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ABRAHAM ACCORDS AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE MIDDLE EAST POLITICAL MOSAIC

INTRODUCTION

In the second decade of the 21st century, a series of events and processes took place in the Middle East that had a destabilizing effect on this already troubled region. One of them was the Arab Spring, which hit Syria particularly hard. The country plunged into the chaos of a civil war, during which the interests of the United States, Russia, several regional powers and non-state actors were confronted. The second major security challenge was Iran's nuclear program. The 2015 agreement with this country, which was aimed at countering Iran's nuclear ambitions, turned out to be a positive accent. However, it turned out to be a short-term success, as already in 2018 the American President Donald Trump withdrew from this agreement. The problem therefore remained open, and Washington's decidedly pro-Israel stance during his presidency left its mark on the mosaic of Middle Eastern relations. An important element, also in the context of Iran's position in the region, were the agreements concluded in 2020 by Israel with four Arab states, aimed at normalizing mutual relations. They constituted a seemingly surprising turn in their attitude towards Israel, treated hostile by the Arab world for many post-war decades, slowly getting used to the very presence of a Jewish state in the Middle East. It is enough to recall that until recently only two countries in the region – Egypt and Jordan – decided to normalize relations with Israel (respectively the 1979 and 1994 agreements), with Egypt paying for this step by excluding it from the League of Arab States for a whole decade.

The aim of this study is to describe the process of normalizing Israel's relations with a group of several Arab states at the end of the second decade of the 21st century against the background of the political situation in the Middle East. This content will be preceded by a description of the evolution of Israeli-Arab relations, especially in the context of the Arab League's response to Israeli-Arab conflicts. It can be hypothesized that the aforementioned 2020 agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco constituted a significant step towards strengthening the acceptance of the Arab world for the presence and interests of Israel, being a resultant of the competition with Iran and the individual interests of individual countries. In the preparation of the article, the method of analyzing the documents (the cited agreements) and the literature covering the subject matter was mainly used.

THE ISRAELI-ARAB CONFLICT AND THE EVOLUTION OF ISRAEL'S POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The tragic experiences of the Holocaust became the main impetus for efforts to create their own state after the Second World War. The issue of the future of Palestine was dealt with by a special commission (UNSCOP – United Nations Special Committee on Palestine), established within the United Nations. Its creation and operation were protested by Arab states that oppose the idea of dual statehood in Palestine (Morris, 2008: 40). Based on its work, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, which divided Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state (*Resolution 181*). A larger part (14,257,000 square kilometers), including relatively coherent areas of settlement, was to be allocated to the Jewish state, and a slightly smaller (11,664 square kilometers) to the Arab state. Jerusalem, as the holy city of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, was to become a separate area governed by the United Nations. Thirty-three countries (including Eastern bloc countries) voted for the resolution, thirteen against (including Arab countries), with ten abstentions (Quigley, 2005: 37).

After the resolution was announced, a series of anti-Jewish excesses followed in the Arab countries. At the same time, their authorities, in December 1947, pondered the response to Resolution 181 at the League of Arab States (LAS) established in 1945. In conditions of militant rhetoric, the LAS ultimately limited itself to announcing efforts to stop the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state. Individual countries – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan – announced the sending of 10,000 rifles for Arab fighters in Palestine. At the same time, there emerged a position among them that with the expiry of the mandate they should intervene in Palestine (Morris, 2008: 70–72). In addition, decisions were made on the recruitment of 3 thousand volunteers in the Arab Liberation Army, created under the auspices of the LPA (Karsh, 2002, 30–31).

The expiration of the British mandate over Palestine took place on May 15, 1948. The day before, the leaders of the Jewish community, led by David Ben Gurion, proclaimed the State of Israel, which provoked a group of Arab states (Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon) to intervene (Karsh, 2002: 22–23). On May 15, 1948, the LAS announced a declaration in which justified the military intervention. It cited arguments in favor of the creation of a unified Palestinian state, referring, *inter alia*, to the League of Nations Covenant and the United Nations Charter. The document clearly echoed the grievances directed at the British over Jewish immigration to Palestine. There was an announcement of intervention by Arab states, justified by, *inter alia*, the right of Palestinian Arabs to their own state, the threat to Arab states from the proclamation of Israel, the need to fill the gap left by the withdrawing British administration and restore peace (*Arab League Declaration*, 1948).

The military operations lasted intensively for several months, then gradually expired in 1949 – between February and July, Israel concluded armistice agreements with Egypt, Transjordan, Lebanon and Syria, respectively. The first Arab-Israeli war, known in Israel as the War of Independence, ended with the success of the young state, occupying the territory of about 21,000 square kilometers, thus significantly exceeding the area envisaged in Resolution 181. Of the territories envisaged for the Arab state

– Egypt took the Gaza Strip, and Transjordan the West Bank – the armistice border between this area and Israel was henceforth described as the green line. Needless to say, the truce agreements did not imply recognition of Israel from its Arab neighbors.

