



Review Paper

## Israel–Arab Relations: from Historical tensions to Modern diplomacy

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### Abstract

*Israel–Arab relations have historically been characterized by conflict, territorial disputes, ideological rivalry, and competing national identities. Since the establishment of Israel in May 1948, relations between Israel and neighbouring Arab states have largely been shaped by wars, diplomatic confrontations, and unresolved political questions concerning Palestinian statehood. Major conflicts such as the Arab–Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 significantly influenced regional geopolitics and reinforced long-standing security dilemmas in the Middle East. In recent decades, however, the region has witnessed gradual diplomatic shifts. The Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty of 1979 and the Israel–Jordan Peace Treaty of 1994 represented early milestones in diplomatic engagement. More recently, the Abraham Accords signed in September 2020 marked a new phase of normalization between Israel and several Arab states including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. This study examines the historical evolution of Israel–Arab relations and analyses the transition from conflict to pragmatic diplomacy. Using qualitative analysis of secondary sources, the research evaluates how geopolitical interests, economic cooperation, security concerns, and identity politics have influenced regional diplomacy. While normalization agreements have created new opportunities for cooperation, unresolved issues—particularly the Palestinian question and periodic conflicts in Gaza—continue to challenge the sustainability of long-term peace.*

**Keywords:** Israel–Arab relations, Middle East politics, Arab–Israeli conflict, diplomacy, Abraham Accords, regional geopolitics.

### Introduction

Israel–Arab relations constitute one of the most enduring and strategically consequential conflict systems in contemporary international politics. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the region has witnessed multiple interstate wars—most notably in 1948–49, 1967, and 1973—that reshaped territorial boundaries, altered regional power configurations, and entrenched long-term security rivalries. The 1967 war, particularly, resulted in Israel’s control over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights, fundamentally transforming the geopolitical landscape and intensifying the Palestinian question as a central axis of regional politics. These developments institutionalized a protracted conflict marked by militarization, alliance formation, and recurring crises<sup>1</sup>. During the Cold War, Israel–Arab dynamics were deeply embedded within superpower competition. The United States emerged as Israel’s principal strategic partner, while several Arab states cultivated ties with the Soviet Union. Military aid, diplomatic backing, and proxy alignments reinforced the regional balance of power and contributed to the persistence of confrontation. Meanwhile, pan-Arab nationalism and ideological mobilization shaped domestic legitimacy and foreign policy orientations across the Arab world<sup>2</sup>.

However, the post–Cold War period introduced significant shifts. The Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty (1979) and the Jordan–

Israel Peace Treaty (1994) marked early departures from collective Arab confrontation. More recently, the normalization agreements signed in 2020 between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan signalled a pragmatic reconfiguration of regional priorities. Expanding cooperation in trade, technology, energy, and security reflects changing threat perceptions—particularly concerning Iran—and growing emphasis on economic diversification and development. Bilateral trade between Israel and certain Gulf states has increased substantially since normalization, indicating material incentives underpinning diplomatic engagement<sup>3</sup>. Despite these developments, structural tensions remain unresolved. The Palestinian issue—encompassing questions of statehood, borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem—continues to influence regional legitimacy and international diplomacy. Periodic escalations in Gaza and the West Bank demonstrate the fragility of the current equilibrium. Humanitarian concerns and debates surrounding international law further complicate prospects for durable peace.

This report situates these transformations within the frameworks of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. Realism elucidates enduring security dilemmas and balance-of-power calculations; Liberalism highlights the role of diplomacy and economic interdependence; and Constructivism underscores the persistence of identity-based narratives and historical memory. By synthesizing empirical developments with theoretical

analysis, the study argues that Israel–Arab relations are evolving toward a hybrid regional order—characterized by simultaneous strategic competition and selective cooperation—rather than a complete transition from conflict to reconciliation.

### **Historical origins, armed conflicts, and territorial transformations (1948–1973)**

The historical foundations of Israel–Arab relations are rooted in competing nationalist movements and conflicting territorial claims that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The rise of Zionism, advocating the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, intersected with the growth of Arab nationalism, which emphasized political sovereignty and resistance to foreign control. Tensions intensified during the British Mandate period (1920–1948), particularly as Jewish immigration increased and communal violence escalated. The United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 proposed separate Jewish and Arab states, but its rejection by Arab leadership and acceptance by Jewish representatives set the stage for armed confrontation<sup>4</sup>.

