

Impact of Abraham Accords on Iran's National Security

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my parents, my family members, my teachers especially my supervisor Dr. Sarwat Rauf.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAH	Asaib Ahl al-Haq
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AJC	American Jewish Committee
AMIA	American Medical Informatics Association
API	Arab Peace Initiative
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
EFPs	Explosively Formed Penetrators
<i>EJBMR</i>	<i>European Journal of Business and Management Research</i>
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICJ	The International Court of Justice
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IEPO	Environmental Protection Organization
IHRNGO	Iran Human Rights
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

KH	Kata'ib Hezbollah
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MESA	Middle East Strategic Alliance
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Mobarakeh Steel Plant
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
P.A	Palestinian Authority
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
QF	Quds Force
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SAVAK	Sazman-e Etelaat Va Amniat Keshvar
SM	Saraya al-Mukhtar
TSE	Tehran Stock Exchange
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
US	United States

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the changing political dynamics of the Middle East region after the Abraham Accords. The Trump administration facilitated the deal and thereby the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan recognized Israel. There are many underlying reasons for signing the pact, these motivations include political, economic as well as security. One of the major reasons is the threat from Iran. All the signatories of the Abraham Accords share rivalry with Iran, the security threats from Tehran have pushed the Arabs and Israel to join hands with each other. The study found that Israel's main concern of security is Iran and its extensive network of proxies; likewise, Iran's main fear is the United States, some Arab states, and Israel. So, the signing of the Abraham Accords appears as a nightmare for Iran and the Arab-Israeli rapprochement indicates serious fallouts for Tehran. The Abraham Accords directly impact the national security of Iran; hence, Iran uses proxies i.e., Iran exerts its influence over various institutes and non-state actors to achieve various security objectives to counter the underlying threats. The thesis finds that Tehran has been effective in maintaining a balance between its relationships with political leaders and its proxy clients thus far. Later the study examined that the Abraham Accords have further consolidated the relations between Tehran and some other states and non-state actors which share common objectives i.e., they oppose the United States, Israel, and some Arab states and support the Palestinian cause. It is determined that Iran will be able to accomplish its foreign policy objectives and increase its influence at a reduced cost by using proxy clients, provided that it has the flexibility to cut ties with them when necessary. The study is qualitative and uses secondary sources such as books, articles and updated online news and reports.

INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the impacts of the Abraham Accords on the national security of Iran and investigates Iran's strategies to balance the threat that has transformed into a new shape because of the Arab-Israeli rapprochement. The Arabs and Israel had been struggling over the Palestinian issue for a long time and it brought about different conflicts between the two.¹ However, over time, the struggle i.e., the Arab-Israeli conflict became less intense, and Arab states began to sign peace agreements with Israel to protect their interests while ignoring the Palestinian issue, which had been the primary cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel in the past.² For more than two decades, Israel maintained close ties with a few Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. At a ceremony held in the White House on September 15, 2020, in which UAE FM Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani and American President Donald Trump took part and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the agreement and normalized relations with the Jewish state. The agreement was later signed by Morocco and Sudan, two additional states that normalized their ties with Israel the same year. Saudi Arabia has chosen to have implicit normalization with Israel rather than signing the agreement formally like the above-mentioned states.³

The behaviour of Iran has an impact on the future, the more hostile Iran gets, the more likely countries who perceive threats from Tehran are to join and normalize ties with Israel, and Saudi Arabia is one of those states that might join the race to recognize Israel.⁴ The Abraham Accords are distinct from other peace agreements that were based on peace in exchange for lands occupied by Israel in 1967, such as the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement of 1978 and the agreement between Jordan and Israel i.e., the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement of 1994. Abraham Accords doesn't address the Palestinian issue; these are bilateral agreements based on Arab and Israeli security. Iran's national security is directly impacted by these states' development of relations with each

¹ Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar. "Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict a Primer." *Middle East Research and Information Project*, (2014). http://merip.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Primer_on_Palestine-IsraelMERIP_February2014final.pdf.

² Massimiliano Fiore. "The Abraham Accords and the Palestinian Issue." *E-International Relations*, (November 1, 2020). <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/01/the-abraham-accords-and-the-palestinian-issue/>.

³ Daniel Brumberg. "Saudi Arabia Prefers Implicit Normalization with Israel," *Arab Center Washington DC*, (2020). <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/saudi-arabia-prefers-implicit-normalization-with-israel/>.

⁴ Debbie Mohnblatt. "Greater Iranian Threat Brings Abraham Accords Countries Closer." *The Jerusalem Post* (2022). <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-702667>.

other including economic and security factors as a result of the rapprochement. Another outcome of this development is that it will allow Israel access to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. The United Arab Emirates views Iran as an adversary to its security and interests and the rapprochement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates means working together to fight against Iran. On August 18, 2020, the chief of Mossad visited the United Arab Emirates, which should be seen as a significant warning to Tehran since it clearly illustrates that the new agreement has strong potential on the security front as well. Furthermore, according to some sources, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco have lately shown an interest in the Iron Dome; obtaining Israel's Iron Dome may allow these states to minimize the threat presented by Iran's long-range weaponry.⁵ The United Arab Emirates may receive the Iron Dome missile system in response to the threat posed by separatists funded by Iran.⁶ Iron Dome is an all-weather air defence system that is intended to defend against a variety of incoming short-range weapons. It tracks incoming rockets with radar and can distinguish between missiles that are projected to land in unoccupied areas and those that are likely to strike populated areas. The system is believed to consist of ten batteries, each with three or four launchers, spread around Israel. Up to 20 rockets can fit inside each launcher. For every rocket deemed dangerous, two Tamir interceptor missiles are launched against it. According to estimates from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the production of a missile battery costs USD 100 million. But because it doesn't shoot rockets until they threaten populous regions, the system is regarded as cost-effective.⁷

Tehran poses a serious security threat to some Arab states and Israel. Iran's influence has grown, and it is regarded to be one of the key reasons leading to the normalization of ties and reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis. Saudi Arabia regards Iran as a nation that is attempting to spread its Shia ideology throughout the Middle East, whereas Saudi Arabia doesn't want any change and wants to maintain the existing state of affairs.⁸ Iran also faces significant security challenges from

⁵ Sina Azodi. "Why Is Iran Concerned about the Peace Agreement between the UAE and Israel?" *Atlantic Council*, (2020), 97–125. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/why-is-iran-concerned-about-the-peace-agreement-between-the-uae-and-israel/>.

⁶ TOI Staff. "Israel Said Ready to Sell Iron Dome to UAE, Build Regional Defenses against Iran." *Times of Israel* (2022). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-ready-to-sell-iron-dome-to-uae-build-regional-defenses-against-iran/>.

⁷ "Israel-Hamas conflict: What is Iron Dome?" *BBC News* (2023). <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ck5xyz29e470>

⁸ Al-Rasheed, Madawi, Pejman Abdolmohammadi and Jack McGinn. "Saudi Arabia and Iran beyond Conflict and Coexistence?" *Middle East Centre LSE Middle East Centre Report* (2018): 1–13. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/89829/1/MEC_Saudi-Arabia-Iran_Published.pdf.

the Arabs and Israel. Four Arab states already joined Israel in 2020, and now Israel and Saudi Arabia are trying with the idea of forging diplomatic ties. Tehran is worried about this development and is working to stop the Persian Gulf Arabs and Israel from coming together more. In this particular context, mending Israel's relations with the Arabs of the Persian Gulf is intended to accelerate regional integration at the expense of Iran. The Arab-Israeli rapprochement has made Tehran anxious; the Abraham Accords have opened a new series of security threats for Iran. The Abraham Accords pose direct impacts on the national security of Iran as the Arabs have joined hands with Israel. Now to counter these threats, Iran uses its decades-old policy of using proxies to secure its national security objectives and keep threats away from reaching its borders. Iran exerts its influence on some organizations and non-state actors to counter the US, Israel, and some Arab states in the region.

Statement of the Problem

Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has been facing sanctions, isolation, and threats from the United States and its Middle Eastern allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel. The toppling of traditional monarchies as a result of the Arab Spring changed the Middle East's political balance. Iran has gained diplomatic and security space as a result of the new regimes in Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. However, the Abraham Accords and the resultant Arab-Israeli rapprochement have added insecurity to Iran's national security calculus. Both Arabs and Israel pose existential threats to Iran's national security because they oppose the current administration and want a regime change in Tehran. In this scenario, the study revolves around the basic question, will the Arab-Israeli rapprochement trigger and incentivize the Iranian leadership to use proxies which includes the influence over non-state actors to enhance its sphere of influence and mitigate the evolving threats to regime security?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the nature and impacts of the Arab-Israeli rapprochement on Iran in the framework of the Abraham Accords.
2. To examine Iran's Middle East plans and actions in the context of the Abraham Accords.

Research Questions

1. How does Iran perceive Arab-Israeli rapprochement surfacing as a result of the Abraham Accords?
2. What specific national security threats are visualized by Iran as an outcome of the Abraham Accords?
3. How can Iran mitigate the threats against its national security?

Literature Review

The existing literature explains the Abraham Accords in detail. Most of the literature tries to explain the Abraham Accords and its economic and political impacts. It says that Iran and the Arab states have been in bitter relations for a long time. There are several underlying reasons behind it explained by the researchers. To understand the current scenario, one needs to understand Middle East politics first. The book titled, - *“The Arab World and Iran, A Turbulent Region in Transition”* - , written by Amin Saikal explains the crises that the Middle East is facing. The Middle East North Africa region has been facing serious crises for many years and is in serious transitional disorders. Iran's revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf War, the invasion of Iraq, and the Arab Spring have all altered the region's geopolitical environment. The Arab Spring was a glimpse of hope for democracy but only Tunisia succeeded in having a democratic government but still in vain as it is facing serious crises. Democracy in Egypt failed after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood which was designated as a terrorist party and Egypt reverted to an authoritarian government. The decades-old Israel-Palestine conflict is another security issue for the region. Along with that, the Middle East is home to most non-state entities which have been engaged in wars and are used by various states for their interests. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been involved in sectarian and power struggles which has added to the region's instability and resulted in one of the key causes of wars and instability. The issue of sectarian and ethnic exploitation has turned out to be a dominant feature in the region. The ongoing Syrian crisis is the best example of sectarian and ethnic exploitation and not only Syria but Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Bahrain are also included in this list.⁹ The paper “Strategic Dynamics of Iran-Gulf Cooperation Council Relations” by Anthony and John Duke explains the origins, dynamics and concerns of relations between Iran and the members

⁹ Amin Saikal. “The Arab World and Iran: A Turbulent Region in Transition”. *Springer*, (2016). <https://www.scribd.com/document/489553411/The-Arab-World-and-Iran-A-Turbulent-Region-in-Transition>

of the Gulf Cooperation Council. First of all, Iran is a country that is not Arab because of its different language and origins than Arabs. Millions of Iranians speak Farsi as their mother tongue. Another big reason behind the contention is the revolutionary and radical policies and system of governance of Iran, the Arab states don't want Iran to expand its ideology and revolution to other states. Arabs oppose the interference of Iran in the domestic matters of Arab League members such as Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine. Another point of contention is Iranian control of the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb, which the United Arab Emirates claims as part of its territory.¹⁰ The book titled, - "*The Iranian Revolution Ten Years Later: What Has Been Its Global Impact*"- written by Piscatori, John L. Esposito and James in 1989 sheds light on the changes and effects of the Iranian Revolution. Following the Iranian revolution, the region's political dynamics shifted, it not only impacted and changed the politics and domestic factors of Iran but the impacts of the revolution spilt over to other states too as Iran tried to expand its ideology by passing on its literature and funded and influenced the Shia population in other countries. The revolution had impacts on many Muslim states including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, Kuwait and Lebanon. That is why the Arab states feel threatened and oppose the policies of the Iranian revolution.¹¹ Following the revolution, the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war strained relations between Riyadh and Tehran. From that moment, ideological rivalry became more tense and it transformed into a political confrontation. Another main event was in 1987 when Irani pilgrims and Saudi police got into a confrontation that severed the rivalry as Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed Saudi Arabia as its main enemy. The main three reasons behind the Saudi-Iran rivalry are the ideological as well as cultural differences, the supremacy in the Persian Gulf and the struggle for The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) leadership.¹² Dr. Ehud Eilam in his book titled, - "*Israel, the Arabs and Iran; International Relations and Status Quo 2011-2016*"- writes about the geographic location of Israel, main events between 2011-2016 and its relations with the neighbouring states. Israel shares its borders with four states i.e., Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. Furthermore, Israel shares borders with two factions, Hamas in the Gaza Strip

¹⁰ John Duke Anthony. "Strategic dynamics of Iran–GCC relations." *Industrialization in the Gulf: A Socioeconomic Revolution* (2010): 78-102. <https://ncusar.org/pubs/2010/08/strategic-dynamics-of-iran-gcc-relations/>

¹¹ Rahnema, Saeed, and John L. Esposito. "The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact." *International Journal* 46, no. 2 (1991): 365. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202872>.

¹² Amirahmadi, Hooshang, and Nader Entessar, eds. *Iran and the Arab World*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, (1993). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22538-5>.

and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, but Israel having advanced technology has proven to be the military force in the region, and no Arab state has been able to defeat Israel. Israel can topple Hamas but Israel stays away from invading lands and interfering in domestic politics of the Arabs. Egypt has been busy with its domestic hardships; Syria has been facing civil war since 2011 so such a setting gave leverage to Israel. Also, Egypt opposes Hamas which is why Egypt acted as a peace broker in the 2014 confrontation between Israel and Hamas. Israel is worried about the nuclear program of Iran and its proxy Hezbollah. Israel has carried out several operations to block the arms supply that Iran delivers to Hezbollah. Hezbollah has been working for Iran to save the Assad regime in Syria. Hezbollah and Israel would go into a war if Israel directly attacked Iran's nuclear program. Israel is very concerned about Libya as the instability in Libya has created a breeding ground for the terrorists and smuggling of weapons.¹³ The book, - "*Why Israel Can't Wait; The Coming War Between Israel and Iran*," written by Jerome R. Corsi talks about the intensity of rivalry between Israel and Iran. According to Corsi, the war between the two is inevitable once Iran succeeds in developing a nuclear weapon. According to Netanyahu, Israel is a small state and a single atomic bomb would be enough to destroy it. Iran has developed modern missiles and soon it will acquire nuclear weapons as Iran has developed all the necessary components required in acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran's nuclear capability would pose a significant threat to Israel, as Iran wishes to fully erase Israel from the map. Furthermore, the writer explains the relationship between Iran, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Syria, Hezbollah and the proxies used to counter Israel in the region.¹⁴ Fathi Dazi-Héni in the article, "The Gulf States and Israel after the Abraham Accords" talks about the reasons behind the Arabs joining Israel. The Arab states need to normalize relations with Israel, the rivalry with Iran has urged Arab states to join Israel to counter Iran, the common threat. The normalization of Israel's relations with Arab states has altered the status quo of the previous seven decades. The Arabs, who were once rivals of Israel have joined hands and formed diplomatic relations with Israel. Some Arab states have formally recognized Israel and have developed diplomatic and economic ties while some states don't have formally declared but have good informal relations with Israel such as Saudi Arabia. The United

¹³ Ehud Eilam. "Israel, the Arabs and Iran International Relations and Status Quo, 2011–2016." 2: *Routledge*, (2018). <https://www.routledge.com/Israel-the-Arabs-and-Iran-International-Relations-and-Status-Quo-2011-2016/Eilam/p/book/9780367890865>

¹⁴ Jerome R Corsi. "Why Israel Can't Wait: The Coming War between Israel and Iran." *Simon and Schuster*, (2009). <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Why-Israel-Cant-Wait/Jerome-R-Corsi/9781439183014>

Arab Emirates was the first state in the Arabs to sign the Abraham Accords, breaking the Arab world's long status quo. The relations opened a window for Arab states to pursue peace with Israel and consolidate relations with the US. Another reason for the normalization of Arab-Israel ties is the common enemy Iran, Arab states and Israel have teamed up to counter Iran.¹⁵ Aziz Ur Rehman sheds light on the prominent reasons behind the Arab-Israeli rapprochement. Arabs had strong reasons to sign the deal with Israel. The first reason is the threat from Iran, second reason is the hegemonic ambitions of non-Arab states which include Iran as well as Türkiye. The third reason is the relations between the Arabs and the US, the Arabs need the support of and good relations with Washington for security as well as safety of oil routes. Another reason behind the deal is the security perspective, the Arabs needed security against certain threats and Israel has impressive technology and experience in this regard and it would help the Arabs in filling the security vacuum. The Arabs face a serious threat to their governments as some groups reject the monarchy such as ISIS wants to eliminate monarchs.¹⁶ Astorino-Courtois and Dr. Allison explain the future security perspectives of the Abraham Accords. Iran wouldn't be much affected if the Abraham Accords resulted in diplomatic and economic cooperation only. Iran wouldn't face grave security threats if the pact had a diplomatic and economic nature only and no military and security aims. The effects of the Abraham Accords depend on how far the normalization goes between the Arabs and Israel. The military cooperation if taken place between the Arab states and Israel would have direct impacts on Iran's security. If the agreement includes sales and purchase and stationing of weapons, stationing of the Israel Defense Forces in the Gulf region, exchanging military and intelligence information and operations would directly impact Iran. Iran would counter the security threat through various means like Iran has been using social media (cyber means) to support its ideology, and Iran has a great influence on many political parties as well as non-state entities. Iran has made a strong presence in Lebanon and Syria to counter Israel, and Iran is fighting Saudi Arabia in

¹⁵ Fatiha Dazi-Héni. "The Gulf States and Israel after the Abraham Accords," (2020). https://www.arab-reform.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Arab_Reform_Initiative_en_the-gulf-states-and-israel-after-the-abraham-accords_14899.pdf.

¹⁶ Aziz Ur Rehman. "Causes behind the Abraham Accord and Its Consequences for the Peace Process in the Middle." *The Middle East International Journal for Social Sciences (MEIJSS)* 2, no. 4 (2020): 73–82. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346879739_Causes_behind_the_Abraham_Accord_and_its_consequences_for_the_Peace_Process_in_the_Middle_East

Yemen. Iran has great influence in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria as well. Along with that, Iran is being supported by a great population in Bahrain because of religious affiliation.¹⁷

Literature Gap

The available literature explains the Arab-Israeli rapprochement and its impacts but a lack can be seen vis-à-vis the impacts of the Abraham Accords on Iran's national security. Furthermore, the existing literature doesn't explain the policies and strategies that Iran might follow to counter and defend itself from the threat that has transformed as a result of the Arab-Israel rapprochement, there is no proper theoretical framework that explains the phenomenon. So, the question arises, how and why Iran might influence the like-minded political parties and non-state entities in the region to balance and defend its national security against the growing Arab-Israel ties? Furthermore, the existing literature doesn't shed light on the population in Arab countries that is in opposition to Israel and the Abraham Accords which Iran might influence to secure its security interests.

Core Argument

The Arab-Israeli rapprochement called the Abraham Accords has made Iran apprehensive. Hence, Tehran exerts its influence over like-minded political parties, organizations and non-state actors via proxies to counter the threats that surfaced as a result of the Abraham Accords for the sake of its national security.

Theoretical Framework

Realism is a structural theory centered on the idea that the necessity of a state's survival in anarchic society determines its foreign policy. States are forced to maximize power or security due to the instability brought forth by anarchy, and this is based only on perceived threats and relative capabilities. The realist paradigm can be divided into three primary theories: neorealism, neoclassical realism, and classical realism. Neoclassical realism is a response to neorealism's failure to forecast and evaluate foreign policy behaviour. Neorealism is a highly abstract theory that is primarily defined by explanations of the balance of power. Here is a further breakdown of neoclassical realism theory. Neoclassical realists share the same theory as neorealists, namely that

¹⁷ Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois. "The Abraham Accords and Iran's Unconventional Warfare Activities | NSI," (2020). <https://nsiteam.com/the-abraham-accords-and-irans-unconventional-warfare-activities/>.

state leaders evaluate potential external threats from other nations by determining their relative capabilities before determining how to best use their power and security. Rather than assuming that states only respond in a self-help manner to the international order of states created by anarchy in the system, neoclassical realists view unit-level factors, such as regime ideology, regime type, and nationalism, as the intervening variables between structure and foreign policy outcomes. Waltz's balance of power theory and neorealism's inability to account for domestic-level variables are criticized by Randall Schweller because structural theory falls short of explaining state behaviour in the international system.¹⁸ Because neoclassical realists like Schweller emphasize the significance of domestic "... interests, values, ideology, and strategic beliefs...", their studies of foreign policy incorporate unit-level factors. The term "neoclassical realism" was first used by Gideon Rose in his article "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy" to refer to a theory that rejects neorealism by introducing sub-systemic factors into an analysis that nevertheless views systemic constraints as the primary source of foreign policy constraints. Rose argues in his paper that neoclassical realism is a response to neorealism's critics because neorealism's attempt to "black-box" the state falls short of providing a complete explanation for how foreign policy decisions are made.¹⁹

Neoclassical realists, according to Jennifer Sterling-Folker, hold that decision-makers in foreign policy are mainly constrained at the systemic level and subsequently restrained at the sub-systemic level.²⁰ According to her, the domestic process is a contextual factor that operates inside a particular environment. All processes are included in the anarchic environment and are under pressure, but domestic processes will eventually give rise to their interests and behaviours, and these will influence the decisions that actors make to cope with the anarchic environment's pressures.²¹

¹⁸ Randall L. Schweller. "Neorealism's status-quo bias: What security dilemma?." *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996): 90-121. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09636419608429277>

¹⁹ Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds. *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*. Cambridge University Press, (2009). <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/neoclassical-realism-the-state-and-foreign-policy/D429E8219FAB58A9A6636E1766818912>

²⁰ Sterling-Folker, Jennifer. "Realist environment, liberal process, and domestic-level variables." *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997): 1-25. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600905>

²¹ Genevieve, S. "Neoclassical Realism, Strategic Culture, and Iran's Postrevolutionary US Foreign Policy." (2011). https://books.google.com.pk/books/about/Neoclassical_Realism_Strategic_Culture_a.html?id=w4gXtwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y

Neoclassical realism tries to describe the foreign policy process in addition to defining international relations by adding intervening elements while still recognizing the systemic environment. The degree to which neoclassical realism contributes to the explanation of Iran's foreign policy toward the United States, Israel and the Arabs can be ascertained by comprehending the foreign policy expectations of neoclassical realists and contrasting them with Iran's historical record. Iran's regional aspirations and its response to perceived American imperialism in the region's attempts to physically encircle it contribute to the explanation of how the country's regional environment and aspirations combine to produce a power-politics-style foreign policy toward the United States and its allies that are both reactionary toward them and an effort to win over Arab and domestic public opinion. This is the reason Iran continues to pursue its nuclear goals, provides Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, PIJ and Hamas in Gaza with billions of dollars to fight proxy wars in Israel, and seeks to exert as much influence as possible in Iraq by arming government officials with cash and providing tactical and financial support to Shi'ite militias. It is not good news for Israel's security that Iran now has more sway over the Lebanese government as a result of the recent shift in Hezbollah leadership in Lebanon.

In conclusion, because of its ideology and desire to become the dominant nation in the region, one should anticipate hostile actions by the Iranian regime regarding Israel and the US presence in the region. Morgenthau's focus on the reality that foreign policy is best made when the motivations of other governments are known highlights the significance of articulating expectations for Iran's foreign policy.²² Many, however, have written on the reality that theories of neorealism and classical realism—of which Morgenthau is a member—can only adequately explain the dynamics of the systemic environment and international relations. Realist theories merely describe the international system and fall short of understanding the why of foreign policy because they neglect to account for crucial elements like regime ideology, regime type, and military doctrine. By accepting systemic limitations and making an effort to comprehend the domestic issues that influence foreign policy decisions, neoclassical realism manages to get around this issue. Cultural

²² Morgenthau, Hans Joachim, Kenneth W. Thompson, and W. David Clinton. "Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace." (1985). <https://search.worldcat.org/title/politics-among-nations-the-struggle-for-power-and-peace/oclc/230770392?referer=di&ht=edition>

arguments, on the other hand, contend that culture is the main factor limiting the formulation of foreign policy. They fall on the opposite extreme of the classical realism theory spectrum.

