian influence are particularly pronounced in Bahrain since it is a Shia-majority kingdom like Iran. In addition to the security coalition the Accords constructed, the agreement signed by Bahrain and Israel outlined a range of sectors for potential collaboration, including “investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, technology, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, and other areas of mutual benefit, as well as reaching agreement on the reciprocal opening of embassies.”¹³⁸ Additionally, the agreement between Israel and Bahrain emphasizes their dedication to fostering coexistence, aiming to create a culture of peace and acceptance for diverse religions and ethnic groups. Thus, the Israel-Bahrain agreement reinforced the nations’ dedication to advancing regional stability, security, and collective prosperity in the Middle East.

While symbolically significant, the treaty is succinct and lacks comprehensive details, resulting in ambiguities about its implementation. It is only one page long and does not contain specific information on how the countries intend to build progress in the various sectors outlined. More significantly, the agreement avoids the term “normalization,” signifying that, although Bahrain is amenable to cordial diplomatic relations, it has not aimed to formalize its recognition of Israel. Additionally, consistent with the agreement signed between Israel and the UAE, the Israel-Bahrain agreement does not explicitly address how a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be actualized. However, on September 24, 2020, nine days after the signing ceremony in Washington D.C., His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa told the UN General Assembly, “We consider [the Abraham Accords] a cornerstone for achieving a just and comprehensive peace leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with East

¹³⁷ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” 9.

¹³⁸ Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations, September 15, 2020.

Jerusalem as its capital.”¹³⁹ While King Hamad’s vision to resolve the conflict includes a two-state solution, the agreement only vaguely mentions the goal of “continuing the efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”¹⁴⁰ The treaty fails to specify conditions that would support the Palestinian cause. Despite lacking critical details and an explicit endorsement of a two-state solution, establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and Bahrain represents significant progress in regional cooperation. An analysis of Bahraini media coverage of the Abraham Accords reveals that, while Bahrain has made notable progress in some areas since signing the Abraham Accords, it reaffirms its commitment to enhancing cooperation across all outlined sectors.

Gulf Daily News

Gulf Daily News is a prominent English-language news source based in Manama, Bahrain, focusing on local, regional, and international news. Esteemed as the region’s oldest daily publication, founded in 1978, it is recognized for its credible journalism in various domains, including politics, business, sports, and other significant fields.¹⁴¹ Analyzing articles published on their online platform, *GDNOnline*, reveals Bahraini interests and perceptions of the Abraham Accords. Similar to the Emirati source, *The National*, *Gulf Daily News* discusses several sectors in which the Abraham Accords have facilitated progress in the Bahraini-Israeli relationship and how they have impacted Bahrain’s position and role in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

¹³⁹ “Bahrain’s Ambassador to Washington: Middle East Yearning for Change,” *Bahrain News Agency*, October 31, 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations, September 15, 2020.

¹⁴¹ “About us,” *Gulf Daily News*, accessed March 28, 2024, <https://www.gdnonline.com/AboutUs>

Accessing the articles published on *GDNOnline* through Factiva's database, 64 articles appear when searching "Abraham Accords" and "Abraham Accord," all of which are relevant to this analysis. The articles primarily support advancing relations and cooperation with Israel. However, some articles harshly criticize Israeli policies toward Palestinians. In addition to covering Bahrain's stance on the Palestinian cause in the context of the Abraham Accords, the articles also discuss indications of advancing diplomatic relations, economic initiatives and trade, education and coexistence, and cooperation to promote regional security. The expansive scope of progress discussed in *Gulf Daily News*'s articles on the Abraham Accords reveals the kingdom's comprehensive range of interests in advancing its relationship with Israel.

Topic	Mentions in articles published by <i>Gulf Daily News</i> (Total: 64)*
Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process	21
Supporting Palestinian statehood	11
Abraham Accords to facilitate peace	11
Discussion of the conflict	2
Diplomatic Advancements	27
High-level officials' visits and meetings	20
Diplomatic statements	8
Signing deals/agreements	6
Establishing embassies	4
Economy and Trade	22
Trade relations	9
Private-sector business ties	7
Other	9
Education and Coexistence	29
Religious toleration	20
Culture	7
Education	4
Regional Security	24
Security collaboration	18
Iranian threat	6
Israeli-Palestinian conflict destabilizing	5

* Some articles discuss more than one topic and/or subtopic

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Among the 64 articles *Gulf Daily News* published on the Abraham Accords, 21 touch on Palestinian affairs. To identify these articles, I have made note of articles that included the terms “Palestinian,” “Palestine,” “two-state solution,” “Palestinian Authority,” “West Bank,” “ Hamas,”

and “Gaza,” and articles with a broader discussion of the conflict. The articles discuss Bahrain’s commitment to Palestinian statehood, its perception of the Accords as a means to facilitate peace, and reports of escalating tension and conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, with some articles addressing multiple themes.

Of the 21 articles discussing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, 11 reaffirm Bahrain’s commitment to the Palestinian cause and the formation of a Palestinian state. The articles maintain that signing the Abraham Accords did not have significant implications for Bahrain’s solidarity with the Palestinian people. In fact, Bahrain continues to assert its commitment to the Palestinian cause at high-level government meetings with Israeli counterparts. In December 2022, an article reported Bahraini Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani, discussing a meeting that occurred with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and His Majesty King Hamad: “He added that His Majesty reaffirmed Bahrain’s unwavering support for a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital – in accordance with the two-state solution.”¹⁴² King Hamad maintains Bahrain’s steadfast commitment to the Palestinian cause and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. *Gulf Daily News* also reports Bahraini Members of Parliament maintaining their stance of Palestinian solidarity, however, at the expense of celebrating the Abraham Accords. In May 2023, *Gulf Daily News* reported that, in discussing Bahrain’s private schools, Members of Parliament “unanimously approved another proposal to issue a statement condemning the Education Ministry for changing the curricula to reflect the Abraham Accords,

¹⁴² “Promoting Shared Hopes ‘Key to Peace and Growth,’” *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic500003&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

saying that the Palestinian cause was still a matter of pride.”¹⁴³ The article demonstrates that, despite the Kingdom’s formal recognition and engagement with Israel, there is considerable resistance within Bahraini society and its legislative body to any advancements in the Abraham Accords that are perceived as undermining the Palestinian cause.

Additionally, 11 articles discuss the Abraham Accords as a means for Bahrain to assist in finding a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the articles speak more broadly about the potential for the Abraham Accords to foster peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, a few articles highlight proactive measures to facilitate this process. For instance, just a few months after signing the Abraham Accords, *Gulf Daily News* reported in December 2020 that Bahrain “urged the Palestinians and Israelis to give peace a chance and sit at the negotiating table, while once again backing a two-state solution to end the conflict.”¹⁴⁴ While Bahrain facilitated an initial push for dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis following the signing of the Abraham Accords, actual progress toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has since been limited. However, the articles still acknowledge the Accords as a strategic framework that enables Bahrain to support peace initiatives. In March 2022, *Gulf Daily News* reported Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani’s statement: “Bahrain’s signing of the historic Abraham Accords with the UAE and Israel in 2020, represents an effective step that will help address the root causes of the Palestinian cause, which, along with other regional crises, have led to sowing the seeds of terrorism and extremism.”¹⁴⁵ Bahrain continues to perceive the Abraham Accords as a mechanism for its involvement in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace.

¹⁴³ “Bahrainisation Quota for Private Schools,” *Gulf Daily News*, May 10, 2023,

<http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020230510ej5a00009&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁴⁴ “GIVE PEACE A CHANCE,” *Gulf Daily News*, December 7, 2020,

<http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201207egc700004&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁴⁵ “World Must Unite in Fight against Terror,” *Gulf Daily News*, March 13, 2022,

<http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220313ei3d0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

Although *Gulf Daily News* articles reveal that Bahrain's tangible contributions to Israeli-Palestinian peace have been limited, its commitment to leveraging the Abraham Accords to promote dialogue and seek resolution remains evident.

Notably, only two articles allude to escalations in Israeli-Palestinian tension in their report on the Abraham Accords. The first article, which was published in December 2020, vaguely mentions that Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani, outlined steps to "de-escalate tensions" at Manama Dialogue 2020's second plenary session, though the article does not go into detail on the measures he discussed.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, *Gulf Daily News* did not publish an article on the implications of the 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in May 2021. However, following the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack and subsequent Israeli-Hamas war, *Gulf Daily News* published one article in November 2023 announcing the reinstatement of a Bahraini support committee for the Palestinian people as a result of the war. The article reports,

A previously shelved parliamentary support committee for the Palestinians has been reinstated as the kingdom, alongside the rest of the world, watches in horror at the siege of Gaza... The committee had not been annually actioned since 2020 when Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords with Israel... [The Members of Parliament] also want the support committee to look into the current relationship with Israel, diplomatic ties and suggest a way forward with the foreign affairs, defence and national security committee in the light of recent developments and the rejection of the kingdom's calls for a de-escalation of hostilities and an immediate ceasefire.¹⁴⁷

While the articles provide insight into Bahraini rhetoric surrounding de-escalating conflict and strengthening support for Palestinians, neither of the two articles published by *Gulf Daily News* explicitly discusses the implications of increased Israeli-Palestinian tensions on the diplomatic ties between Israel and Bahrain.

¹⁴⁶ "MIDEAST 'KEY TO GLOBAL SECURITY,'" *Gulf Daily News*, December 6, 2020, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201206egc60000g&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁴⁷ "Support Panel for Palestinians Reinstated," *Gulf Daily News*, November 1, 2023, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020231101ejb10000j&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

While 21 out of 64 (roughly 33 percent) of the *Gulf Daily News* articles published on the Abraham Accords refer to Bahrain's commitment to the Palestinian cause and potential involvement in finding a resolution to the conflict, they fail to document any concrete impact of the Israeli-Bahraini relationship on this issue. Like the Emirati news outlet, *The National*, the articles largely present symbolic support for the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, before the outbreak of the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, the articles did not present the conflict as a reason to reconsider its newly formed diplomatic relationship with Israel. However, unlike *The National*, which only reports the suspension of flights to Israel, *Gulf Daily News* published an article following the outbreak of the 2023 war that reports increasing assistance for Palestinians by re-establishing its previously shelved support committee and re-evaluating its relationship with Israel.

Diplomatic Advancements

Of the 64 articles published by *Gulf Daily News* on the Abraham Accords, 27 discuss diplomatic progress in strengthening the bilateral relationship between Israel and Bahrain. The articles detailing diplomatic advancements feature coverage of high-level government officials visiting each other's countries, engaging in meetings, signing new agreements that expand upon the Abraham Accords, issuing diplomatic statements, and establishing embassies. These articles document diplomatic progress between Israel and Bahrain, demonstrate their growing relationship, and emphasize important events that reveal the impact of the Abraham Accords on fostering regional collaboration.

Twenty articles published by *Gulf Daily News* discuss diplomatic progress through meetings and official visits involving high-ranking Israeli and Bahraini government representatives. The articles reveal that leaders from each country have visited and met frequently to discuss advancing bilateral ties. In December 2020, just months after Bahrain formalized its relationship with Israel, one article reports Bahrain's Ambassador to the UK, Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, discussing visits to Israel by Bahraini representatives: "We are looking forward to the results of three Bahraini visits to Israel so far and also looking forward to (Israel) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Bahrain soon."¹⁴⁸ Subsequent articles report visits from high-level Israeli government officials positively, noting their importance in strengthening the leaders' perception of Bahrain. In an article published in December 2022, *Gulf Daily News* reports King Hamad's excitement for President Herzog's visit to Bahrain:

He expressed hope that the Israeli leader's visit will contribute to enhancing relations between the two countries. "We are confident that this visit has an important role in consolidating relations between our countries, and supporting our common aspirations for peace and sustainable development in the region and the world," His Majesty said. He said the visit is also an opportunity for President Herzog to witness the beauty of the religious and cultural diversity in Bahrain, and the spirit of friendliness, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among members of society of all religions and races.¹⁴⁹

The article also reports the productive discussions throughout President Herzog's visit to Bahrain: "Talks between the two sides focused on ways to bolster co-operation in economic, trade, investment, scientific, technical, health, educational, youth, tourism and cultural field."¹⁵⁰ Additional articles report President Herzog's visit to Bahrain as a means to advance bilateral ties

¹⁴⁸ "Historic Deal 'Will Shape the Future,'" *Gulf Daily News*, December 2, 2020, <http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201202egc200001&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁴⁹ "Championing a Just Cause," *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic50000e&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and leverage investment opportunities that the Accords present.¹⁵¹ The frequent diplomatic visits and substantive discussions reported by *Gulf Daily News* reveal Israel and Bahrain's commitment to advance bilateral ties.

Gulf Daily News has also published eight articles that report leaders from Israel and Bahrain issuing diplomatic statements or participating in meaningful celebrations indicative of warming bilateral relations. The articles predominantly note Bahraini officials issuing statements or attending events, with less reporting on Israeli support. For instance, in December 2020, soon after establishing formal relations with Israel, an article published by *Gulf Daily News* reports Bahrain's ambassador to the United Kingdom's remarks at a Channukkah celebration: "In a year when hope has often seemed in short supply, the Abraham Accords are a reason to look ahead with at least some confidence, towards the possibility of a new era of peace for the Middle East and an era of understanding between all the faiths and peoples of our region," said Shaikh Fawaz.¹⁵² Participation in Chanukkah celebrations signifies Bahrain's dedication to embracing Jewish culture soon after formalizing its ties with Israel. In addition to Bahraini leaders celebrating Jewish holidays, *Gulf Daily News* articles report Bahraini officials' attendance and speaking roles at the Abraham Accords anniversary events. The article "Accord Marked" reports Bahrain's Foreign Minister "stressed Bahrain's keenness to further enhance relations with Israel" at an Abraham Accords first-anniversary event webinar that Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani took part in.¹⁵³ Further, *Gulf Daily News* reports Bahraini officials' congratulatory statements related to internal Israeli politics; in December 2022, Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani

¹⁵¹ "Promoting Shared Hopes 'Key to Peace and Growth,'" *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic500003&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁵² "Envoys Join Online to Celebrate Chanukah," *Gulf Daily News*, December 17, 2020, <http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201219egch0000g&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁵³ "Accord Marked," *Gulf Daily News*, September 19, 2021, https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/ga/default.aspx?page_driver=

expressed his congratulations to Israel on its election of Netanyahu as Prime Minister and stated, “We truly in Bahrain look forward to working with the new government under the leadership of one of the major signatories and architect of the Abraham Accords Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu.”¹⁵⁴ Although some commentators were concerned that the election of a right-wing Israeli government would reduce Arab support for the Abraham Accords, Bahrain’s congratulatory statement following Netanyahu’s election demonstrated that the Accords could withstand political transitions. While the articles do not discuss Israeli remarks toward Bahrain, the media coverage of Bahraini diplomatic statements reveals its interest in warming relations with Israel.

