



Abraham Accords signing ceremony, Washington, September 15, 2020. Photo: The White House

The Many Faces of Normalization: Models of Arab-Israeli Relations

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The 2020 Abraham Accords between Israel and four Arab states heralded a new model of normalization. While Israel has a “cold” peace with Egypt and Jordan—which exists mainly between the governments—a “warmer” model of peace has developed with UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, even sans progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the inherently negative meaning of the Arab term for normalization (*tatbiʿ*). This article maps three models of normalization in Israel’s relations with Arab countries and the Palestinians over the years. The first is informal normalization, featuring bilateral ties, primarily clandestine, without diplomatic relations. The second is formal functional normalization, featuring security, intelligence, and sometimes also economic cooperation with governmental agencies. This type of normalization exists primarily behind the scenes, but includes public manifestations, based on diplomatic relations. The third model, full or legitimate normalization, features a combination of cooperation at both the governmental and popular levels.

Keywords: normalization, Middle East, Arab world, Israel-Arab relations, peace

Introduction

The peace agreements that Israel signed with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan in the second half of 2020 were immediately hailed as “normalization” agreements by then-United States President Donald Trump and then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The use of this term was no accident, as it was meant to emphasize that in contrast to the peace agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO, which have translated into a cold peace, the new agreements would be warm, featuring ties between not only governments but also peoples. More than a year later, it appears that there are indeed significant differences between the old and new peace agreements. Israel’s peace agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO have also seen warm periods—mainly when diplomatic relations were established—but it appears that there is a profound difference in how the agreements are realized. In other words, a cold peace is not necessarily the only model, and Arab-Israeli relations have seen other models of normalization as well.

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The term “normalization” is relevant to peace studies. The academic literature does not make a clear distinction between peace and normalization, yet it is clear that normalization is relevant mainly to societies and countries in a state of post-conflict or after having achieved a settlement (Hogland & Kovacs, 2010, pp. 367-390). This article examines the evolution of the term “normalization” in the context of Israel’s relations with Arab countries, and concludes that three models of normalization

have developed in these relations, each with its own set of characteristics.

What is Normalization?

Definitions

The accepted meaning of the term “normalization” is the conversion of something abnormal into something normal, or its return to a normal state. Most dictionaries associate the term with relations between countries; in this context, the Macmillan dictionary describes, “If two countries normalize their relations, they have a friendly relationship again after a war or disagreement” (Macmillan, n.d.). A book dealing with terminology of diplomacy defines it “a process involving the recognition of the need for and the introduction of measures to reduce tension or friction; promote the improvement of relations; and isolate...major sources of dispute or tension” (Barston, 2006, p. 246). Barston regards normalization as a process of reconciliation between countries, and lists ten stages, with the introduction of diplomatic relations being the ninth stage and their implementation being the final stage (p. 251). Although these definitions are somewhat ambiguous, they convey two clear meanings: first, that a process of returning to a given situation is involved; second, that the situation immediately preceding was exceptional or abnormal.

There are two problems with these definitions. The first is who determines what normal relations comprise—what one side perceives as normal may be perceived as abnormal by the other side. The second is that Israel had no diplomatic relations with Arab countries before the state of war, and what was involved was therefore the creation of a new situation, not the restoration of a previous one. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the term has been interpreted in various ways over the years.

The International Arena

The use of the term “normalization” in international relations is usually linked to the establishment of diplomatic relations.

For example, in 1965, Japan and South Korea signed, with United States mediation, a Treaty on Basic Relations, which spoke of their “mutual desire for good neighborliness and for the normalization of their relations on the basis of the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty” (“Japan and Republic of Korea,” 1965). Along with the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries, the agreement included the intention to sign additional agreements for regulating issues of marine sovereignty, trade, civil aviation, and more (Cha, 1996, pp. 123-160; Mobius, 1966, pp. 241-248; Oda, 1967, pp. 35-56). In other words, normalization included diplomatic relations and the beginning of negotiations toward additional agreements regulating relations in a number of civil areas.

The *ostpolitik* of German Chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1960s and 1970s likewise led to the signing of “normalization agreements” with Romania (1967), the Soviet Union and Poland (1970), East Germany (1972), and Czechoslovakia (1973) that were designed to institute “normal” diplomatic relations between the countries. The meaning of normalization in these agreements was the reduction of diplomatic and political tension, in the hope that a pattern of cooperation between the countries would ensue. In practice, the extent of normalization of the relations between South Korea and Japan and between West Germany and East European countries following the establishment of diplomatic relations varied according to the political circumstances on the regional and global arenas.

“Normalization” had a similar meaning in the context of relations between the United States and China. The thaw between the two countries—which began with Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing in July 1971, continued with Nixon’s public visit to China in February 1972, and culminated in a joint announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations in December 1978 during the term of President Jimmy Carter—was also referred to as

“normalization” (Fardella, 2009, pp. 545-578; Kirby et al., 2007). In the announcement, Carter said that within two weeks of the declaration, “our two Governments will implement full normalization of diplomatic relations.” He expressed hope that “Normalization—and the expanded commercial and cultural relations that it will bring—will contribute to the well-being of our own Nation, to our own national interest, and it will also enhance the stability of Asia” (“Jimmy Carter,” 1978). The normalization achieved with the establishment of diplomatic relations was therefore designed to bring about cooperation in the trade and cultural realms, but the establishment of diplomatic relations did not make such cooperation mandatory, and it was not part of the concept of normalization. Actually, the rapprochement between the United States and China following the announcement was called “post-normalization” (Hsiao & Witunski, 1983, pp. 16-21).

The processes of rapprochement between the United States and Vietnam; between the Soviet Union, Japan, and China; and between Indonesia and China were also referred to as “normalization” (Hegghammer, 2001, pp. 17-18; Rozman, 2000; Stern, 2005; Vishwanathan, 1973). The rapprochement between Serbia and Kosovo following Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008 was likewise called “normalization.” This process included several signed agreements mediated by the European Union and the United States in 2013-2020, which opened the door to dialogue between the two countries and agreement to normalize their economic relations, but this process did not lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations at the time (“Historic Agreement,” 2013; “Serbia and Kosovo,” 2013).

These examples illustrate two types of normalization in the international arena. One is the establishment of “normal” diplomatic relations following a conflict, usually for the purpose of returning relations to their previous state. The second is bilateral arrangements in security and/or economic and trade matters,

but without the establishment of diplomatic relations. The kind of interpretation adopted in Israel, as we shall see below, was less recognized in the international arena.

The Israeli Interpretation

The term “normalization” was not used frequently in Israel before the mid-1960s, but it became more common during the negotiations on establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1965. Following the signing of the Reparations Agreement between Germany and Israel in 1952, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer expressed hope that this agreement would be expressed in “normalization of the relations” between West Germany and Israel (“Adenauer Statement,” 1953). Before the joint announcement that relations were being established, a dispute arose about the text: while Israel saw a strong association between diplomatic relations and normalization (in line with the accepted international interpretation), Germany preferred to interpret the exchange of ambassadors as “a measure of reconciliation between the German and Jewish peoples” (Deutschkron, 1965). Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol referred to Israel’s sensitivities, saying, “Although diplomatic relations are what regulate the relations between governments, and to some extent can remove barriers to the road to understanding between the two peoples, there is still a long way between them and normalization of cultural and moral relations” (Marcus & Elyashiv, 1965). In a letter to Adenauer about the establishment of diplomatic relations, Eshkol wrote that this agreement would constitute normalization of the relations between the two countries, but not between the two peoples (Harif, 1965). Eshkol thereby made it clear that there were levels of normalization, the highest of which was reconciliation between the peoples.

