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“We Are Cousins. Our Father Is Abraham...”: Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism with the Abraham Accords

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Abstract: This article addresses how the Abraham Accords, a series of agreements that are normalizing relations between Israel and a growing number of countries in the Arab world, could be harnessed to counter antisemitic discourses outside of the Middle East region. In particular, we argue that interfaith activities under the framework of the Abraham Accords demonstrate that hostility is not an inevitable response to Israel’s presence in the region. This article highlights the unique framework for peacebuilding that underpins the Abraham Accords and discusses how it has generated a new flourishing of Jewish life in its signatory countries, including unprecedented efforts to address anti-semitism and an acknowledgement of the centrality of Zionism to contemporary Jewish identity. We juxtapose these positive developments with the growing ostracism and demoralization of those Jews in the diaspora who identify with Israel and highlight how the Abraham Accords offers a different narrative for fruitful dialogue.

Keywords: Jews; Muslims; Abraham Accords; Israel; BDS; antisemitism; Zionism; interfaith



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1. Introduction

On 15 September 2020, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords, officially establishing peace, diplomatic relations, and full normalization with the State of Israel. Observers noted the warmth and enthusiasm with which the Accords were being received, with UAE and Bahrain’s leaders sending social media messages to their Israeli counterparts in fluent Hebrew, expressing genuine interest in the Jewish religion and contemporary Israeli culture, and showing excitement over the potential for establishing people-to-people connections in Israel. For the first time, many Arabs and Israelis are meeting one another in person, with opportunities for exchange fostered by the launch of the Abraham Accords Institute for Peace (Ravid 2021), new non-governmental organizations such as *Sharaka* (Nissani 2021), and the *Warm Peace Movement*, which promotes a range of cultural activities connecting Israelis and Arabs under the framework of the Abraham Accords.

For many familiar with the longstanding language and rhetoric of “anti-normalization” by Arab states vis-à-vis Israel, these developments have been a cause for optimism that Israel was finally being accepted by its neighbors as a natural, even valued, part of the Middle East (Ben-Shabbat and Aaronson 2022). Indeed, as we discuss further below, by acknowledging the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination in Israel, the Abraham Accords have facilitated an increased visibility of Jewish life and culture in signatory countries. As Jews increasingly feel empowered to publicly express themselves fully as Jews—including their religious practices and faith identities tied to Israel—a deeper understanding of antisemitism within the Arab world and the need to combat it has also emerged.

Concurrent to these developments, however, thousands of miles from the Middle East, has been a marked coarsening of the discourse around Israel in the United States, especially on campuses but also in other arenas. In a time of geopolitical and ideological shifts in the Middle East, when relations between Israel and a growing number of Arab countries

have warmed, signaled by improved Muslim–Jewish relations and new efforts to promote Jewish heritage and culture, many critics of Israel are incongruously working to undermine interfaith projects and are increasingly questioning the place of Jews within society, as we describe further below.¹

Israel’s detractors are increasingly employing aggressive tactics to delegitimize Israel and its supporters. These have included campaigns that demonize Israel and at times traffic in antisemitic tropes and canards; attempts to exclude Jewish-Zionists from participation in progressive causes, programs, initiatives, and events; and campaigns that seek to redefine Jewish identity and belief in ways that excise Zionism and a deep attachment to Israel (Grenell 2022; Elman 2022a; Fish 2019; Pessin and Ben-Atar 2018). On American campuses, for example, organizations that support Jewish life (e.g., Hillel and Chabad) are coming under attack; both on and off campus, there are efforts to create dichotomies between good/anti-Zionist Jews and bad/Zionist Jews. The cumulative effect of these efforts is to relegate Israel’s Jewish-Zionist supporters to a pariah status—in essence, a form of de-normalizing Israel but one that is transferred to spaces outside of Israel and which primarily impacts Jews in the diaspora, the majority of whom feel deeply connected to Israel and view a “love of Zion” as central to their religious identity.²

The article is organized as follows. First, we discuss the unique features of the Abraham Accords, which relies on and draws from connections across the three monotheistic faiths to provide a peacemaking framework that emphasizes people-to-people engagements. Second, we highlight the growing interest in Jewish religion, culture, and history in the signatory countries, especially the UAE, which embraces rather than demeans or denigrates the centrality of Zionism to contemporary Jews. Third, we contrast these developments with a brief overview of antisemitic forms of anti-Zionist expression and activism in the United States, in particular how the promotion of “antinormalization” as a tactic has resulted in a hostile climate for Jews in many arenas. Lastly, we discuss how the normalization of Israel and, in turn, of Judaism, including its Zionist elements, through the Abraham Accords can serve as a catalyst for promoting interfaith coexistence and countering antisemitism, in the Middle East region and beyond. We outline ways in which improved Muslim–Jewish relations under the auspices of the Abraham Accords contradicts some of the rhetoric that delegitimizes relations with Israel and underscores their potential for fruitful cross-religious dialogue.

2. Data and Analysis

In this section, we juxtapose the coarsening of discourse and activism on Israel and Zionism with the normalizing of relations between Israel and a growing portion of the Arab world under the Abraham Accords. Given how recently these agreements were negotiated and the fact that they have been in effect less than two years, to date, they have generated few scholarly studies. Think tanks and nongovernmental organizations have taken the lead in publishing policy briefs and reports analyzing the Abraham Accords and their impact. Criticisms of the agreements have also featured as opinion editorials in various media outlets and as petitions and open letters. However, many academic critics of the agreements have been outright dismissive, choosing to ignore these regional developments rather than to write about them. Below we offer a close textual analysis of the agreements and draw on reports and writings by academic experts affiliated with research institutes and think tanks and evidence from open-source English language media coverage. We also highlight the central criticisms and reservations that have been raised regarding the Abraham Accords. More scholarly work, by both critics and supporters of the Abraham Accords, is necessary. Thus, this article should be viewed as one perspective in what we hope will become a lively and robust scholarly debate.

2.1. The Abraham Accords Framework

Efforts at conflict resolution between Israel and its neighbors have resulted in an Egyptian–Israel peace treaty signed in 1979 and the 1994 Jordanian–Israel peace treaty.

For the ensuing two-and-a-half decades, peace efforts stagnated and no new Arab–Israeli agreements were reached until the Abraham Accords were signed in August 2020 between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, followed a few weeks later by normalization agreements with Sudan and Morocco. Unlike earlier peace agreements between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, the Abraham Accords involved countries that do not border Israel, have not engaged in warfare, and have relatively small Palestinian populations. Some experts have argued that these features have enabled the signatories to implement a “people-to-people” framework for normalized relations that was impossible for their predecessors (Musmar and Al-Saied 2021). As noted by scholars Frank Musmar and Najat Al-Saied:

The Egyptian and Jordanian treaties were agreements between governments that focused to varying degrees on closing the book on military conflict with Israel, even as the Palestinian issue remain unresolved and normalization between their societies remained uncertain. . . . Despite the passage of decades since the signing of the agreements with Egypt and Jordan, genuine “people-to-people” ties have not come to fruition.