The confrontational attitude towards Israel became the main binder of Arab states, although – as the history of successive conflicts has shown – a binder that was insufficient in the face of the contradictions tormenting the Arab world. Nevertheless, it was possible to create a formal basis for cooperation. One of them was the agreement on joint defense and economic cooperation of June 17, 1950, concluded by the seven LAS countries. The second article of the treaty contained provisions very similar to the fifth article of the Washington Treaty on NATO, that an attack on one of the states would be treated as aggression against everyone, obliging the other states to come to the aid of the attacked (*Treaty of Joint Defense*, 1950: 1250). The agreement entered into force in August 1952 (Fryzeł, 1981: 65).

Another major conflict, known as the Suez War of October/November 1956, broke out as a consequence of Egypt's rapprochement with the Eastern Bloc and the nationalization of the Suez Canal by the local leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. A constant problem for Israel was also the blockade of the Strait of Tiran, which was the exit to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. The conflict opened the field for cooperation between Israel and France and – so far unfavorable to Israel and perceived as Jordan's patron – Great Britain. Contrary to the war of 1948–1949, this time Egypt fought alone. The Sinai War also clearly made people aware of the limitations of the Arab world in pursuing coordinated anti-Israel actions in the Middle East (Kober, 2002: 64–65), also in a multilateral context, i.e. through the League of Arab States (Chandra Singh, 1965: 206). The conflict, besides the achieving one of the most important goals, which was to unblock shipping in the Strait of Tiran, strengthened Israel's position in the Middle East and its sense of relative safety.

While the attempts to create an alliance of Arab states failed during the Suez war, during another major conflict, i.e. the Six-Day War of June 1967, the forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan stood against the Israeli. Earlier, at the Arab League summit in January 1964 in Cairo, a decision was made to create the United Arab Command (*Arabs to set up*, 1964), and a few months later, at the next summit in Alexandria, the member states accepted the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (*Declaration Issued*, 1964). In May, a series of decisions was made by Nasser – the removal of the UN conciliation forces from Sinai and the blocking of the Strait of Tiran. It appeared to be a turning point that prompted Israel to take military action. Israel's triumph in the Six-Day War resulted in territorial gains at the expense of Egypt (Sinai and Gaza), Jordan (West Bank) and Syria (Golan Heights). On the one hand, this fact improved Israel's strategic situation, and on the other, it caused problems related to the presence of hostile Arab people in the occupied territories. The territorial gains were also to become a bargaining chip in possible future negotiations based on the "land for peace" principle. The UN Security Council became the arena for the diplomatic confrontation between Israel's supporters and opponents, which on November 22, 1967, finally managed to draft the text of the resolution numbered 242. It called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in the Six-Day War, "guaranteeing freedom of navigation in international waterways" "achieving a just settlement of the refu-

gee problem” and guaranteeing the territorial integrity of all states in the Middle East (*Resolution 242*, 1967). Meanwhile, a few days later, the LPA summit in Khartoum at the turn of August and September 1967, was an opportunity to manifest the unity of Arab states. A sharp course towards Israel was confirmed, based on three principles: “no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country” (*The Khartoum*, 1967).

During the Suez or Six-Day War the Arab states were the party reacting to Israeli military actions. Another conflict – known as the Yom Kippur war of October 1973 – was initiated by them (Amos, 1979: 1–2). The Egyptian attack launched on October 6, 1973, proved successful, as did the Syrian offensive in the Golan Heights. The armies of both countries, supported by small formations of other Arab states, inflicted heavy losses on Israeli forces in the first days of the conflict. It was only after a few days that the Israelis managed to launch an effective counter-offensive – first on the Syrian front, then on the Egyptian front. On October 22, 1973, Resolution No. 338 of the UN Security Council was passed, calling on the parties to the conflict to suspend military operations and to conduct peace talks and implement the objectives of Resolution 242 (*Resolution 338*, 1973). However, it was only when both superpowers, supporting the opposing parties to the conflict, joined the Middle East diplomatic game that allowed the end of military operations and led to a truce in the first months of 1974. Israel, with minor concessions to Syria, retained control over the Golan Heights, and on the Egyptian front his forces withdrew some 40 km east of the Suez Canal, which allowed Egypt to regain control of the Canal (Shapira, 2018: 380–394).

While Israel clearly triumphed in previous conflicts, the balance sheet of the 1973 conflict was not so clear-cut. In the declaration of the LPA summit in Algiers of November 28, 1973, there were even triumphal notes: “In October 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian armed forces, together with the Palestinian resistance supported by other Arab forces, inflicted severe blows on the Israeli aggressors.” A few days later – on December 4, 1973 – a secret LAS resolution specified the organization’s goals in the context of the Palestinian problem. It states, *inter alia*, that “no Arab party can possibly dissociate itself from this commitment, in the light of the resolutions of previous Summit Conferences.” Another point was noteworthy: “The Palestine problem is the affair of all the Arabs, and no Arab party can possibly dissociate itself from this commitment, in the light of the resolutions of previous Summit Conferences” (*Declaration of the Arab Summit Conference at Algiers*, 1976). The last point quoted could clearly suggest that in the Arab world no deviation from anti-Israel policy would be tolerated, as Egypt found out after a few years.

