



Normalisation Agreements and Their Implications on the Palestinian Cause

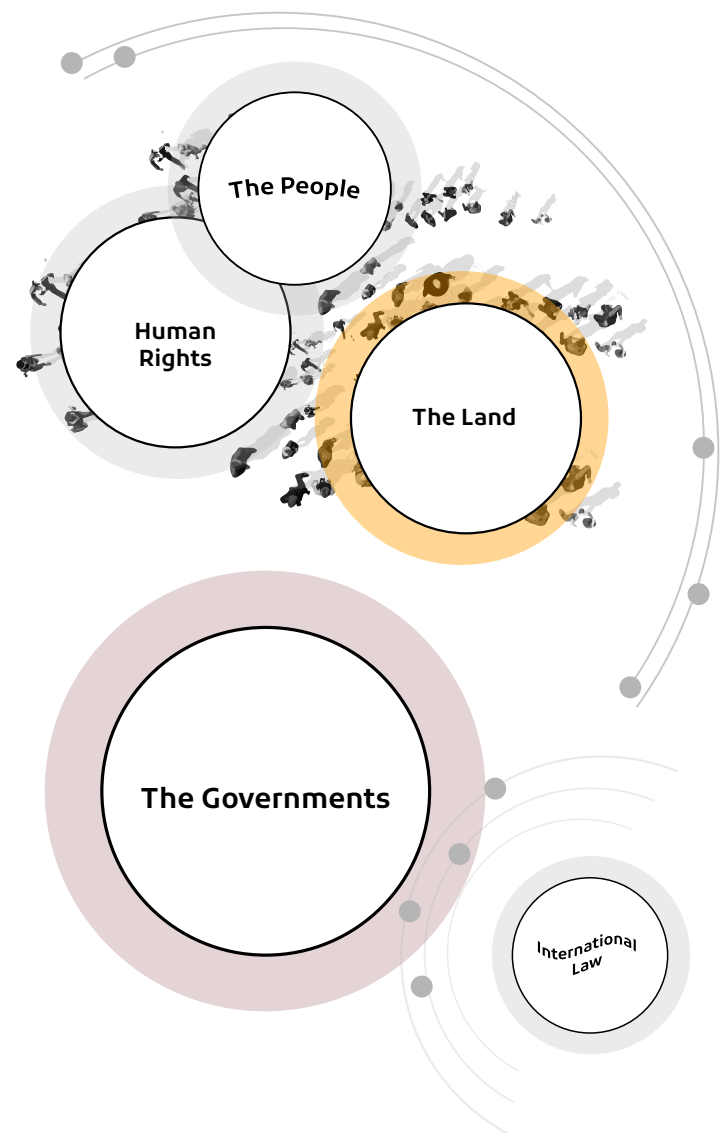
– An International Perspective

Introduction

International perspectives on the normalization of relations with the Israeli occupying state reveal a complex and often contradictory landscape. While some governments, such as the United States and members of the Arab League, have pursued formal agreements like the 2020 Abraham Accords without conditioning them on the realisation of Palestinian self-determination, others continue to insist on adherence to international law and the protection of Palestinian rights. Countries and blocs including South Africa, Russia, China, and the Non-Aligned Movement maintain that normalisation must not come at the expense of justice and accountability.

Since the escalation of violence since October 2023, numerous governments have issued statements advocating for humanitarian ceasefires and the revival of a two-state framework. However, these rhetorical commitments have frequently been accompanied by policies that prioritize Israeli security narratives and interests, often at odds with meaningful support for Palestinian sovereignty.

This bulletin examines the historical and current positions of key international actors, the forms and mechanisms of engagement they employ, and any shifts in policy observed since October 2023. It concludes with an assessment of the implications for Palestinians and a set of advocacy recommendations grounded in international legal frameworks.