Iran has been using a vast network of proxy groups outside of its borders to increase its influence abroad. Iran has a great influence over various organizations and non-state actors, these diverse networks of proxies have been effective in carrying out Iranian foreign policy throughout the region.

Research Methodology

The research is based on the qualitative approach and qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis are used. To conduct an objective analysis, primary and secondary data sources are used. The primary sources of data include speeches. Secondary sources of data include books, journals, research articles, research papers, magazines and newspapers. The primary and secondary sources are used from all sides i.e., the Arab, Israel and Iranian sources as the envisioned objective of the research is to be neutral and not biased. Qualitative research methods are being used as they help to analyze the problems deeper and help to discover individual views and new thoughts. Another reason for using qualitative methods is it allows researchers to be more speculative about the areas they choose to investigate. Lastly, because qualitative research can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent, the interactive approach to qualitative research has a flexible structure. By using qualitative research methods, an issue can be thoroughly and appropriately analyzed, and participants have enough freedom to choose what is consistent for them. As a result, the complicated issues are simple to comprehend. Quantitative research methods are not used as they are limited and rely on numerical data only and researchers get less insights into the thoughts. Another reason for not using quantitative methods is that it may not capture human experience and richness.

Significance of the Study

This research examines the Abraham Accords, as well as the regional developments brought about by Arab-Israeli reconciliation and the existential dangers to Iran's security. Divided into different chapters, the research explores the Abraham Accords and their regional impacts as well as their impact on Iran. The main focus of this study is on a new dimension i.e., Iran's novel approach

towards like-minded groups. It would explore the policies and strategies that Iran follows or is likely to follow to counter newly emerging threats. Hence, it investigates the relations of Iran with different Arab states, political parties and non-state actors in the region. It would help readers in understanding the nature of the rivalry between the parties that shape the politics in the region and the strategies that states are following to counter the perceived threats. The study is unique as previous researches focus on Arab-Israel relations but one could hardly understand the Abraham Accords' impact on Iran. In this way, this study would contribute to the intellectual growth of students and scholars working in the same domain. The scope of the study is not limited to readers only, but students of international relations and policymakers can derive ideas as policy options. The research would help the students, scholars and policymakers to understand Tehran's policies to counter the threats that surfaced as the result of the Abraham Accords. Moreover, the research helps the readers understand a clear image of the rivalry between Iran and the Arabs and Israel. The readers will also get to know the influence of Iran over some states as well as non-state entities.

Delimitations

The Abraham Accords, its impact on Iran's national security, and the approaches of Iran to mitigate the threats are presented in this study. Hence, the era of 2020 to 2023 is my main focus.

Organization of the Study

There are six parts to the study.

The first part of the research comprises of introduction which explains the theory, statement of the problem, research methodology, objectives, research questions, hypothesis, significance and limitations of the study.

Chapter one titled "Unpacking the Abraham Accords; Analyzing Arab-Israeli Rapprochement" focuses on the Abraham Accords. This is an attempt to analyze the nature of the agreement, the motives behind the Arab-Israeli rapprochement and the changes in the region after the pact.

Chapter two is "The Abraham Accords; Threats to Iran". It investigates the Iranian perceptions of the setting and the security threats that Iran faces as the threats have transformed into a new shape because of the Abraham Accords.

Chapter three “Iranian Sphere of Influence” focuses on Iran’s pursuit to strengthen and enlarge its influence in the region, it discusses Tehran's plans for achieving this aim via influencing numerous governments, political parties, and non-state groups in the region through proxies.

Chapter four “Iran’s Vulnerabilities for Regime Security” explicates the weaknesses of Iran that are directly linked to its national security. It explains the domestic as well as foreign factors that are vulnerable to Iran’s security.

The study's results and conclusions are in the final section. This final component of the research includes the entire set of findings and results.

CHAPTER 1

UNPACKING THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: ANALYZING ARAB-ISRAELI RAPPROCHEMENT

This chapter reveals the Abraham Accords and its nature along with the motivations behind the Pact. Furthermore, it would elaborate on economic as well as security, short-term and long-term impacts and criticism of the Abraham Accords would be discussed in the chapter.

On September 15, 2020, two Arab governments from the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, signed a peace pact and formally normalized ties with Israel, signaling a significant shift in the region's politics and marking the beginning of a new chapter in Middle Eastern history. The agreement was brokered by President Donald Trump right before a few weeks of the elections. Later the same year, Sudan and Morocco joined the race of normalizing ties with the Jewish state and became the part of Abraham Accords. So, overall, four countries in four months have signed the Abraham Accords and normalized ties with Israel (See Appendix 1). The nature of the Abraham Accords is quite different than the Israeli-Jordanian or the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreements as those treaties were based on peace in exchange for occupied land by Israel while the Abraham Accords ignored the issue of Palestine. Abraham Accords has been seen as a great turn in Middle East politics since Nixon's Twin Pillar Policy. Nixon's Twin Pillar Policy was an approach that enlisted Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two Muslim states as protectors of US interests in the region, specifically to resist the Soviet Union and its communism. Iran was a great ally of the US at that time, Iran even participated militarily in Iraq and Oman with US approbation. The policy collapsed when the Shah of Iran was thrown as the result of the revolution in 1979 and since then, the relations between Iran and the US have been unpleasant.

The main areas identified for understanding the significance of the Accords include:

Empowering economic participation at individual-to-individuals level through financial motivating programs.

Accepting social differences through cultural exchange programs.

Extending interfaith ventures across the regions.

Enhancing technological participation on issues of shared interest.

1.1 Motives behind the Pact

However, while not explicitly stated or acknowledged in the treaty, one of the key reasons for the agreement is to address the regional danger posed by Iran and its proxies. Israel and The United Arab Emirates shared security ties before but the pact brought them into open.²³ Since around 2011, it has been certain that Israel and the UAE share a common enemy i.e., Iran, in the region, which has given shared belief to the foundation of more profound security relations. Factors like mistrust and instability in the region, particularly with Tehran's foes, are developing pressures between the states.²⁴ Iran perceives itself as the dominant power in the region, Iranians on the Arabian Peninsula have been occupied for a long time and have been trying to grow their influence through Hezbollah and other actors. The US has a Fifth Fleet base in Bahrain, the naval base through which it conducts its operations in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, Iran is aiming to seize control of Bahrain, and this security threat was one of the key reasons for Bahrain's signing of the agreement with Israel.²⁵ Second, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, perceptions of the Arab Gulf states' national security shifted. As a result of the shattered notions of security and stability that resulted from the Gulf War between 1990 and 1991, governments were forced to reevaluate their perspectives on the strategic landscape of the region. Yasser Arafat, the PLO's leader, endorsed Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait, which outraged Gulf Cooperation Council member states and created a sense of betrayal that persists to this day.²⁶

Third, these nations don't have any kind of joint security structure. The US' interest in extra military intervention in the region has diminished after battling for about twenty years and that has resulted in a critical security vacuum. Hence, the nature of this relationship, its relative significance, and the probable dangers it poses for the two sides, specifically for the Gulf countries,

²³ Steven A. Cook. "What's Behind the New Israel-UAE Peace Deal." *Council on Foreign Affairs*, (2020).

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whats-behind-new-israel-uae-peace-deal>

²⁴ Sina Azodi. "Why is Iran concerned about the peace agreement between the UAE and Israel." *Atlantic Council*, (2020). <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/why-is-iran-concerned-about-the-peace-agreement-between-the-uae-and-israel/>

²⁵ Matthew Levitt. "Hezbollah's regional activities in support of Iran's proxy networks." *Middle East Institute*, (2021). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/hezbollahs-regional-activities-support-irans-proxy-networks>

²⁶ Uzi Rabi. "Qatar's relations with Israel: challenging Arab and gulf norms." *The Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3, (2009): 443-459. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20622930>

have to be thought of.²⁷ Fourth, The Arabs are feeling threatened by the non-Arab states in the region. There is a danger of hegemonic motivations from the non-Arab powers in the region that is a shared threat for the Arab states and Israel, whether it is from Iran or Türkiye.²⁸ Fifth, the Gulf States have traditionally had close connections with Washington to accomplish the usual goals of keeping peace in the Gulf as well as the security of oil resources and transportation, as these nations' economies rely heavily on oil.²⁹ The sixth factor is that the region's political and economic situation has changed significantly in recent years. Egypt's ambitions to be the Arab world's leader have been hampered by economic inactivity and Iraq has been at odds with Iran, the United States, and ISIS since the 1980s. The Arab Gulf States now have a chance to fill the power vacuum left by these two Arab states' i.e., Iraq's and Egypt's political, economic, military, and strategic downfall.³⁰

Seventh, the requirement for defence and monitoring systems rose for the Gulf states as an outcome of the regional uprisings. These states now need defence and monitoring systems to safeguard their interests and residents. Israel has impressive experience in this regard as it has fought wars with the Arabs and dominated Palestinians for many years Israel owns one of the most advanced arms and defence systems and is way more advanced in technology than the Arab states. The Arabs have been buying arms and weapons from the US but the Abraham Accords have made it possible for the Arab states to buy jets or any weapons from the US as well as Israel.³¹ The eighth reason, Prime Minister Netanyahu has faced consistent criticism that his approach towards Palestine would increase the chances of Israel's isolation abroad. A crucial component of Netanyahu's foreign policy is that it has enabled Israel to have reassuring relations with the states which didn't have pleasant relations with Israel, this has resulted in tackling his critics. Without a doubt, Netanyahu

²⁷ Omar Rahman. "What's behind the relationship between Israel and Arab Gulf states?" *The Brookings Institution*, (2019). <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/28/whats-behind-the-relationship-between-israel-and-arab-gulf-states/>

²⁸ Vali Nasr. "The Middle East's next conflicts won't be between Arab States and Iran'." *Foreign Policy* 2, (2021). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/02/the-middle-east-s-next-conflicts-wont-be-between-arab-states-and-iran/>

²⁹ Shibley Telhami. "The Persian Gulf: understanding the American oil strategy." *The Brookings Institution*, (2002). <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-persian-gulf-understanding-the-american-oil-strategy/>

³⁰ Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat. "Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States." *Atlantic Council*, (2020). https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Israel%27s+Growing+Ties+with+the+Gulf+Arab+States&btnG=

³¹ Barbara A. Leaf and Dana Stroul. "The F-35 Triangle: America, Israel, The United Arab Emirates." *War on the Rocks*, (2020). <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/the-f-35-triangle-america-israel-the-united-arab-emirates/>

has made significant gains in capitals across Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, while diverting Western Europe away from causing issues for Israel, the Gulf Arab governments remain the principal focus of that campaign.³²

Ninth, the United Arab Emirates, like Israel, faces the conundrum of Islamist parties such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas, all these non-state factions have close ties to their adversary Iran.³³ Tenth, the rise of Sunni jihadists in Yemen and Syria poses a threat to the Arab rulers in the region, particularly ISIS and other actors that need to clear out Arab rulers as they openly oppose Middle Eastern rulers reject the monarchies and fight for an Islamic-based government based on Shariah principles.³⁴ Eleventh, the Arab Spring was the Arabs' and their governments' realization that their fundamental concerns were internal rather than external forces or parties, and the demonstrations and disruptions were clear proof of this challenge.³⁵ The twelfth reason is that Arab rulers, such as the United Arab Emirates' Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, appear to be taking less responsibility for the Palestinian cause. In the middle of this, the flaws and dissatisfaction with the deeply established Palestinian cause have led the Arab states to feel somewhat more at liberty to pursue their proclivities.³⁶

The thirteenth explanation is Sudan established relations with Israel as it saw a chance to work on its political and economic circumstances. According to then-US President Trump's announcement, the US will engage with its foreign allies to reduce Sudan's debt, including progressing debt forgiveness negotiations. The US will take steps to reestablish Sudan's sovereign immunity. As

³² Eyal Ronen and Nimrod Goren. "Divisive Policies. Israel's Foreign Policy towards the EU and its Member States." *Israel's Foreign Policy towards the EU and its Member States* (2019). *Divided and Divisive: Europeans, Israel and Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking*, (2019). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3390978

³³ Jon Gambrell, Matthew Lee, and Josef Federman. 'Historic moment': Israel and UAE form deal, halt annexation. *The CS-Monitor*, (2020) <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2020/0813/Historic-moment-Israel-and-UAE-form-deal-halt-annexation>

³⁴ Shadi Hamid, William McCants, and Rashid Dar. "Islamism after the Arab Spring: Between the Islamic State and the nation-state." In *The Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World-US-Islamic World Forum Papers* 2015, (2017). <https://www.brookings.edu/research/islamism-after-the-arab-spring-between-the-islamic-state-and-the-nation-state/>

³⁵ Douglas J. Faith. Palestinians Can't Stand In the Way of Israel's Regional Integration. *Foreign Policy Magazine*, (2020). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/16/palestinians-cant-stop-israel-new-ties-gulf-states-transform-region-normalization-deal-middle-east-trump/>

³⁶ Aziz Ur Rehman. "Causes behind the Abraham Accord and its consequences for the Peace Process in the Middle East." *The Middle East International Journal for Social Sciences (MEIJSS)*, (2020). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346879739_Causes_behind_the_Abraham_Accord_and_its_consequences_for_the_Peace_Process_in_the_Middle_East

part of the deal, Donald Trump agreed to remove Sudan from the US list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, the SST list. This has made it impossible for the impoverished country to seek debt relief and international assistance for decades. Sudanese President Abdalla Hamdok extended gratitude to the US president in a tweet and according to the Sovereignty Council, Trump's decision to remove Sudan from the list of states that support terrorism is a significant development for Sudan that will affect not just the country's foreign ties but also its whole political and economic condition.³⁷ The fourteenth motive is Morocco's claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara. President Donald J. Trump reversed many years of US policy by saying that the US would regard Moroccan control over Western Sahara as part of an agreement in which Morocco would normalize ties with Israel on December 10, 2020. Despite a United Nations-declared truce in 1991 and continued UN Security Council efforts to seek an agreement, Morocco and the Polisario Front have not relinquished their claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara. Following Trump's statement, which effectively terminated over thirty years of support for UN-led discussions, the US is now at odds with the majority of the international community, which promptly condemned the US action as a violation of the right to self-determination.³⁸

1.2 The Security Dimensions

Given their basic significance, it is critical to have a greater understanding of the accords' security consequences, both for the signatories and the region as well. The Emirati and Bahraini navy staged their very first combined military exercise with Israeli ships in the Red Sea in November 2021, which was supported by the US Fifth Fleet, which is based in Manama. These four countries have never engaged in coordinated naval drills before. More concerted action at sea is planned in the future to combat weapons smuggling and other dangers presented by the Iranian navy.³⁹ Collaboration on air and missile defence between Israel and the Gulf Arab states is also expected

³⁷ Adela Suliman and Charlene Gubash. "Sudan formally recognizes Israel in U.S.-brokered deal" *NBC News*, (2020). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/sudan-formally-recognizes-israel-u-s-brokered-deal-n1240839>

³⁸ "United States Recognizes Morocco's Sovereignty Over Western Sahara." *American Journal of International Law* 115, no. 2 (2021): 318–23. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-journal-of-international-law/article/united-states-recognizes-moroccos-sovereignty-over-western-sahara/36A7A41EC0BB341D79CE4661EDD8B60E>

³⁹ "UAE, Bahrain, Israel and U.S. Forces in First Joint Naval Drill." *Reuters*, (2021). <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uae-bahrain-israel-us-forces-conduct-red-sea-military-exercise-2021-11-11/>

shortly. Both sides are concerned about Iran's drones and missiles, and they will almost certainly collaborate to construct a better defence against these hazardous weapons. The so-called "world's first energy-based" defence against drones and other short-range missiles, which Israel tested in March 2022, is significant to Gulf Arabs, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which have battled to evade strikes from Iran and the Houthi rebels. In any event, with marine security, aviation security, and digital protection, it's difficult to see how the Gulf and Israelis would pursue diverse types of security collaboration. In general, this is because the Israelis and Arabs have different strategic requirements and tactics for dealing with the Iranian threat. Regarding Iranian dangers, Israel prioritizes Iran's nuclear programme, which it views as an existential threat, while Arabs are concerned about Iran's political aggression. Israel undoubtedly worries about Iran's weapons and proxies, but a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that does not recognize Israel and refers to it as the Great Satan remains Israel's top worry. The Arabs are also concerned about Tehran having nuclear weapons because they realize it is impossible to prevent Iran from acquiring them. Furthermore, they believe it is a problem for the United States and the rest of the world to solve. Israel routinely employs kinetic operations to counter Iran's growing influence and military capabilities in countries such as Iraq and Syria. According to the Wall Street Journal, the Israeli military has launched more than four hundred airstrikes against Iran in the region in recent years.⁴⁰ The Israelis recognize that this use of force is not only successful but also critical in combating the Iranian threat. According to the Gulf Arabs, Iran's aggressive foreign agenda can only be controlled by defence and diplomacy. They are anxious about the ramifications of an escalation with Iran, which would be unfavorable if Iran retaliated militarily to assaults on them, particularly given their weaker trust in US insurance than at any point in recent memory. In contrast, Israel considers that its significant military superiority acts as a deterrence against things spiraling out of control, thus it is less concerned about an escalation with Iran. The Gulf Arabs are concerned about Israel's ability and readiness to attack Iranians at any time. If the Arabs get too near to Israel and begin laying out extra wide and major kinds of security engagement, such as supplying it with more information and military access, Tehran might launch an assault. For example, in 2019, Iran launched drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia in

⁴⁰ Dion Nissenbaum. "Israel's 'War between the Wars' with Iran Expands across Middle East." Wall Street Journal, (2022). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israels-war-between-the-wars-with-iran-expands-across-middle-east-11649595603>

response to Saudi Arabia's backing for the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, rendering the Gulf nations more exposed to the Abraham Accords. If the US negotiates a new agreement with Iran and transfers billions of dollars stuck in banks due to sanctions, the Gulf states' vulnerability would be exacerbated. On the other side, the more aggressive Iran grows, the stronger Israel's security connections with the Gulf states will become.⁴¹

Israel and Morocco inked a landmark deal in November 2021 that establishes the framework for future arms sales, intelligence sharing, and security collaboration. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in Rabat by Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and his Moroccan colleague Abdellatif Loudiyi as part of Gantz's first official visit to one of the Arab governments that normalized relations with Israel in 2020. According to a statement, Gantz said the deal was "very significant" and would allow for "exchange of ideas," "joint projects," and the prospect of Israeli military exports.⁴² In July 2022, Israel's army head arrived in Morocco to meet with top defence officials, Aviv Kohavi's visit to Rabat is the first formal visit by an Israeli army leader. Following the normalization of relations, the two countries expanded their collaboration.⁴³

The security cooperation agreement between Israel and Bahrain was signed during the Israeli defence minister's visit to Bahrain in February 2022, amid escalating tensions. According to a statement published by the Israeli Ministry of Defence, the structure of the MOU will facilitate any future cooperation in intelligence, mil-to-mil (military to military), industrial partnership, and other areas. According to an Israeli source, Israel's pact with Bahrain was the first of its sort with one of its new Gulf partners. The Israeli defence ministry reported Defence Minister Benny Gantz as stating, "One year after the Abraham Accords were signed, we negotiated a key defence accord that would benefit both nations' security and regional stability."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bilal Y. Saab. "The Security Dimension of the Abraham Accords" *Defense One*, (2022), <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/04/security-dimension-abraham-accords/366147/>.

⁴² "Morocco, Israel sign first-ever defence agreement in Rabat." *al-Jazeera*, (2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/24/morocco-israel-sign-first-ever-defence-agreement-in-rabat>

⁴³ "Israel army chief lands in Morocco for first visit as ties normalize." *Pakistan Today*, (2022). <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/07/19/israel-army-chief-lands-in-morocco-for-first-visit-as-ties-normalise/>

⁴⁴ "Israel, Bahrain sign security cooperation agreement in Manama." *al-Jazeera*, (2022). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/3/israel-bahrain-sign-security-cooperation-agreement-in-manama>

1.3 The Economic Dimensions

The plans are laid out on security and sharp awareness of the danger from Iran and the countries' common partner, the US. In addition, these arrangements also involve financial potential in trade, tourism, energy, technology, security, economy, climate change and health. In political terms, Israel ought to look for, however, much as could reasonably be expected, to include the Palestinians, Jordan, and Egypt in this economic dynamic, as up until this point, they have gained very less advantages from these arrangements.

The United Arab Emirates has an interest in building up its relations with the US, including securing admittance to cutting-edge American weapons. It also tries to position itself as a powerful regional player and win over the US administration over its disagreement with Qatar. In any case, obviously for the two of them, standing solidly in favour of Israel and the US makes them focus on the adversaries of regional actors like Iran what's more, its allies and proxies. The Abraham Accords additionally have huge financial advantages. Typically, the agreements with the Gulf states make it possible to uncover previously unknown or indirect financial activities with Israel, particularly to establish and expand financial ties in numerous fields like security, trade, travel industry, security, transport, correspondences, innovation, energy, finance, water and food security, climate and smart mobility. For instance, considering their environmental attributes (desert territory and increasing temperatures), the two sides could be extremely intrigued in a joint effort on environmental change issues, including water desalination which means removing salt from seawater, and agriculture. Joint efforts in the energy sector are believable in areas like sustainable energy and oil products that are transported to the West via the Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline. Israel might also see Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates as additional sources of oil and other goods. As per *EJBMR*, a European Journal, after one year of the Abraham Accords, the total volume of exchange between Israel and the United Arab Emirates added up to more than \$ 100 million every month.⁴⁵ According to CBS, the trade between the United Arab Emirates and Israel in 2021 topped 1.1 billion US dollars. Israel imported goods from the United Arab Emirates worth 771.5 million dollars in 2021, a great increase from 114.9 million dollars recorded in 2020. On the

⁴⁵ Manuel Fernandez. "Economic Dividends of the Abraham Accords." *European Journal of Business and Management Research* 6, no. 6, (2021). <https://www.ejbmr.org/index.php/ejbmr/article/view/1152/634>

other hand, the United Arab Emirates imported goods from Israel worth 383.2 million US dollars.⁴⁶ In May of 2022, Israel and the United Arab Emirates entered into a free trade agreement. This agreement aims to boost their annual trade to more than \$10 billion by removing most tariffs. It is anticipated that the comprehensive, significant, and ground-breaking agreement will increase bilateral trade in goods and services, boost Israeli exports to the United Arab Emirates, and provide tax exemptions for 96% of bilateral trade either immediately or gradually. The products will include agriculture, food, cosmetics, medical supplies, and more.⁴⁷

The Emirates may also serve as a source and focal point for a variety of interests. They could have added incentives for advantages that would incorporate the Palestinians, Egypt, and Jordan and license them to appreciate peace. Since the Palestinians believe that the United Arab Emirates has isolated them, this will give them a better public image and political advantages. Shared trading zones, investments in power plants, and possibly even the development of islands opposite the Gaza Strip are some of the topics on the table. Up until this point, arrangements between Israel and Arab parties have not taken into account the economic expectations of the two sides, which is one of the reasons for the ceasefires with Egypt and Jordan. In the year 2021, trade between Israel and Bahrain increased to \$7.5 million, with Israeli imports from Bahrain valued at \$3.5 million and Israeli exports to Bahrain valued at \$4 million in the fields of valuable metals, electric machines, and chemical industry products. Bahrain will follow the United Arab Emirates in signing a free trade agreement with Israel. Israeli Economy Minister Orna Barbivai and her Bahraini counterpart held official talks in September 2022 to establish a free trade agreement between Tel Aviv and Manama, according to a statement released by the Israeli Economy Ministry. Barbivai asserts that the agreement will contribute to "the removal of barriers, the expansion of economic cooperation, and building further bridges between them."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Jacobs Atkins. "Trade between Israel and UAE Booms in Year after Peace Pact." *Global Trade Review (GTR)*, (2022). <https://www.gtreview.com/news/mena/trade-between-israel-and-uae-booms-in-year-after-peace-pact/>

⁴⁷ "Israel-UAE to sign historic Free Trade Agreement." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, (2022). <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/israel-uae-to-sign-historic-free-trade-agreement-30-may-2022#:~:text=The%20comprehensive%2C%20significant%20and%20groundbreaking,agriculture%2C%20cosmetics%2C%20medical%20equipment%2C>

⁴⁸ "Israel, Bahrain start talks on free trade agreement." *Middleeastmonitor*, (2022). <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220920-israel-bahrain-start-talks-on-free-trade-agreement/>

Morocco and Israel are strengthening their economic ties. The first VIP delegation from the Moroccan business community arrived in Israel just over a year after the peace treaty was signed. They were there to meet with Israeli businesses and discuss ways to strengthen economic ties. There was a delegation from Morocco consisting of approximately 80 senior executives from prominent Moroccan businesses, including those in the automotive and aerospace, industrial chemical products, food and beverage and other sectors. At the event, economic data on the scope of goods and services trade between Israel and Morocco were shown, with a notable increase of over 6% in the past year to over 90 million dollars. The CBS's data indicate that the trade between these two countries increased by approximately 84% over the previous year to approximately 42 million dollars. In 2021, exports to Morocco increased by approximately 147% primarily in sectors which include chemical products, rubber or plastic products, and aircraft and transport equipment (roughly 61%). The Export Institute estimates that annual exports to Morocco could reach approximately 250 million dollars.⁴⁹ According to Israel's Ministry of Economy and Industry, another respective understanding between Morocco and Israel was endorsed in February 2022 determined to fortify monetary ties, grow exchange, and lay out joint business communities to push the arrangement ahead. According to Economy Minister Orna Barbivai, Israel intends to raise bilateral commerce between the two nations from \$131 million in 2021 to \$500 million in the following five years as an outcome of the deal, which is expected to bring about economic success and prosperity for Israel and Morocco."⁵⁰

Even though they have their advantages, the Abraham Accords make it possible for Israel to strengthen its financial ties with the Arab states with which it does not yet have formal ties and to expand its financial ties in Asia. The shortening of business, tourism, and cargo flight routes to East Asia is one of the implications.