The public accepted Eshkol’s interpretation: on the occasion of the presentation of the credentials of Rolf Pauls, the new German ambassador to Israel, and to mark the anniversary of Kristallnacht (February 9-10,

1938), several organizations of fighters against the Nazis published a statement saying that they “regarded the rapprochement with Germany as a severe breach of promises by the Israeli government that diplomatic relations between the two countries would not mean normalization in relations between the German and Jewish peoples” (“Statement from a Gathering,” 1965). The ambassador’s response was, “Normalization cannot be regulated between Germans and Jews. These relations must grow. This is a painful process that is liable to take many generations” (Deutschkron, 1966).

The concept of normalization was important during the peace negotiations with Egypt. Even earlier, however, during the May 1977 election campaign, a statement by the Democratic Movement for Change said that the party was ready for compromises in the framework of a peace treaty that would lead to normalization of life in the region, meaning “elimination of the Arab boycott and hostile propaganda, freedom of navigation, open borders, exchanges of ambassadors, establishment of trade and tourism relations, exchanges of information, and region-wide economic cooperation” (“Hawks? Doves? No,” 1977). The Camp David Accords and the peace treaty spoke of establishing “normal relations” between Israel and Egypt. The inclusion of this ambiguous term (see the discussion of Israel-Egypt relations, below) was at Egypt’s insistence, but Israel saw it as tantamount to normalization. The Israeli interpretation of the term, according to Shimon Shamir, was singular in international relations: it resulted from the recognition that the conflict with the Arabs was not purely territorial, and was based on recognition of Israel’s right to exist. If Egypt was to receive a tangible benefit in the form of territorial assets, Israel expected to receive intangible assets, such as full recognition, which was to be reflected in the word “normalization,” including cooperation in a range of areas (Shamir, 1988, p. 201). Indeed, in his Knesset speech during Sadat’s visit, Menachem Begin said in this context, “We

wish to establish normal relations between us, as exist among all nations after all wars” (“Statement to the Knesset,” 1977).

The term “normalization” was also raised in the context of the establishment of ties between Israel and China (1992) and between Israel and Poland (1990). In effect, the use of this term was identical to the establishment of diplomatic relations (Han, 1992, p. 76; Shai, 2011, p. 25). In the Polish context, normalization was likewise linked to earlier clandestine relations between the two countries in the 1980s, which were designed to be the first step toward the establishment of diplomatic relations (Kfir & Ganor, 1985; Abadi, 2005).

The Arab Interpretation

The term “normalization” entered the Arab discourse in the late 1970s in the wake of the Camp David agreements. The designated word for normalization in Arabic is *tatbiʿ*. The etymological history of this term does not indicate its origin; the classic Arab dictionary defines the term as filling some receptacle (a jug or bucket), or loading on a beast of burden (al-Jawhari, 2009, p. 691). One of the dictionaries gives a wider definition: to seal, load, or make something or someone dirty or impure (Lane, 1956, p. 1,823). Another dictionary offers a different and unique meaning: to tame or to train (a beast of burden or an animal for riding) (Hava, 1982, p. 426). This meaning was adopted by one of the modern dictionaries (Cowan, 1994, p. 644). The definition in modern Arabic dictionaries is already closer to contemporary usage: to accustom someone to do something or restore something to its previous state (before a quarrel or dispute).¹ The Milson dictionary includes all of the old and new meanings of *tatbiʿ*: to normalize (relations), to print (fabric), to stain (an article of clothing), to tame (an animal).² A term that is etymologically close is *tabiʿi*, translated as natural, and *tatbiʿ* therefore means making something natural, normal—i.e., normalization.

The Egyptian interpretation of peace with Israel was limited from the beginning.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat stated he was prepared to sign a peace agreement with Israel in 1971, but not a peace treaty, because a treaty requires normalization of relations, and he was willing to do that only after five years. He added, “Governments cannot interfere in the pace of normalization between peoples. There is no way to dispose in one year everything that happened in 30 years” (Segev, 1980b). Sadat echoed the idea in 1975: “Don’t ask me to establish normal relations with Israel. I’m willing to sign a peace treaty, to be committed to it, but it is only natural that after many years of war, hostility, and bloodshed, natural ties cannot be established instantly” (Shamir, 2016, p. 128). In April 1977, six months before his visit to Jerusalem, Sadat repeated that signing a peace agreement with Israel meant only an end to the state of war, while normalization would come in the indefinite future (Dissentshik, 1977).

When Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros Boutros-Ghali was asked in 1979 about the meaning of the word *tatbiʿ*, he answered, “The establishment of ordinary or natural relations, as with any country in the world, in accordance with Egyptian sovereignty.” In this context, he cited exchanges of diplomatic staff, tourism, and signed trade agreements, while emphasizing that normalization was a step toward a full and comprehensive peace. Boutros-Ghali thereby meant that the pace of normalization depended on the degree of progress in talks between Israel and Egypt on a solution to the Palestinian problem (Boutros-Ghali, 1990, pp. 588, 608).

The Camp David Accords and the peace agreement spoke of establishing “normal relations” between Israel and Egypt. The Arabic phrase *ʾalakat tabiʿyya* (natural or normal relations) aroused no special objection, but Israel’s insistence on putting substantive content in the relations—i.e., not merely between the governments, but also between the peoples—kindled opposition among the Egyptian public. The transition from “normal relations” to “normalization” was called *tatbiʿ al-*

‘alakat, in Arabic. It is possible that the negative connotations of *tatbi’* of staining and taming made it easier for its opponents to attach the sense of normalization to it (al-Bustani, 2013, pp. 24-25; Kornbluth, 2002, p. 82). The meaning of *tatbi’* can also be deduced from the word with the opposite meaning: *mukata’a*—exclusion.³ It quickly became a pejorative term in Egypt and in Arab public discourse, and its use by opponents of the peace treaty was designed mainly to attack the regime. As a result, even supporters of the peace treaty were obliged to disavow the use of the word *tatbi’*. According to Shamir, “Condemnation of normalization, not normalization, virtually became a civic duty” (Shamir, 2006, pp. 34-35).

The Arab interpretation distinguished between the term “normal relations,” meaning establishment of diplomatic relations and a connection between governments, and normalization, meaning a connection between the peoples.

A noteworthy example of Arab sensitivity to terminology was reflected in the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Arab League in March 2002. Its adoption was preceded by an interview by *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, in which Abdullah offered “full normalization” with Israel in exchange for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, including in Jerusalem (Friedman, 2002). Following this interview, an inter-Arab dialogue began about adoption of the Arab initiative for ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, the summit in Beirut adopted a peace initiative, but the word “normalization” was replaced by the vague term “natural/normal relations” (Lavie, 2010, p. 163; Muasher, 2008, pp. 102-133). The Arab interpretation therefore distinguished between the term “normal relations,” meaning establishment of diplomatic relations and a connection between governments, and

normalization, meaning a connection between the peoples.

Based on the various interpretations, this article adopts a general definition that treats normalization as an array of cooperative actions in the political, economic, and cultural spheres between governments and between peoples (Yakin, 2003, p. 13).

Models of Normalization

For years, Israel’s cold peace with Egypt and Jordan was considered the only model of peace between Israel and Arab countries. A cold peace, as defined by Benjamin Miller, is a situation in which the underlying issues of the conflict are in the process of moderation but not fully resolved; channels of communication are only between governments; revisionist groups opposed to peace exist; and there is a possibility of a return to war in the event of internal or international changes (Miller, 2000, pp. 58-59). The signing of the Abraham Accords with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, however, illustrated the development of a warm model of relations. In a warm peace, Miller writes, the disputes have been resolved, ties exist between the peoples, no revisionist groups exist, and war is not considered a viable option (Miller, 2000, p. 60). The discussion of the term normalization indicates that it refers mainly to post-conflict situations, but it can appear even before the establishment of diplomatic relations. This article therefore proposes regarding normalization as a elastic concept on a continuum with three models of relations: the first, informal normalization; the second, formal functional normalization; and the third, legitimate or full normalization.

