

**Middle Eastern Defense:
The Role of the Abraham Accords**

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PPOG 600: Think Tank, Research, Training, and Policy Development
December 5, 2022

Most civilized regions of the world have some form of formal defense structure between significant players in their respective locales. For example, Europe has the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Asian continent, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). However, one of the most conflict-ridden areas of the globe—the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region—has no such cooperation, and not for lack of effort. In the 1950s, Great Britain brought Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran into a defense coalition entitled the “Baghdad Pact” (later called the “Central Treaty Organization,” or CENTO).¹ The cooperation weakened after a few years following a series of conflicts involving Israel, various Arab nations, the French, and the British, resulting in Iraq’s departure from the organization. CENTO officially disbanded after the Iranian Revolution in 1979.²

Defense experts Ari Cicurel, Andrew Ghalili, and Samuel Millner contend that the primary reasons for CENTO’s failure and dispersal were a lack of U.S. participation in its operations and the absence of collective security guarantees reminiscent of Article V in NATO’s documentation. Additionally, competition between Soviet-backed Egypt and the U.S.-backed Saudis and Israelis instigated fractures within the alliance, leading to its eventual collapse.³ Until recently, there were no concerted efforts to revive the prospect of a defense architecture within MENA. The United States found itself bogged down in a series of endless wars with various despotic regimes in the Middle East in the fifty years following the Iranian Revolution, distracting from more focused diplomatic ventures.⁴ However, a shared nation-state threat between several MENA countries and a daring U.S.-led diplomatic endeavor at the end of 2020 revived the conversation to create a “Middle East NATO,” as termed by Jordan’s King Abdullah II.⁵

The Abraham Accords Framework

The resurrection of the Jewish state in 1948 was fraught with conflict, pitting Arabs and Jews against one another in decades of tension that included three full-scale wars. Any true reconciliation within the Arab-Israeli conflict seemed an elusive dream due to the struggles mentioned above, the ever-present Palestinian issue, and persistent religious friction over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Noble attempts were made between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and later Jordan in 1994. Still, the subsequent agreements were little more than ceasefires, achieving

¹ U.S. Department of State, “The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO),” U.S. Department of State Archive, January 20, 2009, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm>.

² U.S. Department of State, “Baghdad Pact.”

³ Ari Cicurel, Andrew Ghalili, and Samuel Millner, “A Stronger and Wider Peace: A U.S. Strategy for Advancing the Abraham Accords,” Abraham Accords Policy Project (The Jewish Institute for the National Security of America, January 2022), 11, https://jinsa.org/jinsa_report/a-stronger-and-wider-peace-us-strategy-for-abraham-accords/.

⁴ David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 252–54.

⁵ Riad Kahwaji, “A Middle East NATO? A Missile Defense Network with Israel? Major Shifts Brewing in Region,” *Breaking Defense* (blog), June 24, 2022, <https://breakingdefense.sites.breakingmedia.com/2022/06/arab-israeli-defense-axis-could-signal-major-shifts-in-middle-east/>.

only what international relations experts term “a cold peace.”⁶ However, a bold foreign relations strategy under the leadership of President Trump and his advisor Jared Kushner brought the Israelis and several of their Muslim neighbors to the negotiating table. The American delegation made a solid case to put aside centuries-old disputes in pursuit of shared prosperity in MENA.⁷ The resulting signage of the Abraham Accords allowed for full normalization between several Arab states and the nation of Israel—an unprecedented diplomatic feat thought by most every presidential administration since Harry Truman a geopolitical impossibility.⁸ The Abraham Accords agreement(s) of 2020, or the so-called “Deal of the Century” as characterized by President Trump, revolutionized international relations in one of the most volatile regions in the world.

The Accords came about through a common concern for both “peace” and “security” in the Greater Middle East.⁹ Both notions within the overarching declaration, additionally included in each bilateral agreement, suggested the plausibility of defensive cooperation between countries at the time of their signage.¹⁰ For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-Israel agreement, the parties state that “[t]hey undertake to take the necessary steps to prevent any terrorist or hostile activities against each other on or from their respective territories...[and] to conclude detailed agreements and arrangements on coordination and cooperation.”¹¹ The clear and present danger currently posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran in its support of terrorist proxies and pursuit of nuclear proliferation has already catalyzed unanticipated intelligence sharing, joint military activity, and mutual weapons sales between Accords members.¹² For example, in November 2021, the UAE and Israel agreed to develop seafaring vessels to combat Iranian malign activity in the Persian Gulf and are presently in discussions to develop technology

⁶ Frank Musmar, “The Old Peace Treaties vs. the Abraham Accords,” *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), September 12, 2021, <https://besacenter.org/the-old-peace-treaties-vs-the-abraham-accords/>.