⁴⁹ "The economic ties between Israel and Morocco are growing stronger." *The Ministry of Regional Cooperation*. (2022). <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/morocco240322>

⁵⁰ Toi Staff and AFP. "Israel hopes to increase trade with Morocco to \$500m, says economy minister in Rabat." *The Times of Israel*, (2022). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-hopes-to-increase-trade-with-morocco-to-500m-says-economy-minister/>

1.4 Impacts of Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords have immediate and long-term effects. Several nations in the Muslim world, including KSA, Oman, Indonesia, Mauritania, and Somaliland, have had clandestine relationships with Israel for a considerable amount of time. While others are currently opposing the Jewish State. Even though Muhammad bin Salman, the king and ruler of Saudi Arabia, stated that appropriate ties could benefit both parties. Currently, the two countries are working together to fight Iran. In any case, formal relationships may still be a step too far for the moderate government.⁵¹ Second, it avoids what many believe would be Israeli dominance of West Bank areas engaged in the 1967 conflict, at least for the time being.⁵² Third, there has been a shift in Israeli legislative issues, a decline in State Leader Netanyahu's political fortunes, and conjecture that he may ultimately have to call a fourth round of elections after forming a government. Today, Benjamin Netanyahu has become an Israeli icon for making great strides in lifting his country's isolation.⁵³ Fourth, relationships with Arabs, or the prospect of genuine relations with the first Gulf Arab state, as former Prime Minister Shimon Peres referred to them, give Israelis great hope for a "Modern Middle East," whereas the foundation of relations with Russia, China, and India is something else entirely.⁵⁴

Fifth, it was a major success for the Trump administration, who acted as the negotiator of the deal between the Arabs and Israel.⁵⁵ People-to-people relationships between the signatories have changed as an outcome of the Accords. Bilateral initiatives in the private sector and civil society have blossomed over the past year, indicating support for leaders' decisions. The region and possibly the entire world will have economic and geopolitical benefits. Any country that is keen on cooperating can profit from the agreements' establishment for peace and collaboration. By

⁵¹ Michael Rubin. "Who Will Israel Open Diplomatic Relations with Next? Saudi Arabia? Oman?" *AEI*, (2020). <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/who-will-israel-open-diplomatic-relations-with-next-saudi-arabia-oman/>

⁵² "Explainer: Israel's Annexation Plan for Occupied West Bank." *al-Jazeera*, (2020). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/28/explainer-israels-annexation-plan-for-occupied-west-bank>

⁵³ "Israel 'heading towards record fourth election'." *The BBC News*, (2020). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52322379>

⁵⁴ Samuel W. Lewis. "Israel: the Peres Era and its legacy." *Foreign Affairs*, (1986). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/israel-peres-era-and-its-legacy>

⁵⁵ Michael Crowley and David M. Halbfinger. "A White House Ceremony Will Celebrate a Diplomatic Win and Campaign Gift". *The New York Times*, (2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/14/us/politics/trump-middle-east-accords.html>

creating communication lines between Israel and the Gulf Arab governments, the Abraham Accords can assist in promoting the two-state solution and as a result of this change, Palestinians, particularly young people, will have a fresh opportunity to demand that their leadership grant them access to the Accords.⁵⁶

Another major impact is on the Palestinian issue. First, the choice of a Gulf state to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel is a startling blow to the Palestinian cause, as well as a clear sign of how far the nation and Arab interests have progressed. Second, it appears that many Arab countries are conscious of their willingness to abandon the Palestinian issue. The Arab world should not and will not abandon this cause, but as stated in the covenant, they will no longer permit their interests to continue because Palestine.⁵⁷ The Palestinian plan for coping with the emerging regional coalition is unknown. The Palestinians must pick between restricted alternatives, no tactical options are available, the Palestinian government is in turmoil, and their current administration has been in power since roughly 2006 without the approval of elections. Because they are dissatisfied with their corrupt and inept leaders, the great majority of Palestinians demand new elections. With their present political agendas, the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, have only contributed to the extension of Israeli rule over Palestine as a whole. After years of strife among groups, long-overdue Palestinian elections would offer the president and parliament fresh mandates, giving them more authority abroad and legitimacy at home. Palestinians should rebuild their institutions from the bottom up and rethink their goals in light of a new national consensus. They require a strong and charismatic leader who can unify and inspire them and they want a leader with a compelling vision that has the potential to be realized, as well as a credible and viable strategy for Palestine's future, that leader is not Mahmoud Abbas. As a result, all Palestinians must carefully assess their policies and establish a long-term plan. They must reconsider their prior strategies, understand how effective other liberation movements have been despite an unfavourable power balance, and attempt to win over any prospective partners in

⁵⁶ “The Abraham Accords One Year Later: Assessing the Impact and What Lies Ahead.” *Wilson Center*, (2021). <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/abraham-accords-one-year-later-assessing-impact-and-what-lies-ahead>

⁵⁷ Aaron David Miller, “How Israel and the Arab world are making peace without a peace deal.” *CEIP: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2020). <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/27/how-israel-and-arab-world-are-making-peace-without-peace-deal-pub-81918>

their cause. The Abraham Accords strengthened Arab-Israeli ties and may ultimately benefit the Palestinian cause, but Palestinian participation is required for that purpose.⁵⁸

Abraham Accords may also hurt peace in the region. The Palestinian Authority (P.A.) removal will then be put to a vote. In preparation for Palestinian statehood, the Palestinian Authority was established. Tensions would rise as a result of the P.A. breakup because Israel would be forced to take over crucial security responsibilities currently performed by the P.A.⁵⁹ The United Arab Emirates was the first country that signed the Abraham Accords. This treaty may also lead to a serious large-scale attack on the United Arab Emirates territory by a militant group. The United Arab Emirates authorities have prevented such an attack till now.⁶⁰ Iran is likely to project an image of being the only country in the region that would oppose Israel with some regional support. It is anticipated that Iran will keep widening the gap between the majority of Arab governments and communities, which is already very wide. Many Arabs don't see Palestine as a political issue, many of them still view it as a spiritual issue.⁶¹ There are serious impacts of the Abraham Accords on Iran. Iran cannot escape the impacts of the Abraham Accords, one of the major reasons behind the peace treaty is the common regional adversary Iran. Ali Motahari, who is a member of the Iranian parliament blamed Iran for the agreement, saying that Iran is to blame as Tehran has terrified the Arabs so much that they have joined Israel out of fear. The Abraham Accords have made it possible and public for the Arabs as well as Israel to join hands against Iran, it would increase Iran's insecurities and this would push Tehran to act more aggressively. Another impact on Tehran would be its relations with Ankara. Turkish President was against the peace treaty and even warned the United Arab Emirates to suspend ties and recall the Turkish ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. Abraham Accords might also push Iran to recover its scratched ties with

⁵⁸ Massimiliano Fiore. "The Abraham Accords and the Palestinian Issue." *E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS* (2020). <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/01/the-abraham-accords-and-the-palestinian-issue/>

⁵⁹ Adnan Abu Amer. "Israel's nightmare: The dissolution of the Palestinian Authority." *al-Jazeera*, (2020). <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/7/27/israels-nightmare-the-dissolution-of-the-palestinian-authority/>

⁶⁰ Jon B. Alterman. "The Normalization of UAE-Israel Relations." *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, (2020). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/normalization-uae-israel-relations>

⁶¹ "Iran's Priorities in a Turbulent Middle East." *The International Crisis Group*, (2018). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/huthi-missile-saudi-purge-and-lebanese-resignation-shake-middle-east>

the Arab states.⁶² This deal strengthens Iran and Hezbollah, their regional adversaries as well as local antagonists, notably extreme Sunni Islamists, liberals, and pan-Arabists, the exact elements they want to counter by allying with Israel.⁶³ The most dangerous opinion is that Israelis would embrace their legitimacy as a result of their ability to formalize connections with the Arab world without resolving Palestinian concerns. This can result in significant opposition to Palestinian negotiations and more difficult times for Palestinian expectations to be fulfilled. The Palestinians lack a crucial weapon against Israel and maybe more fractured than ever before.⁶⁴

1.5 Criticism of the Abraham Accords

According to numerous analysts in the region, the Abraham Accords would be of no benefit and Israel wouldn't be recognized diplomatically anywhere else if it did not meet these conditions. First and foremost, it cedes East Jerusalem; second, it recognizes the Palestinian right of return and returns to its 1967 boundaries. This has long been the desire of Palestinian officials, but their efforts have not been particularly fruitful.⁶⁵ The Abraham Accords came with the commitments of collaboration, peace, and stability however the truth is by all accounts different. The peace treaty hasn't stopped the conflict and occupation of several Palestinian territories by Israel, the treaty is just a business transaction which allows the Gulf countries and Israel to establish trade ties and benefit economically while ignoring peace and stability. The Abraham Accords talks about peace and cooperation but it failed to bring peace in the region, Israel is still harassing and attacking Palestinians and ethnic cleansing can be seen in various territories where Palestinians are forced to leave their homes and lands. Similarly, Israel has been carrying attacks against Hamas and Syria and no sign of cooperation can be seen in the region. Another reality is that the peace treaty was a step to gain political leverage, both Donald Trump and Netanyahu tried to get political benefits

⁶² Sina Azodi. "Why is Iran concerned about the peace agreement between the UAE and Israel." *Atlantic Council*, (2020). <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/why-is-iran-concerned-about-the-peace-agreement-between-the-uae-and-israel/>

⁶³ Khalil Al-Anani. *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, identity, and politics*. Oxford University Press (2016). <https://academic.oup.com/book/2075>

⁶⁴ Jonathan S. Tobin. "Arab States Are Tired of Palestinian Fantasies, Israel Is Tired of Their Violence." *The Haaretz*, (2020). <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/2020-09-16/ty-article-opinion/.premium/arab-states-are-tired-of-palestinian-fantasies-israel-is-tired-of-their-violence/0000017f-f536-ddde-abff-fd7704210000>

⁶⁵ William James Stover and Marina Mankaryous. "SOVEREIGNTY OVER JERUSALEM: A LEGAL SOLUTION TO A DISPUTED CAPITAL." *International Journal on World Peace* 25, no. 4, (2008): 115–136. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20752861>

from the treaty. The United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain have begun trade and investment with the Jewish state. Abu Dhabi has already invested in hi-tech, agriculture, health sector, and manufacturing among other sectors. It has also acquired Israeli surveillance technology, airport and drone equipment from Israel. Abu Dhabi has allowed goods from the illegally occupied territories which are labelled as 'from the land of Israel' to be sold in the markets of the United Arab Emirates. Trade with Bahrain and Morocco also seems to intensify with time. Sudan was removed from terrorism sponsor list by the US but it didn't get benefitted economically from the deal nor it has signed any security agreement with Israel like the others.⁶⁶ The Abraham Accords have likewise had difficulty finding new members. Despite some easing of its stance on bilateral relations, such as defence cooperation and opening its airspace to Israeli aviation, Saudi Arabia has remained committed to the Arab Peace Initiative (API). Adel al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's minister of state for international affairs, expounded on this issue throughout the summer. According to the API, "peace comes at the end of the process, not at the beginning." Even governments like Oman and Qatar, which have maintained practically de facto relations with Israel for quite some time, have yet to formalize their ties with Israel.⁶⁷

In this way, the Abraham Accords started a new chapter in Middle Eastern affairs, as four Arab nations that had previously opposed Israel signed the peace treaty and normalized ties with Israel in 2020. United Arab Emirates was the first country to break the long-existing status quo of opposing Israel. After that, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan signed the pact and formed ties with Israel. Abraham Accords was a great victory for Israel as well as the Arabs, on one side there is an advantage of recognition for Israel as four countries have recognized it, while on the other hand, the Arabs portrayed their image as moderate, modern, and cooperative countries rather than extremists. There are also security and economic advantages for the two sides. Abraham Accords represents a new chapter in the region's politics, away from conflict and towards cooperation and economic affluence. United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco already have started trade with Israel as well as signed agreements regarding economy and security. Sudan hasn't benefitted economically or in security aspects because of its democracy crisis but has achieved a great

⁶⁶ Imad K Harb. "The utter failure of the Abraham Accords." *al-Jazeera*, (2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/5/18/the-utter-failure-of-the-abraham-accords>

⁶⁷ Gerald M. Feierstein and Yoel Guzansky. "Two years on, what is the state of the Abraham Accords?" *Middle East Institute*, (2022). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/two-years-what-state-abraham-accords>

milestone as the US has removed Sudan from the SST list in return for recognizing and forming ties with Israel. Abraham Accords come with the promise of peace and cooperation but it hasn't delivered any peace yet in the region. Israel is still in conflict with Iran, Syria, Palestine, and some non-state actors. Abraham Accords haven't delivered any peace yet which is why it is considered merely a business transaction by some specialists. The Abraham Accords have benefited the signatories, namely Israel and the other four Arab governments, but it has not yet influenced the attitudes of or benefited other states in the region. No other state in or outside the region has recognized Israel other than the four, so the Abraham Accords have failed yet to attract other states to become its signatories.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: THREATS TO IRAN

This chapter analyzes the Iranian perception of the Abraham Accords. The chapter opens with the response of various Iranian officials vis-à-vis the deal between the Arabs and Israel. To comprehend the situation better, it explains the relations between Iran and the pact's signatories. It elaborates on the question of how the Arab-Israeli rapprochement is a threat to Iran and the final section of the chapter is the conclusion.

Iran strongly condemned the deal (Abraham Accords) between the Arabs and Israel. Iran has been against and criticizing the deal since day one. Iranian officials strongly condemned the pact in various tweets, interviews and speeches. The day following the agreement, the Iranian foreign ministry labelled it strategic foolishness and a betrayal by the United Arab Emirates with Palestinians. After a day, the IRGC issued a statement calling the normalization a "significant folly" that would lead to a terrible future for the United Arab Emirates officials. On the same day, then-President Hassan Rouhani called the pact a betrayal and warned that the Emiratis would be treated differently if Israel was allowed and gained a foothold in the region. On August 16, 2020, Mohammad Bagheri, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, joined the reaction by forcefully stating that Iran's policy towards the United Arab Emirates would fundamentally transform and that the Islamic Republic's armed forces would have a different viewpoint on this nation. Iran's senior military commander declared, "We will hold the United Arab Emirates accountable and will not tolerate it if something happens in the Persian Gulf and Iran's national security is jeopardized, regardless of how minor." On September 1, 2020, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei described the pact as the United Arab Emirates' attempt to give Israel a foothold and obliterate the Palestinian issue.⁶⁸

The connections, according to then-foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, were done for political reasons. In a tweet, Javed suggested that President Trump desperately needed a campaign photograph. He said that Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and chief Middle East peace

⁶⁸ Maysam Behravesht and Hamidreza Azizi. "Israel's Peace Deals Are a Strategic Nightmare for Iran." *Foreign Policy*, (2020). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/14/israels-peace-deals-are-a-strategic-nightmare-for-iran/>

negotiator, had lied to and blackmailed his customers. The Supreme Leader claimed in an address that the UAE had forsaken Islam, the Arab world, regional states, and the Palestinian cause. The actions taken by the United Arab Emirates government are shameful. Their strategy will not work. It won't last very long thanks to Allah's favor, but the perpetrators will always have the mark on their foreheads. They acted in a way of selling out. They committed a heinous crime by supporting Zionists in establishing themselves in the region while disregarding the critical problem of Palestine, which comprises usurping a nation and displacing people. Former President Hassan Rouhani stated on September 16, 2020, during a Cabinet meeting, that although some of the nations in the region have pious Muslims as their people, their rulers do not comprehend their religion or their obligation to Palestine and their brothers who speak their language. He scrutinized how should these nations (the signatories) connect with Israel. And then they plan to offer Israel regional bases? They are liable for all serious outcomes that would result from this step that they have taken.⁶⁹ In October 2021, one year after the peace treaties were signed, Ali Khamenei announced that Arab states who normalized relations with Israel the previous year had "sinned" and should return to their prior behaviour. Regarding Israel, Khamenei stated that "unfortunately, some governments have made blunders, big blunders, and sinned" by normalizing relations with the usurping and tyrannical Zionist regime. It contradicts Islam's unity. In a holiday speech, Khamenei added that they must retrace their steps and correct this major error. Khamenei stated that the best way to resolve the Palestinian issue would unquestionably be to achieve Muslim unity.⁷⁰

2.1 Relations between Iran and the Abraham Accords Signatories

To understand the Iranian threat perceptions and the possible impacts of the setting (Abraham Accords) on Iran and its security, one needs to have a good knowledge of the relations between Iran and the Abraham Accords parties. Each one of these states has a different pattern of relations with Iran. The account of their relations is separately discussed below;

⁶⁹ "Iran on New Middle East Peace Deals." *The Iran Primer*, (2020). <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/sep/15/iran-new-middle-east-peace-deals>

⁷⁰ AFP and Toi Staff. "Iran's Khamenei urges reversing 'sin' of Arab-Israeli normalizations." *The Times of Israel*, (2021). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/irans-khamenei-urges-reversing-sin-of-arab-israeli-normalizations/>

2.1.1 Iran-Israel Relations: From Synergy to Hostility

Iran was likely one of the first Muslim countries to recognize the State of Israel after its establishment in 1948. In 1947, Iran formally abstained from voting on the UN Parcel Plan for Palestine, and after Israel was established, it rejected the country's admittance to the UN as a member. However, two years after Ben-Gurion's announcement, the Iranian government recognized Israel, making it the second Muslim nation after Türkiye to do so.⁷¹ The Shah government maintained friendly relations with Israel and pursued pro-Western policies. At the time, Iran and Israel shared a common objective in opposing Soviet-backed pan-Arab nationalism. For the sake of US backing, Shah maintained essential connections with Israel. The Islamic revolution in 1979 represented a fundamental shift in bilateral ties. The fundamental tenets of Khomeini's revolution included exporting the Islamic revolution against apostates and causing a clash of civilizations with the infidel West, hegemonic dominance over the Islamic and Arab worlds, particularly in the oil-rich region, and a commitment to destroy "the Little Satan," referring to Israel, and "the Great Satan," referring to the United States.⁷²

Cooperation between the two could be seen even after the revolution. Iraq was a powerful military force that received support from the Soviet Union as well as the United States. Having lost access to American weapons, Iran was in dire need of contemporary military hardware and had to rely on other sources such as military cooperation with Israel. In addition, Saddam Hussein aimed to strengthen Iraq's nuclear capability and a successful Iraq provided a much more formidable risk to Israel than Iran did at the moment. Menachem Begin, the Israeli prime minister, authorized the shipment of weaponry and tires for Phantom fighter planes in the early 1980 to benefit the Iranian Army. Israel's actions contradicted American policy, which prohibited the sale of weaponry to Iran until American hostages held in the American embassy in Tehran were freed. In exchange for Israeli help, Khomeini permitted significant numbers of Iranian Jews to travel to Israel or the US. While the Iran-Iraq war persisted, Iran continued to work covertly on defence matters with Israel

⁷¹ David B. Green. "From friends to foes." *Haaretz*, (2018). <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/iran/2018-05-08/ty-article-magazine/how-israel-and-iran-went-from-allies-to-enemies/0000017f-f633-d887-a7ff-fef71e7f0000>

⁷² Nora Maher. "Balancing deterrence: Iran-Israel relations in a turbulent Middle East." *Review of Economics and Political Science*, (2020). <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/REPS-06-2019-0085/full/html>

while publicly intensifying its vitriol against the Jewish state. In the 1990s, the relations between Iran and Israel became more bitter.⁷³

Any (mostly Arab) "resistance" to Israel began to be largely supported by the Islamic Republic. Iran appears to have a higher proportion of Palestinian forebears than Palestinians. It rejected all peace discussions between Israel and the Arabs, including the PLO's Oslo Accords of 1993. Iran has contributed funds to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israel's most dangerous guerrilla opponent in recent years. It backed Palestinian Sunni Islamist groups, primarily the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and, on occasion, Hamas. Its seemingly never-ending tit-for-tat battle against Israel did not spare even non-Israeli Jews. Most notably, Iran has been suspected of direct involvement in the 1994 suicide bombing of the Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires, which brought about the death of 85 individuals, as per intelligence organizations and Argentinean prosecutors.⁷⁴ In 2000, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei referred to Israel as a cancerous tumour in the region and urged for its annihilation. He remarked that Iran has always seen Israel as an unfavourable phenomenon. Iran has declared several times that this disease must be eradicated from the region. According to Khamenei, Israel's internal affairs are unrelated to the Palestinian problem, Israel has no right over the lands of Palestine. It affects Iran's interests as well as those of the whole Islamic world. We should all work to get that territory back into Islamic hands. According to Khamenei, alternative measures include the return of Palestinian refugees and the option for Muslims, Christians, and Jews to select their governments, excluding immigrant Jews. Nobody will permit a group of hooligans, obscene people and outsiders from London, the US and Russia to run over the Palestinians.⁷⁵ According to current and former US officials, a damaging cyberattack on Iran's nuclear program in 2010 was carried out on secret orders from President Obama, who was eager to halt Iran's apparent progress towards developing an atomic bomb without launching a conventional military attack. The strike destroyed roughly 1,000 of Iran's 6,000 centrifuges, which

⁷³ Dalia Dassa Kaye. Alireza Nader and Parisa Roshan. "A Brief History of Israeli-Iranian Cooperation and Confrontation." In *Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry*, 9–18. RAND Corporation, (2011). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1143osd.7>.

