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Building Order from Conflict: A Study of Diplomatic Practice in Arab-Israeli Peace Processes (1949–2020)

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Abstract

This study analyzes Arab-Israeli peace agreements signed between 1949 and 2020 to understand how diplomacy sought to build order in the Middle East. The objective is to examine these agreements as ongoing diplomatic efforts that managed conflict, built cooperation, and gradually moved the region from repeated wars toward a fragile peace. To answer the research question, this study applies three main approaches from international politics: realism, constructivism, and institutionalism. Realism focuses on the pursuit of security and power that drove each treaty and shaped the limits of cooperation. Constructivism reveals how these diplomatic efforts gradually redefined the meaning of peace and altered long-held perceptions among the parties. Institutionalism offers a more practical lens, showing that the creation of shared mechanisms such as border, water, and security committees helped transform temporary truces into more sustainable arrangements. A qualitative comparative approach is applied to examine Arab-Israeli treaties, showing how shifts in power, diplomacy, and external influence shaped the evolving practice of peace-building in the Middle East. The findings show that each treaty served as a step in shaping regional order, while the study's innovative contribution lies in linking diplomatic practice with the evolving meaning of peace across seven decades.

Keywords: Arab-Israeli conflict, constructivism, diplomacy, institutionalism, peace-building, realism

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Introduction

Recent history shows that peace in the Middle East is much like a mirage in the desert, while it occasionally seems to come closer, actually reaching it remains difficult.[1] For decades, the dominant narrative around Arab-Israeli peacemaking has been one of failure. Scholars and policymakers point to the "cold peace" with Egypt, the stalled Oslo process, the fragility of the Jordan-Israel treaty, and the transactional nature of the Abraham Accords.[2] This article argues that, to move beyond the language of failure, we need to invert the analytical lens. Rather than asking only why peace has been so imperfect, we should ask a different question: How did diplomatic practice help build regional order over time?

This question is especially relevant in the Middle East, where diplomacy must navigate a mixed landscape of great powers, monarchies, fragile democracies, and armed nonstate actors such as Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, al-Qaeda, and ISIS.[3] Their presence reinforces the limits of narrow conflict-resolution models and underscores the need for a broader analytical lens, one that accounts for shifting power balances, evolving identities, and the institutional frameworks that shape how peace is negotiated and sustained. Despite their shortcomings, all these agreements from 1949 to 2020 gradually shifted the conflict from open war to structured coexistence.

Seen from this perspective, the major Arab-Israeli agreements from the 1949 Armistice Agreements to the 2020 Abraham Accords can be read as a slow process of order-building. The 1949 Armistice Agreements drew lines of separation and ended large-scale fighting, even without mutual recognition or cooperation. The 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty showed that a leading Arab state was willing to sign a separate peace and introduced security arrangements monitored by international forces.[4] The 1994 Jordan-Israel treaty

1 Bruno Tertrais, *Middle East Peace Process: Time for a Reality Check* (German Marshall Fund, 2022).

2 Nur Köprülü, "25 Years of Jordan-Israel Peace-making: From 'Warm Peace' to 'Cold Peace'," *Middle Eastern Studies* 57, no. 3 (2021): 456–468.

3 Chen Kertcher and Dima Course. "The Practice of Friendship Balancing: Russia–Israel Relations, 2015 to 2021," *Middle East Policy* 31, no. 2 (2024): 67–82.

4 Steven A. Cook and Shibley Telhami, "Addressing the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President*, eds. Richard N. Haass and Martin S. Indyk (Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

went further by institutionalizing water-sharing, border coordination, and cross-border economic projects. The Oslo process (1993–2000) introduced a phased plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and the gradual establishment of Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza.[5] Between the Taba Summit in January 2001 and 2008, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process remained effectively stalled. This deadlock persisted despite a series of political initiatives and proposals during this period, including the Arab Peace Initiative, the Bush Initiative, the Road Map, the Nusseibeh-Ayalon Initiative, the Geneva Initiative, the Saudi peace plan, and the Annapolis Conference. Most recently, the 2020 Abraham Accords signaled a shift from non-recognition to open engagement between Israel and four Arab and Muslim-majority states (the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan).[6]

These agreements prioritized cooperation in trade, technology, tourism, and security and were driven above all by shared strategic interests, including concerns over Iran. Together, they demonstrate that normalization can arise not only from resolving core disputes but also from converging threat perceptions and economic interests. At the same time, the Arab-Israeli case exposes a deep paradox at the level of international norms. The global system is dense with legal principles and UN resolutions, yet poor in consistent implementation. Dag Hammarskjöld's remark that the UN "was not created in order to bring us to heaven but in order to save us from hell" captures both the organization's ambition and its limits.[7] The UN can sometimes constrain the worst excesses of violence, but it has largely failed to prevent or resolve the core dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The trajectory of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine is emblematic of this. Unanimously adopted at the 2005 World Summit as a commitment to prevent mass atrocity crimes, R2P has remained largely inoperative in the Palestinian context, blocked by Security Council politics and

5 Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, ed., *Barriers to Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2010).

6 Aamer Madhani and Matthew Lee, "Trump Faces Uphill Battle to Persuade Saudi Crown Prince to Normalize Israel Ties," *Times of Israel*, November 16, 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-faces-uphill-battle-to-persuade-saudi-crown-prince-to-normalize-israel-ties/.

7 Carsten Stahn and Henning Melber, eds., *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency: Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

selective application.[8] A similar pattern appears in the fate of key resolutions, from UNGA Resolution 181 on partition to UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, which articulated a land-for-peace formula but have been weakened by vetoes, competing legal interpretations, and the absence of credible enforcement mechanisms.

This article responds to that paradox by shifting the focus from formal norms to the social processes through which peace is made and unmade. It examines Arab-Israeli peace processes from 1949 to 2020 through a combined realist, constructivist, and institutional lens. Realism helps to explain how shifts in power, threat perceptions, and alliance patterns pushed states from total confrontation to more managed forms of competition and cooperation. Institutional perspectives highlight how treaties, monitoring bodies, and joint committees created stable frameworks for repeated interaction, issue-linkage, and crisis management. A constructivist approach, which forms the core of the article, foregrounds how ideas, identities, and public narratives shaped the reception and evolution of these agreements over time.

Existing research shows that Arab-Israeli diplomacy tends to succeed when it influences both government decisions and public perceptions. Yet important gaps remain; many studies focus on single agreements or theories instead of comparing peace efforts across decades as part of a longer regional process. This article addresses these gaps by examining major Arab-Israeli agreements from 1949 to 2020 through a framework that combines power, perception, and institutions. It argues that diplomacy, not war, has been the most consistent force supporting regional stability, even if its results remain fragile.[9] The article shows how the meaning of "peace" has gradually expanded from simple ceasefires to recognition, and now to cooperation in trade, technology, and security. However, as Sybil Morrison warned, "peace through strength" can become "not peace, but war," and Andrew Bacevich notes that confidence in military power often encourages its use.[10]

8 Carl Ruth, "The United Nations' Responsibility to Protect (R2P): Policy, Preference, or Politics" (PhD diss., Walden University, 2021).