In Egypt and Jordan, large Arab nationalist and Islamist factions have made a warm peace based on models of tolerance and coexistence difficult. Nor have Egyptian or Jordanian political leaders been willing to address hostile anti-Israel and anti-Jewish rhetoric that has been openly disseminated in the media and educational systems (Weinberg 2021a, 2021b; Bercovici 2020; Sharnoff 2017; Webman 2010). The negotiated agreements in both these cases created durable and robust security mechanisms for avoiding war but were not transformational, thus limiting the extent to which they improved relations and decreased hostility between the populations of these countries.³ Additionally, these previous peace agreements did not reference the faith-based traditions of the signatory parties. They relied on a “conventional liberal-secular” model that avoided mention of religious beliefs and instead promoted universal values and norms (Zalzburg 2021).

By contrast, the Abraham Accords differ from these prior peace agreements by emphasizing people-to-people relations, and support for relations built on trust, mutual understanding, and affinity, and not only on common security and economic needs and interests (Guzansky et al. 2021). Israel’s Sephardic-Mizrahi Jewish heritage forms a “natural bridge to peace” between Jews and Arabs (Frantzman 2021).⁴ The UAE, with its hundreds of nationalities, is well-situated to undertake such an approach given that it is committed to “creating an exemplary model of tolerance in region years before the Abraham Accords” (Musmar and Al-Saied 2021). For example, the UAE built a Hindu temple and the Abrahamic Family House on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, a complex that includes a mosque, church, and synagogue. The UAE also hosted the pope and 700 religious figures at a Conference on Human Fraternity in February 2019, signing the agreement of Human Fraternity for World Peace. This ethos, which rejects radicalism and seeks to promote the principle of religious freedom and diversity and a tolerant, pluralistic vision of Islam, is also supported by the media and educational system. Geopolitical realignments and economic interests have surely been the primary motivating factors behind the signing of the Abraham Accords, but it is important to acknowledge that a commitment to furthering dialogue, coexistence, and collaboration between the signatory nations was also written into the official text of the agreements. They would “encourage efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue to advance a culture of peace among the three Abrahamic religions and all humanity”, “address challenges through cooperation and dialogue”, and “support science, art, medicine, and commerce to inspire humankind, maximize human potential and bring nations closer together” (US Department of State 2020a).

The agreement with the UAE specifically went even further, with the parties pledging to “undertake to foster mutual understanding, respect, co-existence and a culture of peace between their societies in the spirit of their common ancestor, Abraham, and the new era of peace and friendly relations ushered in by this Treaty, including by cultivating people-to-people programs, interfaith dialogue and cultural, academic, youth, scientific, and other exchanges between their peoples” and to “work towards establishing a High-Level Joint

Forum for Peace and Co-Existence dedicated to advancing these goals” (US Department of State 2020b). Thus, the values of peace, coexistence, and dialogue would not only be a means of achieving other ends but goals to be achieved in and of themselves.

The agreement between Israel and the UAE also emphasized that “Arab and Jewish peoples are descendant of a common ancestor, Abraham, and inspired, in that spirit to foster in the Middle East a reality in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and people of all faiths, denominations, beliefs and nationalities live in, and are committed to, a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding and mutual respect” (US Department of State 2020b). The juxtaposing of “Arab” and “Jewish” in one clause, and “Muslims, Jews, and Christians,” in another demonstrates how the Accords codified recognition of Jewish nationhood, peoplehood, and religion, all integral components of Jewish identity, and highly significant in a region where Jewish self-determination has long been delegitimized.⁵

The concept of “Abrahamic faiths”, generally used since the mid-20th century to symbolize the common origins and bonds between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has come under criticism as an ahistorical conflation of the three faiths under one rubric. In this critique, the very category of “Abrahamic” ignores significant differences in theology and history between the three religious traditions, overlooks the diversity that exists *within* each of them, and papers over areas of tension and hostility to promote peaceful coexistence (see, for example, Hankins 2013). While this critique has merit, it is important to note that the Abraham Accords are political agreements that use the “Abrahamic faith” concept as a rhetorical framework for achieving practical impact, which will be discussed in detail below. The theological or historical accuracy of the “Abrahamic” concept is thus less germane to an assessment of these agreements.

Indeed, the distinctive feature of the Abraham Accords is that they draw on religious and cultural traditions to advance peacebuilding (Zalzburg 2021). The US Department of State (2020b) described the normalization process between Israel and the UAE as a “religious rapprochement” of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The founding document is named the Abraham Accords as a way of honoring the patriarch of the three faiths. Jews are thus portrayed in the Accords as Abraham’s descendants, and Abraham in turn is depicted as an ancestor with Middle East origins, thereby characterizing Jews as a historic indigenous people in the Middle East region (Zalzburg 2021). According to Zalzburg (2021), naming the agreements after the forefather of Jews, Christians, and Muslims “touched deep religious motivations”, helping them to secure the political backing of US evangelicals and Israelis on the right. Prominent evangelicals described the normalization agreements as the fulfilment of the divine promise to Abraham and as a vehicle for “bestowing God’s blessing through the Jews to other peoples, residing in the Arab normalizing countries” in the form of innovative Israeli technologies. Additionally, religious Zionists have viewed the Abraham Accords as an acknowledgement of Jewish indigeneity and consistent with prophecies that the “nations of the world would rejoice when Jews return to the homeland”.

For example, religious institutions and clerics in the UAE have given approval to the Accords, describing the benefits as in “the public interest”, which affords them religious validity (Guzansky and Winter 2020a, 2020b). Guzansky et al. (2021) point out in an issue brief for the Atlantic Council:

The importance of the religious polemic in legitimizing relations with Israel stems from the significance of Islam as a source of political legitimacy in majority-Muslim societies. Islamic justifications for peace are designed partly to alleviate the cognitive dissonance accompanying the transition from years of conflict with Israel—which were often justified on religious grounds—to overt, formal relations.

