

From Foes to Friends: The Normalization of the United Emirates Arab and Israel Relations

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Abstract

This article aims to explain the reason the United Arab Emirates (UAE) normalized ties within Israel through Abraham Accord. The normalization of the UAE-Israel ties contra with the position of UAE as a part of the members of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League that have long been conflicting within Israel, due to Israel's annexation over Palestinians. Utilize explanative type and constructivism paradigm based on identity as a tool of analysis, and supported with the secondary data. This article found the difference in religious identity, not automatic interfere step of UAE and Israel normalization process. The normalization of the UAE and Israel drive by the threat of Iran in the region. The threat shape collective identity between UAE and Israel as friends and Iran as a common enemy. The collective identity was also constructed via systemic processes in the form of interdependency and proximity with the United States of America. The collective identity was also constructed through strategic practice by both leaders. Furthermore, amongst UAE and Israel gathered through a type of identity Abraham's religion.

Keyword: Normalization, UAE, Israel, Identity, Iran, and Constructivism

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan alasan Uni Emirat Arab (UAE) menjalin normalisasi hubungan dengan Israel melalui perjanjian Abraham Accord. Normalisasi hubungan UAE dengan Israel kontras dengan posisi UAE sebagai negara teluk (GCC) dan Liga Arab yang telah lama berkonflik dengan Israel atas aksi aneksasi Israel di wilayah Palestina. Menggunakan jenis penelitian eksplanatif dengan paradigma konstruktivisme berbasis identitas sebagai pisau analisis, serta didukung oleh data sekunder. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa perbedaan identitas agama tidak lantas menyurutkan langkah UAE dan Israel melakukan normalisasi hubungan. Israel-UAE normalization didorong oleh konteks ancaman regional berupa agresivitas Iran di kawasan. Konteks ancaman Iran membentuk collective identity antara UAE dan Israel sebagai sahabat dan Iran sebagai musuh bersama. Collective identity juga tercipta melalui proses sistemik berupa interdependensi UAE dan Israel dan kedekatan keduanya dengan Amerika Serikat. Collective identity juga terbentuk lewat praktik strategis kedekatan pemimpin kedua negara. Selain itu, antara UAE dan Israel juga disatukan lewat identitas tipe agama Abraham.

Kata kunci: Normalisasi, UAE, Israel, Identitas, Iran, dan Konstruktivisme

INTRODUCTION

On August 13th, 2020, Israel and the United Arab Emirates officially declared normalized relations. Israel-UAE normalization is established and carried out according to Abraham Accords. UAE is the third Arab country after Egypt and Jordan that cultivates relationship with Israel (Zweiri, 2020). Israel-UAE normalization was announced and initiated by the US President Donald J. Trump who mentions that Abraham Accords is a huge breakthrough in advocating peace and welfare of the believers of Abraham Religion. The signature of Abraham Accords Declaration took place in front of the White House, witnessed by Donald J. Trump himself as the host, and signed by the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Emirates Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bahrain Abdullatif Al Zayani (Zweiri, 2020).

The Abraham Accords Declaration set forth the peace treaty and full diplomatic relations and Israel-UAE normalization. Abraham Accords Declaration is the foundation on which Israel-UAE collaboration is established. Chapter 5 of The Abraham Accords Declaration contains several bilateral partnerships in different sectors that include monetary and investment; civil aviation; visa and consular services; innovation and economic and trade partnership; health; science, technology, and airspace for peace causes; tourism, culture, and sport; energy, environment education, and maritime management; telecommunication and post; agriculture and food security; water and legal partnership (U.S Department of State, 2020).

Israel-UAE normalization is an anomaly in the midst of Palestine struggle for independence. To date,

being the member of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), UAE is the supporter of Palestinian independence and freedom from Israel. Together with Persian Gulf countries, UAE once proposed a plan to bring Israel-Palestine conflict to an end (Katzman, 2017). UAE even denied the existence and recognition of Israel as a country. Also, as a part of Arab League, UAE contributed to the economic boycott of Israel (Zaga, 2018).

The UAE provide political supports, in addition to multiple funding and relieve programs, to relieve the struggle of Palestine. In June 2015, the UAE donated \$12 billion for victims of Gaza after wars with Israel (Katzman, 2017). Then, in 2017, the UAE donated approximately \$550 billion for humanitarian projects channelled through the U.N. Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) for the Palestinian refugees in Palestine and Syria. The UAE also initiated housing programs or home provisions for the Palestinians in Rafah, Gaza strip known as "Shaykh Khalifa City" (Katzman, 2017).