9 Ivor Roberts, ed., *Satow's Diplomatic Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

10 Andrew Rigby, "Peace News, 1936–1986: An Overview," in *Articles of Peace*, eds. Gail Chester and Andrew Rigby (Prism Press, 1986), 7–26.

From the late 1970s onward, Arab-Israeli diplomacy unfolded through a series of landmark initiatives that gradually reshaped the regional landscape. The 1978 Camp David Accords produced the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state and established a model of US-mediated territorial compromise.[11] In 1991, the Madrid Conference reopened multilateral dialogue and set the stage for bilateral negotiations that followed.[12] The 1993 Oslo Accords introduced mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, enabling the creation of the Palestinian Authority and redefining the diplomatic agenda around governance and interim arrangements.[13] A year later, the Jordan-Israel peace treaty formalized relations and deepened security and economic cooperation. Subsequent efforts, including the 1998 Wye River Memorandum, the 2000 Camp David Summit, and the 2007 Annapolis Conference, sought to advance or clarify land-for-peace commitments but produced limited breakthroughs. The 2003 Arab Peace Initiative offered a regional framework, proposing full normalization in exchange for withdrawal to the 1967 lines.[14] In 2020, the Abraham Accords marked a shift toward strategic normalization, with several Arab states establishing relations with Israel based on shared geopolitical and economic interests rather than progress on the Palestinian issue.[15] Together, these milestones trace the evolving pathways of Arab-Israeli diplomacy.

Theoretical Framework

A long-standing limitation of the dominant conflict-resolution approach is its narrow reliance on the two-state paradigm. Since the 1947 partition plan, much of the international

11 William B. Quandt, "Camp David and Peacemaking in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 3 (1986): 357–377.

12 "The Madrid Framework," Guide to the Mideast Peace Process, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 28, 1999, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/The%20Madrid%20Framework.aspx.

13 "Israel-PLO Interim Agreements since 1993," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 10, 2021, https://www.gov.il/en/pages/israel-plo-interim-agreements-since-1993.

14 Lior Lehrs, "Jerusalem on the Negotiating Table: Analyzing the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks on Jerusalem (1993–2015)," *Israel Studies* 21, no. 3 (2016): 179–205.

15 Elham Fakhro, *The Abraham Accords: The Gulf States, Israel, and the Limits of Normalization* (Columbia University Press, 2024).

system has treated territorial division as the primary route to peace, a view reinforced after the 1993 Oslo Accords.[16] While this model shaped decades of diplomacy, its dominance often obscures the wider strategic shifts, identity changes, and regional realignments that have also driven Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Diplomacy in this study is understood as a patterned social practice through which states negotiate meaning, manage conflict, and construct shared expectations. Rather than viewing diplomacy only as high-level negotiation or formal treaty-making, this approach conceptualizes it as a set of routinized behaviors carried out by political leaders, mediators, and institutional actors. As Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Vincent Pouliot show, the effectiveness of diplomacy often hinges not only on material capabilities but also on emergent power generated through the everyday practices, skills, and social competencies of state representatives.[17]

This perspective reinforces the argument that Arab-Israeli peacemaking cannot be understood solely through structural theories; it also depends on how diplomats translate situational expertise and procedural mastery into influence within negotiations. Operationally, diplomatic practice is analyzed through three dimensions: strategic behavior shaped by material constraints (realism), narrative and identity shifts (constructivism), and the development of mechanisms that stabilize cooperation (institutionalism). To understand how diplomatic practice built a regional order between 1949 and 2020, this study moves beyond monocausal explanations. Since the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a single problem with a single solution but a complex, evolving phenomenon, a single theoretical lens is insufficient to capture its nuances. This analysis therefore employs a synthesized framework of three principal theories in international relations: realism, constructivism, and institutionalism. These dimensions allow the case studies to be examined not as isolated historical events but as iterative performances that contribute to the construction of regional order.

16 Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "Explaining a State Status Quo and Non-State Revisionist Dynamic: The Case of the Conflict Between Hamas and Israel 2007–2019," *Ethnopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2023): 140–156.

17 Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Vincent Pouliot, "Power in Practice: Negotiating the International Intervention in Libya," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2014): 889–911.

Realism: Power, Security, and Strategic Peace

Cynthia Weber argues that critical international relations theory exposes how power imbalances, dominant narratives, and unequal structures shape whose interests are advanced through diplomacy. Viewed through this lens, Arab-Israeli negotiations have often reflected asymmetrical capacities, meaning formal agreements have risked institutionalizing inequality rather than transforming the underlying conditions of conflict.[18] Realism offers a straightforward lens for understanding why Arab-Israeli diplomacy became possible in certain moments and why its outcomes remain limited and fragile. At its core, realism assumes that states operate in an anarchic international system lacking any central authority capable of guaranteeing security.[19] In such an environment, survival becomes the primary objective. States therefore prioritize material power, strategic advantage, and relative security, cooperating only when doing so aligns with their national interests.[20]

For structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, the distribution of power – who is stronger, who is weaker, and how these shifts affect vulnerability – shapes states′ choices between war and negotiation. In the Middle East, these dynamics are evident. The wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 demonstrated that neither side could achieve a decisive victory without incurring high military, economic, and political costs. Israel emerged as the region′s strongest conventional military actor, backed by the United States, while Arab states faced repeated setbacks.[21] Arab states paid a high military and economic price without achieving their core goal of reversing Israel′s existence.[22] From a realist standpoint, the gradual move toward diplomacy reflected not reconciliation but a

18 Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2013).

19 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (Columbia University Press, 1959).

20 John J. Mearsheimer, "Reckless States and Realism," *International Security* 23, no. 2 (2009): 241–256.

21 "U.S.–Israel Strategy: From Special Relationship to Strategic Partnership, 2029–2047," *The Heritage Foundation*, March 12, 2025, https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/us-israel-strategy-special-relationship-strategic-partnership-2029–2047

22 Gerald M. Steinberg, "Realism, Politics, and Culture in Middle East Arms Control Negotiations," *International Negotiation* 10, no. 2 (2005): 487–512.

recognition that prolonged conflict threatened regime stability and national security.[23] The 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty is a classic example of this strategic recalculation. From a realist perspective, Sadat's 1977 visit to Jerusalem was a calculated move driven by national interest, not idealism. Realism offers the most compelling lens for interpreting the Abraham Accords. This theory posits that states act first and foremost to ensure their own security and survival in an anarchic international system. The Accords were not primarily driven by a sudden reconciliation or a moral commitment to peace with Israel. Instead, they represent a pragmatic, strategic realignment by the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.[24]

Constructivist Perspective on Arab–Israeli Peacemaking

Constructivism offers an essential perspective for understanding Arab-Israeli diplomacy by highlighting how identities, norms, and shared meanings shape political behavior.[25] Unlike realism, which assumes fixed interests, constructivism argues that state preferences evolve through social interaction, discourse, and collective memory. Mahmoud Amineh and Davatgari Asl note that the framework synthesizes behavioural insights with cognitive and socio-cultural approaches.[26] Knowledge and political meaning are therefore not objective reflections of the world but socially constructed through language, cultural context, and repeated interaction. This view aligns with Amineh and Asl's argument that behaviour is mediated by socio-cultural processes and with Lev Vygotsky's insight that identity is formed through socially embedded communication.[27] Applied to the Arab-Israeli conflict, constructivism helps explain why historical narratives and perceptions of legitimacy have

23 Efraim Inbar, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process: A Realistic Assessment," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2000): 55–58.

