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Between speeches and actions: The evolution of IsraeliEgyptian relations since the Camp David Accords

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Between speeches and actions: The evolution of Israeli-Egyptian relations since the Camp David Accords



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Abstract

Egypt, the leader of the Arab coalition waging war against Israel since 1948, was ultimately the first Arab country to normalize relations with Israel. This shift in relations from arch-enemy to covert allies is nevertheless complex. This study examines the evolution of Egyptian-Israeli relations by analyzing the gap between official discourse and actual practices since the Camp David Accords. Drawing on discourse analysis, economic indicators, and qualitative evidence from memoirs, investigative journalism, and declassified sources, the paper shows that, although official discourse between Egypt and Israel may vary with regional crises, security cooperation remains unaffected and continues to be central to their relations. Consequently, the paper shows that intelligence services are the backbone of Israeli-Egyptian relations.

Keywords: Egypt, Israel, Clandestine Diplomacy, Cooperation, Securitization, Arab-Israeli Conflict

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Introduction

Relations between Egypt and Israel constitute a fascinating case study in international relations, particularly given their complexity and persistent ambiguity. Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the two countries have been engaged in a series of armed conflicts, diplomatic negotiations, and secret cooperation, often marked by regional tensions and divergent strategic interests. The 1948 war, the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Six-Day War in 1967, and the Yom Kippur War in 1973 have shaped a history of rivalry and mutual distrust, but also of attempts at rapprochement, notably through the Camp David Accords in 1978. However, despite the signing of a peace treaty in 1979, relations between Egypt and Israel are often described as a ‘cold peace’. This expression reflects a reality in which tensions persist, economic and diplomatic exchanges remain limited, and cooperation, when it exists, often occurs behind the scenes, far from the public eye and the media. This duality between apparent hostility and secret cooperation is at the heart of this study.

Intelligence services play a crucial role in relations between states, particularly in contexts of conflict or persistent tension. Their function goes far beyond simply gathering information: they are often key players in clandestine diplomacy, facilitating exchanges and negotiations that could not take place officially. In the case of Egypt and Israel, the intelligence services of both countries have been essential vectors of communication and cooperation, particularly in the area of regional security. Cooperation among intelligence services is a well-documented phenomenon within Western alliances, such as NATO and the European Union.¹ However, in the Middle East, and more specifically between Egypt and Israel, this cooperation is rarely officially recognized. It is often based on informal agreements, personal contacts, and a logic of ‘trust, but verify’, in which societal mistrust persists despite the need to collaborate in the face of common threats.²

Clandestine diplomacy helps understand Egypt-Israel relations and Egypt's regional leadership, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where Egypt leads in the Arab world. It allows states to maintain open channels of communication even in the absence of normalized diplomatic relations. In the case of Egypt and Israel, this diplomacy has often manifested itself through exchanges between intelligence services, secret negotiations, and tacit agreements on security issues, particularly in the Sinai and around the Gaza Strip. The ‘*securitization*’ of relations between the two countries is another key aspect. This term refers to the process by which security issues dominate relations between two states, relegating economic and political issues to the background. This notion thus justifies increased cooperation between intelligence services and armed forces. For example, the fight against terrorism in the Sinai, border management, and the prevention of cross-border attacks are areas where Egypt and Israel have converging interests, despite their political differences.

¹ Richard J. Aldrich, ‘US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism: Low Politics and Compulsion’, *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2009): 122–39, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2008.00353.x>.

² Abdallah Saaf and Cahiers de Chaillot, *Un Concept de Sécurité Traditionnel*, Violence Politique et Paix Dans Le Monde Arabe (European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2010), 23–38, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06929.6>.

To study these secret relations, an abductive approach is particularly appropriate. This method, which I will elaborate on in the methodology section, consists of formulating plausible hypotheses based on the observation of unexplained or poorly documented phenomena. In the case of Egyptian-Israeli relations, the absence of official sources and the confidential nature of intelligence activities make this approach particularly suitable. My methodology draws on several tools: analysis of the memoirs of former officials, analysis of leaders' speeches during decisive regional crises, study of economic indicators, as well as network theory, game theory and theories of cooperation between intelligence services. These theoretical frameworks help to understand how intelligence service actors interact and cooperate, despite the challenging context of persistent tensions.

This study is organized into several parts: a historical overview of relations between Egypt and Israel, highlighting key moments that shaped their interactions. Next, the study will review official relations between Egypt and Israel since the normalization of their relations in 1978-1979. This chapter will be divided into two distinct parts: The first part will analyze speeches by the leaders of both countries at key moments that shaped the Middle East, namely 1977, 1995, and 2011-2013, to understand how they publicly perceive and describe their relations. This will be followed by a subchapter examining official economic relations between Egypt and Israel, excluding indirect economic ties, for which data are virtually non-existent. Next, a chapter will examine secret relations during regional crises, particularly security cooperation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and regional and global terrorism.

This paper traces the evolution of the secret and official relations between Egypt and Israel since the Camp David Accords, highlights and interprets the differences between public statements and covert actions, and proposes an update in light of the war that broke out on 7 October 2023.

This matter raises several issues: the nature of secret cooperation, its strategic motivations, and its limits. This study aims to understand the dynamics of secret relations between Egypt and Israel, highlighting the actors, mechanisms, and motivations involved.

Literature Review

There has been little research conducted on relations between Egypt and Israel.³ Nevertheless, it is a poorly kept secret that Israel maintains secret relations with many Arab countries.⁴

Following an informational report submitted to the French Senate, the Israeli-Egyptian relations have been affected by 'securitization', whereby security considerations prevail over political considerations, implying that security actors have gradually gained the upper hand in

³ Dima Alsajdeya, 'Retour sur vingt-cinq ans de relations incertaines entre Israéliens, Egyptiens et Palestiniens', *Science Politique, Confluences Méditerranée* 100, no. 1 (2017): 65–77, <https://doi.org/10.3917/come.100.0065>.

⁴ 'WikiLeaks - Hillary Clinton Email Archive', accessed 11 November 2025, <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/27915>.

managing these relations, to the detriment of diplomats.⁵ Therefore, when examining secret bilateral relations between Israel and Egypt, conducted mainly through the intelligence services, there are generally no academic or scientific papers on the subject, due to the confidential nature of intelligence activities. Nevertheless, some documents mention these relations, such as memoirs written by politicians and ambassadors,⁶ declassified documents, investigative journalism, journalism, and analyses carried out by specialized think tanks.

Whilst international intelligence cooperation has long been regarded as opaque, posing a major challenge for academics, journalists, and other researchers,⁷ this subject has developed significantly. This intensification of cooperation between intelligence services is well known.⁸ Still, this is a very recent development, having accelerated sharply in the context of the Global War on Terror, following the attacks of 11 September 2001⁹, but they are listed nowhere (officially).¹⁰

The current literature primarily explores the links and cooperation between allied intelligence agencies such as NATO and EU institutional members within the framework of the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, and the 1967 Naples Convention.¹¹ These are the most commonly told stories about intelligence cooperation, as treaties, structures, competencies, legal powers, and institutional developments provide an observable framework for this cooperation. These interdisciplinary methods to enhance cooperation within the European or Western spheres facilitate the work of scholars studying these developments across a wide range of disciplines, including Political Science, Administration Studies, Law, and IR theories. These theories have largely been developed using data collected in the European or Western contexts.

The *logic of practicality* emphasizes acting on what works in practice, rather than what is prescribed by rules, policies, or theories.¹² This theory, developed by Vincent Pouliot in 2008, criticizes representational bias, referring to the tendency of dominant theories in International Relations to focus on conscious representations (i.e., political actors) rather than on tacit and

⁵ 'Traverser la tempête : l'Égypte dans le Moyen-Orient post-7 octobre', Sénat, accessed 19 November 2025, <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r24-378/r24-378.html>.

⁶ Alsajdeya, 'Retour sur vingt-cinq ans de relations incertaines entre Israéliens, Égyptiens et Palestiniens'.

⁷ Richard J. Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability: New Facets to an Old Problem', *Intelligence and National Security* 24, no. 1 (2009): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684520902756812>.

⁸ Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'; Jean-Claude Cousseran and Philippe Hayez, 'Chapitre 6. La coopération internationale entre les services, une dimension en expansion', in *Nouvelles leçons sur le renseignement*, Hors collection (Odile Jacob, 2021), <https://www.cairn.info/nouvelles-lecons-sur-le-renseignement--9782738154569-p-171.htm>; Pepijn Tuinier et al., 'The Social Ties That Bind: Unraveling the Role of Trust in International Intelligence Cooperation', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 36, no. 2 (2023): 386–422, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2022.2079161>.

⁹ Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

¹⁰ Cousseran and Hayez, 'Chapitre 6. La coopération internationale entre les services, une dimension en expansion'.

¹¹ Olivier Chopin and Benjamin Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*, Coursus (Armand Colin, 2016).

¹² Jelle Buuren, *Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation* (2014), 80–93, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203071472-7>.

practical knowledge. In criticizing this bias, he develops the principle of practicality: a mode of action based on tacit, unarticulated knowledge acquired through experience, which allows actors to know what to do without having to refer to rules, models or theories.¹³ This means that it is no longer necessarily political decision-makers who influence reality on the ground, but rather reality on the ground that influences political decisions. Security actors, through habits and common-sense judgments based on experience, will act in a manner that is virtually indifferent to or detached from the political ideologies conveyed by discourse.

Research has also examined the bonds that intelligence agencies may hold in light of postcolonial theories. Egypt's Central Special Office is directly inspired and built around a British model¹⁴ or with General Intelligence Service (Mukhabarat), built around the CIA model, as they received help in 1952, in the coup against King Farouk.

Moreover, Bilateral relations between foreign and domestic intelligence agencies have also been the subject of extensive historical research,¹⁵ including beyond the Western world, in both wartime and peacetime, and involving allies and enemies.¹⁶ These relationships can manifest as institutional agreements based on written contracts or ad hoc contacts arising from immediate needs, personal connections, or even coincidences. Consequently, there is extensive historical evidence that intelligence services maintain significant foreign relationships.¹⁷ And yet, the Middle East suffers from a research gap, and most of the existing documents for this region lie in the memoirs of intelligence officials.¹⁸

Until now, the literature indicates that solidarity among intelligence services relies on trust¹⁹, a shared perception of a common threat, and comparative advantages²⁰. The revelations of Edward Snowden also made public that, despite a potential cooperation or even a strong relationship with trust, espionage between foreign intelligence services is common²¹. In other words, "Trust, but verify". This trust is then never absolute, but the research conducted by Pepijn Tuinier, Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, and Sebastiaan Rietjens highlights that interpersonal relationships and the perception of trust among actors are more significant than what the literature typically acknowledges. Consequently, intelligence services often cooperate without being able to calculate the risk/benefit trade-off rationally.²²

¹³ Vincent Pouliot, 'The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities', *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008): 257–88.

¹⁴ Sophia Hoffmann, 'Circulation, Not Cooperation: Towards a New Understanding of Intelligence Agencies as Transnationally Constituted Knowledge Providers', *Intelligence and National Security* 36, no. 6 (2021): 807–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2021.1938371>.

¹⁵ Wolfgang Krieger, 'German–American Intelligence Relations, 1945–1956: New Evidence on the Origins of the BND', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 22, no. 1 (2011): 28–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2011.549727>.

¹⁶ Hoffmann, 'Circulation, Not Cooperation'.

¹⁷ Hoffmann, 'Circulation, Not Cooperation'.

¹⁸ Hoffmann, 'Circulation, Not Cooperation'.

¹⁹ Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'; Tuinier et al., 'The Social Ties That Bind'.

²⁰ Cousseran and Hayez, 'Chapitre 6. La coopération internationale entre les services, une dimension en expansion'.

²¹ Chopin and Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*.

²² Tuinier et al., 'The Social Ties That Bind'.

Game theory has also been studied and applied to intelligence sharing in the context of the security dilemma.²³ In the absence of institutions or authorities capable of enacting and enforcing international law, cooperative policies, while potentially yielding mutual benefits if all parties comply, can lead to catastrophic outcomes if any actor does not comply. Given this awareness, the anarchic structure of the international system incentivizes states to adopt behaviors that ultimately leave all actors worse off than they might otherwise be. Game theory is crucial for understanding the mechanisms that encourage actors to cooperate or defect.

Clandestine diplomacy is also a concept that appears in many studies related to intelligence studies. This concept stems from the idealistic approach to intelligence. In fact, intelligence services prolong war in times of peace through secret actions and clandestine operations, defending core national interests and preparing for future war (seen by realists as inevitable). Similarly, intelligence services help maintain the conditions for a return to peace during wartime by ensuring the existence of separate channels of communication with the enemy.²⁴ Clandestine diplomacy refers to all secret interactions and negotiations conducted outside official institutions, mobilizing informal networks, implicit norms, and covert strategies to influence international relations.²⁵ It is also used to engage with a party with whom open communication is not possible, such as in negotiations with terrorist groups or with countries the government does not officially recognize, or, in any case, has not normalized relations with, or has temporarily cut off diplomatic channels in the event of potential tensions. It so happens that Egypt, through its General Intelligence Services, is accustomed to using this type of process to maintain its regional influence, but above all, its importance and pivotal role in the Palestinian issue.²⁶ It has been a long time since career diplomats have had the exclusive practice of diplomacy, but intelligence officers who act in this way are rarely studied.²⁷

Overall, the existing literature on intelligence cooperation and clandestine diplomacy provides valuable insights into the mechanisms that structure relations between intelligence services, particularly in Western and institutionalized contexts.²⁸ Most studies focus on cooperation among allied states, where formal agreements, shared legal frameworks, and institutionalized mechanisms facilitate both collaboration and scholarly investigation.²⁹ As a result, the theoretical tools developed in intelligence studies have largely been informed by empirical material drawn from European and transatlantic settings, which also creates a strong Anglo-Saxon bias.³⁰

By contrast, adversarial or semi-cooperative relationships between non-allied states remain comparatively underexplored. In regions such as the Middle East, the scarcity of accessible sources, especially on the academic level, the opacity of intelligence activities and the

²³ Jean-Claude Cousseran and Philippe Hayez, *Nouvelles leçons sur le renseignement*, Hors collection (Odile Jacob, 2021), Cairn.info, <https://www.cairn.info/nouvelles-lecons-sur-le-renseignement--9782738154569.htm>; Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

²⁴ Chopin and Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*.

²⁵ W. Scott, *Institutional Theory: Contributing to a Theoretical Research Program*, 1 January 2005.

²⁶ Sarah Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates ? La gestion du « dossier palestinien » par les services de renseignement généraux égyptiens', *Négociations* (Louvain-la-Neuve) 36, no. 2 (2021): 109–27, <https://doi.org/10.3917/neg.036.0109>.

²⁷ Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates ?'

²⁸ Aldrich, 'US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'.

²⁹ Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

³⁰ Hoffmann, 'Circulation, Not Cooperation'.

predominance of informal channels of interaction have contributed to a fragmented body of research, often relying on memoirs, journalistic investigations or policy-oriented analyses rather than systematic academic studies.