Israel-UAE normalization is met with a rejection from Palestine. Responding to the normalization, the government of Palestine withdrew its ambassador for the UAE as an act of rejection to Israel-UAE normalization. The rejection was announced by HAMAS (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya), a group ruling the Gaza strip and opposing the president of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas (Barghoti, Abbas, Haniyeh condemn UAE-Israel deal, 2020). It is indicative of a mutual rejection by both government of Palestine and Hamas regarding Israel-UAE normalization.

Previous studies on Israel-UAE normalization has been theoretically focusing on the realistic and religious paradigms. Engaging the perspectives of regional alliance in realist paradigm,

Seyed Amir Niakooee and Vida Haji (2020) found that Israel-UAE normalization is intended to gain support from the United States, strengthen regional forces, and to face threats coming from Iran (Amir & Haji, 2020). Meanwhile, RMTAD Wicaksono (2020), reflecting on the concept of national interests and real politics, stated that Israel-UAE normalization is encouraged by the escalating threats from the Iran in addition to the urgency of the UAE to establish economic partnership with Israel to stimulate economic growth amid the Covid-19 pandemic and plummeting oil price (Wicaksono, 2020). On the other hand, Seo Jeongmin (2020) used the security paradigm and regime paradigm security stated that the contributing factor to the normalization of the UAE-Israel relations is regional security, instead of domestic security (Jeongmin, 2020).

The current study departs from previous research that focused on investigating Israel-UAE normalization based on realist and security paradigms which, in fact, set foot on the material elements alone, such as economy, military, and geography. As a consequence, non-material elements like ideas, identity, and concepts that formulate shared understanding among the state actors, are left unexplained. Furthermore, it is an anomaly that the UAE, as a member of GCC and Arab League that have long been in conflict with Israel, is attempting to normalize relationship with Israel. Accordingly, the non-existent studies on the non-material elements in an attempt to explain Israel-UAE normalization as well as the enigma of UAE's shifting policy from 'friends to foes' with Israel has encouraged the researchers to investigate the reasons behind the UAE normalizing relationship with Israel from identity-based constructivism perspectives.

Theoretical Framework: Identity-based Constructivism

One of the core assumptions of constructivism in understanding country behaviour is identity. Alexander Wendt (1999) defines identity as the attributes attached to a country (Wendt, 1999). Simply speaking, identity is the reflection of a country existence. Identity is closely associated with a state effort to make meaning of how the state perceives itself and what international structures the state is facing. Accordingly, state policies reflect the inherent identity of the given country.

Based on the construction, identity constitutes internal elements and external structure (Wendt, 1999), thus creating not one but multiple characteristics. Identity diversity is indicative of a dynamic character of an identity that is dependent on the current internal context and external structure of a state. However, identity diversity is not necessarily applied simultaneously. Identity can be harnessed selectively depending on the current situation or contexts of the corresponding country (Wendt, 1999).

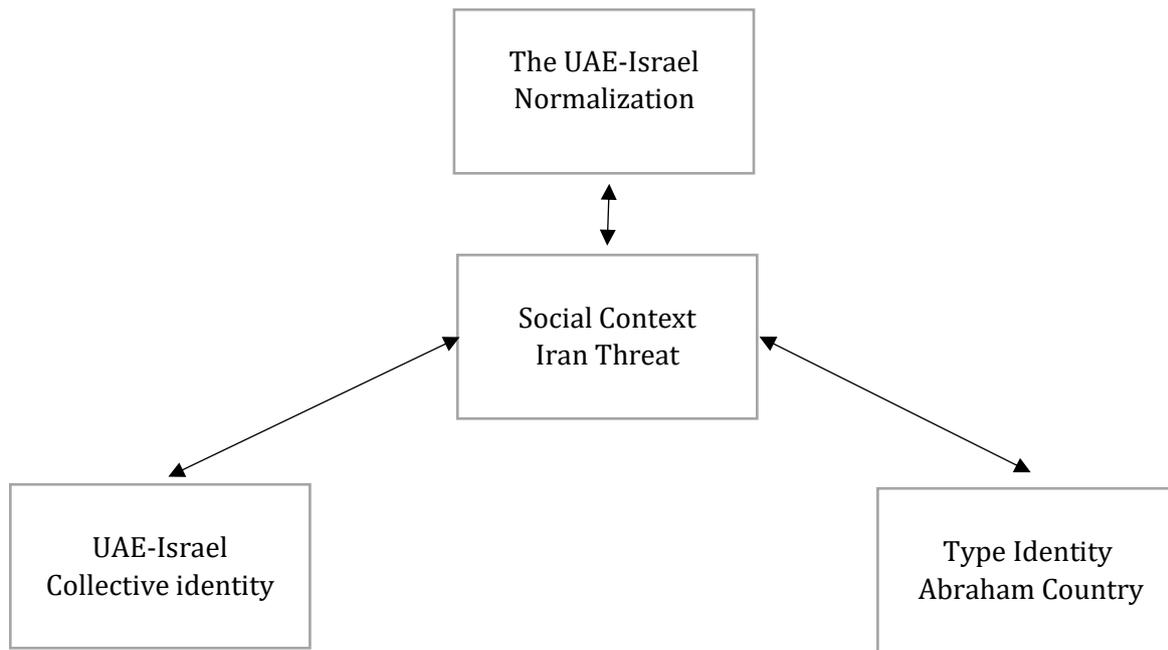
The social contexts faced by a country would shape a variative identity. Alexander Wendt (1999) categorized identity into four types of typology, namely (1) personal or corporate identity, (2) type or categorical identity (3) role identity, and (4) collective identity (Wendt, 1999). *First*, personal or corporate identity is the sole, material identity inherent to a country. Indonesia's personal identity is a maritime country. *Second*, type or category identity refers to social categorization (ideology, thought, beliefs, or religion) embedded on a country. Some examples of type identity are democratic country, Moslem country, country of Abraham religion, and the fight for Human Rights.