⁷ John Levine, “Jared Kushner Nominated for Nobel Prize for Negotiator Role,” *New York Post*, February 12, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/02/12/jared-kushner-nominated-for-nobel-prize-for-negotiator-role/>.

⁸ Lee Zeldin, “Trump Accomplished in The Middle East What No Other President Could,” *The Federalist*, September 17, 2020, <https://thefederalist.com/2020/09/17/trump-accomplished-in-the-middle-east-what-no-other-president-could/>.

⁹ “The Abraham Accords Declaration” (U.S. Department of State, September 15, 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Abraham-Accords-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508-1.pdf>.

¹⁰ “Examining the U.S. Interest in Regional Security Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa: Opportunities, Obstacles, and Objectives” (Washington, D.C.: House Foreign Affairs Committee, September 21, 2022), 4, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA13/20220921/115154/HHRG-117-FA13-Wstate-RobinsonL-20220921.pdf>.

¹¹ “Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel” (U.S. Department of State, September 15, 2020), 2, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UAE_Israel-treaty-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf.

¹² Alvite Ningthoujam, “The Military–Security Dimension of the 2020 Abraham Accords: An Israeli Perspective,” Observer Research Foundation, July 28, 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-military-security-dimension-of-the-2020-abraham-accords/>.

to counter attacks propagated by the Iranian-backed Yemeni Houthis.¹³ The Israelis and Arab Gulf states (Bahrain and the UAE in particular) continue to expand their defensive partnerships at incredible speeds, drawing Jordanian and Saudi Arabian attention to the security benefits of the Abraham Accords.¹⁴ In observance of the defensive success already achieved by the agreements, *Abraham Accords Peace Institute* executive director Robert Greenway suggests the Accords lay the groundwork for an entire MENA security architecture to combat regional threats, primarily those currently posed by Iran and its proxy forces.¹⁵

Challenges and Possible Solutions

Various challenges present themselves as MENA nations and other stakeholders consider the possibility of building a Middle Eastern defensive alliance. International competition is the primary issue: among the Gulf States, the Arabs and the Israelis, and the Chinese and American superpowers in their existential contest. Furthermore, each stakeholder nation has its own internal politics to manage. They must individually consider the interests of their citizenry and work to improve their own national security. However, there are plausible solutions to these questions, some of which have been and are being implemented in the geopolitical sphere.

What a regional defense system would look like and how it would operate in practice are tricky as the Arab nations continue attempting to avoid competing with their Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) colleagues. Disputes between these Arab nations do occur relatively frequently. For instance, the Saudis, Emiratis, Bahrainis, and Egyptians imposed a blockade against fellow GCC member Qatar due to their vocal support for the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁶ Furthermore, the centuries-old Arab-Israeli conflict is still very present in Abraham Accords relations and is not going anywhere any time soon. In May 2021 (the year following the Abraham Accords signing), Israel saw a massive resurgence of antisemitic violence in the form of light artillery fire from Gaza. Bahrain and the UAE loudly condemned Israel's storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem around the same time.¹⁷ Last, powerful Middle Eastern nations such as Israel and the UAE are becoming the battleground for the cold great power conflict being waged by the United States and the People's Republic of China. The added layer

¹³ Nicole Robinson, "Abraham Accords: Sowing Seeds of Peace, Harvesting Fruits of Prosperity," The Heritage Foundation, accessed September 29, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/abraham-accords-sowing-seeds-peace-harvesting-fruits-prosperity>.

¹⁴ Kahwaji, "A Middle East NATO?"; Yaakov Lappin, "Bringing Saudi Arabia into Abraham Accords a Strategic Goal for US, Israel," *Jewish News Syndicate*, February 1, 2022, <http://www.jns.org/bringing-saudi-arabia-into-abraham-accords-a-strategic-goal-for-us-israel/>.