The fact that these lofty ideals were included in the vision for these agreements, alongside more traditional goals such as diplomatic engagement and security and economic cooperation, was an early indication that the signatory nations wished for more than merely a “cold peace” consisting of a cessation of hostilities between governments and militaries but lacking legitimacy amongst average citizens. Instead, the Accords emphasized the importance of people-to-people contacts and collaboration across many sectors of civil

society. The language used by Emirati and Bahraini officials in the weeks and months following the signing of the Accords reflected this sense of openness. For example, Henda Al Otaiba, the director of strategic communications at the Emirati Foreign Ministry, shared her nation's vision for relations with Israel in an interview with the *Times of Israel* in September 2020: "The outpouring of excitement and joy that we saw after the announcement was a genuine display of enthusiasm for the new opportunities that now exist between the peoples of the UAE and Israel. The normalization of relations is not just the cessation of a former policy—it is also the start of a new era of friendship" (Ahren 2020). Soon afterwards, during a tourism conference in the UK, Bahraini Industry Commerce and Tourism Minister Zayed R. Alzayani stated that "meeting another culture is nothing new for us... adding a new country like Israel is very beneficial for our tourism sector" (Hacohen 2020). While these may be perceived as anodyne statements about diplomacy and tourism, they are remarkable in their literal normalizing of Israel's place in the region; rather than a pariah state, Israel is described as a nation like any other.

Early acts of public diplomacy cemented this expansive conception of normalization. A promotional photo featured Emirati and Israeli women in Dubai with their respective national flags, a stark contrast to the past rejection of Israel and its symbols throughout the Middle East but also to situations in Western countries where public displays of Israeliness—and often even Jewishness—have been met with opposition and ostracism. Another incident involved an Emirati musician playing the Israeli national anthem, "Hatikvah", on the oud, a traditional Arab instrument. While this may seem like a minor gesture of outreach and cultural diplomacy, within the historical context of the modern Middle East, it had a more profound implication, conceiving of Israel as a natural part of the Middle East, and not as a European "settler colonial" state lacking indigenous ties to the region and land.

2.2. Improved Muslim–Jewish Relations and the Flourishing of Jewish Life in Arab States Signatory to the Abraham Accords

Normalization with Israel has also led to a greater interest in the history of Jews in the Middle East. The Azrieli Center for Israel Studies (MALI) at Ben-Gurion University in Israel and the Crossroads of Civilization Museum in Dubai jointly hosted a photo exhibit on the history and culture of Jewish communities in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Oman, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (Americans for Ben-Gurion University 2020). Called "Rebuilding Abraham's Tent: Historic Kinship, Future Alliances", the initiative makes explicit the connection between recognizing the historic Jewish presence throughout the Middle East and normalizing relations with the present-day State of Israel. An agreement between Israel and Morocco has Israeli students learn about Moroccan Jewish history, and Moroccan students about the history and heritage of Jews in Morocco and also about the state of Israel (Ben-Nun 2021). The basic frameworks of these burgeoning initiatives are significant in that they accurately recognize Jews as an integral part of the history of the region, and Israel as part of the region's current reality, a step towards countering the decades-long erasure of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Jews from the regional narrative, an inversion of the dynamic where Zionism was blamed for the rift between Jews and Arabs in the region, and a contrast to depictions of Israel that portray it as foreign, temporary, and colonial.

The Abraham Accords has also led to official commitments to combatting antisemitism among signatory nations, a significant step in a region where antisemitism and anti-Zionism have been long entrenched. Bahraini and Moroccan officials both signed agreements with the US State Department intending to "work together to share and promote best practices for combating all forms of anti-Semitism, including anti-Zionism and delegitimization of the State of Israel". Accordingly, they have accepted the non-binding working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which includes 11 illustrative examples for recognizing antisemitic statements (Kampeas 2020, 2021).

The IHRA definition of antisemitism, adopted in 2016, has at the time of this writing been endorsed by nearly 40 governments, including the US, the European Union, the Organization of American States, and numerous non-governmental groups, such as civil rights organizations, religious organizations, educational institutions, labor unions, Jewish community organizations, and others ([European Commission 2021](#)). However, in describing and alerting us to when criticism of Israel may, under certain conditions and depending on the context, cross the line into antisemitism, the IHRA definition has become highly contested within academic circles ([Penslar 2022](#)). In particular, objections have been raised over the potential for the definition to be abused as a means to censor speech critical of Israel and Zionism ([Schaffer 2021](#)). Created for the purposes of education and data collection, the IHRA definition was not meant to prevent or punish the expression of views or to serve as a formal hate speech code. That said, its supporters have argued that the definition can be useful in determining whether unlawful discriminatory conduct or harassment is motivated by anti-Jewish conspiracies, prejudices, or stereotypes that are thinly veiled in criticisms of Israel or Zionism ([Goldfeder 2021](#)). In the academic arena, its supporters have also noted that the IHRA definition can be relied upon to help determine whether a school or campus, given all the circumstances, is tolerating or condoning a pervasively hostile climate for its Jewish members that limits or interferes with their ability to participate in, and benefit from, educational services, activities, and opportunities ([Marcus 2021](#)). They also maintain that the definition can be used proactively as a sensible educational tool for ensuring inclusive, welcoming learning environments for Jewish and Zionist students. Insofar as antisemitism intimidates and therefore chills speech, supporters point out that the IHRA definition promotes free expression by enabling Jews to openly express their identities and Zionist positions.

The commitment of the Abraham Accords' signatories to countering antisemitism endured even in times of tension. In May 2021, immediately after the hostilities between Israel and Hamas, the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum in Dubai opened an exhibition focused on the Holocaust, with an explicit reference to the antisemitic attacks occurring throughout Western nations at the time: "We are all concerned about the rise in anti-Semitism in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. By teaching and informing our visitors about the Holocaust, we will create more awareness about the danger that this negative rhetoric and resulting actions can lead to", said Crossroads of Civilizations Museum Founder Ahmed Obeid Al Mansoori. "As a leading cultural institution in the UAE, it is very important to us that we focus on educating people about the tragedies of the Holocaust, because education is the antidote to ignorance" ([i24 News 2021b](#)). While a heartening display of shifting attitudes in the region, this situation where a cultural official in an Arab nation felt the need to express concern about antisemitism in the West also reflects an unsettling truth about these divergent paths with regard to Jewish safety and empowerment.

The downstream effects of normalization with Israel have had a profound impact on the Jewish communities in the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, particularly in terms of their ability to express all facets of their identity publicly and proudly. In the UAE, the small, mainly expatriate Jewish community, which had previously kept a low profile, has seen new kosher butchers and restaurants to accommodate the influx of Israeli tourists, a visit from the Israeli chief rabbi for the opening of a new school, and the establishment of a ritual bath. Religiously observant Jewish visitors reported being treated with respect and hospitality, and without fear of publicly identifying as Jews ([Estrin 2020](#); [Chabad.org 2020](#); [El-Naggar 2022](#)). Highly public celebrations of Jewish holidays included a Hanukkah candle-lighting in front of the Burj Khalifa skyscraper and Passover seders with thousands of attendees in the UAE's luxury hotels ([Zonshine 2020](#); [Proctor 2022](#); [Jones and Kalin 2022](#)).