24 Saoud Al-Eshaq and Ali Bakir, "Dynamic Security Regime: Analyzing UAE–Israel Security and Defense Cooperation Post Abraham Accords," *Journal of Arabian Studies* (2025).

25 Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 319–363.

26 Mahmoud Amineh and Davatgari Asl, "Review of Constructivism and Social Constructivism," *Journal of Political Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 9–16.

27 Ibid.

strongly influenced diplomatic possibilities. Foundational experiences such as the 1948 war and the Nakba produced competing stories of survival, dispossession, and justice. Amy Horowitz (2010) argues that the post-1967 environment, through these narratives, played a crucial role in shaping how each side imagined the 'other,' ultimately reinforcing hostility and restricting political imagination.[28] Yuri Haasz highlights the role of public diplomacy, education, and media in promoting images of the "other" as a partner.[29] The Khartoum Resolution of 1967, with its language of "no recognition, no negotiation," exemplifies how discourse can harden identity boundaries even in the absence of military confrontation.

Constructivist dynamics also illuminate moments when diplomacy became possible. A major turning point was the Oslo process, which institutionalized mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. The Accords created a discursive space in which each side could begin to imagine the other as a legitimate interlocutor.[30] Even before practical cooperation unfolded, the act of recognition itself created a new discursive space in which each side could begin to imagine the other as a legitimate interlocutor rather than an existential foe. Rachel Bzostek and Allison Rogers argue that confidence-building measures help ordinary people imagine coexistence as realistic.[31] Jocelyn Sage Mitchell adds that media framing can create feedback loops – new diplomatic language encourages further confidence-building measures, which reinforce more flexible perceptions.[32] Similarly, later shifts from categorical rejection to the language of normalization across parts of the Arab world reflect evolving understandings of what constitutes acceptable political engagement. Narratives surrounding 1948, occupation, security, and justice continue to be reproduced in education, media, and political discourse, placing structural limits on the durability of diplomatic progress.

28 Amy Horowitz, *Mediterranean Israeli Music and the Politics of the Aesthetic* (Wayne State University Press, 2010).

29 Yuri Haasz, "Rethinking Approaches to Conflict Transformation: Understanding the Zionist Identity Barrier to Peace in the Israel/Palestine Conflict," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 7, no. 3 (2012): 99–120.

30 Avi Shlaim, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process," in *The Middle East Peace Process*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford University Press, 2016).

31 Rachel Bzostek and Allison Rogers, "Oslo+20: Reassessing the Role of Confidence-Building Measures," *The Social Science Journal* 51, no. 2 (2014): 250–259.

32 Jocelyn Sage Mitchell, "#Blockade: Social Media and the Gulf Diplomatic Crisis," *Review of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 2 (2019): 200–220.

Institutional Mechanisms

Institutionalism in this study refers to the international-relations understanding of how cooperative frameworks reduce uncertainty and stabilize expectations.[33] This includes concrete mechanisms such as the Mixed Armistice Commissions (1949), the MFO in Sinai established by the Egypt-Israel treaty, the Jordan-Israel Joint Water Committee, and the joint security bodies created under Oslo. The Abraham Accords added new institutional arrangements for aviation normalization, economic MoUs, investment councils, and technology cooperation mechanisms that structure ongoing interaction. These institutions, rather than domestic political constraints, are the focus of the analysis because they shape the durability and adaptability of Arab-Israeli agreements. Liberal institutionalism provides a useful, though partial, lens for understanding how Arab-Israeli cooperation became possible despite deep political disputes. As Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin argue, institutions reduce uncertainty, create predictable channels of interaction, and encourage reciprocity by serving as "focal points" that help states recognize shared interests.[34]

These mechanisms work by providing transparency, monitoring procedures, and dispute-resolution frameworks that stabilize expectations and make cooperation preferable to continued conflict. In this study, institutionalism refers specifically to international relations mechanisms rather than domestic political structures. It focuses on externally observable arrangements such as joint committees, monitoring bodies, resource-sharing agreements, and security coordination platforms. These mechanisms can generate routines and norms that persist even when political relations deteriorate. For example, Johan Olsen's work on the "logic of appropriateness," clearly reflected in the Joint Water Committee established in the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty, illustrates how technical cooperation can endure through periods of political tension.[35] Likewise, the security coordination

33 Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 313–344.

34 Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 39–51.

35 Johan P. Olsen, "Understanding Institutions and Logics of Appropriateness: Introductory Essay," Arena Working Papers (2007).

mechanisms created after the Oslo Accords provided an institutionalized framework for managing routine security concerns despite the fragility of broader negotiations.[36] Institutionalism also highlights why multilateral bodies are less effective in this conflict. The United Nations, intended as the central focal point, has often been constrained by major-power divisions, particularly repeated US vetoes in the Security Council.[37]

Alexander Wendt further argues that political constraints and bureaucratic sluggishness make it difficult for the UN to act as an impartial and timely mediator.[38] Institutionalism therefore clarifies both the achievements and inherent constraints of cooperation – institutions can stabilize interaction, but they cannot overcome deep asymmetries or resolve foundational disputes on their own. The long-standing US preference for bilateral diplomacy has shaped agreements such as the Egypt-Israel (1979) and Jordan-Israel (1994) peace treaties, and, more recently, the Abraham Accords.

Methodology

This article uses a qualitative comparative case study approach to examine how key Arab-Israeli agreements contributed to changes in regional order. The analysis relies primarily on official documents, including treaty texts, UN resolutions, policy statements, and public speeches, as well as leaders′ own words. Memoirs and recorded comments by central figures such as Anwar Sadat, Yasser Arafat, King Hussein, and Israeli leaders are used to understand how each actor framed national interests, security needs, and the meaning of negotiation. These primary materials are supported by established historical and scholarly works that provide contextual timelines and help clarify how political environments changed around each agreement. The method focuses on interpreting diplomatic behaviour through three analytical lenses (realism, constructivism, and

36 Louis Kriesberg, *Louis Kriesberg: Pioneer in Peace and Constructive Conflict Resolution Studies* (Springer, 2016).

37 Colter Louwerse, "'Tyranny of the Veto': PLO Diplomacy and the January 1976 United Nations Security Council Resolution," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 33, no. 2 (2022): 303–329.