Informal Normalization

This type of normalization consists of bilateral ties—mainly clandestine—without diplomatic relations. There are quite a few examples of this situation in the world, such as Serbia and Kosovo. Bolivia and Chile also enjoy trade and tourism relations, but without diplomatic relations, due to their border disputes; Turkey

and Armenia have taken various normalization measures in their relations with no diplomatic relations (Hill et al., 2015). Georgia and Russia also enjoy trade and tourism relations, despite the lack of diplomatic relations between them, due to a territorial dispute in Abkhazia and southern Ossetia, which is under Georgian sovereignty but is controlled by Russia. In these and other cases, the absence of diplomatic relations did not prevent the development of ties simultaneously with the continuation of the dispute, due to the existence of common interests ("Georgia and Russia," 2020). This model also existed in the relations between Israel and several countries in the Arab world and elsewhere in the period preceding the establishment of diplomatic relations. For example, relations between Israel and the Soviet Union in cultural affairs, science, and tourism enjoyed normalization even before diplomatic relations were established (Markish, 1987).

Israel enjoyed informal normalization with countries in the Middle East (Podeh, 2022). Officially and publicly, Israel established diplomatic relations only with Turkey in 1949. Israel also had diplomatic relations with Iran, but they remained hidden. Until the 1979 revolution in Iran, the countries cooperated solely on the governmental level. The two countries' respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs were excluded from this activity, all of which took place behind the scenes between the intelligence and military agencies. Normalization included military and intelligence cooperation against common enemies (mainly Egypt and Nasserism), the supply of Iranian oil, Israeli agricultural aid, and bilateral trade. For Iran, Israel was an important link to the United States, due to the belief that the power of the Jewish lobby in Congress and the administration could help Iran in a range of military and civilian spheres (Podeh, 2022, pp. 290-356).

The zenith of cooperation was the formation of a tripartite mechanism between Israel, Turkey, and Iran in the late 1950s, called "Trident," which focused on exchanges of intelligence

information on the Soviet and Egyptian threats. This cooperation was later termed the "Periphery Alliance" (Alper, 2015, pp. 27-71). There was also an attempt to create a southern triangle of Israel, Ethiopia, and Sudan, but this did not materialize, except for a strong bilateral link to Ethiopia and occasional cooperation with Sudan. The Shah was adamant that its relations with Israel remain secret out of fear of the response of Muslim and Arab countries. Iranian Prime Minister Ali Amini told Ben Gurion during a secret visit to Tehran, "Iranian-Israeli relations cannot become public. Allow me to keep this secret between us...Our relations resemble true love between two people without their getting married. It is better this way" (Itzhakov, 2019, p. 280). This was firsthand evidence of the "mistress syndrome" in Israel's Middle East policy. It meant that Israel had to become accustomed to cooperating secretly out of concern that discovery and disclosure would lead to criticism and condemnation of the regimes, thereby having a negative impact on their legitimacy and stability.

Another country with which Israel enjoyed informal normalization was Jordan (Podeh, 2022, pp. 73-133). In contrast to Iran, the two countries did not have diplomatic relations until the peace agreement was signed in 1994, but behind the scenes cooperation was extensive, beginning with the Zionist movement and King Abdullah in the 1920s during the British Mandate. This cooperation became stronger under King Hussein's rule (1953-1999). Since the second decade of his reign, he met at least 50 times with senior Israel decision makers in the pre-peace period (Shlaim, 2009; Shamir, 2012). The clandestine cooperation between Israel and Jordan was an open secret. Other than Jordan's participation in the 1967 war, the two countries conducted an ongoing dialogue on security matters along the borders, on sharing water from the Jordan River, and on various civilian matters. As early as 1970, Israel played an important role in the kingdom's survival during the Black September events. Before the

Yom Kippur War, King Hussein came to Israel to warn about the possibility of war.

The Likud's rise to power put an end to the dialogue, but it was renewed in the 1980s. In April 1987, King Hussein and Shimon Peres signed a secret agreement in London that was supposed to have led to the convening of an international conference and the beginning of diplomatic negotiations, but national unity Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir thwarted it (Shlaim, 2000, pp. 442-450; Podeh, 2015, pp. 184-195). The two countries were also in contact with each other during the 1991 Gulf War. Thus, Israel and Jordan had a de facto peace—functional cooperation motivated by shared interests (Lukacs, 1997, pp. 62-63).

Morocco also maintained informal normalization with Israel. The initial contacts concerned the immigration of Jews from Morocco to Israel. Soon enough, these contacts developed into extensive intelligence cooperation. The Mossad established an office in Morocco in 1963, and was also involved, indirectly, in the killing of opposition leader Mahdi Ben Barka in 1965. The two countries enjoyed political relations over the years—King Hassan frequently met with political figures from Israel, usually in secret, especially with Shimon Peres. Morocco likewise hosted two clandestine meetings between senior representatives from Israel and Egypt (Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Dayan and Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Hassan Touhami) in 1977, who laid the groundwork for Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem. Following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the peace treaty with Jordan in 1994, Morocco agreed to establish diplomatic relations at the level of liaison offices. Before these were closed in 2000, normalization between Israel and Morocco was formal and functional for promoting shared interests at the governmental level. Relations subsequently reverted to the informal model, although they also included civil society ties, among them tourism and interfaith cooperation (Podeh, 2022, pp. 476-526).

Less intensive informal normalization existed in Israel's relations with Oman since the 1970s, and with Bahrain, the UAE, and Qatar since the 1990s (Podeh, 2022, pp. 566-607). There is no doubt that the existence of informal normalization with these countries paved the way to the transition to formal relations.

Formal Functional Normalization

Formal functional normalization⁴ features cooperation in security, intelligence, and sometimes also economic matters. This normalization is based primarily on the existence of common interests and enemies. It takes place mainly behind the scenes, but also includes public encounters stemming from the existence of diplomatic relations. Cooperation is held between official parties in the president's or the king's courts, Ministries of Defense, the army, intelligence agencies, and relevant government ministries (economy, trade, oil, energy, water, and more). Yet the regime does not encourage normalization at the popular level, does not use the tools at its disposal (e. g., media and education) to enforce it, does not confront civil society organizations that boycott Israel, and sometimes even inhibits cooperation. In tandem, many civil society organizations boycott Israel and have established various committees to oppose open normalization.

Due to the absence of popular legitimacy for peace, this normalization experiences ups and downs in bilateral relations caused by effects of events at the internal and regional level. Wars, conflicts, and tension between Israel and the Palestinians are liable to cool or freeze these relations, if only for a limited period. On the other hand, intensification of shared threats and/or progress in the political process with the Palestinians is likely to lead to strengthening and warming of cooperation between security and intelligence agencies. Although popular support for this normalization is lacking, the durability and stability of peace have been demonstrated; the fact that the peace treaties have remained in force (43 years with Egypt

and 27 years with Jordan), and have survived despite turbulent events (such as the Lebanon War, two Palestinian uprisings, the Arab Spring, wars in the Gaza Strip) indicates that the peace agreements are stable, and that the chosen type of the normalization serves the regime's purposes.

This model of normalization suits Israel's relations with Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan; the short-lived peace agreement with Lebanon (1983-1984); the diplomatic relations existing with Morocco, Tunisia, Qatar, Oman, and Mauritania in the 1990s; and the relations with the Palestinian Authority since 2000. Several of these examples are analyzed below.

