

UAE-ISRAEL NORMALIZATION: EXAMINING PUBLIC OPINION ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER (X)

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Abstract

Background: The Abraham Accords, signed in August 2020 between the UAE and Israel, marked a significant shift in Middle Eastern diplomacy. In supporting it, the social media played a critical role in shaping public discourse around the normalization of relations, providing a platform for both support and opposition.

Aim: This study aims to analyze the role of social media in influencing public opinion during the UAE-Israel diplomatic relations normalization process. The focus is on the types of content shared, the dominant sentiments expressed, and the public's reception of the Abraham Accords.

Methods: A secondary data analysis methodology was employed, drawing on social media content from X and Facebook. Posts were collected from August to October 2020, a period characterized by intense online discussions about the Accords. Sentiment analysis, using NVivo software, was conducted on 541 tweets and 117 Facebook posts. Keywords such as "Abraham Accords," "UAE-Israel relations," and relevant hashtags were used to refine the dataset.

Results: The sentiment analysis revealed a spectrum of public opinion, with the majority expressing positive sentiments toward the Abraham Accords. Key terms like "peace," "cooperation," and "prosperity" were frequently mentioned, indicating optimism about the economic and diplomatic benefits of normalization. However, a significant minority expressed negative sentiments, with concerns centered around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and perceived betrayal of Arab unity.

Conclusions: The findings highlight the dual nature of public sentiment, with both robust support and strong opposition to the Abraham Accords. These insights are crucial for policymakers in managing public opinion and fostering diplomatic relations in the region, with implications for future agreements and public engagement strategies.

Keywords: social media, UAE, Israel, normalization, agenda-setting theory, social media use, political participation

Introduction

The Abraham Accords, signed in August 2020 between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel, signify a historic transformation in Middle Eastern diplomatic relations. It is argued that it strategically altered the regions geopolitical landscape (MOFAIC, 2017). Due to its unique and unprecedented, the normalisation of diplomatic relations agreement between UAE and Israel sparked debate in the region. This was predominantly on the impact it had on diplomatic relations among Arab nations and Israel, particularly in light of the long-standing tensions surrounding the Palestinian issue (Dagres, 2021). A critical component of this discourse is the emergence of social media as a platform for public engagement, allowing citizens, influencers, and political commentators to express their views and shape perceptions regarding the normalization process (Jindal & Aron, 2021). With platforms like Twitter and Facebook being widely utilized in the UAE, it is imperative to explore their influence on public sentiment and opinion formation in relation to the UAE-Israel normalization. Over the years, the use of social media has become a vital tool for shaping political opinions and facilitating public discourse, particularly in regions characterized by complex geopolitical dynamics (Gallo & Cho, 2021). Given the UAE's remarkably high social media penetration, it is essential to investigate how these platforms have impacted the public's acceptance or rejection of normalization with Israel. The mixed reactions observed online highlight the dual nature of public sentiment, with some users expressing robust support for the accords and others vehemently opposing them (Baqai & Mehreen, 2021).

Understanding the context and meanings of this online sentiment not only sheds light on the public's perspective but also provides valuable insights into the processes by which opinions are formed in the digital age. Moreover, these insights have broader implications for the future of diplomatic relationships in the region, as they reflect the intersection of public sentiment and international relations (Sorkin, 2021). Critically, the role of social media in the context of the Abraham Accords is significant, serving as both a measure for public opinion and a platform for political expression of opinions and feelings. By analyzing the sentiments expressed on social media regarding the UAE-Israel normalization process, researchers and policymakers can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of public sentiment and its implications for regional diplomacy (Lemay-Hebert & Visoka, 2022). The mixed reactions observed in online discourse not only highlight the varying perceptions among the populace but also underscore the necessity for policymakers to engage with public sentiment actively. Addressing concerns and capitalizing on support as expressed through these platforms will be critical for the successful implementation and sustainability of the Abraham Accords in the evolving geopolitical context of the Middle East (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020).

Aim

The study aims to analyze the role of social media in influencing public opinion during the UAE-Israel normalization process, focusing on the types of content shared and the dominant sentiments, respectively.