The literature reviewed highlights several conceptual approaches that address different dimensions of intelligence relations, including the logic of practicality, post-colonial legacies, trust-based cooperation, game-theoretical models of information sharing, securitization processes and clandestine diplomacy. While each of these perspectives captures important aspects of intelligence interactions, none, taken in isolation, fully accounts for the complexity of intelligence cooperation in non-institutionalized and politically sensitive contexts, which is essential for understanding the behind-the-scenes relationship between Israel and Egypt on the international stage. The following section will detail further how these concepts will be articulated to explain the evolution of official and covert relations between Israel and Egypt.

Drawing on the literature reviewed above, this study adopts a composite analytical framework combining several complementary concepts in order to examine the articulation between official and clandestine relations. Securitization is used to analyze how security concerns shape official diplomatic discourse and legitimize the involvement of security actors in bilateral relations.³¹ The notion of clandestine diplomacy provides a lens through which to examine informal and covert channels of interaction operating alongside formal diplomacy.³² The concept of trust is mobilized to capture the conditions under which cooperation between intelligence services becomes possible despite persistent political tensions.³³ Finally, insights from practice-oriented approaches, and in particular the logic of practicality,³⁴ are used to analyze how routines, tacit knowledge and everyday practices sustain interaction beyond formal decision-making.

Rather than constituting separate explanatory models, these concepts are treated as complementary analytical lenses that illuminate different dimensions of the same relational configuration. Their articulation provides the conceptual basis for the methodological choices outlined in the following section.

Methodology

The study of intelligence cooperation and clandestine diplomacy confronts a fragmented and uneven body of academic research. While existing scholarship has extensively documented patterns of collaboration among allied states in Western and institutionalized settings, interactions between non-allied or adversarial actors remain comparatively underexplored. This imbalance is due to the covert nature of intelligence activities and the predominance of informal and non-institutionalized channels, which complicate systematic data collection and limit direct empirical observation.

In response to these structural characteristics of the research field, this study adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodological approach. This paper thus seeks to build a deeper

³¹ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

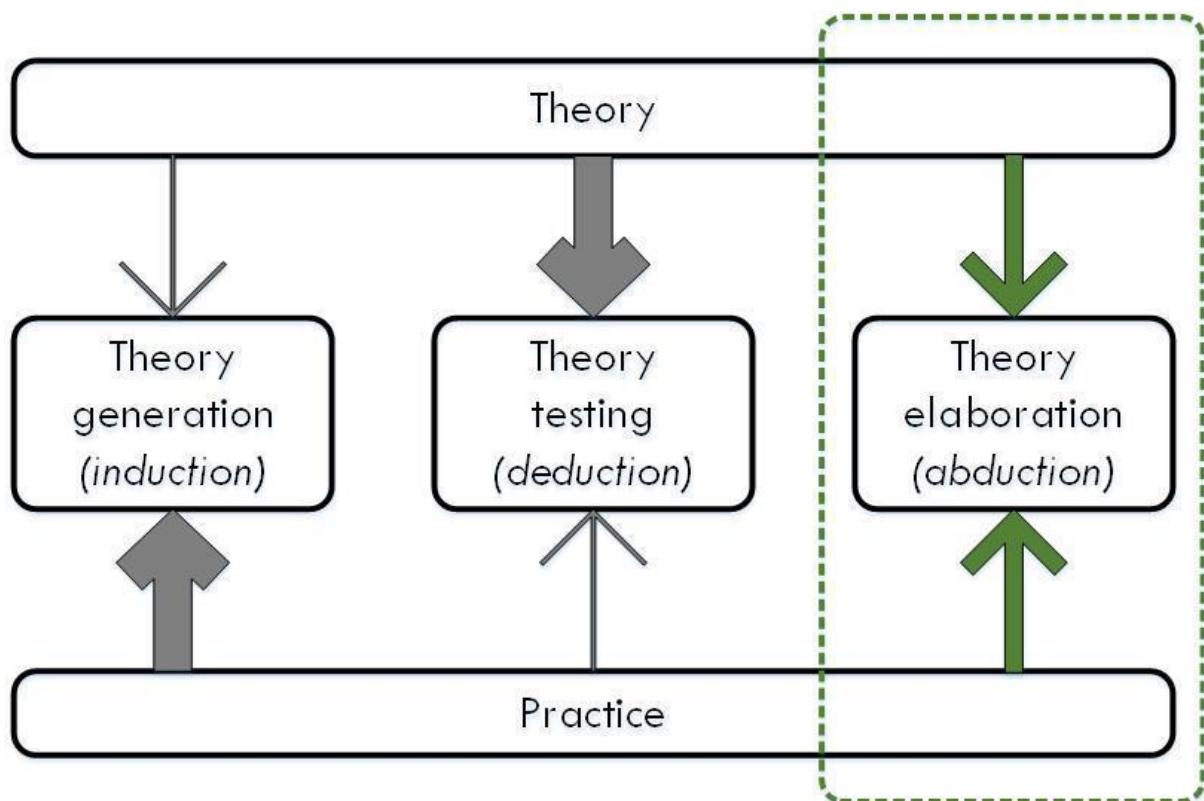
³² Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates ?'; Chopin and Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*.

³³ Tuinier et al., 'The Social Ties That Bind'.

³⁴ Pouliot, 'The Logic of Practicality'.

comprehension around the bonds linking Egypt and Israel with the help of discourses, data, and events analyses.

This research uses an abductive approach. An abductive approach is a form of reasoning that moves from the observation of a surprising or unexplained phenomenon to the formulation of a hypothesis that could account for it. It is an iterative mode of inquiry in which empirical observations and theoretical frameworks are mobilized to construct a plausible and coherent interpretation of a phenomenon. Unlike deduction, which tests and verifies theories, and induction, which seeks to construct a new theory from data, abductive reasoning moves back and forth between empirical material and existing concepts to formulate a new theory or extend an existing one.³⁵



Inductive, deductive and abductive research, and the selected approach (Adapted from Ketokivi and Choi (2014))

This approach is particularly suited to addressing this topic, given the need to draw on multiple theories from various disciplines, compounded by the lack of academic sources and relatively little raw data.

To address this challenge, data collection for this paper involves reading and gathering information from the memoirs of intelligence officials and conducting discourse analysis of political leaders. Through the study of Israeli and Egyptian discourses, it becomes possible to read hidden interests and messages relevant to understanding one's actions or inaction.

³⁵ Mikko Ketokivi and Thomas Choi, 'Renaissance of Case Research as a Scientific Method', *Journal of Operations Management* 32, no. 5 (2014): 232–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2014.03.004>.

In practical terms, abductive reasoning in this research consists of confronting empirical material, such as memoirs, official statements, declassified documents and investigative reporting, with concepts drawn from the literature, including practicality, trust, securitization and clandestine diplomacy. These concepts are not applied mechanically but used as sensitizing tools that guide interpretation while remaining open to revision in light of the empirical evidence.

The case of Israeli-Egyptian relations constitutes a particularly relevant empirical setting for the study of the articulation between official and covert relations between non-allied. Characterized by a formal peace agreement alongside persistent political tensions and limited diplomatic normalization, this case combines elements of institutionalized diplomacy, security cooperation and informal interaction. It therefore provides a valuable opportunity to explore how intelligence services contribute to sustaining, shaping, or compensating for diplomatic relations in contexts marked by both cooperation and rivalry.

The analysis adopts a diachronic perspective, focusing on the evolution of both official diplomatic exchanges and clandestine interactions rather than on isolated events. This temporal approach enables tracing shifts in practices, degrees of cooperation, and patterns of trust, and examining how these dynamics evolve in response to broader political, regional, and security developments. These patterns can then be used to understand interactions among Middle Eastern countries better.

To examine the articulation between official and clandestine relations, this study adopts an analytical strategy structured around distinct yet interconnected dimensions of interaction. Each dimension mobilizes specific empirical materials and analytical methods, reflecting the subject's multidisciplinary nature.

First, official diplomatic relations are analyzed through qualitative discourse analysis of public statements and speeches delivered by political leaders and senior officials. This material enables examination of how bilateral relations are framed, justified, and securitized in official discourse, and of shifts in tone, priorities, and representations over time.

Second, economic relations are examined using a combination of available quantitative data and qualitative sources. Given the limited availability of comprehensive, transparent financial data in specific sectors, this analysis relies on publicly available datasets complemented by secondary sources, including expert reports and sector-specific analyses. This triangulated approach allows for the identification of broader trends while mitigating gaps in official statistics.

Third, clandestine interactions and intelligence-related practices are analyzed through an interpretation of the interactions between Israel and Egypt during two major crises of the 21st-century Middle East: the Arab Spring and the 2014 Gaza War. The material used for this analysis will consist of memoirs, investigative journalism, and declassified documents. Rather than focusing on isolated events, this dimension seeks to reconstruct patterns of interaction, informal channels of communication and practices of cooperation that operate alongside, or in place of, formal diplomatic exchanges.

Finally, the chapter on the evolution of relations since October 2023 will draw on concepts from previous chapters, combining economic, discursive, and cooperative perspectives to

understand better the current nature of the Egypt-Israel relationship in light of unfolding events.

Analysis

Case description

A brief history of Egyptian-Israeli relations

While not all can be explained by the Cold War, understanding its dynamics is crucial. Egyptian presidents exploited USSR/US rivalry for regional and domestic gains, while superpowers used regional issues to expand influence. These factors significantly impacted Israel-Egypt clashes and actors' policy shifts.

Nasser was aware of the Egyptian army's problems since he had fought in it during the 1948 war. When he came into power in 1953, he understood it had to be modernized. He aimed to sign contracts for new equipment to meet Egypt's ambitions and sought new military and economic partners due to his hostility toward the West. On 27 September 1955, he announced an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. This agreement marks the beginning of Egypt's dependence on Soviet weaponry. By doing so, Nasser opened the door to Soviet influence in the Middle East, the enemy of the West that it had sought to prevent from entering the region.³⁶ Nevertheless, Israel itself had already been sourcing weapons from Czechoslovakia since 1948, following the refusal of the major Western powers to supply arms to what would become the State of Israel. This deal significantly enhanced Egypt's military capabilities, which deeply worried Israel, while simultaneously increasing Nasser's prestige.³⁷ This bolstered his authority both in Egypt and as a prominent figure in the Arab world.

For its part, Israel had started to build an army based on quality rather than quantity, designed to act as a deterrent to protect itself from the often existential threats that remained at each of its borders. To this end, the Israelis invested a huge portion of their GDP in creating or acquiring military technologies that surpassed those of their enemies and implemented a mandatory national service with a high proportion of reserve force.³⁸ It is in this deterrence strategy that Israel worked to acquire the nuclear monopoly of the Middle East.

Before the outbreak of what is now known as the Six-Day War, Egypt had been steadily supplied with weaponry by the USSR for approximately 10 years, and its army had significantly increased in both quality and size. On paper, Egyptian forces enjoyed considerable superiority over Israel, to the point where the military and political Egyptian leadership was confident in victory against Israel.³⁹ Nevertheless, Israel enjoyed a decisive

³⁶ Anne-Claire de Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate', *Histoire, Stratégique* 103, no. 2 (2013): 42, 2, <https://doi.org/10.3917/strat.103.0037>.

³⁷ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'.

³⁸ David E. Johnson et al., 'Israel', in *Preparing and Training for the Full Spectrum of Military Challenges*, 1st edn, Insights from the Experiences of China, France, the United Kingdom, India, and Israel (RAND Corporation, 2009), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg836osd.14>.

³⁹ Risa Brooks, 'Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment', in *Shaping Strategy* (Princeton University Press, 2018), <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9780691188287/html>.

qualitative advantage in technologies, economics, military, and political training.⁴⁰ In the context of the Cold War, all actors expected the conflict to be short. Israelis, thanks to access to American intelligence, were aware of the weaknesses of the Egyptian Army. Nasser himself ignored it, as he was blinded by his overconfident generals and by the USSR's views on Egypt's capabilities. For their part, therefore, Egyptians were overly confident, and, even though they expected to only be able to fight for two weeks, thought it was more than enough, especially in the context of the Cold War, where both superpowers would eventually impose a ceasefire.⁴¹ Moreover, Israel's small size also encouraged the Israeli military to quickly end wars, in the hope of limiting the damage done to its relatively small force and population.⁴²

The Egyptian army emerged from the 1967 war decisively defeated, humiliated, and in ruins, necessitating a complete reconstruction. To achieve this, Nasser once again turned to the Soviet Union,⁴³ his Eastern partner. While this reliance on the USSR contradicted his professed doctrine of non-alignment, Egypt's dependence on Soviet military support became absolute.⁴⁴ The urgent need for advanced weaponry, driven by the Egyptian leadership's determination to avenge their defeat and prepare for a future conflict,⁴⁵ left Nasser with little alternative but to deepen ties with Moscow.

Upon assuming power after Gamal Abdel Nasser died, Anwar Sadat inherited the same spirit of revenge after the 1967 war. However, Sadat had grown convinced that the USSR pursued its own strategic interests rather than addressing regional issues, which he viewed as distinct from the Cold War's geopolitical rivalries.⁴⁶ Furthermore, he had long been persuaded that the United States was the only power capable of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and the broader challenges of the Middle East.⁴⁷

In addition to inheriting his predecessor's spirit of revenge, Anwar Sadat also inherited his country's culture of war. This culture of war was not a mere coincidence or a popular choice. It reflected the political weight of the military in the governance of the country. Under Nasser's rule, the proportion of military personnel in the Egyptian government ranged from 36.4% to 52.5%⁴⁸, decisively influencing how governments allocated budgets and perceived priorities. At the height of its war effort, Egypt allocated nearly 30% of its GNP to military

⁴⁰ Paul C. Avey, 'Egypt versus Israel', in *Tempting Fate, Why Nonnuclear States Confront Nuclear Opponents* (Cornell University Press, 2019), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv310vkkv.7>.

⁴¹ Brooks, 'Shaping Strategy'.

⁴² Johnson et al., 'Israel'.

⁴³ Sarah Boudissa, 'Étouffer ou étendre l'influence. Les fournitures d'armes américaines dans la politique proche-orientale de l'Égypte de Sadate', *Science Politique, Stratégique* 118, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3917/strat.118.0155>; Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'.

⁴⁴ Boudissa, 'Étouffer ou étendre l'influence. Les fournitures d'armes américaines dans la politique proche-orientale de l'Égypte de Sadate', 156.

⁴⁵ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate', 45.

⁴⁶ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 497, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108289825>.

⁴⁷ Boudissa, 'Étouffer ou étendre l'influence. Les fournitures d'armes américaines dans la politique proche-orientale de l'Égypte de Sadate', 156.

⁴⁸ Mark N. Cooper, 'The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 2 (1982): 203–25.

spending (as well as Israel)⁴⁹. The direction of the Egyptian budget inevitably contributes to shaping a culture of war.⁵⁰ Upon coming to power, Sadat significantly reduced the influence of the military in government policy by reducing their numbers and therefore reducing the government's will to increase war spending.