⁷⁴ Natan Sachs. "Iran's revolution, 40 years on: Israel's reverse periphery doctrine." *Brookings*, (2019). <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/24/irans-revolution-40-years-on-israels-reverse-periphery-doctrine/>

⁷⁵ "Iran leader urges destruction of 'cancerous' Israel." *Gulf News*, (2000). <https://gulfnews.com/uae/iran-leader-urges-destruction-of-cancerous-israel-1.436970>

are used to rapidly spin and enrich uranium, an essential step in the production of atomic bombs. The cyberweapon was made with help from Israel and the National Security Agency.⁷⁶

Israel seized a ship from Syria in March 2011 that was allegedly carrying Iranian weaponry to Gaza. That same year, an explosion at a nuclear site in Isfahan took place. Iran has denied that such an explosion ever occurred, even though Mossad is said to have carried it out. Earlier in October 2011, the US claimed to have foiled a bomb attack plot. The Iranian plot targeted the Israeli and Saudi embassies in Washington, DC and Buenos Aires, respectively. In February 2012, Israeli diplomatic officials were claimed to have been assaulted in Georgia and India. According to Israel, Iran was behind these two attacks.⁷⁷ Israeli planes attacked a convoy near Syria's border with Lebanon in January 2013, which some viewed as a warning to Damascus not to aid Israel's opponent in Lebanon. According to all reports, the assault's targets were weapons destined for Hezbollah, a Western ambassador agreed with other diplomats that the objective was a vehicle moving weapons from Syria to Lebanon and anti-aircraft weapons or long-range rockets might have been among the shipment. Several sources have ruled out the presence of chemical weapons, which Israel has also raised concern over. Before the assault, Israel warned that it was prepared to prevent President Bashar Assad's weaponry and rockets from reaching either his Hezbollah allies or Islamist opponents.⁷⁸

Except for Israel and the Gulf Sunni monarchies, the majority of countries backed the 2015 JCPOA, popularly known as "the Iran nuclear deal." Netanyahu slammed the agreement, claiming that it would not prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons, despite the edgy interpersonal ties between Netanyahu and Obama at the time. Netanyahu's catchphrase was "Fix it or nix it," which he emphasized at all appropriate times. In the 2016 US presidential election, the Republican

⁷⁶ Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick. "Stuxnet was work of U.S. and Israeli experts, officials say." *The Washington Post*, (2012). https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/stuxnet-was-work-of-us-and-israeli-experts-officials-say/2012/06/01/gJQAlnEy6U_story.html

⁷⁷ Lt Colonel JS Sodhi. "Iran-Israel's Incendiary Relations." *The Citizen*, (2022). <https://www.thecitizen.in/world/iranisraels-incendiary-relations-285043?infinitemscroll=1>

⁷⁸ Mariam Karouny and Oliver Holmes. "Israel hits Syria arms convoy to Lebanon: sources." *Reuters*, (2013). <https://www.reuters.com/article/syria-israel-attack-idINDEE90T09220130130>

nominee finally heard Netanyahu's message across the Atlantic and Donald Trump withdrew from JCPOA in 2018 which he called as “worst deal ever”.⁷⁹

Arch-rivals Iran and Israel moved closer to a full-scale conflict in 2018 after Israel's military claimed that Iranian missiles had been fired at its positions in the Golan Heights, prompting it to retaliate with significant attacks against Tehran's forces all over Syria. A spokesperson for the IDF, Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus, claims that Israeli defences stopped some, but not all, of the Iranian rockets. Israel said that the assault was arranged by the general responsible for the IRGC external tasks division. Conricus announced that the assault was requested and told by Qassem Suleimani and it has not served its objective.⁸⁰ The leader of Iran's elite IRGC, Major General Hossein Salami stated in September 2019 that we have succeeded in achieving the power to eliminate the imposter Zionist regime. Now, it was an achievable aim to destroy Israel. By 2019, Tehran's proxies were acting more like a Middle Eastern network, strengthening Tehran's power and endangering Israel's security. On the frontlines of other countries, militias were operating under Iranian control. Hezbollah of Lebanon conducted operations in Yemen, where its agents provided training to Houthi rebels, as well as in Syria and Iraq. At the end of 2019, Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi, the IDF's Chief of Staff, indicated that the IDF was prepared to engage in a limited confrontation with Iran. The IDF carried out both overt and covert operations against Iran and its allies to halt the spread of missiles from Iran. He stated in December that Israel would not permit Iran to establish itself in Syria or Iraq.⁸¹

Gen. Qasem Soleimani, Iran's most senior military commander, was killed in an air strike in Iraq in 2020. As the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, the 62-year-old oversaw Iranian military operations throughout the Middle East. He was murdered at Baghdad's airport, along with other militia fighters funded by Iran, in a strike ordered by then-US President Donald Trump. Benjamin Netanyahu claims that the US has the "right" to protect itself. President Trump's rapid, aggressive, and decisive measures were lauded by Netanyahu. Republicans in Washington who support

⁷⁹ “Iran and Israel: A history of the world’s best enmity.” *France24*, (2018). <https://www.france24.com/en/20180511-iran-israel-history-enmity-nuclear-hostility>

⁸⁰ Oliver Holmes. “Israel retaliates after Iran 'fires 20 rockets' at army in occupied Golan Heights.” *The Guardian*, (2018). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/09/iran-fires-20-rockets-syria-golan-heights-israel>

⁸¹ Garrett Nada. “Iran’s Confrontation with Israel over Four Decades.” *The Iran Primer*, (2021). <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/jan/21/iran%E2%80%99s-confrontation-israel-over-four-decades>

President Trump were overjoyed to hear the news. Conservative House leader Kevin McCarthy called the attack a "show of resolve and strength."⁸² In April 2022, then-President Ebrahim Raisi informed a military parade that if Israel made even the slightest move against the Islamic Republic, Iran's armed forces would shoot for the Jewish state's heart. Raisi stated in a public speech that our military destination would be the centre of the Zionist regime if they took minimum action against our country. He remarked talks in Vienna to curb Iran's nuclear capabilities, which Tehran insists are for peaceful reasons, came to a stop. Israel is opposed to a solution, claiming that it insufficiently curbs Iran's nuclear program and regional military actions. Officials in Israel have indicated that they will defend their country alone if required and would do what is necessary.⁸³

2.1.2 Iran-UAE Relations

The relationship between the United Arab Emirates and Iran has been very unpredictable, Iran is regarded to represent the greatest security danger to the UAE, which is a major regional partner of Israel. Iran poses a threat to the Emirates, including the risk of a direct kinetic strike on strategic locations including its oil and desalination facilities; and there is a risk of subversion and terrorism perhaps due to Dubai's substantial Iranian community, as well as a threat to the de facto rule of Abu Musa and Tunb Islands, as well as the seizure of Emirati territory. Against this background, the United Arab Emirates has always tried to develop economic and diplomatic relations with Iran as a kind of insurance.⁸⁴ Nearly all Gulf nations severed ties with Tehran in 2016. However, the United Arab Emirates chose only to reduce its diplomatic representation there rather than completely cut the ties. Following the attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran in 2016, it was only natural for ties between the two nations to deteriorate. The Saudi consulate in Tehran and the Saudi office located in Mashhad were both stormed and looted by crowds. With the help of petrol bombs and Molotov cocktails, the embassy building was set on fire. Iran committed a serious breach of diplomatic etiquette with this action, which called for an enraged response and swift

⁸² "Qasem Soleimani: US kills top Iranian general in Baghdad air strike." *BBC*, (2020). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50979463>

⁸³ "Iran Will Target Israel's 'Heart' if It Acts 'Against Our Nation,' President Raisi Says." *Haaretz*, (2022). <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/iran/2022-04-18/ty-article/iran-will-target-israels-heart-if-it-acts-against-our-nation-raisi-says/00000180-5beb-de8c-a1aa-dbeb49a20000>

⁸⁴ Yoel Guzansky. "From the Abraham Accords to the War in Yemen: The United Arab Emirates and the Iranian Threat." *The Institute for National Security Studies*, (2022). <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/iran-uae/>

repercussions for the status of diplomatic ties. Apart from politics, relations between the United Arab Emirates and Iran are very varied. They have many facets and are complex. Trade between the two nations, which has existed for more than a century, has always been the strongest foundation. Iran is one of the United Arab Emirates major trading partners and trade has been uninterrupted even during the time of worse relations and tensions between the two states.⁸⁵

In 2020, Iran called the rapprochement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates a "stab in the back" for all Muslims. Tehran cautioned the United Arab Emirates against allowing Israel to engage in Gulf regional affairs, calling the normalization of relations a reckless and "shameful" step. The Houthis, backed by Iran, have attacked the UAE a few times, but in August 2022, the United Arab Emirates announced that its ambassador to Tehran would be returning. The United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Iran, Saif Mohammed Al Zaabi, has said that he will return to Tehran "in the coming days" after cutting ties with Tehran more than six years ago. The UAE's foreign ministry explained that the proclamation is in line with its efforts to further improve ties with Iran to accomplish the mutual interests of the two countries and the region. According to UAE official media, the Emirati and Iranian foreign ministries spoke over the phone and discussed ways to strengthen ties, including the possibility of sending a diplomat back to Tehran. UAE's FM Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian talked about ways to improve relations between the two countries and collaborate in areas that would benefit both countries.⁸⁶

The Atlantic Council Middle East expert Paul Sullivan says that trade between Iran and the United Arab Emirates peaked in 2017 before falling when the two countries cut ties. In Dubai, he estimates that there may be 500–600 thousand Iranians. He continues by saying that the conflict in Yemen, tensions between the GCC and Iran, and Iran's support for Hezbollah and other regional terrorist organizations have all caused the United Arab Emirates great concern. He contends that the UAE's ambassador to Iran does not signify that everything is in order. He contends that it more likely indicates that deeper understanding is required to forge future ties. He points out that US sanctions

⁸⁵ Abdulkhaleq Abdulla. "The UAE-Iran diplomatic reset is part of a greater focus on regional stability." *The National News*, (2022). <https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/2022/08/24/a-new-chapter-in-iran-uae-relations/>

⁸⁶ "UAE ambassador to Iran to return, 6 years after relations severed." *al-Jazeera*, (2022). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/21/uae-says-ambassador-to-iran-to-return-to-tehran-in-coming-days>

continue to be in effect for Iranians living in the United Arab Emirates as well as for any financial or other agreements made between the UAE and Iran.⁸⁷ In the speech she delivered to the 77th session of the UNGA on September 24, 2022, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy declared that Iran's possession of the three islands violates the UAE's sovereignty. Again, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa are three UAE islands over which the United Arab Emirates has verifiable and lawful control, and the UAE seeks to end Iran's possession of these areas. Despite the UAE's numerous requests for a peaceful resolution over the past 50 years, Iran has not responded. We will never stop claiming these territories, as is UAE's legal right, through direct negotiations or the ICJ, Hashimy stated.⁸⁸

2.1.3 Iran's Relations with Bahrain

Bahrain, one of the largest Shiite centres in the world, might be considered the third major Shiite centre in history, following Iran and Iraq. Bahrain's Sunni population is predominantly Maliki, with some Hanbali. Bahrain's Sunnis include a large number of Arabs or Arabs who lived in the past on Iran's southern shore. Shiites make up approximately seventy per cent of the population and are predominantly from the working class, whereas Sunnis are frequently found in urban areas and control the government. The Shiites, on the other hand, are marginalized politically and economically. Sunni Muslims of the Al Khalifa family control the government, the Royal Court, the National Guard, the National Security Service and the Intelligence Service are based strictly adhering to the "only Sunni" belief. There are just 3% Shiites in Bahrain's Army and Interior Ministry.⁸⁹

Bahrain, an island nation, which is situated in a small harbour between the shores of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has been a "target" of the Iranian government ever since it attained independence in 1971. However, under pressure from the UN, Iran has openly relinquished its claims to Bahraini territory in addition to officially recognizing Bahrain as an independent state. However, it appears that in recent years, when the need arises, officials and journalists have brought up Iran's aim to

⁸⁷ Edward Yeranian. "Iran Resumes Diplomatic Relations with UAE and Kuwait, Talks Continue with Saudi Arabia." *Voice of America (VoA)*, (2022). <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-resumes-diplomatic-relations-with-uae-and-kuwait-talks-continue-with-saudi-arabia/6713647.html>

⁸⁸ "UAE demands return of three islands seized by Iran." *Arab News*, (2022). <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2169061/middle-east>

⁸⁹ Mohsen Mohsen Biuck. "Bahrain and Axis of Resistance: Geopolitical Implications for Iran." *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 31, (2020): 197-220. http://irfajournal.csr.ir/article_130801.html

subjugate Bahrain. The oppression of Bahrain's Shiite people by the Sunni royal family and the ruling class is one of several factors influencing Iran's policies, and it is also the most prevalent one. Riyadh is portrayed as the protector of Sunnis, while Tehran stands in for the Shiite side, as is the case in the majority of Middle Eastern wars, which are primarily religious.⁹⁰

Bahrain most likely would have been seized by Iran if it had its way. However, since the permanent stationing of US troops in the Gulf region in 1991, annexation or any other form of direct Iranian control has not been a realistic alternative, unless the Iranians are prepared to take the risk of going to war with a group of more formidable adversaries that includes the US, the UK, conceivably France, and the majority of the GCC. Iran recollects the Persian Empire and has had its sights set on Bahrain starting around 1820, however, the Islamic Republic's initiative is neither ignorant nor self-destructive to make such a major stride.⁹¹ Iran has made endeavours to expel Al Khalifa from power. Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li Tahrir al-Bahrayn, popularly known as "The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain," attempted and failed to stage a coup in Bahrain in December 1981. The organization talked about its attempts to depose the Al Khalifa royal family and replace it with an Islamic government in newsletters and other media at the time. These records show that the gathering teamed up with the IRGC and that the Iranian government upheld their activities against the Bahraini government.⁹² The unsuccessful attempt resulted in the arrest of a large number of Shiites in Manama, thereby ruling out any future collaboration or rapprochement with Iran. This continued until 2007 when Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa and Iran's then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad met in Bahrain to discuss resuming economic relations. However, due to a subsequent setback in 2011, this was only a temporary resumption of normalized ties between the two nations.⁹³ Because Iran has consistently supported the "Islamic awakening," opposition groups began protesting on February 14, 2011. They wanted more liberties, reforms, free and fair elections, and the liberation of prisoners. Fights escalated into a rebellion against the regime,

⁹⁰ Nikola Petrović. "Relations in the MENA region: Iran and Bahrain." *The Center for Geostrategic Research and Terrorism*, (2021). <https://cegit.org/relations-in-the-mena-region-iran-and-bahrain/>

⁹¹ Bilal Y. Saab. "Iran's Long Game in Bahrain." *Atlantic Council*, (2017). <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/iran-s-long-game-in-bahrain/>

⁹² Hasan Tariq Alhasan. "The role of Iran in the failed coup of 1981: the IFLB in Bahrain." *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4, (2011): 603-617. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mei/mei/2011/00000065/00000004/art00006>

⁹³ Nikola Petrović. "Relations in the MENA region: Iran and Bahrain." *The Center for Geostrategic Research and Terrorism*, (2021). <https://cegit.org/relations-in-the-mena-region-iran-and-bahrain/>

posing a significant challenge for Saudi Arabia, which was concerned that it might negatively impact its own asset-rich Eastern Region, which has a vital Shi'ite population that accounts for ten to fifteen per cent of the population. Saudi Arabia reacted swiftly and forcefully, before using a GCC security provision to justify a military intervention, it first manipulated Bahrain's Sunni population's opposition to the uprisings. Saudi objectives in Bahrain were centred around maintaining the state of affairs, getting the continuation of a cooperative system and smothering the uprising. As a result, Bahrain became the focal point of a proxy war involving Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East. Iran objected to the Saudi and Bahraini attacks on protestors and continued to back the insurgency.⁹⁴ According to the interior ministry, two police officers had been killed in a bomb assault in Bahrain in 2015. The used explosives were comparable to those allegedly recently seized by Iranian smugglers, according to a government statement. As per the state news organization, early data proposes that the explosives utilized in the present assault are of the very type that was as of late captured coming from Iran. Bahrain recalled its ambassador to Tehran and announced that it had stopped a plan to bring weapons and explosives into Iran by two Bahrainis with ties to Iran.⁹⁵

Bahrain, an ally of Riyadh, broke all diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 after demonstrators angered by Riyadh's execution of a Shiite cleric stormed the Saudi Embassy in Tehran the day before and chose to cut off diplomatic ties with Iran. Western and Muslim allies of Saudi Arabia worry that the growing divide will make it harder to defeat common enemies like Islamic State and other terrorist groups. In 2020 because of the Abraham Accords that normalized ties between Israel and Bahrain, Iran guaranteed that Bahrain is currently a colleague in the wrongdoings of Israel. Following the revelation of the agreement, the foreign ministry published a statement in 2020, declaring that Bahrain's rulers will now be participants in the criminal actions of the Zionist government, i.e., Israel, as a continual hazard to the region's as well as Islam's security.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Hussain Abbas and Irfan Hasnain Qaisrani. "Structural Sources of Saudi–Iran Rivalry and Competition for the Sphere of Influence." *Sage Open* 11, no. 3, (2021): 21582440211032642. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/21582440211032642>

⁹⁵ Kareem Shaheen. "Bahrain police officers killed in bomb attack." *The Guardian*, (2015). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/28/bahrain-police-officers-killed-bomb-attack>

⁹⁶ Toi Staff. "Iran: With 'shameful' normalization, Bahrain now a partner to Israel's 'crimes'." *The Times of Israel*, (2020). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-bahrain-partner-to-israels-crimes-through-shameful-normalization-deal/#gs.fx06pq>

2.1.4 Iran-Morocco Relations

Morocco and Iran's relationship, which was established in 1958, was further developed during the 1960s and 1970s under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The Shah travelled to Morocco in 1966, while Hassan II of Morocco toured Iran two years later. Following the takeover of Khomeini in 1979, Iran cut off diplomatic relations with Morocco and, after a year, perceived the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a counter against Lord Hassan II for having welcomed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in exile. Moroccan Prime Minister Azzedine Laraki and Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani met during the OIC's sixth summit in Dakar in 1991, and they opted to re-establish diplomatic relations.⁹⁷

Yet again be that as it may, in March 2009, threats between the two countries expanded. Rabat ended its diplomatic ties with Tehran following tense confrontations that began when Iranian officials referred to Bahrain as Iran's 14th province. In response, Morocco communicated its help to Bahrain and blamed the Iranian consulate for sponsorship of the Polisario Front and taking part in activities to spread Shiism on Moroccan soil. After being cut off for six years, Morocco and Iran decided in 2014 to resume diplomatic relations and Iran sent a representative to Rabat in 2015. Hassan Hammi, the current Moroccan ambassador to Tehran, is a former ambassador to Azerbaijan, Hammi presented his credentials to then-President Hassan Rouhani in October 2016.⁹⁸ In 2014, the two states announced plans to reestablish relations. According to a high-ranking official, Rabat severed the relationship four years ago due to Tehran's alleged involvement in Bahrain's and Morocco's internal affairs. Following a recent phone call between the foreign ministers of the two nations, deputy foreign minister for Arab matters Hossein Amir Abdollahian claims that Iran and Morocco agreed to resume diplomatic relations and that both nations' embassies will soon reopen.⁹⁹ As per the Moroccan foreign minister, Morocco broke diplomatic binds with Iran in 2018 for Teheran's support of the Polisario Front, an association looking for

⁹⁷ Reda Zaireg. "The truth behind Morocco's diplomatic crisis with Iran." *Middle East Eye*, (2018). <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/truth-behind-moroccos-diplomatic-crisis-iran>

⁹⁸ Sami Salami and Mohammed Lakrini. "MOROCCO-IRAN RELATIONS DUPLICITY OF FOREIGN POLICY AND FUTURE OF MUTUAL RELATIONS." *Iranian Studies*, (2018). <https://rasanah-iiis.org/english/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/02/Morocco-Iran-Relations-Duplicity-of-Foreign-Policy-and-Future-of-Mutual-Relations.pdf>

⁹⁹ "Iran, Morocco to resume diplomatic ties, says Tehran." *Alarabiya News*, (2014). <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2014/02/06/Iran-Morocco-to-resume-diplomatic-ties-says-Tehran>

autonomy for Western Sahara. According to allegations made by foreign minister Nasser Bourita, the Iranian embassy in Algeria was used to train and arm Polisario fighters. Hezbollah is Iran's Shiite partner in Lebanon, in a proclamation, Hezbollah denied preparing and supplying Polisario and guaranteed Morocco had settled on its decision because of "tension from the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia." Morocco's neighbour Algeria has camps for Polisario members and refugees from the conflict zone, but it denies providing the group with any military support.¹⁰⁰

2.1.5 Iran-Sudan Relations

Iran's involvement in Sudan began with security advisers and trainers following the coup in June 1989. By the middle of 1991, their relations had considerably improved, and there were speculations that Iran had supplied Sudan with \$300 million in Chinese arms. Additionally, it has been alleged that Iran has relocated some 800 pasdarans—revolutionary guards—to Sudan following their departure from the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. Some of these pasterns are said to have been training Sudanese in three camps in eastern Sudan. Iran has admitted to supplying Sudan's government with military vehicles and oil. The Iranians took advantage of Sudan's thawing relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia due to Khartoum's position in the Gulf War. Iranian President Ali Rafsanjani's visit to Khartoum at the end of 1991 underlined the tight relations between Iran and Khartoum, which also contributed to reinforce fundamentalist influence in the Bashir regime.¹⁰¹

In 2004, Sudan and Iran signed a MoU on security participation. According to the radio, Sudanese Interior Minister Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein and his Iranian counterpart Abdel Wahid Mosawe completed negotiations by agreeing to an agreement that calls for top officials of the two services to exchange visits. Additionally, the pact mandates that each nation provide facilities and training to the other's police forces. Sudan indicated that it supports Iran's efforts to develop nuclear energy for peaceful reasons, while Iran affirmed its support for Sudan's peace and security. As per the radio, the two nations likewise communicated help for the Palestinian nation in their battle

¹⁰⁰ "Morocco severs ties with Iran over support for Polisario independence fighters" *France24*, (2018). <https://www.france24.com/en/20180502-morocco-iran-hezbollah-polisario-arms-western-sahara>

¹⁰¹ Samuel M. Makinda. "Iran, Sudan and Islam." *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 48, no. 6, (1993): 108-111. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40396511>

against Israel.¹⁰² Despite Washington's antagonism, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit for two days to Khartoum in 2007 cemented both of the Islamist countries' warm connection. Talks with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir began after Ahmadinejad's visit, which also included a joint address to cabinet members by the two presidents. After Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's two-day visit to Sudan, the two parties signed seven cooperation memorandums of understanding in the presence of the two presidents.¹⁰³

In the years 2014–15, Iranian-Sudanese ties significantly deteriorated. Iran's cultural institutions were all taught to shut in September 2014, and generally Iranian ambassadors were given 72 hours to leave the country. The Sudanese government accused Iranian officials of attempting to spread Shi'ism, even though their true objective was to support Riyadh and convey a message. At a time when Sudan's economy was struggling due to the effects of South Sudan's independence and the US sanctions, Khartoum was attempting to convey to the GCC that it was willing to abandon Tehran in exchange for financial support. Sudan was an ally of the alliance when Saudi Arabia began its military involvement in Yemen in March 2015. Since the conflict, Iran-backed Houthi militants have killed hundreds of Sudanese soldiers. Iran criticized Sudan for joining the Saudi-led coalition during the Yemen crisis, which quickly became a source of contention between Khartoum and Tehran. The Saudi-led anti-Iranian military alliance known as the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism also included Sudan among its founding members. Bahrain, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Djibouti cut off diplomatic ties with Iran in the aftermath of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's death in 2016.¹⁰⁴

Iran denounced the Sudan-Israel normalization deal, alleging that Sudan paid a "ransom" for it. As part of the agreement with Israel, Sudan has also promised to designate Iran-backed Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, according to a senior US official. The matter was not mentioned in the

¹⁰² "Sudan, Iran sign security cooperation agreement." *Sudan Tribune*, (2004). <https://sudantribune.com/article3017/>

¹⁰³ "Iran, Sudan sign seven cooperation agreements." *Sudan Tribune*, (2007). <https://sudantribune.com/article20904/>

¹⁰⁴ Giorgio Cafiero. "Is a Sudanese-Iranian rapprochement possible." *Middle East Institute* (2019). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/sudanese-iranian-rapprochement-possible>

White House's joint statement on the normalization agreement between Israel, Sudan, and the United States.¹⁰⁵

