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Changing Regional Dynamics: The Abraham Accords and Their Impact on Pakistan's Foreign Policy toward Israel

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ABSTRACT

The diplomatic and strategic equation of Middle East has undergone a radical change, with the signing of Abraham Accords between Israel and United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain and, lately, Morocco and Sudan. The agreements challenged traditional Arab position that normalization with Israel should be preceded by a comprehensive resolution of Palestinian question. The region's changing environment has significant impact on Pakistan, which has never recognized Israel and has consistently tied normalization with establishment of independent Palestine. This article looks at impact of Abraham Accords on Pakistan's foreign policy with Israel, including shifts in Arab diplomacy, Pakistan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ties, Palestinian issue, domestic political hurdles, Pakistan-India strategic ties with Israel, Iran-Pakistan ties and Pakistan-US-China axis. The article maintains that Abraham Accords have made Pakistan's traditional policy more expensive in terms of strategy and diplomacy. The study draws from constructivism and neoclassical realism and formulates Pakistan's policy as a dynamic of identity-based commitments and evolving geo-political dynamics.

Keywords: Abraham Accords, Pakistan, Israel, Palestine, Middle East, Foreign Policy, GCC, Regional Security, Normalization, Neoclassical Realism, Constructivism

1. Introduction:

The Middle East is experiencing significant geopolitical changes since the start of the twenty-first century. A rigid regional hierarchy defined by the Arab-Israeli issue, Palestinian problem and rivalry between regional and extra-regional powers has been gradually supplanted by an intricate network of strategic multi-perspectival relationships. One of greatest advances in this transformation came in 2020 when United Arab Emirates and Bahrain normalized their relations with Israel and in turn more recently Morocco and Sudan. The agreements marked a significant shift in diplomatic paradigm that had come before them, whereby normalization of relations between Arab nations and Israel was widely seen as a step towards a resolution of the Palestinian issue. Abraham Accords mean more than just for Israel and its Arab partners. They have impacted strategic calculations of countries like Iran, Türkiye, Pakistan and India, and have changed the role of the United States in Middle East diplomacy. The transformation has been especially significant for Pakistan, as Pakistani government has consistently been a policy of non-recognition of Israel since independence. Pakistan has supported the Palestinian claim to self-determination, rejection of occupation, Islamic unity and international law and principle of an independent Palestinian state. Abraham Accords then resulted in a strategic conundrum for Pakistan. Islamabad has good economic, political, military and religious ties with several

nations which are on a path of normalization with Israel. Meanwhile Pakistan's domestic political landscape and its past resolution of Palestine issue render formal recognition of Israel politically sensitive. The exact is pointed out by Ahmed and Abbas (Ahmed, 2021) that normalization by UAE and Bahrain has had a tangible effect on social, economic and political landscape of Muslim-majority countries and that pressure on Pakistan has mounted with its close ties with Gulf countries. They are specifically interested in how Abraham Accords will affect Pakistan's ties with GCC countries and its Israel policy and have found that Pakistan has "more to lose than gain" from giving up its historical stance and recognising Israel. The importance of this argument has increased because Middle Eastern environment has continued to evolve. The Abraham Accords have enabled trade, technology, investment, tourism, security and other areas of cooperation. Meanwhile, Palestinian issue has yet to be resolved and other regional wars have shown that normalization is not a cure for root causes of instability in the region. This poses a basic foreign-policy dilemma for Pakistan. Islamabad has good reasons to have good relations with UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and other Gulf nations. Islamabad has strong incentives to maintain excellent relations with UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and other Gulf countries. Gulf region has a great role to play in Pakistan's energy, employment, remittances, investment and diplomatic relations. However, Pakistan may not be able to shift its stance on Palestine without incurring significant domestic political and ideological costs as well. This situation is complicated by India-Israel relations. India and Israel have already expanded their cooperation in field of agriculture, drones, missiles, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism and intelligence and defense since they opened full-fledged diplomatic relations in 1992. Israel is thus now an important strategic partner of Pakistan's main regional rival. Pakistan thus has a push towards learning more about Israel, despite not recognizing it formally. The regional part played by Iran is another factor. Pakistan has long borders with Iran and has deep security, economic and diplomatic vested interests in having good relations with Iran. However, Iran and Israel continue to be a strategic rivalry, so any Pakistani step towards an Israel-centered regional security framework may bring forth difficulties in Islamabad's ties with Iran. Pakistan will thus have to play a balancing act between Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, United States, China and Türkiye. Nowadays, strategic landscape is also becoming multipolar. China has built up comprehensive ties with Israel and Arab countries and strengthened its strategic relationship with Pakistan. The USA continues to be Israel's main external backing and played a key role in formation of Abraham Accords. Türkiye has diplomatic ties with Israel and is a strong advocate of rights of Palestinian people. These various options offer Pakistan more than one option for dealing with Israel. Hence, scholarly literature indicates that no single variable behind Pakistan's Israel policy is sufficient, e.g., religion or national interest. Instead, it is a product of interplay between identity, ideology, domestic politics, regional geopolitics, security interests, economic factors and international pressures. This article, therefore, seeks to explore following central question: What have been impact of Abraham Accords on regional strategic environment of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Israel and what are implications for Pakistan's future policy? The article maintains that current external pressure on Pakistan to rethink its long-standing Israel policy stemming from Abraham Accords, does not yet outweigh domestic, ideological, diplomatic and strategic forces that have been keeping policy of non-recognition alive. Pakistan is thus likely to adopt a middle way through continued support for Palestine, a non-recognition of Israel in current state of affairs and more pragmatic approach to evolving Middle Eastern order.