In Bahrain, home to a native Jewish community since the 1880s, public prayers occurred for the first time in a newly refurbished synagogue, and the newly designated ambassador to Israel praised "the tangible role and contributions of the Jewish community to the comprehensive development process in the Kingdom of Bahrain". The community

commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day publicly for the first time as well, and the former Bahraini ambassador to the US, a woman from a prominent Bahraini Jewish family who had previously been circumspect about her identity, described visiting Israel for the first time as the “manifestation of a dream that I have dreamed since I was a young child” (i24 News 2021a; see also Naar 2022; Nonoo 2020).

The text of the agreement between Israel and Morocco made reference to the “special ties that His Majesty maintains with the Moroccan Jewish community living in Morocco and throughout the world including in Israel”. Despite ongoing tensions related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which make some Moroccan Jews reluctant to identify publicly as Jews, the Jewish community held a public celebration of Israeli Independence Day, and non-Jewish Moroccan activists emphasized how the Jewish community in Morocco could be a bridge between Morocco and Israel (Klein 2022; Harkov 2022). Authorities in Morocco completed a renovation of the historic Jewish cemetery in the city of Meknes as part of a broader overhaul of Jewish heritage sites (Liphshiz 2022).

While outreach to and public displays of respect for the Jewish community may be part of an attempt of these nations to cultivate an image of religious tolerance and respect for different cultures, it is hard to elide the fact that only with recognition of and normalization with Israel can these local Jewish communities express their identities—religious, cultural, and social—on their own terms. In contrast with the situation in many places in the West, where Jews are increasingly ostracized for their real or perceived connection to Zionism and Israel, in these nations in the Arab-Muslim world, Jews have found visibility and empowerment precisely *because of* Zionism and Israel. The Israeli journalist Seth Frantzman has eloquently noted the significance of this shift while also noting a fundamental injustice, which has made such a shift necessary in the first place:

A concerted campaign over the decades attempted to make it seem acceptable that not only would Israel lack relations with dozens of mostly Muslim countries but Jewish religious displays themselves would be considered taboo or ‘controversial’ in those places. The clear link between making the Jews feel unwelcome and not having relations with Israel illustrates how much of the anti-Israel crusade over the last 70 years has simply been an anti-Semitic policy. For example, reports now indicate Morocco will teach Jewish history in schools. This is a positive change. However, it is also extraordinary that Jewish history was not already being taught in a land where Jews have such a long history. How is that possible? Why was it acceptable? Acceptance of the isolation of Israel and erasure of Jewish history in the Middle East has been an open wound afflicting the whole region. It should never have happened (Frantzman 2020).

2.3. Criticisms of the Abraham Accords

Skeptics of the Abraham Accords dismiss them as a mere mechanism for US and Israeli arms sales to dictatorships, enabling them to better repress their own people (Hartung 2022). To be sure, the security interests of the signatory states has certainly been a paramount driving force for the agreements; the Abraham Accords represent an acknowledgement of Israel as a potential ally against Iran and radical Islamist forces at a time when US interest and engagement in the Middle East is waning. Yet, despite the fact that geopolitical considerations are important factors, even critics acknowledge that the relationships being forged have moved well beyond weapons and security threats (Ferziger 2021). New people-to-people opportunities are emerging from the formation of bonds between communities in Israel and the Arab world. For example, last year alone over twenty economic and cultural projects were launched between the UAE and Israel and a dozen covering aviation, banking, technology, and water were reached between Israel and Bahrain. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, last year over 300,000 Israelis visited the UAE. Normalization has also made it possible for Moroccan Jews to identify as Zionists, for example, by publicly celebrating Israel’s Independence Day.

Another central criticism is that the Abraham Accords is a “sellout of the Palestinians” and ultimately undermines an Israeli-Palestinian peace, allowing Israel to achieve normalized relations with Arab countries without having to make any significant concessions to the Palestinians (Matar 2020; Hassan and Muasher 2022). Critics point to the fact that unlike the Egyptian and Jordanian peace agreements, the Abraham Accords have no provisions to assist the Palestinian people in achieving their statehood rights (IMEU 2022). In response, supporters have contended that a “regional peace first” model founded on moderation and tolerance may offer a better chance of advancing peace than has been possible during seven decades of Arab enmity toward Israel.

Critics also point to the fact that, despite rapid growth in trade and academic and scientific partnerships, disapproval rates for the full normalization of ties between Israel and Arab states remain high, largely on account of insufficient progress in the peace process with the Palestinians (El Kurd 2020; Svetlova 2022). To be sure, public opinion in signatory states needs to shift upward in order to sustain the agreements in the long term. As scholar Dana El Kurd (2020) of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies notes, “...the lack of strong public support within gulf nations could limit the effectiveness of normalization agreements”. That said, these polls are likely not fully capturing shifts in public perceptions. A recent study (Benstead 2022), for instance, suggests that those more involved in civil society organizations and those who are more frequent users of social media are more likely to hold conciliatory views toward recognizing Israel and to see the agreements in a positive light.

Lastly, the Abraham Accords can be critiqued for overselling their capacity to realize largescale implementation of “freedom and respectful interfaith activities” since the key signatories (UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan) are countries where civil liberties are not only contested but also violated. Critics thus contend that the realities of state–societal relations in the signatory countries significantly reduce the likelihood that the agreements can serve as vehicles for promoting and implementing dialogue and mutual respect. In this regard, it is worth noting that the people-to-people engagement envisioned by the Abraham Accords facilitates opportunities for the citizens of these countries to experience first-hand democratic practices within Israel. Democratic values and practices can diffuse across borders as citizens in autocratic countries demand reforms that they observe and witness in neighboring states (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Similar dynamics may also emerge as a result of normalized relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords. However, insofar as democratization is influenced by other factors separate from democratic diffusion (Houle et al. 2016), it is important not to exaggerate the transformational nature of these peace agreements. While doing so is premature, that normalization with Israel may positively impact democratization processes in signatory states should be viewed as an aspirational possibility.

