



Abraham Accords 2.0

American Leadership in Establishing a New Regional Architecture of Security, Prosperity, and Innovation

Prepared Written Testimony of

Asher Fredman

Executive Director, Misgav Institute for National Security

Visiting Fellow, The Heritage Foundation

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Abraham Accords”**

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Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Sherman, and honorable members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the critical role of U.S. leadership in shaping the future of the Abraham Accords and regional integration.

My central message is this: **The Abraham Accords can serve as the foundation for a new U.S.-led regional architecture that advances the vital national security interests of the United States and its allies. The historic agreements brokered by President Trump in 2020 produced a flourishing of diplomatic, economic, security, and people-to-people cooperation. Despite the multi-front war that followed Hamas's October 7, 2023 terrorist attack, the Accords have proved remarkably resilient. We nevertheless stand today at a critical juncture. Restoring the momentum of the Abraham Accords, building regional frameworks that advance U.S. interests, and expanding the circle of warm peace will require sustained American leadership. Congress can play a central role in providing that leadership and turning the potential of "Abraham Accords 2.0" into reality.**

From September 2020 to October 2023, the Abraham Accords opened the door to the rapid development of ties between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and, for a time, Sudan. Embassies were established, direct flights were launched, trade grew rapidly, and previously unimaginable commercial, technological, and civil society cooperation emerged. Partnerships were announced in artificial intelligence, space, cybersecurity, water, precision agriculture, energy, health, fintech, defense and many other fields. The Accords also contributed positively to Israel's ties with its traditional peace partners, Egypt and Jordan. More than sixty intergovernmental agreements, instruments, and MOUs were signed between Israel and its Abraham Accords and Arab peace partners.¹

This period also saw the emergence of Abraham Accords multilateral cooperation. In January 2021, the Trump Administration announced that Israel would be moved to CENTCOM's area of responsibility, enabling much enhanced cooperation with other American partners in the region. Under President Biden, the I2U2 framework (Israel-India-U.S.-UAE) and Negev Forum were established. In September 2023, the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the European Union, and other partners signed a memorandum of understanding to advance the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC.

Iran, Hamas, and other radical actors understood the implications of this trend. They viewed the emergence of a U.S.-aligned regional architecture, culminating in advanced U.S.-mediated negotiations toward Saudi-Israeli normalization, as a serious threat. While Hamas' October 7 attack had been planned over a number of years, evidence indicates that the acceleration of this regional alignment was one of the factors that led Hamas to launch the attack in October 2023.²

¹ The Heritage Foundation, *The Abraham Accords: A Five Year Report*, September 2025, https://static.heritage.org/-/2025/AbrahamAccords_Five_Year.pdf

² Avishai Karo, "The Israel-Saudi Arabia Normalization: A Motive for the October 7, 2023 Terrorist Attack Reflected in Documents from the Gaza Strip," The Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Research Institute, June 15, 2026, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/the-israel-saudi-arabia-normalization-a-motive-for-the-october-7-2023-terrorist-attack->



The attack and ensuing multi-front war generated far-reaching regional tensions and strain. Many questioned whether the Accords would survive. Nearly three years later, it is clear that the strategic foundations of the Accords are more resilient than many skeptics predicted. Despite the intense regional conflict, the architecture of peace did not collapse. This resilience found expression in several ways.

First, formal diplomatic relations remained in place. Second, trade between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan continued to grow. According to data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, combined trade between Israel and its Arab and Muslim peace partners increased by approximately 15.4 percent in 2024 compared with 2023. It increased a further 0.8 percent year-over-year in 2025, a modest rise that is nevertheless impressive given the regional tensions and disruptions. During the first five months of 2026, trade was approximately 7.7 percent higher than during the same period in 2025.³ Indeed, Israel's cumulative trade with its Arab peace partners has risen every year since the Accords were signed. Combined trade rose from approximately \$1.97 billion in 2021 to approximately \$4.56 billion in 2025, an increase of roughly 131 percent.⁴

Third, air connectivity proved remarkably durable. Although international aviation to Israel faced severe disruption, Emirati airlines maintained service during periods when many Western airlines suspended flights. The UAE was the third most popular country for passengers traveling to and from Ben Gurion Airport in 2025 and again during the first six months of 2026.⁵

Fourth, defense integration advanced in the face of shared threats. In January 2026, CENTCOM announced the establishment of the Middle Eastern Air Defense-Combined Defense Operations Cell.⁶ The importance of this integration was demonstrated a month later with the launch of Operation Epic Fury. During the conflict Israel deployed an Iron Dome battery and other advanced systems to assist in defending the UAE. It marked an extraordinary development made possible by the Abraham Accords: An Israeli defensive system, developed in close partnership with the United States, helping protect an Arab partner under fire.