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War marked the first major military conflict between Israel and neighbouring Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. The war resulted in the establishment of the State of Israel and significant territorial changes beyond the original UN proposal. Approximately 700,000 Palestinians were displaced during the conflict, an event referred to as the Nakba (catastrophe) in Palestinian historical memory<sup>5</sup>. This displacement created a protracted refugee crisis that remains central to diplomatic negotiations and regional identity politics. The 1967 Six-Day War represented a decisive turning point. Israel's pre-emptive strikes against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan led to the capture of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights. These territorial acquisitions dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape and intensified international debate over occupation, sovereignty, and security. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted later that year, called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories and the recognition of every state's right to live in peace within secure boundaries<sup>6</sup>. However, differing interpretations of the resolution contributed to ongoing diplomatic deadlock.

The 1973 Yom Kippur War, launched by Egypt and Syria, sought to regain lost territories and restore Arab strategic credibility. Although Israel ultimately maintained military advantage, the conflict reshaped regional diplomacy by paving the way for future negotiations, particularly between Egypt and Israel. Collectively, these conflicts entrenched hostility, institutionalized militarization, and redefined territorial boundaries. They also transformed the Palestinian issue into a central axis of regional politics. The period between 1948 and 1973 therefore established the structural foundations upon which subsequent diplomatic and strategic developments would unfold.

### **Security dilemma, balance of power politics, and regional military alignments**

Security considerations have historically formed the core of Israel–Arab relations, shaping state behaviour through patterns consistent with realist theory. From the outset, the regional environment was characterized by mutual suspicion and existential anxiety.

The establishment of Israel in 1948 was perceived by neighbouring Arab states not merely as a political development but as a strategic and ideological challenge. In response, regional actors engaged in military mobilization, alliance formation, and arms procurement, reinforcing a classic security dilemma in which defensive measures by one side were interpreted as offensive threats by the other<sup>7</sup>.

The 1967 Six-Day War significantly altered the regional balance of power. Israel's rapid military victory and territorial gains enhanced its deterrent capacity but simultaneously intensified Arab security concerns. Subsequent efforts to rebalance power were evident in the 1973 war, when Egypt and Syria sought to challenge Israeli military superiority. Although the conflict did not fundamentally reverse territorial outcomes, it demonstrated the persistence of power balancing and military recalibration in the region.

External powers played a critical role in shaping these dynamics. During the Cold War, the United States provided substantial military and economic assistance to Israel, while the Soviet Union supplied arms and political support to several Arab states. This superpower involvement entrenched militarization and linked regional rivalries to global strategic competition. Even after the Cold War, security cooperation remained central. The United States continues to maintain strong defence ties with Israel and key Arab partners, contributing to a complex network of deterrence arrangements<sup>8</sup>.

In recent decades, shifting threat perceptions—particularly regarding Iran's regional influence and missile capabilities—have influenced new forms of alignment. Shared security concerns have facilitated discreet intelligence cooperation and, eventually, overt diplomatic normalization between Israel and certain Gulf states. These developments suggest that contemporary regional politics remains deeply influenced by realist calculations, even when framed within diplomatic engagement<sup>9</sup>.

Despite increasing economic cooperation, the persistence of military preparedness, advanced defence technologies, and alliance commitments indicates that security remains the primary organizing principle of regional interaction. Thus, while diplomatic initiatives have moderated open confrontation, the logic of deterrence and balance of power continues to shape the strategic environment of West Asia.

## **Nationalism, identity, religion, and the constructivist dimensions of conflict**

While military competition and territorial disputes explain much of the structural dimension of Israel–Arab relations, identity-based factors have played an equally significant role in shaping regional politics. A constructivist perspective emphasizes that state behaviour is not determined solely by material power but is also influenced by ideas, historical narratives, collective memory, and religious symbolism<sup>10</sup>.