The manipulation of oil supplies and prices to individual Western countries, accused of pro-Israel sympathies, turned out to be a powerful weapon of the Arab states, which was initiated in October 1973. Meanwhile, the Middle East peace process was slowly taking shape due to American diplomacy and the special commitment of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. In the United States, in January 1977, Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency. In the same year, Menachem Begin became the prime minister of Israel, who had shown his readiness to talk directly with Anwar Sadat, successor of Nasser. The visit of Sadat to Israel in November 1977 was a huge surprise for the world, received by the Arab states with indignation and freezing relations with Egypt.

In September 1978, for several days at Camp David, the residence of the US presidents, talks between the delegations of both sides took place, culminating in two preliminary framework agreements – the first on the terms of the peace agreement and the second on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (*The Camp David Accords*, 1979: 31–32; Shapira, 2018: 430–431). In December, Sadat and Begin received the Nobel Peace Prize. The final Egyptian-Israeli agreement was signed on March 26, 1979. The first article announced the end of the state of war between the two countries and announced the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai. The second and the third concerned the boundaries between them, containing obligations to mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, the right to live in peace within safe and recognized borders, and to refrain from the use of force and threats to use force. It was planned to establish diplomatic, economic and cultural relations (*Treaty of Peace*, 1979).

The deal with Israel cost Egypt a boycott by the LAS. Sadat, deciding to make peace with the arch-enemy, violated the hitherto iron rule not to enter into talks with Israel (Avineri, 1982: 19). The LPA's response to the September agreement was formulated at the Baghdad summit. The summit statement asked Egypt to withdraw from the agreements and not to sign "treaty with the enemy" (*Statement dated*, 1978). The reaction after the signing of the agreement of March 1979 was even stricter. Five days later – on March 31, 1979, the LPA announced a message in which it decided "withdraw the ambassadors on the Arab states from Egypt immediately, [...] recommend the severance of political and diplomatic relations with the Egyptian Government, [...] consider the suspension of the Egyptian Government membership in the Arab League, [...] make the city of Tunis, capital of the Tunisian Republic, the temporary headquarters of the Arab League" (*Arab League Summit Communiqué*, 1979).

The following years brought the expected stabilization in Egyptian-Israeli relations, but there was no breakthrough in solving the Palestinian problem. In 1980, Israel announced the annexation of East Jerusalem. Two years later, there was a limited Israeli invasion of Lebanon to liquidate the PLO bases. As a result of international mediations, the PLO was evacuated to Tunis, while the Israeli forces remained in southern Lebanon, thus creating a buffer zone that made it difficult to attack northern Israel, mainly by pro-Iranian Hezbollah, which was activated in place of the PLO in southern Lebanon. In 1987, a wave of riots hit the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which soon developed into the Palestinian uprising known as the First Intifada. Its consequence became the strengthening of another anti-Israel group – Hamas. The Palestinian movement has thus increasingly succumbed to rivalry between Hamas and the hitherto dominant Fatah.

Meanwhile, the wave of political changes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, which resulted in the end of the Cold War between East and West, left its mark also in the Middle East, inspiring for further steps towards stabilization. In 1992, the post of prime minister was taken over by Itzhak Rabin, who showed great openness to talks with Palestinians and a will to compromise. At the beginning of 1993, talks with the PLO representatives took place, culminating in the signing of the first agreements in September 1993. The achievements of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process mainly consisted of several agreements in the years 1993–1995. These agreements became the basis for the emergence of Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho in

the West Bank, and in the following years the area of autonomy was to be gradually expanded (Hassan, 2011: 68–70). The agreements with the Palestinians drew on Rabin a wave of criticism from right-wing circles in Israel, and the prime minister was killed in an attack in November 1995.

The Oslo Accords paved the way for talks and normalization of relations with another Arab state – Jordan. Bilateral talks began in the second half of May 1994. On July 25, 1994, Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and King Hussein, visiting Washington, announced the end of the state of war between Jordan and Israel (Chojnowski, Tomaszewski, 2001: 376). Three months later, on October 26, 1994, a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel was signed. The treaty defined the boundaries between Israel and Jordan, extensively described the rights of the population in the West Bank, and described cooperation in the use of the waters of the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers. Both sides undertook not to participate in any international alliances that would be directed against the other side of the agreement. The agreement also provided for combating terrorism. In turn, the issue of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons remained practically unresolved in the treaty, the parties were satisfied with the provision that it was so complex that it could not be resolved by a bilateral agreement and required the involvement of a greater number of states. An important element of this issue was the fact that Jordan granted its citizenship to Palestinians who came to its territory both as a result of escapes from Mandatory Palestine during the war of 1948–1949 and after the Six-Day War of 1967. This fact gave rise to the interpretation that they were not refugees, but it was appropriate to refer to them as displaced persons, usually well integrated in Jordanian society. Another important element of the Jordanian-Israeli treaty was the status of Jerusalem and the holy places of this city, important for the followers of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The treaty recorded a special role for Jordan with regard to the holy places to Islam in this city (Schlünder, Ibrahim, 1996: 73–76 and 82–92).