Additionally, *Gulf Daily News* published six articles that discuss signing agreements to build upon the Abraham Accords, though the articles remain broad in their description of the agreements. In April 2021, an article primarily about the inauguration of a synagogue also vaguely touched upon various agreements enacted between Israel and Bahrain: “Officials from the two Gulf countries have visited Tel Aviv and vice-versa with a series of economic agreements signed including for flights, tourism, security and investments. The two sides recently reached an agreement regarding mutual recognition of vaccination and green passport.”¹⁵⁵ While the article’s focus was not on the agreements, their inclusion signals their noteworthy significance. Similarly, other articles vaguely indicate interest in signing agreements to further Bahraini-Israeli cooperation; another article from February 2022 states,

Bahrain and Israel have pledged to strengthen their strategic partnership with a series of agreements in vital sectors. This came as His Majesty King Hamad and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister,

¹⁵⁴ “Promoting Shared Hopes ‘Key to Peace and Growth,’” *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic500003&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁵⁵ “Synagogue ‘Ready to Hold Services,’” *Gulf Daily News*, May 4, 2021, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210504eh540000d&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

yesterday welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to the kingdom... The leaders agreed to expedite the negotiations on agreements for the protection of investments and the joint work on a tax treaty, which will provide the infrastructure for promoting secure commercial co-operation.¹⁵⁶

While the article presents the leaders' noteworthy commitment to formalizing additional agreements to strengthen their bilateral relationship, the vague nature of the reporting and the small number of articles discussing agreements indicate that it may not be of interest to Bahrainis or *Gulf Daily News* readers to advance the Abraham Accords through additional agreements.

Finally, only four articles from *Gulf Daily News* discuss Israel and Bahrain opening embassies to advance their diplomatic relationship. Soon after signing the Abraham Accords, Israel appointed Eitan Na'eh as Ambassador to Bahrain. In January 2021, an article reported Ambassador Na'eh's meeting with Bahraini Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa:

He stressed that His Majesty King Hamad's reforms are based on fostering the values of understanding, dialogue and openness. They reviewed relations between the two countries, in light of their signing of the Declaration Supporting Peace and the Abraham Accords, which will contribute to strengthening security and stability, as well as promoting peace across the region.¹⁵⁷

After appointing Na'eh as Ambassador to Bahrain, Israel opened its first embassy in Bahrain. In October 2021, an article titled "A new beginning" reports that Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al Zayani and Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid "inaugurated the Israeli Embassy in Manama" in September.¹⁵⁸ However, another article reports that a new embassy of

¹⁵⁶ "Ushering in a new era of ties," *Gulf Daily News*, February 14, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&drm=drm%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁵⁷ "Interior Minister Receives Israeli Ambassador," *Gulf Daily News*, January 17, 2022, <http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220117ei1h0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁵⁸ "A new beginning," *Gulf Daily News*, February 16, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&drm=drm%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

Israel in Bahrain opened in September 2023. Although Bahraini initiatives to open an embassy in Israel and appoint an Ambassador are not explicitly reported by *Gulf Daily News*, one article vaguely states, “Israeli and Bahraini officials have met on several occasions, with agreements being signed on Israel opening its mission in Manama last year and Bahrain opening its mission in Tel Aviv.”¹⁵⁹ While not reported by *Gulf Daily News* in its coverage of the Abraham Accords, the UAE’s *The National* reported that the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Israel, Khaled Yousef Al Jalahma, arrived in Tel Aviv in August 2021.¹⁶⁰ However, according to *The National* Communication Centre of Bahrain, Ambassador Khaled Yousef Al Jalahma had returned to Bahrain as of November 2023 in response to Israel’s war in Gaza.¹⁶¹ Whether his return was a definitive diplomatic action or a precautionary safety measure is unclear.

With 27 of the 64 articles (roughly 42 percent) published by *Gulf Daily News* on the Abraham Accords discussing diplomatic advancements between Israel and Bahrain, it is evident that presenting warming ties in their bilateral relationship was significant. Like the Emirati news source, *The National*, *Gulf Daily News* reports several examples of visits from high-level officials to Israel and Bahrain, important meetings to discuss and sign agreements enhancing ties and creating diplomatic links. However, the Bahraini source does not discuss establishing embassies as explicitly as the articles published by *The National*. Furthermore, while the articles primarily reveal a growing trend of diplomatic cooperation, one article published in the month following the October 7 attack and Israel’s declaration of war on Hamas indicates

¹⁵⁹ “Cemetery Fund Vow,” *Gulf Daily News*, January 12, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220112ei1c00001&drm=drm%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220112ei1c00001&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁶⁰ Mina Aldroubi, “Bahrain’s First Ambassador to Israel Arrives to Assume Post,” *The National*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/gulf-news/bahrain/2021/09/01/bahrain-s-first-ambassador-to-israel-arrives-to-assume-post/>.

¹⁶¹ “National Communication Centre of Bahrain: Bahrain’s Ambassador to Israel Returned to the Kingdom, and the Israeli Ambassador Previously Departed for His Country,” <https://www.bna.bh/en/>, accessed March 5, 2024, <https://www.bna.bh/en/NationalCommunicationCentreofBahrainBahrainAmbassadortoIsraelReturnedtotheKingdomandtheIsraeliAmbassadorPreviouslyDepartedforhiscountry.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDiivG%2Bb%2B9pOUZOkGksQX9Q0%3D>.

reconsideration of Bahrain's ties to Israel: "They also want the support committee to look into the current relationship with Israel, diplomatic ties and suggest a way forward with the foreign affairs, defence and national security committee in the light of recent developments and the rejection of the kingdom's calls for a de-escalation of hostilities and an immediate ceasefire."¹⁶² Although *Gulf Daily News* has not reported any explicit changes in Bahraini-Israeli relations since the Gaza war outbreak, it is noteworthy that Israel's military reaction to the October 7 massacre prompted Bahrain to reevaluate advancing its relationship with Israel.

Economy and Trade

Of the 64 *Gulf Daily News* articles referencing the Abraham Accords, 22 report economic progress. While Bahrain lifted its boycott of Israel in 2005, it had not established formal economic or trade relations. However, since signing the Accords, economic collaboration has been a focal point for Bahrain and Israel as they broaden their bilateral relationship. The articles reporting this progress discuss trade and private-sector collaboration, yet several articles discuss economic collaboration broadly without providing additional details.

Nine of the 22 articles reference advancing trade relations between Israel and Bahrain. One month following the official signing of the Abraham Accords, *Gulf Daily News* reported Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Lior Haiat, stating the potential for trade between the two countries: "The main feature of this accord is this similarity in curiosity that we have for science, for innovation, for trade – this is definitely going to be for the economical advantage for both

¹⁶² "Support Panel for Palestinians Reinstated," *Gulf Daily News*, November 1, 2023, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020231101ejb10000j&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

countries.”¹⁶³ Other articles emphasize the potential for future trade relations between Israel and Bahrain, such as the article detailing Prime Minister Naftali Bennet’s visit to Bahrain published in February 2022; the article states, “Bahrain is a gateway for trade between the East and West. As such, both countries are co-operating to explore ways in which regional trade and investment opportunities can be further developed.”¹⁶⁴ Additional articles assert that Bahrain and Israel have negotiated agreements to boost trade but do not provide additional detail. Further, while the articles reveal Bahrain’s commitment to enhancing trade relations, the articles do not explicitly identify or report growing trade rates. However, according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, imports and exports between Bahrain and Israel reached \$6.5 million in 2021, and grew to \$12.7 in 2022.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, in the first six months of 2023, trade had already reached \$7.2 million, suggesting a slight increase.¹⁶⁶ Although trade volumes between Israel and Bahrain remain significantly lower than those with other Abraham Accord signatories, the professed commitment to boosting economic collaboration through trade reported in the *Gulf Daily News* articles demonstrates Israel and Bahrain’s interest in increased trade figures in the future.

In addition to trade, seven articles discuss private-sector economic collaboration between Israel and Bahrain. While the articles are similarly broad, they highlight the willingness of Israelis and Bahrainis to engage in business together. In February 2021, *Gulf Daily News* reported that an initiative led by representatives from UAE and Israel established a network for

¹⁶³ ““New era of hope for Mideast,”” *Gulf Daily News*, October 19, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201019egaj0000a&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020201019egaj0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁶⁴ “Ushering in a new era of ties,” *Gulf Daily News*, February 14, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁶⁵ “Young Entrepreneurs Network with Israelis,” *Gulf Daily News*, February 11, 2021,

<http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210211eh2b0000i&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

¹⁶⁶ “Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly,” Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/Pages/Foreign-Trade-Statistics-Monthly.aspx>

young entrepreneurs to connect with Israeli counterparts, spurring private-sector collaboration between Israelis and Bahrainis:

Young professionals and entrepreneurs in Bahrain have started to network with their Israeli counterparts in a series of online discussions set up as a result of the recently-signed Abraham Accords. The Leaders of Tomorrow hosted the Business and Venture Capital (VC) Forum last night and will be conducting the Bahrain-Israel Forum on February 23.¹⁶⁷

Government officials have also supported the excitement of Bahrainis to collaborate with Israeli counterparts within the private sector. In the article detailing Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Prime Minister, and Economic Development Board (EDB) chairman's meeting with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in December 2022, *Gulf Daily News* reports the two leaders discussing private-sector economic cooperation, noting that "the meeting also served as an opportunity to explore investment opportunities in Bahrain and Israel, including co-operation between the private sectors of both countries."¹⁶⁸ The growing interest in bilateral business engagements, supported by the governments, reflects the broader trend toward deepening economic ties under the framework of the Abraham Accords.

The 22 of the 64 articles (roughly 34 percent) published by *Gulf Daily News* on the Abraham Accords referencing economic collaboration demonstrate the countries' commitment to advancing cooperation in trade and business cooperation, despite the vague nature of several reports. Other articles address economic collaboration between Israel and Bahrain under the Abraham Accords in more general terms, highlighting it as a potential sector for partnership without specific details. While some *Gulf Daily News* articles describe explicit initiatives to bolster economic cooperation, many report economic cooperation more broadly. Interestingly,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "Vow to boost trade ties," *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic500002&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020221205eic500002&cat=a&ep=ASE>

despite various international news outlets speculating about a potential Free Trade Agreement between Israel and Bahrain that never materialized, the Bahraini source omitted any mention of these speculations. Further, compared to the Emirati articles reported by *The National*, Bahrain's commitment to economic cooperation is presented more symbolically with lower rates of trade and cooperation. However, even without reporting concrete instances of collaboration, the *Gulf Daily News* articles reveal overarching enthusiasm and intent to explore avenues for joint economic ventures, reflecting a shared interest in leveraging the Abraham Accords for mutual economic benefits.

Education and Coexistence

Gulf Daily News also highlights the impact of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel on religious toleration, cultural appreciation, and education reform in 29 of the published articles on the Abraham Accords. While the Constitution of Bahrain designates Islam as the kingdom's official religion, it also protects individuals' right to free worship so long as it does not infringe on Sunni Islamic practice.¹⁶⁹ Before the Accords, Bahrain had already enacted various policies fostering coexistence. The *Gulf Daily News* article titled "Culture of coexistence 'inherent in Bahrain'" details the efforts of the "Following-Up Committee of the National Plan to Promote the Spirit of Belonging to the Nation and Reinforce the Values of Nationalism," spearheaded by the Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa.¹⁷⁰ Launched in March 2019, this plan encompasses over 100 initiatives and is executed in collaboration with

¹⁶⁹ "Bahrain 2002 (Rev. 2017) Constitution - Constitute," accessed March 11, 2024, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bahrain_2017.

¹⁷⁰ "Culture of coexistence 'inherent in Bahrain,'" *Gulf Daily News*, April 25, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220425ei4p00001&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220425ei4p00001&cat=a&ep=ASE>

27 public entities alongside the private sector.¹⁷¹ Additionally, before the Abraham Accords, the Kingdom of Bahrain already had Jewish individuals holding prominent government positions; for instance, Ambassador Houda Nonoo served as Bahraini ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2013, becoming the first female ambassador to the US and “the first Jewish ambassador from the Arab region.”¹⁷² Therefore, Bahrain’s decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords aligns with its longstanding commitment to promoting coexistence. Thus, *Gulf Daily News* articles on the Abraham Accords report instances of progress in religious tolerance, education reform, and cultural initiatives that support their efforts to promote coexistence.

Twenty articles discuss Bahrain’s growing religious tolerance since signing the Abraham Accords. Since signing the Accords, Bahrain has established a small Jewish community that is active in Bahraini society. As reported in the article “Bahrain base for Jewish alliance,” published in February 2021, Bahrain’s Jewish community comprises just 35 individuals, yet it plays a pivotal role regionally, with community leader Ebrahim Nonoo, cousin of Ambassador Houda Nonoo, heading the Association of Gulf Jewish Communities (AGJC) – an organization that oversees Jewish programming and Kosher certification across the region.¹⁷³ Though small, the Jewish community represents King Hamad’s vision for coexistence; as an article published in April 2022 states, “The Jewish community in Bahrain and His Majesty King Hamad’s model of

¹⁷¹ “Culture of coexistence ‘inherent in Bahrain,’” *Gulf Daily News*, April 25, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220425ei4p0000l&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220425ei4p0000l&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁷² “Ambassador Houda Nonoo,” KAICIID, accessed March 19, 2024, <https://www.kaiciid.org/who-we-are/advisory-forum/ambassador%C2%A0houda%C2%A0nonoo>.

¹⁷³ “Bahrain base for Jewish alliance,” *Gulf Daily News*, February 16, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210216eh2g0000c&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020210216eh2g0000c&cat=a&ep=ASE>

peaceful coexistence could provide the ideal model for the rest of the region to emulate.”¹⁷⁴

Further, supporting the small Jewish community, Bahrain opened the only operational synagogue in the Gulf as of April 2021 after “a Torah scroll made in honour of His Majesty King Hamad was placed at the Jewish worship place yesterday,” given to King Hamad by US Senior Adviser Jared Kushner, reported by *Gulf Daily News*.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, another article reports the first bar mitzvah service in 16 years at the temple in August 2021, where the Torah was used for the first time.¹⁷⁶ Although the synagogue’s operations were intermittently affected by COVID-19 restrictions, which limited service attendance, its opening nonetheless symbolized a significant milestone in religious tolerance. Other articles highlight significant events for Bahrain’s Jewish community and vaguely discuss Bahraini government initiatives to support religious toleration and Jewish practice.

Furthermore, seven articles discuss the impact of the Abraham Accords on Bahraini and Israeli culture. Since formalizing bilateral relations, the Israeli and Bahraini governments have collaborated to foster cultural exchange between Bahrainis and Israelis; more recently, in September 2023, *Gulf Daily News* reported that Israel and Bahrain “signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of culture.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, *Gulf Daily News* has reported specific instances of cultural cooperation that demonstrate the strengthening of Israeli-

¹⁷⁴ “Bahrain ‘key to securing stability in Mena region,’” *Gulf Daily News*, April 6, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220406ei4600008&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁷⁵ “Synagogue ‘ready to hold services,’” *Gulf Daily News*, May 4, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210504eh540000d&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁷⁶ “Ritual held at Jewish temple after 16 years,” *Gulf Daily News*, August 14, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210824eh8o00003&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁷⁷ “Cementing regional peace,” *Gulf Daily News*, September 5, 2023, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020230905ej950000f&cat=a&ep=ASE>

Bahraini ties. For instance, the article “Expo to display Israeli jewellery” published in October 2021, reports,

Israel Diamond Centre (IDC) will be displaying Al Sakhra, a collection of Islamic fine jewellery designed by its founder Avi Tavisal, at Jewellery Arabia. According to the IDC, the jewellery is crafted with authentic Jerusalem stone, gold and diamonds. It will be the first time Israel has taken part in the event and follows the signing of the Abraham Accords normalisation agreement last year.¹⁷⁸

Israel’s participation in Jewellery Arabia, commissioned by Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, signifies Bahrain’s openness to including Israel in notable Bahraini events and reveals the cultural cooperation initiated by the Abraham Accords. However, an interesting article published by *Gulf Daily News* presents a more complex reaction to the Abraham Accords that reflects the culture in Bahrain; the article reports that “a glass bottle was reportedly hurled at the office of the Bahrain Society Against Normalisation with the Zionist Enemy in Adliya on Friday night.”¹⁷⁹ The incident reveals that, while there is excitement to advance the bilateral relationship with Israel at governmental and institutional levels, there is still a varied response among the citizens of Bahrain. Additionally, many articles discuss the eagerness to boost cultural cooperation more generally. While *Gulf Daily News* reports some instances of cultural collaboration, the articles indicate the population’s willingness to accept Israel within Bahraini culture is still varied.

