

Normalisation Agreements and Their Implications on the Palestinian Cause

– A Regional and Arab Perspective with Focus on Economic, Political and Social Implications

Introduction

The normalisation agreements between some Arab states and the occupying state of Israel have fundamentally reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. These accords, including the Camp David Accords (1978), the Oslo Accords (1993–1995), and the more recent Abraham Accords (2020), have allowed the occupying state of Israel to systematically integrate into the region, often at the expense of Palestinian rights and aspirations. Rather than fostering peace and stability, these agreements have perpetuated the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory, undermined Palestinian sovereignty, and fragmented Arab unity (Rabbani, 2020; El Kurd, 2022).

The normalisation process began with Egypt's signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, followed by the Oslo Accords in 1993–1995, which permitted limited diplomatic engagement but failed to guarantee Palestinian sovereignty. The Wadi Araba Treaty with Jordan in 1994 further entrenched this trend. The Abraham Accords in 2020 marked a significant acceleration of normalisation efforts, with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco establishing relations with the occupying state of Israel without securing any endorsement and safeguarding of Palestinian rights.

The normalisation of relations between some Arab states and the occupying state of Israel is rooted in a mixture of economic incentives, national priorities, and geopolitical strategies. Some States have chosen normalisation for seeking international legitimacy especially from the United States, while others have viewed it as a chance to gain economic interest. This section examines how these incentives are intertwined to shape the region's economic future and the ongoing Palestinian struggle for justice and sovereignty.

This bulletin provides a comprehensive analysis of the normalisation process from both a regional and Arab perspective, focusing on its economic, political, and social implications. By examining the incentives behind these agreements, their consequences for the Palestinian struggle, and the broader regional dynamics, this analysis aims to shed light on the complex interplay between state interests and collective Arab solidarity.





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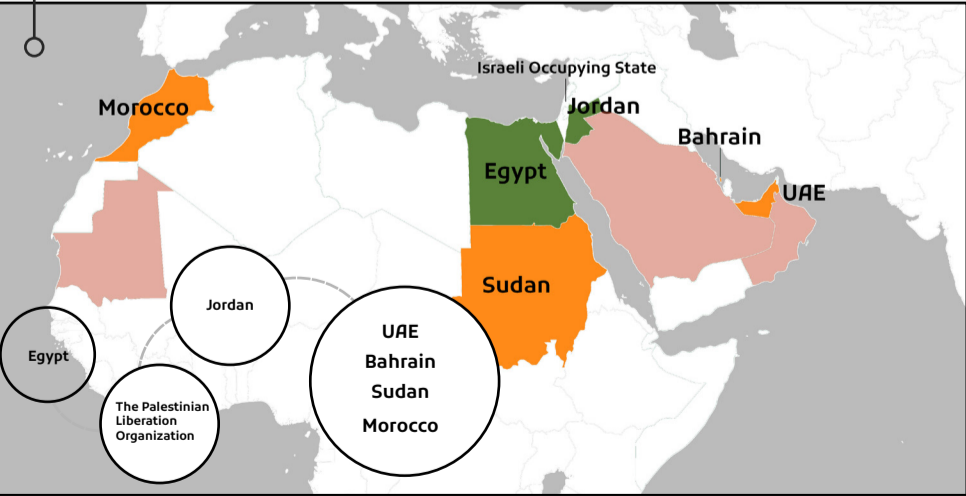


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1. Historical Context of normalisation

The normalisation process between some Arab states and the occupying state of Israel has evolved over several decades, marked by key agreements that have progressively integrated the occupying state of Israel into the region while marginalizing and sidelining the Palestinian cause.

- **Camp David Accords (1978):** Egypt became the first Arab state to normalize relations with the occupying state of Israel, signing a peace treaty in exchange for the withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. While this agreement ended the state of war between the two governments, it was widely criticized for sidelining Palestinian rights and aspirations (Rabbani, 2020).
- **Oslo Accords (1993–1995):** These agreements established limited Palestinian self-rule in parts of the occupied territory but failed to agree on core issues such as borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. Instead, they allowed the occupation state to deepen its control over Palestinian land while maintaining the façade of a peace process (El Kurd, 2022).
- **Wadi Araba Treaty (1994):** After Jordan’s role in the Madrid Conference in 1992, Jordan took steps to follow Egypt’s path by normalizing relations with the occupying state of Israel in exchange for economic benefits and security assurances. Though it is important to mention that this only happened after one year of the signing of the Declaration of Principles and Oslo Agreement (1993-1995). However, public sentiment in Jordan remained largely opposed to normalisation, reflecting a deep-seated solidarity with the Palestinian cause (Steinberg, 2021).
- **Abraham Accords (2020):** The most recent wave of normalisation saw the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Bahrain, Sudan, and Kingdom of Morocco establish formal relations with the occupation state. These accords were not contingent on any sidelining for Palestinian rights, marking a significant departure from the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which tied normalisation to the establishment of a Palestinian state (Rabbani, 2020).