One cannot discuss the history of relations between Egypt and Israel without mentioning the 1973 war, also known as the Yom Kippur War. This war was motivated not only by a desire for revenge and to regain lost honor, as I mentioned above, but also by a deeper desire to effect change and initiate a peace process.⁵¹ The combination of the two may seem surprising, as it is not common to seek to initiate peace through war, but Sadat had two main reasons for initiating that war despite wanting peace: he feared that he would not be taken seriously by the international community, and he feared that the same international community would become accustomed to Israel's territorial gains after the Six-Day War.⁵² Moreover, Egypt knew it couldn't erase Israel from the map anymore: Israel already possessed nuclear weapons.⁵³ The aim of this war was therefore to bring the Israeli-Arab conflict back to the forefront of international affairs and to force the United States to engage in a peace process between Egypt and Israel.⁵⁴

David Camp Accords

The Camp David Accords were not signed in one go. In reality, these agreements were the result of a long process of closed-door negotiations that began at the end of the October War. More specifically, the Geneva Conference in December 1973 brought together Israelis and Egyptians for the first time (it may also be worth noting the presence of the Soviets and Jordanians at this conference)⁵⁵. It was there that the decision was made to resolve the conflict in accordance with the 'small steps' policy initiated by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.⁵⁶ The Camp David Accords were therefore only the final stage (not forgetting the signing of the peace agreements in Washington in 1979, one year after the Camp David Accords).

This did not occur without resistance within the Egyptian military; each step provoked internal discord, culminating in a mutiny in central Cairo in 1974. Nevertheless, due to Sadat's policy of rapprochement with the West, war with Israel became impossible in 1977, when the Israeli army reached 160% of its pre-1973 strength, while the power of the Egyptian army had declined by 90%⁵⁷ due to a lack of military parts and equipment that had previously been

⁴⁹ 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade: In-Depth Analysis', accessed 24 October 2025,

<https://institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/israeli-egyptian-trade-depth-analysis>.

⁵⁰ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'.

⁵¹ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'; Ephraim Dowek, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*, 0 edn (Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315038841>.

⁵² Dowek, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*.

⁵³ Avey, 'Egypt versus Israel'.

⁵⁴ Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁵⁵ E. C. F. Database, 'Geneva Peace Conference (1973)', accessed 7 November 2025, <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/198>.

⁵⁶ Boudissa, 'Étouffer ou étendre l'influence. Les fournitures d'armes américaines dans la politique proche-orientale de l'Égypte de Sadate'.

⁵⁷ Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

imported from the USSR. There have also been persistent disagreements between Egypt and Israel throughout the process. There were disagreements over the terms of the negotiations, as well as an interruption in talks in 1975,⁵⁸ between the 1974 Disengagement Agreements and the Sinai II Agreements in 1975. All this despite both sides' willingness to reach a solution.

Before establishing official relations, Egypt and Israel already maintained channels of communication through intelligence officers, who were later involved in the peace process itself. This is logical, as it refers to the idealist approach to intelligence activities: in wartime, intelligence agencies ensure a separate (from politics) channel of communication with the enemy.⁵⁹ Moreover, without official recognition between the two entities, formal dialogue cannot occur; this is usually why such secret negotiations are conducted with the assistance of intelligence services. When political or legal reasons prevent official dialogue, intelligence services develop what is known as "clandestine" or "parallel" diplomacy.⁶⁰ The secrecy surrounding intelligence services' activities enables states to engage with actors they cannot officially meet.⁶¹ Despite career diplomats having long lost their exclusive diplomatic role, the role of intelligence officers in diplomacy is rarely studied.⁶²

From the outset, these implications for intelligence officers reveal that, even without normalized relations or the establishment of embassies on either side of the border, Egyptians and Israelis maintained parallel channels of communication.⁶³ This stems from an idealistic understanding of what an intelligence service is. For idealists, peace is a temporary state between two wars. War is regarded as a surmountable reality (as opposed to realists, who regard it as inevitable). Intelligence operates between these two periods: in peacetime, it continues the war through covert and clandestine operations and prepares for future wars; in wartime, it maintains the conditions for a return to peace by ensuring separate communication channels with the enemy.⁶⁴

This scenario is omnipresent in discussions surrounding the Palestinian issue. This is particularly true of the discord within Palestinian politics, with the political division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but also externally, with the indirect negotiations between Hamas and Israel.

Although the Egyptian population was not in favor of signing this treaty, foreign policy was not the top priority for Egyptians, who had to contend with sometimes difficult economic and social realities,⁶⁵ and had very little say in their country's policies. Egyptians did not

⁵⁸ '73: Statement in the Knesset by Prime Minister Rabin on Suspension of Talks with Egypt and Knesset Resolution Ministry of Foreign Affairs', accessed 11 November 2025, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/73-statement-in-the-knesset-by-pm-rabin-24-march-1975>.

⁵⁹ Chopin and Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*.

⁶⁰ Len Scott, 'Secret Intelligence, Covert Action and Clandestine Diplomacy', *Intelligence and National Security* 19, no. 2 (2004): 322–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268452042000302029>.

⁶¹ Cousseran and Hayez, 'Chapitre 6. La coopération internationale entre les services, une dimension en expansion'; Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates ?'

⁶² Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates ?'

⁶³ 'CRS: Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, August 12, 2008 - WikiLeaks', accessed 27 November 2025, <https://wikileaks.org/wiki/CRS-RL33003>.

⁶⁴ Chopin and Oudet, *Renseignement et sécurité*.

⁶⁵ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'.

massively revolt against the peace deal with Israel, which shows that the culture of war under Nasser has not been totally absorbed into Egyptian society.⁶⁶

When President Carter voiced concerns to Anwar Sadat about the Treaty's unpopularity, Sadat asserted his ability to shape public opinion at will.⁶⁷ This authoritarian approach was not unique to Sadat but reflected a broader attitude within Egypt's ruling elite. As a former Egyptian prime minister confessed to Marc Lavergne, "The Egyptian people are very easy to govern. There's just one thing you mustn't do: raise the price of bread."⁶⁸ This shows how the David Camp Accords were implemented through a strictly top-down process, with popular dissent either easily suppressed or met with indifference, as the public often regarded such issues as secondary to their immediate concerns. It took years of diplomatic maneuvering before Sadat's visit to Israel even took place⁶⁹, including Sadat's effort to convince Arab leaders of the need to reach a deal with Israel,⁷⁰ which didn't work.

The peace treaty signed in 1979 between Egypt and Israel establishes a framework to guarantee security, normalize relations, and promote cooperation between the two states. On the economic front, the treaty ends economic boycotts⁷¹ and provides for the elimination of discriminatory trade barriers, as well as the opening of negotiations to conclude trade agreements. Finally, on the diplomatic front, the two countries undertake to recognize each other's sovereignty and the inviolability of their borders, to establish full diplomatic and consular relations with the exchange of ambassadors, and to cooperate in a spirit of good neighborliness. In addition, each party undertakes to ensure that no act of aggression, hostility, or violence, or any threat of the same kind, originates on its territory.⁷²

Regional backlash and Egypt's strategic recalibration

The signing of the peace treaty sparked widespread anger and frustration among Arabs and the Muslim world, revealing divisions within the Arab leadership, particularly about the Palestinian question.⁷³ Even within his own government, his prior decision to go to Jerusalem in 1977 led a few of his ministers to resign from their functions.⁷⁴ Although the signing of these agreements revealed deep divisions among Arabs and definitively buried the pan-Arab project, they also united the Arab states against Egypt.⁷⁵ Egypt was thus expelled from the

⁶⁶ Gayffier-Bonneville, 'Culture de guerre du pouvoir égyptien sous Nasser et Sadate'.

⁶⁷ Mohammed El Oifi, 'Les opinions publiques arabes comme enjeu des relations internationales', *Science Politique, Maghreb - Machrek* 204, no. 2 (2010): 112, <https://doi.org/10.3917/machr.204.0105>.

⁶⁸ Marc Lavergne, 'Un bilan amer pour l'Égypte : quarante ans de croissance rentière, au prix de la désagrégation sociale et de la dépendance extérieure', *Économie, Hérodote* 160161, no. 1 (2016): 97–122, <https://doi.org/10.3917/her.160.0097>.

⁶⁹ Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷⁰ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108289825>.

⁷¹ 'The Avalon Project : Camp David Accords; September 17, 1978', accessed 28 December 2025, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/campdav.asp.

⁷² 'Volume-1138-I-17855-French.Pdf', n.d., accessed 28 December 2025, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201138/volume-1138-I-17855-French.pdf>.

⁷³ Abbas Amanat, 'The Global Islamic Revolution', in *Revolutionary World*, 1st edn, ed. David Motadel (Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108182409.009>.

⁷⁴ Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷⁵ Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 501.

Arab League, whose capital had previously been Cairo and which Egypt had led until then. This backlash marked a decisive break with the pan-Arab project that had dominated Middle Eastern politics in previous decades.

This disillusionment with the dream of Arab unity prompted those who felt let down to seek an alternative, notably through political Islam, which successfully reached power in Iran. It was during this decade that movements such as Hezbollah and Hamas gained popularity, motivated by this Islamic success in Iran, and deceived by Arab nationalism.

By the end of the 80s, President Saddam Hussein, who hosted the summit in Baghdad that led to Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League for its peace treaty with Israel, praised Sadat for military assistance and paved the way back into the Arab fold, despite Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. By the end of the 80s, Egypt had already regained an important role in the Arab World, and in May 1989, it was de facto reintegrated into the Arab League, as it actively participated in the Arab summit in Casablanca.⁷⁶

It was under Mubarak's Egypt that the Egyptian government took a less 'peaceful' stance towards Israel, but a more moderate one, resuming relations with Arab states without jeopardizing peace with Israel or the economic and military advantages provided by the United States.⁷⁷

Official relations

This section examines the official dimension of Egyptian-Israeli relations since the Camp David Accords. By combining political discourse analysis and economic indicators, it aims to assess whether formal normalization has translated into substantive bilateral cooperation. Given that there is no single measure of friendship or good relations in international relations, this section draws on multiple disciplines and indicators from different fields to assess the nature of relations between Israel and Egypt. These parameters will be divided into two different kinds: political and economic.

When two countries have poor diplomatic relations, their economic exchanges tend to decline. This can result in economic sanctions, reduced investment, or even barriers to investment and tariffs. A striking example of this phenomenon is the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States on Iran following the hostage-taking of American diplomats in Tehran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, this is not an absolute rule, as there are also counterexamples, such as the significant economic relations between the US and China despite their fierce opposition over the Taiwanese case and their industrial and technological competition.

The United States and China maintain major official economic relations. In other cases, such as Turkey and Israel since 2024, economic ties exist but are not official and are even publicly

⁷⁶ Efraim Karsh, 'Cold War, Post-Cold War: Does It Make a Difference for the Middle East?', *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 3 (1997): 271–91.

⁷⁷ Alsajdeya, 'Retour sur vingt-cinq ans de relations incertaines entre Israéliens, Egyptiens et Palestiniens'.

⁷⁸ 'Iran Sanctions', *United States Department of State*, n.d., accessed 9 December 2025, <https://www.state.gov/iran-sanctions/>.

denied to adhere to the country's political narrative.⁷⁹ It is difficult to completely prevent trade between two countries in a globalized world. There are many tactics to circumvent a trade embargo, such as trading through third countries (e.g., Turkey and Israel) or smuggling (e.g., Egypt and the Gaza Strip).

The political parameter will consist mainly of an analysis of the discourse of Egyptian and Israeli leaders during key moments in Middle Eastern history. I will provide further details on these moments below.

The economic parameters will primarily draw on available quantitative data on trade between Egypt and Israel and analyze them in the context of parallel events. For example, is the improvement in economic relations attributable to a better entente between the two countries, or to major events in the region or globally that leave Israel and Egypt with no alternative but to increase their trade temporarily?

Political Indicators: Public Discourse and the Framing of Bilateral Relations

So far, we have examined the historical animosity between Israel and Egypt in the historical overview and the shift toward a peace treaty from the end of the Yom Kippur War to its signing in 1979. In this section, we examine how the framing of one another in public discourse has evolved, as presented by the leaders of each country at key moments for the region.

The Egyptian presidency and the Israeli prime minister embody these positions. Regarding the selection of speeches, I have chosen three speeches from each leader (the Egyptian president and the Israeli prime minister) at key moments in the Middle East. These are pivotal moments that had a decisive impact on the region. In such times, these speeches will reveal how Egyptians and Israelis publicly refer to one another. What vocabulary do they use? What does this reveal about their relationship? But also, what do they refuse to say about each other? Above all, how have the answers to all these questions evolved over the years and through regional crises? The goal is to observe and understand how these crises influence, or do not influence, their public depiction of one another over the years.

I will analyze the speeches made by the leaders in power at the end of the 1973 war, since we have seen above that it was this war that completely changed the way Egypt interacts with Israel. It will therefore be interesting to see whether this can already be discerned in the post-war speeches.

I will then examine the discourse following the Oslo Accords (2), since the Palestinian question remains a defining issue in international relations in the Middle East.⁸⁰ It is therefore important to examine what Egypt has said publicly about these agreements and to assess what

⁷⁹ In May 2024, Turkey halted all direct trade bilateral trade with Israel due to the numbers of Palestinian deaths in the Gaza strip since the 7th October 2023, see more in Turkish Minute, 'Turkey Was the 5th Largest Exporter to Israel in 2024 despite Trade Ban: UN Data', *Turkish Minute*, 23 May 2025, <https://turkishminute.com/2025/05/23/turkey-was-the-5th-largest-exporter-to-israel-in-2024-despite-trade-ban-un-data/>.

⁸⁰ Nassif Hitti, 'La question palestinienne : une question résoluble mais un conflit structurant', *Science Politique, Les Cahiers de l'Orient* 96, no. 4 (2009): 37–47, <https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdlo.096.0037>.

Israel says about the players in the region. Is there any implicit or explicit positive mention of Egypt?

Next, I will examine the statements made by leaders during the Sinai Insurrection to see what they each say about the insecurity caused by terrorist movements operating in the Sinai Peninsula. These groups in Sinai threaten Egyptian security as much as they threaten Israeli security. They are outraged that a solution for the Palestinians has not been found and blame this on the non-Islamic nature of the situation. They believe that to defeat Israel, they must first defeat the Egyptian government.⁸¹ It is therefore a helpful way to gauge the extent to which the two states can cooperate officially on Islamic terrorism, which threatens their respective security.

Then, the period of 2013, following the arrival in power in Egypt of a president close to the Muslim Brotherhood (later considered a terrorist organization by Egypt itself)⁸² is interesting because it could change everything in the agreements between Israel and Egypt, since the alignment of the Muslim Brotherhood would completely change the Egyptian government's relationship with the group that also claims to be part of the Muslim Brotherhood and which rules the Gaza Strip: Hamas.⁸³

Egyptian discourse

Sadat's discourse after the Jerusalem trip, 1977.

First, Sadat reaffirms Egypt's importance in the fight against barbarism and injustice worldwide and underscores how much Egyptians bear (almost single-handedly) the burden of the Arab nation.

*"[Egyptians] protect the lives of these children against the treachery of those who would trade in sufferings."*⁸⁴

*"What can I say to a people who carried the burden of the entire Arab nation stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Gulf; the heaviest of burdens of self-effacement and altruism, to the point of privation from food."*⁸⁵

He elucidates that this journey to Jerusalem stands as a direct consequence of the October War, framing the conflict as a pivotal struggle for both the broader Arab nation and, more specifically, the Palestinian people. According to his narrative, the war purportedly catalyzed the recognition of Palestinian rights. Throughout his address to the assembly, he consistently underscores a fundamental principle: no lasting peace can be achieved between any Arab state

⁸¹ International Crisis Group, *Les Sunnites Sur Le Sentier De La Guerre: Djihad*, COMPRENDRE L'ISLAMISME (International Crisis Group, 2005), Page 15-Page 18, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43607.8>.