Furthermore, four articles reference education reform and exchange as an example of progress in the Abraham Accords. The first article that reports economic exchange was published in February 2022, when “Health Minister Faeqa Al Saleh signed an MoU with her Israeli

¹⁷⁸ “Expo to display Israeli jewellery,” *Gulf Daily News*, October 20, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020211020ehak00002&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020211020ehak00002&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁷⁹ “Office Attacked,” *Gulf Daily News*, April 26, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020210426eh4q0000j&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020210426eh4q0000j&cat=a&ep=ASE>

counterpart to enhance co-operation in combating pandemics,” utilizing the exchange of “medical education” to bolster collaboration.¹⁸⁰ The same month, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Bahraini Prince Salman agreed to promote “educational and academic collaboration” as a means to expand the Abraham Accords.¹⁸¹ King Hamad and Israeli President Isaac Herzog also discussed collaboration with regard to education, along with other sectors, in another article published by *Gulf Daily News*, reflecting the countries’ desire to share knowledge for their mutual benefit. Additionally, the most recent article referencing education in the context of the Abraham Accords was published in May 2023, expressing the Members of Parliaments’ discontent with the change of school curriculum to reflect the Abraham Accords as they believe it undermines’ their commitment to the Palestinian cause; notably, however, *Gulf Daily News* did not publish an article celebrating progress when the change was made.¹⁸² Regardless, education reform and exchanges, highlighted through various initiatives and discussions between Bahraini and Israeli officials, reflect a crucial aspect of the Abraham Accords and emphasize the role of academic and cultural understanding in promoting coexistence.

The 29 articles discussing initiatives to foster coexistence and educational collaboration of the 64 *Gulf Daily News* articles (roughly 45 percent) demonstrate the countries’ interest in leveraging the accords to create a more tolerant, educated culture. While some articles referencing culture and education reveal that the Abraham Accords remain controversial among some Bahrainis, the notable collaborative progress among governments is indicative of their

¹⁸⁰ “Promoting shared hopes ‘key to peace and growth,’” *Gulf Daily News*, December 5, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020221205eic500003&drm=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020221205eic500003&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁸¹ “Ushering in a new era of ties,” *Gulf Daily News*, February 14, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&drm=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁸² “Bahrainisation Quota for Private Schools,” *Gulf Daily News*, May 10, 2023, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020230510ej5a00009&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

readiness to bridge divides and enhance mutual understanding. Compared to the Emirati articles published by *The National*, which emphasize the UAE's significant cultural evolution, highlighting newfound openness and rapid integration of Jewish practices post-Accords, *Gulf Daily News* focuses on Bahrain's incremental enhancement of its historically rooted interfaith acceptance, detailing ongoing cultural exchanges and synagogue activities. However, the prevalence of articles focused on coexistence and education in both publications demonstrates the importance of educational reforms and the fostering of religious tolerance as significant outcomes of the Abraham Accords.

Regional Security

Gulf Daily News also portrays the Abraham Accords as a tool for enhancing regional security, as discussed in 24 articles. Upon signing the Abraham Accords, the Bahraini Government stressed the agreement's significant role in advancing regional security. With Bahrain already having established security partnerships with the United States, particularly hosting the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, the agreement between Israel and Bahrain is presented as an opportunity to create a strong alliance against regional security threats. The 24 articles in *Gulf Daily News* that address regional security in the context of the Abraham Accords focus on the Accords fostering collaborative security measures, confronting the rising Iranian threat, and resolving aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict regarding regional security.

Twenty articles highlight how the Abraham Accords generally promote security collaboration between Israel and Bahrain. In December 2020, shortly after signing the Accords, an article published by *Gulf Daily News* reports Bahrain's Foreign Minister Al Zayani's remarks

at the 16th International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Regional Security Summit, The Manama Dialogue 2020 in Bahrain:

By establishing and strengthening the new avenues of security co-operation, we will be better equipped to identify, assess and deter any potential challenges to regional security,” he said. “I want to underline here that for Bahrain this new co-operation with Israel is not reactive to any threat, nor targeted against any country, but intended to help consolidate security, stability, and prosperity for the Middle East.¹⁸³

Additionally, several articles present government officials discussing matters of regional security. For instance, an article published in February 2022 reports that, during Israeli Prime Minister Bennett’s visit to Bahrain, a joint statement reported that he and Bahraini Prince Salman “discussed expanding strategic and security relations to address regional challenges, including nuclear threats, terrorist activity, religious extremism, poverty and social challenges.”¹⁸⁴

Additional articles vaguely discuss agreements related to security cooperation. While the specific details of the initiatives or agreements to enhance collaboration are not reported, the emphasis on security collaboration broadly in the 20 articles highlights the strategic significance of the Abraham Accords.

Additionally, six articles explicitly frame the Abraham Accords as a strategic initiative to counter Iranian threats. Despite Bahrain’s Foreign Minister Al Zayani asserting in the December 2020 *Gulf Daily News* piece that the Abraham Accords were not conceived as a countermeasure to any specific threat, a contrasting stance is reported by *Gulf Daily News* in the same month from United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo; he stated, “We understand that when it comes to countering Tehran and many other important issues, Israel is a key partner, and not a

¹⁸³ “GIVE PEACE A CHANCE,” *Gulf Daily News*, December 7, 2020, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201207egc700004&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020201207egc700004&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁸⁴ “Ushering in a new era of ties,” *Gulf Daily News*, February 14, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220216ei2g0000a&cat=a&ep=ASE>

problem,” while emphasizing the Accords’ significance and anticipating further international support inspired by Bahrain’s example.¹⁸⁵ In March 2022, *Gulf Daily News* covered a collaborative discussion involving Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Egypt against Iran. The dialogue represented a collective defense framework, as Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid articulated, emphasizing a unified stance against Iran:

“This new architecture – the shared capabilities we are building – intimidates and deters our common enemies, first and foremost Iran and its proxies,” Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said alongside his US, Bahraini, Emirati, Moroccan and Egyptian counterparts. Foreign Minister Dr Abdullatif Al Zayani ... stressed the need to do so is made more urgent by recent developments, such as the Houthi terrorist militia’s continued attacks on civilian energy infrastructure, the ongoing threat from terrorist organisations such as Hizbollah, and other proxy groups, and the need to resolve the Iranian nuclear file.¹⁸⁶

The article reporting Lapid’s statement and Foreign Minister Al Zayani’s response to escalated regional tension reveals the collaborative effort to enhance shared security capabilities. Thus, the Abraham Accords are framed as a strategic coalition to deter threats from Iran and its proxies.

In addition to addressing security concerns related to Iran, five articles published by *Gulf Daily News* highlight the significance of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as integral to regional security. These articles emphasize Bahrain’s perspective that peace between Israelis and Palestinians is pivotal not only for the parties involved but also for the stability and prosperity of the entire Middle East and North Africa region. For example, an article published in September 2023, following Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen’s visit to Bahrain, reports Deputy King Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa’s “firm stance towards achieving a just, comprehensive

¹⁸⁵ “US praises Bahrain’s role in defeating IS,” *Gulf Daily News*, December 2, 2020, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020201202egc20000o&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020201202egc20000o&cat=a&ep=ASE>

¹⁸⁶ “United against Iran,” *Gulf Daily News*, March 29, 2022, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020220329ei3t0000d&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020220329ei3t0000d&cat=a&ep=ASE>

and sustainable peace that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, that will lead to stability, development and prosperity for both the Palestinians, Israelis as well as all peoples of the region.”¹⁸⁷ This stance is reiterated in other articles, underscoring the necessity of a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a cornerstone for broader regional security. Therefore, the reporting by *Gulf Daily News* presents the Abraham Accords as a strategic alliance aimed at cultivating cooperation to enhance regional security.

The 24 articles (roughly 38 percent) published by *Gulf Daily News* reflect Bahrain’s multifaceted interests in advancing regional security cooperation through the Abraham Accords. They emphasize strategic cooperation to confront regional threats, particularly from Iran, and address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an essential component for stability and prosperity in the Middle East. While details on specific initiatives remain sparse, the articles collectively demonstrate the strategic importance of Bahrain establishing ties with Israel.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of *Gulf Daily News* articles, it is apparent that maintaining support for the Palestinian cause and gaining access to conversations attempting to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the forefront of Bahraini priorities, along with other areas of cooperation. With 21 of the articles (roughly 33 percent) reporting Bahrain’s commitment to the Palestinian cause and resolving tension between Israelis and Palestinians, the media coverage demonstrates the kingdom’s steadfast position to utilize the Abraham Accords to support

¹⁸⁷ “Cementing regional peace,” *Gulf Daily News*, September 5, 2023, <https://global-factiva-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020230905ej950000f&drn=drn%3aarchive.newsarticle.GUDAN00020230905ej950000f&cat=a&ep=ASE>

Palestinian statehood and seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, the articles do not discuss concrete initiatives to work toward a resolution, much like the Emirati news source, suggesting that their support may be more symbolic than practical. While Israeli-Bahraini relations remained strong throughout the escalation of Israeli-Palestinian tension in 2021, the article asserting Bahrain's re-evaluation of its diplomatic relationship with Israel following the outbreak of war with Gaza in October 2023 presents that their relationship may be contingent on Israel's willingness to make peace in the future.¹⁸⁸

However, the articles also illustrate Bahrain's multifaceted approach to its engagement with Israel, which extends beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most prevalent coverage of the Abraham Accords focuses on diplomatic advancements, economic and trade collaborations, education and coexistence initiatives, and regional security enhancement, reflecting a comprehensive strategy to advance the Abraham Accords for broader bilateral and regional benefits. While many articles vaguely report progress in these sectors, some reveal significant milestones in Bahrain's diplomatic relationship with Israel. Thus, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains of critical concern for Bahrain, as reflected in the consistent coverage of the kingdom's commitment to Palestinian statehood and peace, the *Gulf Daily News* articles reveal a broader engagement strategy. Bahrain is actively exploring and investing in various cooperation areas with Israel, including economy, trade, education, culture, and regional security. The *Gulf Daily News* articles collectively demonstrate Bahrain's strategic intent to leverage the various opportunities that the Abraham Accords present.

¹⁸⁸ "Support Panel for Palestinians Reinstated," *Gulf Daily News*, November 1, 2023, <http://global.factiva.com/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=GUDAN00020231101ejb10000j&cat=a&ep=ASE>.

Chapter 4

The Kingdom of Morocco

Moroccan-Israeli Relations Before the Abraham Accords

Similar to the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Morocco was actively involved in the Arab League and endorsed the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative before signing the Abraham Accords. However, unlike the other Abraham Accord countries, Morocco was the only country to take direct military action against Israel with its involvement in the 1973 war.¹⁸⁹ Regardless of its previous military confrontation, Morocco and Israel maintained an informal relationship for almost 60 years, as they engaged in secret security and intelligence cooperation; according to an article published by the *New York Times* in 2020, “Israel has helped Morocco obtain weapons and intelligence-gathering gear and learn how to use them, and helped it assassinate an opposition leader. Morocco has helped Israel take in Moroccan Jews, mount an operation against Osama bin Laden – and even spy on other Arab countries.”¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the two countries maintained discreet tourism relations, making Morocco one of the few Arab countries to permit Israeli tourism before signing the Accords.¹⁹¹ While publicly aligned with the regional bloc against Israel, Morocco’s clandestine, informal relationship with Israel was likely a product of the kingdom’s existing Jewish population before signing the Abraham Accords. Unlike the more recent growth of the Jewish communities in the UAE and Bahrain following the Abraham Accords, Morocco has a longstanding Jewish heritage; according to *Morocco World News*, “In the 1940s, there were between 250,000 to 350,000 Jews

¹⁸⁹ Amr Yossef, “The Regional Impact of the Abraham Accords,” *Modern War Institute Report*, no. 2 (March 2021): 3.

¹⁹⁰ Ronen Bergman, “Israel-Morocco Deal Follows History of Cooperation on Arms and Spying,” *New York Times*, December 10, 2020.

¹⁹¹ Karim Mezran and Alissa Pavia, “Morocco and Israel are Friendlier Than Ever Thanks to the Abraham Accords. But what Does This Mean for the Rest of North Africa?” *Atlantic Council*, October 7, 2021.

living in Morocco as part of the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world.”¹⁹² The connection is evident in more recent years, as almost ten percent of Israelis still consider themselves Moroccan; “Israelis of Moroccan origin number approximately one million and many of them have risen to prominence in politics.”¹⁹³ Therefore, despite its active participation in the Arab League, Morocco had already established an informal rapport with Israel before formalizing its diplomatic relationship in December 2020 through the Abraham Accords.

In addition to its previous unofficial relations with Israel, Morocco’s land dispute with the Algerian-backed Polisario Front over the Western Sahara may have significantly influenced its decision to join the Abraham Accords. In November 2020, one month before Morocco officially signed onto the Abraham Accords, the Polisario Front declared it would resume armed fighting for independence in the land, ending the 1991 UN-brokered ceasefire agreement.¹⁹⁴ While the Polisario Front continues to fight for a complete Moroccan withdrawal from the land, Morocco maintains its claim of sovereignty over the area. In the context of intensifying conflict with the Polisario Front, the United States offered to recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara as part of a tripartite deal that would also see Morocco establish formal relations with Israel.¹⁹⁵ The recognition of Morocco’s claim to the land was a pivotal incentive for the kingdom, given the strategic and diplomatic leverage it provided. Additionally, the prospect of accessing Israel’s advanced military technologies presented a substantial benefit for Morocco, aligning with its security interests and enhancing its military capabilities amidst ongoing tensions

¹⁹² Tarik Oumazzane, “Morocco, USA, Israel Deal: Prospect for Peace in MENA,” Morocco World News, December 21, 2020, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/329456/morocco-usa-israel-deal-prospect-for-peace-in-mena>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Houda Chograni, “The Polisario Front, Morocco, and the Western Sahara Conflict,” Arab Center Washington DC, November 4, 2021, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-polisario-front-morocco-and-the-western-sahara-conflict/>.

¹⁹⁵ “Proclamation on Recognizing The Sovereignty Of The Kingdom Of Morocco Over The Western Sahara,” U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Morocco, December 10, 2020, <https://ma.usembassy.gov/proclamation-on-recognizing-the-sovereignty-of-the-kingdom-of-morocco-over-the-western-sahara/>.

in the disputed territory. Thus, unlike the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, Morocco's ongoing military conflict may have contributed to its decision to forge ties with Israel.