Third, the role identity is established based on the relationship with other parties instead of intrinsic elements such as personal/corporate identity and type/categorical identity. The presence of other parties in shaping role identity cannot be separated from intersubjectivity (shared understanding) on who am I and they. Intersubjectivity has shaped the role identity of a country to tell which is friend and which is foe. The country can have a role identity when it holds certain position in social structure and hold counter-identities role or befriend other countries.

Fourth, collective identity is formed based on common characteristics between one country and another, which blends into one. In collective identity, one country no longer identifies itself apart from others, but collectively (we). Based on the mechanism of formation, collective identity is made up of structural contexts, systemic process, and strategic practices (Wendt, 1994). Regional or global structural contexts are the media for multiple countries to establish interaction. This structure can either hinder or facilitate a country to interact with other and eventually establish a collective identity amongst them (Wendt, 1994). While structural contexts have indirect impacts on the formation of collective identity, systemic process brings direct impact to the formation. It is because systemic process has a direct correlation with the dynamics of external contexts of country's behaviour that shapes the

collective identity (Wendt, 1994). The dynamics of internal contexts are related to interdependence and convergence of domestic values in transnational context (Wendt, 1994). At last, strategic practice is correlated with whom the interdependence is establish (Wendt, 1994). By establishing a cooperative relation with other countries, a country would change its conviction towards other countries while internalizing a new identity with other parties. In brief, the country will learn to identify itself together with other countries and to perceive themselves altogether as 'we' (Wendt, 1994).

In light of the process of normalizing the UAE-Israel relations, the social context in this case is Iran threat to UAE, and Israel provide a space to form collective identity for Israel and the UAE who are both threatened by Iran nuclear program and aggressivity. Additionally, threats coming from Iran unite the type identities of UAE and Israel as Abraham countries. Therefore, relevant identity typology by Alexander Wendt to explain this phenomenon is first, collective identity and second, type identity. UAE-Israel collective identity is established through a structural context, systemic process, and strategic practice. Meanwhile, the type identity of UAE as the representation of Islamic countries and Israel as a Jewish country has united both countries through a type identity, i.e., Abraham religion.



Source: Edited by Author, 2022

Figure 1. Model Analysis of Israel-UAE normalization

Research Method

This study used explanative qualitative research to accomplish research objectives to unravel why the UAE normalized their relations with Israel. Data were constituted from secondary sources that included journal articles, speeches, relevant reports, online media and social media. This study also analyzed primary data in form of tweets posted on Twitter accounts of the UAE officials in Iran.

Probing into the research questions of Israel-UAE normalization, the author used the constructive paradigm that perceives international relations as an outcome of social construction that is built from intangible, non-material elements that include concepts, beliefs, and identity. International phenomena, according to constructivism, is a social construct affected by the proposition of Alexander Wendt (1992), *'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politic'* (Wendt, Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The

Social Construction of Power Politics, 1992). Social construct in international phenomena is marked by a constitutive relationship (constructor) between an agent and structure. The constitutive relation is formed based on the intersubjectivity (shared understanding) between the agents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Iran to UAE and Israel in the area

Historically, Iran has been a threat even before the UAE was established. In November 1971, Iran had occupied the small islands in the Persian Gulf; Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Smaller Tunb. When the UAE was established in Desember 1971, Emirates of Sharjah (one of the UAE) claimed that the three islands in the Persian Gulf belonged to the UAE. Iran, however, countered this claim. As a result, this territorial dispute has escalated to UAE-Iran conflict (Nader, 2010). Today, the UAE-Iran territorial dispute in Abu Musa, Greater

Tunb, and Smaller Tunb remains unresolved.