2. Literature Review:

The literature on Pakistan-Israel relations and Abraham Accords can broadly be divided into four major categories; historical and foreign-policy studies, scholarship on Pakistan-Israel relations, studies of Abraham Accords and regional transformation, and research concerning identity and domestic determinants of foreign policy. The overall context of Pakistan's foreign policy gives an insight into stance of Islamabad on issue of Israel. Sattar (2017) has rightly pointed out that security, ideology, Muslim countries relations and major power politics are important factors in evolution of Pakistan's foreign policy. (Sattar, 2017) His historical study has shown that a significant aspect of Pakistan's foreign policy has been its ties with Muslim world. In same way, Ian Talbot presents context of Pakistan's international image in history of Muslim nationalism, Partition and establishment of a 'Muslim majority' state. (Talbot, 2012) These historical developments account for significance of problems related to Muslim minorities and Muslim territories, especially Palestine and Kashmir, in terms of their transcendence of a narrow concept of material national interest. Similarly, Ayesha Jalal shows how relationship between Pakistan's domestic political frameworks, security anxieties and its self-conception as a central player in Muslim world has shaped Pakistan's international identity and strategic actions. (Jalal, 2014) Importance of this literature is that it provides a context for study of Pakistan's Israel policy, which is not considered as a bilateral issue. A second block of scholarship views Pakistan's ties with Israel in isolation. In article, Kaura discusses chances of Pakistan-Israel rapprochement and enumerates several factors that have militated for absence of any formal diplomatic ties between two countries in past. He says that Pakistan continues to be one of Muslim nations who do not recognise Israel and change in strategic environment is another factor that may lead to future rapprochement between two nations. Kaura's input is significant in this regard as it takes debate out of assumption that Pakistan's policy is forever fixed. (Kaura, 2020) The regional political context, strategic considerations and development of relations between Arabs and Israelis might provide new avenues for engagement, his analysis indicates. Virk's critical appraisal also suggests that domestic politics, religious pressure groups, civil-military relations and overall foreign-policy decision making structure have shaped Pakistan's Israel policy. (Virk, 2021) The study finds that there is a mismatch between target and implementation of policies and that socio-religious pressures have been major factors limiting policy space in Pakistan. The most relevant scholarship is article by Ahmed and Abbas (Ahmed, 2021), in which authors analyse implications of normalisation between Israel and UAE and Bahrain on Pakistan's relations with GCC countries and its own policy towards Israel. They point out that despite frequent engagement with GCC countries, Pakistan has a long-standing commitment towards Palestine. The final point they make is especially important as Pakistan's stance was "more of a loss than gain." (Ahmed & Abbas, 2021) if it changed and acknowledged Israel. This argument sets tone and underpinning for current research. Since their article was published though, regional environment has continued to change. Current economic developments of Arab-Israeli connections, ongoing Israeli-Arab normalization negotiations, recent shifts in US policy, Gaza situation and new security arrangements in region necessitate a fresh analysis of implications of Abraham Accords for Pakistan. Khan suggests that Accords marked a significant shift in Middle Eastern diplomacy and that their long-term consequences would rely on undecided Palestinian issue. (Khan, 2021) This literature implies that Abraham Accords cannot be seen as bilateral normalization deals. Instead, they are part of a more comprehensive realignment of regional alliances. Second type of literature examines the Abraham Accords in a regional context. From perspective of religion and foreign-policy agenda-setting, Jeong looks at accords. Her work shows that a religious identity does not automatically lead to a uniform foreign policy outcome. (Jeong, 2021) Rather, states may give religious

concepts other interpretations and institutionalizations. This discovery is especially important in Pakistan. It implies that identity as a Muslim, in itself, is not sufficient to justify state of normalization between Israel and some Muslim nations and between Israel and others, such as Pakistan, where certain Muslim states refuse to recognize Jewish state. Abraham Accords show that identity and strategic interests are not necessarily deterministic elements, but instead are interconnected. A number of strategic elements have been cited in wider literature that have driven Arab normalization, such as concerns about Iran; US security guarantees; economic diversification; technological cooperation; trade; investment and regional competition. The accords thus demonstrate a shift from an ideologically defined Arab-Israeli dynamic to one of interests in the region. Although there has been considerable published research, there are some gaps. Firstly, majority of literature explores Abraham Accords through lenses of Israel, USA or Arab perspective and there has been comparatively less attention to implications of Accords for Pakistan in long-term. Second, existing studies tend to analyse Pakistan's Israel policy in terms of recognition or non-recognition. There has been much less consideration of the possibility of limited diplomatic interaction without recognition. Third, there is a need for more systematic study of how Abraham Accords interplay with India-Israel strategic cooperation, Pakistan-Iran ties, and Pakistan's ties with Gulf countries. Fourth, there is a need to combine constructivist explanations of identity with realist explanations of geopolitical pressure. This article aims to fill these gaps by studying nature of Abraham Accords as a force to shift regional dynamics and by examining Pakistan's policy in light of an integrated theoretical perspective.

3. Theoretical Framework:

Constructivism is the first theory used in this research. Key concepts of constructivism are: Identity, norms, values, historical narratives, social interaction and political culture. Alexander Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics is one of most influential formulations of constructivist international relations theory. However, Wendt has claimed that it is not only material capabilities that shape international politics, because states' interests are determined by their identities and social relations. One of his well-known statements is "Identities are foundation of interests." (Wendt,1999). This is a very pertinent thought for Pakistan's Israel policy. The country's character as a Muslim majority nation and its past history of Palestinian affair have shaped definition of national interests by successive governments in Pakistan. The nature of Pakistan as a Muslim majority country and its historical linkage with Palestinian cause has affected definition of national interests by successive governments in Pakistan. From a constructivist point of view, Pakistan does not just ask, "What economic advantages can be derived from recognition of Israel?" It also questions, "What does recognition mean for Pakistan, for Pakistan's identity, historical obligations and place in Muslim world?" This can be partly understood why material incentives are not yet enough to achieve normalization. Constructivism offers a more significant explanation of Pakistan's commitment in Palestine. The Palestinian issue has become a symbol of solidarity with Islam, anti-colonial histories, self-determination, opposition to occupation and historical foreign policies in Pakistan. As such, Palestine has become an integral part of Pakistan's foreign-policy identity. The recognition of Israel is not seen as if it was merely a diplomatic move. The meaning in country was seen as a rejection of an identity that had been established over a long period of time. This is why Pakistan's stance has not changed much despite drastic changes in Middle East. The second theoretical approach is "neoclassical realism." Classical realism is more concerned with power and national interest, and structural realism more concerned with distribution of power of international system. Domestic political variables are added to analysis in neoclassical realism.

