

Middle East Peace Prospects After Abraham Accords

*Salman Ali Khan**

*Police Service of Pakistan, 28th SMC (salmanali29@hotmail.com)

Introduction

The recognition of Israel by Arab states has brought tectonic shift in policies of countries, such as, UAE and Bahrain, and is likely to change the political landscape of the Middle-East which would have far-reaching implications for the region and beyond. On September 15, 2020, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu and the Foreign Ministers of United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Abdullatif AlZayani, respectively, signed a general declaration of principles which was called “The Abraham Accords”. The ceremony was hosted and presided by the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump¹. The document was also signed by the President Trump while taking credit for brokering a deal through the Middle East Peace Plan, also known as Trump’s Peace Plan. Abraham Accords Peace Agreement was a treaty of peace and normalization of diplomatic relations between the state of Israel and the two Arab states UAE and Bahrain. The U.A.E. and Bahrain are the third and fourth Arab countries to open diplomatic relations with Israel recently; Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) were the first two².

These normalization of relations of Arab countries with Israel followed the Middle East Peace Plan proposed by the US administration. Also known as Trump Peace Plan officially named as “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people”, was officially launched in January 2020. The plan was unveiled in a ceremony held at the White House where Trump stated, “My vision presents a win-win opportunity for both sides, a realistic two-state solution that resolves the risk of Palestinian statehood to Israel’s security”. The Prime Minister of Israel was present at the ceremony whereas Palestinian leadership was not negotiating with the Trump administration and in spite of invitation, they did not join the event. President

¹ Vinay Kaura, “Pakistan’s Policy Dilemma”, *Middle East Institute* (Oct 2020), <https://www.mei.edu/publications/pakistans-israel-dilemma> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

² Jeffrey Goldberg, “Iran and the Palestinians Lose Out in the Abraham Accords”, *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/winners-losers/616364> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

of Palestinian Authority immediately denounced the plan as a ‘conspiracy deal’ not worthy of serious consideration³.

Later in October 2020, Donald Trump announced removal of Sudan from the US list of states sponsoring terrorism; US unblocked the economic aid of Sudan and initiated investment along with normalization of relations between Sudan and Israel⁴. Most recently Morocco has become the sixth Arab League country which agreed to normalize its relations with Israel in result of a deal brokered by the USA, in which the US government accepted Morocco’s claim over the dispute with Algeria regarding the Western Sahara region⁵.

Statement of the Problem

The long-standing territorial and a seemingly interminable conflict between Israel and Palestine always remained a concern for peace and security across the Middle East with political disruption continuously affecting many Arab states. In 2020, the United States of America oversaw the peace agreements called the Abraham Accords, which initiated diplomatic ties between Israel and the two Arab States: Bahrain and the UAE. Palestinians were not included in these treaties, and the accords were signed without their consultation. For this very reason, the agreements are being received with skepticism in the Middle East and in the global community. This study aims to investigate that whether Abraham Accords would prove fruitful in bringing lasting peace in the Middle East or pose serious challenges in the region by initiating new conflicts and further destabilization.

Significance and Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of US sponsored Middle East Peace Plan resulting in Abraham Accords and normalization of Israel’s relation with Arab countries. It studies the implications of these accords on Israel- Palestine issue and response of other regional and Islamic countries. It examines the complexities of the conflicts in Middle East and challenges these accords present to a long-lasting peace in the Middle Eastern region.

³ Michael Crowley and David M. Halbfinger, “Trump Releases Mideast Peace Plan That Strongly Favors Israel”, *The New York Times*, 28 January 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/28/world/middleeast/peace-plan.html> (accessed 11 December 2020).

⁴ “Sudan-Israel relations agreed, Donald Trump announces”, *BBC NEWS*, 24 October 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54554286> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

⁵ “Morocco latest country to normalize ties with Israel in US-brokered deal”, *BBC NEWS*, 11 December 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55266089> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

Review of the Literature

The basic document relied upon is ‘Peace to Prosperity Plan’ and its annexures, which provides an insight into the US brokered peace initiative for Israeli-Palestinian conflict and later formed the foundation for normalization agreements between Israel and the two Arab states UAE and Bahrain⁶. Extensive literature is available around the Arab-Israeli conflict and analysis of various peace initiatives taken by world super powers for peaceful resolution of the Palestine-Israel dispute.

Yoel Guzansky and Zachary A. Marshall argue that these accords dramatically rebalance the power in region and encourage unprecedented alliance formations but the Arab states will reassess the situation after the US presidential election results (Marshall, 2020)⁷. Similarly, Ahmad Kilani and others claim that ‘Peace to Prosperity Plan’ is essentially designed for a ‘one state solution’ and with minor adjustments can assimilate both Israel and Palestine into a hybrid nation (Kilani, 2020)⁸. Kurtzer, identifies the factors that has caused the conflict to protract but concludes that economic intervention in the region shall bring fruitful results in addressing the resolution in future (Kurtzer, 2020)⁹. Khalil Shikaki maintains that the Trump’s Plan negatively affects the capacity of the two sides to effectively manage the conflict (Shikaki, 2020)¹⁰. Simela Victor Muhamad links the pro-Israel Trump’s initiative to the Presidential election in the US and identifies economic interest of UAE as determining factor behind the accords (Muhamad, 2020)¹¹. Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai concludes in their study that not addressing the core issues postpones tragedy but cannot avoid it as the future can never fully bury the past. They argue that these accords will lead to isolation of Iran and the Palestinians, provoking their violent reaction (Tova, 2020)¹². Similar findings have been shared by Kobi Micheal and Udi Dekel,

⁶ “Peace to prosperity – A vision to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people”, (January 28th 2020), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprosperity/> (accessed 10 December 2020).

⁷ Yoel Guzansky & Zachary A. Marshall, “The Abraham Accords: Immediate Significance and Long-Term Implications”, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2020.1831861> (accessed 19 December 2020).

⁸ Ahmad Kilani, Mohammad Ali Alawieh, Mussaui-Uliyanishcheva E. V. & Ulyanishcheva L. V., “Peace to Prosperity Plan as a one State Solution”, *Journal of Politics and Law* 13 No. 2 (May 2020):99, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341645456_Peace_to_Prosperty_Plan_as_a_one_State_Solution (accessed on 16 December 2020).

⁹ Daniel Kurtzer, “Israel-Palestine Peace Is Possible”, *The Caravan*, (Sep 2019), <https://www.hoover.org/research/israel-palestine-peace-possible> (Accessed 15 December 2020).

¹⁰ Khalil Shikaki, “Annexation, the Trump Plan, and the Future of Palestinian-Israeli Relations”, *Middle East Brief* No. 138 (2020), <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb138.pdf> (accessed 16 December 2020).

¹¹ Simela Victor Muhamad, “Normalization of the Arab- Israel Emirate Union Relationship and Palestine Issues”, *Infosingkat* (2020), https://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info_singkat/Info%20Singkat-XII-17-I-P3DI-September-2020-183-EN.pdf (accessed 14 December 2020).