In the case of Israel and the Arab world, competing national identities have deeply informed political discourse and diplomatic positioning. Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century as a nationalist movement advocating Jewish self-determination in historic Palestine, rooted partly in experiences of persecution in Europe. Conversely, Arab nationalism developed as a response to Ottoman decline and European colonial influence, emphasizing territorial unity and political sovereignty in the Arab world. The intersection of these two national projects within the same geographical space generated a profound legitimacy contest that extended beyond strategic rivalry into questions of historical justice and identity recognition<sup>11</sup>.

Religion further intensified the symbolic significance of the conflict. Jerusalem, home to sacred sites for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, became not merely a political issue but a deeply emotional and theological one. The status of East Jerusalem and holy sites such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall has repeatedly triggered tensions, demonstrating how religious symbolism intersects with territorial politics. For many actors, compromise over such issues is constrained not only by strategic calculations but also by moral and historical narratives. Collective memory has also shaped public opinion and policy. The Holocaust occupies a central place in Israeli national consciousness, reinforcing security concerns and the perceived necessity of military preparedness. On the Palestinian side, the memory of displacement in 1948 and subsequent occupation forms a core element of national identity and resistance narratives. These historical experiences influence political leadership, electoral discourse, and diplomatic rhetoric across the region<sup>12</sup>.

Even as normalization agreements have altered interstate relations, identity-based tensions persist at the societal level. Public opinion in several Arab states continues to reflect solidarity with the Palestinian cause, illustrating the limits of purely strategic realignments. Thus, understanding Israel–Arab relations requires acknowledging that material interests operate alongside deeply embedded ideational forces. Identity, religion, and historical narratives remain powerful determinants of both conflict and cautious engagement within the evolving regional order.

## **The Palestinian question and contemporary humanitarian–diplomatic crisis**

The Palestinian question has remained the central axis of Israel–Arab relations since 1948, shaping regional diplomacy, identity politics, and international engagement. Its origins lie in the displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War and the unresolved status of territory following the 1967 conflict, when Israel assumed control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem<sup>13</sup>.

These developments transformed the Palestinian issue from a refugee crisis into a broader struggle over sovereignty, borders, and national recognition. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and subsequent diplomatic initiatives framed the principle of “land for peace,” yet competing interpretations and political realities hindered implementation. The 1993–1995 Oslo Accords represented the most significant attempt to institutionalize a negotiated pathway through mutual recognition and the creation of the Palestinian Authority. However, final-status issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, and security arrangements have remained unresolved<sup>14</sup>. Settlement expansion, periodic violence, and political fragmentation between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank undermined prospects for a comprehensive settlement.

The crisis deepened dramatically after the October 7, 2023 attack and the subsequent Israel–Hamas war (2023–2025). By early 2026, Gaza faces a severe humanitarian emergency characterized by extensive infrastructure destruction, mass displacement, restricted aid flows, and widespread food insecurity. Reports of famine-like conditions in late 2025 intensified global scrutiny and diplomatic pressure. Reconstruction efforts remain stalled due to the absence of a clear political framework and uncertainty over post-conflict governance<sup>15</sup>.

The conflict has significantly strained Israel’s normalization with Arab states. While the Abraham Accords have formally endured, prospective normalization—particularly with Saudi Arabia—has stalled. Riyadh has insisted on a credible and irreversible pathway toward Palestinian statehood as a prerequisite for formal diplomatic recognition. This position reflects not only strategic calculation but also mounting public pressure across Arab societies, where popular sentiment remains deeply sympathetic to Palestinian suffering.

Internationally, debates over recognition of Palestinian statehood have intensified, with several European states considering formal recognition. Simultaneously, divisions persist among major powers regarding ceasefire terms, humanitarian corridors, and long-term political arrangements. Thus, the Palestinian question in 2026 embodies both a humanitarian catastrophe and a diplomatic impasse.

It remains the primary structural constraint on sustainable regional transformation, underscoring that economic normalization and strategic convergence cannot substitute for a viable political settlement addressing sovereignty, rights, and long-term governance.