Neoclassical realism looks at how domestic political institutions and leaders' perceptions filter the system pressures, as described by Gideon Rose (Rose,1998). This is especially of value to Pakistan in its policy because pressure from outside world cannot be only reason behind Pakistan's policy. The external pressures include changing alliances and cooperation in GCC region, influence of US diplomacy, Israeli regional integration and cooperation between India and Israel stemming from Abraham Accords. However, these pressures are mediated by Pakistani public opinion, political parties, religious organizations, civil-military relations, economic weaknesses and national identity. Hence, Pakistani response is not dictated by international system. The article makes following proposition that external incentives and pressures driving Pakistan to rethink its policy on Israel have also improved since launch of Abraham Accords, albeit Islamic identity, Palestinian solidarity, domestic political dynamics, strategic competition with India, Pakistan-Iran relations and reliance on Gulf states have presented constraints to quick normalisation. It is thus sensible to suggest that next move for Pakistan in evolving regional scenario would be to adapt in a pragmatic manner without abandoning its traditional stance. This indicates that Pakistan might pursue a more flexible policy in future, engage in indirect engagement, third-party mediation, economic cooperation with third countries, closer ties with Gulf countries, and support for Palestine and conditional normalization.

4. The Abraham Accords of 2020 & Its Significance:

Abraham Accords 2020 marked one of the biggest shifts in political and strategic landscape in Middle East since end of Cold War. Normalization deals with Israel and United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain and normalization process with Morocco and Sudan, changed old patterns of Arab-Israeli diplomatic relations. In Pakistan, developments posed a new strategic conundrum: While Islamabad has never acknowledged Israel and bound normalization to establishment of an independent Palestinian state, some of the country's closest Arab allies have been moving towards more pragmatic ties with Israel over years. Therefore, role of Abraham Accords for Pakistan cannot be just confined to the issue of 'recognition of Israel'. Instead, they have reshaped the regional context in which Pakistan is developing its Israel policy, impacting on relations with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, its stance on Palestine, strategic considerations regarding India-Israel relations, its relations with Iran, and relationship with United States. Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Khurram Abbas' paper, The Abraham Accords and Pakistan, in Middle East Policy is a noteworthy scholarly work. They say accords posed a big dilemma for Pakistan as Islamabad has good relations with GCC countries and keeps a long policy of supporting Palestine. The conclusion of their work is especially relevant to Pakistan's future policy; that Pakistan faces more to lose than to gain from giving up on its historical stance and recognizing Israel (Ahmed & Abbas, 2021).

4.1. The Abraham Accords: Meaning and Historical Significance:

Abraham Accords was a series of US-brokered agreements that were designed to broker or create diplomatic normalization between Israel and certain Arab states. In September 2020, UAE and Bahrain officially signed an agreement to normalize their ties with Israel; Morocco and Sudan followed with moves toward normalizing relations with Israel. Historic, the agreements broke from common wisdom of Arab-Israeli normalization coming after a comprehensive resolution of Palestinian issue. 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which had required Israel to withdraw from Arab occupied territory and establish a Palestinian state, had been a major shift. Abraham Accords thus launched a novel concept in Middle East diplomacy; that is, that Arab states could pursue their national strategic and economic interests without waiting for the final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. This has huge repercussions for Pakistan.

4.2. From Arab-Israeli Conflict to a New Regional Order:

The Middle East regional order was an order that was largely shaped by Arab-Israeli conflict. Palestinian statehood was at heart of Arab states' relations with Israel in most cases. The Abraham Accords helped to divide this consensus. Rather than a single Arab stance towards Israel, the region was increasingly adopting various positions from states that continued to maintain statesmanship without recognizing Israel to others who welcomed diplomatic interaction, others who had normalized relations with Israel and others who had maintained relations with Israel despite their support for Palestinian statehood. This change made a complicated environment for Pakistan. With rise and fall of Cold War, Pakistan's traditional stand could not be regarded as strongest anymore. In fact, Ahmed and Abbas highlight just this issue, stating that normalization led to a "notable divide" between Muslim majority states and put pressure on Pakistan by its Gulf allies. (Ahmed, 2021)

4.3. The Abraham Accords and Pakistan's Traditional Policy:

Contrastingly, Pakistan has never recognized Israel. By placing its emphasis mainly on the following principles, it is clear that it is opposed to the Israeli occupation and the settlement expansion: Palestinian self-determination; establishment of an independent Palestinian state; pre-1967 borders; Al-Quds Al-Sharif/East Jerusalem as capital; implementation of relevant UN resolutions; and opposition to occupation and settlement expansion. Abraham Accords, in turn, put Pakistan in a bind. Pakistan has opportunity to benefit from further cooperation with Israel in following areas: technology, agriculture, water management, cyber security, investments, and diplomatic facilities. Conversely, the acknowledgment might negatively impact Pakistan's long-standing Palestine policy. The difference in opinion was starkest in 2025, when Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar explicitly denied Pakistan's willingness to participate in the Abraham Accords, pointing out that it would effectively mean state of Israel and abandonment of Pakistan's traditional stance on two state solution. Dar reiterated Pakistan's stance of seven decades, and said that recognition was tied to Palestine's statehood and Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

4.4. Pressure from Gulf States:

Perhaps one of more important impacts of Abraham Accords on Pakistan has been shift in role of Gulf states. Pakistan has very significant relations with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman. The relations with Gulf countries are economically and socially significant with millions of Pakistanis working in these countries throughout history. The Gulf countries also remunerate Pakistan in form of remittances, energy, investments, finance and Diplomatic support. UAE normalisation with Israel thus put Islamabad in a challenging situation. Pakistan was left with dilemma of having to keep a close watch on Abu Dhabi's relations while at same time rejecting its stand on Israel. This has posed a big diplomatic dilemma as Pakistan has a multi-dimensional approach towards GCC countries and its approach towards Israel is intricately linked with Palestinian issue," they wrote in their paper (2021).

