

**Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation**

**Regional states and the international system**

**The Palestinian question in Middle East's new Balance of Power and regional transformations**

**by**

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## **Abbreviations**

American Israeli Public Relations Committee – AIPAC

Centre for European Policy Studies – CEPS

European Community – EC

European Economic Community – EEC

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – EMP

European Neighborhood Policy – ENP

European Union – EU

Immaterial Capacities Index – IMCI

International Energy Agency – IEA

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – JCPOA

Material Capacities Index – MCI

Middle East and North Africa – MENA

Palestinian Authority – P.A.

Palestinian Liberation Organisation – P.L.O.

Regional Security Complex Theory – (RSCT)

Semi-Material Capacities Index – SMCI

Statistical Programme for Social Sciences – SPSS

United Arab Emirates – U.A.E

United Arab Republic – UAR

Union for the Mediterranean – UfM

UN Relief and Works Agency – UNRWA

United Nations – UN

United States – U.S.

World Power Index – WPI

World War II – WW II.

World War I – WW I.

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*I am also grateful to my wife [Noor] who has been my rock throughout this journey. Her love, patience, and understanding have made this challenging experience bearable. Your unwavering belief in me has been my driving force and I am forever grateful for your support. To my friends and colleagues, thank you for your friendship, support, and motivation. Your presence in my life has made this journey more enjoyable and meaningful.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Geopolitical change has had a significant impact on international politics. Two major trends have dominated international politics in the post-Cold War era: the diffusion and transfer of power. The international system has moved from a unipolar system to what observers have described as an ambiguous system characterised by a kind of fluidity. It is sometimes described as multipolar, but the consensus is that power has become increasingly decentralised. Conflict and order have become regional, and regional interactions between states have become more critical to world politics.

The growth of regional autonomy in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia and the waning influence of former colonial powers in most non-Western regions have allowed solid sovereign countries in the region to play an increasingly important role in economic integration, security dynamics in the region, and regulation of political relations.<sup>1</sup> This gave importance to studying regional powers and their impact on the international system.

Many studies have examined the definition of regional power (D. Nolt 2010, S. Yilmaz 2017, B. Buzan and O. Waver 2003; M. Beck 2014; M. Ponizilova 2016). However, there is still no consensus on the definition of regional power and its precise meaning or on how to measure it because it combines power and region.

Measuring power in terms of state capabilities, such as demographic, economic, and military capabilities, is crucial for analysing power and understanding state behaviour. However, material resources alone may not reflect the power of states to influence others. The possession of substantial material resources alone does not always guarantee that the state will be able to achieve all its goals in order to become a regional power. What matters most, however, is the exercise of that power over others. It is easy to measure regional power in terms of its material resources, geography, economy and military power, but what matters most is the impact of that power in the region until it becomes regional. Its influence lies in its ability to lead and influence.

On the other hand, the fact that the Middle East is a region by definition is also a dilemma. Does it constitute a region, what countries belong to it, and how is it defined politically or

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<sup>1</sup> PONIZILOVA, M., 2016. p. 158.

geographically? The thesis also discusses this to achieve a logical analysis of the Middle East as a region and its powers.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian question occupy an essential place in the politics of the Middle East, on the minds of many local and international politicians. First, because it is considered one of the political dilemmas of the protracted conflict, and second, because it lacks visions of logical solutions. The thesis deals with two critical axes: regional power and the use of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to measure power by analysing the region's influence in this conflict. The thesis will be concerned with developing a set of several scenarios for resolving this conflict by knowing what has been analysed from the outside and analysing it from the inside.

The importance and originality of this thesis lies in the fact that it brings together all the relevant actors in the region and compares what has been written and analysed in the theoretical works of scholars – an outsider approach – and provides the results of ground-based empirical research - an insider approach.

The thesis highlights the repercussions of the existence of a Regional Power for conflict resolution and regional institutionalisation. It focuses on the tools and strategies of how the regional powers mechanise their interests and hegemony. It also predicts the practical methods used to achieve this position – regional power – through conflict resolution.

The PhD work aims to collect all the region's main influential actors and conduct an in-depth analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Success in creating a regional order means resolving, or at least stabilising, the conflict in the region.

The thesis analyses the region's leading actors, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran, their policies and strategies in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to know their visions and perceptions of the region to measure the power hierarchy and their influence. In parallel, it analyses mainly the U.S. policy towards the region and other world powers. Concerning the region's future, it is appropriate to assess who will determine the ruling power in the region and the expected forms of alliances.

The thesis will explore the region, establish a particular definition for the Middle East, and analyze the role of regional powers. This complexity needs to connect the internal actors in the region with the external actors and world powers, especially the role of the U.S. played in the region.



The thesis aims to understand the role of regional actors in the Middle East, whether they are considered a dominant regional power or an influential secondary power, in order to classify them. Classifying the powers in the region can determine their political features and forms of internal relations. In parallel, the thesis examines the process of regional cooperation through the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by analysing key actors' policies, strategies, and alliances.

