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Regional Power Politics and the Future of the Two-State Solution: A Qualitative Study of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the longest-standing and most intricate issues in international politics, and regional dynamics continue to influence its ongoing development and prospects for a negotiated resolution. The study analyzes the regional power dynamics and their impact on the conflict and their implications for the future of the Two-State Solution. The study used a qualitative approach, adopting elements of Realist theory, which involved conducting semi-structured interviews with three political science experts and secondary data analysis of academic literature, policy reports and official documents. The study shows that regional actors play a key role in the conflict in numerous ways, including diplomacy, normalization efforts, security cooperation, humanitarian work, and forming strategic alliances. The so-called "Abraham Accords" have led to greater cooperation in the region, but have not directly tackled the fundamental political issues that have driven the conflict, such as Palestinian statehood, land claims, and sovereignty. The study also underscores that the domestic political polarization, regional conflicts, and diverging strategic agendas remain as impediments to any substantive effort at achieving a negotiated resolution. The Two-State Solution is still the most popular international peace model, but there are increasing political and practical obstacles blocking its adoption. The study adds to the literature by bringing the voice of the experts into the Realist analysis and showing the impact regional power politics have on the continuing nature of the conflict and on the future of the Two-State Solution.

Keywords: *Israel–Palestine Conflict, Regional Power Politics, Two-State Solution, Realist Theory, Middle East Politics, Qualitative Research.*

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Introduction

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the most persistent and intricate international disputes and has been a central political and security issue of the Middle East for over 70 years (Caplan, 2020; Gelvin, 2021). It has been marked by repeated wars, humanitarian crises, political unrest and failed peace attempts, and is a pivotal issue in regional and international diplomacy, stemming from competing claims over territories, national sovereignty, national identity and self-determination (Smith, 2021; Khalidi, 2020). Even though the efforts of regional and international actors have been ongoing to find a comprehensive and lasting political solution, this has been unsuccessful.

The Middle East's geopolitical landscape has altered, shifting alliances and strategic dynamics, and a developing national agenda have turned the conflict into a regional issue rather than just a bilateral one (Fawcett, 2016; Kamrava, 2018). Regional actors, such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran and Türkiye, are increasingly playing a role in the conflict by engaging in diplomatic activities, mediation, humanitarian assistance, security cooperation, and economic engagement. The normalization agreements, especially the Abraham Accords, have also changed the diplomatic landscape in the region, as Israel has broadened its ties with some Arab countries, causing concerns about how they may affect the path towards Palestinian statehood and peace talks (Reuters, 2025).

The Two-State Solution is the most accepted by the international community among the alternatives offered for a resolution of the conflict. It includes a vision of an independent Palestinian state living peacefully with Israel and remains the basis of international diplomatic efforts (Bunton, 2013; Bickerton & Klausner, 2022). Its implementation has however, been hindered due to Israeli settlement growth, contestations over Jerusalem, the internal Palestinian political divisions, ongoing security issues, and the loss of trust between the two sides (Gelvin, 2021; Smith, 2021). All these problems have heightened academic and policy discussion on the future of the Two-State Solution.

Much scholarly work has already investigated the

evolution of the conflict, peace negotiations and regional and international actors' strategic interests in the conflict (Caplan, 2020; Fawcett, 2016; Khalidi, 2020). The potential impact of normalization pacts and changing regional coalitions on Middle East politics has also been discussed in more recent studies (Brown, 2021; Reuters, 2025). Yet, to date, little effort has been made to explore how regional power politics, normalization processes, domestic political developments, regional security rivalries and normative influences interact collectively in shaping the future of the Two-State Solution from the perspective of subject experts. This is a significant gap, especially in the light of the rising influence of regional actors in conflict management and peacebuilding.