4.5. Saudi Arabia as Most Important Variable:

Saudi Arabia has a special significance in future of Pak-Israel relations. Saudi Arabia's involvement in aiding the Palestinian cause has been significant in past. But Saudi foreign policy has become more pragmatic these days. Saudi Arabia's priorities are now like Vision 2030; economic diversification; technological modernization; regional security; attracting foreign investment; managing relations with Iran and strengthening ties with major global powers. Saudi Israeli normalization option has thus emerged as a significant player in strategic calculations of Pakistan. Pakistan may be subjected to more pressure if Saudi Arabia decides to normalise ties with Israel. Pakistani normalization would not automatically follow Saudi normalization. Pakistan has deep ideological inhibitions at home, a very mobilized public

discourse on Palestine and a historical constitutional and political legacy of a commitment to Muslim world.

4.6. Abraham Accords and Palestine Question:

The most controversial part of Abraham Accords is their connection to Palestinian issue. Supporters believe that normalization can lead to regional stability, economic integration, technological cooperation, dialogue and security cooperation. Palestinians have criticized Israeli measure for lowering pressure on Israel to make concessions, even though it is a step toward normalization. Palestinians have condemned Israeli measure as a “gamble that is not accompanied by any solution for Palestinian statehood.” This is a very significant separation for Pakistan. Pakistan has always believed that normalization should not come before Palestinian statehood but after. In June 2026, Palestine was the subject of such an opinion piece by Dawn which stated that the issue was a “matter of principle” for Pakistan and that Pakistan should not join Abraham Accords until Palestine’s status was finalized. This is an editorial position and not a government statement but it is indicative of the ongoing debate in the country.

4.7. Abraham Accords and Two-State Solution

Two-State Solution is counterpart to Abraham Accords. Pakistan is very pro-two state solution. This was complicated by Abraham Accords, which proved that normalization between Arabs and Israelis is possible without a Palestinian state. In this regard, there is a policy challenge in front of us: Should Pakistan go on to make Palestinian statehood a precondition for normalization with Arab countries, which are already normalizing relations with Israel without any demand for a Palestinian state? So far, Pakistan has responded with a positive response. In 2025, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's statement was specific, if not explicit, as he stated that membership in Abraham Accords would constitute a repudiation of Pakistan's longstanding stance on a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders and with *Al-Quds Al-Sharif* as its capital. Therefore, Abraham Accords have not changed Pakistan's official stance, but have complicated it even more.

4.8. Strategic Competition with Iran:

Abraham Accords also have to do with balance between Israel and Iran. Israel and Iran are still considered strategic rivals and a few of Gulf Arab countries have always been wary of Iran's regional influence. Normalization with Arab states, in turn, created new opportunities for intelligence cooperation; missile defense; maritime security; cybersecurity and countering Iranian influence. Pakistan has a land border with Iran and historical as well as geopolitical considerations to pursue positive ties with Tehran. Hence, any improvement in ties between Pakistan and Israel may pose problems for Pakistan-Iran ties. This is one of reasons, Islamabad may not be eager towards formal normalization.

4.9. Abraham Accords and India-Israel Relations:

India's strategic relations with Israel must also be considered in context of Middle East landscape. India-Israel strategic cooperation also needs to be taken into account in context of changing environment in Middle East. India and Israel have established a wide range of military, missile, drone, intelligence, cyber security, agriculture etc. cooperation. Pakistan has always seen India's relationship with Israel as a key element in its security landscape. Abraham Accords may further enhance Israel's regional strategic network, which could give rise to further concerns for Pakistan. Meanwhile, Accords could also offer a reason for Pakistan to have a degree of informal cooperation with Israel. More Israel approaches India's strategic partners; more Pakistan has a motive to learn about Israel and more sensitive Pakistan becomes toward Israel politically.

4.10. Economic and Technological Implications:

The Abraham Accords have pledged opportunities for economic cooperation between Israel and various Arab countries. Israel has particular expertise in Agriculture like drip irrigation; precision agriculture; desert farming and agricultural biotechnology. Israel has also water technology in form of desalination; wastewater recycling and water conservation. As far as Israel technology is concerned, its technology is well advanced in fields of artificial intelligence; cybersecurity; medical technologies and digital innovation. These are significant challenges for Pakistan. Abraham Accords have, therefore, raised question of opportunity costs to Pakistan for its refusal to recognize Israel. Ahmed and Abbas (2021) caution to not equate economic gains with political costs. Their analysis is that Pakistan's losses outweigh its gains in giving up its historical stance.

4.11. US Influence and Abraham Accords:

United States played a key role in development of Abraham Accords. To Washington, normalization had multiple functions: consolidating Israel's regional security to ensure its survival; building an anti-Iran security network; creating a platform for Arab-Israeli cooperation; easing diplomatic strain of Palestinian conflict and enhancing US strategic footprint. The relationship between Pakistan and United States hence becomes another aspect of problem. Washington has called for a few times on Muslim-majority countries to think about normalisation. Pakistan's response is an example of its attempt to reconcile its new policy with its old policy on Palestine.