The relationship of the neighbouring UAE-Iran in the regional Middle East is full of tensions but without direct confrontation. Since founded in 1971, the UAE has leaned towards *hedging* strategy to gain benefits without imposing direct confrontation with Iran (El-Dessouki & Mansour, 2020). *Hedging* strategy is a rational option for the UAE as a small country with minimal forces when facing its neighbour, Iran (El-Dessouki & Mansour, 2020). In other words, disparity in force has encouraged the UAE to impose hedging strategy against Iran. However, as the Arab Spring was taking place in the Middle East in 2011, UAE put forward the hard balancing strategy that focused on *external balancing* by forming alliance with Saudi Arabia and the United States, as well as *internal balancing* by strengthening the UAE military capacity (El-Dessouki & Mansour, 2020).

Iranian nuclear energy marks Iran real threat against the Middle East region. Iranian nuclear program during the era of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has sparked sanction from international communities. The isolation of Iran from international community was initiated by George W. Bush's administration, and this practice made the UAE the frontier countries together with Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the other Gulf countries. Their relationship seemed to warm up when Iran, as well as the United States, China, France, Russia, England, and Germany signed the nuclear deal Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14th, 2015. Soon after, the UAE, together with Saudi Arabia and the other eight Gulf countries were caught in conflict with Iran in Yemen. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and eight other Gulf countries launched the Operation Decisive Storm, Operation Restoring Hope, and Operation Golden Arrow to curb Iranian

forces in Yemen (Ulrichsen, 2017) and to block Houthi groups that received back up from Iran.

The perception that Iran is a threat is set forth by some leaders of the UAE. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Partnership of the UAE, Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan penned his opinion in the *Financial Times* January 30th, 2018, that Iran is a threat to the stability of Middle East. The threat occurs due to Iran's disobedience to the principles agreed in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Iran's decision to continue developing nuclear weapons. Abdullah asserted his opinion as follows:

What we need is a new treaty of three elements: strip Iran's capacity to supporting the extremists and sectarian militant in the Region; incapacitate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp that brought conflicts and destruction to other countries; and moderate the development of ballistic missile program to the normal level, while preventing the innocent civil residents from being the target of the neighbouring countries (Al Nahyan, 2018).

The opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Partnership, Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan did not emerge from a vacuum space. His writing is the reflection of Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan's contemplation about "Iran" and who is "UAE". This contemplation arises from the relationship and mutual observation between the UAE and Iran, which eventually produces an understanding that Iran is a mutual threat for the UAE and the Middle East territory. Accordingly, there needs a collective attempt in addition to JCPOA involving the UAE to block the progress of Iranian nuclear development.

In line with the UAE-Iran feud, a statement of feud is expressed from Iran to the UAE. When Mike Pompeo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United States, visited Abu Dhabi in 2019, he stated that, "When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran expressed a threat to pull a full-force war until the last American standing, we are here to build a coalition to make peace" (Hafezi, 2019). Responding to Mike Pompeo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted that "@SecPompeo stated the opposite: *It is not #Iran that wanted to be the last in America; but rather, the host #B_team seems so eager to fight Iran until the last American standing.*" *B_Team here refers to the advisor of national security of the White House, John Bolton, the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, the Crown Prince of Saudi Mohammed Bin Salman, and the Crown Prince of the UAE Mohammed bin Zayed* (Hafezi, 2019).

Iran-Israel relations are full of tension. Their relations became worse following Iran Revolution in 1979. Ephraim Kam, an observer to Israeli security council revealed that the entire leaders of Israel acknowledged that Iran is a real strategic threat to Israel (Russell, 2017). Nuclear weapon ownership is Iran main threat to Israel. Iranian threat was expressed by Benjamin Netanyahu in the UN General Assembly 2016 that:

"Iran threat is laid before us all. There must be sustainable and integrated efforts to counter the aggression and terror from Iran. Israel will not let the terrorist regime develop nuclear weapon in Iran – not now, not in the next decade, and in the future" (Netanyahu, 2016).

Facing Iran, Israel put forth *deterrence* strategy to prevent the extension of Iran influence in Middle East Territory. Deterrence strategy was conducted via a lobby with the US, and diplomacy with Saudi Arabia, the UAE,

Bahrain, and Oman. Israel lobby to the US was intended to pull the US from the JCPOA treaty because Iran failed to sign and obey the treaty. Meanwhile, diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the other Gulf countries aimed at maintaining Saudi Arabia-Iran rivalry (Maher, 2020).