The study focuses on how regional power politics has influenced the Israel/Palestine conflict so far and what they say about the future of the Two-State Solution. The study uses the qualitative approach and Realist theory to analyze the role of strategic interests, regional diplomacy, and domestic political development on the peace prospects in the contemporary era through expert interviews and secondary sources. The study's incorporation of expert perspectives and existing scholarship helps contribute to a better understanding of the regional aspects of the conflict, and provides policy-relevant findings for the future of conflict resolution in the Middle East.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Realism is one of the most influential theories in the field of International Relations that is used in this study. Realism sees the international system as anarchic, with states acting primarily to ensure their own national security, maximize power, and to protect their national interests. Realists have claimed that cooperation among states is frequently motivated by strategic rather than moral or ideological concerns. The regional nature of the theory is important in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict as regional players such as Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan develop their policies with reference to security, geopolitical and regional interests. More recently, however, normalization deals with Israel and Arab nations have emerged not only out of ideological interest in the Palestinian cause, but also as a result of

strategic concerns about regional security, the economy and stability (Waltz, 1979).

Realism also has an explanation for how regional rivalries and changing alliances affect the nature of the conflict and the prospects for peace. This power and influence struggle in the Middle East has consequences for the standing and influence of Middle East actors regarding the Israeli–Palestinian issue, and for the viability of the Two-State Solution. Hence, realism is a suitable analytical approach to investigate how regional power politics contributed to the continued conflict and future peace process.

Literature Review

Fawcett (2016) claimed that the Israel–Palestine conflict is no longer a bilateral territorial dispute but rather a geopolitical conflict in the region, characterized by changing alliances, security concerns, and regional and international strategic interests. Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran and Türkiye are playing a greater role in the conflict through diplomacy, mediation, humanitarian assistance, normalisation and security cooperation. The Abraham Accords also reshaped regional diplomacy, paving the way for improved relations between Israel and several Arab nations, and spurring a range of questions about the consequences for Palestinian statehood and regional peace.

Gelvin (2021) stated that the Two-State Solution is still the most popular approach for solving the conflict, it remains fraught with political and security issues, such as settlement expansion, Jerusalem, division within the Palestinian community, and loss of confidence between the parties. Some research on regional diplomacy and conflict resolution has already focused on a regional approach, but there has been little that has brought together regional power politics, normalization agreements, domestic political dynamics and normative pressures in a qualitative analysis that relies on expert perspectives. This study aims to fill this gap by taking a Realist approach to analyzing the future of the Two-State Solution, in examining how these interrelated factors collectively impact on the Two-State Solution.

Research Statement

Numerous peace initiatives and international mediation efforts, there are concerns that regional power politics is a factor that may impact the viability of the Two-State Solution.

Research Questions

- 1) How would analyze the role and impact of regional actors and normalization agreements in the region has on the Israel-Palestine conflict
- 2) What do you think how the changing internal political dynamics within Israel and Palestine shapes continuity, escalation and resolution of Israel and Palestine conflict?
- 3) To what extent would you think evolving regional rivalries and changing regional security environment will impact Palestine and Israel conflict and peace process
- 4) To what extent normative pressure within middle east does impact regional powers position towards Israel and Palestine conflict

Research Methodology

Approach

This study has been carried out using the qualitative method and case study design. The study is exploratory, analytical and historical. This explores how regional power politics have affected the Israel–Palestine conflict and the future of the Two-State Solution.

Research Tool

The data analysis methodology used in this research is document analysis and content analysis technique. Relevant information on the conflict and peace process has been collected from books, journal articles, policy papers, official statements and reports of international organizations.

Data Collection

The collection of data is based on secondary sources. The information has been collected from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, government publications and documents from international organizations like the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Arab League and the International Crisis Group (ICG). Relevant peace agreements, normalization agreements and official policy statements have also been examined to grasp the role of regional actors, evolving political landscape and the future

of the Two-State Solution.

Discussion and Analysis

To gain qualitative insights about the research topic, the present study used telephonic interviews with key informants, despite geographical and logistical limitations. The results of these interviews provide interesting themes and patterns that can illuminate the reasons behind the views and experiences of the participants. The discussion aims to understand the meaning of the findings, the commonalities and differences found in the responses and the implications for the issue being studied, by looking at the responses in the light of existing literature and the wider socio-political context. The findings are then discussed in relation to the existing knowledge and implications for further research and policy.

Role and Impact of Regional Actors and Normalization Agreements in the Region has on Israel Palestine Conflict

Based on the results of this study, it is clear that the regional actors are still playing an active role in the Israel-Palestine conflict in the diplomatic, mediation, financial, humanitarian, and security dimensions. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the pivotal role played by countries like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and others in the region in influencing the trajectory of the conflict. The results indicate that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has ceased to be a purely bilateral one and has become a regional issue, a dimension that must be taken into account in the context of the intricate geopolitics in the Middle East.