Jordan became the second – after Egypt – Arab state to conclude a treaty aimed at normalizing relations with Israel. Time showed that we had have to wait over a quarter of a century for further agreements of this type. During this period, the Middle East peace process continued to be promoted, primarily with the participation of the United States, but faced serious obstacles. Following the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995, he was succeeded by right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, known as an opponent of excessive concessions to the Palestinians. During his reign, Jewish settlements in the West Bank of the Jordan were expanded. The agreement with the Wye River Plantation of September 23, 1998 brought some progress, handing over more areas of the West Bank to the Palestinians. In turn, in May 1999 the post of prime minister was taken over by the head of the Labor Party, Ehud Barak, who was considered to be a more conciliatory. His readiness to compromise was confirmed, *inter alia*, by the decision to withdraw Israeli troops from the south of Lebanon, that had so far created a buffer preventing Shi'ite Hezbollah from attacking northern Israel. Another disruption to the peace process was the Second Intifada, which broke out in 2000 after the hawkish right-wing politician Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In February 2002, he assumed the office of Prime Minister. A tough course towards the Palestinian Authority and a firm reaction for anti-Israel terrorist attacks contributed to the exacerbation of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

In these circumstances, another peace plan was formulated by the Saudi heir to the throne, Prince Abdullah, presented at the LAS summit at the end of March 2002 as a joint project known as the Arab Peace Initiative. The main proposals were the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied since 1967, the “achievement just solution” on Palestinian refugees, recognition by Israel of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with its capital in East Jerusalem, recognition of the Israeli-Arab conflict as completed and transition to peaceful relations between Israel and Arab states (*The Arab Peace*, 2002). Israel reacted relatively restrained to the Arab initiative, stressing, *inter alia*, that it did not impose any obligations on the Palestinian side and that the condition for comprehensive peace talks should be the cessation of anti-Israel terrorist acts. In those circumstances, the plan had no chance of being implemented, but it was nevertheless to be included in the agenda of Arab-Israeli relations in the following years.

A complement of the Arab Peace Initiative was the establishment of the so-called the Middle East Quartet in April 2002, inspired by President George W. Bush, composed of the United Nations, the EU, the USA and Russia. Then the president proposed the so-called a road map for recognition of Israel by Arab states and the creation of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian problem, however, receded into the background with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the chaos that ensued in that country in subsequent years. Also within the Palestinian movement itself, the rivalry between the moderate Fatah, and radical Hamas, which took power in the Gaza Strip in 2006, intensified. Another attempt by the United States to mediate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict took place at the Annapolis conference in November 2007 with the participation of several dozen countries. The strongly pro-Israel position of the USA was slightly corrected during the presidency of Barack Obama in 2009–2017. At the same time, the post of Prime Minister in Israel was taken over by Benjamin Netanyahu after Ehud Olmert (until mid-2021), a supporter of a hard course towards the Palestinians. It should be noted, however, that in the second decade of the 21st century, the Palestinian problem was somewhat overshadowed by other challenges and threats. One was the chaos in Iraq and then in Syria in the wake of the Arab Spring. At that time, the international community had to focus on the fight against the Islamic State, which nested in some areas of these countries. Iran’s ambitions to produce nuclear weapons became the second major challenge. The international community managed to defeat the Islamic State with an enormous effort in 2017 (at least in terms of regaining territories). In turn, the problem of Iran’s nuclear ambitions was temporarily resolved under the JCPOA (*Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*) agreement of July 2015 with the participation of Iran, five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the EU. The agreement, which provided for Iran to refrain from trying to produce nuclear weapons in return for lifting the sanctions previously imposed on it, was met from the very outset with sharp opposition by Israel, fearing that the agreement would at best delay the process of building nuclear weapons by Tehran. At the same time, Israel was concerned about Iran’s efforts to develop missiles carrying explosives capable of striking Israel – this problem was not at all a subject of negotiations with Iran. Therefore, the 2018 decision by the next American president, Donald Trump, to withdraw from the JCPOA was received by Netanyahu with satisfaction. It should be remembered that when analyzing Israel’s agreements with the Arab

states in 2020, one should take into account both the Syrian context and – or perhaps most of all – the related Iranian context.

ABRAHAM ACCORDS – DIFFICULT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE ARAB WORLD AND ISRAEL

Donald Trump's peace plan for Palestine has become one of the most important elements of the US policy towards the Middle East. It was preceded by the US offer of ten-year economic support to Palestinians – both those from both parts of the Palestinian Authority and those living in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan – in the amount of 50 billion dollars, announced in June 2019. The proposal met with a cold reception from the Palestinians, traditionally demanding the end to the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories (Diamond, 2019). The 181-page plan itself was presented at the White House on January 28, 2020 in the presence of President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and diplomats from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Oman. The plan met Israel's expectations, proposing to connect to Israel primarily the Jordan Valley with its Jewish settlements, the largest centers of Jewish settlement near the borders of Israel, and smaller settlements. They would be connected by a system of roads with the proper part of Israel. It also required building tunnels or bridges to connect different parts of the Palestinian state. The Palestinian West Bank was to be connected by a long tunnel to the Gaza Strip (*Peace to Prosperity*, 2020, map of the predicted Palestinian state: 45). It was quickly rejected by Palestinian leaders as favoring Israel. Jordan expressed its concerns, on the one hand, emphasizing the Palestinians' right to their own state based on the pre-1967 borders with the capital in East Jerusalem, and on the other hand, warning against the effects of Israel's unilateral actions aimed at annexation of Palestinian lands. The moderate approval for the plan came from the representatives of the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Crowley, Halbfinger, 2020). It is worth noting that the Trump plan, for example, did not address the issue of the potential return of Palestinian refugees. On the other hand, Israel's concession was the postponement of decisions on the formal annexation of areas inhabited by Israeli settlers, which had been urged by the Israeli right for a long time.