Morocco signed its "Joint Declaration" on December 22, 2020, making it the third Arab state to formalize diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020. In exchange for Morocco joining the Abraham Accords, the United States recognized Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara. While the treaty signed by Israel and Morocco ensures the "establishment of full diplomatic, peaceful and friendly relations," it does not explicitly use the term "normalization."¹⁹⁶ Although the international community views the "Joint Declaration" as a step toward normalization, Morocco sought to mitigate the Accords' perceived importance within its borders, asserting that the agreement did not signify comprehensive normalization with Israel.¹⁹⁷ Despite attempts to publicly downplay the deal, the treaty identifies several areas of cooperation between Israel and Morocco, including "trade; finance and investment; innovation and technology; civil aviation; visas and consular services; tourism; water, agriculture, and food security; development; energy and telecommunications; and other sectors as may be agreed."¹⁹⁸ While the treaty does explicitly mention finding a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it asserts Morocco's dedication to the Palestinian cause:

His Majesty the King reiterated the coherent, constant and unchanged position of the Kingdom of Morocco on the Palestinian question, as well as the position expressed on the importance of preserving the special status of the sacred city of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions in His Majesty the King's capacity as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee.¹⁹⁹

Notably, Morocco is the only signatory country to explicitly reaffirm its stance on the Palestinian issue within the context of its treaty, demonstrating the country's intent to balance its diplomatic

¹⁹⁶ Joint Declaration, The Kingdom of Morocco, the United States of America and the State of Israel, December 22, 2020.

¹⁹⁷ Karim Mezran and Alissa Pavia, "Morocco and Israel are Friendlier Than Ever Thanks to the Abraham Accords. But what Does This Mean for the Rest of North Africa?"

¹⁹⁸ Joint Declaration, The Kingdom of Morocco, the United States of America and the State of Israel, December 22, 2020.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

advances with Israel against its longstanding regional commitments. As presented in Moroccan media, its multifaceted relationship with Israel through the Abraham Accords reflects Morocco's efforts to support the Palestinian cause while engaging in beneficial cooperation with Israel across various sectors.

Morocco World News

Morocco World News is a leading independent English-language news source in Morocco and its surrounding region. With its headquarters in Rabat, Morocco, and Washington, DC, *Morocco World News* focuses on local, regional, and international news. It aims to promote free speech and report without political bias within the limitations of Moroccan free speech restrictions. As a significant publication in Morocco, *Morocco World News* publishes credible articles in various domains, including politics, economy, technology, culture, and more. By analyzing the articles published on the Abraham Accords since Morocco officially signed its agreement with Israel on December 22, 2020, *Morocco World News* articles reflect the Moroccan perception of the Abraham Accords and interest in expanding its relationship with Israel. Similar to the Emirati and Bahraini news sources, *Morocco World News* articles highlight several areas of cooperation fostered by the Abraham Accords and clarify Morocco's commitment to the Palestinian cause despite its diplomatic relationship with Israel.

In searching "Abraham Accords" on the *Morocco World News* online platform, 171 relevant articles appeared since Morocco signed the Accords. The articles present the Abraham Accords positively, yet some are highly critical of Israel. They reveal Morocco's firm commitment to standing with the Palestinian people and also discuss advancing Moroccan-Israeli diplomatic relations, trade and economic activity, education and coexistence, and cooperation in

the security realm. The thorough reporting on the Abraham Accords by *Morocco World News* illustrates the kingdom's wide-ranging interests in strengthening its relationship with Israel while also emphasizing its goal to utilize the Accords in backing the Palestinian cause.

Topic	Mentions in articles published by <i>Morocco World News</i> (Total: 171)*
Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process	43
Supporting Palestinian statehood	19
Abraham Accords to facilitate peace	14
Discussion of the conflict	19
Diplomatic Advancements	82
High-level officials' visits and meetings	44
Diplomatic statements	18
Signing deals/agreements	18
Establishing embassies	15
Other	5
Economy and Trade	66
Trade relations	46
Private-sector business ties	24
Other	3
Education and Coexistence	42
Religious toleration	15
Culture	24
Education	16
Regional Security	33
Security collaboration	15
Strengthening Moroccan military	14
Iranian threat	7

* Some articles discuss more than one topic and/or subtopic

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

Of the 171 articles reporting the progress of the Abraham Accords since Morocco signed on, 43 articles discuss the implications of Morocco's relationship with Israel on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. These articles are identified by their inclusion of terms like "Palestinian," "Palestine," "two-state solution," "Palestinian Authority," "West Bank," "Hammas," and "Gaza." They also cover broader tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, focusing solely on content that includes discussions relevant to Morocco. Demonstrating Morocco's steadfast commitment to the Palestinian cause, the articles frequently report Moroccan initiatives to facilitate peace, aspirations for a two-state solution, and condemnation of Israeli contributions to escalating violence.

Nineteen articles published by *Morocco World News* on the Abraham Accords since Morocco's signing of its agreement with Israel reiterate Morocco's firm stance in support of Palestinian statehood. On the day that Morocco announced the Accords, a *Morocco World News* article reported:

During a phone call today with President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas, King Mohammed VI vowed that his and Morocco's position on the Palestinian cause remains unchanged. Despite Morocco's decision to normalize ties with Israel, King Mohammed VI said his position on Palestine, which he "inherited from his father," the late King Hassan II, is consistent and unchanging. The King assured that "Morocco always places the Palestinian issue in the rank of the Moroccan Sahara issue, and that Morocco's work to consolidate its Moroccanness will never be, neither today nor in the future, at the expense of the Palestinian people's struggle for their legitimate rights." He stressed to Abbas that Morocco supports a solution based on two states living side by side in peace and security. Negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties remain the only way to reach a final, lasting, and comprehensive settlement of this conflict, the King said.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Morgan Hekking, "King Mohammed VI Assures Mahmoud Abbas of Unchanged Position on Palestine Amid Israel Normalization," *Morocco World News*, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/328446/king-mohammed-vi-assures-mahmoud-abbas-of-unchanged-position-on-palestine-amid-israel-normalization>.

In the three years since signing the Abraham Accords, Morocco has maintained its position outlined in the initial phone call to PA President Mahmud Abbas, prioritizing the Palestinian cause in its relationship with Israel. Their commitment to the Palestinians is evident in the postponement of hosting the Negev Summit in Morocco in support of the Palestinian cause. As reported in an article published in June 2023, the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita confirmed that the Negev Summit was postponed “due to unfavorable ‘political context,’” likely in response to Israeli approval of plans to expand settlements in the West Bank.²⁰¹ The article reports Bourita’s description of Israel’s settlement plans as “provocative and unilateral” and reiterates Morocco’s commitment to promoting Palestinian statehood; “Bourita said that Morocco views dialogue as the only solution to end the dispute – reiterating Rabat’s support for an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.”²⁰² The article indicates that Morocco will only support its relationship with Israel so long as Palestinian statehood remains a possible resolution to the conflict. Additionally, articles posted following the October 7 attack on Israel and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war reiterate Morocco’s support for Palestinian statehood. Although Israel and the United States expected a statement of solidarity following the October 7 attack, according to an article published by *Morocco World News*,

the Moroccan Foreign Affairs Ministry’s statements in the wake of the 7 October attack did not live up to the expectations of both Israel and the US administration. Given their long-standing and well-documented opposition to Israel’s decades-long occupation and oppression of Palestinians, Moroccan authorities did not use any language that could have been interpreted as suggesting that Morocco considers Hamas as a terrorist organization. Instead of single-handedly condemning the 7 October attack as terrorist, the official statement of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the violence from all sides and called for de-escalation and calm. Morocco thus reiterated its

²⁰¹ Safaa Kasraoui, “Morocco Confirms ‘Political Context’ Behind Postponement of Negev Summit,” *Morocco World News*, June 23, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/06/356105/morocco-confirms-political-context-behind-postponement-of-negev-summit>.

²⁰² Safaa Kasraoui, “Morocco Confirms ‘Political Context’ Behind Postponement of Negev Summit,” *Morocco World News*, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/06/356105/morocco-confirms-political-context-behind-postponement-of-negev-summit>.

“principled position” in support of the Palestinian cause, urging a return to dialogue and negotiations as the only path to a comprehensive and lasting solution - while warning of the political consequences of obstructing the political process.²⁰³

Thus, while Morocco established a formal diplomatic relationship with Israel, it consistently reiterates that attaining Palestinian statehood is at the forefront of Moroccan priorities. The articles published by *Morocco World News* since Morocco joined the Abraham Accords demonstrate the kingdom’s persistent advocacy for the Palestinian cause amidst evolving regional dynamics.

While several articles affirming Morocco’s support for Palestinian statehood are critical of the Abraham Accords, 14 articles published by *Morocco World News* portray Morocco’s established relationship with Israel as an opportunity for Moroccan intervention in facilitating the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. One article, “Morocco, USA, Israel Deal: Prospect for Peace in MENA,” published around the time that Morocco signed its agreement with Israel, notes that Morocco’s signing of the Abraham Accords may lead to peace between Israelis and Palestinians due to the notable Moroccan Jewish population currently living in Israel and the Moroccan King’s ties to Palestinians. The article explains,

It is this profound and ancient Jewish connection which Morocco brings to the table. Morocco can mobilize Moroccan Jews in Israel to bridge the gaps between Palestinians and Israelis. More than that, the Moroccan King’s status as a descendant of Prophet Mohammed, his title of Amir al-Mu'minin---Commander of the Faithful, his position as the Head of Al-Quds “Jerusalem” Committee, and his good relations with the Palestinian National Authority reinforce his legitimacy as a peace broker in the Middle East.²⁰⁴

Several articles similarly assert the potential of Morocco to assist with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through the Abraham Accords more broadly. However, while the Emirati and

²⁰³ Samir Bennis, “Israel’s War on Palestinians: Moment of Reckoning for US-Moroccan Relations,” *Morocco World News*, December 6, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/12/359373/israels-war-on-palestinians-moment-of-reckoning-for-us-moroccan-relations>.

²⁰⁴ Tarik Oumazzane, “Morocco, USA, Israel Deal: Prospect for Peace in MENA,” *Morocco World News*, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/329456/morocco-usa-israel-deal-prospect-for-peace-in-mena>.

Bahraini sources report leveraging the Abraham Accords to find a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more vaguely, *Morocco World News* reports a concrete example of intervention in the peace process; several articles report Morocco's role in opening the Allenby Crossing, bringing tangible benefits for the Palestinian people. As one article reports,

Morocco's contributions to tackling regional issues with Israel was also evidenced by the country's significant role in the decision to fully reopen the vital Allenby Bridge linking the West Bank with Jordan last year. Morocco worked along with the US to help mediate to ensure that the bridge opened as scheduled, making it possible for people in the West Bank to use the international airport on the Jordanian side of the bridge.²⁰⁵

As a signatory of the Abraham Accords, Morocco successfully negotiated the re-opening of the Allenby Bridge in 2022, which allows Palestinians to cross into Jordan more conveniently and demonstrates the potential for Arab countries to support the Palestinian cause through forging ties with Israel. Other articles discuss Morocco's role in facilitating essential conversations between Israeli officials and their Palestinian counterparts. While some articles appear skeptical about the utility of the Accords bringing substantial change for the Palestinians,²⁰⁶ *Morocco World News* reports the most significant advancement that the Abraham Accords brought the Palestinians compared to the articles published by *The National* and *Gulf Daily News*.

Furthermore, *Morocco World News* published 19 articles reporting escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, unlike *Gulf Daily News* and *The National*, which published far fewer articles directly discussing the conflict. The articles, which are much harsher on Israeli engagement in the conflict, report several instances of escalation, including the 11-day war against Hamas in May 2021, clashes at the Al Aqsa Mosque in April 2022, and the October 7

²⁰⁵ Oussama Aamari, "Allenby Crossing To Open Permanently Following Moroccan Mediation," *Morocco World News*, July 16, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/07/350285/allenby-crossing-to-open-permanently-following-moroccan-mediation>.

²⁰⁶ Shaquile Goff, "Morocco Joins UAE, Bahrain, and Israel for Abraham Accords Anniversary," *Morocco World News*, September 13, 2021, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/09/344414/morocco-joins-uae-bahrain-and-israel-for-abraham-accords-anniversary>.

Hamis invasion and subsequent war beginning in October 2023. Following the escalation of tension in the 11-day war in May 2021, *Morocco World News* published, “King Mohammed VI condemned Israel’s “unilateral” decision making in the most recent conflict between Hamas and Israel in late May 2021. The Moroccan government, as a Sunni Islamic monarchy, also noted the importance of protecting the “Islamic character of the holy city and the sanctity of the Al Aqsa Mosque.”²⁰⁷ However, the article, discussing the conflict’s implications on the Abraham Accords, noted that King Mohammed VI affirmed that Morocco would not weaken its ties with Israel. Thus, while the articles published on the 11-day war reveal Morocco’s critical stance on Israel’s role in the conflict in May 2021, they also note that Morocco remained committed to advancing progress in its diplomatic relationship with Israel as outlined by the Abraham Accords.

Similarly, in April 2022, *Morocco World News* published several articles that directly discuss the escalating conflict at the Al Aqsa Mosque. Following the clash between Palestinian worshipers attempting to stay at the mosque overnight during Ramadan and the Israeli police storming the mosque, *Morocco World News* published an article that reports Morocco’s Foreign Affairs Ministry’s statement on the violence: “In a statement following a raid on Al Aqsa in April, Morocco’s Foreign Affairs Ministry ‘strongly condemns and denounces the Israeli occupation forces’ invasion of Al-Aqsa mosque, the closing of its gates, and assaulting worshippers inside the mosque and in its courtyards.”²⁰⁸ However, the article also discusses Morocco’s commitment to the Abraham Accords despite condoning Israel’s raid of the mosque; it reports one Israeli official describing “the previous freezing of bilateral relations as an

²⁰⁷ Michael Sauer, “Israel’s MFA Visits Morocco to ‘Promote Bilateral Relations,’” *Morocco World News*, July 6, 2021, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/07/343259/israels-mfa-visits-morocco-to-promote-bilateral-relations>.

²⁰⁸ Souad Anouar, “Israeli Official: ‘We Must Show People in the Region That We Can Work Together,’” *Morocco World News*, June 22, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/06/349846/israeli-official-we-must-show-people-in-the-region-that-we-can-work-together>.

‘opportunity lost,’” and asking rhetorically, “‘In what way did it help Palestine?’”²⁰⁹ The article highlighted both countries’ preference for dialogue over severing diplomatic connections to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace. Additionally, *Morocco World News* published eight articles following the outbreak of war in October 2023, each of the articles discussing the Israeli-Hamas war in the context of the Abraham Accords. An article published by *Morocco World News* reports that Morocco’s Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita “expressed the country’s condemnation of Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza. On October 11, Bourita said that tampering with the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people undermines the prospects for peace in the region.”²¹⁰ However, while the articles further report Morocco’s harsh criticism of Israeli retaliatory warfare, they do not explicitly discuss Morocco severing ties with Israel.

In discussing Morocco’s commitment to the Palestinian cause in 43 of *Morocco World News*’s 171 articles on the Abraham Accords (roughly 25 percent), it is evident that finding a just resolution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a priority for Morocco. Morocco did not intend to abandon the Palestinian cause by establishing ties with Israel but instead sought to leverage the Abraham Accords to support Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Most notably, Morocco’s successful facilitation of opening the Allenby Crossing through negotiations with Israel granted Palestinian people the ability to cross into Jordan at all times of the day and access to its international airport. Furthermore, the articles published by *Morocco World News* that discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represent a much harsher stance on Israel compared to the articles published by *The National* and *Gulf Daily News*. While this difference may be attributable to Morocco’s freedom of the press being considerably higher than in the UAE and

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Jihane Rahhou, “Despite Denouncing Gaza Genocide, Morocco Committed to Protecting Jewish Rights,” *Morocco World News*, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/11/359186/despite-denouncing-gaza-genocide-morocco-committed-to-protecting-jewish-rights>.