The decision to establish Israel-UAE normalization cannot be separated from the social context, which in this case is Iran threat to the UAE and Israel. The social context provides a room for countries to interact and build mutual understanding. The meaning made in 'Who am (I) the UAE' and who are (you) Iran' will shape the identity and interest of the UAE in nurturing relations with Iran.

However, although both countries are neighbours, intersubjectivity between the UAE and Iran has paved the way to feud. It is because both the UAE and Iran perceive each other as foes instead of friends. Instead of building friendship, these two Gulf countries are caught up in a long-standing feud.

The social context in terms of nuclear weapon ownership and aggressiveness of Iran in Middle East territory has provided a room where UAE-Iran and Israel-Iran feud has grown. The UAE and Iran identify themselves as foes instead of friends, and so do Israel and Iran. The current social context faced by the UAE and Israel is Iranian threat in the Middle East territory that will eventually establish the UAE identity and Israel-Iran feud. In other words, a common enemy has united the UAE and Israel.

The Construction of the UAE-Israel Collective Identity

The normalization of the UAE-Israel relations signifies a collective identity that unites both countries. Collective identity is a varied identity based on issues, time, and place, and may take

form in a bilateral, regional, or global contexts. There are three mechanisms where collective identity is created: structural context, systemic process, and strategic practice (Wendt, 1994). In this part, we will go through the process of the UAE-Israel collective identity taking shape which has led both countries to normalize their diplomatic relationship.

Mutual Understanding of the UAE and Israel

First, the intersubjective structural context that is established from mutual understanding, expectations, and social knowledge of each other countries (Wendt, 1994). In this context, the UAE and Israel identify each other as friends. This status is embodied in positive statements and responses in multiple occasions. During the Abu Dhabi Climate conference 2019, Yisrael Katz, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs revealed that:

"I am excited to stand here in Abu Dhabi and represent the interests of the state of Israel vis-a-vis the Arab Gulf states. I will continue to work with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to promote the normalization policy with the strength we are leading, based on Israel's capabilities, both in the fields of security and intelligence, and in various civilian areas" (Barghoti, 2019).

Israel's positive response and expressions towards the UAE were expressed by Miri Regrev, Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport when in Abu Dhabi in 2018 visiting the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque with the officials of the UAE. Miri Regrev showed his admiration to the architecture of the mosque that represented friendship and peace. Miri Regrev stated:

"For two years we had talks in order to reach this moment and it was hard to stop the tears. I want to thank the authorities in Abu Dhabi and our hosts here who received us in an exemplary manner" (Heller, 2018).

The hope for Israel-UAE relationship was articulated by Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Figure 2 below shows that Israel PM, Benyamin Netanyahu has retweeted a post by Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Partnership of the UAE who shared an article from Spectator magazine. The article posits reformation in Islamic body will support Arab-Israel in Middle East. The article shared by Abdullah Bin Zayed met with a warm reception from Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu with a hope for a normalization and peace in both Arab and Israel sides.



Source: Twitter (@IsraeliPM), 2019.

Figure 2. PM Israel Benjamin Netanyahu Retweeted a post by Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan

In line with Israel, the UAE also gave a positive response to establish a relationship with Israel. Figure 2 above shows that Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan – The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the UAE – tweeted an article about Arab-Israeli alliance from Spectator magazine was not without any intention and purposes. Looking further, the tweet indicates that Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has read, understood, and made meaning of the article in the magazine. As he grasped relevance and understanding of the news of the article, he shared it to his Twitter personal account. His tweet received positive feedback from PM Netanyahu with a hope for peace and normalization.

The evidence of the statement of The Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel, Yisrael Katz, Israeli Minister of

Culture and Sport, Miri Regrev, and the tweet of the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Partnership, Abdullah Bin Zayed, and the retweet of Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu above indicates mutual understanding of the established official relations between both countries, which demonstrate an understanding that Israel is a friend for the UAE, and vice versa. Structural context in forms of perceiving the other country as a friend is the initial stage of forming collective identity between Israel and the UAE. However, this structure remains dynamic depending on the social contexts currently faced by the corresponding countries. Therefore, the next stage in the formation of collective identity is systemic process.

The UAE-Israel Interdependence

Second, the systemic process is formed through interdependence and mutual domestic values (Wendt, 1994). This article will review one variable that forms collective identity at the systemic process, namely interdependence. Interdependence can be measured from the dynamic density (Wendt, 1994). *Dynamic Density* refers to commerce activities or transactions between the UAE and Israel, as well as a “mutual interest” namely Iran threat in the Regional and friendship with the US in the global setting.

