

ისტორია, პოლიტიკა, წყაროთმცოდნეობა HISTORY, POLITICS, PRIMARY SOURCE STUDIES

How the "Abraham Accords" Herald a new Era in the Middle East

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Abstract

The article is devoted to a very interesting topic - the significance of the "Abraham Accords" for the history and future of the Middle East.

At the initiative and efforts of former US President Donald Trump, Israel signed historic and important peace agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, known as the "Abraham Accords" in honor of Abraham, the Patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions - Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

After the conclusion of the 1979 Egypt-Israel and 1994 Jordan-Israel peace agreements, such an important and seemingly incredible story has probably never happened in the Middle East. The "Abraham Accords" are a conscious and determined decision by the three states to move from division to successful engagement. After that, Morocco established relations with Israel, the process of normalization began with Sudan.

Despite the outbreak of a new conflict between Israel and Hamas, having temporarily hampered peace initiatives in the Middle East, the normalization of Israel's relations with other Arab countries will be an irreversible process. **Keywords:** The Abraham Accords; Middle East conflict; Israel, Arab countries; USA.

Introduction

"After decades of division and conflict, We mark the dawn of a new Middle East ..." – Donald John Trump

After the conclusion of the 1979 Egypt-Israel and 1994 Jordan-Israel peace agreements, such an important and seemingly incredible story has probably never happened in the Middle East - Israel and the United Arab Emirates agreed on the full normalization of relations, which was announced by the 45th President of the United States, Donald John Trump (2017-2021). It turns out that this is only the third Arab-Jewish peace deal since Israel declared independence in 1948.

On August 13, 2020, during a telephone conversation between Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the President of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), a historic agreement was reached - Israel and the Emirates would establish diplomatic relations.

Donald Trump's mediation played a major role in reaching the agreement. In a joint statement issued by the parties, the three leaders "agreed to fully normalize relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and expressed hope that this historic breakthrough would contribute to peace in the Middle East" (Seán Federico-O'Murchú, 2020). According to the agreement, Israel agreed to stop "extending its sovereignty" over the parts of the West Bank the annexation of which was discussed (VOA, Israel ..., 2020).

"Today we have a huge achievement! A historic peace agreement between our great friends - Israel and the United Arab Emirates," Trump wrote on his Twitter page, adding that he was very pleased

with the agreement. In response to Trump's statement, Netanyahu also wrote on Twitter: "Historical day"!

Until this moment, none of the Persian/Arabian Gulf ¹⁰ countries had diplomatic relations with Israel. Common concerns about Iran's increasing influence in the region had led Arab countries and Israel to engage in some informal contacts with each other in recent years, which became official by the active intervention of the Trump Administration (England Andrew, 2020). From the US side, the following were also involved in the deal: Trump's senior advisor and son-in-law Jared C. Kushner, US Ambassador to Israel David M. Friedman, Middle East Envoy Avrahm Berkowitz, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and White House National Security Adviser, Robert C. O'Brien.

Method

The presented scientific article is based on theoretical methodology: analysis of the cause-effect relationship, synthesis, comparison, searching and processing of various scientific literature. The publications of competent researchers and experts working on this issue were studied and the basic scientific material we needed was reflected in the article.

Result

As a result of working on the research topic, many aspects of the importance of the "Abraham Accords" in peacemaking between Israel and the Arab countries in the Middle East have been revealed. Based on the study of scientific literature, the article answered the questions of what important role the Administration of Donald Trump played in the conclusion of the "Abraham Accords". It was also determined that despite the new challenges in the Middle East, the normalization of Israel's relations with other Arab countries would be an irreversible process.

 $^{^{10}}$ In the Arab world, only the term "Arabian Gulf" is used; Arabic: - الخليج العربي - Al- Khaleej Al-Arabiya).