4.12. Abraham Accords and Pakistan's Muslim Diplomatic Autonomy:

The agreements give rise to a larger issue of strategic autonomy of Pakistan. The Pakistani government has tried to maintain relations with other competing regional countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, China, United States and Gulf countries. Pakistan's membership of Abraham Accords may help enhance ties with Washington and Israel, but also complicate ties with Iran and parts of Muslim world. Absence of recognition gives Pakistan more flexibility in its diplomacy. Ahmed and Abbas (Ahmed, 2021) conclude that Pakistan has more to lose than gain from changing its historical stance. UAE is one of key economic partners of Pakistan. Normalisation with Israel brought a unique political situation into existence. Pakistan's condemnation of decision of UAE did not harm bilateral relationship in any serious way. Instead, Islamabad was to continue to have its own policy without severing ties with Abu Dhabi. This highlights one of key aspects of Pakistan's post-Abraham Accords policy—that it divorces its Israel policy from its bilateral ties with individual Arab states. That is, Pakistan can have good relations with Israel recognizing nations without having to abide by their policies. It is a real politic solution that will enable Pakistani government to evade diplomatic isolation. Türkiye is in a unique situation as it not only maintains diplomatic ties with Israel itself but also is strongly supportive of rights of Palestinians. This could be a blueprint for Pakistan. Türkiye proves that a Muslim majority country can have relations with Israel, criticize its policies, support Palestine and engage in regional diplomacy. In future, Pakistan may be able to follow a similar pattern. But domestic political climate and Pakistan's past policy is unfriendly toward Israel and immediate adoption is improbable. “Abraham Accords” have also stirred up domestic political debate in Pakistan. The question of Israel and Palestine is treated differently by different political parties, but is very much linked with discussions of Palestine. Media reports of possible Pakistan-Israel normalization were a touchy subject in September 2024, as highlighted in a Dawn report. In September 2024, another Dawn letter highlighted proposals to consider normalisation with Israel a national-security issue. These debates make it clear that Abraham Accords is no longer just a foreign-policy matter. They are also a political matter at home. The Abraham Accords show expanding variety of foreign policy interests among Muslim

majority countries. In past, there were often common points of view on Israel within framework of Muslim solidarity. In modern era, Muslim majority countries are increasingly adopting varying strategies. For instance, UAE is investing in economic modernization and strategic diversification. Saudi Arabia stresses on Vision 2030 and regional leadership. Türkiye is striving for strategic autonomy. Iran's resistance against Israel. Pakistan's focus is on Palestinian statehood and maintaining relations with Gulf states and Iran. This disintegration has compelled government to be innovative in formulation of its policy on Pakistan so that it does not assume role of a united Muslim towards Israel. The agreements are also in line with growing trend towards a multipolar Middle East. Regional actors engage in a growing pattern of independent relations with United States, China, Russia, Israel, Iran and Türkiye. Middle East is thus moving away from primal alliance among its three most important actors, namely United States, Arab world and Israel. This is a good opportunity for Pakistan. Islamabad may seek enhanced relations with Gulf countries, Iran, Türkiye, China and with Palestine as always. The diplomatic approach of Pakistan could, therefore, shift to “multi-alignment instead of alignment with any particular regional grouping.

5. Challenges Facing Pakistan and Opportunities for Pakistan after Abraham Accords:

The Abraham Accords have brought about a paradigm shift in strategic environment with their impact on the Middle East and have posed new challenges and opportunities for Pakistan's foreign policy towards Israel. In 2020, first agreements came into effect for normalizing relations between Israel and UAE and Bahrain and in 2021, another normalization deal was reached with Morocco and Sudan. The relevance of their role for Pakistan is based on the simple premise that a number of countries with whom Islamabad maintains cordial political, economic, religious and strategic ties have shifted from concerted diplomatic enmity to practical engagement with Israel. Abraham Accords, therefore, have posed a basic foreign policy problem for Pakistan. Islamabad will not make any concession on issue of diplomatic recognition of Israel without a just solution to the Palestine issue, but simultaneously it will have to keep close contacts with Gulf countries, which have established relations with Israel. Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Khurram Abbas' view in 2021 was that Pakistan was “more to lose than gain” from abandoning its historical stance and recognising Israel. The relevance of their analysis is intact as Pakistan's ties with Gulf, Palestine, Iran, China, United States and India are linked with Israel question. The modern stance is also evident. In June 2025, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar rejected Pakistan's participation in Abraham Accords and reiterated that recognition of Israel was tied to a two-state solution. In January 2026, Pakistan's Foreign Office reiterated its stance on not joining Abraham Accord but called for Palestinian self-determination and a just and lasting peace. In May 2026, again, Dar had said that Pakistan would not take any decision regarding Pakistan's stance on Israel without the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Abraham Accords, therefore, have not altered Pakistan's policy but have definitely transformed the strategic context of the policy.

5.1 Dilemma between Palestine and Relations with Arab States:

The most glaring issue for Pakistan is to balance its historical backing of Palestine with closeness of ties with Arab nations that have normalised relations with Israel. Pakistan has always been in favor of Palestinian self-determination, establishment of an independent State of Palestine, two-state solution, pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif/East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and implementation of related UN resolutions. Other Arab countries have had different relationships, but informal with Israel and formal with UAE and Bahrain. This is indeed a fundamental dilemma for Pakistan as Islamabad has “multifaceted cooperative relations with all states of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)” with a longstanding stance on

Palestine as described by Ahmed and Abbas (2021). This presents a challenge in balancing. Pakistan's relations with its Gulf partners are under pressure due to trade; remittances; employment of Pakistani manpower; energy supplies; investments; financial aid and in field of defence. Meanwhile, Pakistan's historical Palestine policy could be jeopardized by moving towards Israel in name of Gulf countries.

5.2 Pressure to Join Abraham Accords:

The second is external pressure on Pakistan to change the policy of non-recognition. In June 2025, Dawn wrote that US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff had made a recommendation for other countries to become a part of Abraham Accords. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, in reply, categorically denied Pakistan's involvement. He said that Pakistan would not recognise Israel until two-state solution is accepted. It is a lesson that Pakistan's Israel policy is becoming part of broader American and Middle Eastern diplomatic efforts. Pakistan thus finds itself in a strategic dilemma between relations with Washington and new regional configurations, should it stick to the old position on Palestine? Till now, Islamabad has opted for the latter.

5.3 Domestic Political Opposition:

Admission to Israel would create a lot of internal political turmoil. Palestinian cause has always been linked to concepts of Islamic solidarity, justice, anti-colonialism, self-determination and opposition to occupation in Pakistan's political culture. Religious parties are particularly vocal on issue. In May 2026, Dawn reported strong opposition from *Jamaat-i-Islami* and *Tehreek Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan* to calls for Pakistan to join Abraham Accords. One religious-political leader characterized accords as a "document of surrender. This shows that Abraham Accords is not just an international-relations problem. They have significant domestic political implications for Pakistan. If any government hastened to recognition, it might be subject to street demonstrations, political opposition, religious organisation, criticism by opposition parties and charges of neglect of Palestine. As a result, domestic politics is a key factor limiting policy change.