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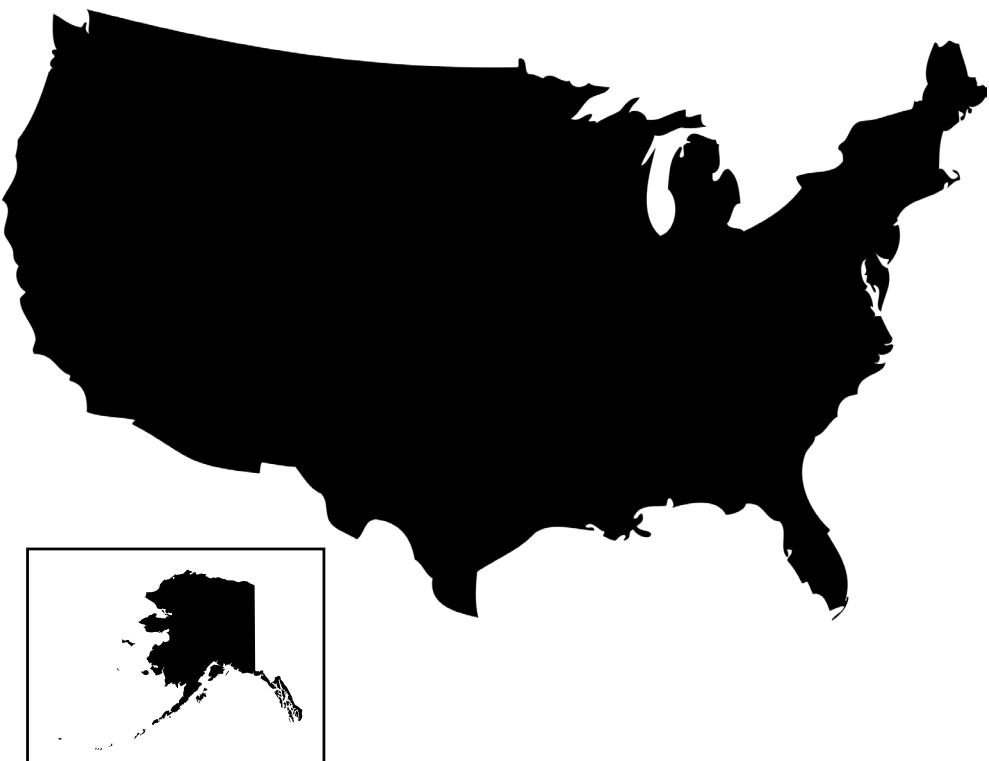
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The United States has historically maintained an enduring strategic alliance with the Israeli occupying state. Representing a patronage model, this relationship has been shaped by geopolitical considerations, shared military interests, and domestic politics including the influence of the Zionist lobby in the U.S., i.e.: AIPAC. This alliance has been characterised by consistent American diplomatic protection for Israel in international forums, most notably through the exercise of veto power at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as substantial financial and military aid packages (Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], 2024; Press UN, 2024). While successive administrations have officially affirmed support for a two-state solution, American policy in practice has often undercut this position by reinforcing the Israeli occupation and marginalising Palestinian national rights.

A significant policy shift emerged during President Donald Trump's administration (2017–2020), wherein U.S. foreign policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian reality became increasingly unilateral and detached from international legal frameworks. The administration formally recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital by relocating the U.S. embassy there—effectively legitimising Israeli sovereignty over occupied East Jerusalem in contravention of UNSC Resolution 478. Furthermore, it withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran nuclear deal) and brokered the Abraham Accords, normalisation agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, none of which were conditioned on ending the occupation or advancing Palestinian self-determination (Al Jazeera, 2023; Arab Center Washington DC, 2023).

President Joe Biden's administration (2021–present) reintroduced rhetoric supportive of a negotiated two-state solution and partially restored financial aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA). Nevertheless, Biden has continued the structural elements of Trump-era policy: advancing normalisation initiatives involving Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, sustaining military assistance, and preserving strategic coordination with the Israeli occupying state (Washington Post, 2024). Since the start of Israel's war on Gaza in October 2023, the U.S. has fast-tracked arms transfers—including precision-guided munitions and bunker-buster bombs—totalling over 100 separate sales by March 2024 (Washington Post, 2024). These deliveries continued even amid evidence of widespread civilian casualties and potential breaches of international humanitarian law (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2024).

U.S. domestic legislation, such as the Foreign Assistance Act, prohibits military aid to states obstructing humanitarian relief; yet, Congressional scrutiny over Israeli compliance with humanitarian law has thus far not resulted in policy restraint. In May 2024, the Biden administration briefly paused the delivery of 2,000-lb bombs amid concerns about a planned Israeli ground invasion of Rafah, only to resume shipments of smaller munitions in July (Reuters, 2024a, 2024b). Within the UNSC, the U.S. vetoed a 15 October 2023 draft resolution proposed by Russia calling for a humanitarian ceasefire, citing the absence of explicit condemnation of Hamas as the rationale—thereby obstructing multilateral action while enabling Israeli military operations (Reuters, 2023).