The lack of progress on the Palestinian issue did not hinder the process of improving Israel's relations with the Arab states. Israel for years was in secret contacts with some of them, thus creating a united front directed against Iran. In relations with the UAE, there were also elements of more formalized cooperation, such as the establishment of an Israeli representative office at the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi in 2015. Three years later, Israeli judokas participated in a tournament in the UAE, and shortly thereafter, the Minister of Culture Miri Regev paid a visit in the UAE. In 2020, Israel received an invitation to the Expo in Dubai, but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also Bahrain, a country with a small Jewish community, had long secret contacts with Israel. The factor facilitating the conclusion of the agreements was certainly the fact that the above-mentioned countries belonged to the allies of the United States, hosting American troops on their territories (air force – F-35 aircraft in the UAE and the navy, Fifth Fleet in Bahrain) (Liebermann, 2020).

The first agreement was announced by the joint statement of the United States, Israel and the UAE of August 13, 2020, announcing the normalization of Israel's relations with the UAE (*Joint Statement*, 2020). On September 15, 2020, agreements on the normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain were concluded at the Washington White House. The United States was represented by President Donald Trump, Israel by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the UAE and Bahrain by the foreign ministers of both countries, Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, respectively.

Let's take a look at the content of signed documents. The starting point is a one-page declaration, its content does not differ from standard phrases – it emphasizes the need to maintain and strengthen peace in the Middle East based on mutual understanding and coexistence, respect for human dignity and freedom, freedom of religion, tolerance, cooperation, etc. In the penultimate sentence, the signatories tell support the process leading to the conclusion of diplomatic relations between Israel and its Middle Eastern neighbors (*The Abraham Accords Declaration*, 2020).

The actual text of the agreement between Israel and the UAE consists of four pages and a three-page annex. An interesting fragment of the preamble refers to the common ancestor of Arabs and Jews – Abraham, whose name inspired the name of the agreement. The signatories in this section are in favor of supporting the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and followers of other religions. Two recently announced documents were recalled in the preamble – the peace proposal by Donald Trump of January 28 to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the joint statement of the UAE, Israel and the United States of August 13, 2020. Then, the most important provisions were focused on twelve points. These include, first of all, the normalization of mutual relations based on the principles of the United Nations and international law. The parties announced that they would establish diplomatic and consular relations (Article 3). Actions for peace and stability have been announced, including the fight against terrorism, and regular consultations (Article 4). In addition, cooperation in other spheres is foreseen, such as finance and investment, civil aviation, health protection, innovation, trade and economic relations, tourism, sport, culture, energy, the environment, education, post and telecommunications, agriculture, legal cooperation (Art. 5, later developed in the appendix). Subsequent articles say, among others, on mutual understanding and coexistence (again in this place – Article 6 – there is a reference to Abraham as a common ancestor), interpreted here primarily as supporting social relations (social programs, interfaith dialogue, cultural, academic, scientific and youth exchange). To this end, a High-Level Joint Forum for Peace and Co-Existence was to be established. Both sides committed to working with Washington to promote peace in the Middle East. The treaty required ratification by both parties (Article 10). In the case of interpretative disputes, they are resolved by negotiation or – in the event of their failure – they can be conciliated or arbitrated (Art. 11). The agreement was signed by: on behalf of Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan, and President Donald Trump as a witness to the agreement (*Abraham Accords Peace Agreement*, 2020). Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that, from the UAE's perspective, it was crucial that Israel met the condition of announcing the suspension of plans to annex part of the West Bank.

On the same day, i.e. September 15, 2020, a declaration was signed between Israel and Bahrain, represented respectively by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani. The most important seemed to be the announcements of establishing diplomatic relations and the intention to conclude agreements in various areas of cooperation – investment, tourism, direct air connections, the environment, and others. The last sentences thanked President Donald Trump, who also signed the document (*Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation*, 2020).

Thus, the UAE and Bahrain became the third and fourth Arab states and the first Gulf states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. It can be concluded that the Abraham Accords were a specific consequence of the informal cooperation that had been going on for many years in many areas. The factor mobilizing for cooperation was certainly the sense of threat from Iran, which was more and more openly interfering in the Middle East conflicts – especially in Yemen and Syria, accused of interfering with the freedom of navigation to the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz and supporting extremist anti-Israel groups (Hamas and Hezbollah). For the UAE and Bahrain, good relations with Israel were a condition for strengthening ties with the United States. In this way, the UAE could count on the providing of its army with modern American F-35 multirole fighters.