Literature Review

The normalisation of diplomatic relations, particularly in historically contentious contexts like the UAE-Israel relationship, is a multifaceted process that extends beyond the signing of formal agreements. It requires a concerted effort to reshape public perceptions, create new narratives, and strategically manage opposition (Krzyżanowski, 2020). The diplomatic relations normalisation process involves actions such as the establishment of embassies, the

development of trade relations, and the initiation of cultural exchanges (Kramer & Kauzlarich, 2011). In the case of UAE-Israel relations, these measures were supplemented by extensive media campaigns that sought to redefine the relationship as one based on mutual economic, technological, and security benefits (Guzansky & Marshall, 2021). The formalization of relations, as seen in the Abraham Accords, not only signaled a shift in political alliances but also reflected deeper strategic realignments in the Middle East, where nations like the UAE have begun prioritising economic development and stability over long-standing regional disputes (Sadeghi & Al-Harbi, 2021). In this context, social media has emerged as a pivotal tool in advocating for and shaping the narrative around normalisation. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are used by governments, influencers, and civil society actors to promote the benefits of diplomatic relations and to address the concerns of the public (Foucault, 2007). In the UAE-Israel case, government officials and influential business figures leveraged social media to disseminate messages emphasizing the economic and technological opportunities that the new relationship with Israel could unlock. The narrative promoted on social media framed the normalisation as a forward-thinking, pragmatic decision that could foster innovation, drive economic diversification, and enhance security cooperation (Taylor, 2009). These narratives sought to present normalisation as not only a political necessity but also a catalyst for regional growth, appealing to younger, more globally connected populations who value economic progress and technological advancement (Zweiri, 2020).

The use of social media platforms has allowed governments to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and directly engage with citizens, shaping public opinion in real-time (Coretti & Pica, 2015). Through social media campaigns, governments have been able to carefully craft messages that resonate with specific audiences, often using influencers or respected public figures to endorse the normalisation process (Ferziger & Bahgat, 2020). The strategic use of hashtags, targeted ads, and visual content has amplified pro-normalisation narratives, making them more visible and accessible to a wider audience. In the case of UAE-Israel relations, positive framing on social media also included highlighting cultural exchanges, joint business ventures, and shared technological initiatives, painting a picture of a future in which both countries could thrive through cooperation (Silke et al., 2023). However, social media's role in advocating for diplomatic relations has its share of challenges. In this case, while platforms have been effective in promoting pro-normalisation messages, they have also been spaces where opposition can gain traction (Jackson et al., 2017). In regions where the Palestinian cause holds significant emotional and political weight, many users have used social media to voice their opposition to the UAE-Israel normalization (Al-Saidi & Haghirian, 2020). These online movements often draw on emotive language, historical grievances, and ideological positions, generating widespread debate and, at times, reinforcing political divisions (Frisch, 2020). Social media algorithms, which tend to prioritize highly engaging content, often exacerbate this polarization by promoting posts that elicit strong reactions, whether positive or negative (Zerback et al., 2020).

The role of social media in advocacy for diplomatic relations is demonstrated in the cases of Facebook and Twitter platforms use in the past. During the Arab Spring of 2011, Facebook played a pivotal role in mobilizing movements, organizing protests, and disseminating information (Valenzuela, 2013). Although debates persist on whether social media directly instigated the uprisings, there is no doubt that Facebook was a crucial platform for initiating calls to action across the region (Al-Jenaibi, 2014). The number of Facebook users grew exponentially during this period, with protests often coinciding with spikes in user growth and activity. While not every use of Facebook during the protests was political, the correlation between social media activity and civic movements suggests that Facebook was instrumental

in fostering public consciousness and organizing collective action (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015). Additionally, Facebook became a vital outlet for knowledge dissemination, enabling individuals to coordinate protests, raise awareness of government injustices, and foster a sense of solidarity across geographical boundaries (Karatzogianni, 2013). However, Facebook has also been a platform for spreading misinformation, as seen in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Covid-19 pandemic in the Arab region. Misinformation campaigns on social media have often been used to manipulate public opinion and sway political outcomes (Dawson & Innes, 2019). In the case of the Arab Spring, while Facebook contributed to mobilizing protests, the growth of users and content also opened the door to the potential spread of false information, further complicating the role of social media in political movements (Shehata & Eldakar, 2021). As the influence of platforms like Facebook continues to grow, the challenge of discerning credible information from misinformation becomes increasingly critical, highlighting the need for greater media literacy to combat the spread of false narratives