Israel-Egypt Relations

In the ensuing negotiations between Israel and Egypt following Sadat's visit, Israel insisted that normalization follow the signing of the peace agreement and the establishment of relations. In the Camp David Accords, Israel and Egypt agreed to sign a peace treaty within three months; it was stipulated that subsequently, and after the completion of Israel's interim withdrawal from Sinai, "normal relations will be established between Egypt and Israel, including full recognition, including diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations; termination of economic boycotts and barriers to the free movement of goods and people; and mutual protection of citizens by the due process of law" ("Camp David Accords," 1978). In this context, the phrase "normal relations" was identical to normalization as conceived by Israel.

Similar phrasing appeared in Section 3 of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty ("Egypt and Israel," 1979). It was designed to ensure that the process of normalization in relations would lead to cooperation in the civil sphere, and not end with the establishment of diplomatic relations. But this was not enough for Israel: Annex III of the treaty contains a Protocol Concerning Relations of the Parties, which stipulates that beyond the exchange of ambassadors (Article 1), the parties would commence negotiations no later

than six months after completion of the interim withdrawal on a trade and commerce agreement (Article 2); a cultural agreement (Article 3); free movement of people and vehicles (Article 4); good neighborly relations and avoidance of hostile propaganda (Article 5); and civil aviation, free access to ports, and the right of passage through territorial seas (Articles 6 and 8). Setting a timetable for signing the agreements was designed to ensure that Egypt would keep its promises before the withdrawal from Sinai was completed. Normalization thereby became an integral part of the peace treaty.

Following the signing of the peace treaty, Israel aimed at inserting normalization elements. Begin was quoted as telling the cabinet that diplomatic ties alone "without cultural, trade, and economic appendices is not normalization" (Harif, 1979a; 1979b). Beyond this, Israel, which gave up tangible territorial assets, expected to receive in return not merely an intangible (albeit important) achievement in the form of recognition, but also concrete achievements, such as opening of embassies and full normalization of relations in order to ensure the stability and durability of peace. A committee of government departments directors general, led by Prime Minister's Officer Director General Eliyahu Ben-Elissar, recommended a series of measures in tourism, communications, trade, science, and more, but stressed the importance of gradual implementation and the need to take Egyptian sensitivity into account (Gemer, 1981, pp. 21-26; Granot, 1979).

The two sides established a steering committee to formulate the normalization agreements. Completion of the work before the final withdrawal from Sinai in April 1982 and attainment of as comprehensive normalization measures as possible was important to Israel, while Egypt, according to Ephraim Dowek, who was a political attaché in Cairo in 1980-1983, "fought for every position with obstinacy... [in order] to reduce their concessions as much as possible" (Dowek, 1998, pp. 139-140). Eventually, no fewer than 50 agreements in a wide range

of civilian matters were signed in 1980-1981, including a detailed agreement on cooperation in the cultural sphere, but ultimately many of these were not implemented (Winter, 2015, p. 186; Tamir, 1988, pp. 86-87; Sultan, 2007, p. 26; Ali, 1993, p. 259).

The Israeli side quickly realized that despite the signing of the normalization agreements, Egypt was planning to render them meaningless. The appointment of Sa'ad Mortada, not a senior diplomat in the Egyptian foreign service, as ambassador to Israel reflected a policy of "low-profile normalization" (Granot, 1980). Already in the first half of 1980, long before the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was completed, there were signs of "selective" Egyptian normalization (Segev, 1980a; see also Assaf, 1980; Tadmor, 1980). At first intellectuals on both sides met and cultural events took place, including the Israeli booths at the international book fair in Cairo (Winter, 2015, pp. 186-187). Yet normalization proved to be one way: Israel opened an academic center in Cairo, but no similar institute was established in Israel; many Israeli tourists visited Egypt, but the number of tourists from Egypt was small, and they had to undergo a great deal of administrative harassment. Dowek argued that normalization became a powerful instrument for Egypt to generate pressure on Israel through the carrot and stick method, thereby sending positive and negative messages to Israel, the Arabs, and the Egyptians. In his eyes, after 16 years of effort, Israel achieved "a few marginal changes" (Dowek, 1998, p. 152).

From the outset the Egyptians objected to use of the term "normalization" and to its Israeli interpretation, and therefore strove to change or to avoid it. They attempted to adhere to the phrase "normal relations," or to propose alternative terms (Winter, 2015, pp. 188, 246). The Egyptian objection was not merely a matter of terminology; it chiefly concerned the content of the peace. As Fouad Ajami wrote, "The rulers who opted for the peace had not embraced it in public. They gave every hint that theirs had

been a grudging choice, dictated by the balance of power" (Ajami, 1999, p. 280). The authorities thereby gave civil society groups room to attack the peace. "The 'cold peace,'" Ajami summed up, "emerged out of a subtle pact between the state and the civil society" (p. 285).

Moreover, the regime gave the media, which was subject to state control, a green light to attack Israel, including the use of antisemitic expressions, while the Ministry of Education's textbooks continued to use negative stereotypes to portray Israel and Jews. This was another indication that the regime was not countering demonization trends, and was perhaps even encouraging them, thereby in effect advocating anti-normalization (Yadlin, 1988; Podeh, 2018, pp. 141-166). In civil society, many groups opposed the peace and normalization; this was particularly evident with the trade unions (lawyers, artists, doctors, engineers, journalists, and others), opposition parties of the secular and liberal left, Islamic movements, businessmen, intellectuals, and students (Sultan, 2007, pp. 50-68; Sasson, 1992, pp. 97-99, 112; Ginat & Abu Ghazaleh Mahajneh, 2021, pp. 9-30; Stein, 1997, pp. 305-306). Indeed, overall, the professional organizations adhered to a hard line against any manifestation of normalization.

The Egyptian regime regarded peace and normalization as both an asset and a burden. On the one hand, Egypt was awarded American financial aid, loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and investments by private companies. On the other hand, it was boycotted by most Arab countries; it lost its leading stature in the Arab world and was heavily attacked. In this situation, a cold peace and small-scale normalization were a solution that bridged the gap between the peace agreement being both an asset and a burden. An editorial in the popular weekly *Rose al-Yusuf*, in an issue devoted to the 30th anniversary of the agreement, commented on this apparent contradiction, stating that most Egyptians wanted peace (*salam*), but opposed normalization (*tatbi'*) (Editorial, 2009).

Opposition to normalization stemmed from various reasons. Some were conjectural, relating to specific events in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the bilateral and regional arena. Among them: the 1981 attack on the nuclear reactor in Iraq; the Lebanon War and the massacre in Sabra and Shatila (1982); expansion of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; the 1985 bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis; the Palestinian intifada that began in 1987; the opening of the Western Wall tunnel in 1996; non-implementation of the Hebron (1997) and Wye (1998) Agreements; the al-Aqsa intifada, which began in 2000; Operation Defensive Shield in 2002; IDF operations in the Gaza Strip; and more. The regime's response was not purely instrumental; it was also an expression of anger and frustration with Israel's policy toward the Palestinians. Furthermore, the Palestinian issue was still perceived as a pan-Arab issue: so thought 84 percent of the respondents in a survey by an institute in Doha in 2011. This percentage declined slightly over the years (77 percent in 2018), but still constitutes a clear majority (al-Mu'ashar al-'Arabi, 2018). On the other hand, normalization expanded under the Rabin government (1992-1996), the Barak government (1999-2001), and the governments of Sharon and Olmert following the disengagement from the Gaza Strip (2004-2008), due to positive changes in the political climate and lack of political provocations (Sultan, 2007, pp. 69-135; Sasson, 1992, pp. 137-138, 142).