Business activities between the UAE and Israel have long been established although the UAE once boycotted Israeli products. DP World (Dubai Port World) is one of the UAE state enterprises that form a joint venture with Israeli corporate, ZIM Integrated Shipping Services Ltd (Salem, 2016). It is evident when a logistic-provider company, DP World, was criticized for its operation in several harbors in the US. The Chairman of ZIM Integrated Shipping Services Ltd, Idan Ofer sent a letter to the US Senate that despite the UAE boycott of Israel, ZIM remains in trust and convenience to partner with DP World. Meanwhile, the Vice President of DP World, Michael Moore, made an affirmation that DP World has a long-established business relation with ZIM. It demonstrates a business activity that has been a mutual necessity and an interdependence between the UAE and Israel.

Business activities and transaction between the UAE and Israel are also nurtured in security sector. As written in Emirates247.com, in 2008, the security authority council of Abu Dhabi Critical National Infrastructure Authority (CNIA) signed a US\$816

million contract with AGT International, a company based in Switzerland owned by an Israeli businessman, Mati Kochavi (Ulrichsen, 2016). In addition, Middle East Eye wrote that in 2015, AGT International established a joint venture with two UAE companies: Advanced Integrated Systems and Advanced Technical Solutions in an initiative of Falcon Eye (Ulrichsen, 2016).

Israel-UAE relations are bonding through a mutual interest, namely Iran threat in the regional context and friendship with the US in the global context. Iran has been a threat to both UAE and Israel due to its nuclear weaponry which becomes the real threat to both UAE and Israel in the regional of Middle East. Contemplating on the realist paradigm, Muhammad Ismail (2015) argued that Iranian nuclear program would trigger its neighbouring countries to harness their nuclear program in order to create a balance of power to face Iran (Ismail, 2015). It is worth considering that the UAE is geographically close to Iran and involved in territorial dispute in Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Smaller Tunb as previously elaborated. Accordingly, Iranian nuclear weaponry is an acute threat to the Gulf countries, including the UAE (Kaye & Wehrey, 2007). For Israel, Iranian nuclear is a direct threat. It is evident from the rhetoric statement of the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who claimed a plan to undoubtedly launch direct aggression to Israel (Kaye & Wehrey, 2007). This rhetoric statement from the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will certainly impose fear and threat to the public of Israel.

Israel-UAE relations are also strengthened through their

friendship with the US at a global level. The US has frequently engaged with the UAE and Israel in discussions around regional and global development. For example, discussing Iran threat in the regional of Middle East, Brian Hook who is the Top Official in the US Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Iran, organized and hosted a meeting with the officials of Israel and the UAE. As published in Wall Street Journal, the covert discussed the agenda for coordination mapping and improving bilateral relations in diplomatic, military, and intelligent (Strobel & Nissenbaum, 2019).

Historically, the US-UAE relations have been nurtured since 1971. An official diplomatic relation was initiated in 1972. The UAE is an important partner for the US in facing threats in the regional Middle East. The US deposed 5,000 military personnel under an umbrella partnership with the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) (Katzman, 2017). Additionally, some momentums have demonstrated the close relation between the UAE and the US, such as the UAE affiliation with Saudi Arabia to counter the Houthi force in Yemen, with the US to fight Al Qaeda, ISIS, and the rebel groups to take down Asad in Suriah, toppled Qadafi in Libya, and supported the fight against the Ikhwanul Muslimin (Katzman, 2017). These momentums altogether demonstrate a closeness, mutuality, and togetherness between the US and the UAE as allies in global and regional contexts.

Israel and the US have had a harmonious relationship since the Israel was established in 1948. Since Israel establishment, many members of the US Congress are committed to the US-Israel security and partnership. Based on the report of Congressional Research Service 2018,

Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu is the influential figure to the US President Donald Trump to exit the 2015 JCPOA treaty with Iran (Zanotti, 2018). The withdrawal decision was based on Iran's failure to submit to, obey, and follow JCPOA rules. The success of Israel PM in influencing Trump to withdraw from JCPOA shows trust to Netanyahu. It demonstrates the closeness and friendship between the US and Israel.

The common other between the UAE and Israel, i.e., Iran threat and friendship with the US, is the embodiment of systemic process in establishing the UAE-Israel collective identity. Iran is the enemy to both Israel and the UAE. It reflects an old proverb that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Meanwhile, the US is a best friend to Israel and the UAE, and therefore, confirming an old proverb that a friend of my friend is my friend.

Strategic Practice of the UAE and Israel

Third, strategic practice assumes the countries with which interactions and interdependence occur. According to Wendt (1994), strategic practice forms collective identity in behavioural and rhetorical fashion (Wendt, 1994). While collective behaviour identity is established through international partnership, the rhetorical identity is demonstrated through statements conveying meanings and significance that are manipulated by rhetorical practice (Wendt, 1994).