The cumulative impact of U.S. policy has been the entrenchment of Israeli impunity through military support, legal shielding, and rhetorical alignment. By prioritising Arab-Israeli normalisation as a strategic objective, Washington has diverted focus away from the structural conditions of occupation, settler colonialism, and apartheid faced by Palestinians. As civilian casualties in Gaza mounted into the tens of thousands, U.S. officials framed their concerns primarily in terms of Israeli tactics rather than Israeli policy, thereby absolving the occupation state of accountability under international law (Press UN, 2023; HRW, 2024).

This posture has sustained a regional status quo that incentivises normalisation without justice. It has diminished the credibility of U.S. claims to support a rules-based international order and undermined global commitments to Palestinian self-determination. In effect, American policy has moved from passive complicity to active facilitation of a paradigm in which normalisation proceeds at the expense of international law, with Palestinian rights deferred indefinitely.



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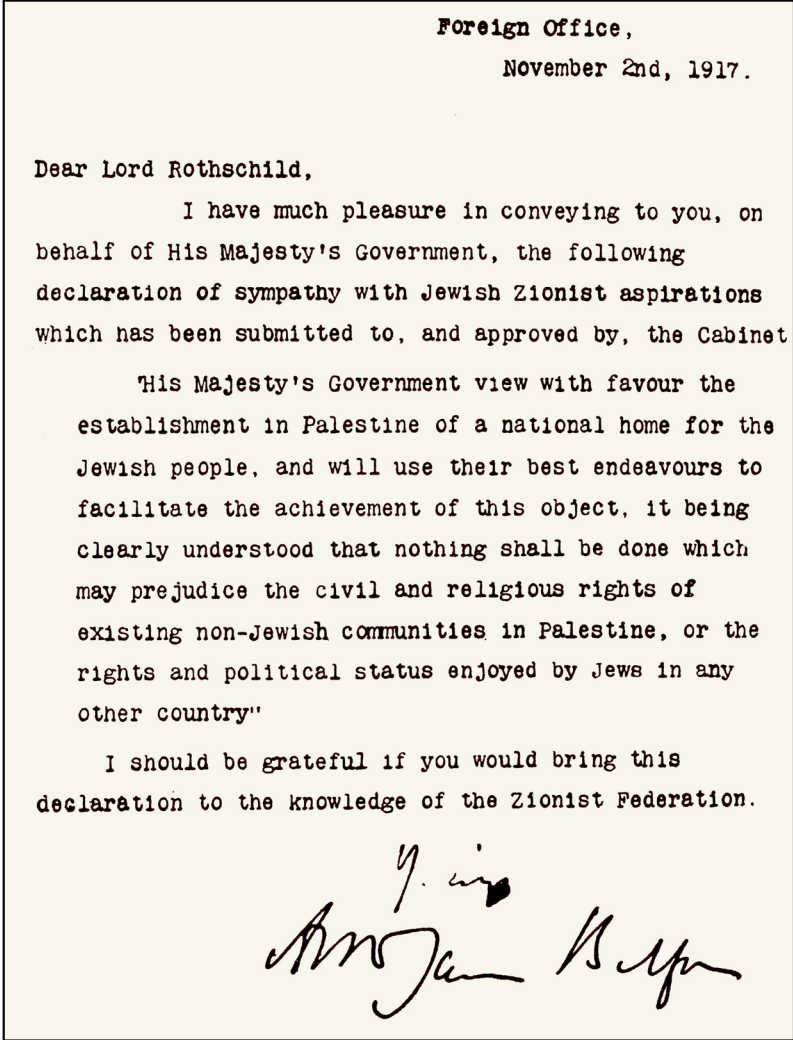
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The United Kingdom occupies a foundational role in the history of Palestinian dispossession, beginning with the 1917 Balfour Declaration and extending through the period of the British Mandate. In the contemporary context, the UK has deepened its political, economic, and military relationship with the occupying state of Israel, normalising the structures of occupation and apartheid under the guise of a strategic partnership. British officials routinely affirm a commitment to a two-state solution, but policy practice reveals sustained support for Israeli actions that violate international law (UNGA, 1947).