Other reasons opposing normalization were structural, relating to Egyptian interests. In the political-strategic sphere, Egypt strove to rejoin the Arab world after Arab summit conferences in Baghdad in 1978-1979 passed a series of boycotts against it. A return to the Arab world required Egypt to keep a low profile in its relations with Israel. Egypt was also accused of neglecting the Palestinian issue, and therefore had to demonstrate its commitment to it in a variety of ways. Egypt's aspiration to lead the Arab world was likewise an important consideration in its commitment to the Palestinian problem. For

example, Egypt recalled its ambassador from Israel following the Lebanon War (1982) and the outbreak of the two Palestinian intifadas, froze all inter-governmental contacts following Operation Defensive Shield, and played a variety of mediation roles between Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Hamas (Oron, 2011; Podeh, 2007, pp. 111-120).

In the psychological-cultural sphere, anxiety prevailed about “penetration” (*ikhtirak*) or “invasion” (*ghazu*) of the Jewish/Zionist narrative. Egyptian and Arab intellectuals believed that “cultural normalization” (*tatbi' thakafi*) was the greatest danger facing the Arab world.

In the political-economic sphere, Egypt's fear of a strengthened Israel in the Middle East was reflected in two ways: opposition in the 1990s to Shimon Peres's “new Middle East,” which was perceived as a drive to compound Israel's military hegemony with economic hegemony; and a campaign against Israel's nuclear weapons (Landau, 2006, pp. 128-144). At the same time, there was some cooperation on mutual economic interests, such as the agreements on the establishment of qualified industrial zones (QIZ, 2004) and the supply of natural gas (2019). In addition, there was some cooperation in the agricultural and industrial fields. In general, Egypt promoted normalization where it benefited its economy, while at the same time raising obstacles to cooperation on the popular level (Sela, 2006).

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superiority, and spread an atmosphere of subjugation and dependence on the culture of imperialism and Zionism. In other words, opponents of normalization feared the loss of Egyptian identity and personality (Shamir, 2016, p. 327). In an Arab pun, normalization (*tatbi'*) was regarded as a type of taming (*tatwi'*), while peace (*salam*) was interpreted as surrender (*istislam*) (Ajami, 1999, p. 275).

In order to fight against "invasion," the left wing al-Tagamu' party founded the Committee for the Defense of the National Culture. Intellectuals proposed strategies for conflict and war against the Zionist invasion (Gemer, 1981, pp. 35-41; Hamdan, 1989; 'Abd al-Razek, 2000; Sagiv, 2001, pp. 112-139; Sela, 2005, pp. 15-71; Harlow, 1986, pp. 33-58). Most of the intellectuals rejected normalization, and sometimes even opposed peace. Nizar Qabbani, one of the most admired poets in the Arab world, published a poem against "moving hastily forward" (*al-muharwiluun*) and peace with Israel (Ajami, 1999, pp. 256-258). A few, for example, like Naguib Mahfouz, Lutfi el-Khouli, and Amin al-Mahdy (al-Mahdy, 2001) took action to promote peace and normalization. Some, such as 'Ali Salem and Syrian poet Adonis (the pen name of 'Ali Ahmad Sa'id Esber) were punished in various ways for their pro-peace views.

Since the rise of 'Abd al-Fattah a-Sisi to power in 2013, several common interests have strengthened and in turn, improved relations between Israel and Egypt. The first is the growing threat of Islamic jihad organizations in Sinai, which led the regime to ask Israel for intelligence and military support in the fight against them. Israel also allowed Egyptian military forces in Sinai beyond what is stipulated in the peace treaty. The second is containment of Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip. The third is help from the Jewish lobby in the United States in securing continued American aid to Egypt. The fourth is handling regional threats, such as Iran and the Shiites. The Israeli-Egyptian cooperation took place mainly behind the scenes between state agencies (Winter & Essa,

2021; Podeh, 2022, pp. 211-219). Recent months saw also public manifestations of cooperation, as reflected in the Sharm el-Sheikh summit between Bennett, a-Sisi, and Muhammad bin Zayed, and the participation of Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri in the Negev Summit in March 2022. Yet the thaw in relations has been confined to the diplomatic and economic realms and has not extended to the cultural realm. An Egyptian journalist wrote in November 2021 that no progress had taken place since the peace treaty was signed with regard to peace between the peoples (al-Tayeb, 2021). While this assertion is somewhat overstated, normalization has indeed remained formal and functional, even after 43 years (Perry, 2021).

Israel-Jordan Relations

The model of informal clandestine normalization at the governmental level characterized relations between Israel and Jordan until the peace treaty was signed on October 26, 1994. In contrast to the peace treaty with Egypt, the agreement between Israel and Jordan was the climax of a process of rapprochement and dialogue that took place behind the scenes over many years. Article 5 of the treaty states that the parties agree to establish full diplomatic and consular relations, and to exchange ambassadors. In addition, "the Parties agree that the normal relationship between them will further include economic and cultural relations" ("Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty," 1994). The treaty speaks of cooperation (the word appears no fewer than 24 times) in a large number of fields, including security, economics, water, and more. The text of this treaty ostensibly reflects a warm peace, or at least warmer than the Israel-Egypt treaty (Shamir, 2012, p. 94; Satloff, 1995, pp. 128-129).

Indeed, signed economic and cultural cooperation agreements and special arrangements in Eilat and Aqaba hinted at the potential of a warm peace. Public opinion surveys in Jordan conducted immediately after the treaty was signed also showed great public support (over 80 percent) for the agreement and

its hoped-for economic benefits. The fact that the palace marketed the treaty as “the King’s agreement” added legitimacy to it (Winter, 2015, pp 282-283; Stewart, 2007, p. 117). Hussein was committed to the agreement and spoke explicitly of “true peace.” At the same time, Crown Prince Hassan promoted various initiatives between Israel and Jordan in the realms of water, energy, technology, the environment, communications, and transportation (Winter, 2015, pp. 319-320; Shamir, 2012, pp. 138-139, 141-145). Hosting the regional economic conference in Amman in 1995 was also part of the palace’s effort to promote a warm peace. After a short honeymoon, however many Jordanians were greatly disappointed with the benefits of peace (Meital, 1998; Shamir, 2012, pp. 543-544). Furthermore, when the Netanyahu government took office and several diplomatic crises developed—the opening of the Western Wall tunnel (1996) and the attempted assassination of Hamas leader Khaled al-Mashal (1997)—normalization began to ebb. The intifada that began in 2000 “only buried an already dead process of normalization” (Lucas, 2004, pp. 93, 107-108).

The relations between the two countries have seen ups and downs over the years, including periods of cooperation on security, intelligence, trade (for example, the establishment of qualified industrial zones in 1997), and water, based on common interests and enemies. Two features, however, remained unchanged: the resistance of civil society to normalization, and sometimes to the agreement itself, and indecisiveness on the part of the monarchy to fight against it. The opposition in Jordanian public opinion began immediately after the signing of the agreement, which was greeted with mixed feelings, and even outright hostility (Shamir, 2012, p. 93). As early as 1994, a coalition of eight Islamic and pan-Arab parties founded the Popular Arab Jordanian Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization, which included 14 professional organizations with over 100,000 members. Over the years, this coalition held protests, demonstrations,

summits, and conferences against Arab-Israeli normalization. The media published blacklists of people suspected of cooperating with Israel. There was also covert or passive opposition to normalization that was not part of the official movement (Scham & Lucas, 2003, pp. 126-130; Lucas, 2004, pp. 99-101; Stewart, 2007, pp. 141-164). The royal palace initially struggled against the anti-normalization forces, but soon gave up; King Hussein was quoted in 1995 as saying, “Whoever wants to deal with the people in a neighboring country with which we are at peace can do so, and whoever wishes otherwise is free.” King Abdullah went even further, including a number of ministers from the anti-normalization movement in his government as part of his policy for containing the opposition (Stewart, 2007, p. 132).