2.2 How is Iran a threat to the Arabs and Israel

Since the 1979 Revolution, Iran has had a constant foreign policy in the region. The politics of nearly every regional state have been influenced by the Iranian state, with its quasi-official religious institutions and official bureaucratic bodies. Iraq became a Shiite state following extensive Iranian infiltration; Syria and Yemen are also transitioning to Shiite status. The Iranian regime has concurrently pursued two different foreign policy pathways since the revolution. Iran's role and influence grew easier because of both methods, which demanded the instrumentalization of Shiism and Islam. Using pan-Islamism, Iran attempted to promote its revolutionary principles to both Sunni and Shiite Muslim governments as part of its first campaign. Up until the emergence of the Arab insurgencies, Iran employed Islam, the largest common denominator in the area, as a tool and instrument of Iranian expansionism. Iran positioned itself against pro-status quo powers as the lone revolutionary force in the region standing up for oppressed peoples. Another tactic is pan-Shiism. Iran promptly abandoned its pan-Islamic agenda with the onset of the Arab revolutions and began promoting the Shiite identity. Since then, Iran has mobilized Shiites for its foreign policy goals by concentrating on all Shiite-related groups, including all varieties of Shiism. Since the invasion of Iraq, the Iranian state has used pan-Shiism as a tool of its regional expansionist agenda. The adoption of a certain sect or denomination as the primary element of social and political identity was made possible by Western, or American, regional strategy. This, in turn, enabled Iranian expansionism. Along with the West and Iran, Sunni Muslim nations also started to ignore all other characteristics, including ethnicity (Arab, Turk, Fars, and Kurdish) and religion (Islam, specifically). As a result, Iran has made an effort to alter all forms of Shiism to establish a unified ideology that would support its policies. Iranian social and religious institutions started to infiltrate the political and social structures of neighbouring states. Other forms of Shiism, such as Nusayriyyah and Zaydiyyah, were dragged away from their customs and toward the Twelver Shiite interpretation. Non-Iranian Shiite groups also started to recognize the Iranian

¹⁰⁵ TOI Staff. "Iran slams Sudan's Israel deal, says it paid 'ransom' to get off terror list." *The Times of Israel*, (2020). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-says-normalization-deal-between-israel-sudan-was-secured-by-ransom/>

religious leadership as the supreme political authority. This leader is the commander in chief of the military forces and the acting head of the legislative, judicial, and executive departments of the state. That is to say, non-Iranian Shiites started to express their allegiance to the Iranian religious authority rather than their national political leaders. No power opposes Iranian tactics in this situation. On the one hand, Sunni political objectives and practical long-term strategies to counter Iranian sectarian policies are lacking. The majority of the time, Sunni states, like those in the Gulf, only attempt to survive when faced with numerous unforeseen difficulties that jeopardize their territorial integrity and national security. Conversely, there is division among the Arab and Sunni regimes and communities in the region.¹⁰⁶

Iran wants to wipe out the Jewish state from the map. Iran's regional foreign policy is based on its goal of overthrowing the Israeli state, which has a significant impact on politics in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. The Iranian-Israeli conflict has intensified over the past few years due to its efforts to supply weaponry to ally proxies in Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon. Iran has surrounded Israel with well-equipped militants, making their threat to Israel evident. These organizations, which include Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hezbollah, are reliant on Tehran's generosity to sustain their military might and internal dominance. They also share Iran's commitment to the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. In response to these provocations, Israel has carried out regular bombings against Iranian military installations and arms shipments into Syria, as well as assassinations and sabotage operations inside Iran to delay its nuclear, drone, and missile programs.¹⁰⁷

2.3 How is The Arab-Israeli Rapprochement a Threat to Iran

The new Arab-Israeli coalition will almost certainly make Iran more vulnerable to pressure campaigns and security drills by its adversaries. In February 2018, a crew of Mossad operatives successfully recovered nearly all of a large number of highly sensitive nuclear data from an unknown location in Tehran and flew them to Tel Aviv, highlighting Iran's current vulnerability.

¹⁰⁶ Muhittin Ataman. "The Impact of Iranian Over-Expansionism on Regional Politics." SETA (2016). <https://www.setav.org/en/the-impact-of-iranian-over-expansionism-on-regional-politics/>

¹⁰⁷ Afshon Ostovarira. "ISRAEL, AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST." War on the Rocks (2023). <https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/iran-israel-and-war-in-the-middle-east/>

According to Turkish media, the Emiratis are allowing Israel to establish "spy camps" on the UAE-controlled island of Socotra in Yemen.¹⁰⁸

In addition, the agreements have encouraged expanded security participation and coordinated efforts among the signatories. Since the Accords were signed, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Israel have strengthened their security ties. The United States, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain performed a five-day combined naval training exercise in the Red Sea in November 2021. Then, in February 2022, Israeli Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai met with senior officials from the UAE's interior ministry to discuss how the two nations could further their security cooperation. In addition, in April 2022, Israel announced that the Iron Beam laser air defence system had passed a successful test and expressed its readiness to supply allies with the equipment. The relationship between Bahrain and Israel has changed the most, on February 3, 2022, only days before the Israeli Police Commissioner's travel to the UAE, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz astonished Bahrain by signing an MoU to increase intelligence collaboration, institutionalizing training, and formalize cooperation between the two military. Israel announced the appointment of a military attaché to the Fifth Fleet headquarters of the US Navy in Bahrain shortly thereafter. While such improvements are empowering in that they show a rising eagerness to partake in territorial tact with Israel, they likewise raise the chance of creating an extreme security predicament with Iran. The Abraham Accords have been regarded as a strengthening coalition against Iran and a thawing of relations with Israel.¹⁰⁹ The Arab-Israeli alliance poses a significant threat to Iran because it is Iran itself responsible for it and its policies are to blame for the arrangement. In the same way that six Persian Gulf states formed the GCC in 1981 in response to Iran's actions, same way Tehran has now pushed and forced the Arabs to join hands with Israel. Aviv Kochavi, the IDF Chief of Staff, indicated that preparations were being made for an imminent military operation, implying that action against Iran was being considered. On March 22, 2022, Netanyahu, the foreign ministers of four Arab countries—Morocco, Egypt, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates—along with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in the Israeli desert to set the basis for strategic military cooperation to oppose Iran and its allied

¹⁰⁸ Maysam Behravesht and Hamidreza Azizi. "Israel's Peace Deals Are a Strategic Nightmare for Iran." *Foreign Policy*, (2020). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/14/israels-peace-deals-are-a-strategic-nightmare-for-iran/>

¹⁰⁹ David Hamilton. "The Abraham Accords, Iran, and Security in the Middle East." *Al Fusaic*, (2022). <https://www.alfusaic.net/blog/amplify/the-abraham-accords-iran-and-security-in-the-middle-east>

forces, as Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid put it. In recent years, notably since the signing of the Abraham Accords in late 2020, Israel has proved that it is a reliable ally for Arab governments facing Iran's threat. In the middle of February 2022, an Israeli strike on a western Iranian airbase destroyed hundreds of Iranian drones. According to the Times of Israel, Israel and its Middle Eastern partners are working on a "joint defensive system" to counter Iranian drones and missiles. Similar to the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) that the Trump administration has proposed, the alliance will be modelled after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The strategic alliance will focus on air defence coordination and make it possible to share intelligence and plan military operations to stop attacks.¹¹⁰ The Middle East Air Defense Alliance (MEAD), which will be directed by the US, is a new combined air defence network that Israel and several other Middle Eastern nations have declared they have joined. Israel will link its air defence capabilities with regional players who have long played an antagonistic role, according to a Monday speech by Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz. On the other hand, Israel formally declined to comment on which countries might be engaged, and information regarding the new arrangement is, at best, vague. A request for an instant response was not received from the White House. Gantz claims that the MEAD will assist the nations in the area in strengthening their defences against Iranian attempts to infiltrate their borders with UAVs, cruise missiles, and rockets.¹¹¹

According to Iranian media, the recent meeting (Negev Summit) was the first time that the foreign ministers of these countries travelled to Israel simultaneously, which is significant. In the Negev desert's Sdeh Boker region, the ministers of the four Arab nations met with the Jewish state's foreign minister, a place where David Ben-Gurion, founder and the first prime minister of the Jewish State, built a home for himself and his wife. Iran kept a careful eye on these developments. They are aware that the countries are concerned about it and its nuclear deal. This meeting was organized against Iran and prompted by the Zionist regime. Tehran also closely observed another conference in which Egypt hosted Israel and the UAE, in which Iran claims that "drones, missiles, and other threats were on the agenda of the three presidents." According to sources, this might

¹¹⁰ Ghazal Vaisi. "What would an Arab-Israeli military alliance mean for Iran?" *The Middle East Institute (MEI)*, (2022). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/what-would-arab-israeli-military-alliance-mean-iran>

¹¹¹ Arie Egozi. "Israel announces regional air defense network with Middle East partners, US" *breakingdefense* (2022). <https://breakingdefense.com/2022/06/israel-announces-regional-air-defense-network-with-middle-east-partners-us/>

involve sharing air defence technologies. According to recent allegations in the Gulf media, Morocco is interested in Israeli air defence systems.¹¹²

Thus, Iran strongly condemned the Abraham Accords. Various interviews, speeches and tweets of the Iranian officials presented a severe response. According to Iran, the Arabs have sold out the Palestinian cause and stabbed the Palestinians in the back and betrayed the Islamic world. None of the signatories of the Abraham Accords share good relations with Iran, all the members of the treaty face various threats from Iran. Many scholars have a view that it is because of Iran and its threats that have forced these five countries to join hands against their common enemy. The armaments, military equipment, and intelligence that Israel and the Arab states would be able to trade as a result of the accord represent a direct danger to Iran's security. The trips by Abraham Accords leaders to each other's nations, cooperative naval drills, and the conference in the Negev desert in 2022 to establish the basis for a strategic military alliance to block Iran and its allied militias, are strong indicators of a significant danger to Iran. Furthermore, the purpose of building a "joint defensive system," a Middle Eastern alliance similar to NATO, would be a nightmare for Iran because the group's main goal would be to resist Iran.

¹¹² Seth J. Frantzman. "Iran is beginning to understand the Abraham Accords - analysis." *The Jerusalem Post*, (2022). <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-703073>

CHAPTER 3

IRANIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Chapter 3 elaborates on Tehran's influence over like-minded states and non-state entities. There will be a brief history of Iran's non-state foreign policy covered. Furthermore, it will explain certain non-state entities which have Iran's backing and how these groups enhanced Iran's sphere of influence and helped it in countering and preventing threats from reaching its soil in the past as well as present.

The term "non-state foreign policy" refers to relationships between a state and a political-militant non-state entity. This kind of strategy addresses how a state builds and manages connections with non-state actors through ways other than traditional foreign policy. Iran's strategic ties to the Kurds in Iraq and the Shias in Lebanon ushered in a Middle East policy for dealing with non-state entities. It signaled the start of "Iran's nonstate foreign policy," a specialized foreign strategy targeted at strengthening connections with political and militant organizations. Colonel Pashaie, who was in command of the Middle East Directorate of SAVAK (Sazman-e Etelaat Va Amniat Keshvar), Iran's National Intelligence and Security Organization, uttered the aforementioned remarks to undermine the Middle East's developing pan-Arabism in the aftermath of the 1958 Iraqi coup. To avoid compromising Iranian land, we must resist and limit the threat along the eastern Mediterranean shore. This marked the start of Iran's Green Plan approach in Southern Lebanon, laying the framework for Iran's links with Lebanon's marginalized Shia population. After Seyyed Musa Sadr's dramatic departure to the south of Lebanon, Tehran's ties with the Lebanese Shia took an entirely different trajectory. Added to that, Pahlavi Iran accompanied the Iraqi Kurds in resisting Iraq. The pro-Western monarchy had been overthrown by an Iraqi revolution in 1958, which formed a pan-Arab, pro-Moscow republic on Iran's western frontiers. The Shah directed SAVAK to create an important relationship with the Kurds in Northern Iraq in this special scenario. The Kurdish rebels, led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, drove out the Iraqi Armed Forces and saved Baghdad from posing a threat to Iran's western territories and the Persian Gulf.¹¹³ Since the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979, the governing bodies of the Islamic Republic have depicted their support

¹¹³ Arash Reisinezhad. "Geopolitical Account of Iran's Ties with Non-State Actors under the Shah: 1958-1979." (2017). <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4190&context=etd>

for non-state organizations in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere as a show of opposition to Israel and imperialism, as well as an act of service to oppressed nations. When alluding to Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance, which currently includes Syria, Iran, and their non-state allies in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and IRGC commanders frequently use religious rhetoric. The Islamic Republic attempts to draw attention to the fact that it varies from the practices of the Imperial State of Iran that came before it by demonstrating its regional policy in terms of revolutionary or religious objectives. Regardless of the Islamic Republic's revolutionary rhetoric, this component of Iran's regional politics after 1979 resembles and, in many instances, directly perpetuates the Shah's policies of the 1960s and 1970s. Both deployed Shia people around the region to fight opponents and support non-state entities. After 1979, Iran's regional strategy remained focused on Lebanon due to its strong Shia population and advantageous geographic location. Khomeini, who led the revolution in 1978-1979 and toppled the Shah's political authority, faced the strategic problem of Iraq. Shortly after the Pahlavi regime was deposed, Iranian revolutionaries, who had formed strong relations with Palestinian Fatah in the 1970s to promote their anti-Shah fight, began to cultivate and assist anti-Israeli and pro-Khomeini groups in Lebanon.¹¹⁴ Christian Saunders, an experienced Iranian analyst for the Defence Intelligence Agency, spoke with Pentagon media in 2019 before the public unveiling of the study titled "Iran Military Power." According to Saunders, one of the three aspects the Iranian system employs to ensure its survival and establish a more dominating position in the region is the employment of unconventional capabilities, including the deployment of accomplices and proxies. According to Saunders, the IRGC, Iran's primary tool for unconventional operations, maintains a large network of nonstate collaborators, proxies, and associates throughout the region. He pointed out that Iran provides financial, political, training, and material assistance to groups such as Hezbollah, Shia civilian armies in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, a few Palestinian gatherings, the Taliban, and Bahraini Shia groups for the purpose to further achieve their objectives.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Mohammad Ataie. "Continuity Despite Revolution: Iran's Support for Non-State Actors." *Middle East Briefs*, (2021): 34188. <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb141.pdf>

¹¹⁵ C. Todd Lopez. "DOD Official: Iran's Military Strength Relies Partly on Nonstate Actors." *U.S. Department of Defense*, (2019). <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2020954/dod-official-irans-military-strength-relies-partly-on-nonstate-actors/>

The non-state organizations listed below have stronger relations with Iran to acquire assistance from it.

3.1 Hezbollah

Hezbollah surfaced during Lebanon's 15-year civil conflict, which began in 1975 when long-standing discontentment with the country's strong-armed Palestinian presence reached a boiling point. Different sectarian communities in Lebanon maintained contrasting opinions on the nature of the Palestinian situation. A 1943 political accord distributes political authority in Lebanon among the major religious groups: a Sunni Muslim is the state leader, the president is a Maronite Christian, and the speaker of parliament is a Shiite Muslim. Tensions between these groups burst into civil war due to a multitude of factors disrupting the delicate balance. The influx of Palestinian refugees increased the number of Sunni Muslims in Lebanon while further alienating Shia Muslims from the dominant Christian society. In the time of conflict, Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 to expel Palestinian guerrilla fighters who were using the territory as a base for strikes against Israel. The dominant Shiite authority in the area, Iran's theocratic dictatorship, which took power in 1979, prompted several Shiites to take up arms against the Israeli occupation. Iran and the IRGC saw an opportunity to strengthen its influence in Arab countries by providing training, weapons, and funding to the newly established force, which adopted the name Hezbollah, which means "The Party of God".¹¹⁶

Hezbollah is the only non-state organization that is actively involved in parliamentary politics, institutional development, and social services in Lebanon. Hezbollah has sought to legitimize its position by taking part in elections and assisting in the establishment of a variety of social welfare organizations. The organization has evolved to be the most powerful non-state group in Lebanon and the region as a direct result of Iran's support. Hezbollah, for one, has never changed its narratives about its designated foes, such as Israel, the US, and Arab governments associated with the US. Furthermore, with Iran's aid, Hezbollah has obtained weaponry, missiles, and rockets. Even though the Lebanese government has not recognized Hezbollah as a legitimate military organization, Hezbollah has resisted the government's demands to entirely disarm and as a result,

¹¹⁶ Kali Robinson. "What Is Hezbollah?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, (2022). <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>

Hezbollah has effectively served as a state within a state. Furthermore, as a result of Hezbollah's engagement in regional wars under the excuse of battling terrorists, assaults on civilian targets have happened. Non-state organizations with whom Hezbollah maintains close ties include Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Houthis.¹¹⁷

The active participation of Hezbollah in the crises in Syria and Iraq has had a significant impact on how the group's alliance with Iran is implemented in practice across the region. These changes included significant deployments of Hezbollah forces outside of Lebanon, as well as a well-organized training programme to assist Iran in building Shi'a warfare networks. The GCC designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in 2016, and Gulf states have tightened restrictions on Hezbollah supporters and donors within their borders. Furthermore, the Arab League and the OIC have issued statements condemning Hezbollah, prompting a verbal clash between the organization and Gulf authorities. Morocco severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 2018 owing to purported Hezbollah-Polisario Front ties. The movement of top personnel from positions focused on Israel to those involving Iraq, Yemen, and Syria was the first structural proof of Hezbollah's shift to a regional posture in favour of Iranian interests. Hezbollah became the commander and uniting force for a wide range of Shi'a militants allied to Iran and the Quds Force, the component of the IRGC primarily responsible for foreign operations, as it trained new Shia fighters from the area and led them in conflicts across Syria. Following the killing of Soleimani and Iraqi Shi'a militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in January 2020, Hezbollah took a more prominent role in overseeing the affairs of a vast network of Shia militant proxies acknowledged as the "Resistance Axis" for Iran's IRGC-QF. As an outcome of these developments, Hezbollah's regional focus has shifted from that of a Lebanese militia concerned merely with operations in Lebanon and fighting against Israel to that of a regional actor operating as a commander for the IRGC-QF's regional network of militant proxies.¹¹⁸

Despite having its roots in the Middle East, Hezbollah has developed an extensive network in Europe, as well as networks in Latin America and Africa, allowing it to launch global attacks.

¹¹⁷ Akbar Khan, and Han Zhaoying. "Iran-Hezbollah Alliance Reconsidered: What Contributes to the Survival of State-Proxy Alliance?." *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7, no. 1, (2020): 101-123. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2347797020906654>

¹¹⁸ Matthew Levitt. "Hezbollah's Regional Activities in Support of Iran's Proxy Networks." Middle East Institute, (2021). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/hezbollahs-regional-activities-support-irans-proxy-networks>

Hezbollah attempted to kill Israelis in Cyprus and attacked a bus loaded with Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in 2012, in addition to the AMIA Centre bombing in Buenos Aires in 1994. Authorities in Europe identified Hezbollah safe houses, some of which had tremendous quantities of chemical compounds needed to make powerful bombs. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) has urged the EU to classify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah revealed in 2016 that Iran provides finances, logistics, and equipment to the organization. Nasrallah, who was captured on camera, stated that the organization considered itself a "soldier" of Iran's spiritual authority. Iran has given Hezbollah weapons by using Syrian soil to support Bashar al-Assad, and Israel has often attacked Iranian weapon supplies to Syria during the previous two years.¹¹⁹

3.2 Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

In Gaza, PIJ is Iran's most near ally. In the late 1970s, Fathi Abdulaziz al-Shiqaqi founded the group as an Egypt-based affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood. The organization supported Khamenei's Islamist ideals as well as the idea that Palestine must be set free via armed conflict. As a consequence of the Islamic Revolution's alignment with its principles, Iran provided military and economic help to the organization. Indeed, Iran funds the organization's operations at every level, from weaponry to pay, and is essentially its single supporter. To maintain and develop relations, the PIJ has a permanent representative in Iran who talks with Iranian parties regularly. With the group's efforts against Israel, Iran's military and economic backing for PIJ has grown and as a result, the PIJ has grown in importance and influence in Gaza. Furthermore, the IRCG has regularly trained the organization's agents. In 2002, they spent \$50 million to build a training facility in Syria for Palestinian fighters, where PIJ operatives learned about how to use Fajr-5 and SA-7 missiles and conduct suicidal operations. According to senior US sources, Tehran paid PIJ incentives in the millions of dollars for each strike on Israel.¹²⁰

Iran is believed to have ceased sponsoring PIJ in May 2015 because it refused to support Tehran's intervention in Yemen. Iran transferred funds to As-Sabarin, or "the Patient," a Gaza-based

¹¹⁹ "Hezbollah, Hamas, and More: Iran's Terror Network Around the Globe." *AJC*, (2022). <https://www.ajc.org/news/hezbollah-hamas-and-more-irans-terror-network-around-the-globe>

¹²⁰ Sima Shine, and Anna Catran. "Iran's Policy on the Gaza Strip'." *Institute for National Security Studies*, (2017). https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/GazaCrisis_ENG-151-157.pdf

movement led a former PIJ member Hisham Salem. In May 2016, the Islamic Republic allegedly restored its backing for the PIJ, giving \$70 million yearly. When a PIJ delegation visited Tehran, they reached the decision. According to Israel's chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Gadi Eizenkot, Iran boosted the funding it provided for Gaza-based organizations towards the end of 2017. With an increase in yearly funding for Hamas and PIJ in the Gaza Strip to \$100 million, he indicated in January 2018 that investment in the Palestinian arena has been expanding in recent months out of a desire to influence it. Later, Israeli media stated that Iran was sending PIJ \$2.5 million per month, or \$30 million per year. In May 2018, Israel was attacked by PIJ rockets. In May 2021, in reaction to what they saw as Israeli provocations in Jerusalem, the PIJ and Hamas launched hundreds of missiles into Israel. On May 7, 2021, Ramez al Halabi, a PIJ officer, told an Iraqi news outlet, "I am gratified to announce that the rockets that were used to bombard Tel Aviv bear an Iranian signature, that of Qasem Soleimani." He thanked Iran for handing over guns, money, and food to the Palestinians.¹²¹ "Over months, the resistance has proven capable of crushing Zionist cities with over 1,000 rockets each day," pointed out PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhleh in 2019. The State Department's 2020 Country Reports on Terrorism indicate that "PIJ is given primarily Iranian financial and training assistance." Joint operations have been carried out by the PIJ and Hizballah, which receives backing from Iran and Syria. "Soleimani travelled across multiple countries, made plans, and established guidelines for bringing these weapons to the Gaza Strip," Nakhleh adds. "These weapons were indeed sent to Gaza. I can confirm that Soleimani delivered the missiles that were used for hitting Tel Aviv to Gaza. I'm convinced that Qasem was a big reason why Palestinians looked to attack the Zionist entity's capital. From that point forward, weapons were developed in Palestine, and as a result of the expertise gained via Qasem's decisions, the Palestinians began creating all missiles themselves. This is a significant issue that has undoubtedly helped to strengthen the Palestinian resistance."¹²² The leader of the organization, Ziyad al-Nakalah, met in Iran with Ali Akbar Velayati, the principal counsellor to the Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Khamenei, before the August 2022 escalation between Israel and the PIJ, which

¹²¹ Daniel Levin. "Iran, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad." *The Iran Primer*, (2021). <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2018/jul/09/iran-hamas-and-palestinian-islamic-jihad>

¹²² Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is an Iran-Supported Terror Organization." *FDD*, (2022). https://www.fdd.org/in_the_news/2022/08/07/palestinian-islamic-jihad-pij-is-an-iran-supported-terror-organization/

saw over 1,000 rockets fired on Israel in two days. "We share a strong and solid connection with the PIJ and Palestinian resistance," Velayati stated at the meeting.¹²³