Military cooperation was not limited to Israel and the UAE. In January 2026, a senior Moroccan military delegation traveled to Tel Aviv and signed a strategic work plan with their Israeli counterparts.

[and-massacre-reflected-in-documents-from-the-gaza-strip/](#); Marcus Walker and Summer Said, " Hamas Wanted to Torpedo Israel-Saudi Deal With Oct. 7 Attacks, Documents Reveal," *Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-wanted-to-torpedo-israel-saudi-deal-with-oct-7-attacks-documents-reveal-a70ec560>.

³ Israeli CBS trade data can be found here (Hebrew)- Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Monthly Bulletin of Foreign Trade Statistics," <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/cbsNewBrand/Pages/Foreign-Trade-Statistics-Monthly.aspx>.

⁴ It is important to note that these figures cover trade in goods. They for the most part do not reflect trade in services, software, investment, or many defense transactions, meaning that the true volume of economic activity is significantly higher.

⁵ Israel Airports Authority, "Activity Reports," <https://www.iaa.gov.il/en/about/aeronautical-information/annualreport/>.

⁶ U.S. Central Command, "U.S., Regional Partners Open New Air Defense Operations Cell in Qatar," public release, January 13, 2026, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PUBLIC-RELEASES/Article/4376614/us-regional-partners-open-new-air-defense-operations-cell-in-qatar/>.



At the same time, we must not minimize the damage caused by the post-October 7 war. Public support for normalization declined across much of the region. People-to-people initiatives suffered, business and technology partnerships were paused or canceled, academic and scientific cooperation decreased, multilateral forums lost momentum, and the expansion of normalization slowed.

We therefore stand at a historic juncture. The Abraham Accords have the potential to shape a new regional architecture that supports crucial U.S. national security interests. Realizing this potential, and restoring positive momentum on the bilateral and multilateral levels, will require American leadership, commitment, and focus. Congress has an indispensable role in taking the Accords to the next level. **I will now present five areas in which Congress can make an invaluable contribution to Abraham Accords 2.0.**

1. Advance Concrete Steps to Realize the IMEC Vision

IMEC could become one of the most consequential infrastructure initiatives of our generation. Such an overland route could shorten transit times for goods between India and Europe by 51 percent, and between the UAE and Israel by 79 percent.⁷ However, IMEC's potential extends beyond freight. Energy infrastructure, digital connectivity, and data infrastructure could all form part of the corridor.

For the United States, IMEC is not simply a transportation project. It is an opportunity to strengthen supply-chain resilience, provide an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative and routes dominated by Russia and Iran, increase demand for American technology and services, connect close U.S. partners, and reinforce a Western-aligned economic corridor extending from India to Europe.

Despite extensive diplomatic attention and rhetoric, there in fact has been relatively little detailed analysis of IMEC's likely economic benefits, costs, regulatory requirements, and commercially viable projects. Overcoming political, bureaucratic, and economic hurdles, and attracting public and private investment, will require a credible account of what the corridor could deliver for each of the countries involved, a detailed mapping of infrastructure needs and gaps, an analysis of the regulatory, customs, and security requirements for its success, and an assessment of the opportunities for public and private sector actors along the route.

Congress should therefore advance two complementary products.

⁷ Asher Fredman and Joseph Rozen, "The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor: A Catalyst for Regional Integration and Global Prosperity," Misgav Institute for National Security, June 26, 2025, <https://www.misgavins.org/en/fredman-rozen-the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor/>



First, it should seek an independent U.S. International Trade Commission assessment of IMEC's trade and economic implications.⁸ The assessment should examine potential employment, investment, trade, and growth effects for participating states and identify opportunities for American companies in engineering, logistics, cybersecurity, energy technology, and digital infrastructure.

Second, Congress should call upon the Department of Commerce, in coordination with the Departments of State, Treasury, Transportation, and Energy, together with the U.S. Trade Representative, the Trade and Development Agency, the International Development Finance Corporation, and the Export-Import Bank, to develop an actionable commercial roadmap that includes bankable projects, financing gaps, regulatory barriers, and investment opportunities. A central component should be identifying ways to provide technical assistance in harmonizing customs and data exchange procedures, so that goods can move efficiently from India to Europe.

Congress should also encourage the Treasury Department and the U.S. Executive Director at the World Bank to support complementary analytical work. The World Bank has extensive experience modeling major transport corridors, including projects associated with China's BRI. Comparable work on IMEC could add international credibility and help identify the steps needed to make the corridor viable.

In tandem with these studies, the United States should convene the IMEC signatories and the key transit and destination countries, including Israel and Jordan, to develop an implementation roadmap, measurable benchmarks, and a permanent secretariat for coordination, communication, and oversight.