5.4. Challenge of Balancing Saudi Arabia and Iran:

Balanced relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran are one of Pakistan's most complex strategic dilemmas. Saudi Arabia is one of Pakistan's important strategic and economic partners and Iran is immediate neighbor to Pakistan in west. As this strategic dynamic shifted, Abraham Accords are tightly bound up with relationship between Israel–Saudi Arabia–Gulf States – Iran. It is possible that a closer relationship between Pakistan and Israel could be seen in Tehran as an emerging anti-Iran regional bloc, a stance that would undermine Tehran's ability to act as a key player in international community. In Tehran, a closer Pakistani relation with Israel could be interpreted as Islamabad moving closer to an emerging anti-Iran region. This would be a serious issue as Pakistan requires Iran for border security, regional stability, trade, energy cooperation, in controlling militancy, which is crossing border and in diplomatic communication. Hence, Pakistan has great interests to remain out of this rigid alignment between Israel and Gulf and US against Iran.

5.5. The Challenge of India-Israel Strategic Cooperation:

The other big issue is the growing linkages between the two countries, India and Israel. Israel is an important defense and technology partner to India in a range of technologies from missiles to drones, surveillance, intelligence, cyber security, military technology, and border security. The Abraham Accords from Pakistan's viewpoint could lead to deepening Israel's involvement into India's broader strategic ecosystem. This puts us in a dilemma. There may be an incentive for Pakistan to involve Israel just because of strong relations Pakistan has with India. But domestic political costs also could arise in a normalization scenario. Thus, Pakistan is in what

one may term 'paradox of Pakistan and Israel', an incentive to know more about Israel has grown as relationship with India has improved, while a suspicion of Israel has grown stronger in Pakistan's political circles. This is one of reasons why informal or indirect recognition might be more appealing than formal recognition.

5.6. Challenge of Maintaining Strategic Autonomy:

Pakistan has always tried to remain free from any outside power. Its modern foreign policy is with China, United States, Saudi Arabia and UAE, Iran, Türkiye, Qatar, Russia, and Central Asian countries. Pakistan may be able to inch closer to a strategic framework between US and Israel and Gulf nations in event of its joining Abraham Accords. This would limit Islamabad's diplomatic maneuverability. Thus, broader geopolitical relationship of Pakistan comes to the forefront in considering pros and cons of the Israel recognition issue as Ahmed and Abbas (2021) point out. These conflicting strategic ties are among reasons they have drawn such a conclusion that Pakistan has "more to lose than gain."

5.7. The Challenge of Preserving Pakistan's Diplomatic Credibility:

Self-determination, international law, UN resolutions, Palestinian rights are repeated points emphasized by Pakistan. Kashmir issue also plays a crucial role in Pakistan's foreign policy. If we forfeit Palestine without making a substantial settlement, then there will be an allegation of inconsistency. So, if we renounce Palestine without making any substantial settlement, then there will be an allegation of inconsistency. Pakistani position on issue of self-determination can be summarized as "Self-determination is to be consistently applied to people living under disputed and occupied territories. If Pakistan had accepted Israel without Palestine as a condition, then critics could say that Pakistan is playing fast and loose with principle of Islam. This is not only Palestine as a foreign policy concern, but also a part of Pakistan's foreign policy values."

5.8. Economic Challenges:

One of reasons for signing Abraham Accords is that Israeli technology and investments could be available. Israel possesses vast experience in water conservation, desalination, agriculture technology, irrigation, cybersecurity, medical technology, artificial intelligence and renewable energy. Pakistan has much to do in all these aspects regarding development. Therefore, a failure to recognize could result in an opportunity cost. This argument should not be overstated, though. Various technologies can be imported indirectly by Pakistan from other countries, including those of Gulf countries, which are already cooperating with Israel. The economic problem is not just "recognition versus no technology." It depends on if Pakistan is able to acquire Israeli-origin technology without the process of normalizing relations.

6. Opportunities Created by Abraham Accords:

Abraham Accords have also ushered in significant opportunities for Pakistan, despite these challenges. The new Middle Eastern setting provides Pakistan with an opportunity to hold relations with both countries that recognize Israel and with those who oppose to Israeli policies. Pakistan can thus opt for 'multi-alignment' strategy. It can uphold a positive relationship with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Türkiye, Iran, China and the United States, without recognizing Israel. This is significant diplomatic benefit. Pakistan may have a role to play in Middle East diplomacy in a unique manner. Pakistan has close ties with Saudi Arabia, relations with Iran, close ties with Türkiye, extensive ties with Gulf states, relations with China, a pro-Palestinian stance and a high level of diplomatic experience in OIC. This has placed Pakistan in a potentially useful geo-political position as a bridge building state. Pakistan may try instead to help mediate between Arab powers, Iran, Türkiye, Palestinians, Israel and the great powers,

rather than being a part of Abraham Accords. This would help Pakistan to make their policy of non-recognition a strength rather than a weakness.

6.2. Opportunity for Pakistan as a Potential Mediator:

The ties with Saudi Arabia are of special significance to Pakistan. The evolving regional landscape offers opportunities for Pakistan to enhance its cooperation with Riyadh in fields of defense, investment, energy, trade, food security, technology and infrastructure. Importantly, Pakistan doesn't have to recognize Israel in order to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia. Indeed, keeping an independent Palestine policy would enable Pakistan to play a unique role in Saudi-led regional scenario. Particularly noteworthy are latest regional developments. This shows that Pakistan's strategic importance in Middle East is growing not just due to its involvement in an Israel-centric security framework, but also through security cooperation with Muslim states.

6.3. Opportunity for Greater Cooperation with Türkiye:

Türkiye represents an important diplomatic model for Pakistan. Türkiye maintains diplomatic relations with Israel but continues to strongly advocate Palestinian rights. Pakistan could study this approach without necessarily adopting it immediately. The Turkish experience demonstrates that diplomatic relations and political disagreement are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This could eventually provide Pakistan with a possible middle ground between complete non-engagement and full normalization.