¹⁵ Robert Greenway and Jacob Olidort, "Greenway and Olidort: Here's How the Two-Year-Old Abraham Accords Can Help Solve Today's Biggest Challenges," *Daily Caller*, September 15, 2022, <https://dailycaller.com/2022/09/15/opinion-heres-how-the-two-year-old-abraham-accords-can-help-solve-the-worlds-biggest-challenges-greenway-and-olidort/>.

¹⁶ "U.S. Interest," 3.

¹⁷ Ishaan Tharoor, "Analysis: The Abraham Accords Have Already Become a Middle East Afterthought," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/12/israel-palestinians-abraham-accords/>.

of stake in the game for the U.S. in dissuading Accord nations from partnering with its most significant competitor puts resolving regional issues on a short timeline.¹⁸

The internal politics of the nation of Israel are central to regional security cooperation because of the fundamental role of the Abraham Accords. Within the past month, the political dynamic in-country has shifted dramatically as Israeli voters supported the election of right-wing Knesset (Israel's parliament) Members (MKs) from the Religious Zionist, Otzma Yehudit, and Likud parties with Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu as prime minister.¹⁹ In the Israeli parliamentary system, the elected members have 28 days with the incoming prime minister's leadership to form a government that retains support from MKs and their respective parties to out-vote the remainder of the Knesset. In the past few days, Netanyahu gave Otzma Yehudit chair Itamar Ben Gvir the role of national security minister and Religious Zionist chair Bezalel Smotrich control over the contended West Bank, sparking intense backlash from Palestinians in Israel.²⁰ Additionally, the Muslim month of fasting, Ramadan, is coming up and has historically brought with it waves of terrorist violence—with Smotrich's new authority, the West Bank is likely to become a hotbed of such action. Gulf States in support of a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel will hold Netanyahu under intense scrutiny regarding West Bank activities, further harming his chances of bringing Saudi Arabia into the Accords.²¹ If Bibi can form a government in the next week, he will have no grace period in handling many pretentious issues.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are the two most influential players in the Persian Gulf with their burgeoning economic status, relations with both the United States and China, and critical geographic positioning vis-à-vis Iran. The Emiratis signed the most detailed Abraham Accords agreement with Israel, seeing the initiation of a UAE-Israel relationship worth the potential economic outcome. Furthermore, many Emiratis see better diplomatic relations with Israel as a new tactic to push for a resolution of the Palestinian issue. However, left-leaning and anti-Israel Emirati media, such as *Haaretz*, continue to criticize the government for its participation in the Accords, hurting public support for the UAE's soft power initiative.²² Saudi Arabia, seen by both Americans and Israelis as the ultimate Abraham Accords prize, has refrained from publicly supporting them without resolving the Palestinian issue. The elderly King Salman remains steadfast in this view, but his son Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is reported to be

¹⁸ Jim Garamone, "Great Power Competition Adds to Challenges in Middle East," *U.S. Department of Defense News*, February 9, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2498114/great-power-competition-adds-to-challenges-in-middle-east/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.defense.gov%2FNews%2FNews-Stories%2FArticle%2FArticle%2F2498114%2Fgreat-power-competition-adds-to-challenges-in-middle-east%2F>.

¹⁹ Victoria Coates, "Bibi's Back," *The Heritage Foundation*, November 7, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/bibis-back>.

²⁰ Dalit Halevi, "Mansour Abbas: Netanyahu, Ben Gvir and Smotrich Government Is a Disaster," *Israel National News*, December 2, 2022, sec. Israeli News, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/363794>.

²¹ Eitan Dangot, "Can Netanyahu Deter Iran and Make Peace with Saudi Arabia?," *The National Interest* (blog) (The Center for the National Interest, December 3, 2022), <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/can-netanyahu-deter-iran-and-make-peace-saudi-arabia-205965>.

²² Najat Al Saied, "The Abraham Accords in the UAE," *Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis* (blog), January 18, 2021, <https://www.mideastcenter.org/post/the-abraham-accords-in-the-uae>.