⁸² Moneef R. Zou'bi et al., *États Arabes*, RAPPORT DE L'UNESCO SUR LA SCIENCE (UNESCO, 2016), 431–69, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep65154.25>.

⁸³ Noor-ul-Ain Khawaja, 'Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis: From Nasser to Morsi', *Pakistan Horizon* 66, no. 1/2 (2013): 43–63.

⁸⁴ 'President Sadat Speech to the People's Assembly.Compressed.Pdf', n.d., accessed 9 December 2025, <https://sadat.umd.edu/sites/sadat.umd.edu/files/President%20Sadat%20Speech%20to%20the%20People%20%80%99s%20Assembly.compressed.pdf>.

⁸⁵ 'President Sadat Speech to the People's Assembly.Compressed.Pdf'.

and Israel without the explicit acknowledgment of Palestinian rights and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

“No peace will ever be established or maintained as long as the land of others is occupied, and no peace will ever be achieved without the Palestinians and the recognition of their right to establish and return to their own state.”⁸⁶

“The most important point that is clear to every Israeli now, is the right of the Palestinian people to establish their state on their land.”⁸⁷

“Today Syria is inciting the Palestinians as usual; although you have heard me say it here, and I even told the Knesset and the Israeli people, that even if peace treaties were signed between Israel and each of the confrontation nations, without the solution of the Palestine problem, there can be no peace.”⁸⁸

He then clearly explains the reasons for his travel to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. He explains that Israelis lack trust in the Arab nation, and he goes there to demonstrate good faith, to “break down the barriers of doubt, mistrust and fear”.⁸⁹

He explains the 1973 war, justifying sacrifices for a greater good. He tells Egyptians they had no choice as the world ignored Egypt's peace calls and emphasizes regaining lost honor after the humiliating Six-Day War.

It seems clear that if Sadat feels compelled to explain his choices, from the October War to his visit to Jerusalem four years later, it is because he is, in fact, justifying himself to his people and to the Arabs, while trying to convince the Israelis and the international community of his good faith. He wants to limit the damage this historical move may cause to his influence and relationship with the Arabs, and maximize the effects his actions may have on the West.

In this speech to the assembly, Israel is first defined as ‘those who would trade in suffering’, but also, without saying so, as invaders, since he repeatedly refers to ‘liberating’ the land, whether it be the Sinai or the Palestinian territories. Moreover, he does not mention Israel until halfway through his speech, or else the closest he comes to Israel is when he mentions that he has ‘addressed the Knesset’. Actually, the first part of the speech prepares the audience to hear the word 'Israel. Mentioning Israel is taboo. Even though he undertook one of the most peaceful and historic initiatives, his choice of words toward Israel remains far from conciliatory. He refers to Israel as follows:

“I would like you to know, that the Israeli commander whom I met in Jerusalem expressed to me, with the full military respect due from one military to another, their high esteem for the performance and magnificent capabilities of our heroes. It is a testimony by an adversary, and it is the right of our sons in the Egyptian Armed Forces to know it.”⁹⁰

In 1977, there was no normalization between the two countries, and no other Arab nation had normalized relations with Israel. Therefore, he likely avoided mentioning the most unpopular

⁸⁶ ‘President Sadat Speech to the People’s Assembly.Compressed.Pdf’.

⁸⁷ ‘President Sadat Speech to the People’s Assembly.Compressed.Pdf’.

⁸⁸ ‘President Sadat Speech to the People’s Assembly.Compressed.Pdf’.

⁸⁹ ‘President Sadat Speech to the People’s Assembly.Compressed.Pdf’.

⁹⁰ ‘President Sadat Speech to the People’s Assembly.Compressed.Pdf’.

Middle Eastern state at the start of his speech. At the 1973 Geneva Conference, which ended the conflict and first brought Israelis and Egyptians together, he didn't mention Israel but did mention US President Carter. He said: "We have adopted our policy of extending the hand of friendship, cooperation and peace to all countries of the world, [...]" referring to rapprochement with Israel under US auspices. However, he later explicitly mentions Israel multiple times speech.

This speech marks a clear transition in how Israel is perceived, named, and engaged with. This transition in tone from hostile to peaceful reflects the history of interactions between Egypt and Israel. In this speech, Sadat is unequivocal: He wants peace. He is making the idea palatable to Arabs who are not yet ready to follow suit.

Speech of Mubarak on the 28th September 1995. Address at the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Signing Ceremony.

In this speech delivered at the White House to a relatively small audience composed of diplomatic delegations representing the negotiating and mediating parties, Israel is much easier to name than in 1977. This phenomenon could be attributed to two primary factors: First, Mubarak is not addressing the same audience as Sadat did after his trip to Jerusalem. Second, it is not the same period either. In 1977, Egypt was alone on the path to normalization with Israel, doing what no other Arab country had yet dared to do. In 1995, Jordan had already joined the process a year earlier.

Mubarak begins his speech by referring directly to the agreements signed between Israel and Egypt, stating that these agreements paved the way for peace in the region and calling peace a "noble cause".

"The signing of this elaborate agreement testifies to the strength of the new spirit which has emerged in our region since we started the peace process years ago.

It reflects the firm commitment of both Arabs and Israelis to a noble cause ..."⁹¹

Linking the Camp David Accords to a noble cause is a clear sign that Egypt has no intention of changing its stance on the matter. Furthermore, by calling it 'a noble cause,' Egypt helps remove the stigma from normalization and peace with Israel in the eyes of other Arab countries that have not yet pursued such steps.

Mubarak addresses the assembly with the words 'Dear friends.' This is entirely unprecedented that in a public speech, an Egyptian president would address a crowd including Israelis and call them 'friends'. At the very least, this signals trust and camaraderie, at least on an interpersonal level.

In this brief speech, Mubarak reaffirms his support for the Palestinian cause. He states that while this is progress, it is not a definitive solution; there is still much work to be done, and this must be kept in mind.

⁹¹ 'President Hosni Mubarak - Speech at the Oslo 2 Accord Signing Ceremony (Transcript Audio Video)', accessed 8 November 2025, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/OsloII/hosnimubarakosloII.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

*“On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the fact that what has been accomplished on the Palestinian front does not constitute a final settlement. It is still, nevertheless, an important step that is definitely going to make that goal easier to reach.”*⁹²

Mubarak even invites Israel, Lebanon, and Syria to also commit to peace, explaining that otherwise the mission of peace-building cannot be accomplished. Of course, this call for peace is not just for the sake of silencing the guns. It is also, and above all, a way to reclaim and expand the regional influence Egypt once held. If other Arab states follow suit, Egypt will be regarded as a pioneer in the Arab world.

Finally, he concludes on an optimistic note, speaking in terms of ‘we’, effectively placing Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, and Egyptians (and even if they are not explicitly named, he also includes Jordanians, since they were present in the room)⁹³ on the same side, the side that promotes peace in the region.

This speech demonstrates greater closeness than Sadat’s 1977 address. However, this displayed rapprochement with Israel does not alter Egypt’s core objectives, and recurring themes remain clear: reaffirming Egypt’s loyalty to the Palestinian cause and its desire to restore Egypt’s image as a powerful and courageous leader rather than a traitor to the Arab nation.

Egyptian President-elect Mohamed Morsi’s speech on 24th June 2012

In this speech, newly elected President Morsi addresses his people. He begins with a verse from the Quran, and religious references are found throughout his speech. One senses that this speech is marked by a need to legitimize himself by invoking the democratic process that brought him to power following the 2011 elections.

A brief passage where he discusses intelligence services and the diplomatic corps is particularly interesting.

*“I can never forget the people who work in the diplomatic corps and the workers in the General Intelligence Service and those who maintain the security of the homeland against its enemies wherever they are. I cannot forget all of them.”*⁹⁴

First, placing the diplomatic corps alongside Egypt’s General Intelligence Services is not innocent. It is particularly noteworthy in the context of covert diplomacy, an area in which Egypt, through its intelligence services, is highly effective. Secondly, publicly acknowledging their role signals that their position is not being questioned. It assures that they can continue to perform their functions of covert diplomats as before, thus ensuring continuity in the networks previously established between Egyptian and Israeli intelligence services, as well as with Palestinian factions.

⁹² ‘President Hosni Mubarak - Speech at the Oslo 2 Accord Signing Ceremony (Transcript Audio Video)’.

⁹³ E. C. F. Database, ‘Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement (Oslo II, 1995)’, accessed 14 November 2025, <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/818>.

⁹⁴ Misrmonitor, ‘Thawra Thoughts: English Translation: Egyptian President-Elect Mohamed Morsi’s Speech’, *Thawra Thoughts*, 24 June 2012, <https://thawrathoughts.blogspot.com/2012/06/english-translation-egyptian-president.html>.

In this speech, a paragraph is devoted to the ‘message of peace from the Egyptian people’, assuring that Egypt will uphold the international charters, conventions, and commitments it has signed. He also assures that he wants to maintain balanced relations with all powers. This time, it is aimed primarily at Iran, with which ties were severed after the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1979. He is the first Egyptian leader to make an official visit to Iran in 30 years.⁹⁵

“We came to the world with a message of peace. We will maintain international charters and conventions and the commitments and agreements Egypt has signed with the world. We will also work to make the Egyptian system of ethics, and its civilizational identity, in addition to human values particularly in freedoms, respect for human rights, maintaining rights of women and children and abrogating all sorts of discrimination. We will establish, God willing, balanced relations with all world powers, we will establish balanced relations between us and other world countries based on common interests and mutual respect and benefits to all sides.”⁹⁶

As with the two previously analyzed speeches, Morsi continues to convey his message of peace. However, for the first time, and somewhat paradoxically for a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, he does not explicitly refer to the Palestinians or the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, he asserts Egypt’s commitment to an ethical framework that places human rights at the center of its policies. Given that this paragraph addresses foreign policy, it is reasonable to presume that this is a subtle and somewhat shy way of reaffirming Egypt’s loyalty to the Palestinian cause.

We can thus trace a remarkable change in the way Egyptian presidents publicly refer to Israel. In 1977, when trust was beginning to develop between the two countries following the successive disengagement agreements of 1974 and 1975, the president barely dared to mention Israel, still referring to it in the old rhetorical manner as an adversary. This was no longer the case in 1995, when President Mubarak spoke of Israel as being in the same camp as Egypt. Nevertheless, there was a slight reversal in Egyptian political discourse after the rise to power of Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi. In fact, he was cautious in his speeches not to speak ill of Israel or the Jews. He even stated that he wanted to maintain existing treaties and agreements, without specifying with whom, but it is clear that this mainly referred to the peace with Israel. Nevertheless, Morsi’s purely anti-Semitic remarks before he came to power, in which he compared Jews to “monkeys and pigs,”⁹⁷ should be taken into consideration. That said, despite his personal hostility toward Jews and Israel, Morsi’s foreign policy toward Israel does not appear to deviate from that of his predecessor, Mubarak, which stayed on the path paved by Sadat in the 70s.

⁹⁵ Khawaja, ‘Egypt’s Foreign Policy Analysis’.

⁹⁶ Misrmonitor, ‘Thawra Thoughts’.

⁹⁷ Richard Behar, ‘There He Goes Again: Egypt’s Morsi Stuns U.S. Senators In Meeting With “Jews-Control-Media” Slur’, Forbes, accessed 17 November 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardbehar/2013/01/25/there-he-goes-again-egypts-morsi-stuns-u-s-senators-in-meeting-with-jews-control-media-slur/>; Glen Segell, ‘Mohamed Morsi, Egypt and Israel’, *E-International Relations*, 12 December 2013, <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/12/12/president-morsi-egypt-and-israel/>.

Israeli discourse

Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Menahem Begin on 21 November 1977.

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin delivered this speech on the day Sadat came to address the Knesset to call for an end to the war and the occupation of the Sinai Peninsula and the Palestinian territories, and for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

In the first few paragraphs, he presents Israel as actively seeking peace, using the active voice.

*"We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish People settled in its Land."*⁹⁸

Throughout the text, he also emphasizes that the roots of the Jewish people lie in the land of Israel and that the Jewish people have an undeniable historical right to this land, one that cannot be called into question. And that this right has been recognized by the world, and in a sense, Arab countries should also accept it.

*"No, sir, we took no foreign land. We returned to our Homeland. The bond between our People and this Land is eternal. It was created at the dawn of human history."*⁹⁹

*"This, our right, has been recognized. The Balfour Declaration was included in the Mandate which was recognized by the nations of the world, including the United States of America."*¹⁰⁰

*"Whereas recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish People with Palestine (or, in Hebrew, 'Eretz Israel') and to the grounds for reconstituting their National Home in that country (that is, in 'Eretz Israel')..."*¹⁰¹

Whereas when he speaks of conflict and war, he portrays Israel as suffering from the war and, this time, uses the passive voice.

*"One day after the declaration of our independence, an attempt was made to strangle it with enmity, and to extinguish the last hope of the Jewish People in the generation of Holocaust and Resurrection"*¹⁰²

The speech also includes references to the Holocaust, using this event to convey the following message: 'The Jewish people are a people of survivors, ready to fight for their existence' and 'They have had enough of bloodshed, they want peace'.¹⁰³

Peace is the central theme of this speech; it recurs throughout and culminates in an invitation to neighboring states to follow the Egyptians' example.

Towards the end of his speech, the Israeli Prime Minister urged Arab states not to exclude anything from the negotiations, insisting that everything was negotiable. Nevertheless, it is

⁹⁸ 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)', accessed 14 November 2025, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/prime-minister-begin-speech-to-knesset-following-historic-speech-by-anwar-sadat-november-1977>.

⁹⁹ 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)'.

¹⁰⁰ 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)'.

¹⁰¹ 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)'.

¹⁰² 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)'.

¹⁰³ 'Prime Minister Begin Speech to Knesset Following Historic Speech by Anwar Sadat (November 1977)'.

interesting to note that Sadat came to ask, among his demands, for the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. At the same time, Begin repeatedly used the notion of 'Eretz Israel', which *de facto* includes the Palestinian territories, as if there were no intention to negotiate this matter. In fact, Menahem Begin was part of the Likud party, known for its purpose to maximize Israeli territory and allow up to 100.000 Israelis to settle in the occupied territories.¹⁰⁴ Despite the rapprochement between Egypt and Israel, there are apparent disagreements, particularly regarding the Palestinian matter.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; Address at the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement Signing Ceremony, on the 28th September 1995.

This speech concludes the ceremony for the signing of the Oslo II Accords. It brings together the heads of state of Jordan, Egypt, the United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and Israel.

The Israeli Prime Minister reaffirms the historical right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. That, in a way, they are not going anywhere, like the Palestinians, so peace will have to be built together. Nevertheless, he does not mention the creation of a Palestinian state *per se*, but says '[...] we want you as good neighbors,' creating a kind of ambiguity.

Just as his counterpart, Begin, did in 1977, he took the opportunity to reach out to Syria and Lebanon to normalize relations. Reaffirming Israel's desire to continue its integration into the region.

Unlike Begin, his speech makes no mention of Eretz Israel, and the Prime Minister's stance toward the Palestinians seems much warmer than before, to the point where Rabin says, "we want you [Palestinians] as good neighbors",¹⁰⁵ showing Rabin's more conciliatory stance than his predecessor.