¹² Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai, “The Abraham Accords: Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?” *Security Insights*, (Oct 2020), <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights> (accessed 20 December 2020).

who see this normalization of ties as an informal anti-Iran alliance in the region (Micheal, 2020)¹³. Elif Zaim see these accords as an act of treachery by the Arab capitals, where Palestinian issue is no longer a major concern beyond domestic implications (Zaim, 2020)¹⁴. Kristian Coates Ulrichsen concludes that the other regional and Arab countries will wait and see the results of the US elections (Ulrichsen, 2020)¹⁵.

Several online journal articles were consulted to understand the impact of the Abraham Accords and the Trump's Peace Plan in achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. Articles from magazines like Times and Newsweek were also consulted along with studying the news items and opinion pieces from sources including reputed news agencies DW, BBC, the New York Times, the Washington Post, Aljazeera, the Guardian, the Jerusalem Post and Dawn.

Methodology

The methodology of research basically consists of review of certain documents and published literature on the issue. It includes collection of primary documents of Abraham Accords and Peace to Prosperity Plans from official websites of the US government. It also included meetings with senior diplomats in foreign office of Pakistan dealing with Middle East division. Relevant research papers, media reports, press briefings and articles by experts published in reputed magazines and journals were also consulted.

Organization of Paper

The paper has been divided into two sections. Wherein, section I traces the historical background of the Middle East conflict and various peace initiatives. It discusses the latest effort 'Peace to Prosperity Plan' launched by the USA to address the core issue of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its implications for the Palestinian cause. It also identifies the factors that drove UAE and Bahrain to sign the Abraham Accords. Section II highlights the effects of the US sponsored Abraham Accords on regional political scenario and discusses the response of various Arab and Islamic countries. It

¹³ Kobi Michael and Udi Dekel, "Israel-UAE Normalization of Relations: At the Expense of the Palestinians?", *INSS Insight* No. 1368 (2020), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343818476> (accessed 15 December 2020).

¹⁴ Elif Zaim "The Abraham Accords: A Historic breakthrough or an act of treachery", *Policy Outlook*, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/publications/policy-outlook/the-abraham-accords-a-historic-breakthrough-or-an-act-of-treachery> (accessed 19 December 2020).

¹⁵ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Gulf States and the Middle East Peace Process: Considerations, Stakes, and Options", *Issue Brief* (2020), <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/files/16242/> (accessed 15 December 2020).

identifies the challenges posed by these Accords in achieving lasting peace in the region and discusses the future of these Accords after the new US administration takes over. Lastly, the study concludes and outlines some salient recommendations.

Section I

1. The Middle East Conflict and Peace Process

The Middle East is considered a volatile region which remained of great significance in history since ancient times. This importance is mainly due to the ages long persistent tensions which fostered in the region over a period of time. Besides its geographical and strategic uniqueness, Middle East is also the birthplace and spiritual center of the three most important monotheistic religions namely; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The region also carries significant importance as the greatest single reserve of oil. The region's geopolitical importance is such that any inter- and intra-state conflict in the Middle East can destabilize the region or can upset the regional balance of power affecting global stability¹⁶. Hence, it is no surprise that every great power in history has sought to advance its interests in the region. Amongst all the hostile relations and discords, The Israeli-Palestinian dispute is one of the world's longest-running and most controversial conflict. The conflict is between the two self-determination movements — the Jewish Zionist project and the Palestinian nationalist project — that make claims to the same territory¹⁷.

1.1 Historical Perspective

The Middle East conflict can be traced almost a century back from Balfour declaration, where first time the British government expressed its support for a separate Jewish homeland. The Partition Plan to divide the British Mandate in Palestine to an Arab and Jewish state sparked the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948, which ended in 1949 with armistice agreements defining armistice lines as green lines between Israel and neighboring countries including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Israel occupied large territories and the state was divided into three parts, State of Israel, West Bank and Gaza.

¹⁶ Yannis Stivachtis, "Conflict and Diplomacy in the Middle East", *E-International Relations*, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/10/04/conflict-and-diplomacy-in-the-middle-east/> (accessed 12 December 2020).

¹⁷ Zack Beauchamp, "Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine", <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18079996/israel-palestine-conflict-guide-explainer> (accessed 12 December 2020).

The next decade saw tensions between Israel and neighboring Egypt, Jordan and Syria and the region saw a war in 1956 over Suez Crisis and invasion of Sinai Peninsula by Israel. The conflict reached its peak with a full blown Arab-Israeli war in 1967, famously known as the Six Days War, in which Israel maintained its superiority and seized areas of Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and West Bank including East Jerusalem¹⁸. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, passed on November 22, 1967, called for the exchange of land for peace. The resolution was under Chapter VI of the UN Charter which were recommendatory in nature and not binding¹⁹.

Six years later, a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria, fought Yom Kippur War in 1973. The war was majorly indecisive and resulted in secret peace talks at Camp David that yielded peace agreements. Finally in 1979, following a series of peace negotiations, President of Egypt Anwar-al-Sadat, Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and the US President signed the Egypt- Israeli Peace Treaty at the White House in Washington DC²⁰. This accord did improve relation of Israel with its neighbors but the basic question of the right of self-determination and self-governance of Palestinian people remained unanswered. December 1987 saw the first violent Palestinian uprising commonly known as First Intifada, resulting in hundreds of casualties and injuries on the Palestinian side that continued for several years.

Many attempts have been made by world leaders and international bodies to achieve peace in the Middle East. Major super powers of the world came together in what is called Madrid Conference of 1991 where in discussions involved Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine — not from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) — who met with Israeli negotiators for the first time. While the conference achieved little, it did create the framework for more productive talks in future. In 1993 first direct talk between PLO and Israel were held at Oslo, Norway resulting in signing of the First Oslo Accords between the two parties calling Israeli troops to withdraw from West Bank and Gaza and a self-governing interim Palestinian authority be set up for a five-year transitional period²¹. Following year, in 1994 Israel was able to sign a peace treaty with neighboring Jordan under witness by the US President Bill Clinton. A second Oslo accord was signed in 1995. The phased withdrawal of troops as well as violence and killings of both Israelis and Palestinians did not stop and a lasting peace

¹⁸ “Global Conflict Tracker”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Updated 11 December 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict> (accessed 12 December 2020).

¹⁹ “A History of Middle East Peace Process”, *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/en/a-history-of-the-middle-east-peace-process/g-37138623> (accessed on 12 December 2020).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

as envisaged in the Oslo Accords could not be reached. The subsequent peace process initiated by the US President Bill Clinton at Camp David in 2000 to discuss; borders, security, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem issues, between the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak remained inconclusive. The visit of Ariel Sharon in September 2000 sparked the second intifada resulting in more violence and killings.

Later in 2002, Arab league proposed an Arab Peace Initiative offering Israel to withdraw to its pre 1967 positions so that a Palestinian state could be set up in West Bank and Gaza, for return offered recognition of Israel by the Arab world. This was followed by similar failed peace initiatives taken by the world leaders like: The Road Map 2003, US President Bush initiative to hold talks in 2007 at Annapolis, Maryland between Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas and Washington talks of 2010 between Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu and President Mahmud Abbas. A new cycle of armed conflict between Hamas and Israeli security forces aggravated violence and escalation continued followed by a ceasefire. Boycotted by the Israelis and Palestinians, the Paris Summit of 70 countries in 2017 also called for a peaceful two state resolution.