One of the key topics that came across in the interviews is the changing trend of regional engagement via normalization agreements, especially the Abraham Accords. Respondents A and B emphasized that these agreements have provided a new path for cooperation between Israel and a number of Arab countries in various fields, including trade, technology, investment, and security. The agreements have also helped remove some of Israel's diplomatic isolation and helped bring some stability to the region. But the respondents said that these developments have failed to meet the basic demands of the Palestinians for self-determination, sovereignty and an independent state. Refugees, borders, settlements, Jerusalem are unresolved issues. This

discovery reinforces the idea that normalization can help to ease interstate tensions even if it doesn't address the root causes of the conflict.

The respondents also noted that normalization has led to a paradoxical result. On the other hand, it has helped to open the door for dialogue and cooperation between those states that have not had formal ties with Israel. It, on the other hand, has diminished the role of the Palestinian issue in Arab diplomacy. In the past, the Palestinian cause played a large role in the political consciousness of the Arabs and their unity. But as geopolitical factors change, many states are now more focused on economic modernization, regime stability and national security than on their ideological commitments. While Arab public opinion continues to be overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian, the policies of their respective states are more and more driven by strategic considerations than by a common ideological approach. Likewise, points out that today's political issues in the Middle East are not about Pan-Arabism but about the survival of the regimes and competition among them.

Another significant finding is about the peacebuilding capacity of regional actors. Respondent C highlighted the role of institutions, leadership and public opinion in shaping the positive or negative dynamics of regional engagement in conflict resolution. Regional powers have the ability to play a role in the mediation, in helping to provide humanitarian aid, in promoting economic cooperation, and in confidence-building. In the past, Egypt and Jordan have served as mediators, owing to their peace treaties with Israel and their geostrategic interests in regional stability. Besides Saudi Arabia's political and religious position in the Arab world, Qatar has become a key force in humanitarian diplomacy. These actors have the ability to provide spaces for dialogue when the political will is there between the conflicting parties.

The results of this research are furthermore in line with the majority of the research literature on the consequences of the Abraham Accords. The normalization agreements are seen as a significant shift in Middle Eastern politics and a shift in priorities, both economic and security cooperation. Likewise, argues that the “fracturing of the regional order” has spurred states to pursue pragmatic foreign policies that seek to maximize

national benefits. The Palestinian issue is thus more of a symbolic issue than ever, and it is now taking place alongside other strategic issues that weigh on the regional decision-making.

The results provide strong support to this assumption as seen from the Realist paradigm, which emphasizes that states are driven in their international relations primarily around national interest, security and survival in an anarchic international system. In, the fundamental concepts of foreign policy are power and the preservation of national interests. The reactions of the states to shifts in power and threat distribution in the international system. The Abraham Accords can thus be seen as a tactic to deal with changing regional realities, not a self-fulfilling peace pledges. A shared anxiety about regional instability, economic diversification and the sway of competing powers has led to a growing interest in bilateral relations between the Arab states and Israel, in spite of the fact that there has been no full resolution to the Palestinian issue.

The results also show, however, that the strategic interests do not completely override the normative concerns. Palestinian self-determination and hopes for Arab solidarity remain central to political discussion and limit policy options. Regional governments try to maintain a balance between practical interaction with Israel and expectations within their region and countries regarding justice and Palestinian rights. This balance is a complex one in Middle Eastern politics, that is characterized by the entanglements of national interests, historical identities and normative commitments.

In conclusion, the duality of the regional actors' role in the Israel–Palestine conflict is illustrated. They are capable of playing a role in peace and reconciliation, including through mediation and humanitarian work, and diplomatic efforts, but they can at the same time help shore up the marginalization of Palestinian issues by focusing attention on wider geopolitical issues. Normalization measures have created opportunities for cooperation and regional stability, but do not replace substantive negotiations to address the underlying issues of the conflict. The ability of regional powers to use their rising influence to advance a political settlement which is both inclusive and sustainable

– and which serves the legitimate aspirations of both the Israelis and the Palestinians – will therefore determine the future of the Two-State Solution.

