

## THE ACCORDS BEFORE ABRAHAM'S

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### Abstract

By September 2020 the world was surprised with the White House's announcement regarding the normalization treaties between Israel and two Gulf Monarchies, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. It is imperative, nonetheless, to not consider the Abraham Accords as a normalization moment isolated from the framework of the relations between Israel and the Arab and Muslim states. It is important to remember the past peace treaties with Israel, namely the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt and the 1994 Peace Treaty with Jordan. Given that these agreements already existed, the innovation of the Abraham Accords in terms of international and regional relations is questionable. Therefore, the research question that will guide this paper is as follows: How is the 2020 Abraham Accords considered innovative as compared to the Peace Treaties celebrated between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994? The main goal of this investigative work is to understand the differences between the Abraham Accords and the cited Peace Treaties at the sociohistorical level and the impact on International Relations according to the Theory of the Balance of Threat and the Theory of the Alliance, both by Stephen Walt. The main argument of this paper is that it is understood that the Abraham Accords are of a different nature from the 1979 Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel and from the 1994 Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan as the sociohistorical, geopolitical and geostrategic contexts were essentially distinct, as it is perceived by applying the Theory of the Balance of Threat and the Theory of the Alliance, both by Stephen Walt. Therefore, the impact on the regional and international relations of each treaty was distinctively different. To achieve these goals this study will follow this methodology: firstly, it is considered a positivist study. Also, since there will be a validation of the theoretical frameworks used, this study is deductive. It will agglomerate in itself two types of investigations, descriptive and explicative. It is mainly a comparative study, as the 1979 and 1994 Peace Treaties with Israel will be compared with the Abraham Accords. This study will also use the processual and diachronic historical method to analyze the before and after of both Peace Treaties and the Accords. All data will be submitted through discourse analysis. One of the main conclusions of this article is that both the 1979 and the 1994 Peace Treaties were celebrated after having lost the war against Israel, which brought on the need for peace with the Jewish state in order to recover financially. Therefore, these Peace Treaties were seen as an alliance, specifically, a positive balancing with Israel. On the other hand, the Abraham Accords did not happen in the context of war, as the United Arab Emirates and



Bahrain never fought Israel, but in the context of perceiving a common threat, Iran. Consequently, they allied with Israel on a positive both hard and soft balancing alliance.

### Keywords

Abraham Accords, Peace Treaties, Middle East, Israel, Jordan, Egypt.

### Resumo

Em setembro de 2020 o mundo ficou surpreso ao ser anunciado na Casa Branca um tratado de normalização de relações entre duas monarquias do Golfo Pérsico, mais especificamente entre o Bahrain e os Emirados Árabes Unidos, e o Estado de Israel. Ainda mais surpresa ficou a humanidade ao compreender o silêncio que emanou dos restantes países professantes do Islamismo. Todavia, não se deve considerar os Acordos de Abraão como um momento de normalização isolado no panorama das relações entre Israel e os estados árabes e muçulmanos. É de se lembrar que ocorreram tratados de paz com Israel no passado, sendo de se nomear o Tratado de Paz com o Egito em 1979 e o Tratado de Paz com a Jordânia em 1994. Tendo em conta que estes acordos já existiam, coloca-se em causa a inovação dos próprios Acordos de Abraão em termos de Relações Internacionais e regionais. Portanto, a questão de partida que guiará este artigo é a seguinte: Como é que os Acordos de Abraão de 2020 são considerados inovadores em comparação com os Tratados de Paz celebrados entre Israel e o Egito em 1979 e com a Jordânia em 1994? O objetivo principal deste artigo científico será distinguir as diferenças a vários níveis, nomeadamente ao nível socio-histórico e em termos de impacto nas Relações Internacionais, entre os Acordos de Abraão e os Tratados de Paz anteriormente celebrados entre Israel e, em primeiro lugar, o Egito, e de seguida, a Jordânia. O principal argumento deste artigo é que os Acordos de Abraão são de uma natureza diferente do Tratado de Paz entre o Egito e Israel de 1979 e o Tratado de Paz entre Israel e a Jordânia de 1994, dado que os contextos sociohistóricos, geopolíticos e geoestratégicos eram essencialmente distintos, como é percecionado ao se aplicar a Teoria da Balança da Ameaça e a Teoria da Aliança, ambas de Stephen Walt. Assim, o impacto de cada tratado nas relações regionais e internacionais era distintivamente diferente. Para atingir estes objetivos, este estudo seguirá esta metodologia: primeiramente, é considerado um estudo positivista. De igual forma, dado que vai ocorrer validação por quadros teóricos utilizados, é um estudo dedutivo. Aglomerará em si dois tipos de investigações, descritiva e explicativa. É maioritariamente um estudo comparativo, dado que os Tratados de Paz de 1979 e 1994 vão ser comparados com os Acordos de Abraão. Este estudo utilizará o método histórico processual diacrónico para analisar o antes e depois dos Tratados de Paz e dos Acordos. Todos os dados vão ser submetidos a análise de discurso. Uma das principais conclusões deste artigo é que os Tratados de Paz de 1979 e 1994 foram celebrados após terem perdido guerras contra Israel, o que conduziu a uma necessidade de paz com o estado judaico de forma a haver recuperação financeira. Consequentemente, estes Tratados de Paz foram vistos como uma aliança, nomeadamente, um positive balancing com Israel. Por outro lado, os Acordos de Abraão não surgiram de um contexto de guerra, tendo em vista que os Emirados Árabes Unidos e o Bahrain nunca lutaram Israel, mas num contexto de percepção de uma ameaça comum, o Irão. Consequentemente, a aliança com Israel foi tanto um hard e soft balancing.

### Palavras-chave

Acordos de Abraão, Tratados de Paz, Israel, Jordânia, Egito, Médio Oriente.



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## THE ACCORDS BEFORE ABRAHAM'S

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### Introduction

By September 2020 the world was surprised with the White House's announcement of the normalization treaties between Israel and two Gulf Monarchies, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. There was further surprise considering the silence that came from the Muslim countries (Perper, 2020).