6.4. Opportunity for Economic and Technological Cooperation:

Abraham Accords have sparked new levels of economic engagement between Israel and Gulf countries. There is possibility of indirect benefit for Pakistan. Pakistani companies, for instance, could partner up with UAE or Bahraini companies that have ties with Israeli companies. Sectors that may have potential include Agriculture, Water Security, Cybersecurity and healthcare. Advanced irrigation technology and precision-agriculture technologies could be brought to Pakistan through partnership with Gulf. Desalination, wastewater recycling and water efficiency technology are possibilities that Pakistan could consider. There is a scope of strengthening cyber-resilience of Pakistan by enhancing cooperation with third countries. The possibility of commercial relationships with the region for commercialization of Israeli medical technology can be discussed. This way, Pakistan could enjoy the benefits of the region's change without giving up on its current stance on Palestine.

6.5. Opportunity for Economic Diplomacy with Gulf:

Abraham Accords have brought about new economic networks that connect. Pakistan can join these new networks by using its linkage with Gulf countries. Islamabad should not view accords as a purely political phenomenon but as a part of larger economic shift in Middle East. This would enable Pakistan to broaden its export, logistics, food security cooperation, investment, digital services, labour mobility and infrastructure partnership with Pakistan. Most feasible option for Pakistan is limited engagement without official acknowledgment. This is a strategy that has been followed in Pakistan in the past. The foreign ministers of two countries also held a public meeting in 2005 in Istanbul while Musharraf was in office. That experience proves that Pakistan can abide by its formal policy and still meet with Israeli officials when it's required. This could be applied to humanitarian topics, international conferences, UN diplomacy, hostage takings, ceasefire talks, regional security and humanitarian assistance. This would enable Pakistan to have greater flexibility in its diplomacy without formally participating in the Abraham Accords.

6.6. Opportunity to Strengthen Palestinian Cause:

Surprisingly, refusal by Pakistan to recognize Israel might end up benefiting Islamabad in terms of an active role in Palestinian diplomacy. Pakistan can Urge Palestinian Statehood and offer

helping hand for humanitarian aid. Pakistan should facilitate ceasefires, and involve international community in this by supporting reconstruction and by involving OIC platform and encourage Arab-Israeli dialogue on the Palestinian issue. It may help Pakistan's reputation as a principled and diplomatic nation.

6.7. Opportunity through Multilateral Diplomacy:

Pakistan has capacity to promote a negotiated settlement through United Nations; OIC; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; diplomatic relations with China; relations with Türkiye; relations with Gulf countries. The goal of Pakistan does not have to be aimed at Israel's isolation. Rather, it can promote a diplomatic path that links normalization with tangible strides in movement for Palestinian rights. This would make Pakistan a constructive player in diplomacy instead of a non-recognizing state. There is opportunity to negotiate a Conditional Policy. Pakistan may be able to develop a more definitive long-term policy on conditional normalization. The policy should include a commitment on Pakistan's part to engaging in diplomatic ties with Israel in the event of realization of two-state solution, being implemented in a credible fashion with maintenance of Palestinian territorial integrity, with status of Jerusalem being determined through negotiations, with respect to international law, and with a commitment to protection of Palestinian security and political rights. This would safeguard the principles of Pakistan and would not make the Israel policy rigid.

7. Future Prospects of Pakistan in Its Foreign Policy towards Israel

One of the most discussed subjects in Pakistan's foreign relations is Pakistan's future foreign policy towards Israel. Since that time, Pakistan has been consistently opposed to recognition of Israel and has set condition of normalization for a just solution to Palestinian issue. Due to changing geopolitical dynamics, normalization with Arabs and Israelis, strategic cooperation between India and Israel, economic issues and evolving regional dynamics, however, future of Pakistan-Israel relations has again been put under discussion. Although a shift in policy is unlikely to happen overnight, some scholars state that Pakistan might take a more pragmatic stance towards Israel in future without compromising its historic stance of support for Palestinian self-determination. Pakistani policy can thus be analyzed in light of following scenarios.

7.1. Continuation of Status Quo:

The immediate future outlook is most likely to be continuation of Pakistan policy of non-recognition of Israel and a strong policy of support for Palestine. Repeatedly, Pakistan has expressed its commitment that it would recognize Israel only in context of an independent Palestinian state. This position is popular and has become a part of the Pakistani mindset. The ideology of Pakistan's foreign policy as dictated by its commitment towards Palestine, the influence of status of an Islamic republic and public opinion in Pakistan is rooted in foreign policy of Pakistan towards Palestine-Israel conflict as stated by Qadeer et al. (Qadeer, 2026). Likewise, Shahid and Ahmad suggest that Pakistan's stance on Arab-Israel conflict continues to be historically rooted in backing cause of Palestine and rejecting any form of occupation. (Shahid, 2026) In this situation, Pakistan has decided not to recognize state. Palestine is at heart of foreign policy. Cooperation to Israel is still an informal and indirect one. Political peace at home is maintained. Another option is to increase unofficial contacts without official recognition. In past, Pakistan and Israel have had a few secret chats. The most significant one was 2005 meeting between Pakistani Foreign Minister *Khurshid Kasuri* and Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom. Political pragmatism had forced Pakistan to deal with Israel, albeit in secret, says P.R. Kumaraswamy. Future cooperation could take place in fields of Intelligence sharing, Counterterrorism, cybersecurity, agriculture, water management and Disaster

response. Engagement would be beneficial for Pakistan both in terms of gaining Israeli know-how and the political price of formal recognition.

7.2. Recognition Following a Palestinian Settlement:

Many scholars believe that most realistic way towards normalization would follow a negotiation of Palestinian issue. Pakistani-Israeli normalisation, Kumaraswamy argues, could be an appropriate time if there is a meaningful resolution to Israel's conflict with Palestinians. This is official policy of Pakistan since its independence. In event that future peace talks result in an independent Palestinian state, International guarantees for Palestinian rights and acceptance by major Muslim states. Pakistan would have more room for diplomatic maneuvering in matter of recognition. The benefits would be that recognition in such a case would have a positive impact on Pakistan's relations with Western countries, greater access to advanced technologies and more trade opportunities, and less diplomatic isolation on Middle East affairs.