3.3 Hamas

The Islamic Resistance Movement, which is known as Hamas in the Arabic language, is the Palestinian arm of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. It was founded in the late 1920s with an explicit objective of "raising the flag of Allah throughout each inch of Palestine" and ensuring the fall of the Jewish State as a step towards the formation of an international Islamic community. It was given its current name in December 1987 during the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Following "meetings at the most senior level," Iran assisted Hamas within a few years, in accordance to the organization's spokesperson Ibrahim Goshi. Up to that time, most of Tehran's support had gone to the PIJ and its Lebanese branch Hezbollah, PIJ, a tiny group that likewise promised to destroy Israel. Based on Israeli intelligence sources, Hamas had received support from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and various other Arab countries, but Iran first gave them military training overseas and an estimated \$30 million yearly. In 1991, Hamas established offices in Tehran. Later that year, Tehran invited the organization to a meeting to share information about the "Islamic intifada" with other Iranian customers. Iran's help allowed Hamas to start organizing itself better. The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the organization's military arm, was established in 1991, and Egyptian intelligence verified later that year that up to 3,000 Hamas members had received training from Iran. According to reports, in the same year, a Hamas delegation led by Politburo Chairman Musa Abu Marzouk flew to Tehran to meet with key Iranian authorities, including Ayatollah Khamenei.¹²⁴

Throughout the second intifada (2000-2005), the IRGC, Hezbollah, and Hamas operated collectively. During this time, Hezbollah launched three significant initiatives for importing weapons and bomb-making materials into Gaza. It also supported Hamas in developing the considerably more powerful weapon used in the March 2002 suicide bombing that killed thirty Israelis. As a result, rather than becoming an entirely Iranian puppet like Hezbollah, Hamas

¹²³ "Hezbollah, Hamas, and More: Iran's Terror Network Around the Globe." *AJC*, (2022). <https://www.ajc.org/news/hezbollah-hamas-and-more-irans-terror-network-around-the-globe>

¹²⁴ Jonathan Schanzer. "Hamas as Tehran's Agent." *Middle East Quarterly*, (2022). https://www.meforum.org/63270/hamas-as-tehran-agent#_ftn50

evolved into a practical ally for Tehran's anti-Israel axis. The relationship was consolidated further by Iran's efforts to assist the Hamas rocket programme. According to IRGC missile commander Ahmed Hosseini, Hamas fighters had acquired weaponry and training from Hezbollah, and some of these individuals had been to Iran for training years before. He said that the now-deceased IRGC general Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam was in charge of equipping, directing, and developing Iran's missile program. The IRGC and Hezbollah originally trained Hamas engineers how to build missiles out of common stuff like pipes and sugar, this enabled the organization to begin manufacturing its primary short-range rocket, the Qassam, in the country. Following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and Hamas' subsequent control of the region, the organization started collecting Israeli weapons that had not been exploded to make rockets. Syria and Iran also provided it with more modern missiles. Between 2008 and 2009, many kinds of Iranian weapons were utilized in the Gaza conflict; in 2012 fighting, Hamas began launching long-range Iranian Fajr-5 rockets at the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.¹²⁵

When the Syrian war began in 2011, Iran and Hamas, which had been backing opposing groups, parted ways. Iran provided soldiers and military support to President Bashar al-Assad, an Alawite, whereas Hamas promised to assist the opposition, which is predominantly Sunni. In response, Iran ceased sending \$23 million per month to Hamas in 2012. The Egyptian military deposed the first Muslim Brotherhood-led administration in Cairo in 2013 and closed the tunnels that connected Gaza and Egypt. These tunnels were used by Hamas to transfer people, supplies, and weapons. The restrictions allegedly resulted in a budget reduction for the Hamas administration of up to 75%, which had a substantial effect on its financial sources. Following the breakup with Syria, Meshaal and other top Hamas members were compelled to abandon their stronghold in Damascus. For Hamas, Qatar acted as a second headquarters and a financing source. Tensions between Hamas and Iran further increased when, in 2015, Hamas gave implicit assistance to the Saudi-led campaign against the Houthis, an Iranian-supported organization in Yemen. In August 2017, Iran started supporting Hamas after the second-in-command of the organization, Saleh al Arouri, met with senior Iranian officials. According to a key Hamas military leader identified as Yahya Sinwar, Iran is the most significant material and financial benefactor of the Izz ad-Din al Qassam Brigades.

¹²⁵ Ido Levy. "How Iran Fuels Hamas Terrorism." *Washington Institute*, (2021). <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-iran-fuels-hamas-terrorism>

Good relations exist with Iran. The struggle against Israel and Hamas' plans for liberation will reflect this, as the relationship is evolving and reverting to its former state. In the words of Hamas officials, when the Syrian civil war broke out in the spring of 2018, linkages to Tehran stood at an all-time high. In August 2018, Israeli media reported that Iran was sending Hamas \$5.83 million per month, or \$70 million annually.¹²⁶

3.4 Houthis (Ansar Allah)

The Houthi movement got started in northern Yemen in the course of the 1990s as an apparent response to Saudi Arabia's growing economic and religious clout. During their insurrection against the Yemeni government in November 2009, the Houthis marched into Saudi Arabia. For the first time, the Saudi army deployed overseas without an ally. The Saudis used both airstrikes and ground fighting to suppress the militants. In March 2015, the Saudi-Houthi war reached a critical juncture. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates conducted an attack against Houthi targets in Yemen. Despite United Nations efforts to serve as mediators for negotiations for peace, the fighting between the Houthis and Yemen's internationally recognized government and its supporters continues. Iranian government officials have been supportive of the Houthis and correlated them to Hezbollah. According to senior advisor to the Supreme Leader Khamenei Ali Akbar Velayati, "Iran recognizes this campaign as part of the succeeding Islamic Awakening movements and encourages Ansarullah's righteous struggles in Yemen." Saudi Arabia has long accused Iran of supplying weaponry to the Houthis as a proxy battle, meanwhile, Tehran has always denied equipping, supporting, or training the Houthis. "We have concerns about...Iran's regional interests, which are among the key reasons that contribute to regional instability," remarked the late Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal in 2015. According to a declaration made by a US admiral in October 2016, five weapons shipments from Iran to the Arabian Peninsula have been successfully stopped by warships of the US Navy and allies since April 2015. Thousands of AK-47 automatic weapons, anti-tank missiles, as well as sniper rifles, were among the shipment.

¹²⁶ Daniel Levin. "Iran, Hamas & Palestinian Islamic Jihad." Wilson Center, (2021). <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/iran-hamas-and-palestinian-islamic-jihad>

"These accusations are baseless," claimed Bahram Ghasemi, then-spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry."¹²⁷

The militant group Houthis in Yemen were given weaponry, equipment, training, and various additional supplies from Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iran's IRGC. Iran's Quds Force has supplied the Houthis with a wide range of weapons, the Quds Force and Hezbollah in Lebanon provided instruction to Houthi forces in combat strategies and the creation, usage, and maintenance of missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and other weapons and systems. Unlike its partners in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the Quds Force delivers weapons and supplies to Yemen via a network of maritime smuggling routes. It cannot, however, rely on air and land bridges for this. Iran routinely disassembled military systems, transported them via boat through ports in Yemen and Oman, and then put them back together. Between 2017 and 2020, the Houthis boosted their reliance on upgraded UAV technology, sophisticated Iranian bombs, UUVs, and land and marine mine warfare. The Houthis also have their sights set on the United Arab Emirates and other countries that were a part of the Saudi military alliance. Although the Houthis have targeted other members of the alliance, Saudi Arabia continues to be their top objective. They have increased their targeting of Saudi oil tankers to destabilize the Saudi supply chain and impair the flow of oil. During the first nine months of the year 2021, there were approximately twice as many Houthi strikes in Saudi Arabia, largely targeting civilian targets, as there were during the same timeframe in 2020.¹²⁸

3.5 Badr Organization

The Badr Organization, the Iraqi oldest Shiite militia, possesses the deepest ties to Iran. Between 1983 and 1984, the Badr Corps was established as the armed division of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). As Saddam Hussein's administration intensified its persecution of Shiites in 1979, several exiled Iraqis fled to Iran. The Corps was led by cleric Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (1939-2003), and his family continues to hold power over the

¹²⁷ "Who are Yemen's Houthis?" *Wilson Center*, (2022). <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/who-are-yemens-houthis>

¹²⁸ Seth G. Jones, Jared Thompson, Danielle Ngo, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., and Brian McSorley. "The Iranian and Houthi War against Saudi Arabia." *CSIS*, (2021). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/iranian-and-houthi-war-against-saudi-arabia>

Supreme Council. The Badr Corps was a branch of the IRGC, also known as the Army of the Protectors of the Islamic Revolution (Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami). This army, which operates alongside regular forces, is responsible for defending and propagating the Islamic Revolution. The Quds Brigades include Iraqis, who are responsible for maintaining diplomatic, military, and intelligence ties with Iran's Muslim neighbours in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. The Quds Brigades are in communication with the Lebanese Hezbollah and Badr, as well as other organizations that support Iran. After the Iran-Iraq War, the Badr Corps remained a part of the Revolutionary Guards. Soldiers from Badr marched into Iraq after the American invasion in 2003. The Badr Corps, subsequently known as the Badr Organization, maintained its paramilitary personnel and established its political influence in Baghdad.¹²⁹

In Iraq, the Badr Organization has been active in politics, Hadi al Amiri, the chairman of Badr, served as Iraq's transport minister from 2011 to 2014, and from October 2014 to July 2016, another Badr member identified as Mohammed Ghabban worked as Iraq's interior minister. The Badr Organization grasped 22 seats in the Iraqi parliament at the end of 2016. Long-standing criticism of the group's influence over Iraq's Interior Ministry. In January 2018, the Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) launched the Fatah Alliance political party as they geared up for the Iraqi elections in May 2018. After Sadr's party won the Iraqi elections in June, the alliance joined forces with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance, which received 48 parliamentary seats, 21 of which belonged to Badr. Up to the October 2021 parliamentary elections, the Badr Organization was the second-largest political body in the Iraqi parliament, with Sadr's party receiving just 14 members. On July 13, 2018, protesters from Iraq attacked Iranian-backed organizations and Badr's political offices, asking for Iran to leave Iraq.¹³⁰

The state-funded PMF is supervised by Badr and has at least 10 and maybe as many as seventeen brigades. The PMF brigades are regarded as government organizations under Iraqi legislation. The commander-in-chief, also referred to as the prime minister of Iraq, commands the armed forces of Badr inside the Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, PMF, and other divisions. Badr's PMF

¹²⁹ Guido Steinberg. "The Badr Organization: Iran's most important instrument in Iraq." (2017): 8. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/53678/ssoar-2017-steinberg-The_Badr_Organization_Irans_most.pdf?sequence=1

¹³⁰ "Badr Organization." *Counter Terrorism Project*, (2023). <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/badr-organization>

brigades periodically defy the government's chain of command while still being recognized as official institutions. For example, they disobeyed the prime minister's directive to take part in the Battle of Tikrit if coalition airpower was supporting the operation. When asked, Badr is willing to acknowledge that the Supreme Leader of Iran is superior to Iraq's Prime Minister. "We follow Imam [Khomeini]: "If the Imam announces war, we declare it, and if he proclaims peace, we accept it." Hadi al-Ameri, a younger commander fighting for Iran, recorded this event and stated, "At this point, we know that the Imam represents Islam. Syria's Badr military branch is governed by the IRGC."¹³¹

3.6 Kataib Hezbollah (KH)

The IRGC-Quds Force uses Kataib Hezbollah, a comparatively tiny Iraqi Shiite militia, to assert power in Iraq. Kataib Hezbollah, which was founded in 2003, served as an umbrella organization for several Shiite organizations before declaring a merger in 2007. In the same year, the organization used lethal explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), an IED provided by Iran, to assault American and coalition soldiers. The most ardent supporters of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei call him the "Imam," and Kataib Hezbollah also uses the title and accepts Ali Khamenei as the "Imam". The Washington Post was informed in 2015 by a Kataib Hezbollah official that the organization had dispatched 1,000 militants to Aleppo in response to a direct request from Iran's Soleimani (late). Kataib Hezbollah is currently attempting to fill the power vacuum left by the Islamic State caliphate's demise, along with other militias backed by Iran. It was one of the first Iraqi organizations to send troops to Syria, where it helped form organizations like Liwa Abu-Fadl al-Abbas, a militia made up of Iraqi Shiites.¹³²

Kata'ib Hezbollah, according to the organization's web page, is a group that advocates "resistance" and aspires to build an Islamic republic in Iraq based on the Iranian model and its concept of the rule of law (Wilayat al-Faqih). Furthermore, the militia aspires to develop a political majority to democratically enact important constitutional reforms in Iraq (implying the formation of an Islamic

¹³¹ Michael Knights, Crispin Smith and Hamdi Malik. "Profile: Badr Organization." (2021). <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-badr-organization>

¹³² David Adesnik and Amir Toumaj. "FDD Profiles of Leading Iranian-Backed Militias." (2018). <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2018/02/28/fdd-profiles-of-leading-iranian-backed-militias/>

rule like that of Iran), to protect Iraq's unity, and to emphasize the Islamic nature of the country. It also exposes and opposes American and pro-American projects in Iraq. The group also thinks Iraq's decision-making roles should be elevated to those with the best qualifications. The Iranian website Iran International, located in London, said on November 1, 2022, that it had learned that militia members from the PMF, including Kata'ib Hezbollah militiamen, were taking part in the repression of the uprising in Iran. On October 31, 2022, 150 Iraqi fighters between the ages of 25 and 30 reportedly landed at the airport in Mashhad, according to eyewitnesses. Additionally, it has been claimed that Arabic-speaking people helped put an end to the rioting. According to estimates, the government favours the deployment of mercenaries out of fear that Iranian police will refrain from attacking protestors who are their citizens (and potentially even their families).¹³³

3.7 Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH)

Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), also known as the Khazali Network and funded by Iran, was officially established in January 2006 by Qais al-Khazali as a splinter organization from the Mahdi Army. The Shiite militias in Iraq led by Iran are referred to as "Special Groups" by the US military. Khazali formerly headed a fighting battalion in Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army but, by 2004, Khazali and his associates were operating independently of Sadr and the Mahdi Army. Most notably, despite Sadr's instructions for the Mahdi Army to lay down its weapons in the summer of 2004, Khazali's unit continued to attack American forces. Despite their reunion with Sadr, Khazali and the remaining members of his brigade quit the Mahdi Army in early 2006 because they were hired by the IRGC to lead AAH, a brand-new militia that had begun receiving IRGC training in Iraq. AAH has relied heavily on Iranian financial support, training, and logistical aid since its inception. As payment, AAH acted as an Iranian proxy in Iraq, promoting Iranian aims and interests. AAH's fighters performed admirably during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war thanks to extensive training and backing from the IRGC. The late Qasem Soleimani continued to directly manage the organization, and it had always maintained close ties with Hezbollah.¹³⁴

¹³³ "Kata'ib Hezbollah: A Dominant Iraqi Pro-Iranian Militia." *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, (2022). <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/kataib-hezbollah-a-dominant-iraqi-pro-iranian-militia/>

¹³⁴ "Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq." *Stanford*, (2018). <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/asaib-ahl-al-haq>

3.8 Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba

Kaabi was a key member of AAH and a US terrorist, but in 2012, he defected from Asaib and created Nujaba with Iranian sponsorship to gather Iraqi fighters for the Syrian conflict. While many Iraqi Shiites went home from battling the Islamic State, Nujaba continued their deployments in Syria and grew to be one of the largest Iraqi contingents. Nujaba posted a photo of Kaabi with the late Qassem Soleimani on its Facebook page in 2015. Nujaba took part in the retaking of Aleppo in 2016. Kaabi met with Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah, in 2016 and declared the two groups to be "twins of the resistance," asserting that the militia had 3,000 men in Syria. Numerous people, including women and children, were murdered in Aleppo by Nujaba and the Syrian military, according to the United Nations. Nujaba engaged in combat with the IS in Iraq as well as in eastern Damascus and Hama in 2017. It has announced the formation of a "Golan Liberation Brigade" and promised that it would support Hezbollah in any potential future battle with Israel.¹³⁵

3.9 Saraya al-Mukhtar (SM)

The Bahraini organization Saraya al-Mukhtar (SM), which has proven to be the most vocal in its support for Iranian proxies, has publicly announced its links. In the summer of 2016, SM emerged in Iraq as a splinter organization from Muqtada al-Sadr's Saraya al-Salam, a group of people claimed to have met with many organizations in Iraq around the end of 2016. Saraya al-Mukhtar disclosed connections to the Iranian-controlled Iraqi Shia organization Kata'ib Jund al-Imam on Facebook and through its Telegram chat platform in October 2016. Jund al-Imam, the secretary general of Kata'ib, also serves as the official spokesperson for the Iraqi PMU. Images of Saraya al-Mukhtar members presenting a memorial to an Iraqi Shia militia called Saraya al-Khurasani in commemoration of one of its slain commanders were posted online the same month, Saraya al-Khurasani's secretary and deputy secretary general were present. The links between Bahrain's Saraya al-Mukhtar and its Iraqi counterpart demonstrate Bahrain's access to Iran's regional proxy network. The Bahraini group's logos appear to be modelled on the IRGC's.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Bill Roggio and David Daoud. "Harakat Hezbollah al." (2016). <https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/HarakatNujaba.pdf>

¹³⁶ Phillip Smyth, Tim Michetti and Owen Daniels. "Bahrain: Proliferating Proxy Networks." *Atlantic Council*, (2017). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep03726.7.pdf>

In the year 2020, the US State Department labelled Saraya al-Mukhtar as a terrorist organization for allegedly receiving "financial and logistical" support from the Iranian military to destabilize the tiny Arab state's (Bahrain's) government. In a statement dated 2020, Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state at the time, said that Saraya al-Mukhtar is an Iranian-backed terrorist organization with headquarters in Bahrain that most probably receives both logistical and financial assistance from Iran's IRGC. According to Pompeo, the group's avowed goal is to destabilize Bahrain's government to allow Iran more clout in the country. The organization has plotted assaults on US forces in Bahrain and has promised incentives for the assassination of Bahraini authorities. Bahraini authorities praised Washington's designation, even though it came far later than similar measures taken by other nations, which includes the United Kingdom, where Parliament blacklisted the organization in 2018, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt designated the group on the same day that Bahrain was designated a year before. According to a statement from Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the designation is a significant positive step taken to confront the group's malign actions and intentions, combat its destabilizing activities in the region, and dry up its funding sources.¹³⁷

3.10 Enhancing Sphere of Influence via Network of Proxies

Tehran's efforts to fortify its network of proxies and increase its influence have led to the development of links between the pro-Iranian organizations and governments. Iran is fending off the dangers posed by the Abraham Accords by solidifying its alliances with its friends and forging positive relationships with certain organizations and nations.

The Houthi-Hamas alliance is currently growing in terms of rhetorical convergence and backing for one another. In the address he gave to mark the start of the Islamic New Year in August 2021, Abdul Malik al Houthi repeated his offer to free Palestinian detainees in exchange for the release of captured Saudi commanders. A strategy for the 2021 "Region Opposes Jerusalem" campaign was also developed during the media conference held by the Houthis with the participation of journalists with ties to Hamas. In addition to their interactions with Hamas, the Houthis have also met with representatives of PIJ, another organization from the Axis of Resistance. The Houthi

¹³⁷ Namo Abdulla. "What Is Bahrain's Saraya al-Mukhtar Militia?" VOA, (2020). https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_what-bahrains-saraya-al-mukhtar-militia/6199751.html

ambassador in Syria, Abdullah Ali Sabry, has met with PIJ representatives, while Ahmed Baraka, the PIJ representative in Yemen, has actively spoken with Houthi leaders. He discussed fundraising for the Palestinian cause at a meeting with Hassan al Hamran, the Houthi official in charge of the Palestinian record, in June 2021. He then attended the Houthi question-and-answer sessions related to the Houthi "Jerusalem is closer" fundraising drive in Sana'a and after that, Baraka praised the Houthis for their threats against Israel.¹³⁸

The Palestinian organization Hamas declared in 2022 that it had repaired relations with the Syrian government following a meeting between a visiting team and President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus. This is a joyous and historic day as we return to our beloved Syria to carry on our united effort, Khalil al-Hayya, the chairman of Hamas' Middle Eastern division, told reporters in Damascus. After meeting with Assad and other Palestinian group officials, he announced, "This is a new beginning for joint Palestinian-Syrian action." Khalil continued by saying that Assad and Hamas have decided to "move on from the past and look to the future." Khalil claimed that the Hamas movement and its supporters were in accord on restoring ties with Syria, a decision that was also supported by the organizations that funded the Palestinian groups. According to Khalil, all the countries we informed, including Qatar and Türkiye, welcomed and backed the action and urged us to make it. After the Islamist organization signed a peace pact with its Palestinian rival Fatah in Algiers, Hamas travelled to Syria for two days. To end a 15-year dispute inside the Palestinians, Hamas agreed to organize elections by next October. A Hamas leader told AFP that the group intends to reestablish its office in Damascus, where it previously held its headquarters before fleeing the nation. According to a senior Hamas source, Tehran and Hezbollah resolved the differences between Hamas and Damascus.¹³⁹

It looks like Hamas is for the first time developing a military presence in Lebanon. This became more apparent after a blast on December 12, 2021, at a suspected Hamas weapons stockpile in the Burj al-Shemali camp, close to the southern city of Tyre, as a result, Hamza Shahin, a Hamas spy, was slain. Even while Hamas denied that the explosion's location was a depot, it claimed Shahin

¹³⁸ Katherine Zimmerman. "Yemen's Houthis and the expansion of Iran's axis of resistance." *JSTOR Security Studies Collection* (2022). <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/yemens-houthis-and-the-expansion-of-irans-axis-of-resistance/>

¹³⁹ Agence France-Presse. "Hamas Resumes Ties With Syria in Damascus Visit." *VOA* (2022). <https://www.voanews.com/a/hamas-resumes-ties-with-syria-in-damascus-visit-/6797583.html>

perished while on "a Jihadi mission" in its reason for his death. In his statement, Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah, warned that Israeli aggression in Jerusalem might spark a regional conflict. In a March 2022 interview, Arouri—one of the Hamas commanders who is now located in Beirut—made the following statement. Nasrallah gave the controversial statement in May 2021, following unrest between Israel and the Palestinians brought on by Israel's forcible removal of Palestinians from their houses in occupied East Jerusalem. Nasrallah said that "fake borders no longer matter" when sacred places are in jeopardy. This is also a recurring theme in Israeli security assessments, which gradually emphasize the likelihood that, in any future conflict, Israel will face opponents from both Hezbollah and Hamas on the front in southern Lebanon.¹⁴⁰

Abd Al-Malik Al-Houthi and other figures from the Iran-led resistance axis, including assassinated Iranian general Soleimani, Hezbollah secretary-general Nasrallah, and assassinated Hezbollah commander 'Imad Mughniyah, were on display at the PIJ's historic mass rally in Gaza on January 21, 2023, to express support for the Houthis in Yemen. Mottos such as "America is the Great Satan" and "demise to [the Saudi imperial family] Aal Sa'ud" could also be heard. In his remarks to the assembly, PIJ official Khaled Al-Batsh criticized the Middle Eastern coalition's strikes on the Houthis while proclaiming support for the last option and expressing skepticism about the legitimacy of Arab leaders. He pointed out that the Arab coalition's misdeeds in Yemen are an embarrassment to the alliance's members since they encourage the killing of innocent people, women, and children in their homes, mosques, and workplaces. He said that the Middle Eastern armed forces have left Palestine, and their current duty is to protect the leaders' privileged positions from the wrath of the people groups. The staggering number of innocent victims and billions of dollars destroyed in Yemen is an accomplishment for Israel and a defeat for the Palestinian resistance organization and cause. The majority-backed true Arab coalition would travel to the blockaded Gaza Strip, including Palestine, and supply resources and arms to the opposition [there] until Palestine is freed; this is the greatest method to liberating Jerusalem. Al-Batsh emphasized that Arab leaders, the Arab League, and the OIC should concentrate on putting an end to the Yemeni crisis and preserving neutrality rather than backing one side at the expense of the other. He asked for the entire Arab world to speak out against the hostility and killings in Yemen,