Sudan turned out to be another country that entered the path of an agreement with Israel. On February 3, 2020, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with the leader of the transitional Sudanese authorities (after the overthrow of long-term dictator Omar al-Bashir in April 2019), Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan in Entebbe, Uganda. One of the first effects was the opening of Sudanese airspace to Israeli aircraft. In May 2020, Sudan pledged to pay 335 million dollars in compensation for the US victims of terrorism (the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole off the coast of Yemen). In August 2020, talks in Khartoum were continued by the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, while in September, further negotiations took place in the United Arab Emirates, during which Sudan was to demand economic support (mainly wheat and oil supplies). On October 20, 2020, information was released that Sudan had transferred the said compensation to the Americans in the amount of 335 million dollars (*Sudan says*, 2020). Two days later – on October 22, 2020, representatives of the United States and Israel flew to Khartoum. The visit resulted in a declaration on the normalization of relations between Sudan and Israel. Three days later, Israel announced a 5 million dollar shipment of wheat to Sudan. On December 14, 2020, the United States announced the removal of Sudan from the list of states supporting terrorism (El-Gizouli, 2021: 4–6). On January 6, 2021, the information was released that Sudan had officially joined the Abraham Accords. This took place during the visit of the US Secretary of the Treasury, Steven Mnuchin, to Khartoum. On the Sudanese side, the document was signed by the Minister of Justice, Nasredin Abdulbari. At the same time, Sudan received promises of financial support, which was particularly important in the context of talks with the World Bank. In addition, Sudan committed to talks on the repatriation of immigrants from that country to Israel (around 6.2 thousand, many from war-torn Darfur, some received the so-called humanitarian status from the Israeli authorities), it also received support in the form of wheat supplies (Harkov, 2021). Already in January, talks on military cooperation

between the United States and Sudan took place, and American ships soon appeared in Port Sudan (El-Gizoui, 2021: 9).

Morocco became another country that decided to make a breakthrough in its relations with Israel. On December 10, 2020, thanks to the mediation of the United States, a joint declaration of the United States, Israel and Morocco was signed, aimed at the normalization of Israeli-Moroccan relations. A significant achievement of Morocco was the assertion in the document that the United States would recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the former Spanish colony, the Western Sahara. In it, King Mohammed VI reaffirmed "the coherent, constant and unchanged position of the Kingdom of Morocco on the Palestinian question" and the need to ensure "the special status of the sacred city of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions." The opening of direct air connections between Israel and Morocco was announced, the establishment of full official contacts, including diplomatic relations, and the promotion of economic cooperation and cooperation in the fields of trade, finance, investment, innovation, technology, etc. (*Joint Declaration*, 2020). The deal was criticized by Palestinians, both by the West Bank PLO and Gaza Hamas, who argued that any deal with Israel must be conditional on the complete departure of the occupied territories. Not surprisingly was the criticism of the agreement from the Algerian-backed Polisario Front, which was fighting for the independence of Western Sahara for years. In turn, Egypt and the UAE officially endorsed the Israeli-Moroccan agreement (*Israel, Morocco agree*, 2020).

Israel's agreement with Morocco was a natural consequence of the balance of power in the Middle East. The common denominator was, *inter alia*, hostility to Iran – Israeli media reported that Morocco held Tehran responsible for supporting the Polisario Front through Hezbollah. For many years, the intelligence cooperation of both countries was also to continue. There was information about the sale of three drones by Israel to Morocco for the amount of 48 million dollars in January 2020 (Nahmias, Harkov, Cashman, 2020). The Americans also decided to sell Morocco four modern drones capable of patrolling huge sea and land spaces (*Exclusive*, 2020). Another confirmation of the good relations between Israel and Morocco was the agreement on cooperation in the field of security signed by the defense ministers in Rabat on November 24, 2021. It concerned intelligence cooperation, defense industries, training, etc. (Ahronheim, 2021).

It is appropriate to stress the key role of the United States as an intermediary in all four 2020 agreements. Washington's essential goals were to continue supporting Israel while isolating its greatest enemy, Iran. Washington therefore sought to improve Israel's relations with the Arab states. Let us add that US-Israeli relations developed well at the level of the two hawkish leaders. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump quickly found a common language, which was in contrast to the relationship of the head of the Israeli government with Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama. This can be associated with a similar, confrontational perception of international relations by both leaders. Trump entrusted to his son-in-law with Jewish roots Jared Kushner with the construction of a Middle East policy, which was a clear signal of strengthening the US pro-Israel stance. One of the visible manifestations of this process was the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which was announced by the White House on December 6, 2017. The Trump administration also

suspended financial aid to the Palestinian Authority through the UNRWA, and recognized the affiliation of the Golan Heights to Israel, taken from Syria in the Six-Day War in 1967 (the decision to restore American financial support to the Palestinians was made at the beginning of Joe Biden's term) (*Ameryka wznawia*, 2021).

