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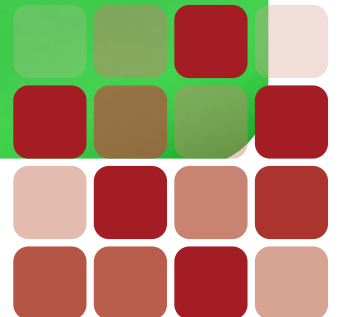
Analysis

No: 261 / August 2020

# THE UAE-ISRAEL NORMALIZATION: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS



HALA MULKI & GÖKHAN ERELİ





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ISBN: 978-605-06622-6-9

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# THE UAE-ISRAEL NORMALIZATION: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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August 2020

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## Background of the Agreement

The United Arab Emirates (the UAE) has stood out among the most important US allies in the Middle East particularly since 2016. Even when Trump was president-elect, the UAE has attempted to influence the Middle East policy of the incoming Trump administration. It has been claimed that many people from the Trump administration have had various relations with both the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. Ultimately, it was revealed that the UAE and Saudi Arabia were now illegally supporting the Trump election campaign through people, some of whom are now in prison.<sup>1</sup> Especially in 2017 and early 2018, there were many earthquakes within the Trump cabinet as a result of issues that have come up in the campaigning process.

Emboldened by the support of Trump administration, the UAE started to pursue a more effective policy in the Middle East after 2016. In most analyzes, it is mentioned that the most important US allies in the Middle East are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. This partnership policy was also tried to be reified via the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) project, which was very popular for a period.<sup>2</sup> It can be said that the UAE is the most prominent among the Middle Eastern partners of the US. One reason why the UAE is the most important partner is that more than 90% of the UAE's population is non-citizens and only 10% of the country en-

joys the perks of citizenship. The UAE which does not have a large public opinion and whose leaders do not have a sense of accountability to the public has thus become the most important partner of the USA. The fact that its current leader, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed has a military background and the fact that the USA has been involved in the activities of the region since the 1990s have created a positive perception of the UAE in the Washington policy circles. Even former Secretary of Defense James Mattis when he was a general in the US Army labeled the UAE as "Little Sparta".<sup>3</sup> The UAE's becoming a pivot country valued by the US is blended with the UAE leadership's desire to pursue an active foreign policy. For this reason, the UAE has sought to implement its foreign policy perspective both in the Gulf region and in the wider Middle East with facilitation brokered by the US.

The UAE played a key role in Sisi's coming to power in Egypt in 2013 and supported the Assad regime in Syria after 2018. Also, the UAE helped Khalifa Haftar, leader of the illegitimate forces in Libya, form the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) from 2014 onwards and helped him launch various offensives on the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli. In Yemen, the separatist structure, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), has been supported by the UAE and the UAE did not fulfill the requirements of the Arab Coalition of which it is a staunch member alongside Saudi Arabia.

Emboldened by the support of Trump administration, the UAE started to pursue a more effective policy in the Middle East after 2016.

In addition to all this, what makes the UAE an important partner in the eyes of the US is its ongoing desire to normalize relations with Israel. For some time now, there had been several collaborations between the leadership of the UAE and Israel in the social, cultural, economic, tourism, and sports fields. Although it is argued that the efforts date back to earlier times, it can be argued that the intensive web of rela-

tions between the UAE and Israel has increased during the last decade.

## Growing Normalization

It was alleged that in 2017, the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan met in New York in 2012.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to the verifiability level of this claim, the meetings that followed started to be carried out in a more concrete and apparent fashion. For example, a judo tournament was held in Abu Dhabi in 2018. As part of this tournament, Abu Dhabi's leadership allowed Israeli athletes to be represented at the tournament under their flag.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, after that a former Israeli minister attended a conference in Abu Dhabi and gave a speech. Along with this, in 2019, former Israeli Foreign and Intelligence Minister, Yisrael Katz, visited Abu Dhabi as part of a UN-designated conference.<sup>6</sup>

Bilateral cooperation between the UAE and Israel is reflected in the cybersecurity field and other relevant fields, as well as in mutual visits by officials who are serving or have previously served. In late 2019, it was claimed that a \$3 billion cooperation was made between Israel and the UAE regarding the transfer of modern intelligence tools.<sup>7</sup> The cooperation instances in 2020 were mostly related to the economy and health fields. In May, the UAE's airline company Etihad Airways made historic and unexpected flights to Tel Aviv for the first time, with coronavirus medical aid planned to be delivered to the Palestine Authority via Israel.<sup>8</sup> Although the Palestine Authority refused to take the aid because it was not consulted beforehand, the UAE may have earned a point in the Israeli policy circles with this move. Throughout the years, this and many other social, cultural, economic, and prestige-related developments have intensified the network of relations between the two countries.

Also, Netanyahu's office published a statement saying that the fact that an agreement has been reached with the UAE does not mean that the Israeli government will provide the UAE with US-made F-35 jets.

In this sense, an important development took place in August 2020. US President Donald Trump stated that the diplomatic normalization process between the two countries has been formalized, with the countries reaching a peace agreement. President Donald Trump's statements on normalization were also confirmed by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the UAE's de facto leader, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed. Thus, the UAE has become the third Arab country to normalize relations with Israel in 2020, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. The agreement called the "Abraham Accords" will then be signed on paper in Washington.<sup>9</sup>

The agreement was reached based on the Israeli Prime Minister's preface that he abandoned the plan to annex the West Bank, but Prime Minister Netanyahu made a later statement on the matter. Netanyahu used expressions in his statement implying that the annexation plan was not abandoned. Also, Netanyahu's office published a statement saying that the fact that an agreement has been reached with the UAE does not mean that the Israeli government will provide the UAE with US-made F-35 jets.<sup>10</sup> Also, the office said that Prime Minister Netan-

yahu voiced consistent opposition to any such transfer to the UAE. As these instances have shown, we can think that the UAE may experience a loss of prestige from this agreement in the long term.

This agreement, which will have great consequences in the Middle East, of course, garnered many positive and negative reactions. As expected, Western countries are the leading actors who are satisfied with the agreement. Western countries and organizations such as the EU, France, Germany, the UK, and Greece declared their urgent support for the agreement and congratulated Israel and the UAE. Also, the agreement had an echo in Balkan countries such as Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Albania, and these countries congratulated Israel and the UAE on the agreement.

Looking at the regional responses, Bahrain, one of the closest partners of the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in the region, was one of the first countries to express positive support for the agreement. Bahrain praised the efforts of Israel and the UAE concerning the agreement. The island kingdom also stated that the agreement will have significant regional outcomes. Besides Bahrain, Egypt and Oman were the countries that favored the agreement. Egypt's response is ultimately understandable given its close ties with Israel and the UAE particularly after 2013. However, what is striking here is the reaction of Oman, which stands out with its neutrality and mediation in regional developments. Here, Oman's support for the agreement can be explained by economic motives. Although Netanyahu visited Oman during the reign of the former ruler, Sultan Qaboos, and caused an increase in the level of socio-cultural relations between the two countries, it should be seen that this is not the main reason for an Omani response to the agreement. The underlying economic reason for Oman's reaction here could be the relationship between

Omani and Emirati banks. This is because, as part of a recent agreement, Omani banks are relying on a \$2 billion loan that is expected to come from leading Emirati banks.<sup>11</sup> In such an environment, it can be thought that the Omani leadership may not want to upset this economic relationship with the UAE. Especially considering the example where Bahrain is financially dependent on Saudi Arabia and the UAE, it can be dangerous for economic relations to take the lead in political relations. This is because, when looking at other regional developments, Oman does not seem to have a common attitude with the UAE in the war in Yemen, the Gulf crisis in 2017, and countering Iran.

In addition to the supporting statements expressed for the agreement, there was also a strong chain of reactions against the nature, process, and the possible implications of the agreement. Turkey has condemned the agreement with the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and stood with Palestine and the Palestinians. In addition to Turkey, Iran, Libya, and Palestine have strongly criticized the agreement as well as the UAE's stance.

In addition to the countries that have shown support for the agreement and the countries that have reacted strongly, some countries have not yet issued a clear statement about the agreement. Looking at the prominent countries here, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait stand out. It can be thought that Saudi Arabia is already trying to normalize relations with Israel, as did the UAE, but Saudi Arabia fails to do so, fearing that the public reaction against it will be great. Therefore, the absence of an official statement confirming the agreement does not mean that Saudi Arabia does not support the agreement.

## Implications of the Agreement

Immediately after the agreement, a telephone line was established between the UAE and Israel with the meeting of the Israeli Foreign Min-



ister and his counterpart, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs. With the establishment of the telephone line, it is expected that embassies and consulates will soon be opened between the two countries. Considering what the agreement stands for, several issues stand out.