38 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

institutionalism) without claiming predictive or statistical inference. This approach allows the study to examine how material pressures, evolving identities, and institutional arrangements shaped the possibilities and limits of diplomacy across different periods of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Study Background

The roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict lie in overlapping historical attachments, demographic shifts, and competing national movements that crystallized during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods. Jewish tradition identifies Eretz Yisrael, the ancient Land of Israel, as divinely promised and continuously remembered in religious and cultural life.[39] Periods of political presence between roughly 1200 BCE and the second century CE reinforced a durable collective memory, even after the Romans dispersed much of the Jewish population and renamed the province *Syria Palaestina*.[40] In subsequent centuries, the region came under Byzantine, Arab, Crusader, and Ottoman control, evolving into a multilingual and multi-religious landscape. By the late nineteenth century, Palestine was a rural Ottoman province inhabited by approximately 450,000 Arabs and around 25,000 Jews, many concentrated in Jerusalem.[41]

New waves of Jewish migration, driven by historical attachment and rising persecution abroad, gradually formed the modern Yishuv. These communities purchased land, established agricultural settlements, and built autonomous social and cultural institutions despite political and financial constraints. The collapse of Ottoman rule and the British Mandate (1917–1948) redefined the political context. The Balfour Declaration supported the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people" while simultaneously pledging to protect the rights of existing Arab residents. These dual commitments produced

39 Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Indiana University Press, 2009).

40 Walter Laqueur and Dan Schueftan, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (Penguin, 2016).

41 Ibid.

contradictory expectations and heightened mistrust.[42] During the Mandate, the Yishuv expanded its economic, educational, and security structures, while Palestinian Arab society mobilized politically against mass Jewish immigration and what many perceived as British endorsement of a rival national project. By the 1940s, both communities had developed proto-state institutions and articulated incompatible territorial claims.[43] The British authorities, unable to reconcile these competing nationalisms, struggled to maintain order. The convergence of deep historical narratives, religious significance, demographic transformation, and unmet political promises ultimately set the stage for the 1947–1948 war and the long conflict that followed.

Case Study Analysis

The earlier historical trajectory (1897–1947) is included in this study only to clarify how competing national movements formed the identity narratives that later shaped diplomatic behavior. To establish a clear analytical progression from 1949 onward, the case studies are examined as part of a sequential evolution in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. The 1949 Armistice Agreements introduced a foundational logic of territorial separation and security stabilization, setting a baseline for how the parties understood conflict management. The Egypt-Israel peace process built on this foundation by transforming armistice-style disengagement into a full territorial-security settlement aimed at ending interstate war. The Oslo Accords and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty marked a second stage, shifting the focus from borders to mutual recognition, governance arrangements, and emerging institutional practices.[44] By contrast, the Abraham Accords represent a third stage in which normalization is driven less by bilateral disputes and more by shared strategic interests, external threat perceptions, and opportunities for technological and economic cooperation (see Table 1).

42 Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Random House, 2011).

43 Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

44 Lehrs, "Jerusalem on the Negotiating Table."

The Armistice System as Early Order–Building (1947–1949)

The 1949 Armistice Agreements established foundational principles that reappeared throughout later diplomacy – the demarcation of lines of control, the creation of monitoring mechanisms, and the use of mixed commissions to manage disputes. In 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, proposing the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration.[45] Jewish leaders accepted the plan, albeit with reservations, while Arab leaders and neighboring states rejected it. When the period of British rule ended in May 1948, Jewish leaders declared the State of Israel, prompting military intervention by several Arab armies. In 1947, Jews constituted roughly one-third of the population, but approximately 341,782 Jews migrated to Israel during 1947–1949. According to most historical estimates, around 900,000 Jews left or were expelled from Muslim-majority countries in North Africa and Asia between the late 1940s and early 1970s in processes closely tied to the establishment of Israel and subsequent Arab-Israeli wars.[46]

Large parts of this movement were organized or facilitated by Zionist institutions such as Mossad LeAliyah Bet and the Jewish Agency, and roughly 650,000 (about 72%) ultimately resettled in Israel, with a final major exodus of Iranian Jews after 1979. The 1948–1949 war produced contrasting historical narratives. For Israelis, it is remembered as the War of Independence, securing statehood under difficult conditions. For Palestinians, it is the Nakba (Catastrophe), when around 750,000 people fled or were expelled and became refugees in neighboring countries, the West Bank, and Gaza.[47] The Armistice Agreements left Israel controlling about 78% of the former Mandate territory, while Egypt controlled Gaza and Jordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem.[48] The armistice lines were

45 UNGA Resolution 181 (II), November 29, 1947.

46 Avi Beker, "The Forgotten Narrative: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries," *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 3/4 (2005): 3–19.

47 Badil Resource Center, for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Right, " The Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons," June 2007, https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/Badil_06-07Survey.pdf

48 Ahron Bregman, *Israel's Wars: A History since 1947* (Routledge, 2016).

explicitly temporary, and no comprehensive political settlement followed, leaving borders, sovereignty, and the refugee question unresolved.

The Six–Day War and the Khartoum Resolution

Cold War rivalries deepened the already tense relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In the 1950s and 1960s, Soviet support allowed Egypt to build a modern air force, while Israel, backed by the United States and purchasing aircraft from France and tanks from Britain, cultivated its own strategic edge.[49] A new generation of sabres (native-born Israelis), vowed not to repeat past vulnerabilities. After the 1967 Six-Day War, this hardened environment fueled the prolonged War of Attrition, ultimately paving the way to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The Six-Day War reshaped the conflict's territorial and legal landscape (see Figure 1),[50] deepening Arab perceptions of military defeat and Israeli perceptions of strategic depth.

UN Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in November 1967, became the central international reference point for subsequent diplomacy. It called for Israel to withdraw "from territories occupied in the recent conflict" and for the recognition of every state's right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.[51] The English wording concerning the withdrawal was intentionally ambiguous, and the resolution was adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, giving it the status of a recommendation rather than an enforceable order. Resolution 338, adopted after the 1973 war, reaffirmed Resolution 242 and called for negotiations.[52] Ambiguous language, limited enforcement mechanisms, and divergent interpretations have since constrained the effectiveness of this normative framework. The rigid political positions seen in 1973 were rooted in the Khartoum