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in agenda-setting theory, the Social Media Use (SMU) and the Political Participation (PP) theories, respectively. The interaction of these theories informs the basis for the study variables determination and adoption. On the one hand, the study's theoretical framework incorporates agenda-setting theory to explain the influence of social media on public opinion during the UAE-Israel normalization process. According to agenda-setting theory, the media plays a crucial role in determining the topics of public discourse by selecting which issues to highlight (McCombs & Shaw, 2023). In the context of social media, this influence extends to platforms like Twitter and Facebook, where public discussions can shape perceptions of key events, such as the Abraham Accords (Zahariadis, 2016). Social media enables agenda-setting by amplifying certain issues thus directing public attention to specific aspects of the normalization, such as economic cooperation or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Feezell, 2018). The network agenda-setting model (Guo & McCombs, 2016) also applies here, as social media fosters interconnected discussions on related topics like security, regional politics, and diplomatic relations (Langer & Gruber, 2020; Watts et al., 2021). This theoretical approach helps explain why the study found more positive sentiments around the normalization, with social media users framing the process as a diplomatic success and economic opportunity (Webster, 2014; King & Wang, 2021; Watts et al., 2021). On the other hand, the study seeks to bridge existing gaps by applying the Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM), previously employed in political analyses to better understand how social media influences public perception and engagement during the normalization process (Effing, Hillegersberg & Huibers, 2011). The model asserts that social media can foster political participation through agenda-setting, mobilization, and deliberation, providing a structured approach to analyzing the ways in which citizens engage with political discourse online (Knoll, Matthes, & Heiss, 2020). On its part, the goal theory perspective enriches this framework by elucidating the cognitive constructs associated with human goals, highlighting how individuals pursue and activate participatory goals in response to political stimuli (Nanz, Heiss, & Matthes, 2020). This perspective underscores the notion that attitudes toward political issues alone are insufficient to motivate action; instead, it is the alignment of these attitudes with personal goals that drives engagement (Kruglanski, 1996).

The SMPPM states that for social media use to translate into political participation, citizens must engage with political content to recognize a gap between their current and desired states, and form explicit participatory goals to bridge this gap (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Kruglanski et al., 2014). This theoretical foundation allows for an understanding of the factors that compel

individuals to engage politically through social media, which is critical for analyzing the dynamics of the UAE-Israel normalization (Lazarus, 1991). Moreover, the SMPPM incorporates various psychological theories, including uses and gratifications (Katz et al., 1974), appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), and the priming paradigm (Higgins, 1996), to explore the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive social media's impact on political participation (Kruglanski et al., 2018). By examining these interconnected theories, the framework provides insights into the contingent conditions necessary for social media to influence political engagement, both in low-effort and high-effort forms of participation. Studies such as those by Valenzuela (2013) and Skoric et al. (2016) illustrate the relationship between social media use and political activism, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between different forms of engagement. Furthermore, the application of the PP theory highlights the interplay between online and offline political activities, as demonstrated by Gibson and Cantijoch (2013) and Tufekci and Wilson (2012), showcasing how social media can serve as a gateway for increased political mobilization. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, this research develops a comprehensive understanding of how social media sentiment influences the UAE-Israel normalization process, offering valuable implications for future diplomatic efforts and public engagement strategies.