In 2017, deadly clashes broke out at Temple Mount, the holy city to both Muslims and Jews followed by President Trump's decision to move US Embassy to Jerusalem in 2018 further deteriorated an already complex situation. Palestinian leader Abbas stated that such measures undermined all the peace efforts. The latest Trump's Peace Plan 2020 was also rejected by the Palestinian Authorities²².

1.2 Trump's Plan (Peace to Prosperity Plan) vis-à-vis Palestinian Cause

The Israel Palestine conflict has been extended for unusually longtime and over the years has further deepened the grievances. The conflict is basically a clash between the people of Israel and Palestine, whose claim includes and is not limited to, exclusive ownership and sovereignty over the land in dispute. It is further complicated by the historic animosities of the parties including ideological, ethnic, distribution of power and wealth, competing narratives and other factors. The conflict involves religion and identities with emotions running high and huge mistrust between the parties²³.

²² "A History of Middle East Peace Process", *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/en/a-history-of-the-middle-east-peace-process/g-37138623> (accessed on 12 December 2020).

²³ Daniel Kurtzer, "Israel-Palestine Peace Is Possible", *The Caravan*, (Sep 2019), <https://www.hoover.org/research/israel-palestine-peace-possible> (Accessed 15 December 2020).

The center of the dispute is the holy place at Jerusalem which is sacred for the world's three great religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The continued violence and armed conflicts in the area of Gaza and West bank have caused killings and injuries to thousands of Palestinians creating issues of humanitarian crisis in the area. The Israelis also have suffered with a continued security threat from Hamas and other armed groups firing thousands of rockets resulting in damage of Israeli settlements. Sudden violent protests break down intermittently resulting in days of violence claiming many lives. Wavering from a longstanding US stance, the Trump administration after discontinuing funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency which provides aid to the Palestinian refugees and moved the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and recognized it as the capital of Israel²⁴. This initiated Gaza protests and the clashes worsened on the day of inauguration of the embassy in 2018, killing and injuring hundreds. It is in this background that the Trump administration came up with the Peace to Prosperity Plan for the Middle East, which facilitated the Abraham Accords resulting in some Arab countries to recognize Israel.

The blue print of the frame work of 'Peace to Prosperity Plan- A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People', was drafted under the stewardship of President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner²⁵. The 181 pages document consists of two parts; Political and the Economic Frameworks. The Political Framework loaded with maps of disputed region depicting the state of Israel and the future Palestine connected through a maze of road networks and tunnels. It identifies the failure in implementation of a two-state solution as envisaged in the Oslo Accords. It emphasizes on considering the ground situations and presents a realistic two state solution accepting the state of Palestine alongside Israel but with compromised sovereignty over security and airspace, which makes it more of a one state solution with an apartheid system for Palestinians²⁶.

The plan offers a four years future settlement freeze by Israel but calls for annexation and acceptance of all the previously contested settlements in the West Bank, while offering exchange of land. This is in contradiction to the existing UN resolutions and the most contentious point. It offers new land along the side of Egypt border to be linked to Gaza, whereas claims Israeli control in Jordan valley along with the border,

²⁴ "Global Conflict Tracker", *Council on Foreign Relations*, Updated 11 December 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict> (accessed 12 December 2020).

²⁵ "Trump releases long-awaited Middle-East peace plan", *BBC NEWS*, (28 January 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51288218> (accessed 15 December 2020).

²⁶ Ahmad Kilani, Mohammad Ali Alawieh, Mussaui-Ulyanishcheva E. V. & Ulyanishcheva L. V., "Peace to Prosperity Plan as a one State Solution", *Journal of Politics and Law* 13 No. 2 (May 2020):99, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341645456_Peace_to_Prosperty_Plan_as_a_one_State_Solution (accessed on 16 December 2020).

critical to Israel's security. The plan puts the Temple Mount, with Al-Aqsa Mosque under Israeli control to protect and assure freedom of worship.

The plan confirms Israel has a right to the whole of an undivided Jerusalem, as its capital, while offering Palestinian capital in the outskirts of East Jerusalem across the separation barrier. The Plan calls for Hamas and other armed groups to neutralize and Gaza be demilitarized, while it denies the internationally recognized right of Palestinian refugees to return, not only to Israel but to the future state of Palestine unless allowed by Israel. In short, on most of the contentious issues, the plan puts Israeli security at its pivot point and undermines the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, self-governance and autonomy²⁷.

The Trump's vision was a major deviation from the age-old stance of the United States of America on the issue, as agreed in the previous peace deals, with an intent to further the security interests of Israel and present it in a way that has never been advocated earlier, while keeping the offers to Palestinian's only transactional in nature. The peace deal was more of a US-Israel nexus offering a one sided and hard proposal to the Palestinians for approval of a Jewish state and its enhanced security. The second part of the plan is the economic framework which promises a 50 billion dollars new investment in the region creating 1 million jobs for Palestinians and tripling its GDP²⁸. It also envisions transport infrastructure development, and construction of a port and airport, on a newly created artificial island off the coast of Gaza, for Palestine²⁹.

1.3 Position of Palestine on the Plan

President Abbas said it was "impossible for any Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim or Christian child to accept a Palestinian state without Jerusalem as its capital". "We say a thousand times, no, no, no," he said. "We rejected this deal from the start and our stance was correct"³⁰. There were wide scale protests in streets of Gaza city where pictures of Trump and Netanyahu were burnt and banners that read, "Palestine is not for sale", were displayed. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, a rival of President Mahmud Abbas also promised his unwavering resolve to oppose the plan³¹. The Palestinian

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Trump unveils Middle East peace plan with no Palestinian support", *The Guardian*, (Jan 2020) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/donald-trump-middle-east-peace-plan-israel-netanyahu-palestinians> (accessed 16 December 2020).

²⁹ "The Failed Deals of the Century", *Aljazeera*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/the-failed-deals-of-the-century/index.html#arrow> (accessed 16 December 2020).

³⁰ "Trump releases long-awaited Middle-East peace plan", *BBC NEWS*, (28 January 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51288218> (accessed 15 December 2020).

³¹ "Trump reveals Israeli-Palestinian peace plan", *DW*, (Jan 2020), <https://www.dw.com/en/trump-reveals-israeli-palestinian-peace-plan/a-52179629> (accessed December 2020).

Prime Minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh said, the plan had more to do with Trump and Netanyahu's legal woes than peace. "This is a plan to protect Trump from impeachment and protect Netanyahu from prison. It is not a peace plan for the Middle East," he said³². The document was seen by many countries as an announcement of victory of Israel and future aspirations to shape the region as per the US led vision and not as an all-encompassing peace plan. The risk of this plan is to further aggravate the divide and develop hopelessness, desperation, and resentment in Palestinians and make peace impossible in an ignitable part of the world, which is unsafe.

There was an unexcited and diplomatic response from Europe and United Nations while an outright condemnation and rejection from Palestinians, Turkey and Iran. Most of the regional and Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan etc. and Pakistan cautiously rebuked the plan and reaffirmed their resolve for resolution of the dispute as per the will of the Palestinian people. Close allies of the US in the region including UAE and Bahrain and some other Muslim countries considered the plan as an important starting point and serious effort on part of the United States and Israel, which later culminated in these countries signing Abraham Accords with Israel.