### **Peace treaties, the Abraham accords, and the politics of normalization**

The signing of the Abraham Accords marked a significant inflection point in Israel–Arab relations. Brokered by the United States in 2020–2021, the agreements formalized diplomatic normalization between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (September 2020), followed by Sudan (October 2020) and Morocco (December 2020). Unlike the earlier peace treaties with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994), which followed direct military confrontation, the Accords emerged from strategic convergence rather than war termination. They reflected a recalibration of regional priorities, emphasizing economic modernization, technological cooperation, and shared security concerns—particularly regarding Iran—over the previously dominant “Palestine-first” framework<sup>16</sup>. The agreements institutionalized cooperation across multiple domains, including direct flights, trade expansion, diplomatic representation, tourism, investment flows, and security coordination. Since 2020, bilateral trade between Israel and the UAE, particularly, has expanded rapidly, alongside collaboration in renewable energy, cyber security, and artificial intelligence. Intelligence-sharing and discreet defence coordination have also increased, underscoring the centrality of countering Iran’s regional influence and missile capabilities as a shared strategic objective<sup>17</sup>.

However, the normalization process encountered significant strain following the October 7, 2023 attack and the subsequent Gaza war. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza and mounting civilian casualties generated widespread public pressure across Arab societies, compelling governments to adopt more cautious public positions. Prospective normalization with Saudi Arabia—which was previously under active discussion—was effectively paused, although dialogue regarding a broader regional security framework, potentially involving U.S. guarantees, has continued intermittently. Despite political tensions, formal ties between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco have largely endured through 2025–2026, demonstrating institutional resilience. Critics have characterized aspects of the Accords as reflecting an “illiberal peace,” arguing that they prioritize regime security, surveillance cooperation, and strategic alignment over democratic reform or Palestinian rights. Nevertheless, international institutions continue to maintain that a two-state solution remains essential for sustainable peace<sup>18</sup>.

Thus, the Abraham Accords represent both continuity and departure: continuity in their grounding in security realism and departure in their willingness to decouple normalization from

immediate resolution of the Palestinian conflict. Their long-term durability will depend on balancing strategic cooperation with credible political pathways addressing unresolved core grievances.

### **Economic cooperation, trade expansion, and strategic interdependence**

The economic dimension of Israel–Arab relations has evolved from near-total disengagement to structured interdependence, reflecting a broader transformation in regional priorities. For much of the twentieth century, economic ties between Israel and Arab states were either minimal or formally restricted due to political hostility and boycott regimes. The Arab League boycott of Israel institutionalized economic isolation, reinforcing a zero-sum logic in which trade and diplomacy were subordinated to conflict dynamics<sup>19</sup>.

A gradual shift began after the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty and the 1994 Jordan–Israel Treaty, which introduced limited bilateral trade and cross-border cooperation. However, meaningful regional economic integration remained constrained by the centrality of the Palestinian issue and the absence of wider Arab recognition. The post–Cold War environment and globalization trends created structural incentives for diversification, yet political barriers persisted. The decisive pivot occurred with the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020. Unlike earlier peace agreements rooted primarily in war termination, the Accords were framed around economic modernization, technological collaboration, and shared security concerns<sup>20</sup>. Bilateral trade between Israel and normalization signatories expanded rapidly; by 2023, cumulative trade volumes surpassed \$10 billion<sup>21</sup>.

The United Arab Emirates emerged as Israel’s largest Arab trading partner, with nearly \$3 billion in annual bilateral trade and projections for sustained growth through 2026. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between Israel and the UAE reduced tariffs and institutionalized market access, accelerating integration in sectors such as fintech, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, cyber security, health technology, and water innovation. Defence and technology collaboration also deepened.

Morocco’s post-2021 defence agreements with Israel facilitated joint production and technological transfer, while Israeli global defence exports reached record levels by 2024. These developments illustrate how economic engagement and security cooperation have become mutually reinforcing pillars of normalization. Regional initiatives further demonstrate emerging strategic interdependence. The “Water for Electricity” project linking Israel and Jordan, supported by UAE financing, reflects trilateral resource cooperation aimed at addressing climate and energy challenges. Such arrangements move beyond transactional trade toward structural integration.