2.4. The Campaign to Demonize and Delegitimize Israel and Its Supporters

The downstream impacts of the Abraham Accords—mutual curiosity, dialogue, and respect between faiths and cultures, a growing emphasis on peace, coexistence, and collaboration, and an expanded visibility and empowerment for Jewish communities—must be contrasted with concurrent trends within many circles in the West. The global movement to demonize and delegitimize Israel and its supporters, which has long promoted the tactic of “anti-normalization” as a key strategy (ADL 2012; Braunold and Abuarquob 2015; Nelson and Greenberg 2016), has created an environment where the concepts of dialogue and understanding are dismissed, efforts to collaborate on projects and initiatives of mutual interest and benefit are scorned, and many Jews find themselves reluctant to fully express their identity in social spaces in which they had previously felt welcomed.

The contemporary global boycott campaign arrayed against Israel is merely the latest iteration of a century-old effort to attack and undermine the legitimacy of a Jewish presence in the Holy Land. Arab anti-Jewish boycotts date back to the 1920s and 1930s (May 2020). The Arab League declared a comprehensive boycott in 1945. In December of that year,

well before Israel's founding, the League addressed the "Zionist danger" by enacting a general boycott of Jewish business in then Palestine. The Arab summit in Khartoum in September 1967 resolved no peace, no recognition, no negotiation with Israel, and the infamous November 1975 UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 continued in this same vein, declaring Zionism to be form of racism.

There is a direct line between this denormalization of Israel and Zionism and the contemporary Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. While the received wisdom is that BDS originated among civil society groups in the West Bank in 2005, its platform was in fact prepped in Iran, where Zionism was identified in documents as a movement based on "race superiority". The draft declaration from these preparatory sessions in Tehran was rolled out, in full, just before 11 September 2001 at the *United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance*. By concealing the movement's true origins, BDS blurs any connection to the outrageously antisemitic NGO and main UN meetings in Durban, where Jews ended up hiding their name tags and wore caps to hide their yarmulkes and from which the United States delegation walked out in disgust (Stern 2020, pp. 77–80; Hirsh and Miller 2022). BDS has long worked to increase the movement's legitimacy by casting itself as an authentic call originating from independent, popular voices in Palestinian society. This activist façade shields it from the charge that it emerged from a long and ugly history of anti-Jewish boycotts and sanctions.

The BDS movement's rigid policy of anti-normalization demands avoiding any and all attempts at mutual understanding. It is important to realize that this anti-normalization stance is also strictly enforced against peace activists and coexistence groups. BDS calls for the boycott of any project or program that does not sufficiently emphasize Israel's alleged brutality and wrongdoings. In fact, the only people-to-people engagement that can be condoned are those that support "resistance". Consequently, Palestinians have long faced recrimination and punishment even for acting in a friendly and neighborly way toward Israelis and Zionist Jews. Peace groups such as *One Voice* and *Seeds for Peace* have been condemned by BDS leaders and there are many incidents where coexistence events have been violently disrupted in east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

BDS also explicitly frames the expression of solidarity with Palestinian rights and the national struggle as opposition to projects or programs that might promote dialogue. The *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel* (PACBI 2014) makes it clear that:

Academic activities and projects involving Palestinians and/or other Arabs on one side and Israelis on the other (whether bi- or multi-lateral) that are based on the false premise of symmetry/parity between the oppressors and the oppressed or that claim that both colonizers and colonized are equally responsible for the 'conflict' are intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible forms of normalization that ought to be boycotted. . . Examples include event, projects, or publications that are designed explicitly to bring together Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis so that they can present their respective narratives or perspectives. . . [emphasis in the original].

Thus, the BDS movement has issued guidelines for academics, which entail a set of specific recommendations about how to go about implementing an academic boycott against Israel. For example, they urge working to cancel or annul events that "normalize Israel in the global academy", refusing to publish in or referee academic materials that originate at Israeli universities, teaching at or conducting research through the auspices of Israeli academic institutions, and refusing to write recommendations for students "hoping to pursue studies in Israel" (PACBI 2014). The same is true for celebrities, with artists and performers often subjected to intense pressure to cancel events in Israel (Melman 2022). Even talking to Jewish-Zionist organizations must be rejected. Faculty are encouraged to follow these guidelines for boycott as are student clubs (Atkins and Elman 2021). New York City's Student for Justice in Palestine's manifesto reads "We reject any and all collaboration, dialogue and coalition work with Zionist organizations through a strict policy of anti-

normalization and encourage our comrades in other organizations to do the same". At New York University, over fifty student groups responded to that call by refusing to partner with any Jewish Zionist student club (Moshe 2018). Recently at American University, the Muslim Students Association rescinded an invitation to the local Hillel chapter for an interfaith celebration of Passover-Ramadan on account of its support for Zionism (Lapin 2022).

Off campus, there have also been numerous efforts to refuse engagement with those Jewish communal organizations that identify with Israel, thus dividing American Jewry between those to avoid and those it is "safe" to work with (Kurtzer 2021). A case in point are recent remarks delivered by Zahra Billoo, the Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), San Francisco, in which she warned fellow American-Muslims against partnering with Jewish and civil rights organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Federations, and campus Hillel chapters, "polite Zionists" that are Islamophobic and "working to harm you" and to "pay attention to the Zionist synagogues. They are your enemies". Not only did CAIR refuse to disavow Billoo's comments, it berated her critics, claiming that the outcry was merely the result of "false allegations of antisemitism in a cynical attempt to silence American Muslims who speak up for Palestinian human rights". Yet, some scholars have argued that this charge, namely that any pushback to antisemitic forms of anti-Israel expression is inherently made in bad faith, is itself an antisemitic canard that revolves around the allegedly hidden and dishonest motivations of the Jews (Hirsh 2017).

The BDS movement maintains that Israel is a bastion of European colonialism in the Middle East and that Jews are white interlopers in a foreign land that rightfully belongs to brown people (Linfield 2021; Wilf 2021). Jews in the diaspora who identify with Israel are thus castigated as enablers of this racialized injustice. This is driving a more pernicious form of BDS activism that now ranges from attempts to exclude Jewish and Zionist students from participating in progressive coalitions and causes to new obnoxious campus campaigns that work to discredit American-Jewish organizations, including the ADL, Birthright, and Hillel, and prevent or limit their activity on campus. On some campuses, the fitness of Jewish students to serve in leadership positions has been questioned on account of their perceived Zionist beliefs and identification with Israel (Ritch 2020; Strelzer 2022; Knox 2022). On others, there have been recent efforts to restrict Jewish expression to religious practices that excise faith-based connections to Israel. For example, at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) club demanded that the campus Hillel be replaced with a "proper" Jewish organization that would enable Jewish students to observe the Sabbath (by "lighting candles") but not host any Israel-themed programming. When the school's chaplain joined other faith leaders to condemn SJP's "agenda of hate and alienation", SJP accused her of "working with Zionists" and of being a traitor to the Palestinian cause (Waltzer 2018). The upshot is that many Jewish students are reporting that they are fearful of expressing their identities and afraid for their emotional well-being (Lewin 2020, 2019). In the words of Emory University historian Deborah Lipstadt, who now holds an ambassadorial position as the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, this sustained pressure on American Jews in many quarters has forced some to marginalize crucial components of their identity in order to remain members of "community of the good". She compared their situation to that of the *Marranos*, the Jews in post-Inquisition Spain who formally converted to Christianity but secretly retained Jewish practices:

Most Jewish students on American campuses have not been subjected to overt acts of discrimination or verbal abuse. However, many among them feel they have something to lose if they openly identify as Jews. If they are active in Hillel, the Jewish student organization, they may be informally barred from being active in progressive causes, for example, racial and LGBTQ equality, climate-change mitigation, and the fight against sexual assault. Those who want to be elected to student government are learning to scrub their résumés clean of any overtly

Jewish or pro-Israel activities. They are not abandoning their Jewish identity; they are hiding it. They have become *Marranos* (Lipstadt 2021).

To be sure, not all forms of anti-Zionist expression are antisemitic. After all, anti-Zionism first emerged among Jews, including within Orthodox circles, which viewed a Jewish national liberation movement as a form of heresy and among the nineteenth century founders of Reform Judaism in Germany and later the United States, who thought aspiring for a Jewish state would stymie progress toward citizenship rights for Jews in other countries (Walzer 2019). It is evident, however, that hatred against Jews can be expressed as anti-Zionism; sometimes just by replacing the word “Jews” with “Zionists”, it becomes blatantly obvious (Shams 2022; Jikeli 2021; Waltzer 2021). Anti-Zionism can be experienced as antisemitism because its rhetoric often employs anti-Jewish tropes, stereotypes, conspiracies, and blood libels, although this is not always the case (Harrison 2019). As the scholars Blackmer and Pessin (2021, p. 11) note:

Like in the classic antisemite’s Jew, leftist antisemitism sees Israel as bloodthirsty, devious, conspiratorial, ruthless, and guilty of the most outrageous crimes against humanity. The interest is not in critiquing or improving Israel, but in destroying it.

Contemporary forms of anti-Zionism also deny that Jews are historically and spiritually indigenous to Israel and argue against the right of Jewish self-determination, despite the fact that Israel is today the world’s largest Jewish community. Zionism is “inextricably linked” to the lives of close to 50 percent of the world’s Jews living in Israel, and so “denying Zionism implies disregarding and denying a critical piece of their lived experiences” (Spokoyny 2021). Outside of Israel, anti-Zionism can leave Jews feeling marginalized and even dehumanized given that, for the overwhelming majority of Jews today, Zionism and an attachment to Israel is integrally linked to their religious identity, in much the same way that the Jewish Sabbath and keeping a kosher diet are also core components of Judaism, for many (but not all) Jews (Lewin 2019, 2020). As Andrés Spokoyny (2021) remarks, “The truth is, Zionism has become a key to the Judaism of a very large number of Jews. . . Supporting the Zionist enterprise has become normative for most and a matter of life and death for millions. In that context, claiming that support for anti-Zionism puts one, in some important way, outside of the Jewish people is less a point of debate than a literal description of reality. The difficulties that any boundary-setting exercise entails shouldn’t make us lose sight of this obvious fact”.

Thus, when a Students for Justice in Palestine chapter and 11 other student groups bemoan that the “Zionist grip on the media is omnipresent”, it is a case in point (Shams and Elman 2022). Similarly, when pro-Palestinian students urge their peers to “demand that Zionist professors are not welcomed on your campus. Demand that Zionist students are not in spaces where Palestinian students are.” In an era of identity politics, those who are “other” in relation to gender and race have been afforded an enhanced status. But Jews who identify as Zionists have become the exception. Because any support for Israel is viewed as a form of oppression, Jews are cast as imperialists, racists, and sometimes even white supremacists (Horn 2022; Schneider 2022). They find themselves relegated to pariah status and ostracized from social justice spaces (Kaufman 2021; Elman 2022b). This rhetoric and activism have the effect of not only demonizing and delegitimizing Israel and erasing Jewish history but of isolating Jews and American-Jewish institutions.

A recent online interactive website curated by a group of anti-Israel activists in the Boston area offers an example of the danger this presents. An anonymous online resource and organizing tool launched in June 2022, it explicitly targets scores of Jewish institutions throughout the Boston area and across the state of Massachusetts for “disruption” and “dismantling”. Specifically, it identifies Jewish nonprofits, social-service organizations, philanthropic foundations, synagogues, and schools for their purported ties to the media, law enforcement, and other government agencies engaged in “U.S. imperialism” and the “colonization of Palestine”. Endorsed and promoted by BDS Boston and other virulently anti-Israel groups, the interactive website views universities as “a central nexus that ties to-

gether many of the harms traced” and lists dozens of campuses, academic programs, study abroad trips to Israel, research programs and internship opportunities with Israeli universities, organizations that support campus Jewish life including Hillel, interfaith programs, Jewish student associations, and even specific courses (Bandler 2022a; Cristantiello 2022).

The Project was designed with an alarming purpose: to show “physical addresses, named officers and leaders, and mapped connections” of local Jewish communal institutions so that they can be “dismantled”. It accuses these Jewish entities of being complicit in a host of practices and policies that the mapmakers say “devastate” immigrants and minorities, including policing, militarization, environmental racism, evictions, gentrification, the privatization of public schools, and others. The Project’s creators visualize networks of Jewish power and influence in an attempt to demonstrate intersections between the oppression of people of color and Jewish institutions across Massachusetts, viewed as blameworthy solely because the American-Jews who work, teach, or worship in them have attachments to the State of Israel. The website does not reference or list any other religious or ethnic group; only Jews are singled out and scapegoated for their alleged complicity in America’s ills. The “Boston Mapping Project” also defines Zionism, which as noted above is an essential component of Judaism for the vast majority of American-Jews, as a “form of white supremacy”. It further accuses “Boston’s Zionist leaders and powerhouse NGOs” of “buy[ing] legitimacy and support from universities” and using their “influence to enable a range of oppressive agendas”. The Project thus seeks to ostracize and demoralize Jews for their faith-based identities while trafficking in millennia-old conspiracies about Jewish power, money, and undue influence (Greenblatt 2022; Burton 2022). Campaigns such as the “Boston Mapping Project” and its “call to action” must be recognized for what they are: anti-Israel expression and activism that crosses a line into an antisemitism that must be unequivocally and forcefully denounced as such (Academic Engagement Network 2022).

Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism on Campus in the Wake of Israel–Hamas Hostilities, May 2021

The renewed hostilities and the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas in May 2021 saw a dramatic uptick in antisemitic crimes against persons and property in the United States and Europe. An unprecedented number of academics also signed onto incendiary petitions and statements that condemned Israel for alleged war crimes. In the US, some of these statements and petitions were campus-specific (for example, at Princeton, Harvard, Brown, CUNY, and University of Washington); others were open to entire departments to sign, and still others were discipline specific, for example, to departments of gender studies (Redden 2021; Academic Engagement Network 2021a; AMCHA Initiative 2022). The statements were highly inflammatory in tone and factually inaccurate, absolving the Palestinians of all agency while demonizing Israel for its “crimes against humanity”, “eliminary violence”, “racial supremacy”, “brute force”, “territorial theft”, “Jewish supremacy”, and “attempts to perpetuate modern-day genocide”.

Most of the petitions and statements did not mention Hamas let alone reference the role it played in instigating the violence, effectively erasing the history and lived experiences of Israelis, both Jewish and non-Jewish. A number of the communications also explicitly rejected teaching or researching the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from a multiplicity of perspectives and committed signatories to advancing an academic boycott of Israel on their campuses. Of particular concern was that, in some cases, entire departments, centers, and programs issued such statements, thoroughly alienating Jewish and Zionist students from these educational spaces on campus and marginalizing the most vulnerable faculty, including dissident junior scholars not yet tenured and those on contingent contracts (Nelson 2022). In addition, it is important to consider how this hostile rhetoric about Israel and Zionism would have the effect of inciting harassment and intimidation of Jews on campus (Academic Engagement Network 2021b).

Some of these statements had antisemitic overtones. For example, UCLA’s Department of Asian American Studies issued a statement on 21 May 2021, which alleged that “Israel

has too often upheld its support of Asian and Asian American individuals as proof of its multicultural democracy, over and against the ethnic cleansing of Palestine via a process of yellow washing” (Pierre 2021; Bandler 2022b). Yellow washing, brown washing, and pink washing accusations make the claim that anything positive Israel may do—such as advancing a laudable record of rights for minorities—merely serves to hide and conceal (to ‘whitewash’) the state’s aggressions towards the Palestinians. Scholars have noted that such charges play on antisemitic tropes of the Jew as conniving and devious; that is, the sneaky, trickster Jew who manages to find a way to dupe well-meaning and good-hearted people (Blackmer 2019; Elman 2019). Of particular concern, too, were statements that included blatant antisemitism, characterizing the Jewish state as a reprehensible, demonic force, guilty of heinous crimes. Perhaps one of the worst in this regard was a petition fielded by the group *Religious Studies Scholars for BDS* and signed by over 500 faculty and graduate students in the discipline. It quoted from the sage Hillel in one sentence while accusing Israel of genocide in the next. It is important to juxtapose these incendiary statements issued by student governments, departments, and signed by scores of academics, with the measured responses issued by Israel’s new Arab peace partners. In essence, they modeled exactly how to criticize Israel, even harshly, without crossing the line into hostile rhetoric or by trafficking in antisemitic tropes and canards. We also note that the UAE had harsh words for Hamas; it is a striking comparison with the missives from the US academy, which did not even mention the more than 4000 rockets fired onto Israel civilians for over 11 days, or the Israelis who were killed.

3. Discussion

We argue that the Abraham Accords can be harnessed to educate against antisemitic forms of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist expression and activism. It is difficult to understate the significance of the transformational paradigm of the Abraham Accords. As the journalist Seth Frantzman noted when the first Israeli plane flew to Morocco in December 2020: “Israel now has a peace plane. . . The presence of an El Al airplane in capital cities around the Middle East is unprecedented—just as seeing Israeli flags proliferate across Morocco, the UAE and Bahrain has seemed like something from a parallel universe, in which all the pervasive acrimony against Israel doesn’t exist” (Frantzman 2020). The Abraham Accords offer an alternative to the rejectionist model in which Jews are depicted as modern-day foreign, colonial interlopers with no legitimate historical or religious attachments to the land of Israel. The Holy Basin in Jerusalem is explicitly mentioned in the agreement, which offers a foundation for fostering an inclusive vision around religious freedom and respectful interfaith activities. The Accords thus affirm Judaism’s Middle Eastern roots and support the view that a Jewish sovereign presence in the Arab region is a “natural and desirable condition” in contrast to the extremist Islamist view—endorsed by Iran and its proxies—that Zionism is an eternal enemy of Islam (Guzansky and Winter 2020a, 2020b).

The Gaza crisis of May 2021 was weathered; renewed hostilities between Israel and Hamas did not derail the burgeoning ties between Israel and the signatory states to the Abraham Accords (Vohra 2021; Times of Israel 2021). While anti-Israel propaganda was at a fever pitch in Europe and the United States last spring, with extreme rhetoric and even assaults against Jews (McEvoy 2021), the Israel–Hamas hostilities in Gaza did not significantly alter the approval rate for normalization with Israel among the publics in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain; nor did it cause any of Israel’s newest Arab partners to reconsider their relationship with Israel (Al-Ketbi 2021; Pollock 2021). This outcome highlights how the Abraham Accords has challenged the expectation that Arab–Israeli normalization could only follow an Israeli–Palestinian peace, rather than precede it (Hurban 2022). However, as its supporters have noted, the Accords can improve rather than impede the prospects for Israeli–Palestinian conflict resolution by highlighting that stability and prosperity and peaceful and diplomatic solutions are a common interest—with the exception being extremists to the conflict who reject them (Al-Ketbi 2021; Weinberg 2022). Indeed, what the Abraham Accords demonstrate is that it is possible to recognize

Israel's right to exist, Jewish peoplehood, and historic rights to the Land of Israel while also remaining steadfast to resolving Palestinian grievances, and advocating for Palestinian rights and statehood. Specifically, the Accords challenge the false conflation of Zionism with anti-Palestinianism. Palestinian elites and clerics in the West Bank and Gaza have claimed that the agreements abuse the "exalted values which Islam associates with the figure of Abraham, namely justice" (Zalzburg 2021). Yet, as Koby Huberman (2022) notes, the Abraham Accords resulted in the shelving/freezing of the plan to annex parts of the West Bank, consequently keeping alive the two-state solution:

The Palestinians did not understand the strategic shift in the region or realize that the Arab states now had positive leverage over Israel, which they could have used to encourage and incentivize Israel to make progress toward the Palestinians. Instead, the Palestinian sense of victimhood and of betrayal by the Arab state, a long-term sentiment, was never more obvious or more vocal.