1.4 Factors that Drove UAE and Bahrain to Sign the Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords are being presented as a step towards the onset of a new "Strategic Agenda for the Middle East to explore and expand areas of diplomatic, trade, and security cooperation". The agreement focuses on 'normalizing relations and establishing ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates including business relations, tourism, direct flights and scientific cooperation. Israel and the UAE have been coming closer for normalization in recent years. Bahrain followed UAE's footsteps sooner than later, casting its normalization decision as something that would strengthen its security and economic stability. Bahrain's normalization announcement is significant because such a decision is likely to have Saudi Arabia's backing and consent, showing acceptance of normalization even if Riyadh's public support has been muted³³.

The factors that led both the countries to sign Abraham Accord primarily include protecting their strategic and economic interest by delinking from the rigidity of the Palestinian cause to enhance military cooperation with Israel and counterbalance the

³² "Trump unveils Middle East peace plan with no Palestinian support", *The Guardian*, (Jan 2020) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/donald-trump-middle-east-peace-plan-israel-netanyahu-palestinians> (accessed 16 December 2020).

³³ Varsha Koduvayur, David Daoud, "Welcome to a Brand-New Middle east", *Foreign Policy*, Sep 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/30/israel-uae-bahrain-palestinians-peace> (accessed 12 Dec 2020).

Iranian threat. The Abraham Accords are motivated by quite different factors than the Israeli-Egyptian (1978) or Israeli-Jordanian (1994) peace agreements, which were based on the principle of peace in exchange for land, occupied by Israel in 1967. This dramatic move of breaking with the old pan-Arab consensus, that predicated any normalization of relations on a final peace settlement between Israel and Palestine—reflects a paradigm shift in the Gulf States’ approach to the Palestinian issue. Palestinian cause is no longer at the center of Arab countries’ politics, as was reflected in the Arab League’s refusal of a demand by the Palestinian Authority to condemn the UAE-Israeli deal³⁴.

Israel not objecting to the US sale of F-35 to the UAE is also a motivating factor for the UAE³⁵. The jets will help increase the UAE’s strategic air range to almost the entirety of the Middle East. Expanding cooperation with US and Israel is aimed to contain Iran’s influence in the region. Iran’s military capacity is a threat to the US, Israel and UAE’s strategic interest in the Middle East. This agreement paves way for the signatories to collaborate together to provide for such capability as well for regional defense against Iran³⁶.

Section II

2. Prospects of Lasting Peace in the Middle East

There are more than two dozen Arab and Muslim states that do not have full diplomatic relations with Israel and majority of them have refused to even recognize Israel as a country. This was reiterated in the Arab Peace Initiative 2002 by Arab League which offered recognition of Israel subject to a peaceful resolution of the Israel- Palestine conflict. The countries having no diplomatic relations with Israel include; Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Oman, Libya, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Somalia, Niger, Tunisia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Malaysia³⁷.

Israel had a long desire to end its isolation in the Middle East by Arab countries. Normalization of relations between Israel and UAE in August and formal signing of

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Danny Citrinowicz, “Israel and the UAE on Iran: Shared Foe, Different Perspectives”, *The Washington Institute*, Sep 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/israel-uae-iran-shared-foe-different-perspectives> (accessed 12 December 2020).

³⁷ David Brennan, “After Trump Morocco Deal, Which Countries Still Don’t Recognize Israel?”, *Newsweek* (Dec 2020), <https://www.newsweek.com/after-trump-morocco-countries-do-not-recognize-israel-1554109> (accessed 19 December 2020).

the Abraham Accords in September 2020 by UAE and Bahrain made official the open secret of years of growing alliance between certain Arab states and Israel. The Accords recognize Abraham as the common ancestor of Jews, Muslims and Christians, aspire for peace and stability in the region, recall the Trump's peace to prosperity plan and reaffirm the commitment to normalize relations diplomatically and economically³⁸. The only common factor known to the world between UAE, Bahrain and Israel was the Palestine issue, and the Palestinians were the ones kept out of the deal. Palestinian who earlier enjoyed the undivided unity of the Arab world felt betrayed for their cause which seems to have been de-linked from the commitment of Arab states to normalize the relations with Israel for national interest³⁹.

2.1 Position of Regional countries on the Accords

Palestinian political factions across the board reacted angrily, calling the deals aggression on the people of Palestine and recalled its ambassador from UAE in agitation. The two rival political parties Fatah (having control of west bank) and Hamas (having control of Gaza) held joint meetings and rejected the deals citing no one else has a right to decide on behalf of the people of Palestine. The Arab League reiterated its position of unwavering support to the people of Palestine to attain their rights but did not vote for any resolution interfering in the foreign policy of other member states⁴⁰. The official statement of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's de facto ruler, says that his price for the deal was Israel's agreement to stop the annexation of large parts of the West Bank⁴¹. On the other hand, to Palestinian's utter dismay, there was no mention of it in the accord. Israel merely maintained that the plan of annexation is just suspended and put on a halt for now. UAE's deal made the two-state solution look defunct and an urge to give diplomacy a chance as years of aggression and bloodshed have not yielded any positive results so far.

Maintaining internal political stability and the growing military superiority in the region are the two main interests of UAE to go in the deal as it shares the same threats with Israel namely: Iranian threat, regional insurgencies and terrorism. The normalization of relations with Israel aims to strengthen the military capacity of UAE

³⁸ "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel", (September 15th 2020), <https://www.whitehouse.gov> (accessed 19 December 2020).

³⁹ Elif Zaim "The Abraham Accords: A Historic breakthrough or an act of treachery", *Policy Outlook*, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/publications/policy-outlook/the-abraham-accords-a-historic-breakthrough-or-an-act-of-treachery> (accessed 19 December 2020).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jeremy Bowen, "Five reasons why Israel's peace deals with the UAE and Bahrain matter", *BBC News* (Sep 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54151712> (accessed 19 December 2020).

as it intends to buy US advanced weapons including the F-35 stealth fighter EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft for which Israel shall no longer agitate⁴². UAE also sees huge strategic opportunity in trade of most advanced surveillance equipment, renewable energy, health, tourism etc. The authoritarian government feels little threat from an already controlled public regarding protests on the normalization of relations with Israel. So, the vital reason to go in accords was to keep US and Israel both on its side.

Bahrain, a small country of Sunni monarchy with Shiite majority is a close ally with Saudi Arabia and an equally important ally to US as the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, the headquarters US Naval Forces Central Command is stationed there⁴³. The reaction of the accords was mixed amongst Bahraini population⁴⁴. Kingdom of Bahrain also hosted a summit in June 2019 for the Economic framework of the Trump's Middle East Peace Plan. The country being closely allied with the Saudi Arabia is heavily influenced and most likely to have gone forward with the approval of Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman⁴⁵, also known as MBS who has emerged as a forward-looking leader with an element of change in a traditional Saudi environment. His ideology is driven by his economic plan vision 2030 that explores new arenas to improve his tarnished image due to Yemen war, accountability drive against opponents and mysterious murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi⁴⁶.