Changing Internal Political Dynamics Within Israel and Palestine Shapes Continuity, Escalation and Resolution of Israel and Palestine Conflict

The results of this research suggest that one of the most crucial elements of the continuity, escalation and possible resolution of the Israel Palestine conflict is the internal political dynamics in both countries. The overwhelming majority of all respondents confirmed that domestic political conditions have an impact on leadership decisions, public attitudes and the political elites' willingness to pursue serious peace processes. The conflict is not only fueled by external pressures and regional developments, but also by internal political dynamics that can foster mistrust and make compromise difficult.

One of the central issues that appeared in the interviews is the increase of the nationalistic and right-wing political forces in Israel. An and B highlighted the fact that the far-right coalitions and ultra-Orthodox parties have increased, which has led to a more limited political arena for territorial concessions and reinforced security policies. The Israelis' settlement expansion on the occupied West Bank and their outright rejection of statehood for Palestinians by some parts of the Israeli political establishment has become increasingly accepted in domestic political discourse. All these developments help to preserve the status quo and make significant progress to a negotiated settlement more difficult. As points out, Israeli politics has been moving toward the right, making the voices of political parties calling for peace and coexistence less influential. By the same token, the transformation of electoral behaviour in Israel has strengthened the focus on security over diplomatic compromise.

The results also show that Palestinian internal divisions have emerged as a significant challenge to Palestinian peacebuilding. Ongoing tension between Fatah and Hamas is a key factor that damages the Palestinian political unity and hurts negotiations, respondents repeatedly mentioned. Fragmentation in the Palestinian Authority (PA)

due to the division between the West Bank and Gaza, and between the two rival claimants to legitimacy, Hamas and the PA, has led to divided systems of governance. This makes it difficult for Palestinian leaders to articulate a single negotiating stance, which diminishes the effectiveness of negotiations. However, the disjointed nature of Palestinian politics has repeatedly made it difficult to form coherent national strategies and sustainable institutions, as pointed out. Likewise, the division between Gaza and the West Bank has deprived the region of government and compromised the prospects for political reconciliation.

Public opinion and domestic political pressures are also crucial in determining leadership behavior, as another important finding. When asked about the tendency of certain leaders to avoid compromise within Israel and Palestine, Respondent A did so. Compromises can be seen as a threat to the political leader's electoral support, legitimacy, or authority. In other words, sticking to a tough stance may yield higher domestic payoffs than an unpopular peace plan. This understanding is in line with 'two-level game' theory - in which the leader should negotiate at both domestic and international levels and be held accountable to the domestic constituencies. Leaders in deeply divided societies may find their flexibility restricted by their own domestic audiences, and their capacity to seek negotiated solutions.

The respondents also noted that leadership crises and low public confidence in political institutions have fueled cycles of stagnation and escalation. Weak political legitimacy and lack of consensus often sabotage peace processes, Respondent B added. In the Palestinian context, delays in elections and concerns about the effectiveness of institutions have impacted public confidence in good governance. Similarly, the polarization of the Israeli political has led to instability and made reaching consensus more difficult. "Conflict resolution depends on the legitimate leadership which can also drum up public sentiment in favor of compromise. Without such conditions, peace processes are unable to secure enough political support.

Respondent C noted the opportunities and challenges that can arise from changing political

conditions with regard to conflict resolution. Political change can provide opportunities to talk and reform if moderate leadership is present, or when public opinion is more favorable towards peace. On the other hand, political turbulence and heightened polarization could stoke tensions and lead to more violence. The finding indicates that domestic political dynamics in themselves do not hinder peace, but influence peace depending on the political context and decision made by political leaders and institutions.

The results of this study confirm past research that underscores the relevance of domestic politics in long-term conflicts. Although many peace efforts in the Arab-Israeli conflict have failed, this was not only due to conflicting views of the parties, it was also because of the leaders' failure to secure domestic support for negotiated solutions. Likewise, Palestinian internal impediments and the stark inequalities in political power have had a major impact on the prospects for Palestinian self-determination. The studies provided further support for the thesis that conflict resolution cannot simply rely on external diplomatic pressures, but must also be accompanied by the internal political pressures.