7.3. Influence of Arab-Israeli Normalization

Abraham Accords had an important impact on regional landscape. Normalization pacts between Israel and other Arab nations like UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan undermined prevailing Arab consensus against Israel. Muhammad Fahim says, "It was strongly felt that a formal shift by Arab world towards Israel normalisation will make Pakistan re-evaluate her policy on Israel. Pakistan did not immediately change its stance, but if Saudi-Israeli normalisation happens in future, it will be even more important for Pakistan to reconsider their policy. (Fahim, 2021) Saudi Arabia's current role is seen as vital given that Middle East policy of Pakistan has always been shaped by Riyadh's choices, scholars suggest.

7.4. Economic and Technological Opportunities:

In economic field, one important future prospect is the cooperation. Israel has become a world leader in fields of Agricultural technology, Water conservation, Artificial intelligence, Cybersecurity, Medical innovation and renewable energy. There is a view that Pakistani people's involvement with Israel might aid them in their food security, water shortage and technological modernization issues. Javaid, Tauqir and Khan note, discussions on recognition and perceived economic and strategic advantages for Pakistan have been intermingled. (Javaid, 2014) Cooperation areas, which are considered include Agricultural Innovation, Water Management and Technology Transfer. Israel's cutting-edge irrigation technologies could be a solution to Pakistan's water scarcity and inefficiency challenges in agriculture. The water scarcity crisis and climate challenges in Pakistan are escalating. Solutions in realm of desalination and water recycling may be provided by Israeli experience. Technology alliances may play a role in the economic modernization and digital transformation of Pakistan.

7.5. Countering Strategic Impact of Indo-Israeli Relations:

The growing Indo-Israeli relations is another future related factor. Now Israel is one of the biggest suppliers of military aid to India including supply of missile systems, surveillance technologies, drones and intelligence cooperation. Complete diplomatic isolation from Israel has been suggested to be constraining Pakistan's role in shaping and understanding the strategic aspects of Indo-Israeli engagement. Hence, some analysts have suggested limited engagement to gain insight into Israelis' strategic motivation, to reduce diplomatic imbalance and diversify Pakistan's international relations.

7.6. Emergence of a Pragmatic Foreign Policy Framework:

There are some that want to shift from ideology to strategic pragmatism. Hassan Virk believes Pakistan's foreign policy has been hampered many times in past due to domestic political and religious factors and suggests an interest-based approach to Israel policy. Virk cautioned that Foreign policy should not be shaped only on basis of ideology, but should also be based on

national interests and strategic realities, as well as long-term objectives. In this context, Pakistan would continue to support Palestine and would also seek to increase the unofficial cooperation with Israel by facilitating issue-based ties and keeping an open mind on the matter of realising its recognition. Although it might appear that there are a number of new possibilities, there are also some major hurdles that are yet to be cleared. The attitude of the masses is overwhelmingly pro-Pakistan pro-Palestine in Pakistan. The Islamic identity is still a defining factor in foreign policy preferences in Pakistan. Pakistan often makes comparisons between the Palestinian and Kashmir issue. It is Pakistan's own policies and policies of others that have made it reflect Kashmir and Palestine conflicts as a country supporting oppressed Muslim people," say Farid and Sarwar (Farid, (2025).) Formal recognition of Israel by any government would probably run into great opposition from political parties, civil society organizations, opposition movements and Sections of the media.

8. Conclusion:

The Abraham Accords marked one of the most significant shifts in regional order of present Middle East arena and also brought forth certain important implications for longstanding policy of Pakistan towards Israel. Islamabad has never recognized Israel since its foundation in 1947 mainly due to its desire for establishment of an independent Palestinian state, Palestinian opposition to occupation, Islamic solidarity and domestic political opinion. The advent of Abraham Accords in 2020, however, changed strategic context, in which this policy operates. The normalization of relations between Israel and United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and later Morocco and Sudan, showed that some Muslim-majority and Arab states were more willing than ever before to divorce relations with Israel from need to solve issue of Palestinians. The situation has brought in new diplomatic challenges, strategic quandaries, and opportunities for Pakistan. This study's main thesis is that regional environment of Pakistan's Israel policy has been significantly impacted more by presence of Abraham Accords than by policy itself. Pakistan is not moving towards formal normalisation like UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, or other states. Instead, Islamabad has stuck to traditional stance that recognition of Israel can only be linked with a just and durable resolution of Palestinian issue and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. This continuity reflects strength of historical identity and norm commitments in Pakistan foreign policy. In meantime, however, evolving Middle East landscape has made Pakistan's policy on the issue more complicated. In this context, Pakistan needs to develop its own Israel policy as it has some of its closest partners who have diplomatic, trade, security and technological ties with Israel. Constructivism and Neoclassical realism are two theories that can be effectively used in understanding the findings of the study. Constructivism offers an account of continued relevance of identity, norms, historical memory and Palestinian cause in Pakistan's foreign policy. Wendt's remark "identities are the basis of interests" is of great significance as idea of national roles in Pakistan cannot be divorced from Muslim identity, and historical support for Palestine. Palestinian issue is entrenched in Pakistani foreign policy, political rhetoric and public awareness. Therefore, recognition of Israel is not seen just as a typical diplomatic move that can be made on economic or strategic grounds. It carries important normative and political connotations. Neoclassical realism, however, attributes this to the reason why Pakistan cannot afford to ignore shifting of power and interests in the Middle East. Abraham Accords have boosted economic and strategic ties between Israel and portions of Arab world, established new security ties, and reshaped regional dynamics between Iran, Gulf nations, United States and Israel. Pakistan must therefore make response to such system developments subject to prism of political and institutional developments on domestic scene. Domestic structures and decision-making processes that shape foreign-policy behavior

are at least as important as international pressures, as Rose (1998) claims. Pakistan's reaction to Abraham Accords is a perfect example of how external strategic challenges play into domestic political limitations.

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