Saudi Arabia is considered to be the most important heavy weight country in this entire scenario. As the custodian of the two most sacred holy places for Muslims all over the world, King Salman of Saudi Arabia enjoys an exalted position among the Arab world and beyond. Initial response of the Saudi government was muted but later the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia confirmed that it would not establish any relations with Israel till the time an internationally recognizable peace agreement is reached between the two states. The reaction of Saudi public was varied with trends on twitter denouncing the deals as betrayal to the cause of Palestine and sharing old videos of Late King Faisal's speech from 1973 against Israel. The prevalent opinion is that under King

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Yoel Guzansky & Zachary A. Marshall, "The Abraham Accords: Immediate Significance and Long-Term Implications", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2020.1831861> (accessed 19 December 2020).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Iran and the Palestinians Lose Out in the Abraham Accords", *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/winners-losers/616364> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

⁴⁶ Joseph Hincks, "Will Saudi Arabia Be Next to Normalize Relations with Israel? Don't Hold Your Breath, Experts Say", *TIME*, 18 September 2020, <https://time.com/5890151/saudi-arabia-israel-abraham-accords> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

Salman, the diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel are not promising but the warm track two diplomacy with technical cooperation shall continue⁴⁷.

The Iranian factor gains more importance with the Abraham Accords, which seems to be more focused on building a regional bloc to curtail Iran's aggressive stance in the region. The common threat to UAE and Israel from Iran and support of Iran for groups like Hamas in Gaza, interest groups and proxies in Yemen, Lebanon and Syria has driven the American-Arab-Israeli coalition rather than an attempt for Israeli-Palestinians rapprochement. The strong embargos on Iran imposed under the Trump administration and the sudden shift in alliances have made Iran vulnerable and it may reconsider its nuclear strategy. Iran's continued support for regional proxies and its return to nuclear activities may be the most powerful factor that unites the new-found friends⁴⁸. The US administration intends to isolate Iran by increasing the potential sales of the US arms and weapons to tilt the balance of power in favor of allies⁴⁹.

Turkey has strongly rejected the accords despite having diplomatic relations with Israel for decades. President Erdogan is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause and has frequently criticized Israel policies in west bank. After Abraham Accords, Erdogan warned to suspend its diplomatic ties with Israel⁵⁰.

Abraham Accords did create a short-term domino effect where countries like Sudan and Morocco following the suit. Weeks before the US elections, President Trump brokered a deal between Sudan and Israel over the phone. Sudan was offered to be removed from the US list of countries exporting terrorism and lifting of economic sanctions. The transitional Sudanese government paid millions of US dollars as penalty for victims of terrorism in US along with maintaining ties with Israel to win over the US favors. The agreement made by Khartoum has to be passed through a legislative council which is not in place at the moment. The people of Sudan have strong opposition to the normalization of relations with Israel as Khartoum was the host to 4th Arab League Summit in 1967 after the six days war between the Arab world and Israel, resolving not to have peace, recognition or negotiation with Israel⁵¹. Recently, after

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai, "The Abraham Accords: Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?" *Security Insights*, (Oct 2020), <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights> (accessed 20 December 2020).

⁴⁹ Tom Bateman, "Could Israeli-Arab peace deals spark an arms race?" *BBC NEWS*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54737029> (accessed 20 December 2020).

⁵⁰ "Turkey, Iran condemn Bahrain-Israel Accord", *DAWN* (13 September 2020), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1579418> (accessed 20 December 2020).

⁵¹ Anne Gearan and Steve Hendrix, "Sudan and Israel agree to normalize ties, the third such accord since August", *The Washington Post* (Oct 23, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-sudan-peace-normalization-terrorism/2020/10/23/285f53e4-1548-11eb-a258-614acf2b906d_story.html (accessed 20 December 2020).

losing the presidential elections, President Trump announced a similar agreement between Israel and Morocco, which may be the last of such agreements under Kushner led Envoys before the term of the US president ends in January 2020⁵².

The smaller Gulf States have viewed Israel with suspicion and the popular public view prevalent is that of Israel's aspirations to become a regional super power. The differences and opposition with Israel are deep rooted for decades and even if peace is established between the two states, peace between people will take a lot more time to settle in⁵³. The states of Qatar, Lebanon and Jordan saw the deals skeptically assuring support for the two-state solution for attaining lasting peace.

Kuwait, Yemen, Syria and Tunisia strongly criticized and condemned the decision declaring it as a damage to Palestinian's cause. Egypt and Oman were supportive calling the accords an effort to promote peace. Iraq remained neutral declaring it an internal matter of the countries maintaining a resolve not to recognize Israel.

In short, the deals have divided the Middle East and the Muslim world between criticizing the deals or choose to remain silent, which makes Palestinian cause a lesser issue over domestic implications⁵⁴.

2.2 Implications for Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Being the only Muslim country with nuclear capability, the Abraham Accords has serious implications on Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan has maintained its consistent position not to recognize Israel advocating the two-state solution in accordance with the UN and OIC resolutions as well as highlighting the human rights violations in Palestine. Recognition of Israel would overall weaken the Pakistani principle stand of right of self-determination on Kashmir also. Pakistani public is sentimentally attached to the Palestinian cause and the religious elite has always presented Israel as an arch rival of Islam. In case, Pakistan decided to continue with its principal stand, it may have to face an Israeli-Indian nexus in gulf with UAE, posing new threats to Gwadar port and creating problems for the Pakistani diaspora present in the Gulf states who send billions in foreign exchange. In case it recognizes Israel, besides internal resistance and unrest, it has to face possible complications from the neighboring Iran, as Pakistan has a sizable Shiite population.

⁵² "Israel, Morocco agree to normalize in latest US-brokered deal", *DAWN* (10 Dec 2020), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1595050/israel-morocco-agree-to-normalise-relations-in-latest-us-brokered-deal> (accessed 20 December 2020).

⁵³ Zalmay M. Khalilzad, Davis A. Shlapak and Daniel L. Byman, *The Implications of the Possible End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict for the Gulf Security* (Published by RAAND, 1997), 28.

⁵⁴ Elif Zaim "The Abraham Accords: A Historic breakthrough or an act of treachery", *Policy Outlook*, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/publications/policy-outlook/the-abraham-accords-a-historic-breakthrough-or-an-act-of-treachery> (accessed 19 December 2020).

2.3 Challenges Posed by Abraham Accords in Achieving Lasting Peace

Abraham Accords were termed by the President of US as ‘peace deals’ between the state of Israel and United Arab Emirates as well as Kingdom of Bahrain. It is pertinent to note that the two Arab countries signing the agreement never have had a war with the state of Israel and they do not share borders or have territorial or any other disputes. The geographical distance between the capitals of UAE and Bahrain with Jerusalem is 1260 and 1000 miles respectively⁵⁵. Previously, Egypt and Jordan who had similar but limited normalization of peace in exchange of land have shared borders and had been on war with Israel and the normalization reached in 1978 by Egypt and 1994 by Jordan cannot be termed as long-term warm relations.

The possibility of the Abraham Accords to develop good relations between the two Arab countries is much higher than the previous normalization agreements because the two countries had already unannounced ties and the Accords were merely an acknowledgment and up gradation of the existing bilateral relations. In recent years, UAE and Israel have been on the same side in most of the conflicts in the region, they shared similar stance on the military strikes, coups, counterrevolutions, and undermined democratic transitions in the territory of other members of the Arab League like Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Sudan, and Tunisia⁵⁶. Abraham Accords shall advance the relations between the countries by increasing military cooperation, security, health, tourism etc. but comprehensive peace across the entire region would not be possible.