Arab Peace Initiative (API) (2002): The API conditioned normalization of relations between the Arab States and the occupying state of Israel upon strict conditions. The API, proposed by Saudi Arabia and endorsed by the Arab League in 2002, outlined conditions for normalizing relations between Arab states and the occupying state of Israel. It called for a full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, to the June 4, 1967, lines (Arab Peace Initiative, 2002). Additionally, it stipulated a just and agreed-upon solution to the Palestinian refugee question in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194, ensuring either the right of return or compensation. The initiative also demanded the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. In return, Arab states would consider the “Arab-Israeli conflict” ended, provide security for all states in the region, and establish full diplomatic and economic relations with the occupation state (Arab Peace Initiative, 2002). Despite broad Arab consensus, the occupying state of Israel has never officially accepted the plan, and successive Israeli governments have rejected key provisions, particularly those related to territorial withdrawal and refugee rights.

These agreements have collectively played key roles in shaping the regional presence of the occupying state of Israel, making room for secure economic partnerships, and consolidating the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

2. Economic Motivations Behind normalisation

Economic incentives have been a primary driver behind the normalisation agreements. Arab states involved in these accords have sought to diversify their economies, attract foreign investment, and gain access to advanced technologies. However, these economic benefits often come at the expense of Palestinian rights and aspirations (El Kurd, 2022; Saleh, 2023).

Egypt and Jordan: Egypt and Jordan have historically utilised their strategic positions to foster international partnerships and secure economic assistance. Egypt’s administration of the Rafah border crossing of Gaza and Jordan’s custodianship of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem have played critical roles in shaping their diplomatic relations. Jordan has also benefited from projects such as the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) and the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal, which aims to pump water from the Red Sea to a desalination plant in Aqaba, with half of the water allocated to Jordan (World Bank, 2013).



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In 2023, **Egypt** received approximately \$1.43 billion in aid from U.S. agencies, with similar amounts requested for subsequent years, highlighting the country’s strategic importance to the U.S. (American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, n.d.). Meanwhile, Jordan continues to receive over \$1.2 billion annually in U.S. aid, reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of regional security efforts (Foreign Policy, 2023). While these economic benefits showcase the importance of their geopolitical roles, challenges persist. Recent policy reviews, such as the temporary suspension of certain foreign aid programs by the U.S. government, underscore the complexities and potential vulnerabilities tied to reliance on external assistance (Politico, 2025).

United Arab Emirates (UAE): The UAE has leveraged its normalisation with the occupying state of Israel to create new business opportunities in sectors such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed in 2022 is expected to increase bilateral trade by 30% and up to \$3.3 billion by 2025. While these partnerships enhance the UAE’s economic diversification, they also contribute to the occupying state’s economic integration into the region, further marginalizing the Palestinian economy (Statista, 2024; Abraham Accords Peace Institute, 2023).

Morocco: Morocco’s normalisation was motivated by both economic and political factors. In exchange for establishing relations with the occupying state of Israel, the United States recognized Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara, a region rich in resources. This diplomatic realignment has facilitated economic cooperation between Morocco and the occupation state, particularly in agriculture, renewable energy, and tourism, all the while sidelining the Palestinian issue (Sajjad-pour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