The behavioural elements of strategic collective identity between the UAE and Israel are built through multiple partnerships. The UAE-Israel partnership can be categorized into four sectors: politics, security, economy, and civil. The UAE-Israel political relations can be traced back from multiple meetings of the leaders

of both countries. An Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, published in September 2012 that Israel PM Netanyahu and The UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Abdullah Bin Zayed were holding a meeting amid the UN General Assembly in New York. The meeting was intended to discuss and address the issue of Iranian nuclear (Zaga, 2018). Additionally, a multilateral collaboration in 2015 allowed Israel to be the member of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to open a representative office in IRENA located in Abu Dhabi, the UAE (BBC, 2015).

Israel-UAE partnership in safety sector was established in multiple covert. However, as published in Israel's Haaretz, there were three multilateral military camps sponsored by the third party. In 2018, the UAE military came to Israel for training rehearsal of F35 fighter jets (Zaga, 2018).

Israel-UAE business relations, formed under confidentiality, include exchange of goods and business transactions between the UAE and Israeli corporates. In this business, Israel used the third-party company (Zaga, 2018). In 2008, AGT International based in Switzerland owned by an Israeli businessman, Mati Kochavi secured a contract with Abu Dhabi government for installation of electronic gate, sensor system, and surveillance camera to supervise the border area and secure the oil and gas field. In 2015, AGT International built business partnership with two UAE companies: Advanced Integrated Systems and Advanced Technical Solutions in Falcon Eye initiatives (Ulrichsen, 2016). In 2008, a diamond store of Lev Leviev Group was opened in Dubai as a collaborative project

between an Israel businessman, Yitzhak Tshuva and the UAE government. Meanwhile, trading activities between Israel and the UAE are dominated by Israel exports which, according to (Ulrichsen, 2016), include medical supplies, telecommunication, raw material, defence apparatus, machine and engineering, and agriculture and food. As mentioned previously, these commodities are exported from Israel through the third country before entering the UAE.

Civil partnership between Israel and the UAE focuses on sportmanship. The UAE are the frequent host of international sport events. In 2010, the UAE welcomed Israeli tennis players to International Tennis Tournament in Dubai. In October 2015, Israeli judo athletes participated in the annual International Judo Competition in Abu Dhabi. Further, in 2018, the cycling team sponsored by the UAE participated in Giro d'Italia International Cycling Competition whose first phase was taking place in Israel (Ulrichsen, 2016).

Rhetorically, the practical strategy of the UAE-Israel collective identity is built upon multiple rhetorical discourses. The rhetoric of Israel-the UAE is intended to face Iran aggressivity. In 2018's UN annual Congress, PM Benjamin Netanyahu stated "*By empowering Iran, it brought Israel and many Arab states closer together than ever before in an intimacy and friendship that I have not seen in my lifetime and would have been unimaginable a few years ago*" (UN.org, 2018).

This statement is indicative of the closer and more intimate relations between Israel and Arab countries, including the UAE, in facing Iran. The rhetoric of friendship and

relationship demonstrates mutual attitude, perspectives, and challenge between us (Iran and Arab countries) in facing Iran. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of the UAE, Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan perceived that:

"...Iran seek to undermine the security of the region by spreading chaos, violence, and sectarianism. Iran's interference in Arab affairs has reached an unprecedented level." (UN, 2018).

The rhetorics of Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan emphasized that Iran is a threat to the regional of Middle East. The mutual rhetoric between the UAE and Israel shows that the strategic practice of the UAE-Israel collective identity is rhetorically built upon Iran threat in the regional.

Constructing Type Identity of Abraham Religion

Constructing UAE-Israel identity is adhered through the type identity of Abraham religion. Type identity refers to social categorization (ideology, thought, belief) inherent to a country. This article will elaborate general understanding around Abraham religion, the UAE as a Moslem-majority nation, Israel as the representation of Jewish country, and both religions are part of Abraham Religion.

Abraham religion, or Ibrahim in Islam, is the founding father of semitic or samawi religions that include Islam, Jew, and Christian. The believers of Islam, Jew, and Christians are the descendants of Ibrahim, and therefore, these three religions are very closely associated. The theological concept built by Abraham religion as either semitic or samawi religions emphasizes the concepts of monotheism (tawhid), and surrender (practising Islam) completely (kaffah) to the One Almighty God and reject any

forms of paganism and polytheism (Afdillah, 2016).