The increasing military cooperation is targeted against Iran and that shall deepen the fault lines and revive the conflict in the region. The region shall be recipient of more sophisticated weaponry and potentially a new arm race shall emerge. The interests of Iran have been badly hurt by the signing of accords where Iran seems to be on the losing side of the region. There are possibilities that the proxy wars in the area increase and the status quo may be disturbed with a new wave of violence. At the signing ceremony of these accords in white house, Prime Minister of Israel thanked the US president for standing unequivocally with the state of Israel and boldly confronting the tyrants of Tehran, and reiterated his earlier stance of the realistic deal offered to Palestinians in the form of Peace to prosperity plan. The accords clearly widen the cleavage between the regional countries by aligning Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE in one camp with Israel; whereas Iran, Turkey and Qatar in another.

⁵⁵ Daniel Levy, “The Missing Peace in the Abraham Accords”, *The American Prospect* (Sep 2020), <https://prospect.org/world/missing-peace-in-abraham-accords-israel-uae/> (accessed 04 January 2020).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The leadership of UAE takes credit for a halt on annexation by Israel in the west bank, but there was no such mentioning of the fact by the Israeli Prime Minister during his speech. There are many ambiguities around this announcement of halting the annexation regarding deliverables, commitments and time frame. All the previous peace agreements and initiatives were framed around achieving, no matter how fragmented but a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, but under Trump administration, Palestinians were denied the right to self-determination and offered Israeli hegemony over a semi-independent Palestinian state.

Palestinians have termed these accords by Arab states as back stabbing as it is feared that the basic design of these alliances is to sell the countries in middle east advanced weapons and in turn, they shall be pressurizing the Palestinians to accept the Trumps peace plan which is heavily tilted towards Israel. On one side it is a winning situation for Israel where they have managed to separate the Palestinian cause from normalizing the relations with other Arab nations. Palestinian veto for the Arab countries to recognize Israel has received a serious blow. There could be increased aggression in the Israeli treatment to Palestinians, which in turn has the potential to increase violence and destabilize the region.

There has been a divide in the Palestinian leadership as well, especially the hard liner Hamas and the political policies of the Palestinian Authority. These Accords are seen as the failure of the Palestinian Authority to advance the political interests of the Palestinian people giving wide acceptance to the resistance struggle of Hamas. The factions of the Palestinians who believe that they can only achieve their rights through an armed struggle will gain momentum disturbing the peace in the region. One positive aspect of these accords on the Palestinians is that the divided factions are not confused of the designs and have a similar and firm stand on the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people. These accords can bring the Palestinian factions together against a united cause, as both Hamas and Palestinian Authority boycotted Trumps peace initiative in the Middle East.

The approach adopted by the Trump administration target peace by addressing the matters which are not the basis of the conflict. It is an outside in approach, which targets development of economic and military ties of governments of regional countries on the fringes of dispute to recognize Israel and in turn convince the Palestinians and other Arab countries to follow. It does not address the core issues in the conflict by involving the major party i.e., Palestinians. The major test of the Abraham Accords would be if the US and Israel are successful in persuading Saudi Arabia for normalization. Saudi Arabia though have supported the accords, is in no position to openly accept Israel

forgoing its longstanding principled stance on the issue of Palestine. The older Saudi generation; including, King Salman are considered to have strong stance on the issue of Palestine. A close aide of King Salman, Prince Turki Al Faisal in a summit in Bahrain severely criticized the Abraham Accords and Israelis, he narrated:

“Israelis humbly depict themselves as a small existentially threatened country surrounded by blood thirsty killers who want to eradicate her from her existence. They profess that they want to be friends with Saudi Arabia. And yet, all Israeli governments are the last of the western colonizing powers of the Middle East. Israeli governments have arrested thousands of the inhabitants of the lands they are colonizing and incarcerated them in concentration camps under the flimsiest of security accusations, young and old, women and men who are rotting there without recourse to justice”.

These are the views that are shared by the majority of people of the Saudi Arabia and other regional and Islamic countries including Pakistan. It is because of deep rooted opinions against Israeli atrocities and principled Palestinian support that even the governments of the regional countries would have to face resistance from within before normalizing the relations with Israel.

The timing of the Accords made them President Trump’s foreign policy accomplishment, just before the American Presidential elections by supporting the interests of Jewish lobby and Israel to gain political ground in the elections. It also helped divert the press attention from severe criticism he faced in handling the novel corona virus pandemic. The entire process of the Middle East peace initiative was started in the last year of Trump administration, making it look more transactional in nature than sincere long lasting peace efforts. The Accords do give a winning position to Israeli Prime Minister locally as it addresses the concerns of the far-right in Israel who rejects any relaxations to the Palestinians. Further it helped Netanyahu to avoid the criticism on handling of Pandemic and mitigate the accusations of corruption against him and he appeared successful in securing the deals with the Arab states reducing regional isolation while putting the question of Palestinian sovereignty and conflict resolution on background.

The exclusion of Palestinians from the Trump’s Peace Plan and the Abraham Accords can be identified as the major reasons for these initiatives to fail in bringing lasting peace in the Middle East. The initiative being heavily tilted to Israeli hegemony in the region and hurting Palestinian cause shall see increased violence, in case, it succeeds as per the architects of the plans. The elevated military and economic strength of the Israeli-UAE alliance presents risk to increased violence and aggression by the proxies

supported by the opposite camp. The Accords potentially can lead to enhanced security related measures by Israeli armed forces resulting in humanitarian crisis and inappropriate use of force against the Palestinians.

The future response of the people in the Arab and Islamic world cannot be gauged correctly at the moment. There are two reasons behind this; firstly, most of the Arab countries including UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are monarchies where there is serious control on media. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken off the focus from the regional politics to ‘survival mode’ and governments in general are exercising more control in terms of lock down and regulations to govern the pandemic spread. The reaction of the people from Arab world and other Islamic countries sharing sentiments for the Palestinian cause will be clearer once the pandemic is over.

2.4 Future of the Accords After Change of the US Administration

The term of the American President Donald Trump is leaving behind a legacy of legislation and administrative orders that empowers Israel to continue with what it seems is right regarding annexation, settlements and its treatment with Palestinians in the name of security. The space for Palestinian coverage in the international media is also shrinking due to policies of the US administration and the situation has further worsened due to the pandemic⁵⁷. The ‘Peace to Prosperity Plan’ with major contributions by Trump’s son in law Jared Kushner, which was a major initiative for peace in the Middle East in the last two decades, was popularly labelled as ‘Trump’s Peace Plan’ and the normalization of UAE and Bahrain with Israel were referred to as ‘Kushner Peace deal’. This shows the personalization behind these deals and agreements. The new President of the United States Mr. Joe Biden has remained Vice President during Obama administration and had played a vital role in US policy in the Middle East. Joe Biden may diverge from the transactional nature of Trump’s foreign policy but do approve of the normalization of Israel with UAE and other states and is likely to continue to support Israel’s interest in the region, as Israel is strongest ally of US in the Middle East region.