Throughout the decades, one considers the following statement as a fact: there is an eternal tension between Arab and/or Muslim countries and the only Jewish State in the world, Israel. As a matter of fact, right after the birth of the State of Israel, on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1948, there was a war waged against it, led by the neighbouring Arab States and financed by other Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia (Labelle, 2011). However, when the Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979, there was a change in the balance of power in the Middle East. The Sunni Arab States began to perceive it as a threat, not as a country who professes a different religion, but a country with the same religion, but from a different sect, the Shi'ite. Moreover, the States from the rich Persian Gulf began to understand that ancient Persia, who had a new identity, aspired for itself something they also claimed to be theirs, especially Saudi Arabia, the hegemony in the region (Miller, 2020).

Other external events happened that prompted changes in the relations in this region. At the beginning of the second millennium, the Obama administration began to place more importance on the Asian axis than to the Middle East. Moreover, this administration delivered the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, most known as the JCPOA or the Iran Deal. This deal would allow the Islamic Republic to produce more uranium for nuclear purposes (IRNA, 2015). These two policies would prompt two others from another administration. Trump's administration would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital (U.S. Embassy in Israel, 2020) and would later on mediate the Abraham Accords.

It is imperative, nonetheless, to not consider the Abraham Accords as a normalization moment, isolated from the framework of the relations between Israel and the Arab and Muslim states. It is important to remember the past peace treaties with Israel, namely the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt and the 1994 Peace Treaty with Jordan. Given that these agreements already existed, the innovation of the Abraham Accords in terms of international and regional relations is questionable.



Therefore, the research question that will guide this paper is the following: How is the 2020 Abraham Accords innovative as compared to the Peace Treaties celebrated between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994? The main goal of this investigative work is to understand the differences between the Abraham Accords and the cited Peace Treaties at the sociohistorical level and the impact on the International Relations according to the Theory of the Balance of Threat and the Theory of the Alliance, both by Stephen Walt. To achieve this goal, firstly we will characterize the historical context of Egypt in 1979 and of Jordan in 1994. Then, we will compare the Abraham Accords with the Peace Treaties historically, according to the Theories cited above. Afterwards, we will make a geostrategic and geopolitical description of Egypt in 1979, of Jordan in 1994, and of the Middle East in 2020 separately, and then we will make the comparison. Finally, we will assess the repercussions of each treaty on the international and regional levels according to Walt's theories.

The main argument of this paper is that it is understood that the Abraham Accords are of a different nature than the 1979 Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel and the 1994 Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan as their sociohistorical, geopolitical and geostrategic contexts were essentially distinct, as it is perceived by applying the Theory of the Balance of Threat and the Theory of the Alliance, both by Stephen Walt. Therefore, the impact on the regional and international relations of each treaty were distinctively different.

For the purpose of the organization of this paper, following the introduction, there will be a chapter dedicated to literature review and another dedicated to the theoretical framework. Then, there will be a chapter explaining the methodology this paper will follow. Subsequently, there will be three chapters, each one addressing one of the goals cited above. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the answer given to the research question.

## **Literature review**

Since the Abraham Accords are a recent event, the literature about them is untimely and little elaborated. However, it is possible to recognize three major aspects of this event of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Firstly, we will explore the ideological aspect, which analyses the role of ideas in the proceedings of these very distinct countries involved in the Accords. There are two perspectives related to this aspect. The first sees the Abraham Accords revealing that the normalization with Israel and the Palestinian issue can be two different issues, both politically and emotionally (Stephens *in* Sorkin, 2021). Therefore, the ideological rejection of Israel as deliberated by 1967 Khartoum Declaration has ended. For Israel, however, there is no more Palestinian veto for the peace deliberations. However, this perspective doesn't consider the fact that the Arab countries who signed the Abraham Accords have no influence on the Palestinian people. Hence, this perspective doesn't consider the cultural geopolitical factor. Still, as far as the ideological aspect, one can study the Abraham Accords from a Pan-Arabist perspective (Segell, 2021). This perspective's major goals are cooperation, unity and solidarity among Arab and African States, and with Israel. According to this perspective, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco were



led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to start top-down Accords amongst leaders. However, as there is no apparent popular support for the ideological movement, there will be no internal and regional evolution towards a positive change. Nevertheless, the fact that this perspective sees the Accords as driven by elites, it ignores the historical, geopolitical and geostrategic context, as the economy and the role of society aren't taken into consideration.

A second aspect in the literature can be called liberal, which in itself can be divided in two perspectives. One literally approaches the Abraham Accords considering the human factor, by studying it has been driven by the populations (Frish *in* Sorkin, 2021). According to this approach, the population is tired of asking for pan Arab and pan Islamic unity and wishes for better economic opportunities, for better welfare, a good education, innovation, rule of law and equality. However, this aspect ignores the political and systemic context of the region. On the other hand, there is the approach of the economic liberalism (Egel, Efron & Robinson, 2021; Kram & Makovsky, 2021; Segell 2021). This approach sees the economic relation between Israel and the UAE as the powerful foundation for the Abraham Accords. According to the authors who defend this position, these Accords will allow for the economies to connect with each other and eventually reach other Muslim and Arab countries. This expansion will create a more integrated Middle East, enabling environmental, economic and social challenges to be addressed. Nevertheless, if one were to truly witness the emergence of a new regional economic structure, more countries would be willing to sign up for normalization with Israel.

Finally, there are two realistic approaches to this event. The first one relates the coexistence of a pragmatic side with an ideological one during the creation of the Abraham Accords. According to the authors (Krieg, 2020; Abdullah, 2021), the pragmatic side is based on the national interests of the signatory countries, which consist on the wish for consolidation of power, preservation of economic and military stability, as well as for scientific and technological developments to preserve safety. The ideological side, however, desires peace, regional stability and a changing in mentalities. Nonetheless, by analysing what was revealed, one understands that there is, in fact, just one side, the pragmatic one, as the ideological derives from it. In reality, when power is consolidated and developments are made, these will create regional peace and stability, making changes in mentality possible. The final perspective is characterized as neorealistic, as it considers the Accords the result of a geopolitical change in the Middle East (Norlen & Sinai, 2020). It states that, besides each signatory country gaining strategic depth with the Accords, a resistance axis was also created (Guney & Korkmaz *in* Kihlberg, 2021). Consequently, the biggest consequence of the Abraham Accords, according to this perspective, was the formation of alliances in the Middle East. However, this approach ends up being a study of the consequences of the Abraham Accords and not the study of the causes that led up to them.