1. First of all, with the formalization of this normalization process, the UAE has been irreversibly attached to the foreign policy alignment of the US-Israeli axis in the regional sense and has been placed at the center of the anti-Iran axis.

2. Looking at the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the possibility of a two state-solution will remain less likely to be achieved with the UAE, an Arab state, initiating official diplomatic relations with Israel before the Palestine State is officially established.

3. Also, among the parties to the agreement and the states that have supported the agreement, cyber technology, and intelligence cooperation will probably increase. Also, Turkey and other Sunni Muslim countries will continue to be targeted in the Middle East in an accelerated fashion.

4. After the agreement, Israel continued to launch attacks on several sites in Gaza even though it had announced that it would halt the annexation of the West Bank.<sup>12</sup> The attacks on Gaza might be an expression that Israel will probably not fulfill its promise on the West Bank.

5. The agreement will allow both Trump and Netanyahu to present this as a victory because elections in both countries are expected to be held in November. Inside the US, Trump is lagging in polls against his democratic contender Joe Biden. Netanyahu is also not happy with the coalition he has established recently in Israel. Considering the two situations together, a domestic pol-

icy victory might have seemed necessary for both Trump and Netanyahu. Mohammed bin Zayed seemed quite happy to provide his partners with a sought-after political victory.

6. In this way, Mohammed bin Zayed intended to show himself as the protector of Palestine and all Arabs. For this image not to be tilted, the UAE has employed a strict media policy toward the agreement. In the UAE, official warnings have been made that those who oppose the agreement might have to be expelled from the country. Especially on social media, it is stated that official action can be taken against those who express their negative and criticizing opinions about the agreement.

7. Following the agreement, there are several claims that 5 Arab states expect to normalize their relations with Israel: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Morocco, Bahrain, and Oman.

From this point of view, the official normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel, which is currently operating on intelligence sharing, technology, military, internal circles, and political issues, will also have regional repercussions. It may be necessary to think that the foreign policy of the UAE, which does not completely blame and marginalize Iran especially from the end of 2018, will probably change.

Israel's normalization of relations with the UAE, which is one of the most important powers in the region after Saudi Arabia, against Iran, will draw the UAE into the anti-Iran axis. Besides, the UAE has also acquired a large commercial partner with the agreement in question, and probably the downward trajectory of Dubai's economy, especially in terms of tourism, will get better by considering the Israeli tourists' possible arrival to Dubai for various purposes.

Moreover, it can be argued that the partnership between Israel and the UAE will increase, especially in Libya and in the Eastern Mediterranean geopolitics. The agreement will also affect the already tense relations between Turkey and the UAE. Indeed, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed that Turkey may have to halt diplomatic relations with Abu Dhabi and the Turkish Ambassador to Abu Dhabi may have to be withdrawn.<sup>13</sup> Recently, the UAE has accused Turkey of disrespecting and undermining the sovereignty of Arab countries, preventing the warring parties from reaching a deal in Libya and militarily intervening in Syria. In the face of these baseless and unfounded accusations, the relevant Turkish authorities have also given the necessary warnings to the UAE.

In many sources, comments have been made that the UAE gained great trust in Washington policy circles with this agreement move with Israel and that this trust does not depend solely on who the president is. But an important point to remember is that the support of the Jewish lobby in the US, the support of the team led by Jared Kushner for Israel, and the support of the Trump administration for Israel has reached an almost unprecedented level in US history. Acts such as the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the decision to relocate the US Embassy, and the Deal of the Century may show that the US administration has lost its mediator role in the Israel-Palestine issue.

## **How Arabs Evaluate the Emirati-Israeli Normalization: Analysis Through Twitter Reflections of Arab People**

### **1. The Context:**

On August 13, the governments of Israel and the UAE announced that they had agreed to the full normalization of relations. Dubbed the “Abraham Accord” and blessed by the American government, this agreement is the first Ar-

ab-Israeli reconciliation of its kind since the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty. Although the Emirati government claimed that according to this agreement, Israel has committed to not “extending sovereignty” over large swaths of the West Bank, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that Israel’s plans to annex the area were never cancelled but, temporarily, delayed.

With the announcement of the Abraham Accord, the Arabic official reaction was not conclusive as Egyptian and Bahraini governments hailed the deal, while the rest of the Arab countries remained silent. In contrast, the unofficial Arabic impression was noticed on social media; where people from all over the Arab world explicitly shared their conflicted views towards the Emirati-Israeli normalization. Under multiple relevant hashtags, people intensively tweeted and became involved in debates about the impact of such a deal on the Palestinian cause which has always been the pivotal concern of the Middle East.

In this study, we explore the Twitter platform during the period (August 13th - August 14th) to track, collect, and classify the opinions of the Arabs regarding the Emirati-Israeli Normalization deal.

### **2. Opinion Analysis Methodology:**

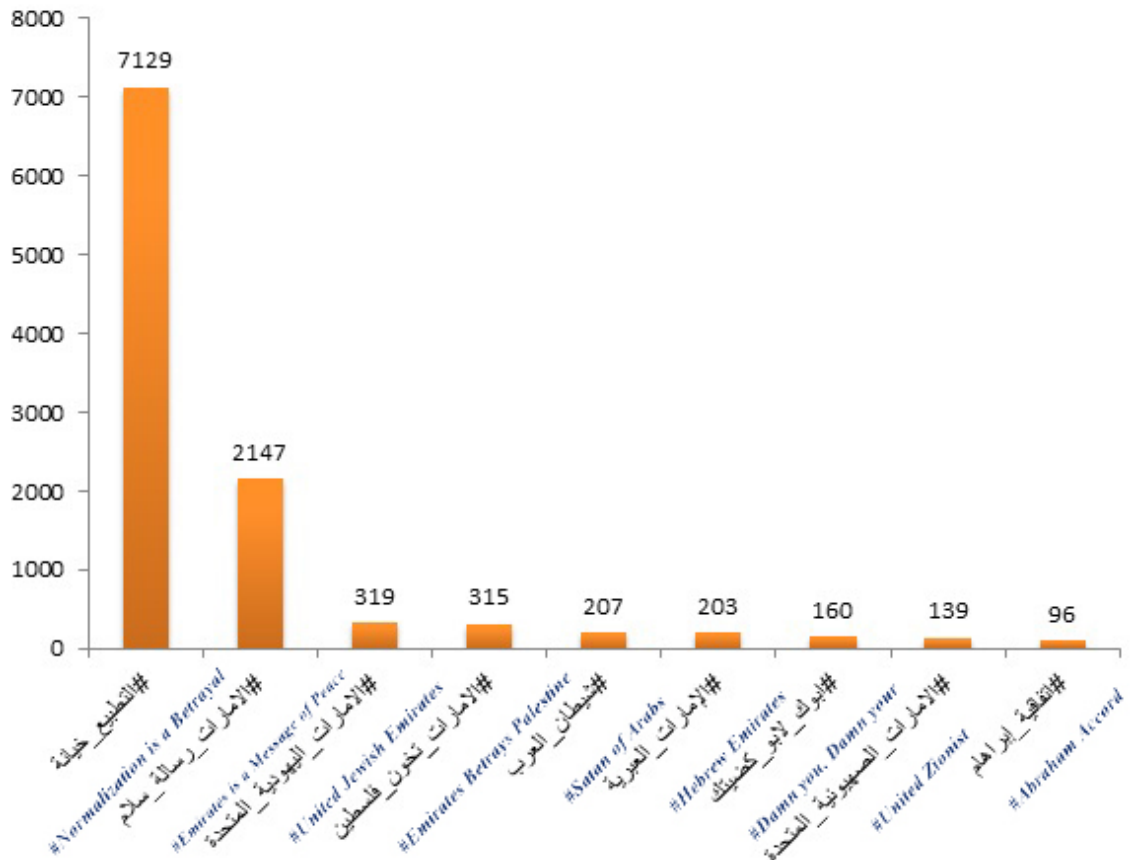
As seeking to capture the first impressions of Arabs towards the normalization deal, we opted to investigate the Arabic tweets posted between Aug. 13 and Aug. 14, 2020. The tweets were scraped using Twitter API based on several hashtags listed in Table (1)

The collected raw Twitter data contained 82,953 tweets; after applying the required normalization and reducing the irrelevant content, objective (opinion-free) tweets, Ads, we ended up with a collection of 10,715 subjective tweets. The previous hashtags were, unevenly, distrib-