49 Jeremy Bowen, *1967: Six Days That Changed the Middle East* (Simon & Schuster, 2002).

50 Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

51 UNSC Resolution 242, November 22, 1967.

52 UNSC Resolution 338, October 22, 1973.

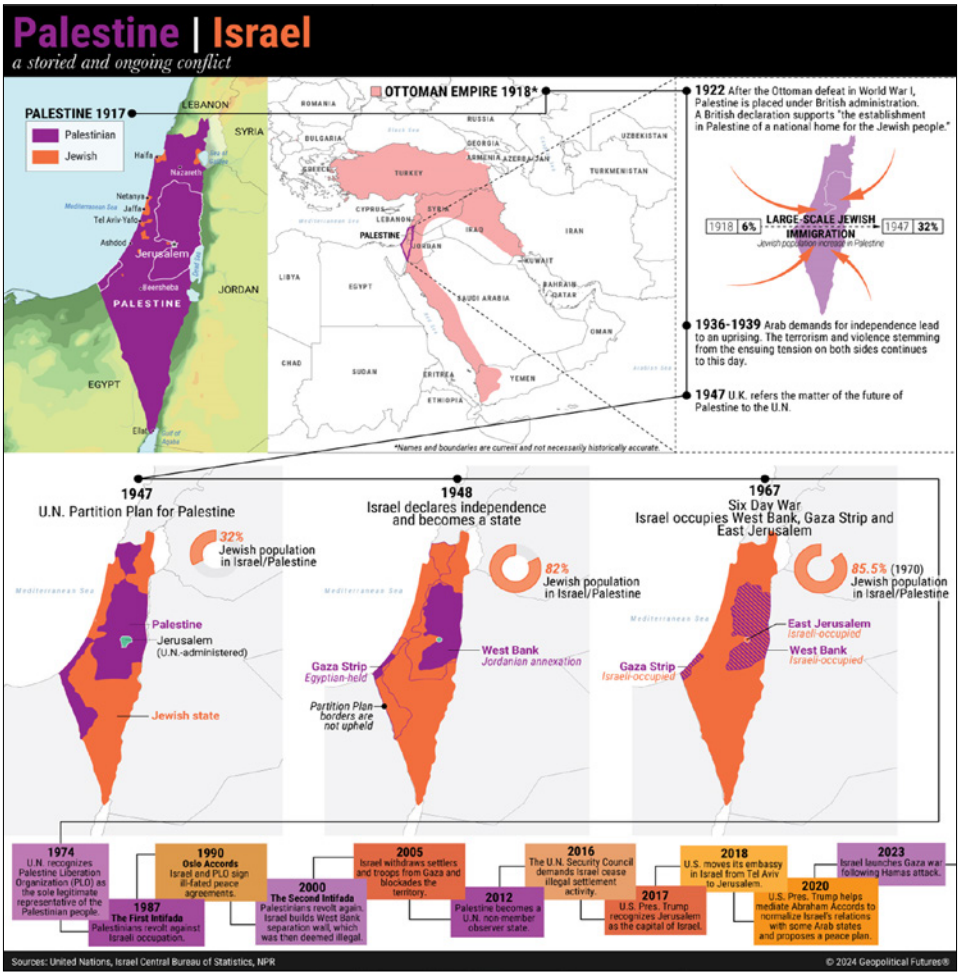


Figure 1: Contours of the Israel-Palestine Territorial Conflict[53]

Resolution of September 1967. This resolution emerged in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, a moment that transformed the territorial and political landscape of the Arab-Israeli conflict. With Israel's rapid capture of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, Arab leaders faced a profound military and

53 Figure source: "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Over the Years," *Geopolitical Futures*, November 22, 2024, https://geopoliticalfutures.com/the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-over-the-years/.

psychological defeat. Convening in Khartoum from August 29 to September 1, eight Arab heads of state formulated a collective response that became known as the "Three No′s": no peace with Israel, no recognition, and no negotiations.[54]

Beyond its symbolic rigidity, the Khartoum Resolution carried a strong economic dimension.[55] Arab finance, economy, and oil ministers recommended using economic tools, including temporarily suspending oil pumping, as leverage in the broader struggle. The decision to create financial support funds for Egypt and Jordan demonstrated an early institutional effort to stabilize key states weakened by the war. Viewed through a realist lens, Khartoum reflected an attempt to restore strategic balance by consolidating Arab resources and signaling resolve. At the same time, the economic measures highlight how regional institutions and coordinated policies functioned as a form of collective bargaining, revealing the interplay between material constraints, shared identity, and early institutional cooperation in shaping Arab diplomatic strategies.

Camp David and the Jordan–Israel Treaty

Egypt and Israel arrived at Camp David after decades of war. The 1948–1949 conflict had left Egypt in control of Gaza, the 1967 war had shifted the balance with Israel′s capture of Sinai, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War had created a costly stalemate. This opened the way for US shuttle diplomacy, culminating in the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1979 peace treaty. Post-war diplomacy between Egypt and Israel emerged when prolonged conflict became strategically and economically unsustainable. From a realist perspective, both leaderships faced mounting costs: Israel grappled with economic disruption and political pressure after 1973, while in 1977, Sadat confronted strategic isolation and the need for domestic recovery. Constructivist insights help explain how Sadat reinterpreted Egypt′s identity and interests, moving away from the Khartoum formula′s prohibitions

54 Yoram Meital, "The Khartoum Conference and Egyptian Policy after the 1967 War: A Reexamination," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 1 (2000): 64–82.

55 "The Khartoum Resolutions," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 1, 1967, https://www.gov.il/en/pages/the-khartoum-resolutions.

toward a pragmatic vision of peace. Institutional mechanisms, monitoring arrangements, and demilitarized zones then provided the procedural framework that enabled the treaty's gradual and stable implementation. Sadat's strategic and identity-based reasoning becomes clearer when examined through his primary speeches and memoirs. Speeches are not just presentations of prepared texts but also patterned and nuanced social performances.[56]

In his 1977 Knesset address, Sadat argued that "the October War was not a goal but a means," emphasizing that Egypt's future required "a new vision for peace."[57] In his autobiography,[58] he frames this shift as part of a broader reorientation from pan-Arabism toward an Egyptian national identity anchored in sovereignty and economic recovery.[59] These primary sources demonstrate that Sadat's departure from the Khartoum Resolution was not merely a strategic adjustment but a discursive reframing of what constituted Egypt's national interest.

The Jordan-Israel agreement should be examined through the combined lenses of shifting power balances, evolving identity narratives, and institutional design. Realism illuminates how regional realignments after the Cold War reduced the costs of peace for both parties. Constructivism shows how King Hussein framed peace as consistent with Jordanian national identity and regional responsibility. Institutionalism helps explain how water-sharing committees and security coordination created predictable and durable channels of cooperation.

The 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty, also known as the Wadi Araba Treaty, followed the same pattern of bilateral normalization. It formalized borders, included arrangements on water and security, and brought Jordan closer to US-led regional diplomacy. King Hussein's public statements during the 1993–1994 negotiations affirm that his decision to

56 Alisher Faizullaev and Jérémie Cornut, "Narrative Practice in International Politics and Diplomacy: The Case of the Crimean Crisis," *Journal of International Relations* 20 (2017): 578–604.

57 "Address by President Anwar Sadat to the Knesset," Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, November 20, 1997, https://www.palquest.org/en/historictext/21734/address-president-anwar-sadat-knesset.

58 Anwar El-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (Harper & Row, 1992).

59 Gadi Hitman and Dan Naor, "Rethinking Pan-Arabism: An Analysis of the Challenges of a Utopian Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 30, no. 3 (2025): 708–727.

pursue peace stemmed from both structural pressures and a normative commitment to "end the state of war."[60] In the Washington Declaration (1994), he highlighted Jordan's need for economic stabilization and regional predictability, framing peace as a "moral responsibility" to future generations.[61] These sources show how realist incentives and evolving political identity together shaped Jordan's diplomatic choices.