In terms of Realist theory this suggests that domestic actors focus on political survival and security issues in devising policies. Politics at all levels is determined by the pursuit of power and the protection of national interest. Leaders are therefore more likely to become engaged in a stance that secures their power and reacts to threats to their security. Political actors are "in environments of uncertainty and competition" and are therefore more likely to have preferences for minimizing risk to their survival. The inability of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to make politically pricey compromises can therefore be explained as a result of other issues of legitimacy, security and maintaining power.

In conclusion, the internal political processes are the key that will determine the outcome of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The conflict remains unresolved and sometimes re-flares as a result of nationalist political movements in Israel, divisions in Palestinian leadership, low trust in institutions and political pressures at home. While shifting political realities can bring opportunities for peace, inclusive leadership, institutional

reinforcement and building domestic political environments that facilitate compromise and reconciliation are necessary for sustainable progress toward the Two-State Solution. External mediation and regional efforts are unlikely to result in a lasting and comprehensive settlement without dealing with these internal issues.

Evolving Regional Rivalries and Changing Regional Security Environment Will Impact Palestine and Israel Conflict and Peace Process

The results of this study indicate that the nature of the Israel–Palestine conflict has undergone a significant shift as a result of the regional rivalries and the changing security dynamics in the region. The respondents were all adamant that the conflict must be viewed not merely as a territorial dispute between Israelis and Palestinians. It has, however, more and more become a part of the larger regional power struggles, shifting alliances, and strategic competition that affect the intensity of the conflict and the peace prospects. Such changes have shifted the landscape of the peace process from the traditional one and broadened the number of stakeholders whose interests influence the course of the peace process.

One of the significant developments singled out in the interviews is a rise in the influence of power struggle in the conflict. One of the main developments highlighted in the interviews is the escalation of power struggle in the conflict. Respondents A and B contended that the Israel–Palestine conflict has become more part of broader geopolitical conflicts, specifically the rivalry between Iran, Israel and the Arab Gulf states. The regionalisation of the conflict has been aided by the involvement of non-state actors and groups that are pro-Iran in Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen. This has now turned into a wider regional security problem, as once it was mostly a land, sovereignty, and national identity conflict. In the Middle East, domestic and regional strife often combine into a complex network of security challenges, often making conflict resolution in Middle Eastern conflicts difficult. Likewise, regional conflicts have been a key feature of today's Middle East political landscape, sometimes eclipsing ideological issues.

The results also suggest that the changing geopolitical landscape has changed the perceptions of regional players. Respondent A

mentioned that Palestinian concerns are now being set aside in favour of security matters in countries' foreign policy. The formation of new diplomatic coalitions such as normalization deals and strategic partnerships shows shifting regional priorities.

While simultaneously reconsidering their traditional solutions to the Palestinian issue, many Arab countries have turned their attention to economic modernization and the development of technology as well as collective security arrangements. These are realignments in the regions which show how the states react to changes in their geopolitical environment by pursuing pragmatic interests or agendas rather than ideological positions. The Palestinian issue, which was the symbol of the event, has become a central issue of the region but not unique anymore.

The second major finding has to do with the character of conflicts in the region and the impact of these conflicts on peace processes. The respondents were in agreement that security environments can be positive and negative. At the positive side, regional cooperation can provide opportunities to mediation, humanitarian assistance, economic integration and diplomatic engagement. More cooperation and coordination between states may be useful to create stability and facilitate discussion between conflicting parties. Respondent C emphasized human rights, economic development, and diplomatic relations as key elements in supporting conflict resolution and building good relations in the region. Regional viewpoints can have the power to take the lead in negotiations and establish a positive peace-building process by remaining in the peace process.

The respondents also identified the negative impacts of the competition in the region. Polarization may be exacerbated by regional conflicts, regional proxy wars and regional peace processes may be stalled. Respondent A agreed that it has become a proxy war between Iran and its neighbours, with local actors involved in this struggle within a wider geopolitical framework. Respondent B similarly stated that the conflict has become a larger regional security fight among multiple aspiring powers to influence and strategically benefit the region. These findings corroborate assertion that regional conflicts can

become embroiled in larger geopolitical competitions, which can diminish the chance of negotiated resolutions. These can exacerbate and become vicious cycles and cannot help reduce confidence building processes (Kelman, 2005).