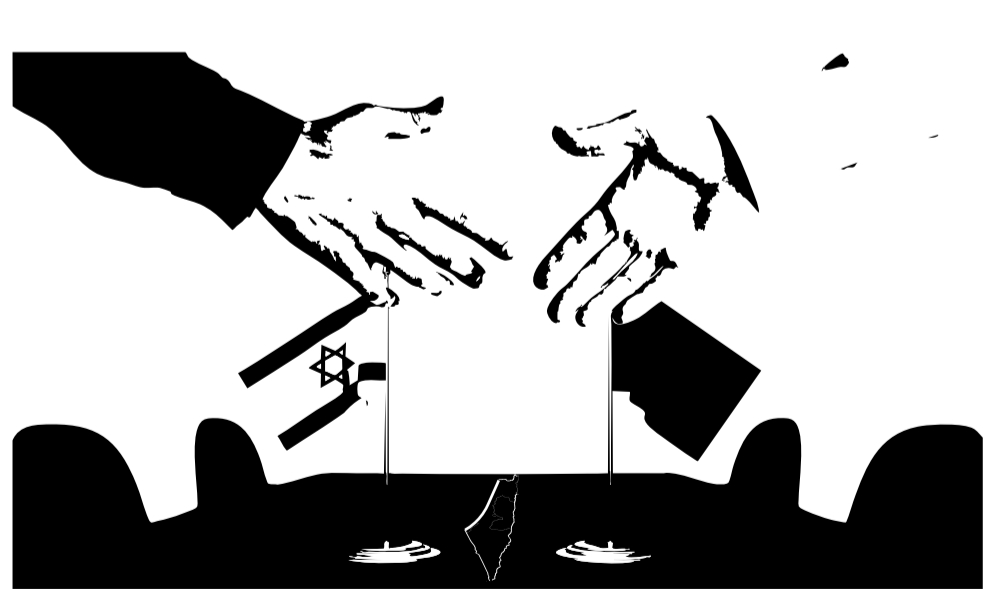
Sudan: Sudan’s decision to normalize relations was driven by economic desperation. With its economy in shambles—hyperinflation exceeding 200% and a national debt of more than \$60 billion—Sudan has pursued normalisation as a way to gain international relief (Sudan Tribune, 2021). The promise of the United States lifting Sudan from its list of state sponsors of ‘terrorism’ and the possibility of obtaining International Monetary Fund (IMF) support encouraged Sudan’s leadership to establish relations with the occupying state of Israel. However, this strategy has placed Sudan in a position to be accused of selling out its long-standing solidarity with Palestine in exchange for temporary economic relief.

Risks or Opportunities? Economic Dependency and Regional Fragmentation

The normalisation process comes with substantial risks. Normalizing states must consider the potential dangers of economic dependency, regional fragmentation, and public backlash. Smaller economies, in particular, may lack the negotiating leverage to secure favorable terms, potentially becoming economically dependent on the occupying state of Israel. This dependency may compromise their economic sovereignty and expose them to external political and economic pressures, especially concerning critical sectors like technology and foreign investment.

The formation of new economic alliances has the potential to contribute to regional fragmentation. The creation of exclusive economic blocs like the Amman-Baghdad-Cairo (ABC) Agreement exemplifies how the region seeks to enhance cooperation in energy, agriculture, and infrastructure (Atlantic Council, 2022). However, these alliances risk excluding countries that reject normalisation with the occupying state of Israel, such as Lebanon, Syria, and Algeria. As normalisation accelerates, these non-participating states are increasingly marginalized from regional trade networks and investment ‘opportunities’ or incentives, deepening economic and political divisions (Arab Reform Initiative, 2021).

In some instances, normalisation has led to notable gains in the energy sector, aligning with economic diversification strategies. The UAE’s partnerships with Israeli firms in renewable energy and water desalination demonstrate efforts to implement its long-term diversification goals. Similarly, Egypt has capitalized on energy cooperation by importing Israeli natural gas and exporting liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe, reinforcing its role in global energy markets. This \$15 billion energy partnership underscores the depth of Egypt’s economic integration with the occupying state while simultaneously increasing Egypt’s reliance on Israeli gas amid volatile global energy markets (FocusEconomics, 2022).



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Moreover, The Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which includes Palestine as a member, the occupying state of Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, aims to coordinate gas exploration and export in the region. Yet despite Palestine’s membership, European countries, seeking alternatives to Russian gas, who have shown growing interest in the EMGF, are positioning the occupying state and its Arab partners at the center of global energy security strategies. However, Palestine gets treated all-the-same as excluded countries, such as Lebanon and Syria, which reject normalisation, further excluding non-participating states from lucrative energy markets (Steinberg, 2021). The United States has actively supported these energy collaborations, aligning them with its broader geopolitical objectives. Moreover, Washington views the occupation state’s integration into regional energy projects as a strategy to counter Iranian influence and safeguard global energy security. Hence, by promoting energy cooperation between the occupation and Gulf states, the U.S. reduces its direct involvement in regional energy production while benefiting from the economic stability of its allies (Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

However, these energy partnerships come with significant long-term risks. Countries like Jordan and, to a lesser extent, Bahrain risk becoming overly dependent on Israeli energy resources and technology. Such dependency could compromise their policy autonomy and expose them to political and economic pressures. Additionally, the prioritization of bilateral energy agreements weakens unified Arab efforts to support the Palestinian cause, further fragmenting the region’s collective stance (El Kurd, 2022). Despite the occupying state’s expanding energy partnerships, Palestinians remain excluded from regional energy projects. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians are denied access to energy resources and infrastructure development, deepening economic disparities and reinforcing the occupation’s control over Palestinian livelihoods (Arab Reform Initiative, 2021).