Oslo Accords and the Constraints of Diplomacy

The Oslo Accords emerged in the early 1990s as the first direct political framework between Israel and the PLO after decades of mutual non-recognition. Rooted in the aftermath of the First Intifada and shaped by the diplomatic opening created by the 1991 Madrid Conference, secret talks in Norway produced Oslo I (1993) and Oslo II (1995), which established the Palestinian Authority, outlined Israeli redeployments, and created interim governance arrangements.[62]

Within this study's theoretical framework, Oslo represents a moment of strategic recalibration, identity reconfiguration, and institutional experimentation. From a realist perspective, both leaderships entered negotiations to resolve a mutually detrimental stalemate. For Israel, prolonged conflict generated economic strain and demographic pressure, while the post-Cold War environment altered regional alignments. For the PLO, political isolation after the Gulf War and declining external support made diplomatic engagement essential for organizational survival. Arafat cautioned that "without peace in the Middle East, peace in the world will not be complete," insisting that true peace required implementing UN Resolutions 242 and 338 on Jerusalem, refugees, and borders.

60 United Nations, *Developments Related to the Middle East Peace Process*, vol. 3 (United Nations, 1995).

61 "Washington Declaration Signed by Jordan and Israel (Washington, DC, 25 July 1994)," https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-179226/.

62 "The Madrid Conference, 1991," Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989–1992/madrid-conference.

His remarks highlighted early concerns that Oslo avoided the core issues needed for a comprehensive settlement.[63]

Yet realism also highlights Oslo's fragility – unresolved territorial and security questions were postponed, and neither party was prepared to absorb the strategic risks required for a comprehensive settlement. In his 1993 letter to Prime Minister Rabin, Arafat renounced violence and recognized Israel's right to exist, an act that redefined Palestinian national strategy. Yitzhak Rabin's remarks at the signing ceremony similarly invoked a discursive shift when he described the agreement as "the victory of hope over fear."[64] Israel and the United States must acknowledge this reality, and mutual, simultaneous recognition between Israel and the PLO marked a constructive turning point, an essential step that opened the possibility for a more sustainable peace process grounded in international law. However, domestic identity debates quickly intensified. Opposition to Oslo grew strongly within Israel's national-religious and right-wing groups. Many felt giving up land violated core beliefs and national identity. As leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu criticized Rabin's approach and some religious figures opposed any territorial compromise, fringe groups' invocations of *din rodef* ("law of the pursuer") highlighted the intensity of internal contestation. Rabin's 1995 assassination became the stark symbol of this deep internal resistance to the peace process.[65]

Institutionalism illuminates how Oslo attempted to operationalize cooperation despite these ideological divides. The creation of the PA, territorial divisions into Areas A, B, and C, and new administrative and security bodies structured daily interaction between the parties. These mechanisms aimed to generate predictable routines, reduce uncertainty, and gradually

63 "Remarks by President Clinton, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, PLO Executive Council Member Mr. Mahmud Abbas, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Chairman Yasser Arafat in Ceremony for the Signing of the Israel-Palestinian Agreement," Office of the Press Secretary, https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1993/09/1993–09–13–remarks-by-the-president-and-others-at-israel-palestinian-sig.html.

64 "Israel-PLO Recognition-Exchange of Letters between PM Rabin and Chairman Arafat," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 9, 1993, https://www.gov.il/en/pages/israel-plo-recognition-exchange-of-letters-between-pm-rabin-and-chairman-arafat-sept-9–1993.

65 Avi Weitzman, "A Tale of Two Cities: Yitzhak Rabin's Assassination, Free Speech, and Israel's Religious-Secular Kulturkampf," *Emory International Law Review* 15, no. 1 (2001): 1–86.

build trust.[66] Yet the same institutional design revealed inherent weaknesses – interim bodies held limited authority, final-status issues were postponed, and ongoing settlement expansion raised doubts among Palestinians about the credibility of the process. Chen Kertcher's research on Israeli-Palestinian medical training programs during the Oslo period shows how sectoral cooperation functioned both as a practical institution and as a space of identity transformation. By institutionalizing regular professional interaction, these initiatives supported the institutionalist logic of routine cooperation while also reflecting constructivist insights about how shared norms and perceptions can gradually emerge even within a conflict environment. These forms of technical collaboration reinforced the broader political framework established by the Declaration of Principles.[67] Edward Said argued that Oslo institutionalized an unequal framework that left the core issues of occupation, settlements, borders, and sovereignty untouched, producing what he called a "process without peace." For Said, the Accords reflected structural asymmetry rather than genuine self-determination, enabling Israel to consolidate control while offering Palestinians only limited administrative authority.[68] However, deep-seated societal mistrust persists, demonstrating that regional stability remains shaped more by coercive strength than by transformed political relationships, creating an uneasy and potentially reversible status quo.

The Taba Summit and Intensified Diplomacy

From the late 1990s onward, diplomacy intensified around unresolved final-status issues. The 2000 Camp David Summit and the 2001 Taba Summit narrowed gaps on territory and Jerusalem but failed to reach an agreement acceptable to both sides. The eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 hardened public attitudes and strengthened rejectionist actors, reducing the political space for compromise. Unofficial initiatives like the 2003 Geneva

66 "Oslo Accords," Makan, https://www.makan.org.uk/hub/glossary/oslo_accords/.

67 Chen Kertcher, "Grassroots Medical Peacebuilding: Training Palestinian Pysicians in Israel," *Medicine, Conflict, and Survival* 30, no. 3 (2014): 190–212.

68 Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (Vintage, 2007).

Accord outlined detailed proposals, including land swaps and shared arrangements for Jerusalem, but lacked formal endorsement.[69] The 2003 Roadmap to Peace drafted by "the Quartet" (the US, the UN, Russia, and the EU) proposed a phased approach: Palestinian institution-building and an end to violence, a state with provisional borders, and final-status negotiations.[70] Nevertheless, the gap between the number of peace plans and the absence of a final settlement highlights institutional and political constraints on translating diplomatic blueprints into practice.

Fragmented Actors and the Dynamics of Diplomatic Breakdown

Wendy Pearlman and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham show that fragmented nonstate actors generate competing agendas and veto players, increasing the likelihood of internal defection and conflict escalation.[71] Andrew Kydd argues that mistrust and strategic uncertainty empower spoilers who can undermine credible commitments between negotiating parties.[72] The internal fragmentation of both Israeli and Palestinian politics has further complicated peacemaking.[73] On the Palestinian side, the division between Fatah, dominant in the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, and Hamas, in control of Gaza since 2007, has produced rival centers of authority with divergent strategies.[74] Hamas refuses to recognize Israel and has engaged in recurrent bouts of armed confrontation, including rocket fire and armed incursions, leading Israel and many Western governments

69 Elie Podeh, "Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative, 2002–2014: A Plausible Missed Opportunity," *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014): 584–603.