Methods

This study employed a secondary data analysis methodology, drawing on social media content from prominent platforms such as X (Formerly Twitter) and Facebook. The adoption and use of secondary data was based on the availability of sufficient data online in regard to the study topic, and the deficiency and limitation of already existing primary data on it (Lynch, 2019; Singh & Kumari, 2016). The selection of the platforms was informed by two main variables, their popularity and availability in the UAE (Bahgat, 2021; Zartman, 2000). As such, these platforms were chosen for their widespread use and significance in shaping public discourse, particularly in the Middle East, where they serve as primary channels for communication and opinion sharing (Gerges, 2018; Ehteshami & Wright, 2019). In collecting the secondary study data, a period limitation was placed focusing on posts published between August and October 2020. This was the period marked and characterized by heightened debates and discussions of the Abraham Accords (Khoury, 2019; Aarts & Cavatorta, 2013). The selection of this timeframe was justified by the heightened online activity and the centrality of social media in disseminating both official statements and public reactions (Buzan & Waeber, 2003; Lynch, 2019).

The obtained findings were analyzed through a sentiment analysis process. Sentiment analysis involves exploring Natural Language Processing (NLP), mathematical linguistics, feature extraction, and neural network methods. Scholars have employed a range of techniques to classify sentiments, often using supervised and unsupervised methods (Singh & Kumari, 2016). In this study, these approaches are applied to examine public reactions to the UAE-Israel normalization on social media, focusing on how sentiment classification can reveal broader emotional and political trends in the discourse (Khoury, 2019). To conduct the sentiment analysis, this study analyzed social media posts from Twitter and Facebook, focusing on content published between August and October 2020, the period when public discourse on the Abraham Accords was most active (Gerges, 2018; Bahgat, 2021). The keywords used included 'Abraham Accords,' 'UAE-Israel relations,' and 'UAE-Israel diplomatic relations,' among others. These terms, along with their synonyms and related concepts, were used to refine the dataset and ensure a comprehensive overview of the online debate. The search queries on platforms like Twitter were constructed using Boolean operators such as 'AND' and 'OR,'

which facilitated the precise identification of relevant posts (Zartman, 2000).

In addition, data collection protocols were designed to ensure that the dataset was accurate, relevant, and reflective of the broader discourse. Hashtags such as ‘#NormalizationIsBetrayal’ and ‘#EmiratesForPeace’ were instrumental in narrowing the scope of the analysis, allowing the study to isolate polarized viewpoints on the agreement (Buzan & Waever, 2003). Moreover, the NVivo software, a tool equipped to classify posts based on their emotional tone, was used to categorize posts as positive, negative, or neutral depending on the sentiments expressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Further, ensuring the trustworthiness of the data was a central priority throughout this research. To enhance reliability and minimize bias, a second coder was employed, adhering to the principle of triangulation, a common qualitative research practice that strengthens validity by using multiple data sources and coding methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach ensured a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of public sentiment, free from researcher subjectivity. Equally, the ethical standards were rigorously maintained, with the anonymity of social media users protected, and participants' rights upheld, particularly in relation to sensitive political topics like the Abraham Accords (Khoury, 2019). Finally, transparency and ethical responsibility guided the entire research process, ensuring that it adhered to broader social science standards. Researcher bias was further mitigated through systematic and impartial data coding and analysis. The use of NVivo software for data management ensured both the validity and replicability of the findings, providing a robust framework that future research can build upon to explore the nuances of public sentiment in political contexts (Singh & Kumari, 2016).

Results

The sentiment analysis conducted on social media posts regarding the UAE-Israel normalization process yielded significant insights into public opinion within the UAE. Using NVivo software, the research analyzed 541 tweets and 117 Facebook posts, providing a focused view of public sentiment surrounding the Abraham Accords. The dataset was carefully curated through data cleaning processes, which involved removing duplicate content and filtering non-relevant or non-English posts to ensure the analysis was relevant to the local discourse. The results reveal a spectrum of sentiments, ranging from highly positive to highly negative, reflecting the complex views held by the public about this diplomatic event.