Bahrain, the articles reveal their unwavering support for the Palestinian cause since signing the Abraham Accords.

Diplomatic Advancements

The Abraham Accords also established bilateral relations between Morocco and Israel, with progress in advancing their relationship highlighted in 82 of the 171 articles published by *Morocco World News* on the Abraham Accords. The 82 articles on advancing diplomatic relations report significant developments indicative of shifting diplomacy for Israel and Morocco due to the Abraham Accords. Similar to the articles published by *The National* and *Gulf Daily News*, they highlight instances of diplomatic advancements, detailing visits and meetings from high-ranking officials, the establishment of embassies and consulates, the signing of agreements to build upon the Abraham Accords, and making significant diplomatic statements that symbolize warming relations. Several of the 82 articles discuss more than one example of diplomatic engagement between Morocco and Israel.

Of the 82 articles on diplomatic advancements, 44 report visits and meetings between high-level officials from Israel and Morocco. The articles reveal the countries' ongoing commitment to expanding their bilateral relations through meetings and visits despite escalating Israeli-Palestinian tension. For instance, in July 2021, an article reported that Israel's General Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Alon Ushpiz, visited Morocco to discuss advancing ties between their countries, despite the 11-day war between Israel and Hamas just months prior.²¹¹ The article also reported that, while in Morocco, Ushpiz extended an invitation to

²¹¹ Michael Sauer, "Alon Ushpiz Invites Morocco's FM Nasser Bourita to Visit Israel," *Morocco World News*, July 7, 2021, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/07/343290/alon-ushpiz-invites-moroccos-fm-nasser-bourita-to-visit-israel>.

Morocco's Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita to be "the first Moroccan foreign minister to visit Israel."²¹² While Bourita's visit to Israel did not occur until the Negev Summit in March 2022, it was revered in another article as a significant milestone marking "the very first Moroccan minister to formally visit Israel."²¹³ Since then, numerous high-level visits have occurred between Israel and Morocco to advance diplomatic relations. An article published in June 2023 reports that Bourita, in discussing the impressive progress made by the Accords, "mentioned that Morocco has welcomed over a dozen high-ranking Israeli officials," among other notable accomplishments.²¹⁴ While the articles do not provide much detail about the visits, other articles report meetings between high-level officials discussing security, technological, and cultural cooperation. Still, other articles also discuss meetings between representatives of Morocco and Israel at events for the broader Abraham Accord signatory countries at N7 Initiative conferences,²¹⁵ an initiative of a US international affairs think tank, and the Negev Summit and Forums. *Morocco World News* reveals advancing diplomatic ties due to the Abraham Accords by discussing high-level visits and meetings between Israeli and Moroccan officials.

In addition to high-level officials convening to expand the Abraham Accords, *Morocco World News* also presents diplomatic advancements between Israel and Morocco through its reports on statements made by their governments. Eighteen articles report significant diplomatic statements that indicate warming bilateral relations between Israel and Morocco. For instance, in March 2022, one article published by *Morocco World News* reports Morocco's condemnation of

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Afnan Abbassi, "Abraham Accords Have Deepened Strategic Alliance Between Morocco, Israel," February 16, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/02/354059/abraham-accords-have-deepened-strategic-alliance-between-morocco-israel>.

²¹⁴ Mariya Sahnouni, "Moroccan Foreign Minister Commends Abraham Accords for Promoting Peace, Prosperity," *Morocco World News*, June 6, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/06/355914/moroccan-foreign-minister-commends-abraham-accords-for-promoting-peace-prosperity>.

²¹⁵ The N7 Initiative is a partnership between the Atlantic Council and the Jeffrey M. Talpins Foundation that aims to enhance and expand cooperation among Abraham Accord countries through engaging with governments and subject-matter experts of each signatory country to provide actionable policy recommendations.

an ISIS terror attack that resulted in the death of two Israelis in Hadera, Israel. The article reports that, at the Negev Summit, Moroccan Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Bourita made a statement on the attack: ““I would like to start by reiterating Morocco’s condemnation of the terrorist attacks in Hadera,’ Bourita said, expressing ‘[Morocco’s] sincere condolences to the victims and our wish of [a speedy] recovery to the injured.’”²¹⁶ Recognizing a tragic loss of Moroccan life, Israel issued a statement of condolences and support following the earthquake that took the lives of over 2,000 Moroccans in September 2023. According to the article, Israel also extended an offer for aid and technological support to assist in addressing the devastating effects of the earthquake.²¹⁷ Most significant, however, was Israel’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty of the Western Sahara on July 17, 2023. The momentous act of diplomacy was reported in several of the articles published by *Morocco World News*; one article states,

Netanyahu’s letter conveyed his country’s formal recognition of Morocco’s sovereignty over the Western Sahara. The Israeli Prime Minister emphasized that this recognition would be reflected in all relevant governmental actions and documents. In addition, the Israeli government underscored its intent to convey the decision to international bodies and organizations, including the United Nations and regional entities.²¹⁸

Israel’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara land, a long-disputed territory between Morocco and the Polisario Front, is significant as it strengthens Israeli-Moroccan relations by demonstrating a mutual commitment to respecting and supporting each other’s territorial claims and policy interests. Although the US officially acknowledged Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara as part of Morocco’s agreement to join the Abraham Accords, Israel’s initial reluctance to do the same had been a sticking point, hindering further diplomatic

²¹⁶ Safaa Kasraoui, “Negev Summit: Morocco Condemns ISIS Terror Attack in Israel,” *Morocco World News*, March 28, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/03/347940/negev-summit-morocco-condemns-isis-terror-attack-in-israel>.

²¹⁷ Safaa Kasraoui, “Earthquake: Israel Reaffirms Commitment to Support Morocco,” *Morocco World News*, September 10, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/09/357588/earthquake-israel-reaffirms-commitment-to-support-morocco>.

²¹⁸ Jihane Rahhou, “US Senator: Israel’s Recognition of Morocco’s Sovereignty Is ‘Great News,’” *Morocco World News*, August 13, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/08/357045/us-senator-israels-recognition-of-moroccos-sovereignty-is-great-news>.

progress between the two nations. Therefore, Israel's subsequent formal recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara was a crucial development, enabling both countries to deepen their cooperation and further advance the objectives of the Abraham Accords. An article published by *Morocco World News* reports that "such a move [recognizing Western Sahara] by Israel could lead to an upgrade of bilateral ties, with the countries' respective missions, currently designated as liaison offices, becoming economic embassies, and a free-trade pact possible down the line."²¹⁹ By offering statements of support, which are reported by *Morocco World News*, Morocco and Israel demonstrate their warming diplomatic relations as a result of the Abraham Accords.

Additionally, 18 articles on the Abraham Accords discuss advancements in diplomatic relations formalized by new agreements signed by Morocco and Israel to expand and deepen cooperation in various sectors. For example, in July 2021, less than a year after Morocco forged ties with Israel, the two countries signed an agreement promoting bilateral cooperation in cybersecurity that "allows Morocco and Israel to participate in 'operational cooperation, research and development, and the sharing of information and knowledge.'"²²⁰ Expanding on their initial pledge in their Abraham Accord treaty to cooperate in technology, innovation, and regional security, Morocco and Israel's subsequent agreement to collaborate on cybersecurity initiatives represents a significant diplomatic progression. Additionally, *Morocco World News* articles celebrate Morocco becoming the first Arab country to sign a defense agreement with Israel in November 2021. Discussing Israeli Defense Minister General Benny Gantz's visit to Morocco, where he cemented the Memorandum of Understanding, one article reports Gantz stating, "This

²¹⁹ Jihane Rahhou, "Israeli Defense Giant Elbit Systems Plans to Establish Two Sites in Morocco," *Morocco World News*, January 26, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/06/355876/israeli-defense-giant-elbit-systems-plans-to-establish-two-sites-in-morocco>.

²²⁰ Mariya Sahnouni, "Morocco to Participate in Cybertech Global 2023 Event in Tel Aviv," *Morocco World News*, January 26, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/01/353725/morocco-to-participate-in-cybertech-global-2023-event-in-tel-aviv>.

is a highly significant event that will allow us to enter into joint projects and allow Israeli [defense] exports to here. I think the ties between Morocco and Israel need to continue to get closer, to continue to develop and expand, and I am glad that we have a part to play in that,” said Gantz.²²¹ In addition to security agreements, several articles report Morocco and Israel signing agreements in other sectors, including sports and culture. In April 2022, the article reported,

Meeting on the margins of Expo 2020 Dubai, representatives from Morocco, Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates have signed the “Culture and Sports for Peace” agreement. The agreement was signed by Morocco’s Minister of Youth, Culture, and Communication, Mohammed Mehdi Bensaid; the UAE Minister of Culture and Youth, Noura Al-Kaabi; the Bahraini Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Ayman bin Tawfiq Al-Moayyed; and the Israeli Minister of Culture and Sports, Healy Trooper.²²²

This agreement, signed by all the signatory countries, excluding Sudan, fosters people-to-people connections between the countries by promoting friendly sports competitions and cultural initiatives. By continuing to sign agreements with Israel in a variety of sectors in the years following their initial signing of the Abraham, Morocco demonstrates its commitment to cementing and advancing its bilateral ties with Israel.

Morocco and Israel have also deepened their diplomatic ties by establishing and utilizing liaison offices, consulates, and embassies, as reported by 15 *Morocco World News* articles. Shortly after signing the Accords, Morocco and Israel established liaison offices in each other’s countries. While Morocco has yet to upgrade its liaison office to an embassy, the article indicates a potential Moroccan discussion to do so. Subsequent articles also report Morocco’s intention to open an embassy in Israel and refer to Abderrahim Beyyoudh as the appointed Ambassador of

²²¹ Souad Anouar, “Moroccan, Israeli Business Organizations Commit To Bilateral Cooperation,” *Morocco World News*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/03/347691/moroccan-israeli-business-organizations-commit-to-bilateral-cooperation>.

²²² Aya Benazizi, “Morocco, Israel, Bahrain, UAE Sign ‘Culture and Sports for Peace’ Agreement,” *Morocco World News*, April 4, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/04/348133/morocco-israel-bahrain-uae-sign-the-culture-and-sports-for-peace-agreement-in-dubai>.

Morocco to Israel.²²³ Israel, however, has taken more concrete steps in opening an embassy in Morocco. In September 2021, *Morocco World News* published an article that reports Eyal David assuming the new role as deputy chief of the Israeli mission in Rabat.²²⁴ Furthermore, in August 2022, another article reports that Israel “announced plans to invest \$4 million to construct an embassy in Morocco’s capital, Rabat.”²²⁵ Along with beginning to construct the Israeli embassy in Rabat, following Israel’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty of the Western Sahara, Israel announced its intention to establish an Israeli consulate in Dakhla, a city in the Western Sahara.²²⁶ The bold move to establish a consulate there demonstrates Israel’s firm commitment to supporting Morocco’s land claims. While respective embassies are still underway, the articles reveal that the ambassadors have already begun working to develop the Abraham Accords further. For instance, according to one article published in January 2022, Moroccan Ambassador to Israel, Abderrahim Beyyoudh, joined the other signatory countries’ ambassadors in forming an “Ambassadorial Working Group” focused on expanding the Abraham Accords, led by then US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides.²²⁷ Although Morocco and Israel have not officially inaugurated embassies in each other’s nations yet, they expressed intent to open them, and *Morocco World News* highlights the initial steps taken as indicative of diplomatic progress.

²²³ Souad Anouar, “US Ambassador to Israel Inaugurates Abraham Accords Working Group,” *Morocco World News*, January 28, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/01/346777/us-ambassador-to-israel-inaugurates-abraham-accords-working-group>.

²²⁴ Safaa Kasraoui, “Eyal David Joins Israeli Mission in Rabat as Deputy Chief,” *Morocco World News*, September 14, 2021, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/09/344433/eyal-david-joins-israeli-mission-in-rabat-as-deputy-chief>.

²²⁵ Jihane Rahhou, “Moroccan, Israeli Universities Launch First Student Exchange Program,” *Morocco World News*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/08/351069/moroccan-israeli-universities-launch-first-student-exchange-program>.

²²⁶ Jihane Rahhou, “US Senator: Israel’s Recognition of Morocco’s Sovereignty Is ‘Great News,’” *Morocco World News*, August 13, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/08/357045/us-senator-israels-recognition-of-moroccos-sovereignty-is-great-news>.

²²⁷ Souad Anouar, “US Ambassador to Israel Inaugurates Abraham Accords Working Group,” *Morocco World News*, January 28, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/01/346777/us-ambassador-to-israel-inaugurates-abraham-accords-working-group>.

The 82 articles on diplomatic advancements (roughly 48 percent) reveal Morocco's intention to expand diplomatic ties with Israel despite the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The articles present the two countries making significant advancements by holding high-level meetings, signing agreements, issuing statements, and initiating opening embassies since signing the Abraham Accords. However, according to some articles published by *Morocco World News*, the outbreak of war following the October 7 attack poses a threat to the Israeli-Moroccan relationship. Already demonstrating worsening ties, Morocco's statement on the October terror attack was weak in its support of Israel and condemnation of Hamas; as one article reports,

the Moroccan Foreign Affairs Ministry's statements in the wake of the 7 October attack did not live up to the expectations of both Israel and the US administration. Given their long-standing and well-documented opposition to Israel's decades-long occupation and oppression of Palestinians, Moroccan authorities did not use any language that could have been interpreted as suggesting that Morocco considers Hamas as a terrorist organization. Instead of single-handedly condemning the 7 October attack as terrorist, the official statement of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the violence from all sides and called for de-escalation and calm.²²⁸

Furthermore, the article reports Morocco's accusation and condemnation of Israel's attack on al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza, although Israeli and American intelligence revealed evidence that the explosion was the result of a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) rocket.²²⁹ Other articles speculate about the possibility of Morocco severing ties with Israel due to the ongoing conflict, yet they do not cite any official Moroccan statements confirming such intentions. However, several Moroccan news agencies, including *Morocco World News*,²³⁰ have reported that the Moroccan government will consider a petition to cut ties with Israel and close its liaison office to comply with Morocco's 2011 Constitution, stating that governmental committees will consider

²²⁸ Samir Bennis, "Israel's War on Palestinians : Moment of Reckoning for US-Moroccan Relations," *Morocco World News*, December 6, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/12/359373/israels-war-on-palestinians-moment-of-reckoning-for-us-moroccan-relations>.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Morocco World News* published its article on January 11, 2024, which is outside of the date range for this thesis and is therefore not included in the article count.

policy changes if a petition is presented to them with 5,000 signatures.²³¹ To date, the Moroccan government has not reached a decision. Thus, while diplomatic advancements withstood escalations of Israeli-Palestinian tension previously, the Israel-Hamas war may have more severe implications.

Economy and Trade

In addition to discussing diplomatic advancements, 64 articles published by *Morocco World News* highlight economic initiatives undertaken by Israel and Morocco stemming from the Abraham Accords. Since establishing formal bilateral ties, the two countries have initiated and advanced their trade relations and promoted private-sector economic collaboration, among other financial initiatives. *Morocco World News* highlights significant developments in trade and private-sector economic cooperation under the Abraham Accords, with some of the 64 articles detailing both types of economic collaboration and other forms of engagement.