70 Institute for Palestine Studies, "Special Documents: The Road Map," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 4 (2003): 83–99.

71 Wendy Pearlman and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, "Nonstate Actors, Fragmentation, and Conflict Processes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (2012): 3–15.

72 Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

73 Oren Barak, "The Failure of the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process, 1993–2000," *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 6 (2005): 719–736.

74 Shmuel Even, "'The Decision that Changed History': Ten Years since the Disengagement from the Gaza Strip," *Strategic Assessment* 18, no. 2 (2015): 73–88.

to designate it a terrorist organization.[75] Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza in 2005 removed settlements and permanent troops but retained control over airspace, maritime access, and most border crossings, sustaining debates over the territory's legal status and fueling cycles of blockade and conflict.[76] On the Israeli side, coalition politics give significant influence to parties opposed to far-reaching territorial concessions or a fully sovereign Palestinian state.[77] Settlement advocates and religious-nationalist actors have mobilized effectively to constrain leaders inclined toward compromise. Violence between Hamas and Israel has recurred in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014, 2021, 2022, and from 2023 to date. Over these cycles, Israel has adopted a process of what it calls "mowing the grass": periods of uneasy coexistence with Hamas broken by military operations meant to weaken its capabilities and restore deterrence before returning to a temporary status quo.[78]

International diplomacy has increasingly grappled with the erosion of the two-state framework on the ground. The State of Palestine holds "Permanent Observer State" status at the UN and, as of September 2025, is recognized as a sovereign state by 157 of the 193 UN member states, or just over 80%. Recent recognitions by European and other states have aimed to signal support for Palestinian self-determination and revive prospects for a negotiated two-state solution.[79] At the same time, key actors, including the United States and Israel, maintain that statehood should emerge from direct negotiations rather than prior recognition, and some Israeli officials openly question the desirability of a Palestinian state. The United States argues that final status must emerge from direct talks rather than

75 Hsiu-Ping Bao, "Hamas' Political Transformation and Engagement, 2003–2013" (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2016).

76 "Fact Sheet: Legal Status of the Gaza Strip," Institute for Middle East Understanding, June 19, 2023, https://imeu.org/resources/gaza/fact-sheet-legal-status-of-the-gaza-strip/178.

77 "Knesset Plenum Votes in Favor of Declaration Stating that Parliament Opposes the Establishment of a Palestinian State," Knesset News, July 18, 2024, https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press18724w.aspx.

78 Robert Barron, "Obstacles and Opportunities in the Pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian Peace," Baker Institute for Public Policy, March 12, 2025, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/obstacles-and-opportunities-pursuit-israeli-palestinian-peace.

79 Farnaz Fassihi, Thomas Fuller, and Catherine Porter, "France and Other Nations Recognize Palestinian Statehood at U.N. Summit," *New York Times*, September 22, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/09/22/world/united-nations-assembly.

through international recognition, and its repeated use of the Security Council veto has blocked efforts to upgrade the Palestinian side's diplomatic standing.[80] These developments highlight how power asymmetries and veto structures shape not only recognition debates but also the broader conditions under which a negotiated peace might eventually take place.[81]

Under Benjamin Netanyahu's governments (1996–1999; 2009–2021; 2022–present), the negotiating track remained largely frozen, and proposals for statehood beyond Israeli control were rejected.[82] Regional alignments have also evolved. The 2020 Abraham Accords normalized relations between Israel and several Arab and Muslim-majority states, focusing on trade, technology, and shared security concerns, particularly regarding Iran. The Accords differed from these past agreements by emphasizing growth in bilateral trade, economic cooperation, and people-to-people diplomacy alongside security cooperation and coordination.[83] These agreements reduced Israel's regional isolation but did not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, raising questions about whether normalization without parallel political progress can contribute to or undermine a comprehensive settlement. Altogether, this historical development reveals why the peace process has repeatedly stalled. Successive diplomatic initiatives have reduced the risk of large-scale interstate war and produced important forms of cooperation but have not resolved core questions concerning borders, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, and mutual recognition.[84] Structural power asymmetries, fragmented leaderships, conflicting historical narratives, and weak enforcement of international norms continue to narrow the space for a negotiated settlement.[85] Any future

80 Edith M. Lederer, "UN Assembly Approves Resolution Granting Palestine New Rights and Reviving Its UN Membership Bid," *AP*, May 10, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/un-resolution-palestinians-membership-rights-us-assembly-875560e897f27d6600090420f36404e4.

81 "Security Council Fails to Recommend Full United Nations Membership for State of Palestine, Owing to Veto Cast by United States," United Nations, April 18, 2024, https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15670.doc.htm.

82 Fakhro, *The Abraham Accords*.

83 Eli Sperling and Elizabeth Trumpfheller, "Can Bilateralism Endure? The 2023–25 Gaza War and the Abraham Accords Framework," *Journal of Strategic Security* 18, no. 3 (2025): 101–113.

84 Alexander Betts, *Protection by Persuasion: International Cooperation in the Refugee Regime* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

85 John Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power* (Temple University Press, 2005).

process will have to address these accumulated layers of constraint if it is to move beyond managing conflict toward a more durable political resolution.

The Abraham Accords and the Future of Regional Peace

The Abraham Accords should be approached through the intersection of strategic incentives, identity shifts, and emerging institutional ties. Realism explains how the shared perception of Iran as a regional threat made cooperation with Israel strategically attractive for the UAE and Bahrain. The UAE′s and Bahrain′s decision to pursue normalization despite minimal public support reflects a strategic recalibration driven by shifting regional power dynamics. As Elham Fakhro argues, Gulf leaders increasingly viewed the post-2006 regional environment marked by Iran′s expanding nuclear program, the destabilizing effects of the Arab Spring, and the perceived imbalance created by the 2015 JCPOA as one in which traditional diplomatic norms no longer guaranteed security.[86] Constructivism reveals how leaders reframed normalization as a modern, pragmatic choice aligned with national visions. Institutionalism helps assess how new economic platforms, aviation agreements, and cooperation councils created routines that moved normalization beyond symbolism. Statements by Emirati and Bahraini officials underscore that normalization was framed domestically as part of a broader vision of modernization, technological advancement, and regional integration. UAE Minister Anwar Gargash described the accords as "a strategic recalibration aligned with national development goals."[87]

By 2024, bilateral trade exceeded USD 3 billion, and regular flights connected Tel Aviv and Dubai.[88] Joint ventures in technology, energy, and security advanced quickly, reflecting how institutionalized economic cooperation can generate predictability and reduce

86 Fakhro, *The Abraham Accords*.

87 UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "UAE's Signing of Peace Accord with Israel," September 10, 2020. https://www.mofa.gov.ae/en/mediahub/news/2020/9/10/10-09-2020-uae-peace

88 "Israel, UAE Trade to Exceed $3 Billion by Year-End," AA Peace Institute, May 16, 2023, https://www.aapeaceinstitute.org/latest/israel-uae-trade-to-exceed-3–billion-by-year-end.