In Summary, energy sector collaborations between some Arab states and the occupying state of Israel offer significant economic and strategic benefits, such as regional energy security, diversified energy portfolios, and foreign investment. However, these agreements have also entrenched economic dependency, marginalised no-normalising states, and further eroded Palestinian economic rights. The incentives behind normalisation are complex: while some states have gained economically, others face isolation, as exclusive economic blocs and trade agreements threaten fracturing regional unity and undermining collective Arab efforts to support Palestinian rights. Given these dynamics, these partnerships warrant close scrutiny—not only for their short-term gains but for their long-term impact on the region’s energy landscape and geopolitical balance, economic sovereignty, and the Palestinian right to self-determination.

3. Political and Strategic Drivers of normalisation

Beyond economic incentives, strategic and political calculations have played a central role in the normalisation process. Some Arab states have pursued normalisation to counter regional threats, secure closer ties with the United States, and maintain stability (El Kurd, 2022; Quamar, 2023). Countries like Egypt and Jordan have received economic aid, military support, and political protection (El Kurd, 2022).

Countering Iran

Normalization has geopolitical consequences. Alliances between Israel and some Gulf states, supported by the United States, have intensified regional rivalries, particularly with Iran. This growing alignment risks escalating militarization in the region while diverting attention from pressing domestic issues such as youth unemployment, economic inequality, and political reform (Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023). A significant factor driving normalisation has been the perceived need to counter Iran’s influence in the region. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states like the UAE and Bahrain view Iran as a direct security threat and have aligned with the occupying state of Israel to enhance their security capabilities. Intelligence sharing and military cooperation with Israel have become key components of this strategy (El Kurd, 2022).

Securing Political Support

Normalization has also been used as means to secure closer ties with the administration of the United States. Countries like Bahrain and Sudan have received economic aid, military equipment, and political protection in exchange for normalizing relations with the occupation state.

4. Social Implications of Normalisation

The normalisation process has revealed a significant disconnect between government actions and public sentiment across the Arab world. While governments have pursued normalisation for economic and strategic benefits, public opposition to these agreements remains strong, reflecting enduring solidarity with the Palestinian cause (El Kurd, 2022).

Public Opposition and Grassroots Resistance

One of the most significant outcomes of normalisation is the growing disconnect between governments and their people. In many Arab states, normalisation decisions were made without public consultation, often against widespread public opposition. In countries like Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, widespread protests have erupted in response to normalisation agreements. Civil society organizations, trade unions, and political parties have actively resisted these accords, highlighting the gap between state policies and popular sentiment (Arab Reform Initiative, 2021).

Furthermore, Cultural normalisation has further marginalized the Palestinian cause. Media campaigns, cultural exchanges, and academic partnerships aim to normalize relations with the occupying state of Israel and soften public opposition. In Morocco, student groups and faculty members protested against proposed academic collaborations with Israeli universities, arguing that such partnerships would legitimize Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Similarly, in Bahrain, public demonstrations against normalisation have been met with government crackdowns, underscoring the regime's efforts to suppress dissent. These internal pressures raise critical concerns about the political and economic viability of normalisation in the long run reflecting public resistance to cultural normalisation; as such initiatives attempt to reshape societal perceptions of the occupying state and diminish the historical narrative of Palestinian resistance. (El Kurd, 2022).

Additionally, normalisation has deepened socio-economic disparities. Economic benefits from normalisation have disproportionately favored political elites and business conglomerates, leaving the general population marginalized. This dynamic is evident in Morocco and Bahrain, where public frustration has grown due to the perception that normalisation benefits only the wealthy and entrenched political elites (Arab Reform Initiative, 2021).

5. Countries Opposed to normalisation

Despite the recent wave of normalisation, several Arab states remain firmly opposed to establishing relations with the occupation state. These countries, driven by ideological commitments, geopolitical considerations, and public sentiment, continue to support the Palestinian cause (El Kurd, 2022; Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

However, opposing normalisation often came at a price. States such as Syria, Lebanon, and Algeria have resisted normalisation, resulting in further economic isolation. Lebanon, struggling with political instability and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion, remains excluded from lucrative energy partnerships, notably the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which includes Israel, Egypt, and Jordan (Steinberg, 2021).

Iran, positioning itself as a leader of the "Axis of Resistance," supports various groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and factions in Syria and Yemen, all of which oppose Israeli occupation. Iran's opposition to normalisation is grounded in its ideological commitment to Palestinian rights and its strategic goal of countering U.S. and Israeli influence in the region (Middle East Eye, 2023).