Representing trade as a significant component of establishing bilateral ties, 46 articles published by *Morocco World News* report advancements in Moroccan-Israeli trade relations. The articles primarily report progress in trade quantity in the years following Morocco's signing onto the Abraham Accords. For instance, an article published by *Morocco World News* reports that trade "almost doubled," growing from \$70 million in 2020 to \$130 million in 2021.²³² Building on this momentum, a later article reports: "in 2022, the volume of trade between Israel and Morocco stood at \$180 million, representing an increase of 160% compared to 2020. Israeli

²³¹ Safaa Kasraoui, "Morocco To Examine Petition Seeking End of Ties with Israel," *Morocco World News*, January 10, 2024, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2024/01/360072/morocco-to-examine-petition-seeking-end-of-ties-with-israel>.

²³² Jihane Rahhou, "Moroccan, Israeli Universities Launch First Student Exchange Program," *Morocco World News*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/351069/moroccan-israeli-universities-launch-first-student-exchange-program>.

exports to Morocco reached \$40 million in 2022, while Israel's imports from Morocco amounted to \$140 million in the same year."²³³ Furthermore, *Morocco World News* reports that trade increased "626.32% in January 2023 compared to the same period" in 2022, citing Abraham Accords Peace Institute's calculation that "trade between the two countries reached \$13.8 million in January 2023."²³⁴ While the articles highlight a notable increase in trade relations between the two countries, several articles also reiterate a goal announced by Israel Minister of Economy Orna Barbivai during her visit to Rabat in February 2022 to expand trade relations between the two countries to reach at least \$500 million per year.²³⁵ Other articles discuss agreements between publicly owned companies to advance bilateral trade in various sectors. For example, in February 2022, Morocco and Israel "concluded a \$500 million deal (MAD 5 billion) to provide the kingdom with the Barak MX air and missile defense system. Morocco also purchased the Skylock Dome anti-drone system from Israel in 2021," as reported by *Morocco World News*.²³⁶ Thus, by reporting growing trade statistics, repeatedly stating their intention to expand bilateral trade, and reporting trade agreements between public companies, the 46 articles published by *Morocco World News* support trade as a priority for Morocco in signing the Abraham Accords.

In addition to advancing trade relations, 24 articles report on the two countries' promotion of private-sector cooperation to enhance economic ties. *Morocco World News* reports privately-owned Moroccan and Israeli companies that have benefited from the new business opportunities presented by the Abraham Accords. The articles describe business collaboration in

²³³ Safaa Kasraoui, "Morocco-Israel Trade Reaches Nearly \$29 Million as of April," *Morocco World News*, June 4, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/06/355776/morocco-israel-trade-reaches-nearly-29-million-as-of-april>.

²³⁴ Mariya Sahnouni, "Morocco-Israel Trade Reaches \$13.8 Million in January 2023," *Morocco World News*, May 9, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/05/355359/morocco-israel-trade-reaches-13-8-million-in-january-2023>.

²³⁵ Safaa Kasraoui, "Morocco Facilitates Dialogue on Permanent Opening of Jordan-Israel Allenby Crossing," *Morocco World News*, July 15, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/07/350267/morocco-facilitates-dialogue-on-permanent-opening-of-jordan-israel-allenby-crossing>.

²³⁶ Oussama Aamari, "Morocco to Potentially Benefit from Increased US Military Cooperation," *Morocco World News*, August 11, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/350735/morocco-to-potentially-benefit-from-increased-us-military-cooperation>.

various sectors, including the pharmaceutical industry. In April 2022, *Morocco World News* published the article “Moroccan Company Eyes Deals with Israeli Pharmaceutical Firms,” which describes the collaboration between Cooper Pharma, a Moroccan company, and Israeli counterparts:

Cooper Pharma, through its subsidiary Cooper Biosciences, operates a vaccine and biotech business and is looking to further collaborate with Israeli companies to co-develop innovative Biotech products,” the CEO told the Israeli media... Copper Pharma already sealed a distribution deal back in 2021 with Teva Pharmaceutical, an Israeli pharmaceutical giant. The Moroccan company added it is in the process of deepening collaboration with the Israeli pharmaceutical industry.²³⁷

In addition to the articles that describe collaboration between specific companies, other articles describe conferences held by various organizations to bring together privately owned companies from Abraham Accord countries to inspire economic cooperation. For instance, *Morocco World News* highlights Marrakesh as the location for an annual conference hosted by the Israeli newspaper *The Jerusalem Post*, the Emirati *Khaleej Times*, and the Moroccan *GMH Media Group* to bring together businesses from across the region “with an emphasis on stimulating regional business cooperation” that took place in November 2022.²³⁸ The conferences reported by *Morocco World News* reveal that companies are deeply interested in promoting Moroccan-Israeli economic initiatives. Finally, *Morocco World News* articles also report efforts made by the Moroccan and Israeli governments to encourage private-sector cooperation. While the agreement has not been enacted, several articles report Israel’s interest in issuing visas to Moroccans to offset its labor shortage. While emphasizing that neither party had signed the agreement, one article acknowledges that “Morocco and Israel have agreed to work on an

²³⁷ Jihane Rahhou, “Moroccan Company Eyes Deals with Israeli Pharmaceutical Firms,” *Morocco World News*, April 6, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/04/348166/moroccan-company-eyes-deals-with-israeli-pharmaceutical-firms>.

²³⁸ Jihane Rahhou, “Marrakech to Host Israel, UAE Media-Backed Global Business Forum,” June 21, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/06/349827/marrakech-to-host-israel-uae-media-backed-global-business-forum>.

agreement that will allow Moroccans to work in Israel.”²³⁹ While the countries have yet to finalize the deal, the discussion of issuing visas indicates Israeli and Moroccan desire to include Moroccan citizens in the Israeli workforce. The articles further support economic initiatives as a critical component of the Abraham Accords by reporting several instances of private-sector cooperation.

Other articles published by *Morocco World News* discuss Moroccan and Israeli commitment to promoting economic growth through the Abraham Accords more generally. The impressive trade rates and private-sector collaboration to mutually advance the Israeli and Moroccan, as discussed by 64 *Morocco World News* articles (roughly 37 percent), demonstrate another priority in signing the Abraham Accords, aside from finding a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Education and Coexistence

Additionally, 42 of the 171 articles published by *Morocco World News* on the Abraham Accords highlight advancements made by Israel and Morocco to promote religious toleration, cultural initiatives, and education exchange and collaboration. Before signing the Abraham Accords, Morocco was home to a substantial Jewish population; according to a study published by Berman Jewish DataBank, Morocco had a core Jewish population of 2,100 in 2019.²⁴⁰ While still small, the Jewish community’s prominence in the kingdom is evident as Morocco’s 2011

²³⁹ Safaa Kasraoui, “Israel Liaison Office Denies Links to ‘Mediation Office’ Offering Work Visas for Moroccans,” *Morocco World News*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/08/350934/israel-liaison-office-denies-links-to-mediation-office-offering-work-visas-for-moroccans>.

²⁴⁰ Sergio DellaPergola. “World Jewish Population, 2019,” in Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. (Editors) *The American Jewish Year Book*, 2019, Volume 119 (2019). Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 263-353.

constitution proclaims Hebrew as a national language.²⁴¹ Several articles published by *Morocco World News* highlight its preexisting Jewish population, noting that the country already promoted religious toleration and Jewish culture. One article describing Jewish integration in Moroccan society before the Abraham Accords states,

Moroccan Jews are even represented in the inner circle of King Mohammed VI, the minister added, noting that 'one of the Moroccan monarch's most prominent advisors is of Jewish descent. He was referring to Andre Azoulay, a senior adviser to King Mohammed VI of Morocco who previously also advised Late King Hassan II. 'Moroccans have studied and lived in Morocco alongside Jews, making the Kingdom a model in this regard and ready to provide lessons on combating racial discrimination long before the convention was established,' [Moroccan Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi] added.²⁴²

However, Morocco has enhanced its dedication to promoting religious tolerance and coexistence since establishing formal relations with Israel. Indicative of these advancements, *Morocco World News* emphasizes advancements in religious tolerance, Moroccan-Israeli cultural projects, and educational collaboration in 42 articles, showcasing these initiatives as critical developments in Morocco's bilateral ties with Israel.

Of the articles discussing education and coexistence, 15 articles published by *Morocco World News* emphasize advancing religious toleration in the kingdom following the signing of the Abraham Accords. Although its Constitution declares Morocco a Muslim kingdom, it already embraced some level of religious tolerance before signing the Abraham Accords, which its agreement with Israel built upon. An article published by *Morocco World News* reports Morocco's Ambassador to the United States, Lalla Joumala Alaoui, claiming that the culmination of the Abraham Accords was unsurprising since, as the article states,

²⁴¹ Jihane Rahhou, "Moroccan Artist Dedicates First NFT Artwork to Women," *Morocco World News*, March 18, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347748/moroccan-artist-dedicates-first-nft-artwork-to-women>.

²⁴² Rahhou, Jihane. "Despite Denouncing Gaza Genocide, Morocco Committed to Protecting Jewish Rights." *Morocco World News*. Accessed March 11, 2024. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/11/359186/despite-denouncing-gaza-genocide-morocco-committed-to-protecting-jewish-rights>.

Muslims and Jews have lived side-by-side for centuries in Morocco, which is home to a significant Jewish presence dating back 2,000 years. ‘As the only Arab country to have a stable Jewish population, with a fully functioning Jewish judicial system and synagogues throughout the country, I would say there has been little adjustment needed,’ the Moroccan diplomat continued.²⁴³

As a result, unlike the UAE and Bahrain, Morocco’s advancements in promoting religious toleration for the Jewish community are not novel and require less foundational work. However, the Abraham Accords still inspired initiatives to combat antisemitism and encourage learning of Jewish tradition within Morocco. Several articles highlight Morocco’s support of initiatives to preserve Jewish tradition in the kingdom after signing the Accords; one article published in March 2022 states, “In recent months Morocco has done much to preserve and promote its Jewish heritage by encouraging scholarship focusing on Jewish heritage, as well as directly funding the restoration of several Jewish cemeteries, and Jewish historical sites across the North African country.”²⁴⁴ More specifically, another article published in June 2023 notes that “King Mohammed VI has authorized the restoration of 15 synagogues, 168 Jewish cemeteries, and other holy sites.”²⁴⁵ So, unlike the UAE and Bahrain, which celebrated the opening of their first synagogue, the Abraham Accords prompted Morocco to restore the kingdom’s existing Jewish sites. Furthermore, the articles report initiatives inspired by the Abraham Accords to combat antisemitism and antizionism. For example, Mimouna Association, a Moroccan NGO dedicated to “preserv[ing] and promot[ing] the Moroccan Jewish heritage and rais[ing] awareness about the role of Jews throughout the history of Morocco,” partnered with the US Department of State to

²⁴³ “Morocco’s Ambassador to US Urges Solidarity Against Regional Challenges,” Morocco World News, April 29, 2021, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/04/341000/moroccos-ambassador-to-us-urges-solidarity-against-regional-challenges>.

²⁴⁴ Jihane Rahhou, “Moroccan Artist Dedicates First NFT Artwork to Women,” Morocco World News, March 18, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/03/347748/moroccan-artist-dedicates-first-nft-artwork-to-women>.

²⁴⁵ Mariya Sahnouni, “Moroccan Foreign Minister Commends Abraham Accords for Promoting Peace, Prosperity,” Morocco World News, June 6, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/06/355914/moroccan-foreign-minister-commends-abraham-accords-for-promoting-peace-prosperity>.

collaborate on initiatives combatting antisemitism and antizionism in Morocco.²⁴⁶ One of the NGO's achievements, in partnership with The American Sephardi Federation, was its creation of the "Rebuilding Our Homes" program that, as one article reports,

[faces] the challenge of how to deal with young people's misperceptions of Mellahs and former Moroccan Jewish inhabitants. However, educational and cultural workshops are changing the underlying perceptions. The program includes activities such as digital mapping, tour guide training, Hebrew and English language instruction, artisanal mentorship, culinary workshops, and Mimouna celebrations.²⁴⁷

While a Jewish community already existed in Morocco, the Abraham Accords prompted organizations in the kingdom to increase their efforts in combatting antisemitism and antizionism. Therefore, the Abraham Accords have acted as a catalyst, reinforcing Morocco's longstanding tradition of religious coexistence and pushing for even greater engagement and understanding between the Jewish and Muslim communities within the kingdom. These efforts, reported in 15 articles published by *Morocco World News* on the Abraham Accords, demonstrate Morocco's reinforced dedication to supporting its Jewish community due to the Abraham Accords.

Twenty-four articles published by *Morocco World News* also discuss Israeli and Moroccan interest in advancing cultural and people-to-people initiatives through the Abraham Accords. One way in which the articles present Moroccans and Israelis embracing each other's culture is by celebrating each other's holidays. An article published by *Morocco World News* reports Israeli festivities for Morocco's 22nd Throne Day, commemorating King Mohammed VI's acquisition of the throne; the article reports, "Israel has begun festivities early by

²⁴⁶ Yahia Hatim, "Moroccan NGO to Collaborate With US Against Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism," *Morocco World News*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/01/332296/moroccan-ngo-to-collaborate-with-us-against-antisemitism-anti-zionism>.

²⁴⁷ Mariya Sahnouni, "'Rebuilding Our Homes': A Project Encouraging Moroccan Youth to Preserve Jewish Heritage," *Morocco World News*, October 18, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/10/351890/rebuilding-our-homes-a-project-encouraging-moroccan-youth-to-preserve-jewish-heritage>.

celebrating in several neighborhoods around the country. In the Israeli neighborhoods of Yakneam, Acre, Netanya, Dimona, and many others, the Moroccan flag flew alongside Israeli flags and community groups held gatherings in public spaces to commemorate the King's Throne Day."²⁴⁸ By embracing and participating in each other's significant national celebrations, as exemplified by Israel's celebration of Moroccan Throne Day, Israelis and Moroccans are fostering mutual respect and appreciation for one another's heritage and traditions, thereby deepening the intercultural bonds between the two countries.

In addition to recognizing national holidays, Morocco and Israel have advanced cultural initiatives through sports. Several articles published by *Morocco World News* report the agreement between Bushra Hajiji, the head of the Moroccan Volleyball Association, and Asher Kasso, the chairman of the Israeli Volleyball Association, at the Moroccan Ministry of Culture and Sports. Kasso, commenting on the agreement that sets the groundwork to establish joint volleyball training camps for young boys and girls, stated, "Today we took action to promote volleyball, for peace and cooperation between nations and cultures. There is no better game than volleyball, which is also very good for promoting connections between people and cultures and mutual respect."²⁴⁹ Following this sentiment, *Morocco World News* also reports basketball to promote people-to-people relationships, with the first Israeli player on an Arab team joining Morocco's professional basketball team.²⁵⁰ Other articles discuss cultural initiatives to promote coexistence through art, music, education, female empowerment initiatives, and more. The 24

²⁴⁸ Sauer, Michael. "Israel Kicks Off Morocco's Throne Day with Neighborhood Celebrations." *Morocco World News*. July 29, 2021. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/07/343656/israel-kicks-off-moroccos-throne-day-with-neighborhood-celebrations>.