“privately contemptuous of the Palestinian leadership,” sparking hopes that once he gains the throne, Saudi-Israeli relations could warm.²³ Furthermore, it is in Saudi Arabia’s interest to maintain positive relations with the U.S. and to potentially sweeten the current bitterness resulting from President Biden’s reprimand; Dr. Eric Mandel suggests the Saudis adopt a less-hardline stance regarding Israel to do so.²⁴

The United States, a more indirect stakeholder in MENA security, is plagued with one of the most polarized political systems in the Western world, inhibiting the implementation of policies in the historically bipartisan foreign relations arena. The Biden administration did little to cement or advance the Abraham Accords in the first several months of their White House occupation, hurting security cooperation expansion by rescinding the Yemeni Houthis terrorist designation, restarting Iran nuclear deal negotiation, and stiff-arming weapons sales to Saudi Arabia.²⁵ Fortunately, the White House began showing signs of embracing the Accords in late 2021 after the failed Afghanistan pull-out and vital relations with the Saudis began souring. However, President Biden’s public rebuke of MBS in 2022 and its growing support for the Palestinian cause due to the arrival of a right-wing government in Israel continues to damage the prospects of a functional defensive architecture.²⁶ Congress is divided as well, with House members such as Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) pushing for an anti-Israel policy, contrasted by the newly established Abraham Accords caucus composed of bipartisan members.²⁷

Though not all-encompassing, several solutions present themselves to address some of the more pressing concerns. Regarding Gulf State infighting and Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States is well-positioned at this juncture to lay the groundwork for security cooperation as a neutral third party. Using established U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) relationships with major regional players, Israel and its Abraham Accords partners (and possibly others) could come together defensively under the auspices of American military leadership.²⁸ President Trump likely anticipated such an outcome as he authorized the transference of Israel into CENTCOM’s area of responsibility (AOR) at the end of his term.²⁹ Fortunately, cooperation in

²³ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 26.

²⁴ Eric R. Mandel, “Will Saudi Arabia Join the Abraham Accords?,” *Jewish News Syndicate*, November 2, 2022, pael, <https://www.jns.org/opinion/will-saudi-arabia-join-the-abraham-accords/>.

²⁵ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 23.

²⁶ Mandel, “Saudi Arabia”; Steve Postal, “Bibi’s Victory: What It Means for Iran, the Abraham Accords, and the Biden Admin,” *Sara Carter*, November 7, 2022, sec. Featured, <https://saraacarter.com/bibis-victory-what-it-means-for-iran-the-abraham-accords-and-the-biden-admin/>.

²⁷ Robinson, “Abraham Accords.”

²⁸ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 29.

²⁹ Michael Makovsky et al., “Abraham’s Command: Relocating Israel to CENTCOM’s Area of Responsibility” (Washington, D.C.: The Jewish Institute for the National Security of America, November 2020), 11–12, https://jinsa.org/jinsa_report/abrahams-command-relocating-israel-to-centcoms-area-of-responsibility/.

this vein is already occurring as CENTCOM organized a combined naval exercise that included Israel alongside Bahrain and the UAE for the first time in November 2021.³⁰

On a broader scope, each stakeholder nation (with the notable exception of China) should reemphasize the primacy of the Islamic Republic threat over all other minor concerns. U.S.-aligned countries in the MENA region remain under constant danger of Iranian drone and missile attacks (from the Iranian-backed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Houthis, Hamas, Hezbollah, and others). They should embrace their shared vulnerability to overcome the more menial obstacles preventing the creation of a defensive architecture.³¹ The United States would benefit two-fold from a security “belt” of friendly MENA nations—not only would it counter the threat posed by the Islamic Republic, but it could frustrate Chinese interests in the Middle East.³² China continues to further its relationship with the Shi’ite regime, most recently approving its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (an economic and security-focused cooperation led by the Chinese that includes the most influential nations in the Asian continent).³³ Suppose powerful countries such as Israel and the UAE take a firm stance opposing Iran. In that case, China might lose some of its diplomatic (and, in turn, economic and military) capital with other vital players in the region.

Action Steps

Since the idea of constructing a Middle Eastern defense architecture is no longer a far-reaching ambition but a plausible idea, Accords members and others in the MENA region should now take steps toward bringing that concept to fruition. In the near term, MENA nations should focus on proving that a security framework between Abraham Accords members would legitimately function despite the plethora of challenges and have a collective defense guarantee, in contrast with the failed CENTO of the last century. Positive building blocks to provide a base for a complete defensive structure would include smaller, more specific defense initiatives tackled between a few nations at a time. The long-term should broaden short-term projects, including all Accords members and other moderate Arab countries in larger coalitions. Such a push could result in more Gulf States coming to full normalization with the state of Israel in the future.