This speech does not directly mention Egypt or relations with Egypt. Nevertheless, there is a fascinating passage that addresses the state of Israel's relations with Egypt (and, more recently, Jordan). Yitzhak Rabin said the following:

*"The enemies of yesterday share a common enemy of today and in the future -- the terrorism that sows death in our homes and on the buses that ply the streets."*¹⁰⁶

This passage explicitly mentions the common threat posed by terrorism to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. It highlights how the fight against terrorism has become a significant security concern in the region.¹⁰⁷ But what it does not explicitly say is how Iran is replacing Israel¹⁰⁸ as the pariah state in the area. To what extent Iran is causing concern among Arab governments,¹⁰⁹ and that Israel is emerging as the winner from this security shift. When Arab countries used to direct their defense capabilities toward a potential conflict with Israel, those resources are

¹⁰⁴ Karsh, 'Cold War, Post-Cold War'.

¹⁰⁵ 'Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin - Speech at Oslo 2 Accord Signing Ceremony (Transcript-Audio-Video)', accessed 12 November 2025, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/OsloII/yitzhakrabinosloII.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹⁰⁶ 'Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin - Speech at Oslo 2 Accord Signing Ceremony (Transcript-Audio-Video)'.

¹⁰⁷ Saaf and de Chaillot, *Un Concept de Sécurité Traditionnel*.

¹⁰⁸ Saaf and de Chaillot, *Un Concept de Sécurité Traditionnel*.

¹⁰⁹ Khawaja, 'Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis'.

now directed at the threat emanating from the Iranian Axis of Resistance, at the time especially active in South Lebanon, and some Palestinian groups, while at the same time seeking to destabilize Arab countries as well as Israel. The goal is to export the Islamic revolution.

Netanyahu's 2013 speech to the UN General Assembly.

This speech, delivered before the United Nations General Assembly on 1 October 2013, highlights Israel's security concerns. Here, the designated enemy is no longer its Arab neighbors but Iran. Almost the entire speech focuses on convincing the assembly of the threat Iran poses to Israel, but also to the world. Netanyahu asserts that Iran is racing to develop nuclear weapons and that its missiles, if successfully developed, could even reach the United States, as well as all central oil reserves.

He also explains that Iran is not only evil for the region and the whole world (through its encouragement and financing of terrorism, notably Hezbollah,¹¹⁰ which he says has killed many Americans and French nationals in Beirut), but also for its own people, having crushed all hopes for Iranian democracy during the 1979 revolution.

He explains at length Iran's nuclear projects, which pose an existential threat to Israel¹¹¹, but not only that, since it has made Arab countries realize that Iran is more dangerous to them than Israel, and that this allows for the creation of new friendly ties between Arab countries and Israel.

Otherwise, he consistently employs the same discursive method as in other Israeli public speeches: invoking ancient references to the Jewish presence in the land of Israel to reaffirm the Jewish people's right to remain there, stirring emotion in the audience, and issuing a clear call for peace.

The last section of his speech is devoted to the Palestinian question. In it, he insists that Israel continues to seek a definitive peaceful solution with the Palestinians, and that they are prepared to make significant concessions if this will help move things towards a lasting peace. Nevertheless, he blames the Palestinian leaders if this is not the case:

*"Six Israeli prime ministers, myself included, have not succeeded at achieving peace with the Palestinians. My predecessors were prepared to make painful concessions. So am I. But so far the Palestinian leaders haven't been prepared to offer the painful concessions they must make in order to end the conflict."*¹¹²

Notably, Netanyahu argues in his speech that diplomacy alone cannot resolve security issues in the Middle East, and certainly not those concerning Iran. He even poses the question to the

¹¹⁰ Ronen Bergman, *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*, trans. Ronnie Hope (Random House, 2018); Éric Denécé, 'Le nouveau paradigme sécuritaire d'Israël', *Géoéconomie* (Paris) 74, no. 2 (2015): 9–28, <https://doi.org/10.3917/geoec.074.0009>.

¹¹¹ Tol Staff, 'Full Text of Netanyahu's 2013 Speech to the UN General Assembly', *The Times of Israel*, 1 October 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-netanyahus-2013-speech-to-the-un-general-assembly/>; Bergman, *Rise and Kill First*.

¹¹² Staff, 'Full Text of Netanyahu's 2013 Speech to the UN General Assembly'.

assembly, after providing all the examples to make the answer seem obvious: “Can diplomacy stop this threat?”

This 2013 discourse has shaped Arab-Israeli relations since the post-Arab Spring period, which has been characterized by significant instability¹¹³. The security shift from Arab States to Iran and from Israel to Iran becomes clear.

*“The dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran and the emergence of other threats in our region have led many of our Arab neighbors to recognize, finally recognize, that Israel is not their enemy. And this affords us the opportunity to overcome the historic animosities and build new relationships, new friendships, new hopes.”*¹¹⁴

Within Israeli discourse, a certain continuity can be identified. The central themes are the reaffirmation of the historical legitimacy of the Jewish people to remain in the land of Israel and the desire to broaden and deepen peace with regional actors. There has been no significant lexical change in the description of the relationship between Egypt and Israel. Still, there has been increasing emphasis on the cooperative dimension of the relationship to combat a common perceived threat. From 1977 to 2013, Israeli discourse seems to refer to Egypt as a partner, especially in comparison to countries that still resist peace with Israel, such as Syria and Lebanon. Egypt is increasingly portrayed as a partner, or even a friend, in accordance with the adage “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, an adage that clearly illustrates the security shift happening in the region and focusing on Iran.

Economic Indicators: The Gap between Political Peace and Economic Cooperation

Building on the analysis of official diplomatic relations and political discourse, this section examines the economic dimension of Egyptian–Israeli relations. Economic indicators are particularly relevant in this context, as trade flows, investment patterns, and institutionalized economic arrangements tend to reflect the depth and durability of interstate relations beyond rhetorical commitments. By analyzing available data on bilateral trade, major economic agreements such as the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ), and their evolution across regional and domestic crises, this chapter seeks to identify the extent to which economic interaction has accompanied, contradicted, or remained disconnected from political normalization.

Although the signing of the Camp David Accords enabled Israel and Egypt to stabilize economically, the main stabilizing factor is not the bilateral trade provided for in the peace treaty, but rather the opportunities that peace between Egypt and Israel brings.¹¹⁵

For example, this enabled Egypt to receive massive aid from the United States.¹¹⁶ Since 1979, Egypt has become the second largest beneficiary of U.S. foreign assistance, after Israel.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Denécé, ‘Le nouveau paradigme sécuritaire d’Israël’.

¹¹⁴ Staff, ‘Full Text of Netanyahu’s 2013 Speech to the UN General Assembly’.

¹¹⁵ ‘Israeli-Egyptian Trade’; Marc Lavergne, ‘L’économie égyptienne après la tourmente : les défis sont toujours là...’, *Économie, Confluences Méditerranée* 101, no. 2 (2017): 143–54, <https://doi.org/10.3917/come.101.0143>.

¹¹⁶ Sénat, ‘Traverser la tempête’.

¹¹⁷ ‘CRS: Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, August 12, 2008 - WikiLeaks’.

This aid also helped rebuild the Egyptian army, which had been in difficulty since the Yom Kippur War and the expulsion of Soviet troops. It also enabled Egypt, by recovering the Sinai, to revive its gas and oil industries (which account for up to 27.4% of its exports)¹¹⁸, and tourism, with the Sinai's seaside resorts already representing a significant part of the Egyptian economy under Nasser and developing further under Sadat.¹¹⁹ This treaty also facilitated foreign investment in Egypt.¹²⁰

On the Israeli side, peace has enabled the state to reduce its military spending, which between 1974 and 1978 amounted to 30% of GDP.¹²¹

At the same time, although Egypt, as a low value-added economy, or in other words, low-complexity economy¹²², and Israel, a high value-added economy¹²³, could be complementary and therefore both benefit from a strong commercial partnership, particularly to develop the Egyptian agriculture, which represents one of its main sectors of activity¹²⁴ and in which Israel is developing cutting-edge technologies, this is not the case¹²⁵. However, given Egypt's demographics and its needs in terms of water, energy and agricultural technologies, in which Israel has a clear comparative advantage, the potential for trade between Egypt and Israel is significant.¹²⁶ Indeed, although the Camp David Accords include economic clauses¹²⁷, trade between Egypt and Israel remains very limited. Egypt has even imposed tariffs on Israeli imports across a range of sectors.¹²⁸ These tariffs demonstrate what Doweik Ephraim argues in his book: Egypt would never become a significant trading partner for Israel for political rather than economic reasons.¹²⁹ They constitute obstacles to the progress of economic rapprochement between the two countries.

Although Sadat and his successors gradually liberalized the Egyptian economy,¹³⁰ Israel remained a special case. In 1983, official regulations were published prohibiting the public sector, which at the time still accounted for 85% of the Egyptian economy, from trading with Israel. Even Egyptian businessmen were discouraged by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign

¹¹⁸ 'Egypt's Top Exports 2024', accessed 5 November 2025, <https://www.worldstopexports.com/egypts-top-10-exports/>.

¹¹⁹ Matthew Gray, 'Economic Reform, Privatization and Tourism in Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 2 (1998): 91–112.

¹²⁰ 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'.

¹²¹ 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'.

¹²² *The State of Development in Egypt: A Global Comparative Analysis*, n.d.

¹²³ 'Israel (ISR) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners', The Observatory of Economic Complexity, accessed 9 November 2025, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/isr>.

¹²⁴ *The State of Development in Egypt: A Global Comparative Analysis*.

¹²⁵ Shmuel Even et al., *The Economic-Strategic Dimension of the Abraham Accords* (Institute for National Security Studies, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27803>.

¹²⁶ 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'.

¹²⁷ Doweik, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*.

¹²⁸ 'Egypt (EGY) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners', The Observatory of Economic Complexity, accessed 4 November 2025, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/egy>.

¹²⁹ Doweik, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*.

¹³⁰ Zeinab Abul-Magd et al., *Egypt, Two Paths to Dominance*: (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020), 10–20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24917.5>.

Trade from trading with Israel.¹³¹ Under Mubarak, economic relations between Egypt and Israel remained minimal.¹³²

In 2004, a new initiative, driven by the Americans, boosted trade between Israel and Egypt: the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs). Originally established in 1996, this initiative initially aimed to strengthen trade between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹³³ In 1999, Jordan joined the QIZ agreement¹³⁴ (Qualifying Industrial Zones), and the impact on its economy was significantly positive.¹³⁵

In 2004, concerned about the threat posed by Jordan-Israel agreements to the competitiveness of its textile industry, Egypt signed a similar agreement with the United States and Israel.¹³⁶ The agreement designated six zones in Egypt where goods could be exported to the U.S. duty-free, provided that a minimum of 35% of the cumulative value added originated from Israel and Egypt combined. Additionally, the Israeli share had to account for at least 11.7% of the total cost of the final product,¹³⁷ a requirement later lowered to 10.5% in 2007¹³⁸ following Egypt's will to reduce Israel's input in the QIZ.¹³⁹

The agreement proved successful, significantly boosting Egypt's textile industry¹⁴⁰ and helping it maintain its competitiveness amid intensifying competition. From Israel's perspective, the deal led to a substantial increase in exports of textile-related products to Egypt, which peaked in 2008, but has since declined steadily.¹⁴¹

These agreements were economically successful for both Egypt and Israel. Still, they failed to foster genuine regional integration or to create sufficient interdependence to make the two countries major trading partners. Even at the peak of the Egypt-Israel QIZ agreement, Israeli exports to Egypt accounted for only 0.3% to 0.4% of Israel's total exports.¹⁴² This clearly shows that trade between the two countries remains minimal. Moreover, Egypt did not sign these agreements primarily to improve economic relations with its Israeli neighbor, but rather

¹³¹ Dowek, *Israeli-Egyptian Relations, 1980-2000*.

¹³² 'Egypt and Israel's Growing Economic Cooperation | The Washington Institute', accessed 10 November 2025, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/egypt-and-israels-growing-economic-cooperation>.

¹³³ 'Israel Free Trade Agreement (ILFTA) | U.S. Customs and Border Protection', accessed 11 December 2025, <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/free-trade-agreements/Israel>.

¹³⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, *APPENDIX D: Information on Qualified Industrial Zones*, In Support of Arab Democracy: (Council on Foreign Relations, 2005), 65–65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29879.17>.

¹³⁵ *Overview - QIZ*, n.d., accessed 11 December 2025, <http://www.qizegypt.gov.eg/Page/Overview>.

¹³⁶ *Overview - QIZ*.

¹³⁷ Relations, *APPENDIX D*.

¹³⁸ 1166, 'QIZ Egypt', accessed 11 December 2025, <https://www.trade.gov/qiz-egypt>; 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'; TurnDigital, 'Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ)', accessed 11 December 2025, <https://sis.gov.eg/en/international-relations/egypt-intl-organizations/qualified-industrial-zones-qiz/>.

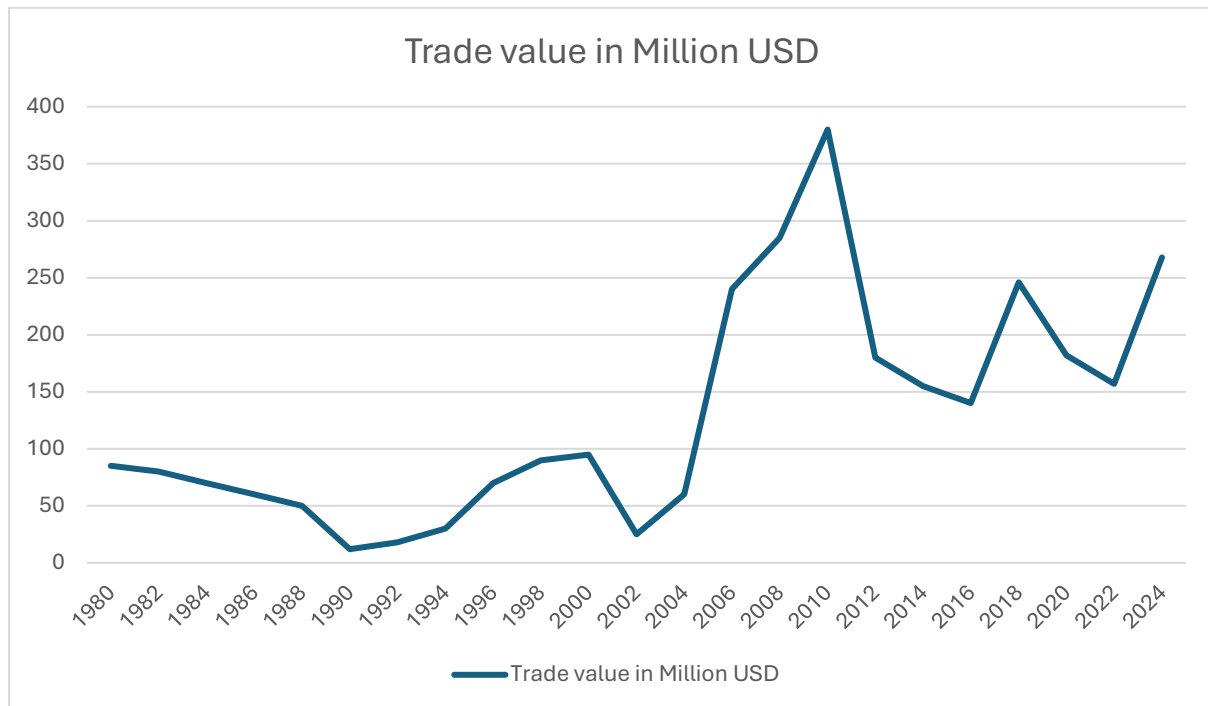
¹³⁹ 'Egypt and Israel's Growing Economic Cooperation | The Washington Institute'.