²⁴⁹ Lamine Rahhali, "Morocco, Israel Sign Volleyball Cooperation Agreement," *Morocco World News*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/350938/morocco-israel-sign-volleyball-cooperation-agreement>.

²⁵⁰ Afnan Abbassi, "Abraham Accords Have Deepened Strategic Alliance Between Morocco, Israel," *Morocco World News*, February 16, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/02/354059/abraham-accords-have-deepened-strategic-alliance-between-morocco-israel>.

articles discussing Moroccan and Israeli initiatives to incorporate elements of each other's culture in their countries demonstrate their desire to promote coexistence and people-to-people relations through the Abraham Accords.

Additionally, *Morocco World News* discusses education collaboration and exchange and indicates progress in the Abraham Accords in 16 articles. Notably, according to the Anti-Defamation League, Morocco had previously integrated Holocaust education into their school curriculum in 2018.²⁵¹ However, the articles published by *Morocco World News* also describe agreements between academic institutions and government officials that promote knowledge sharing and exchange. For instance, one article published in April 2022 vaguely reports an agreement signed by The Israel Institute of Technology Technion and Morocco's Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), cementing an educational partnership between the two institutions.²⁵² However, Technion's President, Uri Sivan, commented on the agreement, stating, "the value of the collaboration between the two institutions goes beyond the academic sphere and is also an attempt to educate and prepare the youth of the region for the future."²⁵³ UM6P's president, Hicham El Habti, added, "what is more significant is what lies beneath it - the mutual desire for cooperation' that will lead to student exchanges between the two institutions."²⁵⁴ Additionally, Morocco's UM6P signed an agreement with Israel's Ben-Gurion University, setting up an academic exchange program between the two countries. An article published in August 2022 reports, "Ben-Gurion University is hosting four Moroccan university students for a summer semester. The Moroccan students are enrolled in the university's data science and health

²⁵¹ Carole Nuriel and Aykan Erdemir, "Moroccan Textbooks Teach Appreciation of Jewish Life and Tolerance in the Kingdom | ADL," Anti-Defamation League, September 9, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/moroccan-textbooks-teach-appreciation-jewish-life-and-tolerance-kingdom>.

²⁵² Sara Zouiten, "Morocco's UM6P Partners with Israel Technology Institute," *Morocco World News*, April 27, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/04/348637/moroccos-um6p-partners-with-israel-technology-institute>.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

system programs.”²⁵⁵ While the four students studied in Israel, there are no published reports on the continuation of this program. However, in addition to agreements signed by the universities, the Israeli and Moroccan governments have signed agreements to support educational exchange; one article published in June 2022 discusses a deal signed by Morocco’s Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation and Israel’s Ministry of Innovation in May “to strengthen cooperation in the field, particularly in artificial intelligence, renewable energies, and smart cities.”²⁵⁶ Promoting knowledge sharing and educational exchange, these initiatives reported by *Morocco World News* represent Israeli and Moroccan commitment to building bridges between their academic communities through the Abraham Accords. By engaging in joint research endeavors and academic programs, the institutions enhance their educational offerings and promote mutual understanding and innovation. Educational initiatives, discussed in 16 *Morocco World News* articles, contribute to the Accords’ goal of fostering coexistence and tolerance between Israel and Morocco.

While the articles published by *Morocco World News* on education and coexistence highlight notable advancements since signing the Abraham Accords, they also present areas for further advancement or weaknesses in their cultural initiatives. For instance, an article published in August 2022 reports, “In its latest survey, the Arab Barometer, a nonpartisan research network, reported that 31% of Moroccans favor normalization with Israel, dropping 10% since 2021.”²⁵⁷ The declining support for the Abraham Accords within Morocco reveals that the cultural initiatives undertaken by Israel and Morocco have not sufficiently swayed Moroccan

²⁵⁵ Jihane Rahhou, “Moroccan, Israeli Universities Launch First Student Exchange Program,” *Morocco World News*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/351069/moroccan-israeli-universities-launch-first-student-exchange-program>.

²⁵⁶ Oussama Aamari, “Israeli Interior Minister to Visit Morocco on Monday,” *Morocco World News*, June 19, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/06/349795/israeli-interior-minister-to-visit-morocco-on-monday>.

²⁵⁷ Aya Benazizi, “Arab Barometer: Moroccans Less Positive About Israel Normalization,” *Morocco World News*, August 12, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/350760/arab-barometer-moroccans-less-positive-about-israel-normalization>.

perception of the Accords. While the decline may represent a failure in cultural initiatives, it may also be a result of escalating Israeli-Palestinian tension, causing Moroccans to oppose Israeli normalization in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, as the 42 *Morocco World News* articles reported (roughly 25 percent), the Abraham Accords facilitated Israeli and Moroccan progress in promoting religious toleration, supporting cultural initiatives, and expanding educational cooperation.

Regional Security

Morocco World News also reports initiatives that promote regional and national security as a sign of progress in the Abraham Accords in 33 articles. Similar to *Gulf Daily News*, some articles discuss enhancing regional security cooperation to counter Iranian threats. However, unlike the UAE and Bahrain, Morocco signed the Abraham Accords amidst an ongoing territorial dispute in the Western Sahara and tension with its neighboring country, Algeria. As a result, *Morocco World News* also portrays the newly established ties with Israel as an asset for Morocco in building up its national defense and military capabilities. Thus, the articles published by *Morocco World News* report broader regional security benefits of the Abraham Accords and highlight how Morocco's engagement with Israel, particularly in the context of its territorial and regional challenges, is strategic for its national defense and military capabilities.

Fifteen articles published by *Morocco World News* detail the establishment of security cooperation between Israel and Morocco as a critical aspect of the Abraham Accords. While most of these articles vaguely identify security cooperation as an area of interest in fulfilling the Abraham Accord agreement, some articles report concrete initiatives Morocco and Israel have implemented to bolster their security partnership. In November 2021, Morocco became the first

Arab country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Israel in defense during Israeli Defense Minister General Benny Gantz's visit to Morocco. Reflecting on the agreement, *Morocco World News* reports, ““This is a highly significant event that will allow us to enter into joint projects and allow Israeli [defense] exports to here. I think the ties between Morocco and Israel need to continue to get closer, to continue to develop and expand, and I am glad that we have a part to play in that,’ said Gantz.”²⁵⁸ The groundbreaking agreement laid the foundation for Morocco and Israel's growing security cooperation, resulting in continued visits between high-level officials to discuss areas of collaboration.

Several articles report Israeli and Moroccan cooperation in advancing cybersecurity alongside other Abraham Accord countries. An article published in January 2023 reports Moroccan participation in the Tel Aviv Cybertech global summit as an essential event for Morocco, specifically since a 2021 Kaspersky report revealed Morocco among the five countries that are “most affected by cyber-attacks through mobile malware.”²⁵⁹ Along with Moroccan attendance at the event, the article reports that the Under Secretary for Policy Department at the US Homeland Security announced, “Later today, I will take the stage with my counterparts from Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. We are expanding the Abraham Accords to cybersecurity.”²⁶⁰ Other articles discuss Moroccan participation in additional Israeli cybersecurity conferences. Further, some articles identify potential areas of security cooperation between the two countries. Reflecting on a report by a US think tank, Abraham Accords Peace Institute, an article published by *Morocco World News* in February 2023 states, “On the security

²⁵⁸ Souad Anouar, “Moroccan, Israeli Business Organizations Commit To Bilateral Cooperation,” *Morocco World News*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347691/moroccan-israeli-business-organizations-commit-to-bilateral-cooperation>.

²⁵⁹ Safaa Kasraoui, “Cybertech Global 2023: Abraham Accords Countries Expand Cooperation to Cybersecurity,” *Morocco World News*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/01/353789/cybertech-global-2023-abraham-accords-countries-expand-cooperation-to-cybersecurity>.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

front, the Accords' aim is to have Morocco agree to take part in a joint counter-terrorism establishment with the Israeli military to aid in 'countering crime and terrorism, information sharing, and extradition of Israeli criminals.'"²⁶¹ The articles identify specific areas of expanding security cooperation and present vast opportunities in the realm of regional security that can provide tangible benefits to Israel and Morocco. The articles detail the progression of Morocco-Israel security cooperation and highlight future opportunities, indicating interest in strengthening their partnership under the Abraham Accords framework.

Additionally, 14 articles present cooperation with Israel as an asset to enhancing Morocco's military and defense capabilities. With its escalating tension with its geographic neighbor, Algeria, and fighting with the Polisario Front over land claims in the Western Sahara, *Morocco World News* presents Morocco's signing of the Abraham Accords as a strategic move for national security. As one article reveals, "Morocco is committed to increasing military cooperation with countries with some of the strongest armies in the world, including the United States and Israel."²⁶² Thus, leveraging the Abraham Accords to equip Morocco with Israeli military technology aligns with its existing strategy. In November 2021, almost one year following Morocco's signing of the Abraham Accords, *Morocco World News* reported that the kingdom had already expressed its interest in purchasing Israel's Iron Dome defense system to assist with its own land disputes:

Morocco has reportedly expressed its willingness to purchase Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system to reinforce its defense wall in Western Sahara as well as other sensitive military zones, according to reports by both Moroccan and Israeli sources... The news of

²⁶¹ Afnan Abbassi, "Abraham Accords Have Deepened Strategic Alliance Between Morocco, Israel," *Morocco World News*, February 16, 2023, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/02/354059/abraham-accords-have-deepened-strategic-alliance-between-morocco-israel>.

²⁶² Zouiten, Sara. "Morocco Receives 92 Military Trucks from India's Tata Advanced Systems." *Morocco World News*, January 4, 2023. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/01/353376/morocco-receives-92-military-trucks-from-indias-tata-advanced-systems>.

Morocco's interest in the Israeli defense system comes amid fears of escalations between Rabat and Algiers-backed Polisario separatists in Western Sahara.²⁶³

Along with acquiring Israeli technology, other articles also report about Moroccan delegations visiting Israeli military sites and more general initiatives to increase Moroccan military capabilities with Israeli support. Collaboration with Israel not only aligns with Morocco's efforts to enhance its military strength but also plays a critical role in addressing its regional security challenges, especially given its tensions with Algeria and the Western Sahara conflict. Morocco strategically leverages Israel's impressive military capabilities by integrating Israeli defense technology and expertise for its national defense enhancement.

Seven articles published by *Morocco World News* also discuss the Abraham Accords as a coalition to counter Iran. However, unlike the Emirati and Bahraini news sources, several articles published by *Morocco World News* portray countering Iran as an American, not Moroccan, interest. In discussing the implications of Morocco's decision to forge ties with Israel, one article notes that it has caused Algeria to align closer to Iran, noting that it is of concern because "the US considers Iran among the major threats within the MENA region."²⁶⁴ Supporting this narrative, *Morocco World News* highlighted a visit by US senators proposing an "integrated air defense network" between the Abraham Accord countries to "counter potential Iranian missile and airplane attacks."²⁶⁵ Another article, published amid the ongoing 2023 Israel-Hamas war, more harshly states that the Abraham Accords "[allow] American power to disengage and encourage Arab states to counter Iranian power. This is what we could call American

²⁶³ Oumaima Latrech, "Morocco Considers Purchasing Israel's Iron Dome," *Morocco World News*, November 7, 2021, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/11/345407/morocco-considers-purchasing-israels-iron-dome>.

²⁶⁴ Shaquile Goff, "Why Algeria Has Yet to Hold a Diplomatic Meeting with the US," *Morocco World News*, September 29, 2021, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/09/344672/why-algeria-has-yet-to-hold-a-diplomatic-meeting-with-the-us>.

²⁶⁵ Oussama Aamari, "Morocco to Potentially Benefit from Increased US Military Cooperation," *Morocco World News*, August 11, 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/08/350735/morocco-to-potentially-benefit-from-increased-us-military-cooperation>.

subcontracting of the Iranian problem.”²⁶⁶ While many articles present Iran as an issue primarily for the United States, some articles recognize the Gulf’s interest in countering Iranian threats and report them discussing such security initiatives at the Negev Summit and forums with Morocco and Israel. While the seven articles published by *Morocco World News* mostly critically present countering Iran within the context of the Abraham Accords as primarily driven by US interests, Morocco’s involvement in these discussions and related security initiatives underscores its active role in contributing to collective efforts to safeguard regional security.

In conclusion, the 33 articles published by *Morocco World News* present regional security (roughly 19 percent), particularly regarding security cooperation and national defense, at the forefront of Moroccan priorities in advancing the Abraham Accords. However, following the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack in Israel, *Morocco World News*’ perception of Israeli military prestige significantly weakened; as one article states, “More to the point, how can a country that failed miserably to anticipate or respond to the October 7 attack, or even to make any military gains in the brutal aggression it has launched against the Palestinian people, be considered a protector or guarantor of Morocco's stability or national security?”²⁶⁷

While Morocco’s regional security cooperation with Israel withstood earlier escalation in tension between Israelis and Palestinians, the articles published following the October 7 attack and subsequent war indicate that its willingness to engage with Israel may weaken. However, Morocco has not yet released any official statement announcing declining cooperation in regional security. Nonetheless, the articles from *Morocco World News* before the 2023 outbreak of war highlight the regional security advantages provided by the Abraham Accords and

²⁶⁶ Mohamed Chtatou, “What Future, If Any, for the Palestinian People?,” *Morocco World News*, December 24, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/12/359744/what-future-if-any-for-the-palestinian-people>.

²⁶⁷ Samir Bennis, “Israel’s War on Palestinians : Moment of Reckoning for US-Moroccan Relations,” *Morocco World News*, December 6, 2023, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2023/12/359373/israels-war-on-palestinians-moment-of-reckoning-for-us-moroccan-relations>.

emphasize Morocco's strategic collaboration with Israel to enhance its national defense and military prowess.

Conclusion

The 171 articles published by *Morocco World News* on the Abraham Accords present Morocco's multifaceted interests in advancing its bilateral relationship with Israel while remaining committed to the Palestinian cause and working toward Palestinian statehood. Of these, 44 articles (about 25 percent) emphasize Morocco's dedication to a fair solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, affirming its support for the Palestinians despite the advantages gained from relations with Israel. As the only country with articles reporting tangible progress toward bettering Israeli-Palestinian ties by facilitating the opening of the Allenby Crossing, it is evident that Morocco views its signing of the Abraham Accords as a mechanism to support the peace process. Moreover, the critical coverage of Israel by *Morocco World News* during heightened periods of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict indicates that the kingdom's stance in support of the Palestinian people remains steadfast, regardless of any diplomatic, economic, cultural, or military benefits that may arise from its relations with Israel. Regardless, Morocco and Israel have maintained their various areas of cooperation throughout these periods of conflict, reflecting the resiliency of the Abraham Accords.

The articles present Morocco's comprehensive strategy in its interactions with Israel, encompassing areas of cooperation beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The most reported sectors of Israeli-Moroccan collaboration include diplomatic advancements, economic initiatives, coexistence and education exchange, and security cooperation. The articles discuss specific examples of advancing bilateral ties in various sectors. Thus, while *The National* and *Gulf Daily*

News tend to offer more generalized and less scrutinizing perceptions of Emirati and Bahraini normalization with Israel, *Morocco World News* delivers a more detailed and occasionally critical view of the Abraham Accords. Furthermore, the Moroccan news source presents the regional security implications of the Abraham Accords more explicitly, emphasizing Morocco's strategic intention to bolster its national defense in light of tensions with Algeria and issues in Western Sahara rather than focusing on countering Iranian threats. In conclusion, the nuanced coverage by *Morocco World News* of the Abraham Accords in its 171 articles illustrates Morocco's multifaceted engagement with Israel, balancing its national interests with its commitment to Palestinian advocacy.