Progress need not wait for a complete regional railway network. Existing and expanded trucking routes can demonstrate commercial value while rail infrastructure is developed. Congress should encourage engagement with Saudi Arabia and other partners on transit arrangements for goods originating from or destined for Israel. Where appropriate, U.S. financial support through the DFC and other mechanisms could be made available to qualifying regional partners for infrastructure projects.

As noted, IMEC should be viewed not only through the lens of trade but also through the lens of energy and digital connectivity. Saudi Arabia's East-West oil pipeline has demonstrated the strategic value of energy infrastructure capable of bypassing the Strait of Hormuz. At this stage, the energy component of IMEC should focus on natural gas, including pipelines from the Arabian Gulf to Israel's Mediterranean ports, which could then be transported to Europe through new pipelines in the eastern Mediterranean.⁹

⁸ A Tariff Act Section 332 investigation could be requested by the President, the U.S. Trade Representative, the House Committee on Ways and Means, or the Senate Committee on Finance.

⁹ Victoria Coates and Asher Fredman, "A New US-Led Architecture for the Middle East," *The National Interest*, June 12, 2026, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/a-new-us-led-architecture-for-the-middle-east>



2. Establish an Abraham Accords Critical-Technology Partnership

Technological leadership will increasingly shape the global balance of power and the national security of states. The United States, Israel, and key Arab and Muslim partners possess complementary capabilities that can strengthen U.S. and allied technological leadership.

The State Department's Pax Silica initiative provides a valuable global framework for cooperation with trusted partners on AI. Congress should complement this global effort with an Abraham Accords Critical-Technology Partnership focused specifically on regional projects and innovation ecosystems. This initiative could build on the United States-Israel Artificial Intelligence Center Act introduced by then-Senator and now Secretary of State Marco Rubio in 2021, while expanding the concept to include Abraham Accords partners and adding additional scientific fields such as quantum technologies, space, cybersecurity, and biotechnology.¹⁰

Such a Center should leverage resources from all of its members to support joint research, shared test beds, pilot projects, standards cooperation, fellowships, commercialization partnerships, and the deployment of emerging technologies that address shared regional challenges. Participation should depend on matching contributions and rigorous safeguards governing intellectual property, export controls, cybersecurity, and the exposure of sensitive technologies to adversarial nations.

3. Advance Regional Security Integration

Congress has already advanced and in some cases enacted important initiatives involving regional air and missile defense, maritime security, cybersecurity, space cooperation, and joint exercises. These efforts should be consolidated into a practical regional architecture that encompasses planning, interoperability, resilience, R&D, and manufacturing.

One realistic model for such an architecture is the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement, or C-SIPA, signed by the U.S. and Bahrain in September 2023. C-SIPA establishes mechanisms for high-level consultation and coordination in response to external aggression, strengthens defense cooperation, and integrates security with trade, technology, and investment.¹¹

The United States should work to establish an Abraham Accords C-SIPA. Such a framework would not require an automatic commitment to use force. Rather, it could facilitate rapid senior-level consultations,

¹⁰ *United States–Israel Artificial Intelligence Center Act*, S. 2120, 117th Cong. (2021), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2120/text>. ([congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov))

¹¹ U.S. Embassy in Bahrain, “U.S.-Bahrain Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement,” September 13, 2023, <https://bh.usembassy.gov/u-s-bahrain-comprehensive-security-integration-and-prosperity-agreement/>.



shared threat assessments, and consideration of coordinated political, economic, and defensive responses whenever a participant faces external aggression or coercion. Standing working groups could deepen cooperation in integrated air defense, counter-drone systems, maritime security, cyber defense, and defense industrial cooperation. Particular attention should be devoted to protecting the infrastructure upon which regional integration and economic prosperity depends, including ports, energy installations, data centers, desalination facilities, airports, and logistics hubs.

This architecture should be modular. Not every participant will take part in every aspect. The objective should be a flexible regional security architecture that strengthens deterrence, enhances resilience, and enables partners to coordinate responses to common threats while respecting different constraints.

4. Invest in the Human Foundations of Peace

Intergovernmental agreements and cooperation form the physical architecture of regional integration. But people-to-people relationships are its beating heart. Lasting peace will depend not only on agreements signed by governments, but also on entrepreneurs building businesses together, scientists conducting joint research, students studying side by side, and future leaders developing relationships of trust across borders.

The post-October 7 period demonstrated the danger of failing to build extensive public constituencies that understand, value, and benefit from regional cooperation. If the Abraham Accords are to become a durable and lasting foundation, they must be rooted in sustained engagement among the peoples of the region.

The United States already possesses highly effective tools for advancing this goal. Congress does not need to create new programs. Instead, it should expand and adapt existing educational, scientific, and leadership programs by establishing dedicated Abraham Accords tracks that bring together participants from the United States, Israel, and regional partners.