During the continuous Israeli military campaign on Gaza, which has been referred to by the ICJ as “Acts of Genocide” (ICJ, 2024). During the beginning of the Israeli military assault on Gaza shortly after October 7, 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visited Tel Aviv to express what he described as the UK’s “unwavering support for Israel,” despite widespread international concern over civilian casualties and allegations of war crimes. In multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the UK frequently abstains or aligns with US vetoes on resolutions calling for Israeli accountability, reinforcing a diplomatic shield around Israeli policy. (Reuters, 2025)

Economically, the UK is a significant trade partner with Israel the occupying power, with annual trade exceeding five billion pounds (UK Department for Business and Trade, 2025). Key sectors include pharmaceuticals, information technology, and military hardware. The UK regularly licenses arms exports to the occupying state of Israel, including components used in weapon systems deployed in the occupied Palestinian territory. Joint ventures in surveillance, cyberdefense, and artificial intelligence have grown in recent years, many involving Israeli companies with documented ties to the Israeli military and intelligence apparatus. In addition, conducting over 500 surveillance flights around Gaza (Action on Armed Forces, 2025).



The original letter from Balfour to Rothschild -November 2nd, 1917. [Wikipedia]

On the domestic front, the UK government has advanced legislation to suppress solidarity with Palestinian rights. The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, colloquially known as the “anti-BDS bill,” aims to prevent public institutions from engaging in boycott or divestment campaigns targeting foreign states, with Palestine explicitly singled out in parliamentary debates. Organisations such as Amnesty International and the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP) have criticised the bill as an assault on free expression and an enabler of systematic impunity. (Loft, Jozepa, & Mirza-Davies, 2024)



The European Union (EU) has maintained a complex and often contradictory posture toward the Israeli occupying state. While the bloc has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to international law, a two-state solution, and the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force, it has simultaneously institutionalised a range of normalisation mechanisms across economic, academic, agricultural, and technological sectors. This multifaceted engagement reflects a structural complicity that undermines stated commitments to Palestinian self-determination and international legal norms.

Economically, the EU and the Israeli occupying state have been linked through the EU–Israel Association Agreement, signed on 20 November 1995 and operational since 2000 (European Union, 2000). This agreement grants the occupation state preferential trade access to the European single market. Despite the EU’s declaration that settlements in the occupied West Bank are illegal under international law, trade data reveals that Israeli exports, including those originating in settlements, continue to enter the EU market, often under mislabelled origin statuses or through vague customs enforcement (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Furthermore, bilateral agreements under this framework have expanded over time to cover pharmaceuticals, aviation, and customs cooperation, enhancing the economic interdependence between the EU and the occupying state.

In the academic sphere, the occupying state of Israel has enjoyed privileged access to European research funding. Notably, it has been a full participant in the EU’s Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programmes, receiving hundreds of millions of euros for joint research projects. Many of these collaborations include Israeli institutions directly involved in military technology, surveillance, and the infrastructural maintenance of occupation. Despite calls from European civil society and some MEPs to suspend Israeli participation due to its human rights record, the EU has repeatedly renewed these agreements without conditionality (ECCP, 2018).

Agriculturally, the EU’s engagement with the occupation state includes technical cooperation under the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. These frameworks facilitate knowledge transfer, joint innovation in arid farming, and export of produce. Israeli agricultural goods, including those produced in settlements, are often exported to European markets, contributing to the economic viability of occupation enterprises. EU directives nominally require labelling of settlement goods, but enforcement remains inconsistent across member states, effectively allowing normalised agricultural trade with illegal outposts (Amnesty International, 2022; European External Action Service, n.d.).

Structurally, the EU maintains high-level diplomatic and strategic engagement with the occupying state, including annual Association Council meetings and strategic dialogues. In December 2022, the EU-Israel Association Council was reconvened after a decade-long pause, despite ongoing and escalating Israeli violations and acts of genocide in Palestine. In addition, the EU supports Israeli participation in digital border technologies, police training, and cybersecurity cooperation through its Justice and Home Affairs network, integrating the occupation state into the architecture of European internal security.

While countries like Ireland, Spain, and Belgium have taken stronger rhetorical stances, condemning apartheid policies or demanding arms embargoes, these remain exceptions within the bloc. Germany, France, and the European Commission leadership have maintained strong diplomatic and technological ties with the occupation state, often invoking Israel’s “right to self-defence” while marginalising the structural violence of occupation. The dissonance between rhetorical commitments to international law and material support for Israeli institutions involved in the occupation renders the EU’s approach one of selective ethics.

The cumulative effect of these normalisation mechanisms is to entrench the Israeli occupying state’s integration into European economic and security frameworks while sidelining Palestinian rights. A double-standard stand proven by comparison with European intervention and rush to Aid in Ukraine. By continuing its preferential agreements without meaningful conditionality, the EU has enabled the Israeli occupation’s sustainability. This complicity reflects not only a failure of policy coherence but also a broader unwillingness to confront European responsibility in enabling settler-colonial violence in Palestine.