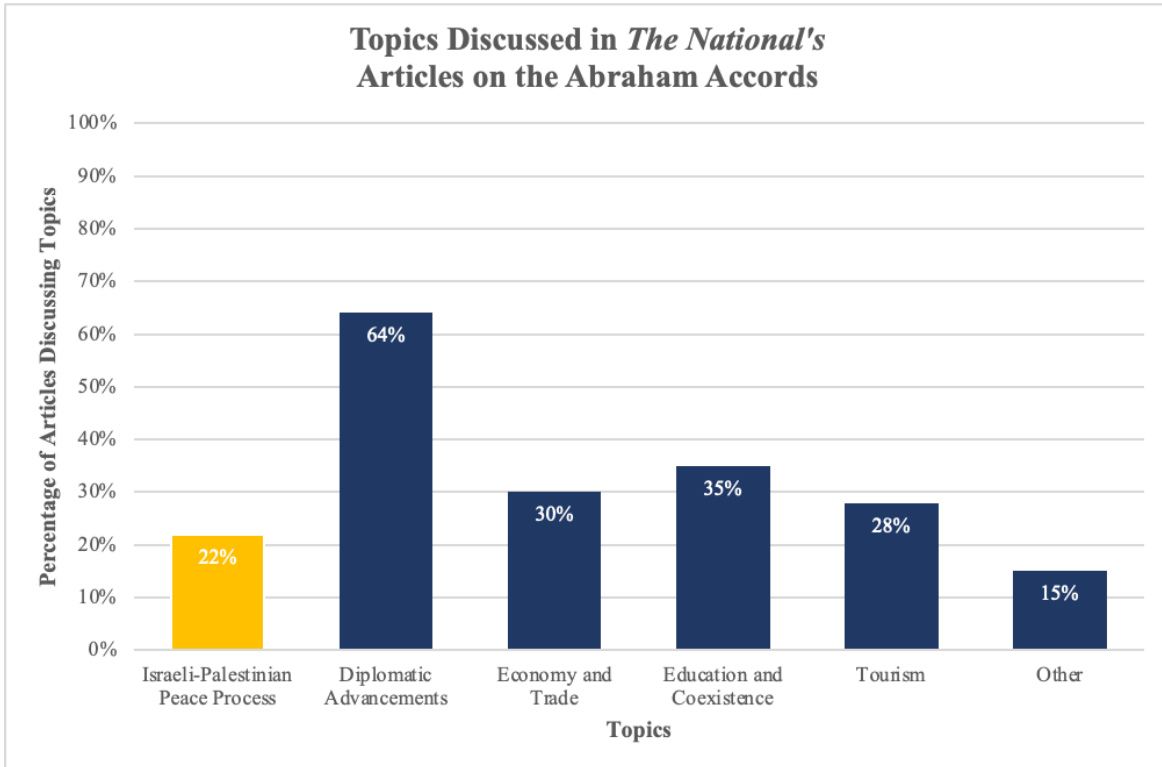
Chapter 5

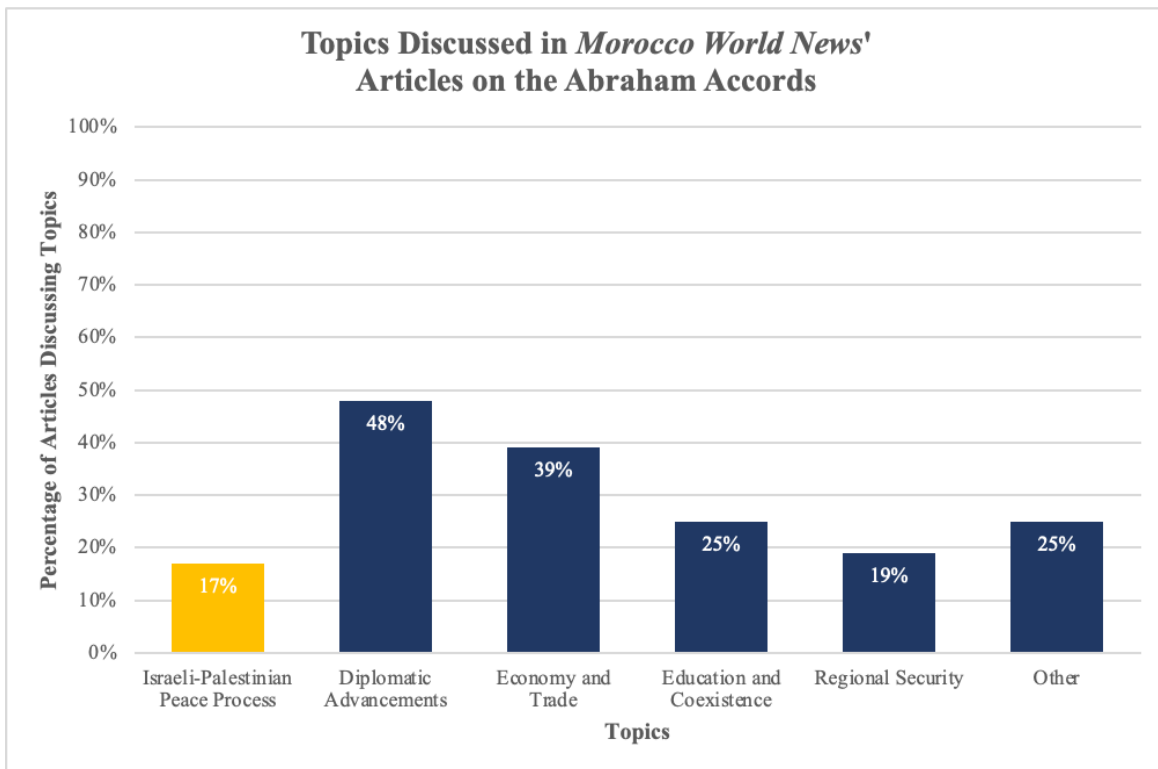
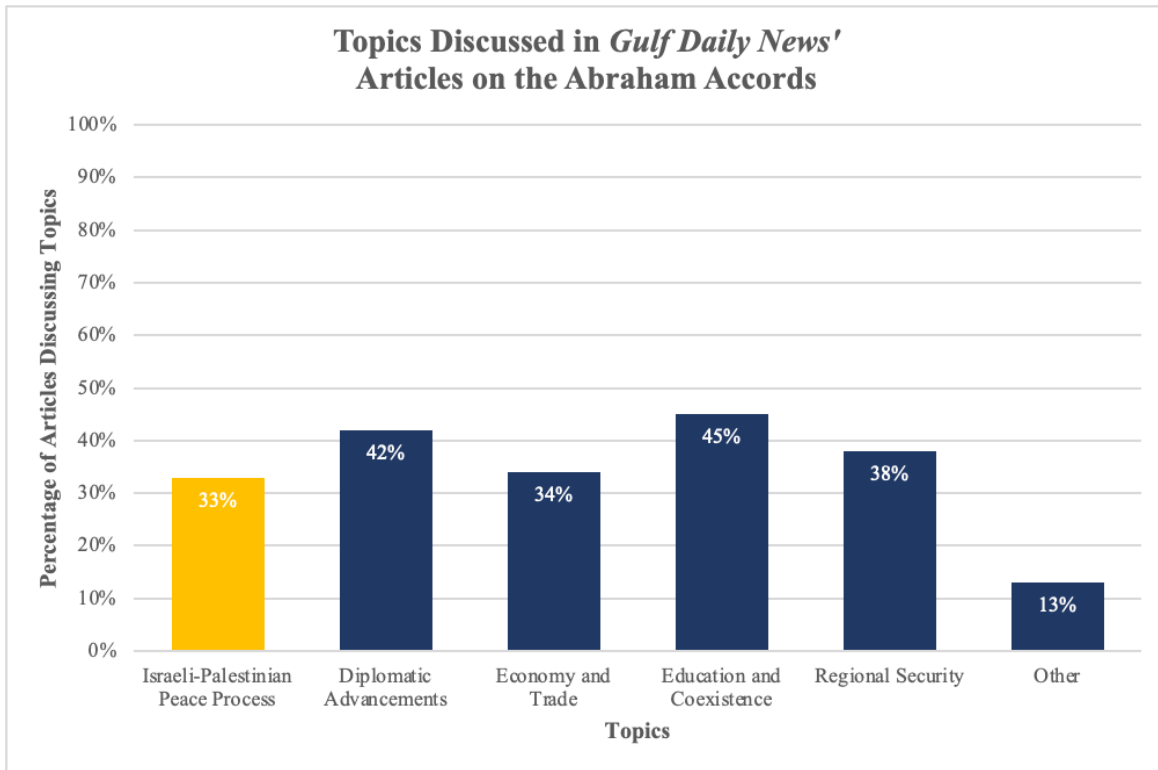
Conclusion

Analyzing every article published by *The National* (UAE), *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), and *Morocco World News* (Morocco) on the Abraham Accords since each signatory country signed the Abraham Accords until three months following the outbreak of the 2023 Israeli-Hamas war, it is evident that the signatory countries of the Abraham Accords assert that their diplomatic engagements with Israel through the Abraham Accords do not detract from their steadfast commitment to the Palestinian cause. Instead, they assert that forming ties with Israel is an attempt to advance their own national and regional interests while simultaneously supporting a just resolution to the conflict. In total, 107 of the 430 articles published by *The National*, *Gulf Daily News*, and *Morocco World News* directly report their countries' support for Palestinian people or address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, indicating that, while Palestinian solidarity remains a prominent consideration in the Abraham Accords, it is not the only priority for the Arab signatory countries.

Most of the articles that report the signatory countries' support for the Palestinian cause is largely symbolic, lacking any concrete initiatives undertaken by the signatory countries to support the Palestinian people or find a resolution to the conflict through the Abraham Accords. Notably, *Morocco World News* is the only source that published an explicit advancement when Morocco worked with Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian leaders to open the Allenby Crossing in July 2022. While the signatory countries present the Abraham Accords as a mechanism to actualize their support for the Palestinian cause, the limited focus on tangible action to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace in the media coverage suggests that these diplomatic initiatives are primarily viewed through the lens of national and regional interests.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is mentioned only in a small fraction of the articles published by each media outlet, revealing that the countries have alternative focuses in making progress through the Abraham Accords. The following charts provide a comparative analysis of the frequency of various topics covered in the articles from each media outlet:





The Emirati publication, *The National*, discussed in Chapter Two, extensively covers a range of topics in addition to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, with the most prevalent being advancements in diplomacy, economics, education and coexistence, and tourism. However, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the Bahraini outlet, *Gulf Daily News*, and the Moroccan publication, *Morocco World News*, similarly report advancements in diplomacy, economics, and education and coexistence, but discuss security collaboration more frequently than tourism. In addition to the most prominent themes addressed in the previous chapters, other articles on the Abraham Accords published by *The National*, *Gulf Daily News*, and *Morocco World News* report international support for the countries' decision to sign onto the Abraham Accords, collaborative climate initiatives, and the potential expansion of the Accords to other signatory countries. In particular, many articles published by the three media outlets discuss the potential of Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords. Notably, unlike the articles that discuss the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, numerous articles published in each of the three sources report concrete examples of progress in advancing cooperation in the other domains, demonstrating that the Accords have brought actualized change to the region. The diversity in coverage of the Abraham Accords represents the multifaceted interests of the signatory countries of the Abraham Accords, illustrating that, while the articles report progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the accords have catalyzed significant developments across other sectors.

This thesis is the first comprehensive analysis of media reporting by Arab signatory countries on the Abraham Accords, methodically examining the range of topics addressed in articles published by prominent news outlets from each country since its signing of the Accords. As a relatively recent diplomatic development, the Abraham Accords are a valuable area of study to understand how Arab countries shifted from their diplomatic and economic boycott of Israel

toward full cooperation in a variety of sectors. While experts and scholars have written on various developments since the initial announcement of the Abraham Accords, very few comprehensive studies have been done to assess their progress, particularly through the realm of media reporting. Furthermore, although the public's understanding of the progress and impact of the Abraham Accords largely comes from articles published by media outlets, no academic works to date have systematically cataloged or analyzed the extent of such media discourse across the multiple sectors engaged by the Accords. Therefore, this thesis intends to fill this critical research gap, providing valuable insights into how citizens of signatory countries perceive information regarding the Abraham Accords' developments. This understanding is crucial as it might shape or reflect their interests and priorities, considering that privately-owned media organizations, motivated by profit, tend to align their coverage with topics they believe will engage their audience's attention and interest. The analysis of media coverage from Arab signatory countries may also assist with identifying signs or formulating pertinent questions related to the potential expansion of the Abraham Accords to other countries, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Future Studies

While this study presents important findings regarding the Arab signatory countries' priorities in advancing their newly established bilateral relationship with Israel, it is preliminary and may be repeated or expanded in future research endeavors. Articles published by *Gulf Daily News* and *Morocco World News* indicate that the 2023 Israel-Hamas war may have significant implications on the strength of the Abraham Accords. Thus, it may be worthwhile to expand the data collection of articles published to a later date to see how the 2023 war has shifted media coverage of the Abraham Accords. Also, should Hamas and Israel agree to a ceasefire in the

future, examining if the Abraham Accord countries play a prominent role in the negotiations and the rebuilding of Gaza would be noteworthy. Furthermore, while my research provides a solid foundation by utilizing prominent English-language news outlets from each signatory country and encompassing the first three years since establishing the Abraham Accords, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that significant change unfolds over time. Therefore, continuing this study in the future could unveil evolving priorities and perspectives.

Expansion of my research could also include additional news outlets from the signatory countries. My research is confined to English-language sources due to my lack of proficiency in Arabic, which precluded the inclusion of Arabic-language media in my study. Arabic media outlets from the signatory countries may provide a more authentic perception of the Abraham Accords, as the English-language news outlets are geared to both domestic and international audiences. Thus, future studies could compare Arabic-language media outlets to the English-language sources I have analyzed. It may also be interesting to compare these privately owned media sources to public outlets owned by the governments of each signatory country to see if there is a notable contrast in the content they report. Additionally, juxtaposing coverage from Israeli and Palestinian media outlets with the sources from the Abraham Accord countries could also yield a comprehensive comparison and contribute to our understanding of regional narratives. As the first research to analyze articles published by prominent Emirati, Bahraini, and Moroccan media sources on the Abraham Accords, this thesis contributes to existing literature on the Abraham Accords and sets a necessary foundation for future studies.

While the signatory countries' promises to leverage the Abraham Accords to find a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have yet to be fulfilled, the Accords have demonstrated that peace between a Jewish and an Arab state is possible despite ongoing regional

tension. While the resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict likely cannot occur overnight, the Abraham Accords nonetheless foster a comprehensive collaboration between historically adversarial parties that have brought noticeable improvements to those involved. They represent a departure from the region's alienation of Israel and lay the groundwork for a more collaborative approach to peacebuilding. Revealing the lack of reported initiatives to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within media outlets from the Arab Abraham Accord signatory countries will hopefully catalyze a more focused dialogue and action. Ideally, this will transform the countries' commitment to actualizing a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from being "the missing piece of peace" into a higher prioritized initiative to construct a sustainable and inclusive peace in the Middle East.

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