Despite the disruptions caused by the 2023–2025 Gaza conflict, economic ties have proven resilient. Although public opinion pressures slowed visible expansion, institutional frameworks remained intact. By early 2026, forecasts of continued economic growth and investment signal that interdependence now forms a structural component of the regional order. Thus, economic cooperation has transitioned from marginal engagement to a central stabilizing mechanism, embedding Israel–Arab relations within a pragmatic architecture of mutual benefit despite enduring political tensions.

### **India’s strategic autonomy and multi-vector diplomacy**

India’s engagement with Israel and the broader Middle East has evolved through distinct historical phases, reflecting shifts in domestic priorities, global alignments, and regional geopolitics. In the decades following independence, India’s West Asia policy was shaped largely by anti-colonial solidarity, Non-Alignment, and support for the Palestinian cause. Although India formally recognized Israel in 1950, it refrained from establishing full diplomatic relations for over four decades<sup>22</sup>.

During this period, India prioritized relations with Arab states due to energy dependence, the presence of a large Indian diaspora in the Gulf, and broader Third World political alignments. The Palestinian question occupied a central place in India’s diplomatic discourse, consistent with its commitment to decolonization and self-determination. A significant calibration occurred in 1992, when India established full diplomatic relations with Israel. This shift coincided with the end of the Cold War, India’s economic liberalization, and the need to diversify strategic partnerships. Defence cooperation quickly became the cornerstone of bilateral ties, with Israel emerging as a key supplier of advanced military technology, including missile systems, surveillance equipment, and unmanned platforms. Over time, cooperation expanded into agriculture, water management, cyber security, and innovation<sup>23</sup>.

In the 2010s and 2020s, India’s approach matured into what may be termed “hyphenated diplomacy,” separating its relations with Israel from its engagement with Arab states. Strategic partnerships were elevated with the United Arab Emirates (2015), Saudi Arabia (2019), Egypt (2023), and Qatar (2025), reflecting deepening cooperation in energy security, counterterrorism, maritime security, and investment. Simultaneously, India strengthened its defence and technology collaboration with Israel, moving toward joint development and coproduction models. By 2025–2026, India’s policy had evolved into proactive strategic realism anchored in multi-vector diplomacy. Initiatives such as I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, United States) and the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) illustrate India’s interest in connectivity, supply-chain resilience, and economic integration. Meanwhile, India maintains working ties with Iran to safeguard connectivity

projects and energy interests, carefully avoiding alignment in regional rivalries<sup>24</sup>.

Thus, India’s trajectory from ideological caution to strategic balancing reflects the consolidation of strategic autonomy. It now engages Israel, Gulf Arab states, and Iran simultaneously, positioning itself as a pragmatic middle power within an increasingly multipolar West Asian order.

### **Emergence of a hybrid regional order: liquid alliances, strategic hedging, and managed instability**

As of 2026, the Middle East reflects what can analytically be described as a “hybrid regional order”—a system characterized by the coexistence of entrenched conflict, pragmatic cooperation, and high strategic uncertainty. Unlike earlier decades, when war resulted in the complete rupture of diplomatic relations, the contemporary landscape is marked by what scholars increasingly describe as “liquid alliances”: flexible, interest-driven partnerships that persist even amid active hostilities<sup>25</sup>.

Regional actors now prioritize regime stability, economic diversification, and strategic hedging over rigid ideological blocs. The resilience of the Abraham Accords illustrates this paradox. Despite the immense strain caused by the 2023–2025 Israel– Hamas war and widespread public outrage across the Arab world, normalization between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco has endured<sup>26</sup>. The UAE remains Israel’s principal Arab economic partner, sustaining trade and technology cooperation. Morocco has expanded defence collaboration in early 2026, including joint military planning and drone production initiatives. Bahrain continues security coordination, though it faces domestic political pressures reflecting broader societal discontent over Gaza.