Denigrating the faith-based attachments of Jews to Jerusalem and the land of Israel has contributed to the Israeli–Palestinian impasse. Insofar as the Abraham Accords reference Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, it is possible to use the agreements as a basis for acknowledging the legitimate status and rights of both Jews/Israelis and Muslims/Palestinians to these holy sites. Recognition of Israel and its role in the region is also linked to Jewish visibility and empowerment, a recognition of the Jewish history in the region, a respect for and interest in Jewish religion and culture, a public commitment to combat antisemitism, and the ability of Jewish communities and individuals in those countries to openly express themselves as Jews. By contrast, the BDS anti-Israel movement does little to advance peace or improve the lives of Palestinians since it is focused only on isolating Israel economically, culturally, and politically, with the goal of eradicating it. Its core principle of "anti-normalization" rejects coexistence efforts. Palestinians who engage in interactions with Israelis are vilified, shunned, and sometimes even physically harmed. Since the Abraham Accords represent a refutation of this anti-normalization premise, pro-BDS organizations have opposed the agreements since their inception (Milstein and Carafano 2020).

On American campuses and beyond, academic events and projects can harness the premises and promise of the Abraham Accords to promote dialogue and interfaith coexistence, regional economic integration, and technological innovation (Kamaras 2020; Zarook 2021). Student groups can field pro-normalization resolutions that endorse the Abraham Accords and emphasize how the anti-Israel movement on campus is often more radical toward Israel, Zionism/Jewish identity, and more hostile toward Jews than leaders and reformers in the Arab and Muslim world. A wide variety of programs might constructively highlight the developments currently taking place in the Middle East as an example of how mutual respect and recognition can enhance peace and collaboration between nations, cultures, and religions.

One illustrative example of such an approach is the recently launched Abrahamic Programs for Academic Collaboration in the MENA Region (Reitz 2022). Housed in the University of Connecticut's Global Affairs, this "Abrahamic Initiative" is an interdisciplinary academic project that "fosters cross-border research collaboration, intercultural communication, and community engagement to explore emerging trends. . .". Of significance is that it explicitly aims to build on the "intellectual foundations of Abrahamic thoughts and its three monotheistic faiths—which emphasize the value of acquiring knowledge, using reason, and acting with wisdom". The initiative engages the university community in dialogue and discussion on the Abraham Accords along with projects that contribute to regional economic, environmental, and social development through new research collaborations. Given a recent spate of antisemitic incidents on the University of Connecticut campus (Kilyk 2021), it will be useful to assess the extent to which the school's new Abrahamic Programs impact the campus climate.

4. Conclusions

In this article, we argued that the Abraham Accords could be harnessed to counter anti-Zionist and antisemitic rhetoric by offering an alternative model for Jewish–Muslim coexistence. The two-year-old Abraham Accords overturn Arab and Islamist rejection of Israel and demonization of Zionism, a central component of the faith-based identity of most Jews (Lewin 2020). Based on the common heritage of Muslims and Jews, the Accords explicitly acknowledge that Jews are a people indigenous to the Land of Israel. The Accords reject religious hatred and the extremist goal of undoing Israel, empowering its signatory states to concentrate on the common goals of stability and prosperity. By calling into question the basic premises of the anti-Israel movement, the Abraham Accords offer some useful opportunities, especially in academic spaces: a demonstration of how a growing number of Arab states and societies are today beginning to rethink their relationship with Jews and Israel, providing a new set of discourses for Israel/Palestine campus conversations. After all, if Israel and states in the Arab world can dialogue and reach mutual understandings, students on campus can do so as well. Moreover, insofar as signatory states to the Abraham Accords celebrate their lands as centers of religious tolerance through the vehicle of the Abraham Accords, this may facilitate a revisiting of the actual treatment and views of Jews, both before and after the advent of the modern Zionist movement, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the mass exodus of Jews from Arab and Muslims lands since 1948 (Stillman 1979; Shulewitz 1999; Julius 2018; Bensoussan 2019; Green and Stursberg 2022). Jews under Arab-Muslim rule experienced periods of coexistence, relative safety, and prosperity yet were also subjugated, humiliated, denigrated, and faced prejudice that spilled over into horrific waves of violence (Memmi 1975; Lewis 1984; Julius 2018; Pollack 2017; Pollack and Norwood 2021). Historically, the reality of Muslim–Jewish relations in Arab lands was one in which Jewish life and community were complex and diverse, yet often precarious, and where antisemitism proliferated, spread by political leaders and prominent Muslim educators and clerics (Cooperman and Zohar 2013; Kressel 2017). Although currently a speculative possibility, the promise of the Abraham Accords is that signatory states will come to terms with this tragic past even as they forge new relations premised on a very different set of values. Future research should assess the extent to which this promise is realized.

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Notes

- ¹ This article focuses on antisemitic and virulently anti-Israel rhetoric and activism in the US context. For a global perspective, see, for example, [Rosenfeld \(2019, 2021\)](#).
- ² Anti-Zionist Jewish groups, such as Jewish Voice for Peace, receive considerable media exposure relative to their actual numbers but are, in fact, on the fringes of contemporary American Jewish life ([Elman 2020](#)). Numerous recent polls find that while many American Jews are critical of Israeli policies and governments, only a very small percentage identify as “not pro-Israel”.
- ³ Numerous studies in the field of conflict resolution show that peace is enhanced when agreement includes aspects related to the day-to-day lives of citizens in the signatory countries, thus moving beyond security and economic interests as motivators and demonstrating how ordinary people benefit. See, for example, [Elman et al. \(2019\)](#).
- ⁴ Organizations representing Jewish communities from the Middle East and North Africa seek to advance a better understanding of the memory and history of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry (see, for example, [JIMENA 2022](#)). Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin are sometimes referred to as “Arab Jews” (see, for example, [Shenhav 2006](#); [Levy 2008](#)). However, this category is highly contested and is often rejected by Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews as ahistorical. See, for example, [Memmi \(1975\)](#) and [Taib and Nouriel \(2022\)](#).
- ⁵ The reference to Jewish peoplehood in the document is noteworthy given that Jews are typically described in much of the Arab and Palestinian discourse since the establishment of the state of Israel as followers of a set of religious practices, and not as a people. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), for example, has long rejected recognizing Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people, a position that has remained unchanged despite its official recognition of the State of Israel. In its 1968 National Charter, for example, the PLO describes Judaism as a “revealed religion; it is not a separate nationality, nor are the Jews a single people with a separate identity; they are citizens of their respective countries”.

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