Discussion

- 1. What we should know about this agreement (main articles):
- Emirates becomes the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel;
- Within the framework of the agreement between the countries, Israel stopped the "declaration of sovereignty" (annexation) in the occupied West Bank of Jordan River;
- However, Netanyahu later stated, that he had agreed to postpone the plans in exchange for normalizing relations with the Emirates and they "remain on the table".
- According to Trump's plan, Muslims can visit Al-Aqsa Mosque and pray there: "All Muslims coming in peace will be able to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque, and other holy places in Jerusalem will be open to believers of all faiths." The Haram al-Sharif complex is located in East Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967, which has not received international recognition.
- Israel and the Emirates will also expand and accelerate cooperation to create a vaccine against the corona virus, in which cooperation had already begun before the conclusion of the deal (Hadzhich, 2020).

2. Mixed reaction in the Middle East and the world regarding the conclusion of this historic deal

The UN Secretary-General António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres welcomed the announcement by the leaders of the US, Israel and the Emirates that Israel halted its plans to annex the West Bank, which the UN had repeatedly called for. The United Nations will support any initiative that promotes peace and security in the Middle East (UN News, 2020).

In the interview with Sky News Arabia, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Mohammed Gargash said that "making peace with Israel helped defuse a ticking time bomb that threatened the decision to create two states."

"If Israel uses this as an incentive to end the occupation, it will advance the region towards a just peace," said Ayman Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the president of Egypt, the first Arab country, an ally of the Emirates with diplomatic relations with Israel welcomed the agreement on Twitter: "I've been following with great interest the joint statement of the US, the Emirates and Israel, on ending the annexation of Palestinian lands and taking measures to establish peace in the Middle East".

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, European Union, Great Britain, Russia also welcomed the agreement (Hadzhich, 2020).

For facilitating such a historic deal, Trump has been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. Prior to the signing of the agreement with the Emirates, Norwegian MP, Norway's representative in NATO's Parliamentary Assembly, Christian Tybring-Gjedde, praised Trump's efforts to resolve the long-standing conflicts in an interview with Fox News: "I think he has done more to promote peace between peoples than any of the other peace nominees and the Trump Administration has played a key role in this, as it is expected that other Middle Eastern countries will follow this example (which has already happened, Z.T.)" (Decker, 2020).

At a time when the West and some Arab countries positively evaluated the UAE-Israel deal, some countries in the Middle East and the Palestinians sharply criticized Abu Dhabi and considered the agreement to be a betrayal and neglect of Palestinian interests.

The Palestinian Hamas and rival Fatah movements rejected the agreement. Hamas representative Abd al-Latif al-Qanua said that the Tel-Aviv-Abu Dhabi deal would not make the "Zionist occupation" of Palestine legitimate and the Palestinians would continue their struggle for liberation. Fatah member Abbas Zaki, commenting on Al-Jazeera called the action of the Emirates a betrayal of the Palestinians and the Arabs (Khaled Abu Toameh, 2020).

Although on September 9, the "League of Arab States" rejected the Palestinian draft resolution, which condemned the normalization

of relations between Israel and the Emirates, but it reaffirmed its commitment to the "2002 Arab Peace Initiative", according to which relations between the Arab countries and Israel can only be established "After the end of the occupation of the Palestinian lands seized in 1967, with the establishment of the State of Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem".¹¹

Radical Zionists also called the deal a shame and a betrayal, they believe that Netanyahu has betrayed them. "He lied, lied to half a million residents of this area (Jewish settlements) and hundreds of thousands of voters," said David Elhayani, chairman of the Council of Settlers of Yeshi.

But it is Netanyahu who benefits the most from this deal, Middle East experts say. It was of great importance for him to conclude these agreements for his personal image in the domestic turbulent conditions in Israel (Hadzhich, 2020).

Those states, whose actions in the region cause concern to both Tel Aviv and Arab countries, opposed the agreement mediated by Trump. Such states are Iran and Turkey, which continue to fight for hegemony in the Middle East (Zamikula, 2020).