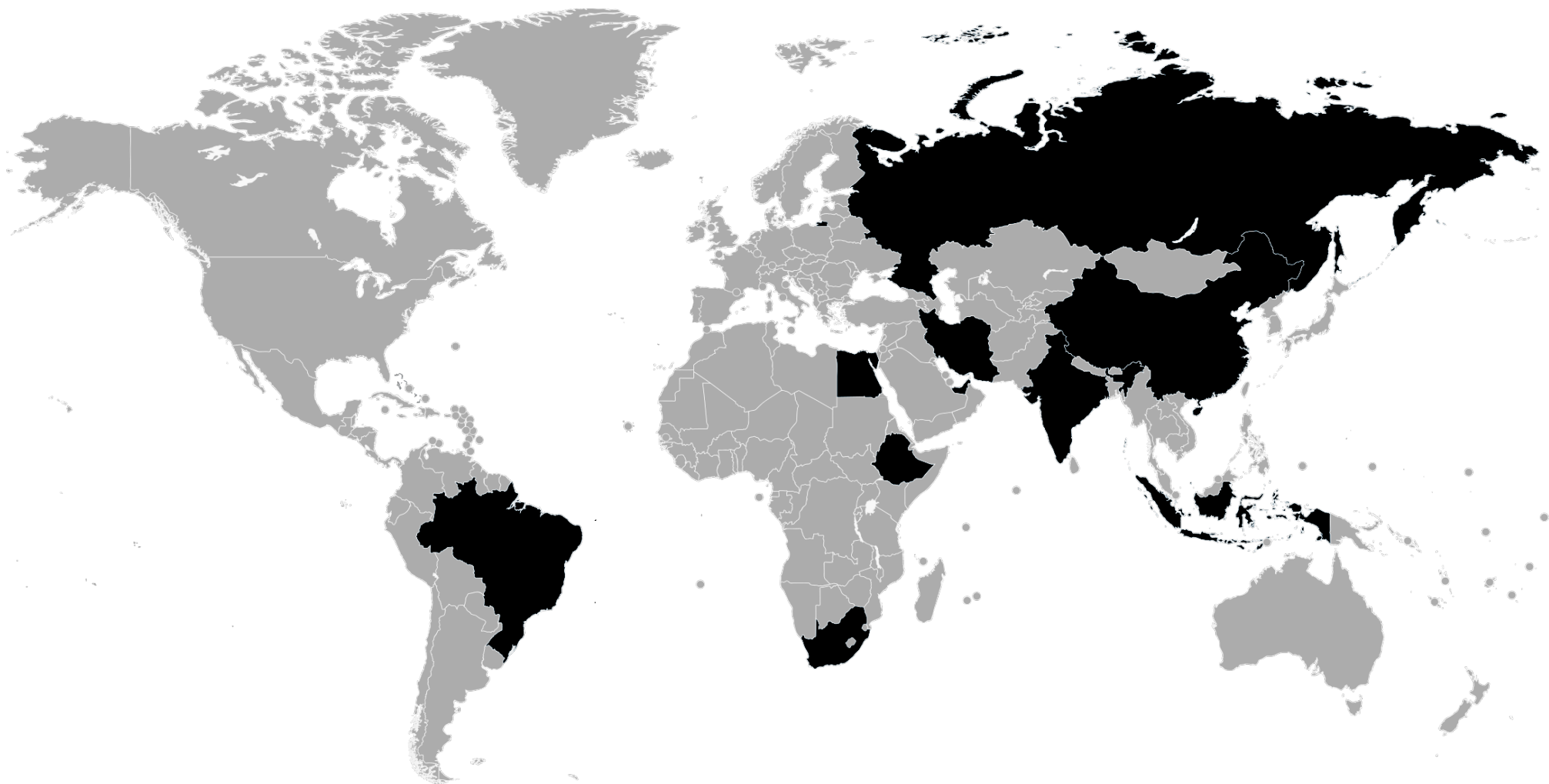
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Russia, formerly part of the Soviet Union, a traditional ally of Arab states during the Cold War, has maintained strategic ambiguity since the early 2000s. While rhetorically supporting Palestinian statehood and denouncing Israeli settlements, Moscow has also deepened its security and diplomatic ties with the Israeli occupying state. After 7 October 2023, Russia pushed for ceasefire resolutions at the UN and hosted Hamas representatives, positioning itself as an alternative to U.S.-led diplomacy (Reuters, 2023).