The respondents also emphasized that the effects of regional rivalries do not just affect the directly involved states. In addition to the direct effects, there were indirect effects as well, as Respondent C made clear, including economic disruptions, diplomatic tensions, changing alliances, foreign policy orientations, and more, even in non-belligerent nations. The impact of the Middle East instability is therefore not limited to the Middle East but extends to the political and economic scenario of the world. The interdependence illustrates the multi-layered nature of modern warfare and that regional security concerns are transnational in nature.

The results are consistent with the predictions of the Realist theory, and from the states' perspective, it is geared towards survival, security and strategic considerations in an anarchic international system. Foreign policy is all about wanting to win and protecting national interest. Likewise, the states' behavior will change as they rebalance power struggles and their perceived threats. The strategic rivalry, shifting alliances and shifting security partnerships of the regional actors in the respondents' accounts are indicative of these Realist assumptions. States do not fall into a rigid ideological category of being ideological allies or opponents of a given actor, but rather on the basis of calculations of security, influence and national advantage.

At the same time, results show that regional conflicts are not necessarily incompatible with peace. In some instances, strategic interests can lead to cooperation when states perceive the stability to be preferable to ongoing conflict. Geopolitical competition and diplomatic engagement can go hand in hand: Several countries in the Middle East are increasingly turning to economic development and integration. But sustainable peace is not going to be a walk in the park as the major players' incentives and priorities continue to shift in the general regional conflicts.

In general, the analysis shows that the regional competition and security dynamics have

developed into a major factor in the Israel-Palestine conflict and in the fate of the peace process. These developments have turned the conflict into a complex regional issue, with various strategic, alliance and security factors playing a role. Regional players have the means to help bring people to the table and promote dialogue and cooperation, but ongoing geopolitical tension is undermining the efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement. So, the viability of the Two-State Solution will rest on the regional framework and the readiness of regional powers to put peace ahead of strategic competition, as well as Israeli and Palestinian leadership.

Normative Pressure Within Middle East Does Impact Regional Powers Position Towards Israel and Palestine Conflict

The results of this study show that the position of regional powers in the Israel-Palestine issue is still affected by the normative pressure, but it has shifted due to the changes of geopolitical realities. All the respondents highlighted that the Palestinian cause is very much entrenched in the Arab and Islamic political culture because of their historical experiences, collective identities, religious identity and the Palestinian cause of self-determination. They also recognized, however, that "More and more regional governments weigh these normative commitments against strategic, economic and security interests." As such, regional reactions to the conflict depend on the interplay of public expectations and national interests.

Perhaps one of the most prominent themes that came across the interviews is the continuity of the importance of Arab unity and unity of identity. Respondent A stated that the historical norms that underpinned Palestinian rights are still reflected in foreign policy narratives in the Middle East. Such norms will force policy makers to be sensitive to the sentiments of the public and the expectations of the regions, especially in time of tension. Respondent B also noted that the Palestinian issue has always played a major role in Arab and Islamic identity, and thus entailed expectations of governments for solidarity with the Palestinian people. Public opinion across the Arab world has shown consistently high levels of support for Palestinian aspirations and that it continues to

shape the political legitimacy of the governments within the Arab world. As a result, states' measures are frequently expressed in a manner that explicitly demonstrates their "stance" on the Palestinian issue even if they are of a pragmatic nature.

The results also show an increasing shift of normative pressure towards strategic calculations and national interests. Respondents A and B pointed out that changing geopolitical realities have spurred many regional governments to focus on security, economic growth, technological progress, and regional stability. Normalization deals with Israel and some Arab countries are a good example of this change. Governments have been making strides in cooperation with Israel in the field of trade, investment and security, but they have also continued to rhetorically support Palestinian rights. This balancing approach demonstrates a desire to marry expectations at home with foreign policy goals as a whole. The present day politics of the Middle East is becoming more pragmatic in terms of decision-making, where survival and strategic interests of the regime are becoming the primary considerations, rather than ideological ones. Regional states often modify policies to suit shifting security contexts with symbolic links to past causes.

A second significant observation is on the limits that public opinion sets on regional policy makers. The respondents proposed that the governments cannot ignore the views of society towards the conflict as Palestine still enjoys popular support from the Middle East. Regional leaders tend to take a firmer stance with regards to the Palestinians during the height of the violence in order to be seen as being tough, and to appease public opinion. Normative influences are also significant, as the conflict is seen as not only political, but also religious, historical, and cultural, as noted by Respondent C. The proliferation of new communication technologies and transnational media has intensified public participation in regional concerns, making public concerns and demands regarding Palestine more visible.