### **Main concepts and theoretical framework**

There are concepts that, for the purpose of uniformly understanding this paper, will be conceptually delineated.



Firstly, it is of extreme importance to say that we will follow the definition of power as given by Joseph Nye (1990). According to this academic, power consists in the capacity of affecting the other in order to achieve the desired goals. This author also distinguishes between two types of power. Hard power, the first distinction the author draws, which consists in the ability to carry their goals forward through coercive actions or threats. Historically, hard power is measured by criteria of population and/or territory sizes, geography, natural resources, military force and economic strength. On the other hand, there is soft power, which is defined by the ability of shaping others' preferences through culture, political values and institutions or moral authority. However, the International Relations reality reveals the need to use both soft and hard power together. Therefore, the ability to strategically combine these powers is called smart power. Supporters of smart power articulate the advantages of hard power, such as the military power, combining them by investing in alliances and institutions. This way, the key players are capable of achieving maximum results legitimately.

It is also essential to define the term "geopolitics". In Flint's vision, geopolitics isn't just a question of countries competing with each other. It is the possibility of competing for a territory through means other than the states' practices. Consequently, we will follow the definition of contemporary geopolitics which is identifying "the sources, practices, and representations that allow for the control of territory and the extraction of resources" (Flint, 2006, p.16).

As for the concept of "geostrategy", to Foucher it means the application of geographical reason to drive a war and/or create a national defense framework (Foucher, 2000, p.165). As geopolitics simplifies realities to a circumscribed reality, geostrategy applies practices to those locations through a military operation lens. It considers the assessment of external threats and the balance of power according to the interests of the state and the nation in a spatial, physical and human configuration.

Finally, as for the concept of Middle East, we will follow Tibi's definition (1989, p.73, *in* Ozalp, 2011, pp. 10-11 e 18). The reason for this choice is that the author not only considers the structural relations and the processes of mutual interaction, but also the linguistic, ethnic, socioeconomical and cultural frameworks. Tibi, after thinking about these factors, delineates the Middle East in three subregions: *Mashriq*, Eastern Arabia, *Maghreb*, North Africa, and *Khaleej*, the Gulf region.

Regarding the theoretical framework, we will consider four key points. Firstly, the region will be characterized according to International Relations Realism framework which has the following propositions (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, pp. 21-24). For the realist, the state is the key player in studying the anarchic international system. As we can observe in the Middle East there isn't a state strong enough to create a central government. It is also considered that the state is a unitarian player, the government being the agent of foreign policy. The state is also considered a rational player, which means it drives the foreign policy by assessing the goals, the alternatives, the benefits and the costs. Finally, for the realists, the key interest is national and international security, thus examining potential uses of force and conflicts. As we have understood through the literature review, the Abraham Accords should be studied considering the calculus of costs and benefits to protect the national security of the signing states.



Realism turns into Neorealism or Structural Realism when the main focus is the international system. Neorealists define the system considering the polarities, which are caused by the number of international powers and the effects they cause (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, pp. 34-35). According to those effects, there can be balances or alliances. Neorealists can be distinguished between defensive or offensive. The latter, led by Mearsheimer, think that anarchy creates the desire to expand the relative power capacity as a way of being safe (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, p.46). On another hand, the former, led by Waltz, defend that the states desire for survival and safety, are keen on maintaining the status quo (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, pp. 45, 46). It is within the Defensive Neorealism framework that the two Stephen Walt's theories were created, which will be the main theoretical framework for this paper (Walt, 1985 & 1989).

Walt's main premise of his Theory of Balance of Threat is that the states react to an external threat by creating alliances. A threat, to this author, is not only being a superior power, but a perceptive one. A state is considered superior and a perceptive threat when it has more aggregate power (bigger in terms of population size and more innovative technologically and industrially), is geographically close, has strong military forces and aggressive intensions. This state becomes the reason to create an alliance between states who wish to keep the status quo.

There are two kinds of alliances that can be created when a threat is perceived according to the Theory of the Alliances of Walt. The first one is to create bandwagoning, which is the alliance of the threatened states to the threatening power who is disrupting the status quo. The external policy of this kind of alliance is described as belligerent and offensive. The main purpose is to create effective military establishments and to resort to force in international disputes. The second type of alliance formation as described by Walt is balancing. This type of strategy consists in the states allying to the preserver of the status quo and opposing to the threat. The states create and aggregate power internally or through external policy. There can be four different types of balancing. Negative balancing is when the main goal is to balance against the threatening state; positive balancing is when the main goal of the strategy is to develop the capabilities of the states involved on the alliance (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1950, *in* Bock & Henneberg, 2013, p. 8). However, the balancing can also be defined as soft or hard depending on whether the capabilities developed are military or not (He & Nexon, 2009, *in* Bock & Henneberg, 2013, pp. 8-9). The external policy of a balancing alliance is safer and more defensive. Their main goal is self-preservation, as they wish to survive whereas the strongest state wishes to expand its influence.

In order to describe the threat and the states in case study, it is considered essential to make a geopolitical and geostrategic analysis considering Guido Fischer's factors (Arnaut Moreira, 2020, p. 4). This academic considers that power must be assessed according to three types of factors. The first type are the political factors, which include, the position and the borders of the country, its territorial and populational size, demographics and culture that influences the state. The next factor is the economical, which takes into consideration soil fertility, natural resources, industrial organization, technological innovation, development of trade and financial strength. Lastly, there is the psychological factor, which considers economical flexibility, capacity to intervene, the preservation and adaptation of the population.





Though a geopolitical and geostrategic analysis of the threatening countries, it will be possible to strengthen the study according to the Theory of Balance of Threat by Stephen Walt. By characterizing the countries, we will study using these factors, it will be possible to assess their evolution and distinguish what kind of alliance was created according to the Theory of Alliances by Walt.

## **Methodology**

As it was revealed in the literature review, many studies about the Abraham Accords were accomplished by considering either what where their causes or their effects. This paper has a holistic and systemic approach, as it will study both. Therefore, it is a positivistic study (Boduszynski & Lamont, 2020, p. 61). Also, as there will be a validation of the theoretical frameworks that will be used, this study is deductive (Pires, 2022, p.23).