According to Dr. Berthold A. Pareira, O.Carm in (Afdillah, 2016, page. 99), for the follower of Islam, Ibrahim I the beloved of Allah (QS. al-Nisa' [4]: 125), the opposer of paganism, and the founder of monotheism (QS. al-An'am [6]: 74-83; Maryam [19]:41-51; al-Shaffat [37]:83-99; al-Anbiya [21]:51-71; al-Syu'ara' [26]: 69-104). In addition, Ibrahim is represented as the victory of all trials and whom Allah is testing to lead mankind; a perfect example of faith, and together with his Son, Ishmael, set up the Ka'bah (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 124-129). In fact, Islam can be named Ibrahim religion (pen theology) (QS. alBaqarah [2]: 130-141; Ali Imran [3]: 64-68, 95; al-Nisa' [4]: 125; alAn'am [6]: 161). For the Jew, Ibrahim is their ancestor (Isaiah 51: 2; Mat 3: 9; Luk 3: 8; and John 8: 33,39) and even "The renowned Father of many nations." In Christian faith, he is the ancestor of Jesus Christ (Mat 1: 1). Even St. Paul mentioned Ibrahim as the father of faithful people, both the circumcised and uncircumcised (Rm 4: 1-25). Those who have faith are children of Abraham, and blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Gal 3: 7-9). The Christians who are his descendants will be blessed by their faith to Christ (Gal 3: 29) (Afdillah, 2016).

Islam is part of Abraham religion. The majority of the citizens of the UAE are Islam followers that consist of 85% Sunni and 15% Syiah. The total populations are made up of 76% Islam, 9% Christian, and the rest 15% are Buddhist and Hindu (Katzman, 2017). It clearly demonstrates that the religion type of identity in the UAE is Abraham religions. Although Islam is the official religion, freedom of faith remains upheld in the UAE. There are at least 35 churches donated by the kingdom to its people, and the government of the UAE announces the plan to provide a land to

build temple for the Hindu and Buddhist minority (Katzman, 2017).

The establishment of Israel cannot be separated from the desire to seek for a homeland for the Jewish people. Encouraged by sense of nationalism and antisemitic in Europe in the 19th century, Theodore Herzl wrote *The Jewish State* in 1896 (Zanotti, 2018) about the ideas of wanting to establish an independent Jewish country in Israel. Jew is a part of Abraham religion as the majority of Israel populations. Based on the Data of World Population Review 2020, three quarters of the populations are Jew, 17,8% Islam, 2 % Christians, and 1.6 % Druze. Israel recognizes five official religions: Judaism, Christian, Islam, Druze, and Baha'i belief (World Population Review, 2020).

Constructing type identity that is inherent in the UAE-Israel national identity arrives at Abraham religion as its meeting point which unites the UAE and Israel with a mutual ancestor, i.e., Abraham or Ibrahim (Islam). This shared characteristic shows that both UAE and Israel have the same historical roots and equal positions as semitic or samawi religion. Therefore, in Israel-UAE normalization, the term Abraham is used to represents the shared type identity through "Abraham Accords."

CONCLUSION

Based on the elaboration above, this article has found some contributing factors that lay the foundation of UAE-Israel normalization. First, the social context in forms of social context in the regional of Middle East. Social contexts provide a room for UAE-Iran interactions, as well as invoking the meaning of "who am (I) the UAE" and who are (you) Iran." Although the UAE and Iran are neighboring countries, the intersubjectivity between them has created feud. It is because Iran and the UAE perceive each other as enemies

instead of friends. Eventually, the social context that the UAE identity is currently facing has shifted from Israel threat to Iran threat. In other words, Iran threat has made the UAE prefer normalizing its relations with Israel to making friends with Iran.

Second, collective identity between the UAE and Israel can be traced back from the structural context, systemic process, and strategic practice of both countries. In the structural context, self-identification of each country, has shaped a friendship pattern.

Third, type identity of Abraham countries is the adhering factor of the UAE-Israel relations. Abraham religion is either semitic or samawi religions that emphasizes monotheism and rejects paganism and polytheism. On that note, Abraham religion consists of Islam, Jew, and Christian religions. While Islam is the official religion in the UAE, Jew is the official religion in Israel. Both religions are constructed based on type identity of Abraham countries.

Identity-based constructivism has enabled the authors to explore the non-material aspects as the complementary explanation built upon material aspects. The force of non-material explanation that is emphasized by constructivism has given a vast opportunity for the author to make further meaning of the aspects or issues being investigated. Unfortunately, the authors found difficulties in the data collection/gathering process. Most data revealed that the UAE-Israel relations or diplomacy were taking place in secrecy (*covert diplomacy*). Therefore, confidential aspects have hindered the author in gathering the data. Future research can investigate the non-state actors, such as businessmen operating in the UAE and Israel in order to explain Israel-UAE normalization.

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