The overall sentiment analysis indicates that **positive sentiment** was the most prevalent among social media users in the UAE. This is as illustrated in figure 4.1

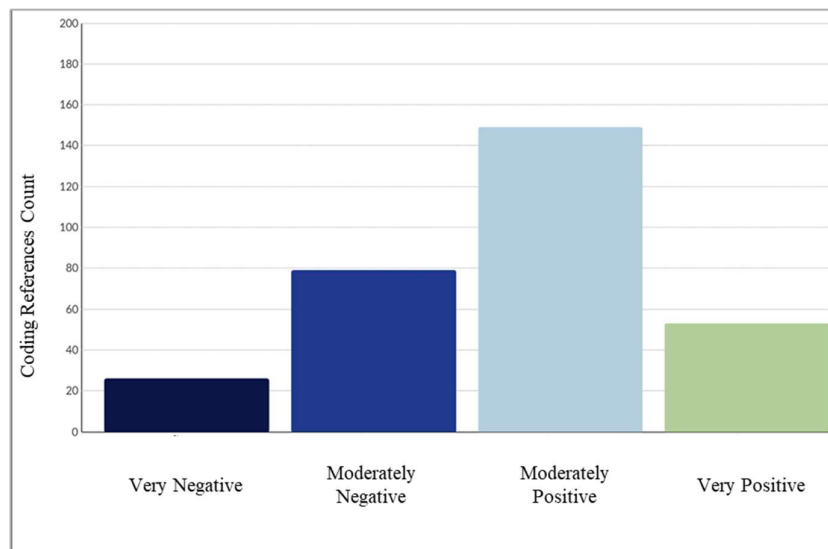


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..1 Sentiment Analysis Results

In the above Figure 4.1, the majority of posts expressed optimism about the normalization process, highlighting the potential benefits of peace and economic cooperation between the two nations. The word cloud generated from these positive posts prominently features terms like "peace," "cooperation," "prosperity," and "security." These terms suggest that many users viewed the Abraham Accords as a historic opportunity for regional stability and growth, with the potential to foster long-term collaboration in areas such as trade, technology, and diplomacy. The frequency of terms such as "peace" and "cooperation" reflects a strong emphasis on the anticipated positive outcomes of the agreement, including the promotion of peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

In the *very positive sentiment category*, social media users displayed strong enthusiasm for the Abraham Accords and the potential for diplomatic and economic growth in the region. The word cloud findings includes prominent terms such as "Abraham Accords," "peace," "Israel," "normalization," and "opportunities," which reflect the general sentiment that the accords represent a significant diplomatic achievement. Terms like "prosperity," "security," and "development" indicate that many users view the agreement as a pathway to long-term stability and growth in the Middle East. Additionally, the word "tech" frequently appears, suggesting that the technological cooperation between Israel and the UAE is seen as a key benefit of normalization. The frequency analysis in Figure 4.2 (below) showcases "Israel" and "peace" as the most frequently mentioned terms, with high weighted percentages, demonstrating the centrality of these concepts in the positive discourse surrounding the accords.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
israel	6	15	2.61
peace	5	11	1.92
uae	3	8	1.39
israeli	7	7	1.22
#abrahamaccords	15	6	1.05
east	4	6	1.05
feel	4	6	1.05
tech	4	6	1.05
agreement	9	5	0.87
good	4	5	0.87
middle	6	5	0.87
proud	5	5	0.87

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..2 Analysis of frequency - Very Positive

Moreover, this category reflected strong optimism about the diplomatic and economic prospects of normalization. Terms like "peace", "cooperation", and "prosperity" were prominent, with "peace" being mentioned 43 times. This indicates that many users were hopeful about the long-term benefits of the accords for both Israel and the UAE. Hashtags such as "#AbrahamAccords" and "#UAEIsrael" were frequently used, with 68% of the positive posts containing these hashtags. These posts emphasized the potential for regional stability and collaboration, especially in sectors like trade and technology, suggesting a forward-looking outlook among supporters of the agreement.