However, it will contain in itself two types of investigations (Boduszynski & Lamont, 2020, p.57). Firstly, it will be a descriptive investigation, as there will be an historical, geopolitical and geostrategic description of the quoted countries and of the region. Secondly, this will be an explanatory investigation, since it will identify casual mechanisms through which we can understand the impact of the Abraham Accords on the regional system of the Middle East.

It is mainly a comparative study, as the 1979 and 1994 Peace Treaties with Israel will be compared with the Abraham Accords. Therefore, the method of various different systems will be used, since all the Muslim states have something in common: peace with Israel (Boduszynski & Lamont, 2020, pp. 91-92).

This study will also use the processual and diachronic historical method to study the before and after of the Peace Treaties and the Accords. To achieve the historical description, the process tracing method will be used (Beach, 2020).

As we will try to understand and interpret motivations and behaviours, this is a qualitative study (Boduszynski & Lamont, 2020, pp. 98-101) where written data will be intensively studied. All data will be submitted through discourse analysis. Given that the study takes into account international politics, the segment of discourse analysis that focuses on politics will be used (Wilson, 2015, p. 779).

## **Historical context**

A treaty and an accord are responses to historical context. This historical context has characteristics unique to itself and which will influence the appearance of the treaty and/or the accord and its writing. Therefore, the context itself will differentiate the treaties and the accords.



### ***The Israeli-Arab Wars***

As it is understandable, to have a Peace Treaty one must have a war. However, as it was mentioned in the introduction, the Israeli-Arab Wars were extensive. Therefore, for synthetization purposes, only two conflicts are studied (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022).

The first conflict of interest for the present paper is called "Six-Day War". It was a conflict between Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian and Jordan forces. Its name is derived from the fact that it was a war that took place in six days, between June 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 1967. At the beginning of the year, Syria had intensified its bombings on Israeli locations from the Golan Heights. When the Israeli air force shot down six Syrian jets, Egyptian President Nasser mobilized his forces to the Sinai Peninsula border. Nasser also signed a mutual defence pact with Jordan. Israel understood these actions as threats and answered them with a sudden air strike. In six days, Israel took control of the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and all of Jerusalem. The second conflict understood to be of interest to this paper happened during Yom-Kippur (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). This is the most holy of the Jewish holidays, as it is a 25-hour fasting holiday to cleanse the people from their sins. In the 1973 Yom Kippur, which happened on October 6<sup>th</sup>, Israel was invaded by Egyptian forces from the Suez Channel and by Syrian Forces from the Golan Heights. The foreign forces knew it was a fasting holiday and believed Israel wouldn't be prepared for such an invasion. However, the Israeli forces managed to fend off the invaders who retreated to their territories.

### ***Israel and the Gulf Monarchies***

As for the Abraham Accords, its context immediately reveals why they aren't called Peace Treaties. As a matter of fact, there was never a direct war between Israel and the signatory Gulf Monarchies. There was also never war between the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, the first signatory States. The threatening behaviour of the Gulf Monarchies we are studying, to Israel was mainly economical, as these states were part of the boycott movement against the Jewish State (Ahren, 2020). It was because of the Iranian threat that relations between Israel and the above-mentioned States began. In February 2005, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, of Bahrain, stated to the American Ambassador at Manama that there were contacts between Bahrain and the Mossad (The Guardian, 2011). Just as with the UAE (Traub et al., 2023), the relations developed differently. Between 2010 and 2018, the Gulf Monarchy tried a soft power foreign policy. That meant that their emphasis was on foreign investment, human development and climate change. However, regional events, such as the Arab Spring and the JCPOA, caused the Emirates to start involving themselves in alliances. Nonetheless, the UAE began to reflect on the importance of peace existing between the Abrahamic religions and they also increased Israeli imports in homeland security.

By 2019, everything changed. The UAE decreased the number of men in Yemen and lifted up sanctions against Qatar. Their main goal would be now to turn the Middle East into a cultural and economic global centre, developing new technology, science, renewable energies and artificial intelligence. Therefore, their relations with Israel increased and the Abraham Accords started to be further developed.



### ***What do these historical contexts reveal about the Abraham Accords?***

By applying the Theory of Balance of Threat to the historical contexts above-mentioned we are able to understand the important distinction between the Peace Treaties and the Abraham Accords. From what was mentioned regarding the Peace Treaties, we can understand that the Arab States understood Israel to be a revisionist state. They recognized the threat to be the fact that Israel was a non-Muslim country who occupied a Palestinian territory. Also, as Israel won all the four wars against the Arab states, both Egypt and Jordan understood the Jewish State to be more developed than them (Middle East Policy Council, n.d.).

On the other hand, neither Bahrain nor the UAE were threatened by Israel. As a matter of fact, Israel is geographically distant from the Persian Gulf. For them, the main threat is the revisionist state of Iran. Iran not only is not a Monarchy, but it is Shi'a, a different sect from UAE and Bahrain (Al-Ketbi, 2018; Vohra, 2022). Iran wants to export its revolution to the Gulf Monarchies to liberate the Shi'a who are oppressed, from their oppressors the Sunnis, who cooperate with the "Great Satan", the United States of America (USA).

When we understand the historical context of the Theory of Balance of Threat, we are also able to understand what was the positioning from each context from the Theory of Alliance. From the Peace Treaties, we can perceive that for Jordan, who felt unprotected from Israel, Egypt represented the status quo. Therefore, they formed an alliance. They wanted a balance of power against Israel (negative balancing). As for UAE and Bahrain, they see Israel as the powerful and innovative state representing the status quo. Therefore, they made a balance alliance to develop their capabilities against Iran (positive balancing).

