

 ABRAHAM ACCORDS PEACE INSTITUTE

# Annual Report Executive Summary





*President Isaac Herzog meets with his Emirati counterpart President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Dubai, November 30, 2023, on the sidelines of COP28 (Kobi Gideon/GPO)*

In 2023, ties between the countries of the Abraham Accords continued to deepen and flourish. Groundbreaking bilateral and multilateral forums were launched, numerous high-level visits took place, and previously-unimaginable joint initiatives brought together innovators, investors, experts, academics and women leaders from across the region. Economic ties reached new heights, with the estimated value of trade between Abraham Accords countries reaching \$10 billion.<sup>1</sup> The values of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding at the heart of the Abraham Accords found expression in important interfaith and people-to-people developments.

The Middle East changed forever on October 7, 2023, with Hamas' brutal assault against Israel and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war. Despite the geo-political tensions, the Abraham Accords have survived, and diplomatic and trade relations have continued, while people-to-people initiatives have

slowed. Looking ahead, it is clear that the spirit of cooperation and peace represented by these historic agreements is key to building a better future for all the peoples of the region.

The Abraham Accords Peace Institute continued in 2023 to fulfill its mandate of tracking, supporting and advancing Abraham Accords ties. We continue to maintain close contact with public and private sector actors across all Accords countries in order to gather data, help overcome challenges, and identify opportunities for strengthening collaboration. In our 2023 Annual Report, we present and analyze the available data on Abraham Accords relations, examine the impact of the Israel-Hamas war, and make numerous recommendations for enhancing mutually-beneficial cooperation.

2023 saw numerous high-level Abraham Accords diplomatic visits, including the November 2023

<sup>1</sup> AAPI includes within the rubric of the Abraham Accords, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan as nations which normalized relations with Israel between September-December 2020, Kosovo, a Muslim-majority nation that established relations with Israel at the same time, and Jordan and Egypt as legacy peace partners of Israel.

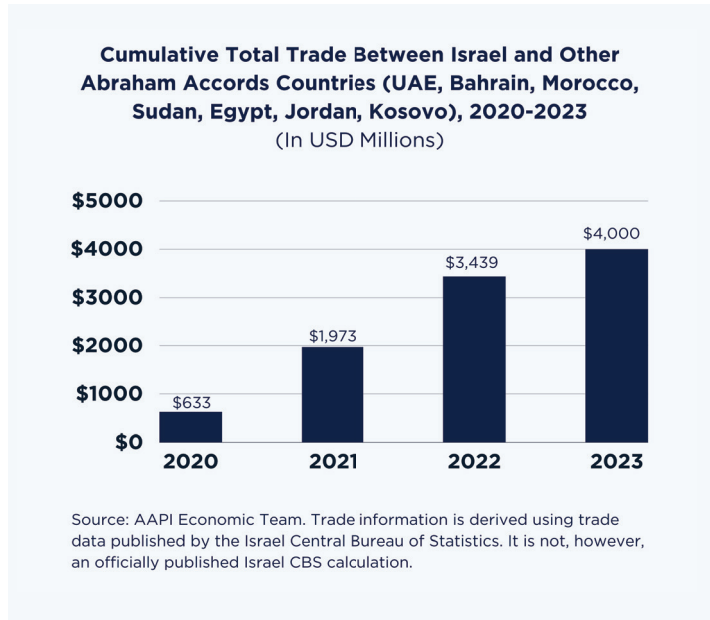
meeting between the Presidents of Israel and the UAE, and the September 2023 visit of Israel’s Foreign Minister to Bahrain. A record number of Israeli ministers visited Morocco and met with their counterparts. These visits helped create the frameworks for expanded G2G cooperation in diverse fields. Indeed, almost 25% of the intergovernmental agreements presented in the Israeli Knesset in 2023 were related to Abraham Accords ties. The UAE-Israel Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into effect, reducing tariffs on 96% of goods.

According to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), accumulated trade between Israel and the Abraham Accords countries surpassed USD \$4 billion in 2023, constituting a 16% increase over 2022. The growth in trade is even more remarkable in light of the fact that Israel’s overall imports and exports were down 14% in 2023. Even before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, Israel’s trade over the first nine months of 2023 was down 12%, while Israel’s trade with Abraham Accords countries grew by 24%. Data from the fourth quarter of 2023 indicate that the war has not had a significant impact on trade. While Israel’s overall trade in Q4 of 2023 dropped 18% Year-over-Year, trade with Abraham Accords countries decreased by only 4%.