transaction costs. Multilateral frameworks struggled even more. The Abraham Accords are not a side note but a window into the geopolitical and economic shifts that have shaped the region over the past 25 years. They reflect a level of diplomatic, strategic, economic, security, and cultural normalization that is unprecedented in Arab-Israeli relations and far more expansive than the limited, cold peace that followed Israel's earlier agreements with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.[89] As Fakhro argues, the Accords largely bypass Palestinian concerns and instead consolidate cooperation among states seeking to navigate a turbulent regional order dominated by powerful political and financial actors.[90]

From a realist standpoint, the Abraham Accords emerged because key regional actors saw strategic benefit in normalization rather than reconciliation. The UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and later Sudan pursued ties with Israel to strengthen security, gain technological advantages, and secure US support. As President Trump repeatedly framed it, the Accords represented a path to "long-term stability," although analysts noted that this stability was grounded more in converging threat perceptions, particularly Iran, than in conflict resolution.[91] The durability of the Accords suggests that institutions can manage conflict but cannot resolve its root causes. Without mechanisms to address Palestinian political rights, institutional cooperation risks functioning in parallel to, rather than in service of, a comprehensive peace.

A constructivist lens shows how changing regional narratives made the Accords possible but also why their future remains uncertain. The agreements shifted long-standing taboos by bringing relations with Israel "out into the open," as several analysts have observed. Cultural interaction increased, with Israeli tourists visiting Dubai in large numbers. However, this shift was uneven. Saudi Arabia's insistence on a "credible path to Palestinian statehood" reflects not only strategic calculation but also domestic expectations shaped by decades of regional discourse. Even Syria's new leadership in 2025 signaled

89 Chen Kertcher and Amira Schiff, "Unpacking Unofficial Normalization: Israel's Unofficial Relations with the UAE and the Abraham Accords," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 60, no. 6 (2024): 3943–3958.

90 Fakhro, *The Abraham Accords*.

91 Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai, "The Abraham Accords – Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?," *Marshall Center Security Insight* 64, October 2020, https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/abraham-accords-paradigm-shift-or-realpolitik.

an interest in engagement with Israel, illustrating how changing political identities can reshape diplomatic possibilities.[92]

The comparative patterns reveal that each agreement reflects a distinct balance between material incentives, identity reformulations, and institutional structures. Where these three dimensions aligned, as with Egypt and Jordan, peace proved durable. Where institutions were weak or identity transformation was incomplete, as in Oslo, outcomes remained fragile. The Abraham Accords demonstrate a new model of strategic normalization in which institutional cooperation expands despite the absence of conflict resolution. This cumulative pattern reinforces the argument that diplomacy has incrementally constructed a regional order shaped by layered practices rather than singular breakthroughs.

Table 1: Key Phases in the Arab–Israeli Conflict and Diplomacy[93]

Phase	Years	Significance
Interstate wars and first peace	1948–1979	Successive Arab-Israeli wars (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973) fix borders and power balances. The 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty proves land-for-peace is possible and brings Egypt into the US camp.
Oslo Accords and Palestinian nationalism	1980s–1990s	The PLO gains recognition. The First Intifada. The Madrid Conference opens direct negotiations. The Oslo Accords and the Jordan-Israel treaty formally embed the two-state idea but leave many core issues unresolved.
Collapse of Oslo Accords and fragmentation	2000–2014	The Second Intifada, the separation barrier, the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, Hamas' takeover, and repeated Gaza wars produce deep territorial and political fragmentation between the West Bank and Gaza and between Israel and multiple armed groups.
Regional realignment and "outside-in" peace	2015–2022	The focus shifts toward Iran and regional security. The Trump plan and the Abraham Accords show a new model where Arab states normalize relations with Israel even without a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

92 Times of Israel. 2025. "*Ahmed al-Sharaa Said to Seek Peace with Israel, Eyes Syrian Entry to Abraham Accords*."

93 Table sources: Sammy Westfall et al., "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Chronology," *Washington Post*, November 6, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/israel-palestine-conflict-timeline-history-explained/; "Timeline: Key Events in the Israel-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," American Jewish Committee, accessed January 26, 2026, https://www.ajc.org/IsraelConflictTimeline.

Conclusion

The analysis in this study shows that Arab-Israeli "peace" has never been a single breakthrough moment but a long, uneven process of partial accommodation. From the 1949 Armistice Agreements and the Egypt-Israel and Jordan-Israel treaties to the Oslo process and the Abraham Accords, agreements have functioned less as final settlements and more as incremental steps that reorder relations in limited ways. They have reduced the risk of large-scale interstate war, opened channels of communication, and created pockets of cooperation, yet they have not resolved core issues such as borders, Jerusalem, refugees, or the long-term status of the occupied territories. The region has thus moved from a state of total confrontation to one of fragile, institutionalized coexistence rather than to one of comprehensive or just peace.

The empirical findings underline that each agreement has been constrained by its own design. The Egypt-Israel and Jordan-Israel treaties embedded clear territorial arrangements, security guarantees, and monitoring mechanisms, which helps explain their durability. In contrast, Oslo deferred the hardest questions to future negotiations while realities on the ground continued to shift. This incremental structure created limited self-rule and security coordination, but it also deepened Palestinian skepticism as settlement expansion persisted. The Abraham Accords normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states without progress on Palestinian statehood, marking a further shift toward interest-driven regional alignment rather than conflict resolution.

The combined theoretical framework clarifies these uneven outcomes. Realism explains why durable agreements emerged when war became too costly and when leaders perceived negotiation as a path to survival or strategic gain, as seen in Egypt′s pursuit of Sinai and economic recovery, Jordan′s search for stability, and Gulf states′ alignment with Israel in response to Iranian power. Constructivism highlights how mutual recognition and shifts in political narratives exemplified in the Oslo process can make negotiation socially and politically conceivable, yet remain vulnerable to violence, mistrust, and unresolved historical claims. Institutionalism shows how joint committees, security coordination, and demilitarized zones can stabilize relations, while weak multilateral structures, veto politics, and limited enforcement capacity entrench a managed but unstable status quo.

Taken together, these findings suggest broader conclusions. Sustainable peace cannot rely on one dimension alone: security guarantees without recognition and justice produce "cold peace"; symbolic recognition without credible institutions leads to backlash; institutions without legitimacy or power become ineffective. Durable arrangements must therefore align material interests, evolving identities, and institutional design. External mediators – especially the United States – remain central, but their involvement is no substitute for local ownership. Agreements lacking broad domestic legitimacy have repeatedly proven fragile.

This study also has limitations, such as its focus on landmark agreements and its reliance on treaties, speeches, and secondary sources. Future research should integrate micro-level analyses of how different social groups experience peace processes, examine the effects of confidence-building measures and media framing, and pursue comparative work with cases such as Cyprus, Kashmir, or Northern Ireland. As Gulf states, the EU, China, and emerging technologies reshape regional politics, understanding how these forces intersect with long-standing security concerns and identity narratives will be essential for evaluating future diplomatic prospects.

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