The supreme spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei, on the normalization of relations between Israel and the Emirates, said that the Emirates betrayed the Islamic world, the Arab and regional countries, primarily Palestine. According to him, "Abu Dhabi paved the way for the Zionists in the region. They forgot the Palestinian problem, they forgot the occupation." Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) news agency Tasnim says the deal is "shameful" (Al Jazeera, Iran's Khamenei says..., 2020).

Gaza Strip, with the capital in East Jerusalem. See also: Arab peace initiative, Guardian, 28.03.2002; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/mar/28/israel7 Accessed [24.04.2024].

^{11 2002} Arab peace initiative (Arab.: العربية السلام مبادرة) - adopted by the League of Arab States (Arab.: مالكرية الدول جامعة) on the 28th of March, 2002 in Beirut and aimed at achieving a comprehensive peace with Israel, in case of fulfillment of the main condition - the withdrawal of Israel in 1967 from the occupied territories by it (Golan Heights and Shabaa Farm) and the recognition of the State of Palestine on the West Bank of Jordan River and the

Turkey also opposed the deal. Through criticism of Israel, Ankara was trying to secure popularity in the Islamic world. There is also a rational disagreement between countries regarding the extraction and transit of energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Turks called the agreement hypocritical. The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "The history and conscience of the people of the region will not forget, will never forgive the hypocrisy of the Emirates" (Al Jazeera, Turkey slams..., 2020). However, in spite of this, recently, there have been trends of normalizing Turkey's relations with Israel and leading Arab countries.

According to the Ukrainian researcher N. Zamikula, recently the Arab-Israeli conflict is already losing its status as a key confrontational factor, and Tel-Aviv and the Arabs are facing common threats. One way or another, the international community is optimistic about the solution to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict based on new realities (Zamikula, 2020).

After the successful negotiations held with the help of the US, the White House official, Jared Kushner, who arrived in Abu Dhabi on the first flight from Israel, called on Palestinians to sit at the negotiating table, that "Palestinians should not be stuck in the past ... they should know that peace will be ready for them" (Williams, 2020).

3. "Abraham Accords"

As such, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been around for a long time, and the Arab world is tired of the Palestinian problem, especially today they face other, more important challenges - the increasingly offensive policy of Tehran. Under these conditions, the issue of Palestine moves to the second place.

From the moment the Emirates and Israel patched up relations, it took at least a month for Bahrain, another Gulf state, to join the deal, mediated by the Trump Administration. On September 15, 2020, Donald Trump hosted the signing ceremony of the agreement on the normalization of relations between Israel and two Arab states - the Emirates and Bahrain (Liebermann, 2020).

"We have gathered today to change the course of history. After decades of division and conflict, we are witnessing the dawn of a new Middle East. Sharp-sighted leaders will sign the first peace agreements between Israel and the Arab states in nearly a quarter of a century," Trump said, adding that "there have only been two such agreements in the entire history of Israel, and now we have two agreements in one month" (Ahren, 2020).

In the South Garden of the White House, the relevant document was signed in the presence of Trump and invited guests: Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Emirates, Abd Al-Lah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Abd Al-Latif bin Rashid Al-Zayan. These documents are collectively called the Abraham Accords.

Pentagon correspondent Oren Liebermann interestingly talks about these deals: "The Trump Administration saw an opportunity in the changing Middle East and took advantage of it." With no way to make progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Trump and his advisers turned their attention to the rest of the region. Now the biggest regional battle is between Iran and the Sunni states of the Gulf. It was in this conflict that Trump saw an opportunity to bring Israel closer to the Arab states" (Liebermann, 2020).

"Gulf Arab states and Israel have a lot more in common in their opposition to Iran", says Will Todman, a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "I think, there is an important geopolitical change" (VOA, Trump ..., 2020).

As The Times of Israel's diplomatic columnist Raphael Ahren notes, "The historic ceremony at the White House is the culmination of a rare diplomatic success and a breakthrough - after 72 years of struggle, Israel won the right to become a full member of its region." "This day is a turning point in history. It will mark a new dawn of peace," Netanyahu said (Ahren, 2020).