The chief threat to Accords members and other key players in the MENA region is the Islamic Republic of Iran, as noted. More specifically, the danger rests in light and heavy artillery launches from the IRGC and Iranian terrorist proxies targeting the aforementioned stakeholders, making the threat primarily an aerial one. The IRGC is investing significant funds to build up its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) program, its rocket and mortar arsenal, and its stockpile of

³⁰ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 8.

³¹ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 37.

³² Robert Greenway, “Transforming the Middle East: The Origins, Impact, and Evolution of the Abraham Accords,” Look Ahead (Hudson Institute, March 9, 2021), 3–4, <https://www.hudson.org/foreign-policy/transforming-the-middle-east-the-origins-impact-and-evolution-of-the-abraham-accords>.

³³ Satgin Hamrah and Alexander Eliassen, “The China-Iran Strategic Partnership: 40 Years in the Making,” *The Diplomat*, December 4, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/the-china-iran-strategic-partnership-40-years-in-the-making/>.

ballistic missiles, the latter of which is the largest in the Middle East.³⁴ They provide their terrorist proxies with these weapons, which use them against Israel, Bahrain, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. Such activities provide a path for a smaller, more specific defense initiative between those threatened to counter attacks from the air.

Israel has much to offer its Arab neighbors in this field due to its considerable experience in defending against rocket barrages and the technology they have produced to do so. The UAE in particular is taking advantage of its sweetened relations with the Jewish state to gain anti-air equipment and expertise. In January, the Emiratis requested to purchase Israeli aerial defense weaponry such as the legendary Iron Dome and David's Sling anti-air systems. The Israelis initially rejected their sale due to security concerns, but President Isaac Herzog suggested the Defense Ministry is reconsidering its embargo on the sale of Iron Dome technology and would be giving the UAE "air defense assistance" soon.³⁵ Additionally, Emirati and Israeli defense contractors signed a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2021 to develop systems that use electromagnetic pulses and lasers against Iranian UAVs.³⁶ Last, there is a far-reaching possibility that the Emiratis may acquire F-35 fifth-generation fighters from Israeli hands, becoming the first Arab nation to possess such technology.³⁷ The Kingdom of Bahrain follows close behind the UAE in its desire for Israeli systems. Iran maintains a historical claim on the island, further incentivizing the Bahraini government to press into its relationship with Israel to bolster its defensive means.³⁸ The nation is currently in the process of procuring Israeli UAVs and anti-UAV mechanisms to protect its critical infrastructure nodes from Islamic Republic drone attacks.³⁹

As individual projects like the ones mentioned previously get underway and produce results, member countries should take steps to broaden coalitions in nation-state involvement and categorical scope. First, cooperation must grow from bilateral and trilateral into multilateral participation. Avenues to do so include initiating collaborative defensive forums geared toward research and development, such as the one proposed at the Negev summit that convened in March 2022. The summit consisted of delegations from Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt, and the United States⁴⁰—the notable inclusion of non-Accords signee Egypt suggests the

³⁴ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, "Stronger and Wider," 8.

³⁵ GlobalData, "Abraham Accords Treaties Continue to Promote Defense Cooperation in the Middle East," *Army Technology* (blog), August 24, 2022, <https://www.army-technology.com/comment/abraham-accords-treaties-middle-east/>.

³⁶ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, "Stronger and Wider," 30.

³⁷ Dalia Dassa Kaye et al., "Toward Aligning Partnerships with U.S. Interests," in *Reimagining U.S. Strategy in the Middle East: Sustainable Partnerships, Strategic Investments* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2021), 24, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA958-1.html.

³⁸ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, "Stronger and Wider," 21.

³⁹ Ningthoujam, "Military-Security."

⁴⁰ "U.S. Interest," 5.

forum approach could be a method to begin integrating external members into a security coalition.

Saudi Arabia, as previously mentioned, is the primary inclusion target of the U.S. and Israel because of its location, size, and regional influence. The Saudis have one premier security concern—the threat posed by the Iran-backed Yemeni Houthis, responsible for more than 240 rocket attacks on the country.⁴¹ A multinational, strictly defensive cooperation directed toward aerial security is a possible means of bringing the Saudis into the defensive partnership picture, in addition to meeting a critical security requirement for members in the region.⁴² In pursuit of that goal, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz announced in June that he intended to start a regional air defense coalition with U.S. sponsorship called the Middle East Air Defense Alliance (MEAD).⁴³ Little is known about MEAD or how it functions, but high-level cooperation between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain is increasing, and there have been discussions about bringing in the Saudis.⁴⁴ Israeli general Eyal Samir hopes the alliance will include Israel, the U.S., the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, and Jordan, with possible additions of Qatar, Oman, Sudan, and Morocco.⁴⁵ The U.S. is rightly supporting the initiative with Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers introducing the *Deterring Enemy Forces and Enabling National Defenses (DEFEND) Act of 2022* in June, requiring the Secretary of Defense to explore the creation of a regional air defense organization like MEAD to counter the aerial threat imposed by the Islamic Republic, with bipartisan cosponsorship.⁴⁶