A new Democrat administration under President Joe Biden is more likely to reassess its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Joe Biden and democrats are considered to be more sensitive to the human rights record of Saudi Arabia and are supportive of reviving Iran Nuclear deal along with lifting unilateral sanctions from Iran, previously imposed under President Trump. The reassessment of the US relations in the region is

⁵⁷ Ms Odeh at “International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East”, *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/pal2238.doc.htm> (accessed 08 January 2021).

likely to bring some respite for the Palestinians in form of increased humanitarian aid and may be revival of some pressure on Israel to resolve its conflicts and achieve peace⁵⁸. It is pertinent to mention that US foreign policy and support towards Israel is heavily dependent on the Jewish vote bank and lobbies in United States, which plays a decisive role in the American polity but the expectations from the new US administration would be to play a role for wider and sustainable peace in the Middle East region.

A violent mob attacked on Capitol Hill in Washington DC on January 06, 2021 in support of President Trump and his call to overturn the results of the US elections have further decreased the World's Trust in his policies. It is reportedly alleged that President Donald Trump incited the mob to mayhem and violence. After the recent attacks he has been labelled as the person who has divided the people of United States of America and weakened the very basis of democracy. There are serious considerations from the US elected representatives to either declare him insane or move for his impeachment. Under these circumstances the new US administration is obliged to reassess all the policies, regulations and initiatives taken by Trump and his administration, especially the Trump's Peace Plan, to ensure that it is not targeted to create unrest and increase volatility in the region, diminishing the hopes for lasting peace.

3. Conclusion

The Abraham Accords represent a monumental change in the foreign policy approach of the Arab countries normalizing their relations with Israel without considering the Palestinian question. The Accords seem to address the domestic issues of the signing countries as well as protect and strengthen their political, security and economic standings in the region. These Accords have disturbed the power balance in the Middle East region by realigning the Arab countries with Israel against Iran, which shall result in rising violence and destabilization of the region. The Abraham Accords may well be able to advance bilateral ties between the signing countries but is unlikely to bring lasting peace to the region and may aggravate the existing divides and develop resentment, aggression and chaos in the most volatile part of the world.

⁵⁸ Try Ananto Wicaksono, "What a Joe Biden Win Means for the Abraham Accords", *Geopolitical Monitor*, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/joe-biden-abraham-accords/> (accessed 08 January 2021).

United States of America under Trump administration has significantly deviated from the previous peace initiatives taken in the Middle East, which were based on a 'two state solution'. The Trump's Peace Plan, which forms the core of the Abraham Accords, do not address the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinians and instead present a plan which takes away Palestinians' right to a sovereign state. Due to non-inclusion of the Palestinians in the peace process and noticeable bias of the initiatives towards pushing Israeli agenda in the region, the world saw these peace agreements, suspiciously. The stance of various regional and Islamic countries to Israeli hegemony and atrocities on the Palestinians will prevail giving rise to public agitation against the deals. In Middle East, the solutions presented overtime are either not workable or they are not acceptable, the latest initiative falls in the latter category. Peaceful resolution of Palestine Israeli conflict with two state solution at its basis is the only route to lasting peace in the Middle East.

4. Recommendations

The world has tried enough ideas and methods to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what is needed is a focus on getting opposite sides to the table. In the light of the study, following recommendations are formulated as a way forward to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East region:

United States being a crucial power broker in the region, under its new administration and support from international community, shall start fresh dialogue between the conflicting parties by engaging the Palestinians. The Arab countries who have been critical of the Trump's approach may persuade the Palestinians to avail the opportunity with new US administration and work towards a new initiative. United States should promote and reassert itself in the region by acting as a mediator in a peace process instead of taking sides with its allies. The US should engage in diplomacy with Iran and the new administration should reassess its policies to create an environment where fruitful dialogue can be re-initiated on Iran's nuclear program and lifting of economic sanctions. This approach can impede the needless arms race and may de-escalate other conflicts in the region, which in turn could bring an end to human sufferings in the region.

Confidence building measures should be taken to initiate the dialogue with the Palestinian factions and Israelis. The United States must push Israelis to realize that sustainable and lasting security to the state of Israel is not possible unless the humanitarian crisis of the people of the region is addressed. Revival of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians, re-opening of consulate in East Jerusalem and

establishing robust diplomatic ties with Palestine and assistance to address the Pandemic in an already difficult and suffering environments will win hearts of the people. Inclusion of Palestinians in the Covid-19 vaccine program can be one such starting point for regional cooperation.

Saudi Arabia should refrain from taking an open step towards Israel because of its leadership role in the region and Islamic world, and should play an important part to make efforts for restoring the trust of Palestinians regarding the unshakable support from the Muslim world and returning them to the negotiating table. It shall strongly re-iterate the claim of Palestinian people to an independent and self-governing homeland in exchange for peace with Israel and collective recognition by Arab and the Islamic world. An international conference aimed at reinvigorating the peace process be arranged to device a road map for negotiations. The issue of Palestinian independence needs to be continuously voiced by the Islamic and regional countries, including Pakistan, through various international forums.

Israel should recognize that the agreement weakens an already unstable Palestinian Authority, which is not in line with Israeli interests. Considering significant integration in the Middle East and long-term security as top priorities, Israel should also reassure the Palestinian leadership that annexation is postponed indefinitely till the time peaceful resolution is reached. Israel must realize that peace can only be exchanged by promising equality to the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian leadership should also take this opportunity and reach out to the new US administration from a united platform and further the demands of the Palestinians. Palestinians after achieving sufficient support from international community and Arab countries should consider entering in peace deal with Israel and seek concessions. Although there is no simple solution to the conflict embedded with hostilities and mistrust, the challenge of bringing lasting peace can only be advanced through determined leadership and the willingness of the people.

Bibliography

“Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel”, (September 15th 2020), <https://www.whitehouse.gov> (accessed 19 December 2020).

“A History of Middle East Peace Process”, *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/en/a-history-of-the-middle-east-peace-process/g-37138623> (accessed on 12 December 2020).

Bateman, Tom. “Could Israeli-Arab peace deals spark an arms race?” *BBC NEWS*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54737029> (accessed 20 December 2020).

Barari, Professor Hassan A. *The Abraham Accord: The Israeli - Emirati Love Affair's Impact on Jordan*. Jordan & Iraq: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/amman/16505.pdf> (accessed 15 December 2020).

Beauchamp, Zack. “Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine”, <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18079996/israel-palestine-conflict-guide-explainer> (accessed 12 December 2020).

Brennan, David. “After Trump Morocco Deal, Which Countries Still Don’t Recognize Israel?” *Newsweek* (Dec 2020), <https://www.newsweek.com/after-trump-morocco-countries-do-not-recognize-israel-1554109> (accessed 19 December 2020).

Bowen, Jeremy. “Five reasons why Israel's peace deals with the UAE and Bahrain matter”, *BBC NEWS* (Sep 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54151712> (accessed 19 December 2020).

Citrinowicz, Danny. “Israel and the UAE on Iran: Shared Foe, Different Perspectives”, *The Washington Institute*, Sep 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/israel-uae-iran-shared-foe-different-perspectives> (accessed 12 December 2020).

Crowley, Michael and David M. Halbfinger. “Trump Releases Mideast Peace Plan That Strongly Favors Israel”, *The New York Times*, 28 January 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/28/world/middleeast/peace-plan.html> (accessed 11 December 2020).