The State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program should establish recurring Abraham Accords cohorts that bring emerging leaders from Israel and Arab and Muslim partners to the United States as joint regional delegations. These cohorts could engage American counterparts while developing long-term professional networks focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, public administration, education, and economic integration. Similarly, the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) should establish dedicated Abraham Accords groups within its existing leadership and entrepreneurship programs. Congress should also support an Abraham Accords-focused track within the Stevens Initiative for Virtual Exchange, bringing American and Abraham Accords member countries' classrooms, universities, and youth together for dialogue and shared projects.



Finally, Congress should enhance the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) Program by creating expanded funding opportunities for multilateral research consortia involving Israel, the United States, and Abraham Accords partners in areas such as water security, agriculture, health, and AI.

5. Appoint and Confirm a Special Envoy for the Abraham Accords and Develop Country-Specific Strategies for Expanding Normalization

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, Congress established within the Department of State the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Abraham Accords, Negev Forum, and Related Integration and Normalization Fora and Agreements. The law provides for a Senate-confirmed envoy with the rank of ambassador who reports directly to the Secretary of State.

This office should be filled, staffed, and empowered. The envoy should have the recourses and access necessary to coordinate initiatives spanning the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Treasury, and other agencies, while working closely with the White House and other special envoys.

The envoy's mandate should encompass both deepening existing agreements and pursuing Abraham Accords expansion. Saudi Arabia is uniquely important, and the United States should continue working toward Saudi-Israeli normalization. But it should also be recalled that there are more than two dozen Arab and Muslim-majority countries that lack formal relations with Israel. Before October 7, 2023, progress was reportedly made towards the establishment of formal relations with a number of these countries.

The Special Envoy's Regional Integration Office should develop prioritized, country-specific strategies for a broad range of potential normalization partners. These strategies should begin with each country's national priorities. For one country, the central issue may be defense cooperation. For another, it could be access to American technology, water and food security, energy, investment, or diplomatic and sovereignty-related issues. The United States should identify where American, Israeli, and regional capabilities can help meet those needs, what mutually beneficial measures could pave the way for the expansion of ties, and what a roadmap towards gradual normalization would entail.¹² There should also be a concerted effort to return Sudan to the Abraham Accords framework, while countering the efforts of Iran and other hostile nations to expand their influence in the Sahel region in general and in Sudan in particular.

¹² For one example of such a roadmap, see Asher Fredman and Joseph Rozen, "Israel, Indonesia, and the Future of the Abraham Accords," Misgav Institute for National Security, May 11, 2026, <https://www.misgavins.org/en/fredman-rozen-future-of-the-abraham-accords/>



Conclusion

The Abraham Accords demonstrated how bold and innovative American leadership can produce outcomes that many believed impossible. However, without concerted U.S.-led effort, these agreements may fail to reach their full transformative potential.

The next phase will require active American leadership, focus, and a strategy that treats regional integration as a central instrument and goal of U.S. policy. Congress can help translate the vision into practical institutions and programs: an implementable IMEC, a trusted critical-technology partnership, a flexible regional security framework, stronger people-to-people networks, and a dedicated diplomatic effort to deepen and expand normalization.

Congress should also recognize that strengthening regional integration requires countering actors that seek to demonize and isolate Israel, and undermine the Abraham Accords model of advancing peace and prosperity. The United Nations is today perhaps the most globally influential actor working to delegitimize and promote boycotts of Israel, while whitewashing terror and rejectionism. The U.S. should not, on the one hand, work to integrate Israel and Arab allies, and on the other hand, fund an institution which seeks to isolate Israel and undermine U.S. national interests.¹³

It also must be recognized that the state-connected media platforms of some U.S. partners, such as Qatar's Al Jazeera, have consistently promoted anti-normalization and a strongly negative framing of the Abraham Accords, making the task of building a warm peace more difficult. American policy should support institutions and initiatives that advance regional cooperation, recognition, and coexistence, while opposing efforts to delegitimize the Abraham Accords.

The MENA region stands at a crossroads. Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, rejectionist Palestinian factions, and others seek to steer the region down the path of extremism, instability, and terror. The Abraham Accords have provided an alternative path, one of tolerance, integration, and cooperation. The United States can play a key role in advancing the path of peace, prosperity, and partnership in ways that serve the vital interests of the American people.

¹³ See Asher Fredman and Gilad Erdan, "From UN Bureaucracy to American Global Leadership: A Strategy for Advancing American Interests by Disengaging from a Failed UN," Misgav Institute for National Security, June 17, 2026, <https://www.misgavins.org/en/fredman-un-bureaucracy-us-leadership/>