In addition, for posts expressing *moderately positive sentiment*, the analysis reveals a sense of cautious optimism about the normalization process. The word cloud in Figure 4.3 highlights terms like "region," "cooperation," "progress," and "stability," indicating that users viewed the Abraham Accords as a positive step toward regional integration and development. Terms such as "opportunity" and "economic" suggest that users in this category were particularly focused on the economic benefits of normalization, such as increased trade and investment between the UAE and Israel. The frequency analysis findings demonstrates that words like "Israel," "UAE," "peace," and "#abrahamaccords" occur frequently, further reflecting the focus on diplomacy, peacebuilding, and economic cooperation.

In contrast, posts classified as exhibiting *very negative sentiment* focused on concerns related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the perceived impact of the normalization on Palestinian rights. This is demonstrated in the word cloud Figure 4.3 findings below.



The word cloud in Figure 4.3 highlights prominent terms such as "Palestine," "betrayal," and "holocaust never again." These terms indicate a strong sense of disapproval among certain segments of the population, particularly those who view the accord as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. Words like "salvation" and "hate" emphasize the polarized nature of the discourse, where users are deeply divided on the implications of the accord for both Palestinians and the broader Arab world. Moreover, words such as "Palestine" and "betrayal" were frequently mentioned, highlighting concerns that the accords compromised Palestinian interests. demonstrate that "Palestine" was mentioned 47 times and "betrayal" 32 times, indicating these topics were central to the critics of the accords. Additionally, hashtags like '#Betrayal' and '#FreePalestine' were widely used, reflecting the perception that the normalization was a betrayal of Arab solidarity. The frequency analysis in Figure 4.4 below further underscores the dominance of terms such as "Palestine," "Israel," and "betrayal," reflecting the centrality of these concerns in the negative discourse.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
arab	4	6	1.87
israel	6	6	1.87
people	6	5	1.56
thought	7	5	1.56
#israel	7	4	1.25
face	4	4	1.25
palestinian	11	4	1.25
state	5	4	1.25
#abrahamaccords	15	3	0.93
#peace	6	3	0.93
#uaeisrael	10	3	0.93
live	4	3	0.93

The sentiment analysis of the UAE-Israel normalization process reveals a largely positive public discourse, with many expressing optimism regarding the potential economic and the normalization of diplomatic relations benefits of the accords. The frequent use of terms such as "peace," "cooperation," and "prosperity" reflects an overall positive outlook, aligning with the growing body of literature that emphasizes the role of economic diplomacy in fostering peace and stability in regions with a history of conflict (Ehteshami & Wright, 2019; Zartman, 2000). These sentiments highlight the belief that the Abraham Accords could be a basis for advancements in sectors like technology, innovation, and trade, benefiting not only Israel and the UAE but also setting a precedent for broader regional cooperation (Bahgat, 2021). Such optimism is consistent with theories suggesting that economic interdependence can reduce conflict, as nations become more inclined to maintain peaceful relations with key trading partners (Buzan & Waever, 2003). The implication is that the accords represent a pivotal opportunity for regional development, with the potential to reshape Middle Eastern geopolitics by promoting economic growth and collaboration.

Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that a significant portion of the public views the accords as a pragmatic step forward, particularly in terms of regional stability and well-being. This aligns with the literature on incremental diplomatic relations gains which assert that gradual engagement can effectively reduce tensions and foster cooperation in complex political landscapes (Aarts & Cavatorta, 2013). The repeated and constant use of terms such as "stability" and "opportunity" frequently appeared in posts expressing moderately positive views, serving as a demonstration and confidence among the users that the Abraham Accords could pave the way for incremental progress in a region historically fraught with geopolitical tensions. This perspective is supported by research suggesting that sustained diplomatic relations engagement, even when initially met with skepticism, can lead to long-term cooperation and stability (Lynch, 2019). The positive framing of the accords as a practical and forward-looking diplomatic achievement highlights the importance of continued efforts to build on this momentum, particularly in areas like trade and technological exchange.