A document of recommendations formulated following the 2003 Israel-Jordan economic conference concluded by saying, “The biggest and best-known problem of Israelis wishing to develop ties with Jordan is the existing resistance among many groups in the kingdom to any ties with Israel (which they refer to as ‘normalization’). This opposition is reflected in a refusal to cooperate, or in withdrawal from existing cooperation as a result of domestic and external pressures” (Shamir, 2004, p. 122). As in Egypt, the main bloc leading the boycott was the trade unions, which imposed the boycott on their members. “Despite repeated promises by the Jordanian government to address this problem,” the document states, “it is still going strong.” Furthermore, it was alleged that notwithstanding the palace’s declarations of support for economic relations with Israel, Jordanian and Israeli businessmen claimed that these declarations did not translate into political support (Shamir, 2004, p. 123).

Public support for the peace treaty and normalization has waned over time. As early as 1997, a survey by an institute at the University of Jordan showed little support for peace and normalization (Lucas, 2004, pp. 107-108). Another survey conducted two decades later found that

the rate of support for Israel's normalization with the UAE and Bahrain was a mere 3 percent among the Jordanian public, while 6 percent supported Israel's normalization with Morocco. Only 14 percent of the respondents supported the idea of expanding cooperation between Israel and Arab countries ("2019-2020 Arab Opinion Index," 2020).

In addition to the reasons that drove Egyptians to oppose normalization, the fact that over half of the population in Jordan is of Palestinian origin contributes to the spread of anti-normalization voices, particularly given the stagnation in the peace process with the Palestinians since the al-Aqsa intifada (2000-2004). According to a 2004 survey by the University of Jordan, 21.1 percent of the public thinks that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects relations between Israel and Jordan to some extent, 25.6 percent think that it affects relations to a great extent, and 21.5 percent are sure that it affects them. In other words, almost 70 percent of the public thinks that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects relations (Stewart, 2007, p. 121). It is no accident that the Arab Authority to Combat Normalization and Zionism was established recently in Amman, and stated in its founding announcement, "Resistance to normalization is the choice of the Arab peoples" designed to defend the most important problem of the Arab nation—the problem of occupied Palestine (al-Katamin, 2020).

Israel-PA Relations (2000 to present)

The al-Aqsa intifada transformed the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. The previous legitimate normalization (see below) gave way to formal and functional normalization, similar to relations with Egypt and Jordan, with a focus on cooperation between the security agencies on both sides and the resolution of acute humanitarian problems, such as electricity, food, and water. Most of the civil cooperation was discontinued or came to a standstill. As Gabi Bar, Middle East division manager in the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor foreign

trade division said in 2005, "We used to meet... from time to time and discuss current matters and plans for the future... Unfortunately, due to the circumstances, contact is currently limited mainly to phone calls and discussion of specific isolated matters" (Bar, 2005, p. 49). Beyond the fact that a few of the organizations vanished because donors cut off their support, many Palestinians developed a negative attitude toward cooperation with Israel; the concept of normalization took on the same negative meaning that it had in Egypt and Jordan. Cooperation between academic institutions on the two sides also discontinued (Kahanoff et al., 2007, p. 22; Herzog & Hai, 2005, pp. 100-109; Salem, 2005, p. 28).

Like Egypt and Jordan, groups and organizations in Palestinian civil society took action against manifestations of normalization. The founding of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement by Omar Barghouti in 2005 attracted widespread support in Palestinian civil society. The pressure exerted by the movement on organizations and members who cooperated with Israel, as well as the threats made by the Palestinian rejectionist organizations— Hamas and Islamic Jihad—was successful in significantly reducing manifestations of Palestinian normalization (Lim, 2012). When it was founded, the movement was supported by 170 Palestinian civil organizations (Palestine BDS National Committee, n.d.). The main argument of the supporters of the boycott was that continued cooperation with Israel legitimized the occupation, and that there was no political prospect for ending it and achieving a just solution for the Palestinian problem, including the question of the refugees (Andoni, 2003, pp. 6-7). Many supporters of the boycott rejected the two-state solution and favored instead a one-state solution in the territory of Mandatory Palestine.

Israel and the PA nevertheless had a shared interest in continuing security and intelligence cooperation against organizations that were planning terrorist attacks in order to undermine

the Oslo Accords. Furthermore, since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007, it has been striving to strengthen its position in the PA territories in order to gain control of them. The security coordination took place consistently and continuously, even in periods of tension and crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, such as the military operations in the Gaza Strip, for example.

In May 2020, following threats by the Netanyahu government to annex parts of Area C, the PA announced for the first time the cessation of all modes of coordination and ties with Israel. At the same time, it delivered a message that it did not intend to break the rules of the game (Eichner, 2020), and retracted the threat when the Biden administration took office. Cooperation also continued in the economic sphere, although in an asymmetric manner, with absolute dependence of the PA on Israel in Palestinian imports (60 percent) and exports (83 percent) (Peskin, 2019). Furthermore, approximately 80,000 Palestinian laborers worked in Israel in 2020, and approximately 25,000 worked in Jewish settlements beyond the Green Line in 2016.⁵

Legitimate, or Full, Normalization

This type of normalization features cooperation at both the governmental and popular levels. The regime initiates cooperation with Israel, most of which takes place openly and publicly, and the rest covertly. It also approves initiatives coming from civil society. Various socialization agents (primarily media and education) promote and legitimize normalization. In the Gulf states (such as the UAE and Bahrain), which are thinly populated and have no trade unions, it is relatively easy for the regime to advance this policy. There are also pockets of resistance in civil society in the countries with whom legitimate normalization exists, but these are contained or thwarted by the regime. This model applies to Israel's post-Oslo relations with the PA, as well as its relations with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.

Israel's Relations with the PA (2000-1993)

No relations existed between Israel and the Palestinians before the Oslo negotiations in 1992 that led to the signing of a mutual recognition agreement in September 1993. In the pre-Oslo period, contacts took place between Israeli left wing groups and PLO officials, and secret talks between official representatives began in 1986 (Podeh, 2019, pp. 72-77). Overall, however, there was no normalization at any stage. The array of agreements signed by Israel and the PLO, and later with the PA in 1993-1999, prepared the groundwork for the normalization. The word "cooperation" appeared no fewer than 30 times in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the PLO published on September 13, 1993, in the context of cooperation on water, electricity, energy, transportation, trade, human resources, labor relations, welfare, and more ("Declaration of Principles," 1993). The 1994 economic Paris Agreement, and especially the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Washington, September 1995), made extensive reference to the expected cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians. Article VIII of Annex VI of the Interim Agreement states, "The two sides shall cooperate in enhancing dialogue and relations between their peoples, as well as in gaining a wider exposure of the two publics to the peace process...[and] shall take steps to foster public debate and involvement, to remove barriers to interaction, and to increase the people to people exchange" ("Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement," 1999). Norway, which was the patron of the Oslo Accords, was supposed to play an active role in financing and promoting these activities.