**Table 1:** List of the hashtags used to collect the data from Twitter

Hashtags	Hashtag/Keyword (English)
#التطبيع خيانة	#Normalization is a Betrayal
#الامارات رسالة سلام	#Emirates is a Message of Peace
#الامارات اليهودية المتحدة	#United Jewish Emirates
#الامارات تخون فلسطين	#Emirates Betrays Palestine
#شيطان العرب	#Satan of Arabs
#الإمارات العبرية	#Hebrew Emirates
#ابوك لابو كضيتك	#Damn you, Damn your Cause
#الامارات الصهيونية المتحدة	#United Zionist Emirates
#اتفاقية إبراهيم	#Abraham Accord

**Figure 1:** Number of tweets under each hashtag (Aug. 13 and Aug. 15, 2020)

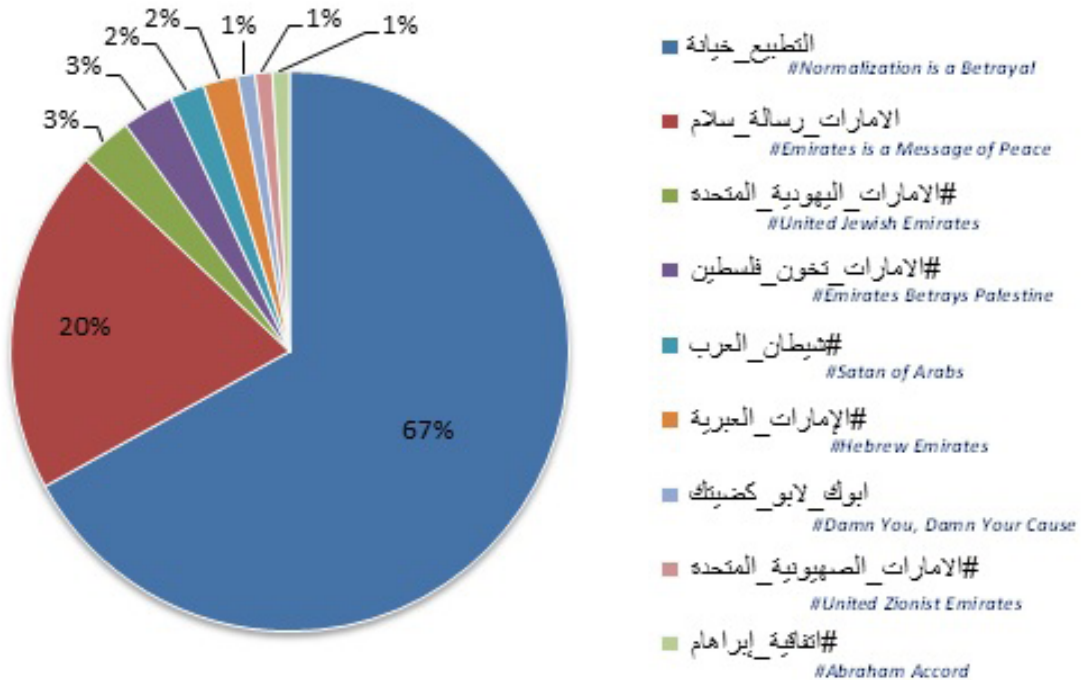


uted among the normalized collection of tweets as it can be seen in Figure (1) and Figure (2).

The opinion analysis and stance classification were, then, conducted using a machine

learning-based model developed by the technical team at ORSAM to recognize the stance embedded within Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic/Dialectal) tweets.

**Figure 2:** The Percentage of Individual Hashtags (Aug. 13 and Aug. 15, 2020)

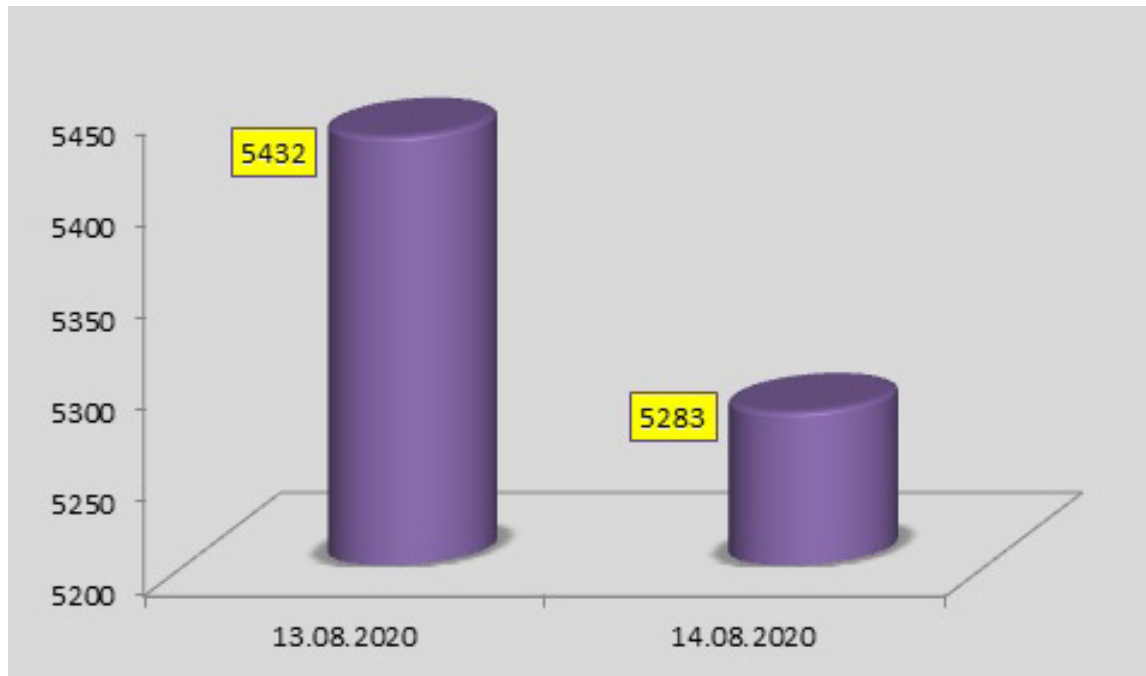


### 3. Tweets Frequency Analysis:

Considering the 10,715 tweets adopted in this study, as it can be seen in Figure (3), the interaction towards the Emirati-Israeli normalization has started right after the official announcement of the deal on Aug. 13, 2020, with a high

rate of tweeting as 51% of the collected tweets were posted on the first day. Considering the importance of the Palestinian cause for Arabs, the interaction continued to be intense the next day (Aug. 14, 2020) with a slight decrease in the number of posted tweets.

**Figure 3:** Tweets Frequency Distribution (Aug. 13 and Aug. 15, 2020)

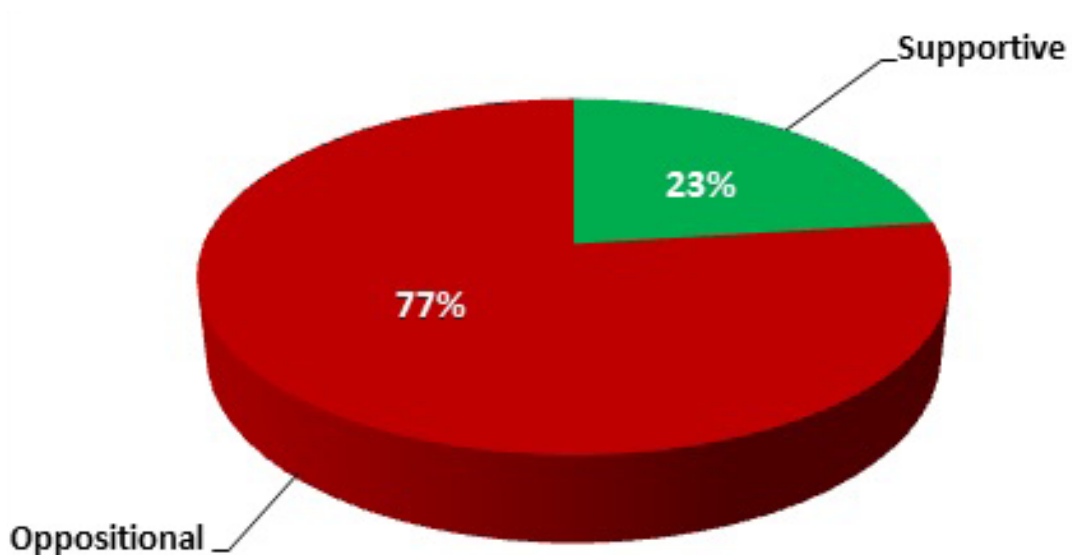


#### 4. Tweets Opinion (Stance) Analysis:

Using the opinion analysis model, the stances embedded in the studied tweets could be

classified into either oppositional or supportive. Figure (4) shows the general attitude towards the Emirati-Israeli Normalization deal in terms of percentage values for both stance categories.