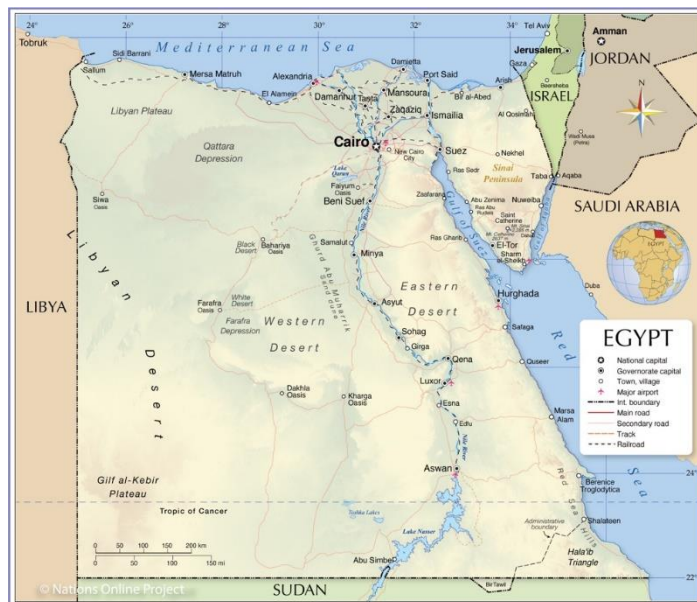
### **Geopolitical and geostrategic descriptions**

As it was said in the Introduction and in the Theoretical Framework, we believe that through a geopolitical and geostrategic analysis we can better understand the strengths and the weaknesses of each state that we are studying in this paper. This rationale is explained by the fact that for a state to involve itself in an alliance, it must understand that the most powerful state could offer some protection or some innovation that it could not have by itself. Therefore, in this chapter, we are going to analyse through Guido Fischer's geopolitical and geostrategic factors, Egypt and Jordan, by the time they signed each peace treaty, and UAE, Bahrain and Israel, by 2020.



**Egypt, 1979**

**Map 1, "Egypt"**



Source: <https://www.nationsonline.org/maps/Egypt-Map-L.jpg>

**Table 1. "Guido Fischer's Factors for Geopolitical and Geostrategic Analysis of Egypt, 1979"**

Political					
Position	Dimension	Population	Organization	Culture	Borders
North Africa	996 603 km <sup>2</sup>	37 71 milhões	Tribal Arab, Berbers, Nubians	Arab Islamic Tribal	Lybia Sudan Israel Mediterranean Sea Red Sea
Economical					
Soil Fertility	Natural Wealth	Industrial Organization	Tech Level	Commerce	Finances
Nile River	Natural Gas Oil Minerals	Oil Distribution	n.d.	Oil Transports	Socialist
Psychological					
Flexibility	Intervention		Preservation	Adaptation	
Islamism Socialism	Oil Gas Regional position		Civilizational	Islam	

Sources: Baker, Goldschmidt, Holt, Hopwood, Little & Smith, 2022; Bruton, 1983; EI-Sherif, 1997; World Bank, 1974

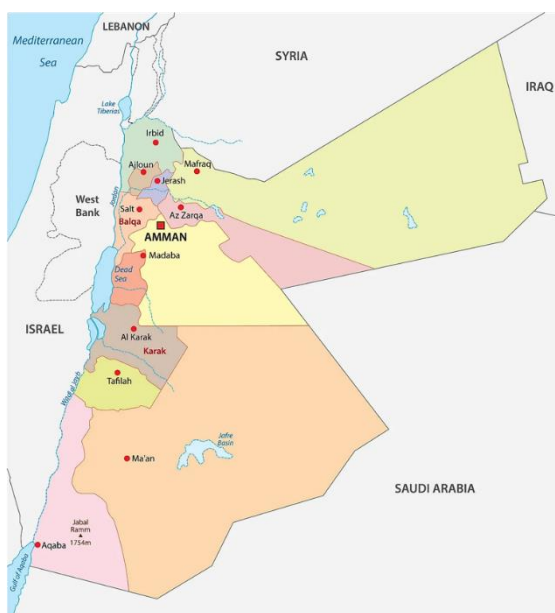


The first Arab state that normalized its relations with Israel was Egypt, in 1979. As it is understood from the historical context, Egypt, as one of the losers from the frequent Israeli-Arab Wars, was in a fragile position. The ancient land of the Pharaohs is a country with strong natural wealth, such as natural gas, oil and precious metals. Also, its soil is fertile, especially near the Nile River. However, by 1979 its economy didn't reflect any of these assets. The riches were invested in defence, which had a very high due to the conflicts against Israel.

Another weakness was its regime. Up to 1970 Egypt was ruled by President Nasser, who followed a socialist strand applied to the Arab countries. The name of this movement was Pan-Arabism and it advocated the political, cultural and socioeconomic unity of Arabs across the different states that emerged after decolonisation. It was also an ideological movement taking the form principally of a secular and socialist system. It was similarly inherently anticolonial and anti-imperial. This political movement, however, caused the Egyptian economy to become stagnant, as there was no income from foreign investments.

### Jordan, 1994

#### Map 2, "Jordan".



Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/upload/e8/2f/72/regions-of-jordan-map.png>



**Table 2. "Guido Fischer's Factors for Geopolitical and Geostrategic Analysis of Jordan, 1994"**

<b>Political</b>					
<b>Position</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Borders</b>
Middle East	89 318 km <sup>2</sup>	4 41 milhões	Tribal Arab	Arab Islamic Palestinian	Syria Iraq Israel Saudi Arabia
<b>Economical</b>					
<b>Soil Fertility</b>	<b>Natural Wealth</b>	<b>Industrial Organization</b>	<b>Tech Level</b>	<b>Commerce</b>	<b>Finances</b>
Arid Rocky	Natural Gas Minerals	Textile Mineral	n.d.	Tourism	Foreign Investment Remittances
<b>Psychological</b>					
<b>Flexibility</b>		<b>Intervention</b>		<b>Preservation</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>
Westernized		Small		Monarchy Modernization	Modernization

Sources: Bickerton, Irvine & Jaber, 2022; Ramachandran, 2004

The second country which normalized its relationship with Israel by 1994, was Jordan. Its geopolitical and geostrategic context was different, as its weaknesses were threefold. The first relates to the issue of population. Jordan had received Palestinian refugees since the Independence War against Israel. Therefore, there was a strong populational pressure from the refugees, as they feared terrorist attacks from radicals.