Despite these gestures, Russia has not imposed economic sanctions or disrupted arms exports to the region. It maintains joint mechanisms with the occupying state of Israel regarding Syria and counterterrorism. Moscow's stance reflects a desire to contrast Western hypocrisy on international law without fundamentally challenging the status quo.

However, as part of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), which has increasingly become a platform for alternative global governance. In 2023, BRICS members called for the end of Israeli occupation and expressed concern over unilateral normalisation moves. South Africa stands out as the most vocal, having initiated legal proceedings against Israel at the ICJ for genocide and maintaining a consistent anti-normalisation position across political and civil society levels (ICJ, 2024).

India, on the other hand, maintains robust ties with the occupation state, particularly in defence and cybersecurity, and has avoided condemning Israeli actions. New Delhi balances this with rhetorical support for Palestine but has distanced itself from multilateral initiatives that challenge normalisation.

Within BRICS, divergent interests limit the bloc's ability to act as a unified front. Nevertheless, its collective scepticism toward Western-sponsored normalisation frameworks has amplified Palestinian legal narratives and helped re-centre international law in global diplomacy.



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This duality underscores China's cautious pragmatism. While rhetorically aligned with Palestinian rights, it refrains from challenging Israeli impunity directly. Beijing's engagement reinforces a global trend where economic and geopolitical interests outweigh accountability, thereby enabling the expansion of normalisation without legal or moral conditionality.

China's position on the Israeli occupation is framed by its commitment to non-interference, long-standing support for Palestinian self-determination, and its desire to emerge as a global mediator. Beijing officially supports a two-state solution and has recognised the State of Palestine since 1988. However, its expanding economic and technological ties with the Israeli occupying state have raised concerns about China's normative ambiguity.

Chinese companies are heavily involved in Israeli infrastructure projects, particularly in ports, transportation, and telecommunications. From the Haifa port to rail networks, China has positioned itself as a major investor. At the same time, Beijing maintains strong ties with the Palestinian leadership and often supports pro-Palestinian resolutions at the UN.

Following the 7 October 2023 events, China called for a ceasefire and humanitarian access, refraining from condemning either party explicitly. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that Israel's actions had "gone beyond the scope of self-defence," and emphasised collective punishment concerns (Chatham House, 2023). Yet, China did not advocate sanctions or use its trade relationship to influence Israeli behaviour.

China's abstentions in key UN Security Council votes and its reluctance to publicly challenge the occupation state suggest a strategic balancing act. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative, the occupying state of Israel serves as a key partner in regional connectivity. Simultaneously, China has cultivated diplomatic influence among Arab and Muslim-majority countries, portraying itself as a neutral peace broker.



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Latin American states have demonstrated mixed and evolving stances toward normalisation with the Israeli occupying state, shaped by their domestic politics, international alignments, and anti-colonial memory. While many administrations have supported Palestinian statehood in principle, bilateral relations with the occupation state have grown across economic, security, and diplomatic sectors. This coexistence of rhetorical solidarity and practical engagement reflects broader contradictions in the region's approach to the Palestinian struggle.

Brazil represents the most illustrative shift. Under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010; 2022–present), Brazil has historically recognised the State of Palestine and supported its bid for UN membership. Lula's recent return to power in 2022 saw a revival of vocal support for Palestinian rights. Following the Israeli brutal assault on Gaza after 7 October 2023, Lula accused the occupation state of committing genocide, comparing its conduct to Nazi atrocities (Al Jazeera, 2024). This provoked a diplomatic backlash, but simultaneously catalysed regional solidarity, as Brazil recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv and publicly called for an immediate ceasefire and international accountability mechanisms. However, Brazil continues to uphold trade and technological ties with the Israeli occupying state, including in agribusiness and security sectors, reflecting enduring institutional cooperation despite political tensions.

Conversely, the administration of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022) marked a high point in Brazil–Israel ties, with open endorsement of settler-colonial policies. Bolsonaro frequently praised Israeli leadership, proposed relocating Brazil's embassy to Jerusalem, and hosted Israeli officials in reciprocal development agreements. His policies aligned with broader right-wing ideological trends in the hemisphere that frame the occupying state of Israel as a partner in security, counterterrorism, and evangelical diplomacy. Similar pro-normalisation sentiments were expressed by leaders in Colombia and Honduras during right-leaning governments, though such ties have been reassessed by successive administrations.