**Figure 4:** General Attitude on Twitter (Aug. 13 - Aug. 14, 2020)

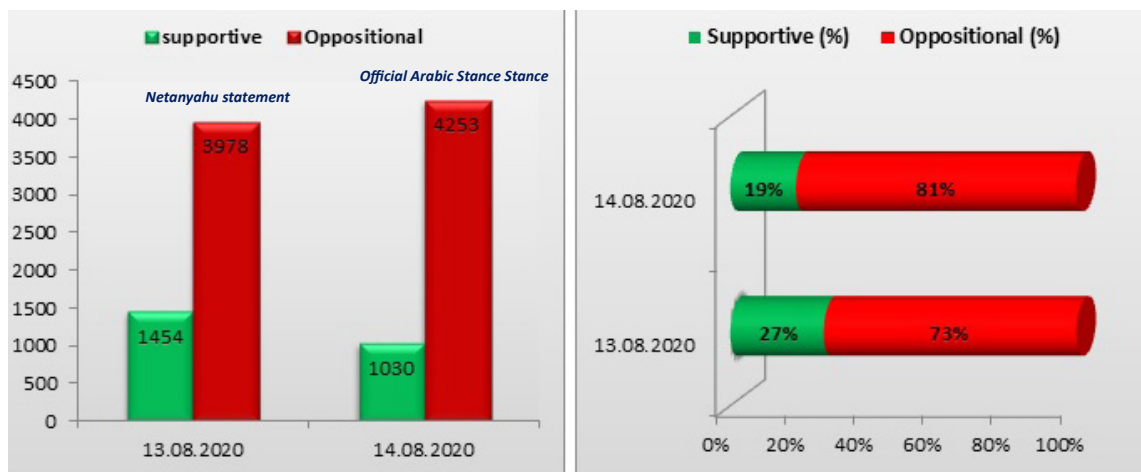


As can be seen in Figure (4), the oppositional stance was dominant among the collected tweets with a percentage value of 77%. This indicates that the majority of Arabs are against any type of normalization with Israel.

As can be seen in Figure (4), the oppositional stance was dominant among the collected tweets with a percentage value of 77%. This indicates that the majority of Arabs are against any type of normalization with Israel. On the other hand, although pro-UAE/Saudi accounts supported by swarms of bots launched their hashtags and drowned them with tweets that hailed the deal, the supportive stance barely represented 23% of the collected tweets.

On the other hand, Figure (5) shows how the contradicting stances distributed during the period (Aug. 13- Aug. 14, 2020).

**Figure 5:** Distribution of stances towards the Emirati-Israeli deal (Aug. 13 - Aug. 14, 2020)



As it is observed in Figure (5), most of the tweets that were posted on Aug. 13, 2020 (right after the announcement of the deal), implied an oppositional stance. This is not only attributed to the historical conflict between Arabs and Israel, but such an oppositional stance was mainly triggered by the claims of the Emirati government which stated that this agreement would support the Palestinian cause and defend Palestinian rights and sovereignty. In this context, people, angrily, questioned the real intentions behind this deal especially after Netanyahu de-

clared that Israel's plans to annex areas of West Bank cannot be hindered by this deal. On the other hand, 27% of the tweets shared on Aug. 13, praised the efforts of UAE to reach a peace agreement with Israel stressing that, this agreement would put an end to the Israeli expansion plans within some Palestinian areas and enable the Emirati people to pray in the Holy Mosque Al Aqsa.

The oppositional stance continued to be dominant (81%) in the next day (Aug. 14, 2020)



as people expressed their rejection of normalization with Israel; they also condemned the official stance of some Arabic governments (Egypt and Bahrain) which congratulated the Emirati government and hailed this deal describing it as a peace agreement. This impacted the supportive stance as it was decreased by 8% and formed, only, 19% of the tweets posted on Aug. 14, 2020.

### 5. Tweets Geolocation Analysis:

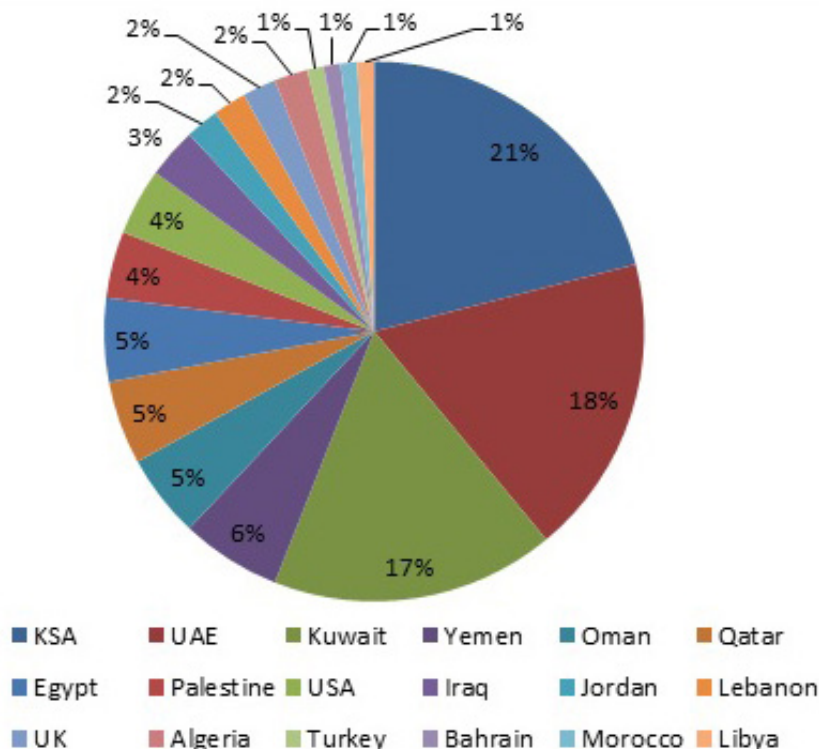
In this section, we seek to explore the geographic locations of the tweets and link the detected polarity with locations. Out of 10,715 tweets, 5,287 tweets contained the location information. Nevertheless, in 4,541 tweets, the users declared real locations (country/city) while the rest used fictional location names.

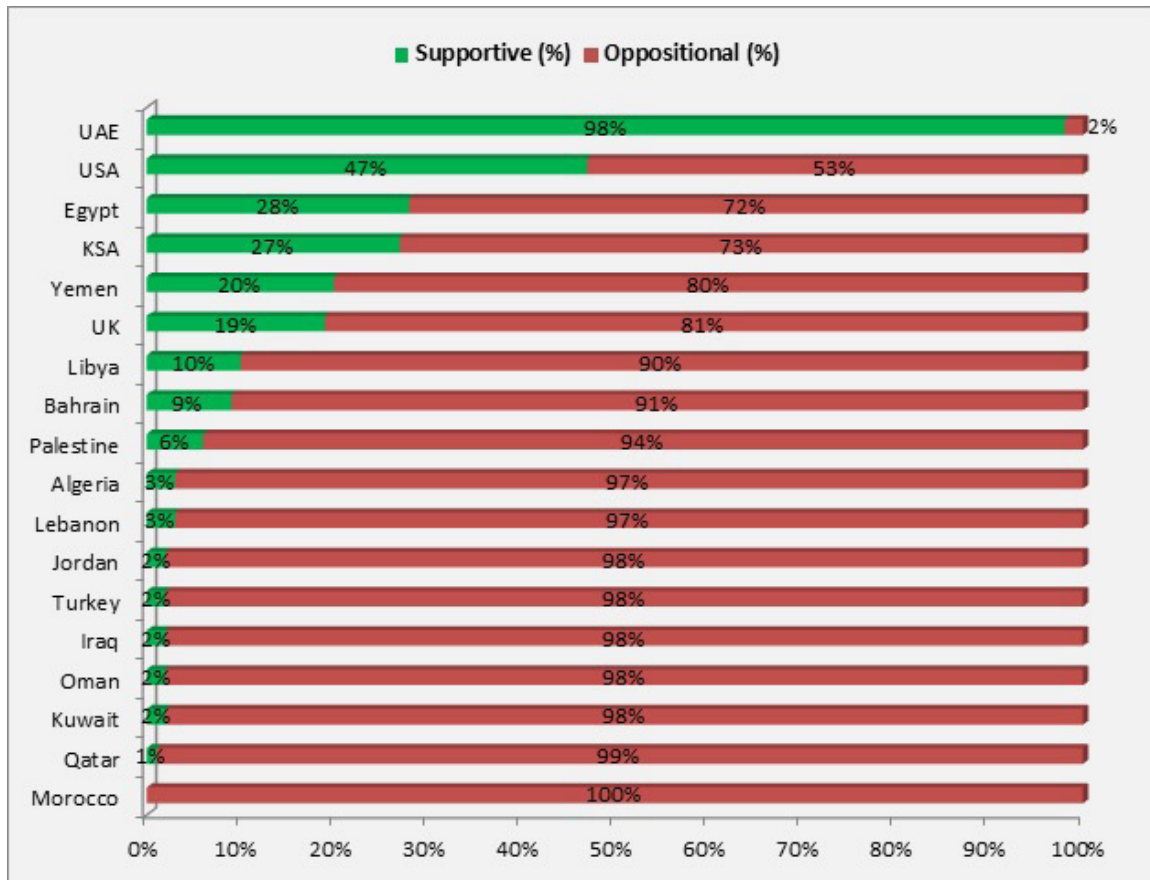
The percentage of tweets for each country is illustrated in Figure (6) where we opted to show

the locations whose tweets are more than 30.