Concurrently, the results suggest that normative influences affect foreign policy decisions beyond mere pressure. As referenced by Respondent C,

several states have established or grown ties with Israel for various reasons, including economic, political and strategic interests. This indicates that the regional governments often take a 'moderate' stance, taking into account conflicting priorities. The Middle Eastern states have been following a new trend of multidimensional foreign policies, in which they combine calculations of power and national interest with identity-based concerns. Therefore, support for Palestine does not mean that states cannot also be engaged with Israel if this is seen to be in the service of wider strategic considerations.

This study's results are consistent with the results of past scholarship on the issue of identity and state interests in Middle Eastern politics. Arab identity has influenced regional cooperation and expectations of Arab solidarity, and has led to the definition of legitimate political behavior. But he adds that identity-based norms can also pit themselves against domestic interests and concerns when it comes to the survival of the state. Similarly, the post-political regional changes have shifted the ratio between idealism and pragmatism, and brought a new debate to the fore about traditional foreign policy stances.

The results reveal from a Realist perspective that normative pressure can shape the behaviour of states, but can only do so when it is subordinate to power and national interest considerations. While moral concepts can inform politics, foreign policies are based upon the desire for power and the defence of national interests. States exist in an anarchic international system and thus must place survival and security as the highest priority. These Realist assumptions are evident in the rhetoric of regional powers of supporting Palestinian rights and the strategic partnerships that they are pursuing with Israel. The governments try to maintain internal mostly legitimacy and regional credibility while not sacrificing their overall security and economic goals.

In general, the argument shows that the dynamics of normative pressure remain an important factor that influences regional reactions to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The influence of Arab solidarity, religious identity, public opinion and historical commitments continue to play a role in political debate and foreign policy discourse. However, there has been a growing tension

between these normative and pragmatic issues in the realms of security, economic development, and geopolitical competition. Regional powers thus pursue balanced strategies that try to balance public expectations with strategic interests. The Two State Solution will not only be shaped by changing regional power dynamics, but also by the capacity of governments to engage in steps that would build a 'normative commitment to justice and self-determination' with the goal of securing a sustainable and inclusive peace settlement.

Conclusion

The study explored the impact of regional power dynamics on the Israel–Palestine conflict and the future of the Two-State Solution by conducting qualitative expert interviews. The results suggest that regional actors are playing a more important role in the conflict via diplomacy, normalisation efforts, military security cooperation and humanitarian actions, and are more inclined to consider strategic and national interests in their interactions. The division of Israel and Palestine at the internal level, as well as the changing dynamics of regional competition, are still hampering the prospect of peace. The Two-State Solution as the most preferred framework for the resolution of the conflict is dependent on increased political will, regional cooperation and continued diplomatic engagement. The study, based on Realist theory, concludes that regional actors need to reconcile the preference and commitment to strategic interests and values, requiring coordinated regional action for a sustainable, durable, and inclusive peace.

Limitations

- This study is a qualitative study which conducted using telephonic interviews and secondary sources. Thus, the results do not necessarily reflect the views of all the actors in

the Israel-Palestine struggle.

- The research used a small number of respondents who were selected because they have knowledge of the issue and expertise. Therefore, the results might not be representative of the general population.
- The interviews were conducted over the telephone which meant the researcher could not observe the non-verbal expression and body language, which might have affected the interpretation of some responses.
- Some of the findings may be affected over time because of the dynamic political and security context in the Middle East, especially in terms of policy orientations and strategic priorities of regional actors.
- Data collection was limited by time and resources, and may have limited participants and other relevant viewpoints on the conflict.

Recommendations

- Regional actors have a role in fostering dialogue and confidence-building initiatives between Israel and Palestine and should exercise their diplomatic influence in this regard.
- Normalization agreements should be tied to specific steps to tackle the fundamental Palestinian issues of statehood, land and territorial rights and political self-determination.
- In the future, Palestinian political reconciliation and unity should be fostered to improve their representation.
- Humanitarian access and support within the region and internationally should be further expanded to alleviate tensions and enhance the situation on the ground.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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