From Donald Trump's perspective, the agreements presented great advantages for the upcoming election campaign. In the calculations of the president and his advisers, they were probably supposed to improve his chances of re-election, to some extent reducing the disastrous impression about his weak diplomatic abilities and the deconstruction of the international order by the USA, which could have been obtained after almost four years of presidency. For the United States, it was also an important step towards strengthening cooperation between the countries of the Middle East region, directed against Iran. The Abraham Accords could be considered a success of American diplomacy, even more so because – as some sources stated – the next country considering the normalization of relations with Israel was Oman (*Two Gulf nations recognized*, 2020).

Thus, an important element of the US policy towards Israel were its clearly anti-Iranian accents. Let us recall that by the decision of Donald Trump of May 8, 2018, the US withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran of July 2015 (JCPOA), negotiated during the presidency of Barack Obama, with the support of China, Russia, Germany, France and Great Britain. President Trump supported Israeli arguments contesting this agreement since the beginning of his presidency. It was pointed out that the agreement made no reference to the development of the Iranian missile program, accusing Tehran of breaking the very letter of the agreement. The anti-Iranian position of the Trump administration suited not only Israel, but also Saudi Arabia, which is fiercely rivaling Iran, and other Sunni monarchies in the region.

Given the above-mentioned anti-Iranian motivations behind the Abraham Accords, it is not difficult to guess what Tehran's reactions were. Even a cursory reading of the pro-government "Tehran Times" reveals an extremely critical attitude towards Arab-Israeli agreements. In one of the articles of September 14, 2020, we can find an Iranian interpretation of the attempts to normalize Arab-Israeli relations, starting with the Israeli-Egyptian agreement with Camp David of 1978. The analyzes quoted here say that normalization is apparent and the image of Israelis in Egyptian society is extremely negative, which is reflected, for example, in the local cinematography. Relations between the two countries have the character of a "cold peace." The results of public opinion polls in Islamic countries on establishing some form of relations with Israel were also cited – 15% of respondents in Indonesia, 6% in Turkey, 4% of Pakistanis and 3% of Egyptians were to support such trends. However, it is difficult to determine the representativeness of this type of research without knowing exactly their method and the sample of respondents. Threads related to Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump's efforts to strengthen their political position in their own countries were also highlighted. The former struggled with corruption accusations, while the authority of the latter in the United States was undermined by the ineffective fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The Palestinians would fall victim to the agreements, ignored in them. Abraham Accords, would lead to an escalation of tensions in the region due to their anti-Iranian attitude (Qaddoumi, 14.09.2020). In the comments and interviews

in the daily, the opinion was expressed that the Donald Trump's support for the agreement is calculated to obtain the support of the pro-Israel lobby in the USA in the perspective of the upcoming presidential elections (Mazhari, 14/09/2020).

The growing sense of threat from Iran resulted in a peculiar Israeli-Arab (Israeli-Sunni) alliance in the Middle East, which led to the Abraham Accords. Individual Arab states that concluded agreements with Israel expected significant political gains from the United States, being a kind of promoter of all four agreements. The US support was valuable to the Sunni power elite in mostly Shi'ite Bahrain. In turn, the UAE counted on obtaining F-35 aircraft and other military support from the Americans. Sudan counted on the lifting of sanctions for supporting terrorism during the rule of Omar Hasan Al-Bashir, and the benefit to Rabat was the recognition the annexation of Western Sahara, occupied by Morocco in the 1970s. For the Persian Gulf states, improving relations with Israel was a condition for closer cooperation with Washington, including military ones, including access to modern technologies. It also opens the possibility of purchasing modern military products with high technological standards in Israel, such as the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system.

In general, the Abraham Accords can be assessed as a step towards strengthening Israel's position in the Middle East. This is due to the fact that Shi'ite Iran is considered the most serious threat in the Arab world. The Sunni elites of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE fear the rise of Shi'ite Iran and its destabilizing impact on the security of the Middle East (Gilboa, 2020). From their perspective, Israel appears to be a valuable ally with considerable resources that can be used against Tehran. They are afraid of the ambitious actions of Iran, which is expanding its influence in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, but is also trying to strengthen its bridgeheads on the Arabian Peninsula (supporting the Houthi rebellion in Yemen). Israel, in turn, is actively using its military potential against Iranian forces in Syria, or against fighters supported by Iran, such as Hezbollah. Arab states also appreciate Israel's influence in the United States (Feith, Libby, 2020: 34–35). Iran itself, in turn, feels threatened and isolated, it relies on an uncertain alliance with Russia, but also actively and consistently tries to strengthen its influence in the region. It can be concluded that the Palestinians became a kind of victim of the Abraham Accords. Arab efforts to strengthen cooperation with Israel marginalized the Palestinian problem and, it seems, pushed the question of establishing a Palestinian state to the background. The new Israeli government established in 2021, led by Naftali Benett, was primarily aimed at removing Benjamin Netahjahu from power. Thus, it is a rather exotic coalition of various parties from the left to the right wing of the political scene, including a party representing the Arab population of Israel. Due to such a large ideological and political dispersion of this coalition, it is hard to expect that it will be able to solve the Palestinian problem on the basis of a two-state solution. On the other hand, it seems that the Benett government should be more inclined to cooperate with the Palestinians than Netanyahu. Moreover, the assumption of the presidency in the United States by