Three documents were signed at the Washington ceremony: the "Agreement on Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization" between Israel and the Emirates, the "Declaration on Peace, Coope-

ration and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations" between Israel and Bahrain, as well as the overall "Abraham Accords" (AA), in honor of the common patriarch of three religions - Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This term will henceforth be used to refer collectively to Israel's agreements with the Arabs (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

All three monotheistic religions have their roots in the ancient Semitic tradition and are associated with the patriarch Abraham (father, leader, Hebrew: Avraami; Arabic: Ibrahim). Abraham became the first person to believe in God.

The agreement is a major breakthrough and the normalization of relations, despite criticism, does not mean forgetting the Palestinian problem. On the contrary, in Abu Dhabi and Manama they say that the deal with Israel is not a betrayal of the Palestinians and it will bring more good to the Palestinians, and the establishment of diplomatic relations will give Arab countries more opportunities for dialogue with Israel on the Palestinian issue.

But the Palestinians don't believe it and have publicly condemned the new deals. The Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority (until March 31, 2024), Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh, called the signing of the "Abraham Accords" a "black day in the history of Arab countries" (VOA, Trump..., 2020).

"There will be no peace in the Middle East until Israel and the US recognize the right of the Palestinians to establish an independent state in the period of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees in accordance with Resolution 194," said the President of "Palestinian National Authority" (PNA) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen).

"The main problem is not between the countries that signed the agreements, but between the Israeli occupation authorities and the Palestinian people who are suffering under the occupation," he said, adding that "if the Palestinians do not get what they want, there will be no peace, no security, no stability in the region." (Ahren, 2020).

Abraham Accords have been called historic by many in the world, which is equivalent to a military deal. In the Middle East, Israel

has a qualitative military advantage, governed by the US Qualitative Military Edge (QME) mechanism. That is, only Israel should have the best weapons in the region. Nevertheless, those Arab countries that have already settled relations with Israel will be able to be armed with advanced American weapons. Thus, the Emirates will purchase \$23 billion worth of weapons, including 50 of the latest F-35 Lightning II Fighter Jets, which only Israel has (Goldberg, 2020).

The Trump Administration promoted the idea of creating a socalled Arab NATO, the purpose of which is primarily to deter Iran and maintain American influence in the Middle East. Washington views a rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf monarchies as one of the stages in achieving this goal.

The change of the old approach in geopolitics in the Arab monarchies is also connected with the emergence of a new generation of ambitious politicians. The rulers of the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince, MBZ and Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS), are ready to renew regional alliances, implement reforms and take unconventional steps.

We should know that the agreement with Israel would not have happened without the support of Saudi Arabia. But the kingdom's recognition of Israel, home to the main Islamic shrines in Mecca and Medina, would be a far more serious step. The kingdom has long had covert contacts with Tel Aviv, and talks have already begun to establish diplomatic relations between them. However, its ambitious pursuit of leadership in the Islamic world requires caution in the statements so as not to tarnish its image for its target audience in the Islamic world. Added to this was the start of a new conflict between Israel and Hamas, which hampered normalization efforts.

The President of the USA was also benefiting from these deals. Presented as a foreign policy triumph, supporting Israel and fighting against Iran, it gained more popularity among one of the most loyal groups of its electorate - evangelical Christians (Williams, 2020).

Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of the influential US publiccation The Atlantic, believes that "the agreements are a victory for MBZ and MBS, for Netanyahu - the permanent Prime Minister of Israel, for Trump and his entourage, because the latter can say that he brought peace in the Middle East. Who lost - Iran and the Palestinians".

There is reason to believe that this new push to normalize the situation will contribute to an Israeli-Palestinian compromise. David Makovsky of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Daniel Shapiro, former Ambassador to Israel, argued in the Washington Post: "History and common sense show that those Arab states that have diplomatic relations with Israel play a more active role in supporting Palestinian aspirations than those who do not want relationships" (Goldberg, 2020).