¹⁴⁰ *Overview - QIZ*; 1166, 'QIZ Egypt'.

¹⁴¹ 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'.

¹⁴² 'Israeli-Egyptian Trade'.

to save its textile industry, its largest and oldest industrial sector,¹⁴³ which was in danger at the time.¹⁴⁴



This graph was reconstructed from multiple sources. It uses data from Ephraim Dowek for the 1980-1992 period, data from the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change for the 1994-2016 period, and data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity for the 2016-2024 period. This graph excludes the Oil trade, which accounted for up to USD 2 billion by 2022.

The major weakness of this graph lies in the years 1980 to 1992, as they are based exclusively on the book by former Israeli ambassador to Cairo Ephraim Dowek, who explicitly reports data only for 1980, 1990, and 1992. For the remainder of the data, alternative values are possible, but they are never far off. It is therefore essential not to take this graph as the absolute truth, but rather as an indicator of trends in the economic relationship between Egypt and Israel.

This figure shows that neither the First Intifada nor Israel's invasion of Lebanon had a major impact on trade between Egypt and Israel. However, the Second Intifada, more violent than the first one, coincided with a sharp decline in bilateral trade. Moreover, it shows that Israeli elections had no impact on trends throughout the years.

Beginning in 2004, the QIZ agreement significantly increased bilateral trade (though trade volumes remained relatively low even after this surge). The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and the conflicts between Hamas and Israel in 2007–2008 did not visibly hinder Egypt-Israel commercial cooperation. It was only in 2011, with the popular uprisings against the Egyptian government and the subsequent overthrow of the regime, that trade began to decline gradually.

¹⁴³ 1166, 'QIZ Egypt'.

¹⁴⁴ 'Egypt and Israel's Growing Economic Cooperation | The Washington Institute'.

This cooperation experienced a revival in 2022 following the start of the war between Russia and Ukraine, which severely disrupted the Egyptian market, the world's largest wheat importer,¹⁴⁵ heavily dependent on importations coming from Ukraine and Russia. Since October 2023, bilateral trade between the two countries has continued, but no new economic activities or initiatives have been put on the table,¹⁴⁶ except for a new energy trade agreement by the end of 2025.¹⁴⁷

The analysis shows that despite a peace treaty and economic arrangements, Egypt-Israel economic relations remain limited, selective, and driven by external factors. Bilateral trade lacks true interdependence, is resilient to crises, but vulnerable to Egyptian political upheavals. Economic normalization isn't a primary driver of their relationship but a secondary, contingent factor influenced by politics and public sensitivities. It is also a tool Egypt uses to implement the stick-and-carrot policy. These limits on official economic ties support the view that Egypt-Israel cooperation mainly occurs outside formal economic and diplomatic channels. We will see in the following chapters what truly drives those relations.

Secret relations

While political discourse oscillates between normalization and caution, and economic interaction remains selective and externally driven, these dimensions alone fail to account for the bilateral relationship's resilience over time. This apparent paradox calls for an examination beyond formal and observable indicators. This section, therefore, shifts the focus behind the curtains of official relations, where cooperation has developed through informal channels, intelligence services, and security coordination. By analyzing covert interactions during major regional crises, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that clandestine cooperation is the most consistent and decisive pillar of Egyptian-Israeli relations, compensating for the shortcomings of official ties.

Politically, the relationship between Egypt and Israel has undergone a notable gradual change known as 'securitization': the increased importance of security actors in managing this relationship, to the detriment of career diplomats.¹⁴⁸ In fact, this behind-the-scenes diplomacy focuses on practical arrangements. It enables collaboration in one or more areas (in this case, security), even if there is disagreement on other issues.¹⁴⁹

Although the links established between intelligence services at the international level have long been considered a grey area,¹⁵⁰ the "Global War on Terror", triggered by the attacks of 11 September 2001, has considerably accelerated the pace of cooperation between intelligence

¹⁴⁵ Obs. Econ. Complex., 'Egypt (EGY) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners'.

¹⁴⁶ 'The Egyptian Agenda and Relations with Israel in the Shadow of the War in the Gaza Strip', *INSS*, n.d., accessed 25 November 2025, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/egypt-israel-gaza-war/>.

¹⁴⁷ 'Israel Approves \$37 Billion Deal to Deliver Gas to Egypt - The New York Times', accessed 5 January 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/17/world/middleeast/israel-gas-deal-egypt.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

¹⁴⁹ Aldrich, 'US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'.

¹⁵⁰ Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

services at the international level.¹⁵¹ Similarly, the Cold War and globalization elevated non-state actors to the top of the list of threats, making them a primary focus of intelligence services and boosting cooperation in this area.¹⁵² This was already the case in the 1970s, when Israeli and European services increased cooperation in counter-terrorism. Some attribute this success to the excellent interpersonal relationships among their head services,¹⁵³ suggesting the importance of interpersonal relations in such collaboration.

Whereas in the past, the region was structured around four hegemonic powers, namely Egypt, Israel, Iraq, and Iran, the American invasion of Iraq has increased Iran's influence. The gradual loss of American influence over Middle Eastern countries since the invasion of Iraq has prompted these countries to seek new solutions to ensure their security. Furthermore, the rise of Iran and its proxies makes dependence on a foreign power less viable, not to mention the anti-Americanism that the war in Iraq has left throughout the Middle East.¹⁵⁴ This paradigm shift, this rise in power of Iran and its proxies, increases the gains from cooperation and decreases the gains from defection between Israel and Egypt. They therefore have an incentive to cooperate.¹⁵⁵

Other factors, this time not based on game theory, indicate a strong propensity for Egypt and Israel to cooperate on security matters. First, however renowned they may be, no intelligence service can know everything.¹⁵⁶ Egypt is the only player with such an extensive network, meaning it is connected to everyone.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Israeli and Egyptian foreign policies converge in that Iran represents a major threat to both countries.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, shared interests do not sufficiently explain effective and sustainable international cooperation.¹⁵⁹ If security actors did not frown even during the partial change in foreign policy under Morsi,¹⁶⁰ it is also most likely due to good interpersonal relations between Egyptian security actors and their Israeli counterparts, and trust that goes beyond the

¹⁵¹ Jelle Buuren, *Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation* (2014), 80–93, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203071472-7>; Aldrich, 'US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'; Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

¹⁵² Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'.

¹⁵³ Ahmet Ateş and Anil Erkan, 'Governing the European Intelligence: Multilateral Intelligence Cooperation in the European Union', *International Journal of Politics and Security* 3, no. 3 (2021): 230–50, <https://doi.org/10.53451/ijps.900302>.

¹⁵⁴ James A. Russell, *Regional Threats and Security: The Troubling Case of Today's Middle East* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2007), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11630>.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma', *WORLD POLITICS*, n.d.

¹⁵⁶ Stéphane Lefebvre, 'The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 16, no. 4 (2003): 527–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/716100467>.

¹⁵⁷ *What Does Egypt Want Out of the Gaza Reconstruction Conference?*, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy 09CAIRO358_a (Egypt Cairo, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09CAIRO358_a.html; Daoud, 'Des acteurs sécuritaires qui s'improvisent diplomates?'; Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

¹⁵⁸ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'; Staff, 'Full Text of Netanyahu's 2013 Speech to the UN General Assembly'; Khawaja, 'Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis'.

¹⁵⁹ Tuinier et al., 'The Social Ties That Bind'.

¹⁶⁰ Khawaja, 'Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis'.

shared perception of the risk posed by Iran And a certain logic of practicality, encouraging actors not to change their professional habits, as these has proven effective. This trust is all the more important in this environment, where it is considered a universal currency.¹⁶¹ Yet, it can never be absolute due to the sensitivity of the content shared and the potential for backfire.

Smoking gun evidence

Like official relations, there's no index for measuring hidden relations between entities, and no official data exists, as secrecy by nature prevents it. To highlight these links, I focus on declassified documents, officials' memoirs, and investigative journalism.

Although states and intelligence services still refuse to admit their partnerships or reveal their collaboration, serious investigations, leaks, and memoirs by former intelligence officers or political figures confirm such links. This is what we might call 'smoking gun evidence'. It cannot be proven directly (through a statement by a statesman or stateswoman or an intelligence agent), but a series of convincing clues suggests that cooperation does indeed exist.

This chapter will consist of an analysis of two smoking 'gun evidences': the Sinai insurrection that erupted in 2011 and the Gaza War of 2014. Analyzing cooperation between Israel and Egypt during these crises will provide a foundation for understanding the nature and pattern of collaboration between the two countries.

2011 Sinai insurrection

Islamic terrorist violence in Egypt did not start under Mubarak.¹⁶² In 2011, taking advantage of the political crisis engulfing the country, violence intensified in Sinai, one of Egypt's poorest governorates,¹⁶³ and some considered it to be almost under a "state of siege".¹⁶⁴ Egypt struggled to quell these revolts,¹⁶⁵ particularly because of the Camp David Accords, which stipulate that Egyptian forces in Sinai must be limited so as not to threaten Israeli security.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Aldrich, 'US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'.

¹⁶² Dalia Dassa Kaye et al., 'Egypt', in *More Freedom, Less Terror?*, 1st edn, Liberalization and Political Violence in the Arab World (RAND Corporation, 2008), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg772rc.10>.

¹⁶³ Sarah Daoud, 'Conflit Israélo-Palestinien : Le Sinaï, Un Enjeu Clé Pour l'Égypte', The Conversation, 24 October 2023, <http://theconversation.com/conflit-israelo-palestinien-le-sina-un-enjeu-cle-pour-legypte-216133>.

¹⁶⁴ Dalia Dassa Kaye et al., 'Egypt', in *More Freedom, Less Terror?*, 1st edn, Liberalization and Political Violence in the Arab World (RAND Corporation, 2008), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg772rc.10>.

¹⁶⁵ European Union Institute for Security Studies., *Counterinsurgency: not an Arab specialty*. (Publications Office, 2015), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2815/570448>; Tol Staff, 'Israel Carrying out Secret Airstrike Campaign in Sinai to Help Egypt — Report', *The Times of Israel*, 3 February 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-carrying-out-secret-air-strike-campaign-in-sinai-to-help-egypt-report/>.

¹⁶⁶ European Union Institute for Security Studies., *Counterinsurgency*.

These attacks primarily target Egyptian forces, which are opposed by certain local extremist groups who consider the Egyptian government to be ungodly. However, under the influence of global jihad, Egypt is also considered an ally of the United States and Israel and therefore also deserves to be destroyed.¹⁶⁷ The fact that Egypt has become one of the favorite targets of global jihad has considerably strengthened its ties with its neighbors¹⁶⁸ (particularly Israel).

Moreover, this local unrest is fueled by the network of smuggling tunnels that Hamas has developed and financed,¹⁶⁹ linking the Gaza Strip and northern Sinai.

Hamas built relations in Sinai before taking control of Gaza in 2007, using these ties to attack Israel, especially southern Israel, which is harder to reach directly from Gaza. After Morsi (and therefore the Muslim Brotherhood) was ousted from power in 2013, Egypt ordered a blockade of the Gaza Strip, to which Hamas responded by supporting the main terrorist groups located in the Sinai.¹⁷⁰

For Hamas, the interest is twofold: financial and military. The smuggling of weapons and military equipment is one of Hamas's primary sources of income,¹⁷¹ in addition to the fact that attacks by terrorists in Sinai also target Israelis and Israeli interests,¹⁷² which remain Hamas's sworn enemy. In 2014, claiming responsibility for a terrorist attack from the Sinai Peninsula in Eilat, Israel, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis group (Supporters of Jerusalem) declared:

*"Jews must understand that our war with the enemy inside will not make us forget the prime enemy of the (Muslim) nation, who occupies the land and defiles the sacred places,"*¹⁷³

In 2011, the Wilayat Sinai group, which affiliated itself with the Islamic State in 2014, took advantage of the political unrest in Egypt at the time¹⁷⁴ to carry out attacks on both sides of

¹⁶⁷ Group, *Les Sunnites Sur Le Sentier De La Guerre*.

¹⁶⁸ Saaf and de Chaillot, *Un Concept de Sécurité Traditionnel*.

¹⁶⁹ Mohannad Sabry, 'The Smuggling Tunnels: Besieged by Israel, Gaza Explodes into Egypt', in *Sinai, Egypt's Linchpin, Gaza's Lifeline, Israel's Nightmare* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2ks70fr.11>.

¹⁷⁰ 'Hamas and the Islamic State: Growing Cooperation in the Sinai | The Washington Institute', accessed 3 May 2025, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hamas-and-islamic-state-growing-cooperation-sinai>.

¹⁷¹ Adnan Abu Amer, 'What Is behind the Hamas-Iran Rapprochement?', Al Jazeera, accessed 22 November 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/7/26/what-is-behind-the-hamas-iran-rapprochement>.

¹⁷² Zack Gold, *Salafi Jihadist Violence in Egypt's North Sinai: From Local Insurgency to Islamic State Province* (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2016), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29441>; JMG DESK, 'The Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis Terrorist Attack on the Israel-Egypt Border (2011)', *ICT*, 22 October 2021, <https://ict.org.il/the-ansar-bayt-al-maqdis-terrorist-attack-on-the-israel-egypt-border-2011/>; 'What's behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai? | The Jerusalem Post', The Jerusalem Post | JPost.Com, 5 February 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/whats-behind-the-egyptian-israeli-cooperation-in-sinai-540688>.

¹⁷³ 'Egyptian Militants Claim Rocket Attack on Israel's Eilat', World, *Reuters*, 21 January 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/egyptian-militants-claim-rocket-attack-on-israels-eilat-idUSBREA0K0ZX/>.

the border between Egypt and Israel,¹⁷⁵ in addition to sabotaging gas pipelines connecting Egypt to Israel and Jordan.¹⁷⁶ Some of these terrorists wore Egyptian security force uniforms and sought refuge near Egyptian forces after crossing back over the border, leading Israeli security forces to fire on Egyptian security forces, killing several security force members.¹⁷⁷ The Israeli embassy in Cairo was sacked less than a month later.¹⁷⁸ The purpose of the attacks and sabotage was the same: to damage relations (diplomatic and economic) between Israel and Egypt.¹⁷⁹

In parallel, the military forces sent to Sinai to quell these uprisings contravened the Camp David Accords, but Egypt received Israel's approval to deploy them,¹⁸⁰ demonstrating cooperation between security forces on both sides. Israel had only permitted Egypt to station more troops in Sinai once before, in 2005.¹⁸¹

This cooperation between Israel and Egypt in the Sinai, which had previously been passive (Israel and Egypt had not yet actively cooperated to achieve joint military objectives), later evolved into active cooperation. From 2013 onwards, not only did Israel agree to amend an article of the 1979 treaty, allowing Egypt to occupy the Sinai with more military equipment than before,¹⁸² but Israel also intervened directly in the Sinai, helping Egypt in its fight against Islamic terrorism. Of course, there are no official reports on this. Still, two articles in *The Times of Israel* are interesting: The first is dated 9 August 2013 and quotes an Egyptian military official saying that an Israeli drone carried out a strike in the Sinai, killing five jihadists.¹⁸³ The second, dated 10 August 2013 (the day after the previous article), quotes the

¹⁷⁴ Heba Afify and Isabel Kershner, 'A Long Peace Is Threatened in Israel Attack', *World, The New York Times*, 19 August 2011,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/20/world/middleeast/20egypt.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Zack Gold, 'The Consequences of Israel and Egypt's Alliance of Convenience Against ISIS', *World Politics Review*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/the-consequences-of-israel-and-egypt-s-alliance-of-convenience-against-isis/>.