Lebanon's stance against normalisation is deeply intertwined with its national narrative of resistance to Israeli aggression. Hezbollah, a powerful political and military organization, views any engagement with the Israeli state as a betrayal of both Palestinian and Lebanese interests. Public sentiment in Lebanon overwhelmingly supports this anti-normalisation position, reflecting the country's long-standing solidarity with Palestine (Saleh, 2023).

Syria's opposition to normalisation is also closely linked to the illegal occupation the occupying state of Israel is practicing over the Golan Heights, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967. Iraq has taken a legislative step in opposition to normalisation by passing a law in 2022 that makes any attempt to establish relations with Israel illegal. This law reflects both governmental policy and popular sentiment, reinforcing Iraq's historical solidarity with the Palestinian cause (El Kurd, 2022).

Kuwait stands out among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for its unwavering opposition to normalisation with Israel. The Kuwaiti government has consistently maintained that any normalisation will only occur once an independent Palestinian state is established with East Jerusalem as its capital (INSS, 2020).



Palestinians protest in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip against Israel's normalisation deals with Arab countries on 15 September 2020 [SAID KHATIB/AFP via Getty Images]



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6. Conclusion and Future Projections

The recent wave of normalisation agreements between several Arab states and the occupying state of Israel has opened new avenues for economic integration and geopolitical realignment in the region. These accords have facilitated growth in trade, investment, and energy cooperation, yet they also carry profound long-term risks, such as economic dependency, political instability, and social fragmentation (El Kurd, 2022; Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

Wealthy states like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Morocco have strategically leveraged normalisation to break into strategic sectors such as technology, defence, and renewable energy, thereby strengthening their foothold in international markets. However, this economic integration has also exacerbated the economic marginalisation of Palestinians and widened regional inequalities (El Kurd, 2022). Smaller and economically fragile states, including Sudan and Bahrain, face the danger of becoming excessively reliant on Israeli technology and foreign investments, a dependency that threatens their long-term economic sovereignty and political independence (Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

Politically, normalisation has fragmented the historical Arab consensus on Palestine and eroded regional solidarity. Countries opposing normalisation—Lebanon, Syria, and Algeria—now risk economic isolation as new regional alliances and economic blocs coalesce around the occupying state. In addition, the suppression of public dissent in normalizing countries and the marginalisation of civil society have weakened democratic processes and eroded the collective Arab stance on Palestinian self-determination (El Kurd, 2022).

This dynamic provokes critical questions about the future of normalisation and its broader ramifications for the region. Will the economic ‘gains’ from normalisation foster sustainable, inclusive development? Can non-normalizing states develop alternative economic partnerships to avoid isolation, or will geopolitical pressures compel them toward normalisation? Most importantly, how will these evolving dynamics impact the Palestinian struggle for sovereignty and justice? The past genocide in Gaza and the continued expansion of illegal settlements by the occupying state underscore the fragility of regional stability and the volatility of normalisation agreements. Amid shifting regional and global political landscapes, it remains unclear whether normalisation will contribute to regional economic resilience or exacerbate existing tensions and divisions (Middle East Council, 2025).

Looking ahead, the trajectory of normalisation may expand further, especially in light of growing geopolitical tensions. However, the long-term viability of these agreements depends on whether Arab states can balance economic ambitions with political autonomy and accountability to their people. Inclusive economic development, meaningful public engagement

in policy-making, and a renewed commitment to Palestinian rights are crucial factors that could shape the future of normalisation (Sajjadpour & Sadeghinia, 2023).

The return of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency in 2025 has significant implications for the region, particularly concerning the Abraham Accords, which were a hallmark of his first term. Trump’s administration is expected to intensify efforts to expand these agreements, potentially bringing more Arab states into normalisation with the occupying state of Israel. This could lead to further economic integration and geopolitical shifts in the region. However, it also raises concerns about deepening economic dependencies and political realignments that may not align with the interests of all regional actors. The renewed U.S. support for the occupation state under Trump’s leadership may embolden Israeli policies that do not recognise Palestinian rights (Middle East Council, 2025). Additionally, it remains unknown that Trump’s return could exacerbate regional tensions, particularly with Iran, and influence the dynamics of existing and emerging alliances in the region, as it could go in a completely opposite direction as well. **Could it not?**

In essence, the economic normalisation of relations with the occupying state of Israel presents a complex and multilayered challenge. The rapidly evolving regional landscape demands a critical examination of the long-term consequences of these agreements.



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