Considering Figure (6), as the Palestinian cause has always been a historical Arabic issue that attracted the attention since 1948, the tweets' resources were distributed among Levantine, North African, and Gulf Arabic countries. Saudi Arabia had the highest contribution in the tweets collection with a percentage value of 21% followed by the UAE which provided 18% of the studied tweets (that have locations). This is expected as Saudi tweeters are, on the one hand, the most active Arabic users on Twitter and, on the other hand, are considered UAE allies. Users from the UAE, however, have intensively tweeted under the studied hashtags as they are mainly concerned with the Normalization deal. Kuwait ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> providing 17% of the tweets collection; where Kuwait has always been a major participant for any incident related to the Palestinian cause.

**Figure 6:** Tweets frequency by country (Aug. 13 - Aug. 14, 2020)



**Figure 7:** Advocacy Percentage by Country (Aug. 13 - Aug. 14, 2020)

Aiming to link stances with geographic locations, we explored the attitudes towards the Emirati-Israeli normalization deal, concerning their international locations as it is shown in Figure (7).

In Figure (7), we noticed that the tweets posted from the UAE were almost totally dominated by the supportive stance as many of the tweets were posted by the UAE electronic army and swarms of bots. After the announcement of the deal, the UAE, instantly tried to boost attention towards the deal while injecting its description of the agreement to get as much favorable advocacy as possible. Following the same scenario, UAE ex-pats and friends in the US have also exhibited a quite considerable favorable advocacy ratio (47%). Surprisingly, the tweets writ-

ten by UAE loyal allies such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, southern Yemen, and Libya implied a dominant oppositional stance where people expressed their rejection of such a deal with an oppositional ratio of more than 70% in all of these countries. This indicates that the Arabic people do not follow their governments' will and can have a common view when it comes to specific causes like the Palestinian cause which has religious and national aspects.

## 6. Interaction Analysis among Twitter Users:

As we were seeking to investigate the interaction activity within the collected Tweets, we opted to track the retweets among users in each of the supportive and oppositional tweets. Thus,



we can recognize the influential users whose tweets were retweeted most in each stance category.

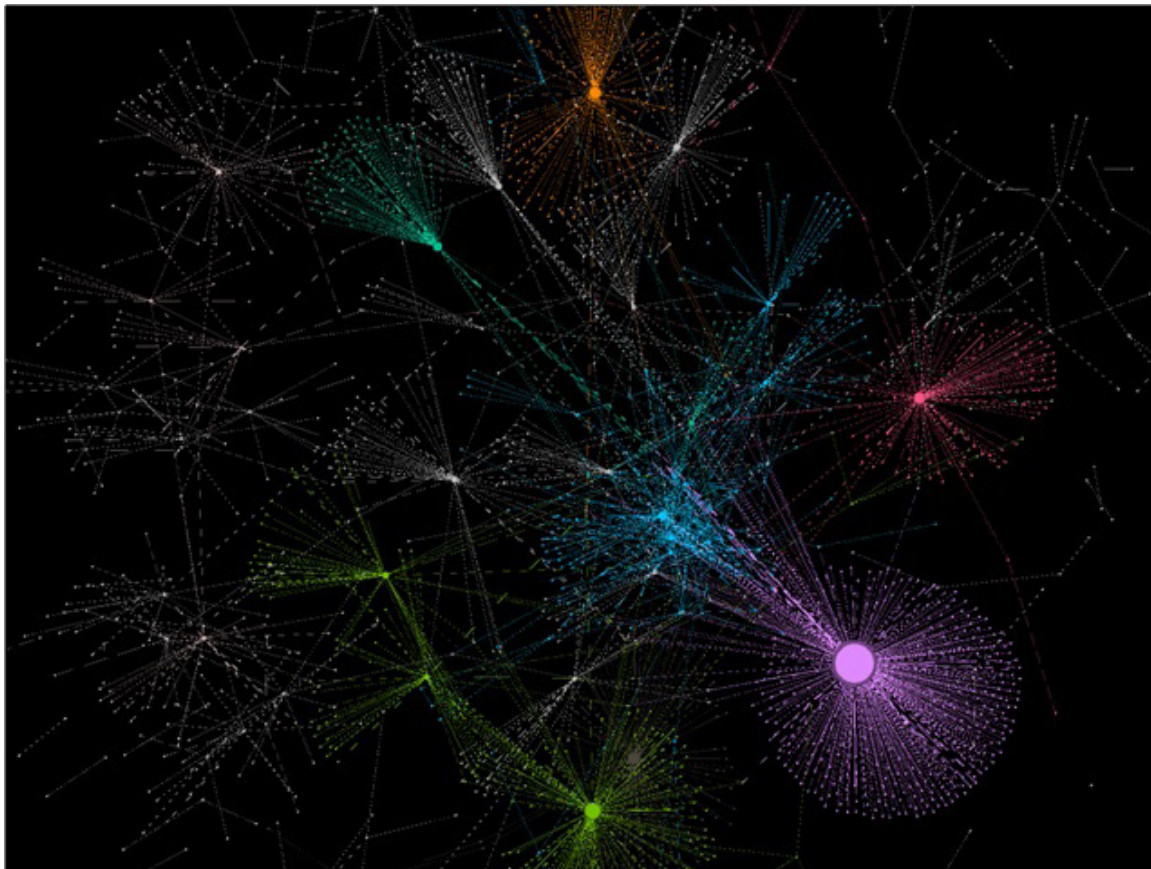
### **6.1. Interaction Analysis for Supportive Tweets:**

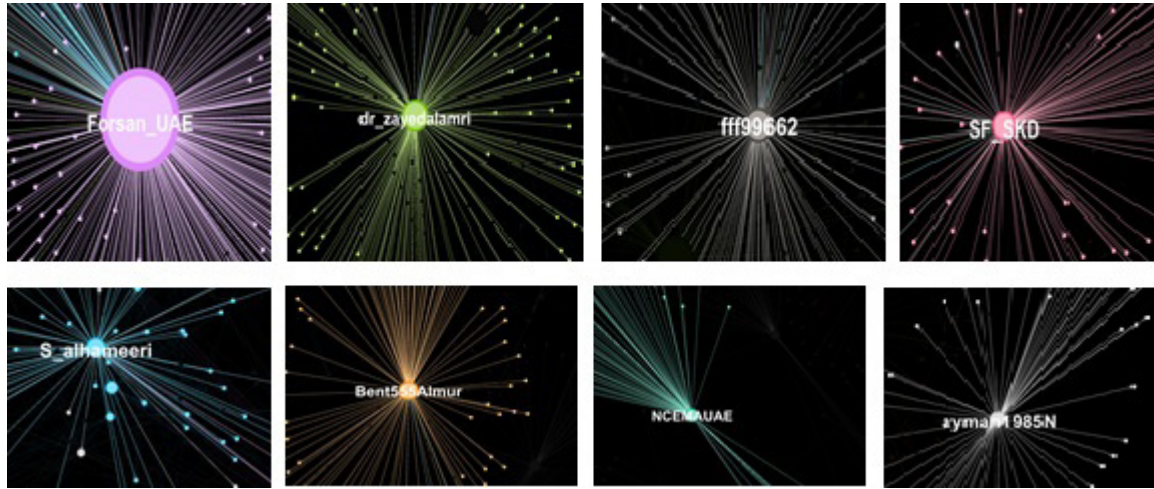
To construct the retweet interaction network, we mined the tweets to identify the handles (screen name) of original users and retweeting users. We, then constructed the graph based on a specific script, normalized it using the graph algorithms, and visualized it using Gephi application. Figure (8) shows the retweet interaction network with 1,960 nodes and 2,267 edges for the supportive collected tweets.