Elsewhere in the region, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico have expressed support for a two-state solution and condemned the escalation of violence, yet their material policies remain cautious. While diplomatic ties with Palestine have been symbolically affirmed, these states have not adopted structural constraints on engagement with the Israeli occupying state. In Chile, for example, President Gabriel Boric has made strong verbal condemnations of Israeli aggression and delayed the credentialing of Israel's ambassador in protest, yet Chilean–Israeli trade remains intact. Moreover, Mexico has historically taken a cautious approach, advocating for a negotiated two-state solution. While condemning excessive use of force, it has refrained from endorsing boycotts or halting cooperation. Mexico's abstentions on key UN votes in 2023–2024 reflect its ambivalent positioning, neither aligning with Global South defiance nor Western normalisation blocs.



Continuously, In Bolivia and Venezuela, anti-colonial discourse has often translated into stronger diplomatic opposition to Israel's occupation. Bolivia severed ties in 2009 over Gaza bombings and re-established them briefly in 2020 before breaking them again in 2023, citing violations of international law (Radford, 2023). Whereas Venezuela remains rhetorically aligned with Palestine but faces internal crises that limit its diplomatic influence.

Additionally, Colombia holds a distinct stand as President Gustavo Petro, elected in 2022, has emerged as one of the most vocal critics of the Israeli occupying state's actions in Gaza. In November 2023, Petro recalled Colombia's ambassador from the occupation state, denouncing its military operations as a "massacre of the Palestinian people" and warning of the possibility of severing diplomatic relations if the assaults continued (Andalou Agency, 2023). In early May 2024, he formally announced the breaking of diplomatic ties, describing the Gaza offensive as genocidal and signalling Colombia's intention to join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice. Colombia also suspended arms imports from the occupying state and elevated its diplomatic relations with Palestine by opening an embassy in Ramallah. Petro's government has amplified Palestinian narratives in regional and international forums, marking a decisive departure from the more cautious and co-operative stance of previous administrations (Reuters, May 2024).

However, Public opinion in Latin America tends to favour the Palestinian cause, informed by anti-colonial legacies, leftist movements, and diasporic solidarity networks; with BDS campaigns gaining traction in academic and cultural institutions. Nonetheless, no Latin American country has adopted formal normalisation agreements akin to the Abraham Accords, and most maintain a cautious, if not critical, distance.

Overall, Latin America plays a critical symbolic role in supporting Palestinian self-determination, especially through multilateral institutions like the UN and the Non-Aligned Movement. Yet structurally, Latin America lacks the economic weight to shape Israeli conduct, but it remains significant symbolically and diplomatically. The bloc's consistent support for Palestinian statehood in UN forums underscores the global south's alignment on the issue. But, the enduring question remains whether this rhetorical solidarity can translate into sustained material action, via trade conditionality, legal initiatives, or collective diplomatic pressure, to meaningfully contest the normalisation of occupation. In other words, the challenge remains whether regional governments will escalate from declaratory solidarity to policy instruments that hold the Israeli occupying state accountable under international law.



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At the institutional level, the occupying state of Israel's contested observer status in the African Union reflects the political tensions surrounding normalisation. The AU Commission's 2021 decision to grant Israel observer status sparked widespread opposition from Algeria, South Africa, and several other member states. The matter remains unresolved, reflecting deeper ideological and strategic fractures within the African continent regarding Palestine. However, despite these divisions, Israel continues to engage with various African nations through economic and technological partnerships, particularly in the agriculture and security sectors. These collaborations often proceed independently of formal diplomatic recognition, reflecting a pragmatic approach to mutual interests (Al-Monitor, 2021; Gidron, 2021).

Africa presents a complex and divided landscape when it comes to normalisation with the occupying state of Israel. While many African states historically supported the Palestinian cause, particularly during the era of anti-colonial liberation movements, there has been a discernible shift in recent decades toward normalisation, often driven by economic incentives, military cooperation, and agricultural development projects (Chatham House, 2023).

South Africa remains a leading voice in resisting normalisation. The post-apartheid government has consistently drawn parallels between its own historical experience of racial segregation and the Israeli regime's violence against Palestinians. In 2023, South Africa formally referred Israel to the International Criminal Court over its brutal aggression on Gaza, and the South African Parliament subsequently passed a resolution to close the Israeli embassy in Pretoria. These actions reaffirm South Africa's longstanding position that normalisation without justice constitutes complicity (Hanafi, 2025).