Middle East Peace Prospects After Abraham Accords

Gearan, Anne and Steve Hendrix. "Sudan and Israel agree to normalize ties, the third such accord since August", *The Washington Post* (Oct 23, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-sudan-peace-normalization-terrorism/2020/10/23/285f53e4-1548-11eb-a258-614acf2b906d_story.html (accessed 20 December 2020).

"Global Conflict Tracker", *Council on Foreign Relations*, Updated 11 December 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict> (accessed 12 December 2020).

Goldberg, Jeffrey. "Iran and the Palestinians Lose Out in the Abraham Accords", *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/winners-losers/616364> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

Guzansky, Yoel and Zachary A. Marshall. "The Abraham Accords: Immediate Significance and Long-Term Implications", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2020.1831861> (accessed 19 December 2020).

Hincks, Joseph. "Will Saudi Arabia Be Next to Normalize Relations with Israel? Don't Hold Your Breath, Experts Say", *TIME*, 18 September 2020, <https://time.com/5890151/saudi-arabia-israel-abraham-accords> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

"Israel, Morocco agree to normalize in latest US-brokered deal", *DAWN* (10 Dec 2020), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1595050/israel-morocco-agree-to-normalise-relations-in-latest-us-brokered-deal> (accessed 20 December 2020).

Karsh, Efraim, Ed. "The Israel-UAE Peace: A Preliminary Assessment". *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* No. 180 (2020), <https://besacenter.org/mideast-security-and-policy-studies/israel-uae-peace-assessment/> (accessed 15 December 2020).

Kaura, Vinay. "Pakistan's Policy Dilemma", *Middle East Institute* (Oct 2020), <https://www.mei.edu/publications/pakistans-israel-dilemma> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

Kilani, Ahmad, Mohammad Ali Alawieh, Mussau-Ulianishcheva E. V. and Ulyanishcheva L. V. "Peace to Prosperity Plan as a one State Solution", *Journal of Politics and Law* 13 No. 2 (May 2020),

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341645456_Peace_to_Prosperty_Plan_as_a_one_State_Solution (accessed on 16 December 2020).

Khalilzad, Zalmay M., Davis A. Shlapak and Daniel L. Byman, *The Implications of the Possible End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict for the Gulf Security* (Published by RAAND, 1997), 28.

Koduvayur, Varsha and David Daoud, "Welcome to a Brand-New Middle east", *Foreign Policy*, Sep 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/30/israel-uae-bahrain-palestinians-peace> (accessed 12 Dec 2020).

Kurtzer, Daniel. "Israel-Palestine Peace Is Possible", *The Caravan*, (Sep 2019), <https://www.hoover.org/research/israel-palestine-peace-possible> (Accessed 15 December 2020).

Levy, Daniel. "The Missing Peace in the Abraham Accords". *The American Prospect* (Sep 2020), <https://prospect.org/world/missing-peace-in-abraham-accords-israel-uae/> (accessed 04 January 2020).

Michael, Kobi and Udi Dekel. "Israel-UAE Normalization of Relations: At the Expense of the Palestinians?". *INSS Insight* No. 1368 (2020). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343818476> (accessed 15 December 2020).

"Morocco latest country to normalize ties with Israel in US-brokered deal", *BBC NEWS*, 11 December 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55266089> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

Muhamad, Simela Victor. "Normalization of the Arab- Israel Emirate Union Relationship and Palestine Issues". *Infosingkat* (2020), https://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info_singkat/Info%20Singkat-XII-17-I-P3DI-September-2020-183-EN.pdf (accessed 14 December 2020).

Mulki, Hala and Gokhan Erel. "The UAE-Israeli Normalization: Political and Social Implications". *ORSAM Center of Middle Eastern Studies* No: 261 (August 2020), https://orsam.org.tr/d_hbanaliz/the-uae-israel-normalization-political-and-social-implications-.pdf (accessed 17 December 2020).

Middle East Peace Prospects After Abraham Accords

“No change in Pak stance on Israel’s recognition”, *The News*, 27 November 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/750040-no-change-in-pak-stance-on-israel-s-recognition-fo> (accessed 11 December 2020).

Norlen, Tova and Tamir Sinai. “The Abraham Accords: Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?” *Security Insights*, (Oct 2020), <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights> (accessed 20 December 2020).

Odeh, Ms. at “International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East”. *United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/pal2238.doc.htm> (accessed 08 January 2021).

“Peace to prosperity – A vision to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprosperity/> (accessed 10 December 2020).

Shikaki, Khalil. “Annexation, the Trump Plan, and the Future of Palestinian-Israeli Relations”. *Middle East Brief* No. 138 (2020), <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb138.pdf> (accessed 16 December 2020).

Stivachtis, Yannis. “Conflict and Diplomacy in the Middle East”, *E-International Relations*, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/10/04/conflict-and-diplomacy-in-the-middle-east/> (accessed 12 December 2020).

Steinberg, Guido. “Regional Power United Arab Emirates”. *SWP Research Paper* 10 (July 2020), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020RP10/> (accessed 17 December 2020).

“Sudan-Israel relations agreed, Donald Trump announces”, *BBC NEWS*, 24 October 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54554286> (accessed on 11 December 2020).

“The Failed Deals of the Century”, *Aljazeera*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/the-failed-deals-of-the-century/index.html#arrow> (accessed 16 December 2020).

“Trump releases long-awaited Middle-East peace plan”, *BBC NEWS*, (28 January 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51288218> (accessed 15 December 2020).

“Trump reveals Israeli-Palestinian peace plan”, *DW*, (Jan 2020), <https://www.dw.com/en/trump-reveals-israeli-palestinian-peace-plan/a-52179629> (accessed 19 December 2020).

“Trump unveils Middle East peace plan with no Palestinian support”, *The Guardian*, (Jan 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/donald-trump-middle-east-peace-plan-israel-netanyahu-palestinians> (accessed 16 December 2020).

“Turkey, Iran condemn Bahrain-Israel Accord”, *DAWN* (13 September 2020), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1579418> (accessed 20 December 2020).

Ulrichsen, Kristian Coates. “The Gulf States and the Middle East Peace Process: Considerations, Stakes, and Options”. *ISSUE BRIEF* (2020), <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/files/16242/> (accessed 15 December 2020).

Weiner, Justus R. “An Analysis of the Oslo II Agreement in Light of the Expectations of Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas”. *Michigan Journal of International Law* 17, no.3 (1996). <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjil/vol17/iss3/5> (accessed 15 December 2020).

Wicaksono, Try Ananto. “What a Joe Biden Win Means for the Abraham Accords”. *Geopolitical Monitor*. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/joe-biden-abraham-accords/> (accessed 08 January 2021).

Zaga, Moran. “Israel and the United Arab Emirates: Opportunities on Hold”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Israel-and-the-United-Arab-Emirates-Pending-opportunities-574211> (accessed 17 December 2020).

Zaim, Elif. “The Abraham Accords: A Historic breakthrough or an act of treachery”, *Policy Outlook*, <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/publications/policy-outlook/the-abraham-accords-a-historic-breakthrough-or-an-act-of-treachery> (accessed 19 December 2020).