These agreements created the infrastructure for establishing legitimate normalization between Israel and the PA. A survey conducted at Birzeit University indicated that the frequent meetings between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as the Palestinian political and economic dependence on Israel, increased support for

The phrase “full normalization” appears in the title of the agreement signed by Israel and the UAE on September 15, 2020: “Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization.”

normalization (Mi'ari, 1999, pp. 339-348). Despite the criticism of certain aspects of the Paris Agreement (especially those concerning strengthening the dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel), other parts of the agreement worked well. According to Palestinian statistics, the volume of Israel's export to the PA before the intifada (2000) was \$2.5 billion, while the volume of the Palestinians' sales to Israel was \$800 million. In addition, nearly 150,000 Palestinian laborers worked in Israel, the unemployment rate fell to 5 percent, and the standard of living rose. An Israeli-Palestinian conference on economic cooperation substantiated that there was a wide range of economic normalization before the outbreak of the intifada in the fields of infrastructure, water, electricity, and agriculture (Shamir, 2005, pp. 106-107). According to one study, 148 joint ventures in health and medicine were founded in 1994-1998, with participation from 67 organizations and approximately 4,000 people (Blit-Cohen & Jaber, 2015, p. 221). In some of these areas (water and electricity, for example), cooperation continued even during the intifada.

Impressive progress was made in joint meetings in civil society. Before 2000, 575 organizations filed requests for support for joint meetings, and 144 received support (Andoni, 2003; Dajani & Baskin, 2006, p. 5). Although these meetings brought numerous problems between Jews and Palestinians to the surface (for example, inequality and asymmetry in power relations), the quantity, and sometimes also the quality, of these meetings could not be ignored. In the opinion of Nadia Naser-Najjab, who took part in these meetings, these activities lacked public support (Naser-Najjab,

2020). The surveys conducted by Khalil Shikaki, however, indicate that before the intifada, 75 percent of the Palestinians supported joint economic projects and 85 percent supported free movement of people and goods across the borders (Joint Palestinian-Israeli Public Opinion Poll, 2000). This civilian cooperation was halted with the intifada, and it was not renewed even after the intifada ended. Thus, Israel and the Palestinians moved to formal and functional normalization, primarily in the security realm. The Palestinian resistance to normalization with Israel was reflected in the PA's support for the BDS movement, condemnation of Israel, activity against it in international forums, initiation of boycotts of Israeli goods, and recently, uncompromising opposition to the Abraham Accords. Current PA Prime Minister Mohammad a-Shtayyeh is prominent, more than his predecessors, in his policy of opposing normalization with Israel.

Israel's Relations with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco (2020 to the Present)

Israel's relations with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco from the 1990s until 2020 can be classified as informal normalization. Israel and Morocco established diplomatic relations in 1995, but relations reverted to the informal mode when diplomatic relations were severed following the Palestinian intifada. With the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, however, the normalization between the two countries became legitimate. This was the first time, except for the Palestinian case in 1993-2000, in which the peace gained popular legitimacy on the Arab side, although pockets of opposition remained.

The phrase “full normalization” appears in the title of the agreement signed by Israel and the UAE on September 15, 2020: “Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization.” This title, an Israeli formulation accepted by the UAE (D. Kurtzer, personal interview, October 27, 2021), made it clear that in contrast to the traditional concept in international relations, which regards

the establishment of diplomatic relations as an expression of normalization of relations, Israel does not consider the establishment of relations as an expression of normalization, but an essential stage on the way to achieving it that requires specific agreements. Indeed, the agreement—in which the word normalization appears no fewer than nine times, and in six of which as part of the term “full normalization”—included an appendix listing cooperation in financing and investment, civil aviation, tourism, innovation, trade, science, technology, mail, the environment, communications, health, and more. A short time later, Israel and the UAE signed four normalization agreements. According to Alan Baker, a former legal adviser to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Israeli insistence on using the term resulted from the disappointing experience with Egypt and Jordan (Baker, 2020; Singer, 2021). Interestingly, in the official version in Arabic, the term *tatbi'* does not appear. In its place appears the phrase “full relations” (*'alaqat kamila*) or “full diplomatic relations.” In Article 5 as well, which deals with “Cooperation and Agreements in Other Spheres,” the phrase “full normalization” appears in Arabic as “full diplomatic and friendly relations.”⁶ Presumably the negative connotations of the phrase in Arabic contributed to its omission from the Arabic text of the agreement.

Israel and Bahrain published a joint declaration on October 18, 2020 without using the word “normalization” in the title. The declaration, however, listed many spheres of expected civil cooperation, including the culture of peace (Singer, 2021, pp. 462-463).

One year after the agreements were signed with the UAE and Bahrain, it is clear they met and even exceeded expectations. A summary by the the UAE embassy in the United States revealed no fewer than 70 meetings, joint activities, and agreements in economy, trade, technology, energy, environment, health, tourism, and aviation, in addition to people-to-people activities (“The UAE and Israel,” 2001). Furthermore, Israel held a joint naval exercise

in the Red Sea with the United States, UAE, and Bahrain in November 2021 (Kubovich, 2021a). To illustrate the difference between the agreement with the UAE and the agreements with Egypt and Jordan, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid stated in the opening ceremony of the Israeli Embassy in Abu Dhabi, “This is peace between peoples” (Karni, 2021).

Cooperation with Bahrain is also impressive: diplomatic relations were established, seven normalization agreements were signed, a direct aviation route was opened, a security cooperation agreement was signed, and for the first time in the Arab world, an IDF attaché will serve in Bahrain (Link & Winter, 2021; Kubovich, 2022).

At the same time, popular opposition exists even in countries with legitimate normalization relations. For example, the UAE Resistance Union against Normalization has 33,500 members, according to its Twitter account, although many of them live outside the UAE. In Bahrain, too, at least 23 civil society organizations expressed their support for the Palestinian cause and their opposition to normalization with Israel. The General Federation of Workers Trade Unions in Bahrain, which represents about 25,000 workers (mostly Shiites) expressed a similar view (Fakhro, 2021; Hassanein, 2021; Hoffman, 2020; UAE Opposition, 2020). A study that examined 150 Twitter accounts in the Gulf discovered that 80 contained statements against normalization with Israel (Hitman & Zwilling, 2021). Due to the regime’s control of the local media, it is difficult to say to what extent these voices represent the public in the Gulf, but it appears that they do not pose a significant challenge. In any case, the UAE and Bahrain openly and unabashedly promote normalization with Israel.

On October 23, 2020, the United States, Sudan, and Israel published a joint declaration stating, inter alia, that agreement was reached on normalization of relations between Israel and Sudan and an end to the state of war between them. Agreement was also reached to

establish economic and trade relations, mainly in agriculture. It was agreed that delegations from the two sides would meet soon to discuss cooperation in these areas and in agricultural technology, aviation, immigration matters, and more (Singer, 2021, p. 459; Ravid, 2022, pp. 270-289). So far, however, there has been no meaningful progress in normalization between the two countries beyond the establishment of diplomatic relations. It is therefore impossible at this stage to judge what model of normalization will develop in Sudan.

On December 22, 2020, the United States, Morocco, and Israel published a joint declaration stating that Morocco planned to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, conduct direct flights, and promote cooperation in trade, finance, investments, technology and innovation, tourism, water, agriculture, security, nutrition, energy, and telecommunications. The agreement was part of a deal reached by Trump with King Mohamed VI of Morocco in return for American recognition of Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara and establishment of a US consulate (Ravid, 2022, pp. 290-306). The word “normalization” did not appear in this statement (Singer, 2021, p. 460). The royal house portrayed the agreement as a return to the previous state of relations, before they were severed following the intifada, and in fact, the statement mentioned the reopening of these offices. There is no doubt that the royal house, which is aware of the sensitivity of Arab and Moroccan public opinion to the negative aspect of the term “normalization,” deliberately chose not to use it, especially during the term of a prime minister from the Justice and Development Party, which is identified with the Muslim Brotherhood (della Ragione, 2021; Feuer, 2021).