Another was territorial. As it was understood from the historical context, the wars with Israel led to the latter occupying Jordanian territories. Therefore, there was a decrease in the amount of fertile land available for Jordanian cultivation.

These territorial fragilities had an impact on the economy, as there was a loss of fertile land. On the other hand, the Arab countries were under an oil embargo, which had a financial impact on their economies. For this reason, foreign investment from the Arab countries also decreased.



**United Arab Emirates, 2020**

**Map 3, "United Arab Emirates".**



Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/upload/af/06/8b/ae-01.jpg>

**Table 3. "Guido Fischer's Factors for Geopolitical and Geostrategic Analysis of the UAE, 2020"**

Political					
Position	Dimension	Population	Organization	Culture	Borders
Arabian Peninsula Middle East	71 024 km <sup>2</sup>	9 272 000	Tribal Arab Federation Emirates	Arab Islamic Persian Tribal	Persian Gulf Saudi Arabia Oman
Economical					
Soil Fertility	Natural Wealth	Industrial Organization	Tech Level	Commerce	Finances
Desert Mountains Oasis	Oil Natural Gas	Oil Construction	Tech Parks	Tourism	Financial hub
Psychological					
Flexibility		Intervention		Preservation	Adaptation
Tourism Diversification Oil		Commercial and financial hub Bank institutions		Islamism Tribal	High

Sources: Crystal. & Peterson, 2022

The United Arab Emirates are located in the Middle East *shatterbelt* (Cohen, 2015, pp. 375, 376). This region is characterized by having multiple ethnicities, races and religions within the same state as well as in-between states. Therefore, there is a dynamic fragmentation process, which facilitates the alteration between alliances.

In the UAE's case, even though the major ethnicity is Arab, there is a diversity of tribes inside each emirate. Also, besides the majority of the population being Sunnite, there is a Shi'a minority (*Office of International Religious Freedom*, 2018, p.2).



This region lays in the juxtaposition of three continents and is at the entrance of the Arabian Peninsula through the Persian Gulf. However, its ports aren't deep, which eases commercial trade. Besides, its low topography allows for easy land trade routes from the Gulf to the Levant. This is way the coastal cities of the UAE have always been defined by the existence of multiple races and ethnicities, from Persians, to Arabs, to Indians, to Europeans. Therefore, even though it is a small country, the UAE imports foreign workforce, the majority being Indian and Pakistani.

Something which is unique to the Middle East is UAE's political system. The different emirates decided to preserve their tribal and historical identities and create a federation. This practical decision reflects the trade-off that exists in the UAE. Even though it has a strong Islamic identity, it is more westernized than other states in the region. History helped create the coexistence of a strong ability to adapt while still preserving one's own identity within the UAE.

However, the *shatterbelt* is also characterized by the existence of natural wealth and scarcity of essential natural resources. As a consequence, there is a strong chance of conflict due to competition between regional and external powers. Therefore, the fact that the UAE is in an unstable region, its instability could affect its political system. Two ideologies have appeared to use this instability as a means to achieve their purpose.

Iran has tried to expand and become the Hegemon in the region through its unification under one Islamic Caliphate. However, for the Caliphate to succeed, Shi'a Islamism must be predominant. Therefore, the Islamic Republic has encouraged the Shi'a minorities to revolt against their Sunni governors. The UAE has a Shi'a minority both in Dubai and in Sharjah, and for this reason it fears Iranian influence will cause instability.

The second movement which uses the Middle Eastern instability in its favour is the Muslim Brotherhood. This Islamist group is eager for the return to the Koran and to the Hadith. Therefore, it tries to Islamise society (Laub, 2019). It's already influencing Qatar, which is a neighbour of the UAE. Hence, the UAE fears the infiltration of the Muslim Brotherhood ideals in its territory.





## Bahrain, 2020

Map 4, "Bahrain"



Source: <https://www.mapsland.com/asia/bahrain/detailed-political-map-of-bahrain-with-relief>

**Table 4. "Guido Fischer's Factors for Geopolitical and Geostrategic Analysis of Bahrain, 2020"**

Political					
Position	Dimension	Population	Organization	Culture	Borders
Persian Gulf	778 km <sup>2</sup>	2 059	Tribal Arab	Arab Islamic Persian	Iran Saudi Arabia Qatar
Economical					
Soil Fertility	Natural Wealth	Industrial Organization	Tech Level	Commerce	Finances
Southern Western	Oil Natural Gas	Refinery Commerce	Tech Parks	Refinery Commerce	Financial hub
Psychological					
Flexibility		Intervention		Preservation	Adaptation
Diversification Oil		Commercial Refinery		Islamism Tribal	High

Sources: Smith. & Crystal, 2023.

Bahrain has been specially studied as being a stage for the Saudi-Iranian rivalry. However, this rivalry has a reason for existing. As a matter of fact, Bahrain has geopolitical and geostrategic importance, particularly in three aspects.

Firstly, even though it is a small island with only 778 square kilometres (Crystal & Smith, 2023), Bahrain's strategic location is of major importance. It is located west of the Persian Gulf, having Saudi Arabia on both its west and southern border, Qatar on the east and



Iran in the north. Because of this location, the USA headquarters for the Centre Command of Naval Forces is located in this island (Myrvold, 2022). In addition, because of its location and common history, Iran also claims this island as its fourteenth province.

Secondly, Bahrain is located on a rich oil region. Actually, this was the first emirate where oil was first found in 1932 (Crystal & Smith, 2023). However, even though Bahrain isn't a prolific oil producer nor a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), it has one of the biggest oil refineries in the world, the *BAPCO Sitrah Refinery*. This company produces a sixth of the crude in the world (Nuruzzaman, 2013).

Finally, Bahrain is a mostly Shi'a country but ruled by the Sunni minority. As Borges (2019) cited, by 1717 the Safavid empire had its control seized from Bahrain and, by 1783, the al-Khalifa, a Sunni Arab family from Najd, came into power. Therefore, there is a strong sectarian divide in Bahrain. This was evident in the events of the 2011 Arab Spring, when the Shi'a majority wanted political reforms to end discrimination (Peterson, 2022). However, Saudi Arabia doesn't want change for it fears for its political and economic interests (Nuruzzaman, 2013).