¹⁷⁶ DESK, 'The Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis Terrorist Attack on the Israel-Egypt Border (2011)'; Gold, *Salafi Jihadist Violence in Egypt's North Sinai*.

¹⁷⁷ Afify and Kershner, 'A Long Peace Is Threatened in Israel Attack'.

¹⁷⁸ Gold, *Salafi Jihadist Violence in Egypt's North Sinai*.

¹⁷⁹ Hirsh Goodman and Dore Gold, eds, *The Gaza War 2014: The War Israel Did Not Want and the Disaster It Averted* (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2015); 'The Global Intelligence Files - Re: G2/S2 - ISRAEL/EGYPT/PNA - Egypt: Israel Delaying Expanding Gaza Offensive', accessed 1 December 2025, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/28/2881998_re-g2-s2-israel-egypt-pna-egypt-israel-delaying-expanding.html.

¹⁸⁰ Jerus. Post JPostcom, 'What's behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai?'; European Union Institute for Security Studies., *Counterinsurgency*.

¹⁸¹ 'Israël et Égypte renforcent la coopération militaire dans le Sinaï', *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 16 February 2011, https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/689455/Israel_et_Egypte_renforcent_la_cooperation_militaire_dans_le_Sinaï_.html.

¹⁸² ' Hamas and the Islamic State'.

¹⁸³ AP and Tol Staff, 'Israeli Drone Kills 5 in Sinai, Say Egypt Officials', *The Times of Israel*, 9 August 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-fires-drone-into-sinai-say-egypt-officials/>.

Egyptian army spokesman categorically denying any Israeli involvement on Egyptian soil.¹⁸⁴ The Israeli army has never confirmed or denied its involvement in the Sinai.¹⁸⁵

The credibility of this cooperation is reinforced by the events of 2018. An article in The New York Times dated 3 February 2018 states that:

*“For more than two years, unmarked Israeli drones, helicopters and jets have carried out a covert air campaign, conducting more than 100 airstrikes inside Egypt, frequently more than once a week — and all with the approval of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.”*¹⁸⁶

This article cites anonymous American officials confirming rumors of Israeli operations in Sinai, similar to 2013, which the Egyptian army denied the next day.¹⁸⁷

To ensure that the secret remains alive, Egypt goes so far as to publicly announce the opposite of the rumors. In June 2017, official Egyptian media accused Israel of aiding Islamic terrorism in the Sinai.¹⁸⁸ Egypt seeks to conceal this cooperation to maintain its image of loyalty to the Palestinian cause.¹⁸⁹ Egyptian public opinion would not accept Egypt taking action against groups that claim to act for the Palestinian cause, even if they threaten the military regime in Egypt,¹⁹⁰ or worse, actively cooperating with Israel to destroy these groups while the Egyptian population remains sensitive to the Palestinian’s fate.¹⁹¹ Therefore, Egypt and Israel exchange intelligence under the table.¹⁹²

Furthermore, Egypt is a military dictatorship (except for Morsi's brief reign), so suggesting the Egyptian army needs Israel to succeed would insult national pride and the military, Egypt's top institution.¹⁹³ It goes without saying that Egypt cannot allow Israel to officially bomb its territory, which would constitute a serious violation of the Camp David Accords¹⁹⁴ and a violation of Egyptian territorial sovereignty.

The Sinai insurrection illustrates how escalating jihadist violence transformed the Egyptian-Israeli relationship into one centered on security imperatives, leading to sustained intelligence

¹⁸⁴ Avi Issacharoff, ‘Egypt Walks the Wire in Denying Israeli Strike on Sinai’, *The Times of Israel*, 9 August 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-walks-the-wire-in-denying-israeli-attack-on-sinai/>.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Israelis, Egyptians Cooperate on Terror - WSJ’, Archive.Is, 20 August 2023, <https://archive.is/jAmqt>.

¹⁸⁶ David D. Kirkpatrick, ‘Secret Alliance: Israel Carries Out Airstrikes in Egypt, With Cairo’s O.K.’, *World, The New York Times*, 3 February 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/03/world/middleeast/israel-airstrikes-sinai-egypt.html>.

¹⁸⁷ Tol Staff, ‘Egypt Army Denies Israel Carrying out Secret Airstrike Campaign in Sinai’, *The Times of Israel*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-army-denies-israel-carried-out-secret-airstrike-campaign-in-sinai/>.

¹⁸⁸ Jerus. Post JPostcom, ‘What’s behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai?’

¹⁸⁹ Kirkpatrick, ‘Secret Alliance’.

¹⁹⁰ Sénat, ‘Traverser la tempête’.

¹⁹¹ Sénat, ‘Traverser la tempête’.

¹⁹² Jerus. Post JPostcom, ‘What’s behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai?’; Kirkpatrick, ‘Secret Alliance’.

¹⁹³ Jerus. Post JPostcom, ‘What’s behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai?’

¹⁹⁴ Jerus. Post JPostcom, ‘What’s behind the Egyptian-Israeli Cooperation in Sinai?’

sharing and operational coordination beyond the limits of the David Camp Accords. Despite public denial, this episode demonstrates that covert cooperation became a pragmatic necessity, driven by shared threat perceptions and embedded practices among security actors rather than by political rapprochement or public support.

2014 Gaza War

Although this war occurred 11 years ago, there remains no consensus on the exact reasons that led to it.¹⁹⁵ Some accuse Israel of exploiting the kidnapping of three young settlers, for which Hamas was not even responsible, to escalate the conflict and legitimize a war that would allow it to pursue its political and military objectives.¹⁹⁶ Some believe that Hamas's kidnapping and murder of three teenagers led Israeli extremists to kill a young Palestinian in brutal circumstances, sparking riots in Arab villages in Israel. This was followed by Hamas rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza, with Operation Protective Edge as a response.¹⁹⁷ The day before the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip was launched, Mohammed Al Tuhami, the Egyptian Minister of Intelligence, visited Tel Aviv,¹⁹⁸ demonstrating the close cooperation and mutual consultation during crises between Hamas and Israel.

At the beginning of the war, Hamas was particularly isolated economically, diplomatically, and therefore militarily.¹⁹⁹ After the military coup that overthrew Morsi in July 2013, Sisi considered the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) a terrorist organization, and Hamas, being part of the MB,²⁰⁰ was therefore also considered a terrorist group by the newly formed Egyptian government.²⁰¹ This recognition of Hamas as a terrorist group was also accompanied by a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip on the Egyptian side²⁰² and the arrest of Hamas members in Egypt.²⁰³

For the first time, Egypt was putting a credible obstacle to smuggling between the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Under Mubarak, there was a relatively laissez-faire attitude because the smuggling network between Egypt and the Gaza Strip was helping the economy of northern Sinai, which had previously been in serious difficulty, thereby removing a heavy burden from

¹⁹⁵ João Pedro Borralho, 'Coping with Egypt's and Israel Normalisation Process: Gaza Strip Siege and Hamas Governance', *JANUS NET E-Journal of International Relation* 01 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0122.1>.

¹⁹⁶ 'Operation Protective Edge: Israel's July 2014 Assault on Gaza', accessed 25 November 2025, https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/pages/operation_protective_edge_israels_july_2014_assault_on_gaza.aspx.

¹⁹⁷ Laurent Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)', *Annuaire français de droit international* 60, no. 1 (2014): 171–94, <https://doi.org/10.3406/afdi.2014.4747>.

¹⁹⁸ 'Operation Protective Edge'.

¹⁹⁹ '2014 Gaza War Assessment: The New Face of Conflict', *JINSA*, n.d., accessed 27 November 2025, https://jinsa.org/jinsa_report/2014-gaza-war-assessment-new-face-conflict/.

²⁰⁰ Mohannad Sabry, 'Sinai's Revolution: Four Days of Armed Fury', in *Sinai, Egypt's Linchpin, Gaza's Lifeline, Israel's Nightmare* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2ks70fr.8>.

²⁰¹ Borralho, 'Coping with Egypt's and Israel Normalisation Process'.

²⁰² 'Hamas and the Islamic State'.

²⁰³ Segell, 'Mohamed Morsi, Egypt and Israel'.

Mubarak's shoulders.²⁰⁴ During Mohamed Morsi's year in power, even though he personally sympathized with Hamas and shared certain ideological views,²⁰⁵ he nevertheless opted for a pragmatic stance, combining populist and realistic rhetoric towards the US, Israel, and Hamas.²⁰⁶ He did not, therefore, completely break with Mubarak's policy on the Gaza Strip, and essentially left the Palestinian issue in the hands of the Egyptian intelligence services.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Morsi's approach and his relationship with Hamas were more cordial than during Mubarak's era,²⁰⁸ pursuing a soft policy toward Hamas,²⁰⁹ which allowed it to expand its activities to a certain extent.²¹⁰

The complete blockade imposed by Marshal al-Sisi's government poses a significant economic and military problem for Hamas, as it disrupts the smuggling routes that Hamas taxed and which constituted a considerable source of income,²¹¹ but which were also part of its military supply line.²¹²

Furthermore, the civil war in Syria had alienated Hamas (which supported Sunni militias in Syria) from the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah (which supported the Al-Assad regime and had actively participated in the massacres against Sunnis in Syria), which until then had been its traditional supporters.²¹³ This (temporary) break with Iran, Hamas's main arms supplier since 2008,²¹⁴ significantly weakened Hamas's military capabilities.

In response to the blockade, Hamas has intensively strengthened its ties with Islamist groups in Sinai,²¹⁵ including the Islamic State group in the Sinai Province. Cooperation between the Islamic State in Sinai and Hamas serves their respective objectives. Still, their relationship is discreet due to the open opposition between their parent organizations, namely Iran for Hamas and ISIS for IS in Sinai. ISIS has already publicly denounced Hamas.²¹⁶

Despite the growing role of the Gulf States in the Palestinian issue, Egypt remains the historical mediator,²¹⁷ still privileged and the most effective in terms of the Palestinian

²⁰⁴ Sabry, 'The Smuggling Tunnels'.

²⁰⁵ Segell, 'Mohamed Morsi, Egypt and Israel'.

²⁰⁶ Borralho, 'Coping with Egypt's and Israel Normalisation Process'.

²⁰⁷ 'How Egypt Prolonged the Gaza War', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed 25 November 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2014/08/how-egypt-prolonged-the-gaza-war?lang=en>.

²⁰⁸ '2014 Gaza War Assessment'.

²⁰⁹ Khawaja, 'Egypt's Foreign Policy Analysis'.

²¹⁰ 'Hamas and the Islamic State'.

²¹¹ Sabry, 'The Smuggling Tunnels'.

²¹² Mohannad Sabry, 'Sinai's Arms: En Route to Gaza', in *Sinai, Egypt's Linchpin, Gaza's Lifeline, Israel's Nightmare* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2ks70fr.10>.

²¹³ '2014 Gaza War Assessment'.

²¹⁴ Sabry, 'Sinai's Arms'.

²¹⁵ 'Egyptian Sources Say 600 Hamas Operatives Entered Sinai via Tunnels - UPI.Com', UPI, accessed 27 November 2025, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2013/08/11/600-Hamas-operatives-said-to-be-in-Sinai-Peninsula/80141376215959/.

²¹⁶ 'Hamas and the Islamic State'.

²¹⁷ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

question, thanks to its unique networks.²¹⁸ Secondly, Egypt is not just a mediator but a negotiating party that also mediates,²¹⁹ with its own interests in the outcome of the negotiations, even when it comes to resolving a conflict solely between Israel and Hamas. For example, during the 2014 talks, the Rafah border crossing, which separates Egypt from the Gaza Strip, was discussed.²²⁰ Furthermore, Cairo is concerned about a spillover effect from the conflicts in the Gaza Strip to the Sinai, which has led the Egyptian authorities to restrict Palestinian factions' access to the Sinai as much as possible.²²¹

There are other reasons Egypt is becoming actively involved in the negotiations. First, Egypt wants to prevent Iran from reaping the benefits of defending the Palestinian cause, as Egypt considers itself the 'owner' of the peace process between Palestine and Israel.²²² Furthermore, as Egyptians are very sensitive to the Palestinian cause, the Egyptian government fears that the Islamic revolution will inspire Egyptians to follow suit and revolt against their own government.

Secondly, Egypt is concerned about its regional influence. It cannot afford to cede the Palestinian cause, the last regional issue on which Egypt still wields authority, to rivals such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan. However, until now, none of them had been willing to take on this role, for fear of being seen as supporting Hamas or complicit with Israel.²²³

The violence of the conflict rendered foreign mediation efforts ineffective, except for Egypt, which succeeded in bringing the two warring parties together and securing a ceasefire after more than 45 days of fighting that had claimed the lives of many civilians.²²⁴

Furthermore, Israel prefers Egypt as a mediator because it uniquely understands Israelis, Palestinians, and Hamas. Furthermore, like Israel, Egypt intends to weaken Hamas in favor of the Palestinian Authority,²²⁵ that is, Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah.²²⁶ In addition, the Israelis are well aware of the problems faced by the Egyptians and share the same aversion to Iran and its proxies, reinforcing the propensity for trust and cooperation. Ultimately, a key factor that makes Israel favor Egypt over other regional countries is that cooperation can be used to influence a partner;²²⁷ the special relationship between the Israeli and Egyptian intelligence services may enable Israelis to shape the outcome of negotiations in favor of Israeli national interests.

²¹⁸ *What Does Egypt Want Out of the Gaza Reconstruction Conference?*

²¹⁹ Carnegie Endow. Int. Peace, 'How Egypt Prolonged the Gaza War'.

²²⁰ Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)'.

²²¹ Ivan Sand, 'Les représentations géopolitiques de la péninsule du Sinaï en Israël', *Géographie, Les Cahiers de l'Orient* 117, no. 1 (2015): 87–105, <https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdlo.117.0087>.

²²² *What Does Egypt Want Out of the Gaza Reconstruction Conference?*

²²³ Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)'.

²²⁴ Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)'.

²²⁵ *What Does Egypt Want Out of the Gaza Reconstruction Conference?*

²²⁶ Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)'.

²²⁷ Cousseran and Hayez, *Nouvelles leçons sur le renseignement*.