¹⁴⁰ Mohanad Hage Ali. "A new alliance in Lebanon?" *qantara* (2022). <https://en.qantara.de/content/hamas-and-hezbollah-a-new-alliance-in-lebanon>

including that the conflict is "meaningless" and only favours Israeli and American interests in the region. He also emphasized the necessity of supporting Yemeni national reconciliation among all groups. According to the PIJ statement, which was issued around the same time, this invasion has failed and has been defeated on the battlefield, as proven by the purposeful bombing of people in Yemen by American planes and maybe also by Zionist enemy jets. It also objected to what it called the Middle Easterner Alliance's abuses against Yemen's Muslim Arab people. Yemenis who have chosen to oppose the regimes that have abandoned Palestine and Jerusalem and tied their fate to the American-Zionist agenda in the region are the focus of this naive and desperate attempt to kill their spirit. In a meeting with Al-Mayadin, Hamas representative Mahmoud Al-Zahhar made similar remarks. Asserting that "there's is a similarity about the animosity towards Yemen and the occupation's hostility towards the Palestinians," he went on to condemn the Arab coalition's activities in Yemen and even urged for Houthi attacks on coalition countries. "I implore those responsible for these atrocities to come back to their culture, history, and faith." The Saudi coalition is intended to please both the West and the Zionist organization. To maintain their positions, Gulf elites are completely disregarding the region's historical legacy of integrity and stability. An alliance with the West and Zionists offers nothing in return. The Gulf governments invading Yemen will be held accountable for their actions." In his speech, Al-Zahhar advised the Yemenis to "fight the one who is assaulting you back. Defend yourself in every manner you can to counter the violence."¹⁴¹

A reminder of the long-standing hostility between Israel and Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese organization that controls Lebanon's southern frontiers, came in April 2023 when Lebanon fired an abnormally high number of rockets towards Israel. On the other hand, analysts and military officials claimed that it also added a fresh and potentially dangerous dimension to the conflict: It reflected a growing alliance between Hezbollah and Hamas, the steadfast Palestinian volunteer army that the Israeli military blamed for coordinating the rocket attacks, logical with Hezbollah's favour. The southern Lebanon strongholds of Hezbollah are the fourth area where Hamas is said to have engaged in violent activities. Hamas welcomed the rocket assaults from

¹⁴¹ "Gulf States Furious At Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad Over Expressions Of Support For Houthis." *MEMRI* (2022). <https://www.memri.org/reports/gulf-states-furious-hamas-palestinian-islamic-jihad-over-expressions-support-houthis>

Lebanon that came after Israeli police raids at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, although the organization did not openly assume responsibility for the attacks. Basem Naim, a representative for the organization, declined to comment when questioned about it. However, the Israeli military said that Hamas militants had fired rockets from near Tyre, potentially working with a different organization known as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or PIJ. Many Palestinian refugees who fled there during the wars surrounding Israel's establishment in 1948 now live in the area. Further evidence that Hamas is aiming to sustain its confrontation with Israel without further endangering its stronghold in Gaza comes from the rocket fire emanating from Lebanon.¹⁴²

Hence, Iran has been enhancing its sphere of influence by the use of proxies since the revolution in 1979. Since 1979, evidence shows that the Shah of Iran too used proxies to defend Iranian interests. Iran has ties with various non-state actors who are working for Iran to pursue various goals. In the Middle East region, these non-state actors have become a decisive element and a very critical tool for influence and competition between the states, various states in the region have been using these groups in conflicts and to counter security threats. One of the core objectives of the revolution was to export the revolution to other states and for this purpose as well as for security and influence, Iran has been using and influencing non-state actors. Only Shia states or groups, Tehran has been supporting Sunni groups and parties as well in the Gaza Strip for example PIJ and Hamas. Today, Iran is involved in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Yemen via various non-state actors and political parties as well (see Appendix 3). Iran has been funding, recruiting as well and training various groups across the region. The connection between Tehran and some of these non-state actors is so strong that these entities are even ready to go and fight against their governments if Iran asks them to. This sort of foreign policy is assisting Tehran in securing its security interests, increasing its footprint across the region, and preventing conflicts from approaching its borders.

¹⁴² Patrick Kingsley, Ronen Bergman and Hwaida Saad. "Rockets From Lebanon Point to Growing Hamas Cooperation With Hezbollah." *the New York times* (2023). <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/08/world/middleeast/rockets-lebanon-hamas-hezbollah-israel.html>

CHAPTER 4

IRAN'S VULNERABILITIES FOR REGIME SECURITY

This chapter investigates the vulnerabilities concerning Iran's regime. Various weaknesses that have direct or indirect impacts on the current regime are being discussed. Domestic as well as foreign factors are explained in the chapter, these factors include economic, military, security, religious and societal dimensions etcetera. The final portion and the ending part are the conclusion.

Iran is in the midst of several major potential crises. The vulnerabilities and difficulties that Iranian society faces, as well as the crises that are putting Iran's regime to the test, are listed below.

4.1 The US' Sanctions on Iran and its Repercussions

The US has put sanctions on Iran since the revolution of 1979 with an end goal to change Iran's way of behaving. Although US sanctions have had significant consequences on Iran's economy, it is unclear whether they have changed the country's major strategic aims of growing its regional influence and developing a sizable arsenal of ballistic missiles and armed drones. Numerous analysts believe that sanctions had a part in Iran's decision to sign the JCPOA in 2015. The JCPOA limits Iran's nuclear program. When the International Atomic Energy Agency determined that Iran had met its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA, the Obama administration eased the appropriate US economic sanctions. Sanctions imposed by the UN and the EU were also removed. The JCPOA did not call for the lifting of US sanctions against Iran for its support of regional armed groups, pursuit of conventional and missile technology, violations of human rights, and direct trade with Iran. Iran's economy felt some relief and started to grow again after the sanctions were lifted. On May 8, 2018, Trump reiterated all sanctions and removed the United States from the JCPOA. The Trump Administration's strategy to put 'maximum pressure' on Iran, with the stated goal of encouraging Iran to arrange a revised JCPOA that takes into account U.S. concerns outside Iran's nuclear program, was focused on the reiterated sanctions and further restrictions forced a short

time later. Iran's economy entered a downturn yet again as a result of the program, as its oil trades dropped and it was effectively shut off from the global banking system.¹⁴³

The Biden administration initiated a new diplomatic push in 2021 to ensure that Washington and Tehran fully adhere to the 2015 nuclear agreement. The hardline cleric President Ebrahim Raisi, who took office in August 2021, has continued the informal negotiations that began during President Hassan Rouhani's final months in power. However, as of the fall of 2022, the talks have come to a standstill.¹⁴⁴

The sanctions put in place on Tehran by the US are causing the Iranian economy to collapse. The Iranian Parliamentary Research Centre has enumerated the consequences of current sanctions on Iran's economy in 12 parts.

1. Visas are impossible for economic operators to obtain in many countries.
2. Transferring money overseas and issuing bank guarantees are not possible.
3. Iran's failure to get any money from its electricity exports.
4. Letters of credit for Iranian businesses and individuals are not opened.
5. A lower credit rating for Iran, as determined by foreign organizations.
6. Export restrictions on petroleum, even petroleum byproducts like gasoline.
7. International businesses leaving the Iranian market and ceasing to work with local Iranian partners.
8. With the reinstatement of US sanctions, the JCPOA agreement to buy airplanes is terminated.
9. Termination of technology transfer agreements with renowned Asian and European companies.
10. Iran's cessation of using its credit lines and foreign investments.
11. Major contracts that haven't been resolved, such as those with the French energy corporation Total.

¹⁴³ Kenneth Katzman. "Iran Sanctions [Updated February 2, 2022]." In *Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service*, vol. 6, (2022). <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ "The Current Situation in Iran." *United States Institute of Peace*, (2022). <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/current-situation-iran>

12. The lack of insurance made the bunkering industry unprofitable.¹⁴⁵

4.2 Stalled Nuclear Talks

The JCPOA, which aims to revive the nuclear agreement, has not progressed. Despite all sides' declarations of progress on nuclear and sanctions issues, the US classification of the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization remains unresolved. In this sense, neither Iran nor the United States appears to be taking any action. Meanwhile, the UN nuclear agency, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, have strongly criticized Iran for not cooperating with advances on its nuclear program. According to the CIA, Iran has yet to offer precise replies to enquiries about traces of enriched uranium identified at three different places. Iran has claimed that the allegations are untrue. At the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors, the US along with a few of its allies i.e., Germany, France, and the UK have introduced a resolution condemning Iran for its lack of cooperation and the impasse will almost certainly continue due to this. Iran's enriched uranium reserves increased significantly, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, putting it one step closer to developing a nuclear weapon. Despite the regime's claims that it has no aspirations to obtain nuclear weapons, several arms control specialists believe Iran is only months away from doing so.¹⁴⁶

Washington's special envoy for Iran made claims in November 2022 that the US goal had switched away from renewing a nuclear deal that Tehran has already rejected. Robert Malley stressed to reporters in Paris that the United States would open the door to diplomacy "when and if" the time came, but that Washington would continue to use sanctions and pressure for the time being. Since September 2022, negotiations to revive a 2015 agreement between Iran and Western powers have been deadlocked. Western powers accuse Iran of making excessive demands after all parties appeared to be on the verge of reaching an agreement. Malley explained that Iran's position and everything that has transpired since September are to blame if these talks fail. Our focus is not on a stalled agreement but rather on what is going on in Iran—this public uprising and the harsh

¹⁴⁵ Mohammad Hossein Ziya. "The 13 crises facing Iran." *Middle East Institute*, (2021). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/13-crises-facing-iran>

¹⁴⁶ Ray Takeyh. "Three Challenges That Are Testing Iran's Regime." *Council on Foreign Relations*, (2022). <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/three-challenges-are-testing-irans-regime>

retaliation of the regime against protesters. Iran's selling of military drones to Russia and the release of our detainees. Malley was talking about the three American citizens who are being held in Iran. Malley warned that the United States was ready to use other means if diplomacy failed, but he did not specify how long Washington would accept the status quo. Malley continued without providing additional details, "Obviously, If Iran takes the initiative to push the bounds of its nuclear program, the response will be different and coordinated with our European allies." There is no enchanted that will permit us to figure out another recipe," he said.¹⁴⁷

4.3 Crippling Economy

The Iranian economy increased considerably from 1990 until the end of the 2000s. Notwithstanding, it started to drop after global powers put sanctions trying to convince Iran's administration to reduce its atomic exercises. Subsequently, the expense of items and administrations has ascended by 1,135% over the most recent decade. Chicken costs more than 20 times as much as it did ten years ago, and cooking oil costs 40 times as much. The rial has lost around 90% of its worth over the most recent five years. In 2017, one US dollar was valued at a little under 40,000 rials on the open market and it is currently valued at more than 330,000 rials. The bulk of the rial's value collapsed as it became evident that the US intended to withdraw from the Iran nuclear agreement, impose severe sanctions on Iran's key source of foreign revenue, and severely restrict Iran's access to the global financial system. According to the data, Iran's average yearly household consumption climbed dramatically between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s. However, it has reduced by 29% in urban regions and nearly 50% in rural areas since then. To put it another way, Iranian families now live in much greater poverty than they did 15 years ago.¹⁴⁸

Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, an economics professor at Virginia Tech, says that there is no doubt that there are concerns that go beyond the mandatory hijab situation that are the root of the current tensions and protests. Djavad says that young people's "more educated" status compared to their elders, who make laws and run the country, makes these economic conditions harder for them to

¹⁴⁷ John Irish. "No push for Iran nuclear talks, U.S. envoy says, due to protests, drone sales." *Reuters*, (2022). <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/no-push-iran-nuclear-talks-us-envoy-says-due-protests-drone-sales-2022-11-14/>

¹⁴⁸ "How Iran's economic woes created conditions ripe for protests." *BBC*, (2022). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63154987>

live with. Young Iranians are growing impatient with the impact of international sanctions and years of economic mismanagement, says Sanam Vakil, deputy director and senior research scholar at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The widespread rage that is erupting violently on the streets is being fueled by the fact that there is neither economic justice nor any hope for the future.¹⁴⁹

An expert says that Iran's economy will suffer more if the 2015 nuclear deal is not revived, leading to inflation exceeding 50% in 2023. In an interview with Fararu, an Iranian reform website, Iranian economist Vahid Shafaqi Shahri stated that if the regime does not reach an agreement with the West about its contested nuclear programme and revive the JCPOA, it will face greater price hikes and possibly zero economic growth in 2023. According to Shafaqi, the Islamic Republic's economy has declined as a result of sanctions and increasing inflation, whereas neighbouring countries such as Türkiye and Saudi Arabia have been experiencing double-digit growth in recent years. He likewise alluded to a new IMF report, which determined higher energy and food costs and harder financial circumstances in 2023, advance notice that without monetary changes, engaging the private sector, and expanded speculations, Iran's economy could be additionally disabled one year from now. According to the IMF, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 outbreak have all had a substantial influence on the outcome, and global growth is anticipated to fall from 6.0% in 2021 to 3.2% in 2022 and 2.7% in 2023. According to the Iranian economist, the Iranian economy will be faced with two additional possibilities in the following year. The optimistic scenario is that the JCPOA will be revived sanctions are going to end, and economic growth will reach 5% with inflation falling to 20%.¹⁵⁰

4.4 Corruption

Iran comes in at 150th out of 180 states in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), one notch lower than last year, adding more strain on the country's already ailing economy. Iran received a score of 25 on the annual list produced by Transparency International, with a score of zero

¹⁴⁹ “No hope for the future: Economic struggles add fuel to Iran’s protests.” *CNBC*, (2022). <https://www.cNBC.com/2022/10/12/no-hope-for-the-future-economic-struggles-add-fuel-to-irans-protests-.html>

¹⁵⁰ Iran International Newsroom. “Expert Says Iran’s Inflation To Soar Beyond 50% In 2023.” *Iran International*, (2022). <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202210166205>

representing severe corruption and a score of 100 representing very clean practices. Every nation's score depends on 13 particular defilement reviews and appraisals directed by perceived associations like the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. Countries and territories are rated annually on how corrupt their public sector is by experts in the CPI, the most widely used global corruption ranking. Iran positioned 144th out of 177 nations in 2013, the last year of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's administration. In 2017, it reached 130, indicating a decrease in corruption, but it has recently decreased again. Iranian authorities routinely scrutinize corruption in the country, with Ali Khamenei giving an anti-corruption mandate requesting that the heads of the three branches of government not yield in efforts to battle corruption.¹⁵¹

In 2022, a leaked tape uncovered far and wide cases of corruption inside the IRGC, as well as its funding and backing of soldiers, militias, and groups all through the region. According to Radio Farda, the tape revealed that some of the country's most influential those making decisions were aware of or engaged in illicit activities that enraged Tehran; even the Supreme Leader was raged. The realness of the video was affirmed by the state-claimed Fars news organization. The tremendous corruption plan has embroiled top Iranian lawmakers like parliament Speaker Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf. While mayor of Tehran, Qalibaf reportedly instructed an official to sign a phony contract with the IRGC to hide a shortfall of 80 trillion rials, or nearly \$2 billion, exposed during an audit of the Cooperative Foundation. The IRGC and the Office of the Supreme Leader possess and control a substantial portion of the Iranian economy and financial systems. The IRGC alone oversees a third to half of Iran's GDP. It has multiple fundamental financial centers and religious endowments, in particular, Mashhad's Astan Quds Razavi.¹⁵²

In August 2022, hundreds of media outlets, prominent people, and government organizations found themselves involved in a major corruption scandal at Iran's Mobarakeh Steel Plant (MSP). Social media documents showed that 125 Iranian media outlets got a lot of money from the MSP. This might have been done to cover up financial misconduct inside the corporation and its large financial empire, which included several affluent associates. In response to a parliament report on

¹⁵¹ "Iran Ranks Among Most Corrupt Countries In The World." *Iran International*, (2022). <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202201284141>

¹⁵² Dr. Majid Rafizadeh. "The ingrained corruption of Iran's IRGC and Quds Force." *Arab News*, (2022). <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2035861>

an alleged \$3 billion corruption scandal, the Tehran Stock Exchange suspended the steel factory, which is majority-owned by state entities. Saba Azarpeik, an investigative journalist, revealed a ten-page list of law companies and persons hired by the MSP on August 22, 2022. A few people subsidiary to great Ayatollahs are on the rundown, as are media foundations, for example, state TV and the hardline everyday Kayhan, which work under the immediate control of Ali Khamenei. There were also well-known reformist journalists and newspaper publishers, government organizations like as Iran's famed Intelligence Ministry, and Friday prayer imams in Iranian cities. Social media users highlighted that President Ebrahim Raisi has ordered the firing of several steel factory employees who were implicated in corruption. According to one user, those folks were sacked so they could flee the nation and have fun in other countries with the money. We expected some sort of penalty, but it appears that no one is aware of what happened to the money.¹⁵³

4.5 External Responses

With the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, one of the major upheavals in the Middle East Region's power structure had taken place. The US and its allies lost one of its most valuable alliances in the region overnight, from one day to the next, and Iran has conflicted with the US and its allies over Middle East supremacy ever since. Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are among these allies. Pressures between Iran and the US and its partners have reached new highs since around 2017, with the US withdrawing from the JCPOA agreement in 2018 and Iran's growing contribution in the Syrian conflict to help the coalition between Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, as well as laying out a prolonged presence in Syria.¹⁵⁴

A struggle in the Middle East defined by two conflicting coalitions has the potential to destabilize the region. As the fight for dominance heats up, the confrontation between Iran's network of state and non-state actors and a counter-front of Western partners centred on Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel has turned into the locale's key battlefield. The US and the European states i.e., the UK, France, and Germany all solidly go against Iran's role in Syria, especially the danger it poses to

¹⁵³ Iran International Newsroom. "Massive Corruption At Steel Plant Rocks Iran's Political System." *Iran International*, (2022). <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202208220582>

¹⁵⁴ Tim Wolters. *The Depiction of USA, Israel and the Gulf States as Enemies from Iran: Has it been successful?*. GRIN Verlag, (2021). <https://www.grin.com/document/994254>

Israel; assistance for Shia militias operating in Iraq and Lebanon; funding for Houthi rebels in Yemen; and involvement in regional missile proliferation. Israel and the GCC nations consider Iran's tactical activities and strategies to be an immediate security danger for them as well as for the region.¹⁵⁵

Iran has a few friends and unfortunately, those friends are not very strong (see Appendix 2). Syria, a nation devastated by war, is one of Iran's handful of close friends. Tehran also maintains tight connections with Haider al-Abadi's administration in Iraq, where Iran has successfully averted the establishment of a formidable pro-US alliance and an anti-Iran dictatorship. Friends of Iran usually try to distance themselves from Tehran due to widespread hostility, including in Iraq. Türkiye and Pakistan, two important neighbours, have good but not very cordial relations. Iran has enhanced relations with Russia to help the Assad government survive in Syria; yet, however, as the regime moves away from the verge of collapse, further collaboration is limited and may deteriorate. With major military powers like Beijing, Tehran only has economic relationships. As a result of this, when Iran is in danger, very few nations offer assistance.¹⁵⁶

4.6 Target Killings

According to a report on a US website, Mossad assassinated an acclaimed nuclear physicist involved in Iran's nuclear program in January 2007. On the website Stratfor.com, former US intelligence personnel provide intelligence and security analysis. An internationally recognized authority on electromagnetism, Professor Ardashir Hosseinpour had been working on uranium enrichment at Iran's main processing plant in Isfahan. According to a recent Stratfor.com article, Hosseinpour was assassinated by the Mossad. According to the article, the physicist died as a result of "radioactive poisoning" as part of a Mossad campaign to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon through "secret operations." According to the website, Mossad assassinated Iraqi nuclear

¹⁵⁵ Julien Barnes-Dacey, Ellie Geranmayeh and Hugh Lovatt. "The Middle East's new battle lines." *European Council of Foreign Relations*, (2018). https://ecfr.eu/special/battle_lines/

¹⁵⁶ Daniel L. Byman. "Iran's foreign policy weaknesses, and opportunities to exploit them." *Brookings*, (2018). <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2018/01/03/irans-foreign-policy-weaknesses-and-opportunities-to-exploit-them/>

scientists in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At least three scientists were killed in those activities.¹⁵⁷

Ten Iranians were arrested on January 10, 2010, for the murder of Professor Massoud Ali Mohammadi because as indicated by Iran's Insight Service, the ten people worked for Mossad. Iran's state-run television networks have shown the alleged confession of Majid Jamali Fashi, one of the people who was arrested. A darkened room was shown with the accused agent talking and confirming his rendition of events is impossible. Mr. Fashi explained that approximately three years ago, he was advised to contact the Israeli consulate in Istanbul by a contact. Precisely why he needed to make this approach isn't understood, however, he did as such and said that he was addressed by Israeli specialists. He said that they precisely inquired about every aspect of his life, in addition, they asked him to gather information from Iran and assisted him with their plans. The detainee returned to Iran after receiving training from Israel, planted a bomb on a motorcycle, parked it outside Massoud Ali's house, and the motorcycle exploded, killing the professor.¹⁵⁸

Authorities announced that in November 2010, two researchers were focused on and followed by guys on bikes who put bombs on the windows of their cars as they went to work. Scientist Majid Shahriari was the one killed. The assassination has been attributed to "Western governments" and Israel, according to President Ahmadinejad. Dr. Shahriari worked in the atomic designing division of Tehran's Shahid Beheshti College. His wife is said to have been hurt in the attack. Fereydoon Abbasi, who has been in the IRCG since 1979, the atomic researcher was harmed in another attack but he survived and his wife was also hurt.¹⁵⁹ Two attackers, according to Iranian media, installed a magnetic device on the car of a nuclear scientist who supervised a department at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility in 2012. The incident is exceptionally similar to earlier assassinations of scientists working on the nation's sensitive nuclear program. According to the Fars news agency, the chemical specialist and head of the Natanz plant in central Iran, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, was killed in the incident. VP Mohammad Reza Rahimi stated that Israeli undercover operatives were

¹⁵⁷ Yossi Melman. "U.S. Website: Mossad Killed Iranian Nuclear Physicist." *Haaretz*, (2007). <https://www.haaretz.com/2007-02-04/ty-article/u-s-website-mossad-killed-iranian-nuclear-physicist/0000017f-e10b-d9aa-afff-f95bb2100000>

¹⁵⁸ "Behind the 'Mossad plot' against Iranian scientist." *BBC*, (2011). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12191203>

¹⁵⁹ "Iranian nuclear scientist killed in motorbike attack." *BBC*, (2010). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11860928>

behind the strike, but that they could not halt Iran's peaceful nuclear exercises. Senior security officer Safar Ali Baratloo told Fars that Israelis carried out the strike, he said that the bomb was of the very type that has recently been used to target researchers. Roshan, 32, and two people were inside the Iranian-assembled Peugeot 405 when the device exploded near Gol Nabi Street, according to Fars. Fars said that Roshan, a recent graduate of Tehran's prestigious Sharif University of Technology, was the victim of a terrorist assault.¹⁶⁰

According to reports, in the year 2020, a crew of over twenty government operatives, including Israeli and Iranian nationals, trapped researcher Mohsen Fakhrizadeh following eight months of following and was shot in his car by the armed assailants, according to Iranian media, and he died later at the hospital. Iran blamed Israel shortly after his death, and then Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted about strong suspicions of Israeli participation, but Israel did not respond, and a spokeswoman for the Israeli government responded to a report by stating that Israel's stance has not changed and that it does not comment on such matters. The West has long held the belief that Fakhrizadeh, 59, was in charge of a secret nuclear weapons program. Israel and the United States accuse Iran of wanting to relaunch an undercover atomic bomb programme that was halted in 2003, and Tehran has long been identified as the mastermind by Western and Israeli intelligence services. Iran has repeatedly denied exploiting nuclear energy for military purposes.¹⁶¹

According to intelligence experts, Al Qaeda's second-highest leader, who is known to have organized the deadly assaults on American embassies in Africa in 1998, was assassinated in Iran in 2020. On the anniversary of the embassy incidents, two motorbike assassins assassinated Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, also known as Abu Muhammad al-Masri, in the streets of Tehran on 7 August 2020. Abdullah was assassinated with his daughter Miriam bin Laden, the widow of Osama bin Laden's son Hamza bin Laden. Four of the officials believe that the strike was carried