Saudi Arabia represents a more complex case. Formal normalization remains “frozen” as Riyadh insists upon an irrevocable pathway toward Palestinian statehood—an outcome currently resisted by Israel’s right-leaning government. Nevertheless, tacit intelligence and security cooperation reportedly continue, driven by shared concerns over Iran’s regional posture and potential nuclear threshold status. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia sustains its détente with Tehran, brokered earlier by China, thereby hedging against both Iranian escalation and perceived unpredictability in U.S. policy<sup>27</sup>. A striking feature of the hybrid order is the divergence between governments and public opinion. While Arab leaderships pursue pragmatic ties grounded in security, water cooperation, surveillance technology, and economic integration, popular sentiment remains deeply hostile due to the humanitarian devastation in Gaza. Relations between Israel and Egypt and Jordan—though formally intact—are often described as a “cold peace,” with rhetoric hardening even as essential border security coordination persists.

Conflict dynamics further reinforce strategic uncertainty. The Israel–Gaza theatre has transitioned into a fragile, low-intensity phase marked by counterinsurgency and humanitarian crisis. Direct exchanges between Israel and Iran during 2024–2025 disrupted the long-standing “shadow war” paradigm, establishing a precarious deterrence equilibrium. Syria and Lebanon remain volatile arenas, reflecting persistent fragmentation and proxy competition. Compounding this uncertainty is renewed U.S. “Maximum Pressure” policy toward Iran, compelling Gulf States to balance deterrence with de-escalation. Within this environment, India has positioned itself as a stabilizing middle power, advancing hyphenated ties with Israel while preserving robust engagement with Gulf partners. In sum, the Middle East in 2026 is neither moving toward seamless peace nor descending into systemic collapse. It represents a transactional and adaptive order in which adversaries trade, allies hedge, and strategic competition coexists with institutionalized cooperation.

### **Conclusion: from protracted conflict to a hybrid and strategic regional order**

The trajectory of Israel–Arab relations from 1948 to early 2026 reflects a profound yet incomplete transformation in regional politics. The relationship began in a context of existential confrontation, shaped by competing nationalist movements, territorial disputes, and successive interstate wars in 1948, 1967, and 1973. These conflicts redefined borders, entrenched mutual mistrust, and institutionalized a security dilemma that dominated West Asian geopolitics for decades. The Palestinian displacement of 1948 and the territorial consequences of the 1967 war embedded the Palestinian question at the centre of regional diplomacy, transforming it into both a political and identity-driven struggle.

During the Cold War, Israel–Arab relations were further internationalized through superpower rivalry, with the United States and the Soviet Union backing opposing camps. Militarization, alliance formation, and deterrence politics became the defining features of the regional order. Yet even within this confrontational framework, limited diplomatic openings emerged. The Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty (1979) and the Jordan–Israel Treaty (1994) demonstrated that strategic recalculation could override ideological hostility, laying the groundwork for institutionalized engagement.

The post–Cold War and especially post-2020 phase introduced a qualitatively different dynamic. The Abraham Accords marked a strategic pivot in which normalization was pursued on the basis of economic cooperation, technological partnership, and shared security concerns—particularly regarding Iran—rather than exclusively on the resolution of the Palestinian issue. Trade expansion, defence collaboration, intelligence-sharing, and connectivity initiatives signaled the consolidation of pragmatic interdependence.

However, the 2023–2025 Gaza conflict re-exposed structural fragilities, intensifying humanitarian crises, straining normalization efforts, and reinforcing the enduring centrality of Palestinian statehood in regional legitimacy debates. By 2026, the Middle East no longer conforms to rigid ideological blocs but operates within a hybrid regional order characterized by “liquid alliances,” strategic hedging, and managed instability. Arab states increasingly prioritize regime security and economic diversification, balancing relations with Israel, Iran, and global powers. External actors—including the United States, China, and emerging middle powers such as India—further embed the region within broader multipolar competition.

India’s strategic autonomy and multi-vector diplomacy exemplify this adaptive engagement. In sum, Israel–Arab relations have evolved from total war to conditional cooperation, from ideological polarization to transactional pragmatism. Yet the transformation remains partial. Security deterrence coexists with economic integration, and diplomatic normalization proceeds alongside unresolved political grievances. The region’s future will depend on whether strategic realism can eventually converge with meaningful political reconciliation, or whether the hybrid order will remain a fragile equilibrium between conflict and cooperation.

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