This Israeli confidence and faith in Egyptian mediation was clearly demonstrated during the negotiations between Egypt, Israel, and Hamas in 2014. On 15 July, Egypt publicly announced a ceasefire proposal agreed solely with Israel to force Hamas's hand.²²⁸ Hamas, of course, rejected this proposal, as the Israelis and Egyptians had expected. This gave the Israelis a pretext to further weaken Hamas militarily by continuing hostilities,²²⁹ but also diplomatically by publicly portraying Hamas as a belligerent group that refuses to accept ceasefires. The military operations that followed were undertaken with the full agreement of President Sisi, who, at the same time, was busy destroying the tunnels linking the Sinai to the Gaza Strip and also conducting operations in the Sinai.²³⁰

The meetings for the final ceasefire agreement took place in Cairo, at the headquarters of the Egyptian intelligence services,²³¹ this time including Hamas, at the risk of losing its privileged status as negotiator between the Palestinians and Israel.²³²

The 2014 Gaza War further confirms that Egyptian-Israeli cooperation is most robust in times of acute crisis, particularly when security concerns converge around Hamas and regional instability. By acting as a central mediator while simultaneously aligning with Israeli security objectives in secret, Egypt exemplified how clandestine diplomacy and intelligence coordination have become structural components of the bilateral relationship.

2023 Gaza War (7th October War)

Having shown that security factors far outweigh political or economic factors in bilateral relations and that they cooperate intensively behind the scenes because their security interests converge, this chapter will examine the regional repercussions of the war that erupted on 7 October 2023, focusing on Egypt's position and strategy. The war that began in October 2023 has often been presented as a potential breaking point in Egyptian-Israeli relations,²³³ given the scale of the violence in Gaza and the virulence of public criticism directed at Israel by Egyptian officials and media outlets.²³⁴ However, this chapter argues that the conflict does not constitute a rupture but rather confirms the relational pattern identified in the previous chapters. Despite harsh public rhetoric and symbolic distancing, cooperation between Egypt and Israel has continued²³⁵ and, in some respects, intensified. This continuity is driven by converging strategic interests: for Egypt, the need to contain regional spillover, stabilize the Sinai, restore economic flows linked to the Suez Canal, and preserve its central role in conflict mediation; for Israel, the need to rely on Egypt as a key intermediary capable of influencing

²²⁸ Carnegie Endow. Int. Peace, 'How Egypt Prolonged the Gaza War'.

²²⁹ Carnegie Endow. Int. Peace, 'How Egypt Prolonged the Gaza War'.

²³⁰ Borralho, 'Coping with Egypt's and Israel Normalisation Process'.

²³¹ Trigeaud, 'L'opération Bordure protectrice menée par Israël dans la bande de Gaza (8 juillet – 26 août 2014)'.

²³² Carnegie Endow. Int. Peace, 'How Egypt Prolonged the Gaza War'.

²³³ Michael Harari Mitchell Gabriel, 'Israel Risks Ties With Egypt at Its Peril', *Foreign Policy*, 22 December 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/09/16/egypt-gaza-israel-cairo-sisi-netanyahu-gas-hamas/>.

²³⁴ John Rafael and Garcia Sowden, 'Propaganda in vain: Managing Egyptian Public Opinion on Relations with Israel since al-Sisi', Centre Étudiant pour la Recherche Stratégique, November 2024, <https://crssciencepo.com/levant/propaganda-in-vain-managing-egyptian-public-opinion-on-relations-with-israel-since-al-sisi>.

²³⁵ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

negotiations and managing the Gaza file. The 2023 war thus reveals the resilience of a security-centered, pragmatic relationship that operates independently of public discourse.

To give some quick context on this war, it began on 7 October 2023 when Hamas, with the help of several Palestinian factions based in the Gaza Strip,²³⁶ launched an attack on Israel by air, sea, and land.²³⁷ These attacks have killed approximately 1,200 victims, the vast majority of whom were civilians.²³⁸ Hamas and its allies also massively abducted people, resulting in 252 hostages, 33 of whom were killed on Israeli soil, but whose bodies were taken away to be used as bargaining chips.²³⁹ It was the deadliest attack in Israel's history.²⁴⁰ In response, Israel declared war on Hamas, the first time Israel has declared war since 1973.²⁴¹ Israel cut off water, electricity, and fuel supplies to the Gaza Strip and launched its largest military campaign against Gaza.²⁴²

Since the beginning of the war, Egyptian rhetoric has become increasingly harsh toward Israel. During the Islamic Summit in Doha, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi described Israel as “the enemy”.²⁴³ Under Sisi’s government, Egyptian media (which do not enjoy free press)²⁴⁴ is still often openly critical about the Israeli government’s actions, especially regarding the war taking place on the borders of Egypt, in the Gaza Strip.²⁴⁵ There is, therefore, more than ever, a disconnect between Egypt's rhetoric and its actions.

Despite the heightened virulence of Egyptian rhetoric toward Israel and Israeli decisions, the Israeli operations triggered by Hamas's attacks on 7 October 2023 have not undermined Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation.²⁴⁶ The strategic peace between Israel and Egypt

²³⁶ ‘Why Did Hamas Attack Israel?’, CFR Education from the Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 1 December 2025, <https://education.cfr.org/learn/learning-journey/why-did-hamas-attack-israel/israeli-palestinian-conflict-timeline>.

²³⁷ ‘Israel-Hamas War (Gaza Conflict) | Explanation, Summary, Ceasefire, Casualties, & Map | Britannica’, 29 November 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israel-Hamas-War>.

²³⁸ Florian Gouthière, ‘7 Octobre, un an après : pourquoi le décompte des victimes de l’attaque du Hamas a été aussi difficile’, *Libération*, accessed 1 December 2025, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/7-octobre-un-an-apres-pourquoi-le-decompte-des-victimes-de-lattaque-du-hamas-a-ete-aussi-difficile-20241006_ZDAODPBYFNENJN5ZNXA5FE46UY/.

²³⁹ Florian Gouthière and Alexandre Horn, ‘Un an après, que sont devenus les otages du 7 Octobre ?’, *Libération*, accessed 1 December 2025, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/un-an-apres-que-sont-devenus-les-251-otages-du-7-octobre-20241005_RYGHZSLANZG6VAECBX5E4URWGA/.

²⁴⁰ CFR Educ. Council Foreign Relat., ‘Why Did Hamas Attack Israel?’

²⁴¹ ‘Israel-Hamas War (Gaza Conflict) | Explanation, Summary, Ceasefire, Casualties, & Map | Britannica’.

²⁴² nayera Shalaby, ‘Egypt’s Difficult Questions in the Gaza War’, *Mada Masr*, n.d., accessed 1 December 2025, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2023/10/11/feature/politics/egypts-difficult-questions-in-the-gaza-war/>.

²⁴³ ‘Egypt Escalates Rhetoric toward Israel, Raising Specter of Military Clash’, accessed 4 January 2026, <https://english.aawsat.com/node/5187049>.

²⁴⁴ ‘Égypte | RSF’, 23 September 2025, <https://rsf.org/fr/pays-%C3%A9gypte>.

²⁴⁵ Rafael and Sowden, ‘Propaganda in vain’.

²⁴⁶ Sénat, ‘Traverser la tempête’.

revolves primarily around security.²⁴⁷ For this reason, Egypt, notably through its clandestine diplomacy, is attempting to create a regional climate that could see the emergence of a Palestinian state that meets Israeli security expectations. Egypt considers the Gaza Strip as part of the territory on which the future Palestinian state will be established, as agreed in the Oslo Accords.²⁴⁸ This is also what Egypt is working towards in the negotiations surrounding the war that broke out on 7 October 2023.²⁴⁹ For Egypt, an Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip directly threatens its national security.²⁵⁰ Similarly, Egypt considers the stability of Gaza and the restoration of fundamental rights integral to its national security.²⁵¹

Beyond security concerns, Egypt's determination to end the conflict rapidly is also driven by economic and diplomatic imperatives that ultimately converge with Israeli interests. Egypt's economy is highly vulnerable to regional instability. As a country with rapid population growth, limited arable land, and scarce water resources, Egypt depends heavily on food imports and is the world's largest importer of wheat.²⁵² The war in Ukraine has already exacerbated inflationary pressures.²⁵³ At the same time, attacks by Yemen's Houthis in the Bab El-Mandeb Strait have reduced Suez Canal revenues by nearly 70 percent in 2023,²⁵⁴ costing Egypt approximately €800 million per month²⁵⁵ at a time of severe debt distress.²⁵⁶ The high cost of living is a source of concern for the central government, which fears that it could lead to increased internal tensions.²⁵⁷

Although tourism has officially reached record levels,²⁵⁸ it remains a fragile resource that depends on regional stability.²⁵⁹ However, several sources claim that tourism is suffering from the conflict,²⁶⁰ which may be due to the loss of revenue that would otherwise accrue in the event of regional peace. These economic pressures heighten Cairo's interest in regional de-escalation and explain why cooperation with Israel persists despite its unpopularity among the Egyptian public.

²⁴⁷ Amnon Aran and Rami Ginat, 'Revisiting Egyptian Foreign Policy towards Israel under Mubarak: From Cold Peace to Strategic Peace', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 556–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.923766>.

²⁴⁸ 'The Egyptian Agenda and Relations with Israel in the Shadow of the War in the Gaza Strip'.

²⁴⁹ 'The Gaza Plan Just Hit a Crucial Juncture. Egypt Is Critical for Its Success.', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed 25 November 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2025/11/gaza-un-security-council-plan-egypt-success?lang=en>.

²⁵⁰ Mitchell, 'Israel Risks Ties With Egypt at Its Peril'.

²⁵¹ Carnegie Endow. Int. Peace, 'The Gaza Plan Just Hit a Crucial Juncture. Egypt Is Critical for Its Success.'

²⁵² Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

²⁵³ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

²⁵⁴ 'The Egyptian Agenda and Relations with Israel in the Shadow of the War in the Gaza Strip'.

²⁵⁵ Sénat, 'Traverser la tempête'.

²⁵⁶ Shay Shaul, 'Egypt between "Al-Aqsa Flood" and the "Swords of Iron"', *ICT*, 17 October 2023, <https://ict.org.il/egypt-between-al-aqsa-flood-and-the-sword-of-irons/>.

²⁵⁷ Shaul, 'Egypt between "Al-Aqsa Flood" and the "Swords of Iron"'.

²⁵⁸ 'Egypt's Central Role in Gaza Conflict | The Jerusalem Post', The Jerusalem Post | JPost.Com, 17 March 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-846247>.

²⁵⁹ Marc Lavergne, 'L'économie Égyptienne Après La Tourmente : Les Défis Sont Toujours Là...:', *Confluences Méditerranée* N° 101, no. 2 (2017): 143–54, <https://doi.org/10.3917/come.101.0143>.

²⁶⁰ Mitchell, 'Israel Risks Ties With Egypt at Its Peril'.

For Israel, Egypt remains an indispensable intermediary. Cairo's control of the Rafah crossing, its intelligence capabilities, and its long-standing involvement in Palestinian affairs make it the key actor capable of influencing negotiations and shaping outcomes in Gaza. Using its expertise, it is working to shape the regional response to the crisis,²⁶¹ thereby becoming a true leader in the Arab Middle East, a position it has lost and is striving to regain.²⁶² And it is working rather well, at least as far as the Palestinian issue is concerned: the Gulf states are aligning themselves with Egypt's peace and reconstruction plan for Gaza rather than the American plan.²⁶³

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that relations between Egypt and Israel since the Camp David Accords cannot be adequately understood through the sole lens of formal diplomacy and treaties. Rather than evolving toward full normalization, these relations have followed a distinctive trajectory: from a *cold peace*, which is a formal and fragile peace, where cooperation is minimal, and relations remain marked by mistrust, to a *strategic peace*, characterized by persistent political distance, limited economic integration, and deepening yet largely unofficial security cooperation. Nonetheless, this *strategic peace* remains partly fragile: It is effective at managing security threats but insufficient to generate political legitimacy or societal acceptance, especially in Egypt, where the Palestinian issue continues to shape public opinion and impose clear limits on overt rapprochement.

One of the central findings of this research is the structural disconnect between public discourse and actual practices. Discourse analysis shows a remarkable continuity and restraint in official rhetoric on both sides. Israeli leaders consistently portray Egypt as a legitimate partner within a regional peace framework, while Egyptian leaders, despite fluctuations linked to domestic political change, avoid open confrontation with Israel and carefully reaffirm their commitments to the peace treaty of 1979. However, this discursive moderation has not translated into meaningful political or societal normalization, which explains why the term "*cold peace*" remains frequently used to describe Egyptian-Israeli relations.

A second significant finding concerns the limited role of economic relations. Despite the potential complementarity between a high-value-added Israeli economy and a demographically rich Egyptian economy, bilateral trade remains weak and politically constrained. Economic cooperation has progressed primarily when driven by external actors, notably the United States, through mechanisms such as the Qualifying Industrial Zones, rather than through a bilateral impulse. This confirms that economic interdependence has not functioned as a driver of normalization, but rather as a controlled and instrumental dimension of the relationship and as a means by which Egypt implements the carrot-and-stick policy.

The third finding lies in the importance of clandestine diplomacy and security cooperation. It clearly indicates that intelligence services have become the backbone of Egyptian-Israeli relations. Through informal channels, tacit agreements, and sustained cooperation in

²⁶¹ Jerus. Post JPostcom, 'Egypt's Central Role in Gaza Conflict | The Jerusalem Post'.

²⁶² Amr Abdelrahim, *Le retour de l'Égypte comme puissance régionale?*, with Institut français des relations internationales, Études de l'Ifri / Programme Turquie et Moyen-Orient (Ifri, 2022).

²⁶³ 'The Egyptian Agenda and Relations with Israel in the Shadow of the War in the Gaza Strip'.

counterterrorism, border control, and crisis management, particularly in the Sinai and around the Israeli-Palestinian wars, both states have developed a dense network of practical interaction. This cooperation has intensified through a process of securitization, whereby shared threats, notably jihadist groups and Iran's regional influence, have overridden ideological hostility and historical mistrust.

Finally, this paper invites broader reflection on the transferability of this model of 'strategic peace' to other regional configurations. The analysis highlights a pattern of normalization based less on socio-political reconciliation than on gradual security convergence, structured around clandestine channels, strong involvement of intelligence agencies, and a shared perception of regional threats. In this respect, the trajectory of relations between Israel and certain Gulf monarchies bears striking similarities to the Egyptian case, particularly concerning the centrality of security cooperation, the relative marginalization of ideological issues, and the cautious management of public opinion. Without claiming to establish a strict equivalence, this study paves the way for a comparative extension of the model analyzed, suggesting that the normalization observed between Israel and the Gulf monarchies can be understood not as a historic break, but as the deepening of a cold and pragmatic peace logic already experienced since Camp David.

The Egyptian-Israeli case shows how former adversaries can sustain long-term cooperation through intelligence channels and pragmatic security arrangements, even in the absence of complete trust, shared narratives, or popular support. While this model has proven effective in ensuring regime security against external threats and regional stability, it remains an incomplete form of peace. It has also proven effective in ensuring lasting peace between Egypt and Israel through regional crises. A durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is increasingly vital for Egypt. Only with such progress can full normalization with Israel (beneficial for both security and economic reasons) become politically feasible.

However, given the Israeli leadership's growing reluctance to support a Palestinian state following the October 7 attacks, these dynamics will continue to test the limits of the strategic peace between Egypt and Israel until significant progress is made on the Palestinian issue.

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