Events developed in such a way that relations with two more Arab countries were normalized. On October 23, 2020, Israel and Sudan, through the mediation of the United States, agreed to end the state of war, causing Khartoum to begin a process of normalizing relation with Israel.

As a result of the agreement package, Washington removed Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST) List, where it had been for 27 years.

On December 10, 2020, the Kingdom of Morocco joined the peace accords signed by the Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan, and the U.S., acting as mediator, recognized Morocco's rights to the disputed territory of Western Sahara, making it the fourth agreement between Israel and an Arab country reached thanks to the diplomacy of U.S. President Donald Trump.

As Haqqin.az columnist Roy points out, finding a "key" with Morocco to agree to a deal is precisely the diplomatic art that Trump has demonstrated" (Roy, 2020).

In the near future (after the end of the current Israel-"Hamas" 12 conflict), Israel will have a "special opportunity" to normalize relations

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¹² The commander of the IQB of the Hamas military wing, Mohammed Deif/Diab Ibrahim Masri, launched the operation "Al-Aqsa Flood or Deluge" against Israel. Arab: عملية طوفان . Hamas called this operation revenge for Al-Aqsa Mosque. Armed groups entered

with its Arab neighbors, cites the Jerusalem Post, based on the statement of the US Secretary of State Antony John Blinken. It has been noted, that the Secretary of State also emphasized the need to create a Palestinian state. "Virtually all Arab countries now sincerely want Israel's integration in the region to normalize relations ... to provide security commitments and guarantees so that Israel feels more secure," Blinken said in a speech at the Munich Security Conference.

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Britain, Khalid bin Bandar Al Saud, told the BBC that Saudi Arabia is interested in normalizing relations with Israel after the end of the war in the Gaza Strip. However, according to him, Saudi Arabia has one condition - the creation of a Palestinian state. As the Ambassador emphasized, before the "massacre" of October 7, as the newspaper cites, both countries were close to reaching an agreement (Lazaroff, 2024).

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair came to the conclusion that "if we want a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue based on two states, we must reject the idea that the Arab world should ignore contacts with Israel...". He believes that "over time, the Palestinian people will realize that only through a radical change in strategy can the legitimate aspirations of a viable Palestinian state be realized" (Ahren, 2020).

Conclusion

No one has been able to do more than Donald Trump and his Administration in the 70-year history of the Jewish-Arab conflict, in particular, the normalization of relations between a number of Arab countries and Israel in such a short period of time has become the main key achievement of Trump. Despite the criticism of his opp-

Israel from the Gaza Strip, breaching the border barrier and entering nearby Israeli towns and military facilities. The operation began on the morning of October 7, with the bombardment of Israel from the Gaza Strip with up to 5,000 rockets and the infiltration of more than 2,500 militants by land, sea and air. About 1,200 Israelis were killed, another 253 Israelis and foreigners were taken hostage; In addition to the massacre of the population, many cases of sexual violence against Israeli men and women were recorded. The attack became the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and the largest act of Palestinian terrorism in history. In response, the Israeli government declared martial law for the first time since 1973 and launched operation "Swords of Iron/Haravot Barzel in the Gaza Strip.

onents, Trump will go down in history as the president during which no major military conflict broke out in the Middle East.

Trump has left a key foundation for continuing to settle the Middle East conflict. New deals involving the US are a logical response to Iran's actions and the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy. Naturally, this does not mean that peace will be established in the region soon, but it is the way to that peace.

Trump is gone - but efforts to resolve conflicts in the Middle East continued under the Administration of US President Joseph Biden, but in a different form. However, if Trump had won a second term in the presidential elections, grand changes would have taken place in the Middle East.

It must be said that Republicans and Democrats do not have any fundamental disagreements in assessing the importance of the Middle East region. Both sides consider this region to be the primary strategic interest of the United States of America. The question is not whether the Arab countries will normalize relations with Israel in the future, but when and how they will do so.

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