Since the declaration was published, several normalization measures have been taken, such as a visit by Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director-General Alon Ushpiz to Morocco in July 2021, a visit by Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid and the opening of the Israeli Embassy

in Rabat in August (and the Moroccan embassy in Tel Aviv), the signing of an agreement on culture, sports, and youth in October, and visits by business, youth, and sports delegations. A noteworthy event was the signing of a military cooperation agreement—the first ever between Israel and an Arab country—during a visit to Morocco in November 2021 by Israeli Minister of Defense Benny Gantz (Podeh, 2021; Kubovich, 2021b). It was followed by the sale of an Israel air defense system to Morocco for \$600 million (Dvori, 2022).

In contrast to UAE and Bahrain, the normalization with Morocco is poised on previous stable foundations in both the security and intelligence fields and the civil realm. Since the 1990s, the number of Israeli tourists visiting Morocco has ranged between 25,000 and 45,000 annually; delegations in media, education, and sports have conducted joint visits; cooperation has taken place in music, cinema, and the arts. In addition, there have been contacts between Israelis of Moroccan origin, the remaining Jewish community in Morocco, and the royal palace through André Azoulay, the Moroccan king’s Jewish adviser.

Furthermore, the 2011 Moroccan constitution states that the Moroccan identity has been shaped also by Hebraic influences. In this framework, the King ordered the renovation and renewal of Jewish heritage sites, such as cemeteries, graves of Jewish sages, synagogues, schools, and streets in the Jewish quarter (*mallah*). Morocco also approved a new curriculum for elementary schools about Moroccan Jewry and its heritage (Levi, 2018; Khalili, 2020)

According to one survey, 41 percent of Moroccans support normalization with Israel, although most reject the normalization with the UAE and Bahrain (“Arab Barometer,” 2021, p. 13). There is also a Twitter page—possibly initiated by the government—with over 1,600 followers (as of the end of 2021). This page recently changed its name from Moroccans for Normalization with Israel to Moroccans for

Renewal of Relations with Israel. This choice was presumably designed to transmit the message that the new relations with Israel do not constitute a deviation but rather a return to the “natural” order, thus escaping the stigma attached to the concept of normalization in the Arab world. The page, which features a symbol combining the Moroccan and Israeli flags, publishes diverse content: sympathetic coverage of diplomatic, security, economic, technological, and cultural cooperation between the two countries; praise for the Moroccan King’s policy of tolerance toward Jews; and harsh attacks against opponents of normalization (Winter, 2021).

Morocco, however, also has pockets of resistance to normalization. Like Egypt and Jordan, the resistance is led by Islamists on the one hand, and leftists and liberals, many of whom are members of professional associations, on the other. In addition to civil society organizations operating on behalf of the Palestinian cause, the resistance is led by the Moroccan Center for Monitoring the Struggle against Normalization, which was founded in 2013. This center raises donations, organizes conferences and seminars for increasing awareness of the Palestinian struggle, operates a lobby in the Moroccan parliament, and encourages boycotts of Israel (Levi, 2018, p. 15). Following the signing of the normalization agreements, demonstrations were held in several cities, and condemnations were published on Twitter under the hashtag “Normalization is Treason.” It is difficult to estimate the numbers and weight of those opposed to normalization, but it appears that the palace is taking action to portray resistance to normalization as unpatriotic to the homeland (Riboua, 2020).

The warm nature of the normalization between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco was exemplified in the signing in Dubai of a Culture and Sports for Peace agreement between the four countries in early April 2022. In a joint statement it was noted that the agreement stemmed from the countries’

recognition of the significance of establishing people-to-people relationships via culture and sports (Benazizi, 2022).

An analysis of Israel-Arab relations shows that three models of normalization have developed along the years: informal, formal functional, and legitimate or full.

Conclusions

An analysis of the term “normalization” in the context of Arab-Israeli relations shows that different and conflicting interpretations of this concept have developed in Israel and the Arab world. These interpretations are not necessarily consistent with the accepted interpretation in the international community. While normalization is generally perceived as a return to a situation that existed before a conflict and to a large extent overlaps with the establishment of diplomatic relations, Israel regards normalization as an array of measures in the political-diplomatic, economic, and cultural spheres at the governmental and popular level following the signing of the peace treaty and the establishment of diplomatic relations. Arab states, however, have generally regarded normalization as a negative concept, and preferred to use the terms “normal/natural relations,” and to confine the relations to governments and not peoples.

An analysis of Israel-Arab relations shows that three models of normalization have developed along the years: informal, formal functional, and legitimate or full. The model chosen was usually a result of the Arab preference, as Israel’s choice was always full normalization. Various obstacles, however—such as popular resistance among civil society organizations and legitimacy deficiencies—limited the maneuverability of Arab and Muslim rulers.

Three types of normalization were thus created. The first, which exists before the establishment of diplomatic relations, takes place clandestinely, primarily in the military and

intelligence spheres, but sometimes also in the diplomatic and economic spheres. The second takes place with the establishment of public diplomatic relations leading to cooperation—overt and covert—on the governmental level, mainly in military and intelligence affairs, but sometimes also in the economic sphere. The third type of normalization, the highest level, takes place between peoples in the economic and civil-cultural spheres. In contrast to the first two models, which are based primarily on the existence of shared interests, the highest level of normalization is a result of an acceptance of the other, who no longer poses a threat to the self-identity.

An analysis of Arab-Israeli normalizations leads to several conclusions. First, a country can move from one state to another; Morocco went from informal to formal normalization (1995-2000) and back (2000-2020), and from informal to legitimate normalization (2020). The Palestinian Authority shifted from legitimate to formal normalization in 2000. Qatar, Oman, Tunisia, and Mauritania underwent a similar process. The changes were a result of a crisis in Israel-Arab relations—and particularly in the Palestinian context (intifada or military operations in the Gaza Strip)—and/or developments in the regional and international arenas, for example the Madrid Conference and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Arab Spring, and the incentives offered by the Trump administration.

Second, normalization with Egypt and Jordan was initially legitimate and warm, but rapidly regressed to official normalization (a “cold peace”). A similar process may occur with Morocco, the UAE, and Bahrain, although this possibility at present appears remote and unlikely.

Third, given the intensive activity of anti-normalization organizations in Egypt and Jordan, and in view of the relative indifference of the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco to the Palestinian cause, Israel should involve Egypt and Jordan in promoting dialogue with the Palestinians

in order to reduce the resistance among civil society organizations in these countries.

Finally, due to the centrality of Saudi Arabia in the Arab and Muslim world, it is crucial that it join the Abraham Accords. Such a step would strengthen normalization in Egypt and Jordan and help persuade other Arab countries to join the agreements. Nonetheless, the lack of progress on the Palestinian problem constitutes a major obstacle to peace and normalization among civil society groups in the Arab and Muslim world.

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Notes

- 1 For the meaning of the work *tatbi'* in Arabic, see <https://bit.ly/3ws5Wso> [in Arabic].
- 2 Menahem Milson, *Arabic-Hebrew Dictionary*. <https://bit.ly/31JD959>
- 3 See the editorial "Between *al-mukata'a* and *al-tatbi'*," special issue of the periodical *Mifgash* (fall 1995), p. 1, which dealt with the views of Arab artists on the subject of normalization.
- 4 Additional terms used to describe this model are partial normalization, imposed normalization, and selective normalization.
- 5 In this context, see Worker's Hot Line, <https://bit.ly/35CxnVf>
- 6 The text of the agreement is not available on the website of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the UAE government website. UAE media published only the agreement's principles. On the website of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel does not appear on the list of countries with whom the UAE has diplomatic agreements.