Conclusion

MENA is in desperate need of a security conglomerate to counter threats posed by both terrorists and nation-states in the region. Fortunately, the revolutionary Abraham Accords signed in 2020 brought Gulf relations into a new era of shared ideas focused on peace, prosperity, and security in the community of Middle Eastern nations, providing a framework for such a coalition to exist and function. Doubtless, many challenges present themselves that stakeholder countries must take diligent and creative steps to overcome, but with a clear mission and vision coupled with strong American leadership, a cooperation might succeed for the betterment of the whole MENA region. Smaller steps leading to specified defensive partnerships in the near and long

⁴¹ VOA, “Houthi Attacks on Saudi Arabia Undermine Prospects for Peace,” VOA, September 13, 2021, <https://editorials.voa.gov/a/houthi-attacks-on-saudi-arabia-undermine-prospects-for-peace/6224745.html>.

⁴² “U.S. Interest,” 6.

⁴³ Madeline Fink, “Israel Developing an Air Defense Alliance in the Middle East,” *The Organization for World Peace* (blog), July 18, 2022, <https://theowp.org/israel-developing-an-air-defense-alliance-in-the-middle-east/>.

⁴⁴ Jon Hoffman, “The Abraham Accords and the Imposed Middle East Order,” *The National Interest* (blog) (The Center for the National Interest, October 3, 2022), <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/abraham-accords-and-imposed-middle-east-order-205136>.

⁴⁵ Anna Ahronheim, “The Middle East Air Defense Alliance Takes Flight,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east-news/article-712150>.

⁴⁶ Cathy McMorris Rodgers, “DEFEND Act of 2022,” Pub. L. No. H.R. 7987 (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7987/text>.

term could spur the creation of a security coalition and a furtherance of the Abraham Accords themselves.

Naysayers from stakeholder countries have attempted to make the case that the Abraham Accords are “losing their luster” and are now doing more harm than good, propagating heightened tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example.⁴⁷ However, the advantages of the agreements far outweigh the less-than-ideal impacts, objectively benefitting each nation involved, particularly in the defensive sphere. First, Israel managed to break through centuries-old ostracization and step up as a major regional power, permitted for the first time to publicly engage economically with Arab nations in their sale of premier security technologies, for instance.⁴⁸ The Emiratis and Bahrainis in turn have better protection from Iranian-backed terrorists as a result of their investment in Israeli systems.⁴⁹ The United States can now ease the burden of MENA security benefaction off its shoulders and redistribute the load amongst a network of regional allies due to the Abraham Accords.⁵⁰ After observing the considerable gains procured from Accords membership, other nations in the region are interested in joining the agreement—Jared Kushner stated there were “six active discussions” occurring at the beginning of 2021.⁵¹ Due to the Accords, paths toward a Middle Eastern NATO are opening—the U.S., Israel, and their Gulf State partners should capitalize on this opportunity of a generation to bring greater peace and security to the Greater Middle East.

⁴⁷ Ben Lynfield, “Two Years Later, the Abraham Accords Are Losing Their Luster,” *Foreign Policy*, September 23, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/23/abraham-accords-israel-palestine-two-years/>.

⁴⁸ Dennis Ross, “The Abraham Accords and the Changing Shape of the Middle East,” Hoover Institution, June 21, 2022, <https://www.hoover.org/research/abraham-accords-and-changing-shape-middle-east>.

⁴⁹ Cicurel, Ghalili, and Millner, “Stronger and Wider,” 10.

⁵⁰ Hoffman, “Imposed.”

⁵¹ Jacob Magid, “Kushner Laments Biden Failure to Bring More Countries into the Abraham Accords,” *The Times of Israel*, September 12, 2022, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/kushner-laments-biden-failure-to-bring-more-countries-into-the-abraham-accords/.

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