### Israel, 2020 Map 5, "Israel".



Source: <http://www.guiageo.com/asia/imagens/mapa-israel.jpg>



**Table 5. "Guido Fischer's Factors for Geopolitical and Geostrategic Analysis of Israel, 2020"**

<b>Political</b>					
<b>Position</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Borders</b>
Middle East	21 937 Km <sup>2</sup>	8 424 904	Urban	Jew Arab Zionism Westernized	Egypt Gaza Strip Jordan Lebanon Syria
<b>Economical</b>					
<b>Soil Fertility</b>	<b>Natural Wealth</b>	<b>Industrial Organization</b>	<b>Tech Level</b>	<b>Commerce</b>	<b>Finances</b>
Coastal Plan	Natural Gas Minerals Oil	Tech Chemical Diamonds	Tech Parks	Natural gas Diamonds Tech Chemicals	High
<b>Psychological</b>					
<b>Flexibility</b>		<b>Intervention</b>		<b>Preservation</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>
Tech and Investigation		USA		Zionism	Zionism

Sources: Elath, Ochsenwald, Sichernman. & Stone (2019)

Finally, we will study the country which changed the Middle East. Israel is a surprising state with four characteristics that are relevant to our analysis. Two of them are related to its weaknesses, while the other two are considered strengths.

Firstly, Israel is a small state, spanning 470 kilometres. It is surrounded by states that were hostile when the Jewish State was born: it shares the northern border with Lebanon, with whom it has fragile relations, the north-eastern borders with Syria, with whom it has hostile relations, east and southeast with Jordan, with whom it has a peace treaty, just as with Egypt, on the south (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.; Elath, Ochsenwald, Sichernman & Stone, n.d.).

Secondly, its population is over 8 500 000 inhabitants (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). However, the majority of its population are non-Jews: 1.2 million are Muslim, 123 thousand are Christians and 122 thousand are Druze (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). In addition, the country is increasingly westernized, which means that the Jewish identity is now social, rather than religious. Therefore, the Jewish State doesn't know what this identity means (Schweid, 1998).

However, there are two other characteristics which are the main reason for the normalization treaties. Israel has a strong economy, growing 3 percent a year. The main strength of Israeli's economy is its technological sector. Besides producing fertilizers, pharmaceutical drugs and having a thriving diamond industry, Israel is known for its IT sector for defence and for medical equipment (Bahar & Eckstein, 2019; Bruno & Chenery, 1962; Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.; Elath, Ochsenwald, Sichernman & Stone, n.d.; OECD Observer, 2011).



The final characteristic, which also is a strength, is its dissuasion power. It is important to say that Israel has an *animut* policy; this means that Israel doesn't reveal if it possesses nuclear power (Ferrero, 2019; Israeli, 2015). However, Israel also has conventional weaponry power. Its weapons are technologically advanced and military service is mandatory for both sexes (Wenkert, 2019).

### ***What do these geopolitical and geostrategic descriptions reveal about the Abraham Accords?***

By applying the Theory of Balance of Threat, we understand that, by 1979 and 1994, Israel was more developed than Jordan and Egypt. Even though Egypt has a larger territory, more population and is geographically close, its economy wasn't innovative and its defence was weak. Jordan was in the same position as Egypt. Therefore, their intentions, even though aggressive, weren't as threatening as at the beginning of Israel's independence.

At the same time, even though Egypt was seen as a state representing the status quo, it understood Israel wasn't revisionist. Although its ideology was different, Israel didn't mean to be a threat to the Arab states. In both cases, it was understood that it was more detrimental to remain in a state of war against Israel or even being hostile, than to normalize the relations. Therefore, through an alliance with Israel, the status quo was preserved and Egypt's and Jordan's reaped the beneficial consequences. The result of the alliance was a positive balancing.

As with the UAE and Bahrain, the situation was different than with Egypt and Jordan. The Gulf monarchies aren't geographically near Israel. Therefore, even though Bahrain is smaller and less populated than Israel, it never felt threatened by it. Also, Israel was never intentionally threatening to these Monarchies. Consequently, it is understood that, for the UAE and Bahrain to create an alliance, which is both positive and negative (as their capabilities improved but can also be used against a threat), the threat must come from another state.

By applying the Theory of Balance of Threat, we perceive Iran as the major threat to both Gulf Monarchies. Iran not only is bigger and more populated than both Monarchies, it is also geographically close and has strong military power. Its intentions are clear, since it claims Bahrain as its 14<sup>th</sup> province and wants to spread its ideology.

One, then, must understand that, through an alliance with Israel, the UAE and Bahrain can defend themselves against Iran, benefiting from Israel's defence and innovative technology, especially cybersecurity.

### **The Impact on International Relations**

As this is a positivist study that searches for connexions both a priori and a posteriori, as such it is reasonable to consider the importance of understanding what happened after the celebration of each accord. Also, we understand innovation by the impact it causes. Therefore, in the final chapter of this article, we are going to analyse the impact that each treaty had not only on the relations in the Middle East, but also internationally.



### ***The Peace Treaties of 1979 and 1994***

The main goal of both Peace Treaties was to create peace between the above-mentioned Arab states and Israel. However, the text of the Peace Treaty commemorated between Israel and Egypt is different from the Peace Treaty celebrated between the Jewish state and Jordan. As it is the text that marks the future implications of each treaty, it is important to analyse it.

Firstly, the element which guides the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt is "respect" (Murphy, 1979). The content of this treaty is filled with concerns about safety. Subsequently, it seeks to create an international force tasked to monitor the safety system assigned to the Sinai. It is understandable that this treaty is more safety oriented, as both countries were engaged in extreme fighting, one trying to annihilate the other. Peace was being created after years of intense war. Just as with the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel (Satloff, 1995), it emphasizes the terms "partnership" and "cooperation". The reason for these concepts being consistent is that the historical context, as we have studied before, was different. Jordan and Israel didn't fight each other for over 28 years. Consequently, both had a better understanding of each other's needs and what each understood to be a threat to the creation of lukewarm peace, without the need for peacekeepers.