Joe Biden should slightly correct the Middle East policy, though not in its basic outline. The Biden administration will seek to gain an image of more impartial in regional security issues in the Middle East. On the other hand, an attempt to return to the nuclear agreement with Iran will certainly not violate the US's existing alliances with Israel and the Arab states. One may agree with the thesis that the Abraham Accords confirm the enormous evolution of Israel's position in the Middle East. In the first years of its existence, it was treated with hostility from Arab states that supported the Palestinians and openly aimed at the liquidation of the Jewish state. With time, breaches began to appear in the tight anti-Israel alliance of Arab states when the Camp David peace agreement was signed. Jordan became the next country, after Egypt, which decided to come to terms with its former enemy, in the post-Cold War political realities. Over time, the sense of threat from Iran has become for Arab states a stronger motive for their security policy than support for the Palestinian problem, which has clearly lost its importance. At the same time, Arab political elites must take into account anti-Israel sentiments in their countries, which may lead to a preference for covert cooperation with Israel. It is therefore not surprising, for example, that the largest state of the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia, is cautious about any formalized agreement with Israel, despite the fact that there are discussions in the public space about its possible joining the Abraham Accords. The advantage of this solution would be an even stronger strengthening of ties with the United States and the chances of gaining access to modern weapons, as well as improving the reputation in the international arena. The disadvantage, however, is the possibility – as mentioned – of social protests in the event of normalization of relations with Israel (Guzansky, 2020). For this reason, the Saudis will probably test the public opinion on this issue in the near future, contenting themselves with covert cooperation with Israel, making formal normalization with the Jewish state dependent on the solution of the Palestinian question. Nowadays this seems to be the safest tactic. The situation of Qatar is no less complicated, as it is also interested in good relations with the USA and in the supply of American weapons, and thus could join the Abraham Accords, but tensions between it and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt have persisted for years. Accusations have been made against Qatar that it supports Palestinians, including radical Hamas. In turn, Qatar has for years been afraid of Saudi Arabia's domination in the region, blaming the Saudis for undermining the power of the Qatar emir Tamim ibn Hamad Al Sani. Nevertheless, Qatar has left itself room for maneuver, maintaining its position that the Palestinian question must be resolved in the peace process (Michael, Guzansky, 2020). In conclusion, it can be stated that the Abraham Accords – although they do not resolve (or even delay the prospect of solving) the Palestinian question, mark a significant step towards strengthening Israel's position in the Middle East and confirm the reconfiguration of the – extremely complex – regional balance of power in the last few decades.

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ABSTRACT

In the second decade of the 21st century, many processes destabilized regional security in the Middle East. These include, first of all, the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria, in which Russia, the United States, a number of regional powers and many non-state actors were involved. Iran's nuclear ambitions turned out to be another major challenge, especially after the US withdrew from the JCPOA agreement in 2018. The pro-Israel stance of President Donald Trump's administration has also strongly influenced the Middle East mosaic of interests. Under these circumstances, in 2020, Israel's agreements with several Arab states, known as the Abraham Accords, were concluded. The aim of the article is to describe these agreements, analyze their causes and outline their consequences. The author adopted the hypothesis that the Abraham Accords constitute a significant step towards strengthening the acceptance of Arab states for Israel and its strategic interests. In the preparation of the text, the method of document and literature analysis was used primarily.

Keywords: Abraham Accords, Israel, United States, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, League of Arab States

**POROZUMIENIA ABRAHAMA NA TLE
BLISKOWSCHODNIEJ MOZAIKI POLITYCZNEJ**

STRESZCZENIE

W drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku na Bliskim Wschodzie doszło do wielu procesów destabilizujących regionalne bezpieczeństwo. Wśród nich można wskazać przede wszystkim Arabską Wiosnę i wojnę domową w Syrii, w którą zaangażowały się Rosja, Stany Zjednoczone, szereg mocarstw regionalnych oraz wielu aktorów niepaństwowych. Innym poważnym wyzwaniem okazały się irańskie ambicje nuklearne, zwłaszcza po wycofaniu się USA z porozumienia JCPOA w 2018 r. Na bliskowschodnią mozaikę interesów silnie wpłynęło także proizraelskie stanowisko administracji prezydenta Donalda Trumpa. W takich okolicznościach w 2020 r. zawarte zostały porozumienia Izraela z kilkoma państwami arabskimi, znane jako porozumienia Abrahama. Celem artykułu jest omówienie tych porozumień, analiza ich przyczyn i zarysowanie ich następstw. Autor przyjął hipotezę, iż porozumienia Abrahama stanowią istotny krok na rzecz wzmacniania akceptacji państw arabskich dla Izraela i jego strategicznych interesów. W przygotowaniu tekstu posłużono się przede wszystkim metodą analizy dokumentów i piśmiennictwa.

Słowa kluczowe: porozumienia Abrahama, Izrael, Stany Zjednoczone, Zjednoczone Emiraty Arabskie, Bahrajn, Maroko, Sudan, Liga Państw Arabskich