As can be seen in Figure (8), the graph

nodes represent the accounts involved within the tweet/retweet process while the edges indicate that two users are related to each other by the retweeting process (one retweeted a tweet of the other). The colored clusters, however, represents the communities of users where each community contains a central node and represents the most influential user whose tweets are retweeted the most by the other users (nodes surrounding the central node) in this community. To recognize the most influential users, we relied on the out-degree weight of nodes in the graph and assigned a bigger size for nodes having high values of out-degree. In the previous retweet network, we could identify the top 10 most influence users shown in Figure (9) and listed in Table (2).

**Figure 8:** Retweet interaction network for supportive tweets



**Figure 9:** Sample of most influential users in the supportive retweet interaction network**Table 2:** Top 10 most influential users in the supportive retweet interaction network

Influencer users	User Name	#Retweets	Location
@Forsan_UAE	فرسان الإمارات	439	UAE
@dr_zayedalamri	د. زايد العمري	160	KSA
@fff99662	فهد الحربي	122	Riyadh, KSA
@Bent555Almur	حمدة المر Hamda Almheiri	110	Dubai, UAE
@SF_SKD	قس بن ساعدة	104	KSA
@S_alhameeri	سالم الجحوشي	81	New York, USA
@NCEMAUAE	NCEMA UAE	75	Abu Dhabi, UAE
@ayman1985N	Ayman Alrashed	61	Qassim, KSA
@ibahzad	إبراهيم بهزاد	51	UAE

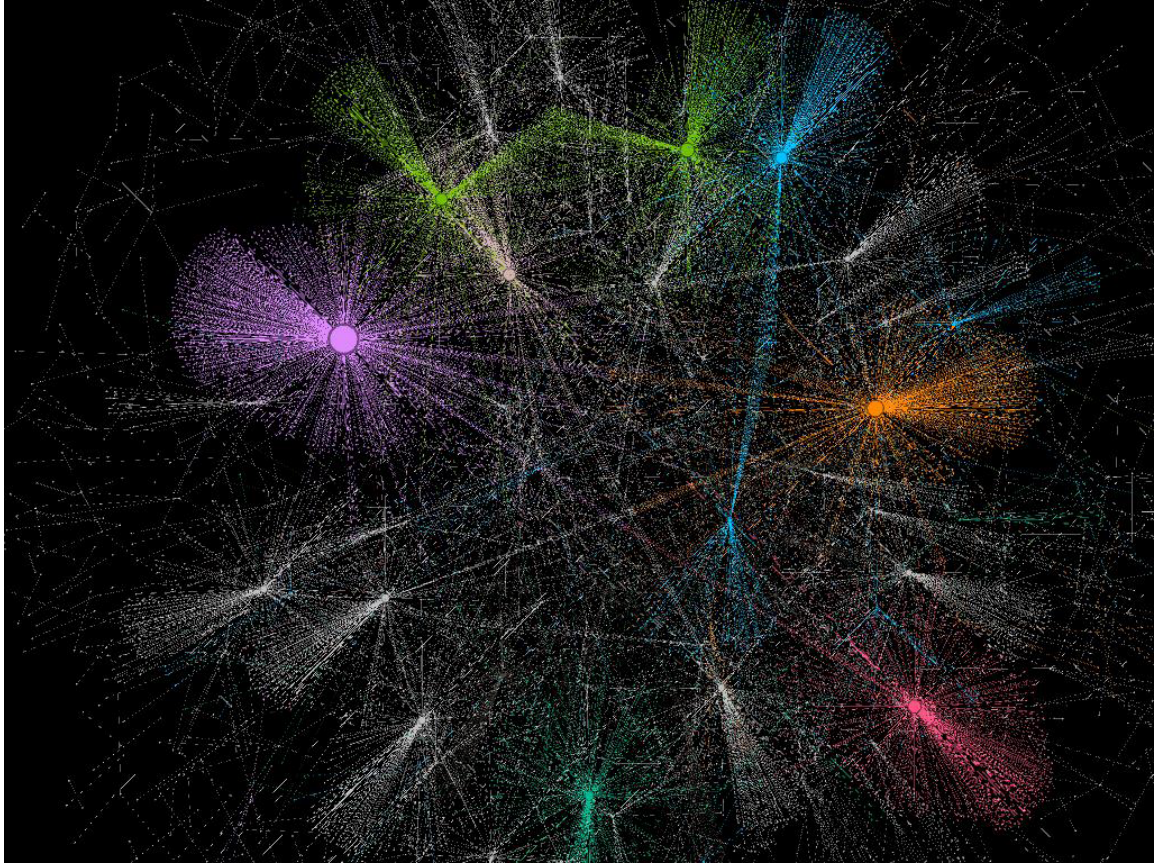
### 6.2. Interaction Analysis for Oppositional Tweets:

Similarly, we constructed the retweet interaction network for oppositional tweets 7,252 nodes and 7,844 edges as it is illustrated in Figure (10) where we can see that the graph nodes represent the accounts involved within the tweet/retweet process while the edges indicate

that two users are related to each other by the retweeting process (one retweeted a tweet of the other). The colored clusters, however, represents the communities of users where each community contains a central node represents the most influential user whose tweets are retweeted the most by the other users (nodes surrounding the central node) in this community.



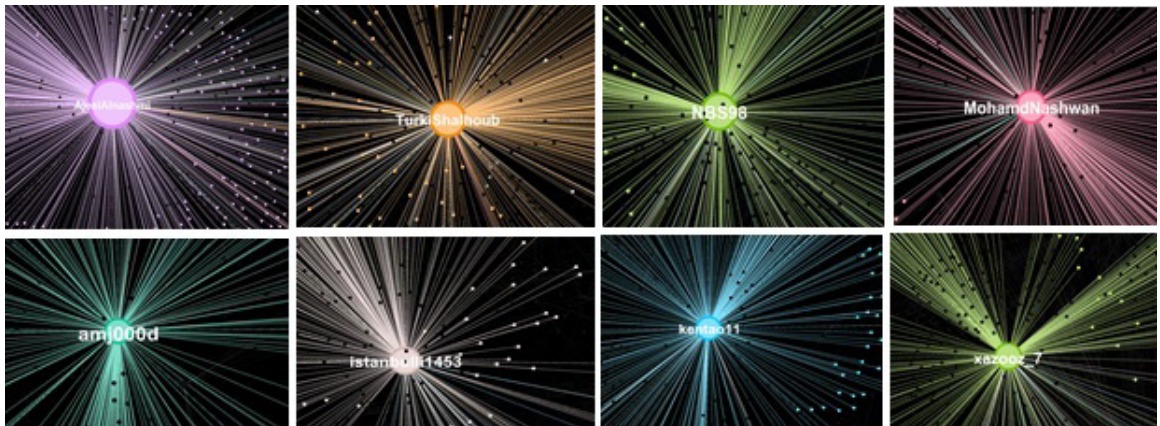
**Figure 10:** Retweet interaction network for oppositional tweets



To recognize the most influence users, we relied on the out-degree weight of nodes in the graph and assigned a bigger size for nodes having high values of out-degree. In the previous

retweet network, we could identify the top 10 most influential users shown in Figure (11) and listed in Table (2).

**Figure 11:** Sample of most influential users in the oppositional retweet interaction network



**Table 3:** Top 10 most influential users in the oppositional retweet interaction network

Influencer users	User Name	#Retweets	Location
@AjeelAlnashmi	عجيل النشمي	852	-
@TurkiShalhoub	تركي الشلهوب	457	KSA
@NBS98	سعد الهويل	382	-
@MohamdNashwan	محمد سعيد نشوان	351	-
@istanbulli1453	الاسطنبولي	332	Istanbul, Turkey
@xazooz_7	Aziz	321	-
@kentao11	محمد بن مرزوق البلوي	319	-
@amj000d	أمجد الرشدي	233	Oman
@hamedaldaadi	حامد الدعدي ☆ #كلنا مسؤول	197	KSA
@jhelles	جهاد حلس	182	Gaza, Palestine

### 7. Tweets Visual Representation:

As seeking to highlight the most common words/clauses mentioned in the studied tweets/comments, we relied on mathematical calculations of word associations to infer the most fre-

quent clauses used within both supportive and oppositional tweets/comments. This was visually represented using word clouds. Figure (12) and Figure (13) show the word clouds derived from supportive and oppositional tweets/comments, respectively.

**Figure 12:** Most frequent clauses in supportive tweets



**Figure 13: Most frequent clauses in oppositional tweet/ comments**



### 8. Tweet Examples:

### 8.1. Supportive Tweets:



(#Normalization is a betrayal

## Good step from the United Arab Emirates

I wish the same for all Arab and Islamic countries

Mongering the “cause” is over!