¹⁶⁰ "Iran nuclear scientist killed by car bomb." *Al-Jazeera*, (2012). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2012/1/12/iran-nuclear-scientist-killed-by-car-bomb>

¹⁶¹ Stephen Farrell. "Iranian nuclear scientist killed by one-ton automated gun in Israeli hit: Jewish Chronicle." *Reuters*, (2020). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-scientist-idUSKBN2AA2RC>

out at the behest of the US. It is unclear what role, if any, the US played, given that it had been tracking Mr. al-Masri and other al-Qaeda agents in Iran for a considerable amount of time.¹⁶²

4.7 Human Rights Violations

Iranians and foreign human rights activists, writers, and NGOs all have condemned Iran's infringements of human rights. The UNGA and Human Rights Commission have criticized Iranian injustices in resolutions and critiques. The Iranian government objects to punishments and limitations that comply with Iran's constitution and regulations, such as the torture and murder of political prisoners and the beating and death of protestors and other civilians. At least one researcher claims that the Islamic Revolution's human rights record was significantly worse than that of the Pahlavi Dynasty. Political historian Ervand Abrahamian writes that prison conditions were much harsher during the Islamic Republic than under the Pahlavis, even though between 1971 and 1979, just over 100 political prisoners were hanged, and between 1981 and 1985, roughly 7900 criminals were put to death. According to one survivor, the cost of four years in SAVAK versus four months under [warden] Ladjevardi was the same. The phrases 'weariness' and 'dullness' appeared sometimes in Pahlavi's jail writing, but in that of the Islamic Republic, those words changed to 'death,' 'dread,' 'fear,' 'horror,' and 'nightmare.'¹⁶³

On March 6, 1979, Khomeini issued a statement expressing that the Family Protection Law would be abolished and that all Iranian women would be mandated to put on the chador, an Islamic veil that covers a woman's body and hair. Tens of thousands of Iranian women marched throughout the country in response, forcing Khomeini to back down and remove the pronouncements since he still shared political power with pro-democracy liberals, notably Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan. However, Khomeini reinstated the requirement for a veil and fired all female judges when he took control in 1980. Yet again female demonstrators rushed to the roads; however, they couldn't hinder

¹⁶² Adam Goldman, Eric Schmitt, Farnaz Fassihi and Ronen Bergman. "Al Qaeda's No. 2, Accused in U.S. Embassy Attacks, Was Killed in Iran." *The New York Times*, (2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/world/middleeast/al-masri-abdullah-qaeda-dead.html>

¹⁶³ Ehsan Zar Rokh, and M. Rahman Gaeini. "Iranian Legal System and Human Rights Protection." *Islamic Law and Law of the Muslim World Paper* 09-58, (2008). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1304731

Khomeini's choice. In 1983, the Islamic Republic imposed other restrictions on women's rights, including the requirement to wear a veil.¹⁶⁴

Women have been discriminated against in law and practice, notably in work, marriage, separation, inheritance, and politics. Daily harassment, incarceration, torture, and various other forms of ill-treatment came from discriminatory forced veiling legislation, in addition to being refused access to school, work, and public venues. Six women's rights activists remained imprisoned for opposing mandated veils. Parliament passed the bill "Youthful Population and Family Protection," which, among other things, restricts funded government facilities from providing free birth control, requires prescription-only contraception to be sold in pharmacies, and forbids vasectomy and tubectomy, except in situations in which pregnancy could compromise a woman's life or bring about serious physical harm.¹⁶⁵

In the words of Javaid Rehman, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of fundamental liberties in Iran, ethnic and religious minorities suffer major barriers to knowing their rights in Iran. The country also has a disproportionate number of political prisoners and a disproportionate number of persons executed on national security grounds. In his 2019 annual report, Javaid expressed worry about the problem of hatred and incitement towards minorities, as well as the fact that the national legislative framework does not provide appropriate protections to ensure that such persons are not discriminated against. As stated by Javaid, just advocating for the use of minority languages, organizing or participating in protests, and involvement with resistance organizations may all be grounds for arrest and imprisonment. Human rights activists from ethnic minorities such as Arab Ahwazis, Azerbaijani Turks, and Kurds have been arrested for peacefully exercising their right to free expression to exercise their rights.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Kelly J. Shannon. "Four decades of smoldering discontent among Iranian women is erupting." *Washington Post*, (2022). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/made-by-history/2022/09/26/iranian-women-uprising-against-oppression-history/>

¹⁶⁵ Iran 2021. *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>

¹⁶⁶ United Nations. "Iran: UN expert says ethnic, religious minorities face discrimination." *The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, (2019). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/10/iran-un-expert-says-ethnic-religious-minorities-face-discrimination>

Following the murder of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman locked up by morality police purportedly for not properly covering her hijab, on September 16, 2022, Iran is witnessing one of its greatest and most spectacular shows of anger. Public fury over her murder, as well as several complaints against the Islamic Republic's harsh rule, have spurred the rallies, which have continued despite parliamentarians asking the country's court to show no mercy to protestors. According to the Iran Human Rights NGO (IHRNGO), which is located in Norway, at least 326 individuals have been murdered by security forces in Iran since statewide demonstrations began. In an update to its death toll, the organization noted that this number included 43 children and 25 women, adding that the reported figure was an "absolute minimum." The total is difficult to ascertain because non-state media, the internet, and dissident developments in Iran have all been restricted. Opposition parties, international human rights organizations, and journalists covering the ongoing events all contribute to varying estimates of the death toll. Celebrities and athletes from Iran have joined the anti-government protests despite the possibility of jail time and substantial fines.¹⁶⁷

4.8 Environmental Degradation

While climate change and environmental degradation rarely create conflict directly, they can play a substantial role in fueling tensions, particularly in resource-scarce environments—by exacerbating existing political, economic, and security problems. Environmental shocks can be especially destabilizing in communities with weak or ineffective institutions, long-standing social conflicts, poor economic growth, and unequal development. Tensions can be aggravated by poorly designed policies like land tenure laws that overlap, these tensions might worsen if natural resources are not managed fairly or adequately. Furthermore, policies that intentionally exclude or make resources unavailable for specific groups of people contribute to community structural inequities, which can lead to excluded groups looking for more equitable access or justice using violence.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Duarte Mendonca, Pierre Bairin, Maija Ehlinger and Kathleen Magramo. "At least 326 killed in Iran protests, human rights group claims." *CNN*, (2022). <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/12/middleeast/iran-protests-death-toll-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁶⁸ Florian Krampe. "ENVIRONMENT, FRAGILITY & CONFLICT." *Foreign Policy*, (2022). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/12/environment-fragility-and-conflict/>

The biodiverse environment was not threatened before the twentieth century when Iran's population was fewer than 10 million people. There was plenty of water, water pumps powered by diesel or gasoline were not yet available for extracting groundwater. Air and water pollution, as well as dust storms, were not yet a problem. Agricultural cultivation and livestock grazing methods had not yet resulted in severe desertification and erosion. Even into the twentieth century, Iran's mountains were teeming with wild sheep and goats, the plains with gazelle, and the Alborz Mountains' forested northern slopes with tigers, leopards, boars, roe deer, red deer, bears, and wolves. The Zagros Mountains were densely forested and home to enormous numbers of wild sheep, leopards, bears, goats, boars, and fallow deer. But the situation gradually changed over time.¹⁶⁹

With decreasing water resources, widespread deforestation, overgrazing of rangelands, desertification and pollution that chokes cities, Iran is confronting a historic environmental crisis. If left unchecked, this crisis will have a ripple effect not only on Iran but also on the stability of the region and the globe. Water scarcity and pollution, air pollution, pesticide contamination, lack of suitable waste management, soil depletion and erosion, natural resource loss, lead poisoning, and desertification are all problems in Iran today. The former regime and the clerical regime both outline environmental policy requirements and how to implement them; however, no implementation of those policies exists. Iran is facing several interconnected political, social, and natural crises, such as environmental deterioration, poverty, unemployment, and population increase. Sustainability is being undermined in all aspects of environmental challenges, at the expense of future generations. With a population of over 80 million people, Iran is struggling to maintain its current infrastructure, housing, food and educational institutions. As the population grows, so does the need for infrastructure and resources. The regime is also facing extreme upheavals from all sectors of society seeking "Freedom and Water" for Iran. Climate change has already generated internal political upheaval in Iran, and if not handled, it threatens to significantly impede the country's economic and social health, as well as destabilize an already volatile region. Toxic air, shortage of water, and degradation of agricultural regions have the potential to cause

¹⁶⁹ David Laylin. "Environmental and Wildlife Degradation in Iran." (2018). https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17110#metadata_info_tab_contents

enormous population shifts in search of more sustainable homes and livelihoods.¹⁷⁰ Some regions of Iran will be unfit for farming and living in the next years due to the heavy use of groundwater resources and climate change. Many members of Iran's lower classes depend on water for their daily needs. The Iranian Parliamentary Research Center found in 2015 that drought has turned two-thirds of the country into a desert. Simultaneously, enormous scope water transfer projects from the nation's water-rich areas, like Khuzestan, to poor water regions have created fights and ethnic pressures. This incorporates, most as of late, the July 2021 fights in Khuzestan, where police killed 15 protestors. If this trend continues, more rural people will move to cities and become more isolated, leading to a crisis that will affect the poorest members of society.¹⁷¹

Iran's reaction to climate change is dependent on two factors: a conservative government that prioritizes the economy above the environment, and an international community that considers the country a pariah due to US sanctions on its nuclear program. Combating climate change does not appear to be high on the Iranian leadership's priority list, even though the leadership recognizes that it is an existential issue. The fact that the director of Iran's Environmental Protection Organization (IEPO) was one of President Raisi's final selections. Iran should plan to bear the adverse consequences of environmental change on natural frameworks, water assets, food security, and provincial work, among other things, disproportionately related to various other regions of the world, according to Ali Mirchi, assistant professor of water resources engineering at Oklahoma State University.¹⁷²

It can be concluded that despite being a powerful country in the region, Iran is suffering from an array of problems. These problems and weaknesses directly impact the influence of Iranian leadership at home and abroad and such crises also give the enemies of Iran a chance to take benefit. The aforementioned factors, taken as a whole, point to a dire future for Iran. Sanctions, for instance, are one of these factors that have external roots and have a significant impact on economic issues. Nevertheless, Iran's poor management is to blame for the majority of these crises.

¹⁷⁰ Khalil Khani. "Iran's environmental degradation." *Atalayar*, (2022). <https://atalayar.com/en/blog/irans-environmental-degradation>

¹⁷¹ Mohammad Hossein Ziya. "The 13 crises facing Iran." *The Middle East Institute*, (2021). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/13-crises-facing-iran>

¹⁷² Sanam Mahoozi. "Iran's failure to tackle climate change – a question of priority." *al-Jazeera*, (2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/9/irans-failure-to-tackle-climate-change-a-question-of-priority>

The current regime itself is responsible for most of the crises that Iran has been facing for many years. Iran ranks 150th out of 180 states in the 2021 CPI, indicating the level of corruption there. Corruption is also one of the main causes of the crises. In the world of cooperation, Iran is acting quite the opposite, Iran's foreign policy is responsible for having fewer friends and more foes. The latest protests in 2022 show that the public in Iran has been frustrated due to the economic situation, human rights conditions and the oppression being used by the regime. Moreover, Iran is facing serious climate-related problems. In the present times, when the world is so concerned about climate change and the outcomes of it, Iran seems to be very little concerned about the drought, water shortage and climate change. The Iranian leadership hasn't taken any effective steps and policies to address climate-related issues in Iran. Such negligence can lead to serious and catastrophic situations like health and economic problems as well as mass migrations which could easily result in internal instability as a result of struggle between different communities or ethnic groups over resources. Iran needs sanctions lifted first to avoid this crisis. Many of the country's issues stem from the country's poor economic situation, and lack of resources for education, development, and productive infrastructure. In the subsequent phase, Iran must carry out the fight against corruption, create strong civil institutions, and promise human rights and freedom of expression. Iran will be able to get back on track with its development in the coming decades if it focuses and works on these above actions, which will assist the current regime in overcoming the crises.

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The main focus of the study is to understand the Abraham Accords in detail, the motivations behind the pact, implications and outcomes, threats to Iran and Iran's steps to mitigate the threats that surfaced as an outcome of the Arab-Israeli deal.

In the year 2020, four Arab governments and Israel signed the historic Abraham Accords, which had been negotiated by the US during the Trump administration. The UAE was the first country who formally recognized Israel followed by Bahrain. Later Sudan and Morocco signed the Abraham Accords the same year. The main disagreement between the Arabs and Israel was the Palestine issue that led to wars and several small-scale conflicts between the two. But with time, the Palestinian cause lost its intensity in the sight of some Arab countries and they started establishing informal relations with Israel. Because Israel is one of the US government's closest friends in the region, Arab governments benefit from recognizing and developing excellent ties with Israel. Another reason that led to the formation of relations between the Arabs and Israel is the security threats. Both the Arabs and Israel share security threats from the common enemy Iran. One of the main justifications underlying the creation of relations between the four Arab governments and Israel is that Tehran has compelled them to join hands and collaborate. The Arabs believe that Iran is meddling in their internal affairs through religious means. Iran wants to expand and export its model of Islamic Revolution to other Muslim states. On the other hand, Israel believes that Iran wants to completely wipe off Israel from the map as it calls it Satan.

Waltz emphasizes that states can go to any extent and can join anyone even Satan for their security needs. Same way, the security threats and policies of Tehran have pushed the Arabs to look for a strong accomplice in the region. The Arabs have joined hands with Israel and made a sort of an alliance to counter their common threat i.e., Iran. Iran, on the other side, must balance and counter the threats that have transformed into a new shape because of the Abraham Accords. Now, Iran is balancing the threat by the use of proxies. Iran has been pursuing the policy of using organizations and non-state actors to gain its security objectives for a long time. Iran has been somehow successful so far in keeping conflicts away from its borders through the use of proxies. Iran has formed alliances with and influenced various nations and non-state groups intending to confront Israel and the Arab states. Iran has a great influence over various factions in Iraq, it also has reached

Israel's borders through close connections with Hamas and the PIJ in the Gaza Strip. Similarly, Tehran has a great influence and good relations with another neighbour of Israel i.e., Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah has the support of Iran and it has successfully carried out many attacks against Israel.

The overall findings of the research are as follows;

1. The Abraham Accords has failed to bring in any new members. Some Muslim states have formed good informal relations with Israel but no other Gulf country or any Muslim state has recognized Israel after Morocco and Sudan did in 2020.
2. For many years, the Middle East region has been in chaos, with many interstate and intrastate wars. The Abraham Accords came with the promises of stability, cooperation and peace but after three years, the agreement was unsuccessful in bringing peace and stability and an end to any conflict in the region. The peace pact established diplomatic connections between Arabs and Jews, but it wasn't successful in bringing peace to the region, there are obvious shortcomings in terms of peace and collaboration.
3. Many believed that the Abraham Accords would have positive impacts on the relations between Israel and Palestine, but the reality is quite different than expected after two and a half years. Palestine and Israel are still engaged in a conflict, no peace agreement or any development could be seen regarding peace and security. Similarly, Israel is engaged in conflict with Lebanese Hezbollah and Syria as well. The Abraham Accords didn't resolve any conflict nor it changed any relations of countries in the Middle East. The situation regarding peace is still the same as it was before the pact.
4. The case of Sudan and Morocco is quite different than the UAE and Bahrain. Both Sudan and Morocco were made an offer by the US that was somehow inevitable for the two to reject. Both the states were forced to make formal relations with Israel and the US used its influence to push them into signing the Accords. The signing of the Abraham Accords by Sudan and Morocco seems like some trade deal in which one (Sudan) got freedom from the SST list while the other (Morocco) gained sovereignty over the Western Sahara, nothing more than that. No further major developments were seen after the pact. Sudan has

also pledged to classify Iran-backed Hezbollah as a terrorist organization as part of the agreement with Israel.

5. Sudan, Morocco and Bahrain didn't benefit economically from the deal like the UAE. If we look at the statistics, the trade and economic benefits are far less for the other states as compared with the UAE. The data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) shows the trade between the UAE and Israel in the year 2021 surpassed 1.1 billion US dollars. Israel imported goods from the UAE worth 771.5 million dollars in the year 2021, a great increase from 114.9 million dollars recorded in the last year 2020. On the other hand, the UAE imported goods from Israel worth 383.2 million US dollars. The trade between the UAE and Israel has crossed a billion dollars while the statistics show the trade between Israel and other countries that are members of the Abraham Accords is far less.
6. Iran has been challenging the US and its allies in the region since the Islamic Revolution which is one of the reasons that has pushed the Arabs and Israel to join hands. The Abraham Accords directly impact the national security of Iran as the main objective of signing the deal was to counter Iran and its network of proxies.
7. Iran is deeply concerned about the Emirati-Israeli rapprochement, and this concern stems from the possibility of an Israeli "foothold" being developed in Iran's immediate neighbourhood. Likewise, Iran has reached the borders of Israel by supporting PIJ, Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria, similarly, Israel is trying to create a foothold and reach the borders of Tehran by normalizing ties with the Arabs. According to Turkish media, the UAE is reportedly providing Israel with a rare chance to establish "spy bases" on the UAE-controlled island of Socotra, which is located south of Yemen.
8. The Abraham Accords have heightened tensions between Iran, the Arab nations, and Israel. The comments from officials of the countries and activities of both sides demonstrate that the competition has intensified since the deal. The Abraham Accords pose serious impacts on the national security of Iran as the deal allowed the signatories to exchange arms, military and intelligence with each other. The Arabs lack any kind of advanced defensive system. Also, they don't have any joint security structure or a military alliance. Strong

signs of a serious threat to Iran include the leaders of the Abraham Accords visiting each other's countries, conducting coordinated naval exercises, and holding a meeting in the Negev desert in 2022 to build the framework for a strategic military alliance to obstruct Iran and its allies' militias. Moreover, Iran would view the establishment of a Middle Eastern alliance akin to NATO, a "joint defensive system," as a nightmare since its primary objective would be to oppose Iran. The Negev Summit has been claimed to have laid the groundwork for a military alliance, but no such development has occurred yet.

9. Tehran is concerned about the deal and is attempting to prevent further closeness between Israel and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf. In this specific context, improving ties between Israel and the Persian Gulf Arabs aims to hasten regional integration at Iran's expense. The establishment of a "joint air defence system," often known as Middle East Air Defense, or MEAD, is one goal of this convergence. The main goal of this "new regional architecture," in the words of former Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, is to deter Iran and its proxy forces.
10. As a result of the revolutions in the region, the Gulf governments needed more defence and monitoring systems. To protect their citizens and interests, these states now require defence and surveillance systems. The Abraham Accords opened a door for the Arabs to acquire jets, arms, defence systems or any sort of technology from Israel. It came to light during a meeting between the US and Israeli foreign ministers and some of their Arab counterparts that representatives from the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco had inquired about purchasing Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system. To defend against ballistic missiles, Bahrain and the UAE mentioned the Iron Dome, the Green Pine radar system, and the Arrow system. The media reported that these are not fresh demands; they have already been sent to Israel via several different avenues. It would be a grave threat to the security of Iran if Israel provides and these states acquire the Iron Dome defence system.
11. The Arab-Israeli rapprochement has further consolidated the relations between Iran and other states and various non-state entities who oppose Israel the Abraham Accords. The attempts to restore ties between the Syrian government led by Bashar al-Assad and the Palestinian group Hamas by Tehran and Hezbollah were a clear indication and struggle to

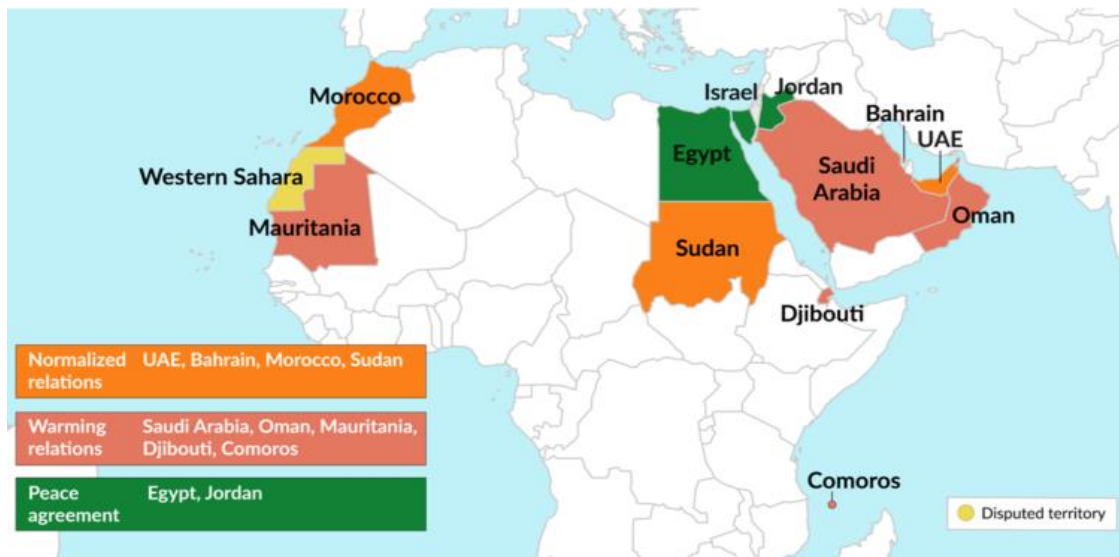
further strengthen the axis of resistance. Another major milestone for Tehran is the growing ties between Houthis and Hamas. Also, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) showed strong support for the Houthis in Yemen in a rally in 2023. In 2023, Hamas official Mahmoud Al-Zahhar in a meeting with the Al-Mayadin channel, strongly condemned and exchanged very harsh words towards the Gulf States who are supporting the Zionist Regimes. Mahmoud showed strong support for the Houthis in Yemen. Another effective strategy towards the common goal of countering Israel, the US and its allies is the establishment of Hamas in Lebanon. The recent attack on Israel in April 2023 shows the strong presence of Hamas in Lebanon. According to experts, the attack on Israel was carried out by Hamas from Lebanese territory and the rockets that were fired resembled those of Hezbollah and Iran. The further consolidation of relations between Iran and like-minded states and groups has more grave implications for Israel than for the Arabs. Iran and other states and non-state actors don't use such harsh language for the Arabs as they use for Israel. One of the reasons behind this is the religious affiliation between Iran and the Arab states. Iran will face a very harsh reaction from the Muslim world if it takes any bold step against the Arab states. That is why Iran and its proxies have carried out more attacks against Israel than the Arabs.

12. The deal reached between Iran and Saudi Arabia which was mediated by China, caused a huge buzz, with some commentators declaring it a success for international security as two bitter rivals in the Middle East region took an effective step towards cooperation. But for many scholars and analysts, the reality is quite different. The developments have not de-escalated any of the conflict between Tehran and Riyadh because the objectives of the two are beyond normalization of relations with each other. The outcomes of collaboration don't outweigh the current goals and objectives of Riyadh and Tehran in the region. The deal seems to be more about facilitating China's influence pushing the US away and harming its position in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Iran should focus and work on the sanctions as these sanctions have very grave impacts on the economy. Furthermore, Iran should focus on its internal issues like human rights violations, corruption, domestic security, unemployment and non-traditional security issues for example environmental degradation as the above-mentioned issues have a direct negative impact on the state.
2. Furthermore, the Arabs should acquire monitoring and other technologies like Iron Dome from Israel as Israel's technology has proven to be very useful and cost-effective.
3. Israel ought to continue pursuing international recognition. To further reduce the threat posed by Iran, Israel should make deals with more countries, particularly those that support Iran and its neighbours.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Source: Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG/gisreportsonline.com. as seen in German Institute for Global and Area Studies | Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/from-new-to-normal-two-years-after-the-abraham-accords>

Appendix 2

Who supports whom

■ Saudi side
 ■ Iran side
 ■ Split*
 ■ Non-aligned



Source: CRS, Pew Research, CIA world factbook. as seen in BBC News
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>

Appendix 3



Source: The Iran Primer

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2021/jan/13/biden-iran-regional-influence-proxies>

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