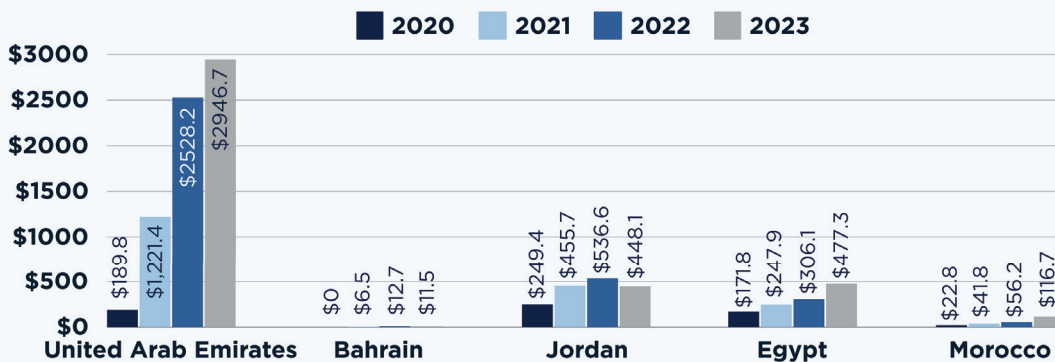
Israel CBS trade statistics do not include substantial elements of Abraham Accords economic ties, including gas and water exports, defense trade, and services, software and cyber. If one includes Israeli exports of natural gas to Egypt and gas and water

to Jordan, estimated at more than USD \$2 billion, defense-related trade,<sup>2</sup> and the multiple cyber and software agreements reached in 2023, it can be estimated that the real value of trade between Israel and the other Accords countries reached USD \$10 billion.

2023 also saw a number of paradigm-shifting initiatives in the fields of interfaith tolerance, innovation and civil society ties. These include the opening of Abu Dhabi’s Abrahamic Family House, the Connect2Innovate conference in Manama which



**Israel Trade with Abraham Accords Countries**  
(In USD Millions)



Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics

<sup>1</sup> In 2022, 24% of Israel’s defense exports went to Abraham Accords countries, reaching approximately USD \$3.013 billion. This robust defense trade between Israel and other Accords countries continued in 2023.



Aviva Steinberger, Director of Innovation Diplomacy at Start-Up Nation Central, addresses the “Women Connect to Innovate” conference in Morocco, May 4, 2023. Credit: Courtesy.

brought together 500 Bahraini, Israeli and Emirati economic leaders, and the “Women Connect to Innovate” conference in Marrakech, which included 100 female leaders from Morocco, Israel, UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, US, Egypt, Jordan and many other countries. Tourism trends reflected those of previous years, with large numbers of Israelis traveling to Accords countries, and new direct flight routes being established, while a relatively small number of tourists from Accords countries visited Israel.

2023 was also marked by the launch or expansion of multi-lateral frameworks for collaboration. These include the Negev Forum Working Groups meeting in the UAE, and multilateral dialogue between the cybersecurity chiefs and national security advisors of Accords countries. Cooperation also expanded to include additional partners. One particularly important partner was India, with 2023 seeing the institutionalization of the I2U2 Forum.

The vision of regional integration took a major step forward with the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe (IMEC) Corridor initiative at the September 2023 G20 Summit. The benefits of establishing an efficient overland corridor connecting East and West via Israel and the Gulf became even clearer following the Iranian-backed Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. Despite the potential of such a route, a number of challenges remain to its full realization, including infrastructure gaps, regulatory and security hurdles, and geopolitical objections. If these are

overcome, an overland route could greatly improve regional and global resilience and prosperity.

Hamas’ October 7 massacre and the ensuing war sent shockwaves throughout the region. Yet despite tensions and disagreements, the leaderships of the Abraham Accords countries affirmed their continued commitment to these historic agreements. Accords countries were able to leverage the trust built with Israel over the previous years to coordinate humanitarian and medical aid to Gaza. The war had a strongly negative impact on regional public opinion towards Israel, while also slowing progress towards Israel-Saudi normalization.

Going forward, it is clear that the Abraham Accords paradigm of tolerance, understanding and mutually-beneficial cooperation is key to overcoming extremism and building a peaceful future for the region. The Accords provide a proven platform for advancing peace and prosperity in a tumultuous Middle East, and their success and resilience increase the chances of additional countries, whether in the Gulf, Africa or southeast Asia, joining the framework. A strong commitment from the United States and other partners will be necessary to maintain the positive momentum. The Abraham Accords Peace Institute will continue to work in 2024 to advance the Abraham Accords, and promote the policies and initiatives necessary to expand the circle of peace. 🕊

# Scan to Read AAPI's Full 2023 Annual Report



A large, stylized dove logo in a light blue color, centered on the page. The dove is depicted in profile, facing left, with its wings spread. The background features a pattern of light blue and white geometric shapes, including triangles and curved lines, creating a modern, abstract design.

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