Nevertheless, while as the positive sentiments were dominant, some negative views primarily centered on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and concerns over Arab unity. Terms like "Palestine" and "betrayal" reflected the historical grievances tied to the Palestinian cause, which remains a central issue in shaping public opinion on diplomatic relations with Israel (Gerges, 2018). However, these negative sentiments, though significant, did not overshadow the overall positive reception of the Abraham Accords. Instead, they underscore the complexities that must be navigated for sustained diplomatic relations success. Scholars have long noted the importance of addressing the Palestinian issue in any Arab-Israeli peace efforts, as public perception is often heavily influenced by national and regional identities (Khoury, 2019). As such, the cautious skepticism reflected in the moderately negative sentiment further illustrates the delicate balance policymakers must strike. While some users expressed concerns over unresolved conflicts and geopolitical implications, particularly the long-standing regional tensions, these sentiments were not overwhelmingly negative. Instead, they reflect a pragmatic recognition of the complexities involved in diplomatic normalization (Khashan, 2018). Terms such as "diplomatic" and "conflict" highlight the awareness of the challenges that accompany such significant agreements, yet they also point to a belief in the accords' potential if these issues are addressed effectively. This perspective resonates with existing research, which emphasizes that while diplomatic agreements may face initial hurdles, their long-term success depends on the careful navigation of regional sensitivities and historical grievances (Lynch, 2019).

Overall, the sentiment analysis demonstrates that the UAE-Israel normalization process is largely viewed in a positive light, with many expressing optimism about its potential for fostering economic growth, regional stability, and technological cooperation. While concerns regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Arab unity persist, these do not overshadow the overall positive outlook on the accords' potential to transform the region. The positive sentiment, reinforced by terms like "peace," "cooperation," and "prosperity," suggests that the accords could serve as a model for future diplomatic and economic partnerships in the Middle East. For policymakers, the challenge is building on this positive momentum by addressing the concerns raised, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue, while ensuring that the economic benefits of the accords are widely shared across the region. In doing so, the Abraham Accords could not only reshape regional diplomacy but also foster long-lasting peace and cooperation in a historically divided region.

Limitations

This study is constrained by its reliance on secondary data sourced from publicly available social media posts, which inherently limits the ability to capture the full spectrum of public sentiment, particularly private discussions or offline sentiments that may significantly influence opinions about the UAE-Israel normalization process. Social media platforms often serve as echo chambers where vocal minority viewpoints can dominate the discourse, potentially skewing the representation of broader public opinion. Furthermore, the specific timeframe of analysis—from August to October 2020—may not adequately reflect the evolution of public sentiment over the long term; opinions may have shifted in response to subsequent events, political developments, or changes in the regional landscape that were not captured in this study. Additionally, the focus on Twitter and Facebook excludes other social media platforms where discourse regarding the normalization may have taken place, potentially leading to an incomplete understanding of the overall public sentiment. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution, recognizing that they represent a snapshot of sentiment during a particular period and across specific platforms, rather than an exhaustive account of public opinion on the accords.

Contributions/Implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on Middle Eastern diplomatic relations by providing an understanding of public sentiment surrounding the UAE-Israel normalization process through the social media discourse. By employing sentiment analysis, the research highlights the polarized nature of public opinion, revealing both the strong opposition based on Palestinian concerns and the optimism for economic collaboration and regional stability. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing historical grievances and socio-political contexts in shaping public perceptions of diplomatic relations initiatives. The implications of this research are significant for policymakers, suggesting that any future diplomatic relations efforts in the region need to consider the ingrained sentiments related to the Palestinian issue to achieve broader acceptance and support. Furthermore, the study illustrates the role of social media as a powerful tool for gauging public sentiment and shaping political discourse, offering a model for future research on how digital platforms can inform diplomatic strategies and public engagement.

Future Research Recommendations

Future research should expand to examine the impact of specific events or developments related to the accords on public sentiment over time, employing longitudinal analysis to

understand how sentiment evolves in response to changing political landscapes. Another avenue for research is to compare public sentiment across different regions within the Middle East region to identify variations in perceptions of normalization with Israel, thereby enriching the understanding of regional dynamics. Furthermore, researchers should consider analyzing sentiment in relation to other diplomatic initiatives in the region to provide a broader context for understanding public reactions to normalization efforts.

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