Elsewhere on the continent, however, the occupation state has made substantial inroads. Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Nigeria have deepened bilateral ties with the occupying state of Israel in sectors including agriculture, counterterrorism, and technology. Israeli firms operate numerous development projects across East and West Africa, many of which involve dual-use technologies with military applications. In these partnerships, the language of development and innovation often masks an underlying security agenda.

Morocco and Sudan have both formalised normalisation agreements with the occupation state as part of the US-brokered Abraham Accords, despite significant public opposition in both countries. The Moroccan monarchy has used normalisation to consolidate international recognition over Western Sahara, while Sudan's military leadership has viewed it as a means of securing international legitimacy and financial relief (Institut Montaigne, 2021).



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Southeast Asia exhibits a diverse and often contradictory approach to normalisation with the occupying state of Israel, shaped by religious solidarity, domestic political calculations, and strategic interests. While countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have remained publicly opposed to normalisation, others have pursued quiet or informal relations with the Israeli occupation state.

Malaysia maintains a principled anti-normalisation stance rooted in both Islamic solidarity and historical support for Palestinian self-determination. Therefore, Israeli passport holders are barred from entering the country, and Malaysian officials regularly condemn Israeli actions in international fora. Public opinion in Malaysia remains overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian, and normalisation is widely viewed as a political impossibility.

Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim-majority country, similarly does not maintain diplomatic ties with Israel (Strangio, 2025). While there have been sporadic reports of informal economic exchanges, efforts to initiate normalisation have been met with mass protests and widespread condemnation. The Indonesian foreign ministry has reiterated its position that normalisation cannot occur until Palestinian rights are fully realised. However, internal pressures related to trade and investment, particularly from Western allies, continue to generate tension around this policy.

However, Singapore has long-standing diplomatic and military ties with the occupation state, dating back to the 1960s. Israeli advisors played a central role in shaping Singapore’s defense doctrine, and military cooperation continues in the fields of urban warfare, cybersecurity, and intelligence. Despite its ties, Singapore avoids public statements on the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupying state, opting for a policy of strategic silence (Asia Society, 2025).

Furthermore, the Philippines has grown closer to the occupying state in recent years, particularly under the Duterte administration. This includes increased weapons imports, joint training programs, and agricultural cooperation. These ties have continued under subsequent administrations, and normalisation is rarely a subject of domestic political controversy.

Continuously, Thailand and Vietnam engage with the occupying state of Israel primarily through economic and technological cooperation. While they avoid political endorsement of Israeli policies, their growing partnerships in tourism, agriculture, and defense signal a quiet form of normalisation.

At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has maintained a largely passive posture, issuing no collective statements regarding Israeli occupation or normalisation agreements. The absence of a unified foreign policy approach has allowed member states to pursue divergent paths based on national interest.

In essence, Southeast Asia’s approach to normalization with the Israeli occupying state is fragmented, shaped by a mix of religious solidarity, domestic politics, and strategic interests. While countries like Malaysia and Indonesia maintain firm opposition, others such as Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand engage in quiet cooperation, particularly in security and trade. The lack of a unified ASEAN position allows for these divergent paths, reflecting the dominance of national interests over collective support for Palestinian rights.

Comparative Analysis and Conclusion

The global architecture of normalisation reveals a pattern in which strategic interest consistently overrides legal and ethical considerations. While some states continue to uphold a principled opposition to the occupying state of Israel, others have embraced normalisation as a tool for economic or technological advancement, security cooperation, or geopolitical leverage. The process of normalisation has shifted from isolated bilateral deals to a transnational system of interdependence that shields the occupying state of Israel from accountability.

In Europe and the United Kingdom, normalisation is embedded within institutional frameworks of trade, research, and diplomacy, often accompanied by legislation to suppress dissent. In the United States, normalisation has reached a maximalist stage, with bipartisan support and near-total political alignment. Russia and China pursue normalisation under the guise of neutrality, leveraging their relationships with the occupation state for strategic gain in the Middle East and Africa. In Africa, Israeli engagement has expanded under the banner of development, while internal resistance, particularly from South Africa, challenges these trends. Moreover, Southeast Asia, though less central to Israel's strategic calculus, reflects both principled resistance and quiet acquiescence, with normalisation occurring beneath the radar of public scrutiny.

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In the end, what emerges is a global system in which normalisation is not simply a series of bilateral agreements, but a structural phenomenon that integrates Israeli apartheid into the international political economy. By normalising relations with the occupying state of Israel, states participate in the erosion of international law, the marginalisation of Palestinian rights, and the entrenchment of impunity.



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