Accordingly, the link is cut off against the terrorist Brotherhood, Hamas, the beggar, and the

## Hamdeen organization

Unfortunately, their “market” has fallen.)



(I wish the same for the Kingdom (KSA))

The time for showing strength under the name of “the cause” has ended, in which no one was left except to monger it.

#Israel # Emirates # Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal # Muhammad\_Ben\_Zayed # Muhammad\_Ben\_Salman)



(#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal

A wise move from the Emirates. We wish them success.

We were all supporters of King Faisal, may God have mercy on him, in his opinions against Israel, but at that time the Arabs were one hand.

(Circumstances are different now, so opinions differ according to them.)



(#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal

The rules of the game have changed

Yesterday's enemies are friends today

Israel is advanced medically, militarily, and economically

What did we benefit from the boycott for 50 years?

Palestine has not returned! (- to Palestinians) Most of its people are businessmen in Europe. They insult us day and night, and burn pictures of our rulers in Gaza. )



(#Khalijis\_against\_normalization

#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal

I do not know why you are upset! I hope that Saudi Arabia announces normalization with the State of Israel as a friendly country and fights the Safavid expansion with us. I swear that they are more blessed than the Arabs of the North and Iran.)



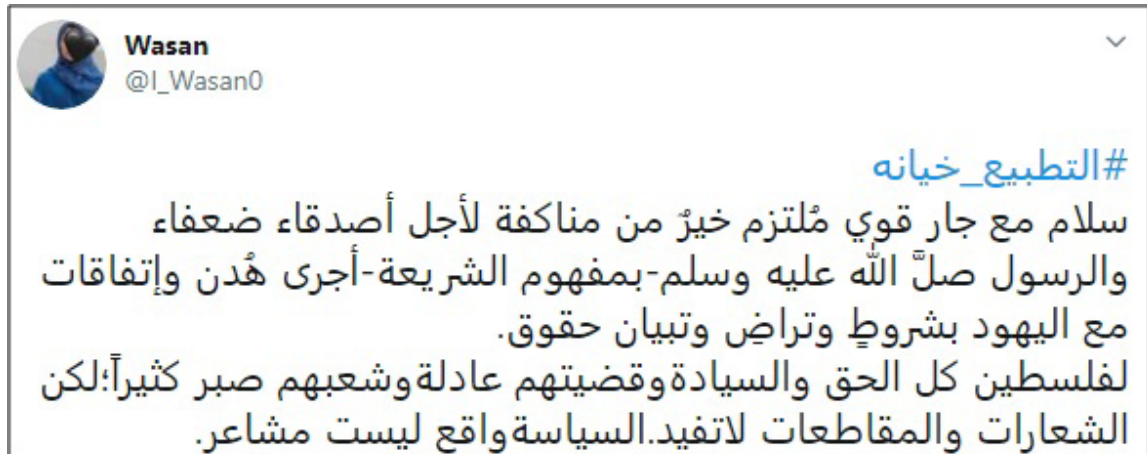
(#Emirates halted #Israel's ambitions to invade the lands of #Palestine and opened the door for Arabs and Muslims to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque and pray there after a break for many years.

Efforts of the Emirates in the interest of Islam and Muslims may be blessed.

@MohammedbinZayed

The charisma of the wise leadership

#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal)



(#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal

Peace with a strong and committed neighbor is better than fighting for weak friends.

The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace - in the concept of Sharia - made truces and agreements with the Jews on conditions, consent and clarification of rights.

Palestine has all the right and sovereignty, its cause is just, and its people have much patience, but the slogans and boycotts do not help. Politics is reality, not emotions. )

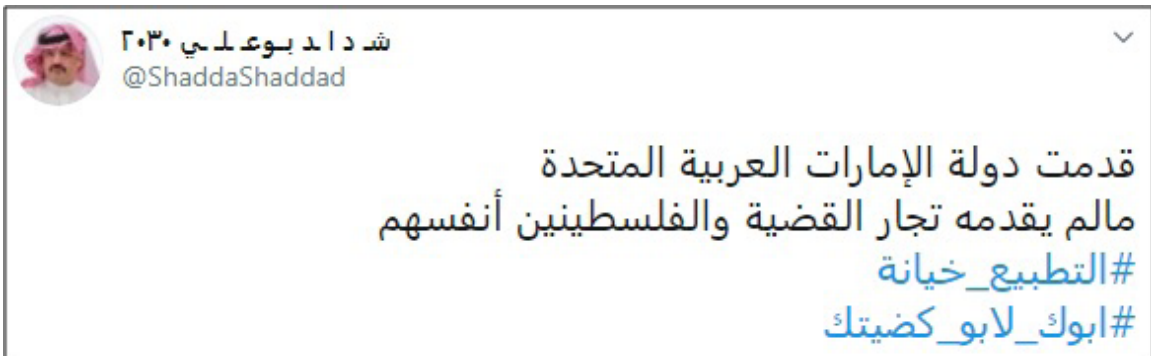




(#Emirates\_is\_a\_message\_of\_peace)

Emirates saved Palestine with this approach. Israel wanted to annex the West Bank and was preventing Muslims from entering Al-Aqsa. (As a result of the agreement), Israel withdrew from annexing the West Bank and allowed Muslims to visit Al-Aqsa.

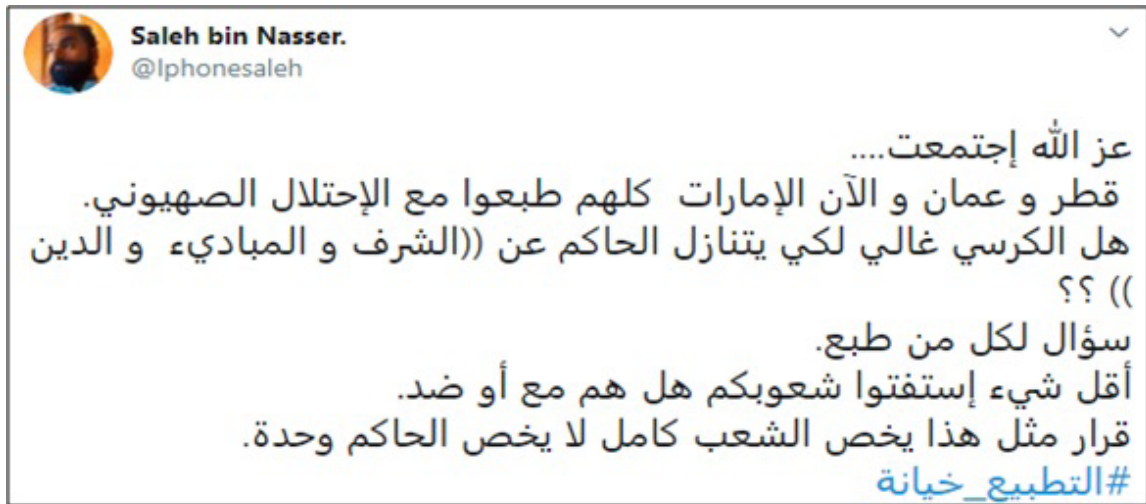
In addition, the Emirates cut off the road to Qatar, which is ingratiating to Israel in order to obtain the approval of the White House.)



[The United Arab Emirates provided what the “Mongers of the Cause” and the Palestinians themselves did not provide.

#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal ##Damn you, Damn your Cause (Insulting)]

## 8.2. Oppositional Tweets:



(They are finally united! Qatar, Oman, and now the Emirates, all of them normalized the relations with the Zionist occupation.

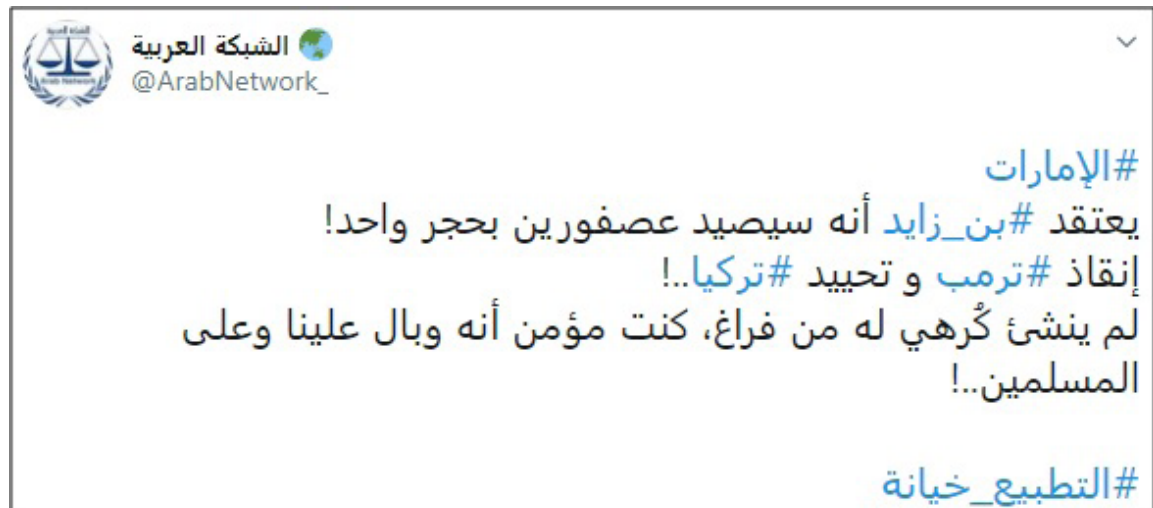
Is the chair so expensive that the ruler can waive honor, principles and religion?