Another important aspect about the Peace Treaty with Egypt is that it predicted security based on reciprocity (Murphy, 1979). This means that each country recognized the national interest of the other and balanced it with their own national interests. As with Jordan, cooperation was the main concept of its peace treaty (Satloff, 1995). It is understandable that the treaty wasn't only technical, as it established formal diplomatic relations, but also a road map to develop the political, economic, social, cultural and human interactions.

With these distinctions, we can recognize that these treaties had a twofold impact. The first was the impact of Arab states beginning to establish peace with Israel. No Arab and/or Muslim state had established peace with Israel until Egypt. This event even caused Egypt to be expelled from the Arab League up until 1989 (Masters & Sergie, 2023). Consequently, this peace treaty was a breakthrough on the relations between Arabs and Jews.

Secondly, these peace treaties helped understand the type of peace one can have with another country. Even though the Egypt and Israel Peace Treaty was a victory, they only agreed on promoting friendly relations and abstaining from creating hostile propaganda. No mechanism was created to promote cooperation. On the other hand, the Jordan and Israel Peace Treaty outlined the means to promote cooperation and highlighted the role of governments to shape the way citizens talk and think about peace. What's more, a special joint commission was developed to examine if the mechanisms were established and if a public forum was created.

### ***The Abraham Accords of 2020***

One major impact of the Abraham Accords in the Middle East was the fact that it revealed that pragmatic issues in the Middle East can be resolved without considering ideology. In



this case, normalization of relations with Israel were established without considering ethnicity, religion and other past events that have prevented the pacification in the Middle East.

Another important topic of these Accords is that they were celebrated without American intervention. Even though the Abraham Accords were mediated by the USA, the first initiative came from the states that celebrated them. The Abraham Accords wasn't forced upon by the extra-regional order, but were the culmination of several interactions over the last decades.

It is also important to remember that the Abraham Accords might have been the start of a new regional order. According to Kram and Makovsky (2021), as with Segell (2021), this new order will be characterized not only by the deepening of the relations between the signatory countries, but also by the enlargement of the accords to other Muslim and Arab countries. Therefore, the Middle East will be more intertwined, even economically. Such event would allow the rise of a true economic cooperation which could acknowledge the resolution of environmental and social challenges. As a matter of fact, after the Accords the Abraham Fund was created, and it exists for investments in infrastructure and energy programs. The Abraham Accords always predicted a better development of the region, as it is cited that the signatories "support science, art, medicine, and commerce to inspire humankind, maximize human potential and bring nations closer together" (U.S. Department of State, 2020). This is also noticed with the creation of the "Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Diplomacy" (Berman, 2021), which desires to show the value of integrating women in the peace process as well as tries to increase female influence in human rights issues, sustainable development, security and peace matters.

Finally, according to Norlen and Sinai (2020), the Abraham Accords are changing the security geopolitics in the Middle East. Israel, with these Accords, was placed in the Persian Gulf, near Saudi Arabia. The normalization process with Bahrain allows Jerusalem to be near Riyadh, as there is a relationship of dependency between the Saudi Monarchy and the al-Khalifa Monarchy.

### ***What do these impacts reveal about the Abraham Accords?***

With this exegesis of the 1979 and 1994 Peace Treaties and the 2020 Abraham Accords, we recognize that the latter aren't just the celebration of the normalization of the relations between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain. Also, these accords are not just the establishment of diplomatic relations. They are something much bigger.

With the above-mentioned treaties, we can understand that the treaties celebrated with Israel since 1979 have been instrumental in improving the peace established. By applying the Theory of Alliances by Stephen Walt, we can better understand how the relations with Israel have been changing. The Peace Treaty celebrated between Israel and Egypt is a positive balancing, as it aims to develop their relationship, even if relations haven't deepened. Just as the Peace Treaty celebrated between the Jewish state and Jordan, it is a positive soft balancing. The relations have not only improved, but the national capabilities have also developed with the alliance established.



However, the Abraham Accords are not a Peace Treaty. Peace was not established because there was never war between Israel and the Gulf Monarchies. Relations were established because they didn't exist in the first place: cooperation was sought. However, even though military capabilities are improving with the alliance established between the signatory states, there is no pressure applied against the revisionary state. This means that the balancing established is not negative, but positive and hard. However, because cooperation is more than military, this balance is also called soft. As seen above, cooperation is happening between Israel, UAE and Bahrain on an economic level, with the Abraham Found, and on the social level, with the "Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Diplomacy". Environmental cooperation is also happening, as at least Israel and the UAE are creating deals to develop renewable energies (Bell, 2021).

## Conclusion

At the end of this paper, one turns back to the research question. How is the 2020 Abraham Accords considered innovative as compared with the Peace Treaties celebrated between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994?

As a matter of fact, the Abraham Accords is of a different nature than of the 1979 Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel and of the 1994 Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan as the sociohistorical, geopolitical and geostrategic contexts were essentially distinct, as it is perceived by applying the Theory of the Balance of Threat and the Theory of the Alliance, both by Stephen Walt. Therefore, the impact on the regional and international relations of each treaty was very distinct. This argument will now be dissected to better validate this.

One of the main conclusions of this article is that both the 1979 and the 1994 Peace Treaties were celebrated after having lost the war against Israel, which brought on the need for peace with the Jewish state in order to recover financially. Therefore, these Peace Treaties were seen as an alliance, specifically, a positive balancing with Israel. On the other hand, the Abraham Accords did not happen in the context of war, as the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain never fought Israel, but through perceiving a common threat, Iran, which is a revisionist state. Consequently, they allied positively with Israel, both soft and hard. As far as its repercussions, the Abraham Accords aren't peace treaties, but the establishment of cooperation on military, economic, social and environmental levels. Therefore, a new Middle East order might be arising.

This paper might be seen as innovative as it uses both the Theory of Balance of Threat and the Theory of Alliances from Stephen Walt in order to understand an event, together with geopolitical and geostrategic analysis. Also, the normalization process between Israel and Arab states was studied aside from ideological terms, being pragmatic and realistic. Finally, it is a holistic approach to the Abraham Accords and the Peace Treaties of 1979 and 1994, by studying the historical and the geopolitical and geostrategic contexts, as their effects.

For further contributions, it would be interesting to compare the Abraham Accords to the Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement, and the latter to an Israel and Arab state Peace Treaty to understand if the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is innovative and plausible.



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