Question for all the normalizers,

At least, ask your people, are they for or against such a step?

A step like this belongs to the entire people, not only the ruler.

#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal)



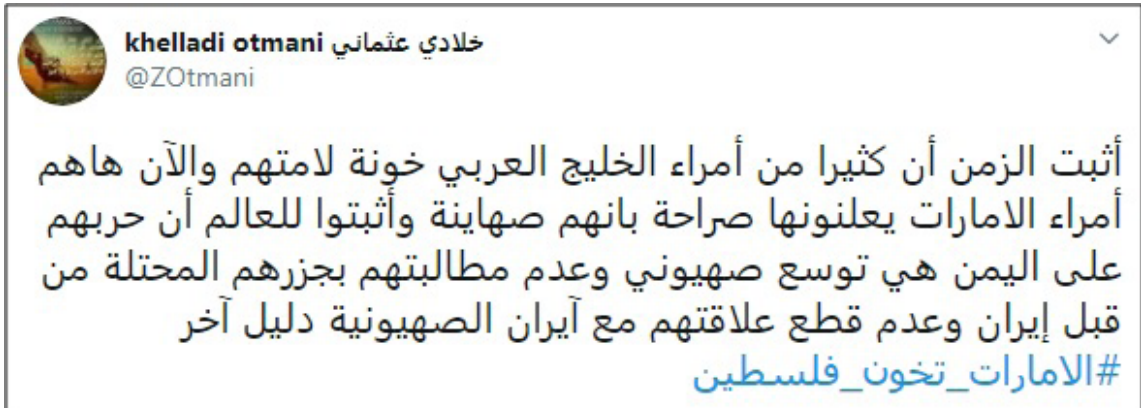
(#Emirates

#Ben\_Zayed believes that he will catch two birds with one stone!

Saving #Trump and neutralizing #Turkey!

My hatred for him did not arise out of nowhere. I used to believe that he is a curse to us and to the Muslims.

#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal)



(Time has proven that many of the princes of the Arabian Gulf are traitors to their nation. And now here are the Emirs of the Emirates are openly announcing that they are Zionists. They proved to the world that their war on Yemen is a Zionist expansion. And their failure to claim their islands occupied by Iran and not sever their relationship with Zionist Iran is another evidence.

#The\_Emirates\_are\_betraying\_Palestine)



(#Emirates\_is\_a\_message\_of\_peace (X)

The Emirates is a message of betrayal against all Arabs

There is no such thing as peace with a state built on the theft of land through terror, displacement, killing of innocents and sacrilege.)



(#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal

Despite my opposition to the UAE step, their stance placed “Arab scum” in a narrow corner. Previously, their excuses were that Erdogan and Qatar are doing normalization clearly and there is no secret and hypocrisy - as they claim. Now, after the normalization of the UAE has been publicly declared, and Saudi Arabia has not taken this step, they have become confused)

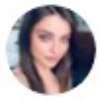


(Drifters on the earth” say: We stopped annexation by our normalization.

Hey harmful and criminal coast! Get out of the cloak of the Sultanate first!

You must be returned to your origin to be disciplined and polished again, so that you can become men

(#Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal)



قطفة غنج  
@gg44202

السلام مع العدو الصهيوني أكذوبة و خيانة كبرى ، من متى إسرائيل دولة؟! بل كيان محتل غاصب ، وحسبي الله على الناس اللي مصورين لنا ان دي الخطوة بطولية وبسببها ح توقف اسرائيل من ضم أراضي جديدة لها ،  
لا سلام مع كيان محتل مجرم غاصب .  
#التطبيع\_خيانه  
#الامارات\_الكيان\_الصهيوني

(Peace with the Zionist enemy is a lie and a great betrayal.

Since when is Israel a state? Rather, it is a usurping occupying entity.

May Allah reward the people who portray this step to us as heroic, and because of it, Israel will stop annexing new lands to it.

There is no peace with an occupying criminal and usurping entity. #Normalization\_is\_a\_betrayal  
#UAE\_the Zionist entity)

**\* The top 10 influencers in the studied tweets collection:**

User name	#Followers	Location	Polarity
اقوال و حكم الفلاسفة	5,858,472	Arab World	Oppositional
جمال ريان	1,939,263	Aljazeera Anchorman Doha Qatar	Oppositional
رياض الصالحين	1,032,389	-	Oppositional
جابر الحرمي	662,571	الدوحة - قطر	Oppositional
أحمد بن راشد بن سعيد	647,428	-	Oppositional
تركي الشلهوب	571,303	المملكة العربية السعودية	Oppositional
د. جمعان الحربش	564,659	-	Oppositional
د. فيصل علي المسلم	526,646	Kuwait	Oppositional
هاني بن بريك	509,725	المملكة العربية السعودية	Supportive
ياسر أبو هلاله	484,659	-	Oppositional





### Conclusion:

As can be seen in figures, the Arab people's oppositional stance was the dominant one among the social media posts. It could be argued that the majority of the Arab people do not in any way endorse the Emirati-Israeli normalization. Even immediately after the normalization agreement, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had implied that abandoning the West Bank plan is not on the table. After that, Netanyahu's office indicated that the normalization agreement between Israel and the UAE did not include the transfer of F-35s to the UAE. These two instances seemed to be enough for understanding the UAE's way of normalization is a dangerous one.

Already, Israel and the UAE have cooperated in cyber technology, defense, and security areas. However, as the recent remarks of Netanyahu after the agreement have shown, the normaliza-

tion between the UAE and Israel could constitute a "hierarchical normalization" where Israel gets the upper hand in strategic matters due to its close ties with the US.

Therefore, the UAE's normalization with Israel could start a process of isolation for the UAE in the Arab world. Already there have been intense exchanges and strong reactions to the Emirati leadership for their way of normalization with Israel. It could be seen in the tweets and the countries' strong statements on the normalization agreement. With the normalization agreement the UAE foreign policy course has irrevocably shifted to the anti-Iran axis. In this situation, feelings of insecurity in the UAE could grow faster, especially in the face of increasing attempts to isolate Iran regionally.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Mark Mazzetti, David D. Kirkpatrick and Adam Goldman, “Adviser to Emirates with ties to Trump aides is cooperating with Special Counsel”, The New York Times, 6 March 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Yasmine Farouk, “The Middle East Strategic Alliance Has a Long Way To Go”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 8 February 2019.
- <sup>3</sup> “The Gulf’s little Sparta: the ambitious United Arab Emirates”, The Economist, 6 April 2017.
- <sup>4</sup> Barak Ravid, “Exclusive: Netanyahu secretly met with UAE Foreign Minister in 2012 in New York”, Haaretz, 25 July 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> “Israel wins second judo gold in Abu Dhabi, ‘Hatikva’ plays again”, Times of Israel, 29 October 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> Aness Suheil Barghoti, “Israel foreign minister visits Abu Dhabi”, Anadolu Agency, 1 July 2019.
- <sup>7</sup> Mahmoud Barakat, “UAE, Israel deal against democracy in Arab World: experts”, 15 August 2020.
- <sup>8</sup> “UAE’s Etihad makes first known flight to Israel”, Al Jazeera, 19 May 2020.
- <sup>9</sup> Achiad Kalman, “The Abraham Accords prove that Israel and the UAE are True Peace Seekers”, The National Interest, 15 August 2020.
- <sup>10</sup> Lahav Harkov and Anna Ahronheim, “Netanyahu: UAE agreement did not include US selling F-35s”, Jerusalem Post, 19 August 2020.
- <sup>11</sup> Yousef Seba, “Oman secures \$2 billion bridge loan: sources”, Reuters, 12 August 2020.
- <sup>12</sup> “Israel continues airstrikes on Gaza in retaliation for Hamas balloon bombs”, The Guardian, 16 August 2020.
- <sup>13</sup> “Turkey mulls suspending diplomatic relations with UAE over Israel deal”, TRT World, 14 August 2020.



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