Understanding the contemporary Middle East could not be done without connecting it to the historical background of the main stages that have passed since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This requires delving into history, reading the finer details, showing the reality, and getting guidance to know whether this contemporary Middle East is in control of itself or has been controlled from outside by the colonial legacy.

The Middle East is considered an arena of international-external and regional-internal competition at the level of the region's countries. In most cases, internal competition is a proxy reflection of external competition. What distinguishes the Middle East, of course, is its dynamism and rapid change, as the events of the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011 constituted a new crossroads for changing the entire political map of the Middle East.

The thesis relied on the World Power Index<sup>2</sup> to classify the candidate powers to measure their influence on the conflict; the author chose it because it collects all indicators to measure the power and influence of states. The author drew up a table based on the data obtained from the World Power Index, which provides data until the year 2017, and chose the highest countries within this classification, which, as we have already indicated, were Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, in addition to Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Egypt, where these countries are discussed and urged in the context of the following chapters. (Table 1)

Given the importance and impact of regional transformation, the focus will be on the Palestinian question in light of ongoing regional changes in the Middle East.

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<sup>2</sup> The World Power Index (WPI) is the result of the addition of 18 indicators, which in turn are organised into three composite indexes: Material Capacities Index (MCI). The MCI is a composite index that seeks to reflect more broadly the economic-military power of states more broadly by considering six essential variables: national production, total surface area, defense, international trade, finance and research & development, Semi-Material Capacities Index (SMCI) the SMCI is a composite index that seeks to refer to the socio-institutional power of a state by considering six fundamental variables: production per capita, population, consumption, household final consumption expenditure per capita, energy, education and health, and the Immaterial Capacities Index (IMCI). The IMCI is made up of six variables designed to reflect a country's broad cultural-communicative power of a State from: government expenditure, tourist appeal, international aid, telephone lines, academic influence and cosmopolitanism. The result is a tool that measures national power in a complex, multidimensional and dynamic way from 1975 to 2017. Morales Ruvalcaba, Daniel. *World Power Index Database*. 2022. Available at: <https://www.worldpowerindex.com/data-wpi/> [Last accessed: 20.02.2022]

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	201	
S. Arabi a	0.652	0.645	0.643	0.636	0.641	0.637	0.641	0.637	0.633	0.642	0.648	0.665	0.676	0.679	0.691	0.695	0.7	0.706	0.707	0.717	0.725	0.734	0.746	0.747	0.744	0.736	0.73	
Israel	0.666	0.669	0.671	0.672	0.676	0.683	0.688	0.684	0.682	0.686	0.683	0.676	0.672	0.67	0.669	0.668	0.669	0.676	0.677	0.682	0.684	0.684	0.686	0.688	0.688	0.688	0.69	0.69
Turke y	0.627	0.641	0.647	0.632	0.636	0.641	0.659	0.662	0.667	0.666	0.653	0.655	0.663	0.675	0.685	0.687	0.695	0.697	0.692	0.698	0.695	0.695	0.694	0.692	0.688	0.693	0.69	0.69
U. A. E	0.631	0.633	0.633	0.631	0.633	0.634	0.638	0.634	0.637	0.646	0.635	0.634	0.636	0.639	0.644	0.648	0.653	0.655	0.657	0.654	0.656	0.658	0.663	0.666	0.666	0.665	0.666	0.66
Iran	0.56	0.558	0.552	0.555	0.556	0.568	0.572	0.578	0.579	0.586	0.595	0.596	0.603	0.607	0.618	0.625	0.636	0.646	0.648	0.652	0.667	0.662	0.65	0.65	0.639	0.642	0.64	0.64
Qatar	0.48	0.482	0.498	0.501	0.504	0.505	0.515	0.506	0.512	0.527	0.526	0.526	0.537	0.543	0.559	0.576	0.583	0.597	0.601	0.607	0.616	0.628	0.633	0.636	0.633	0.625	0.61	0.61
Egypt	0.513	0.517	0.522	0.53	0.537	0.542	0.55	0.553	0.558	0.565	0.565	0.558	0.552	0.544	0.545	0.548	0.554	0.563	0.573	0.581	0.581	0.578	0.577	0.579	0.586	0.585	0.56	0.56

Table No. (1) shows the order of the regions powers

Source: compiled by the author, the data taken from World Power Index (WPI)

## **I.1. Background of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict**

The Arab-Israeli conflict arose at the end of the First World War I (1914-1918) after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the start of the British-French mandate over the region after the Sykes-Picot Agreement, known to the public since 1917. The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, known as the promise of the United Kingdom to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine, is considered to mark the official beginning of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs in the Middle East.

The Israelis claim that they have a historical right to exist in the land of Palestine, while the Palestinians believe that this is their homeland and their state. Politics overlaps with religion in this conflict. The Israelis merge their claim to Palestine from a religious perspective, saying that it has been their land since the days of Prophet Solomon, and Muslims living in the region also say that it is an Islamic endowment land that belongs to all Muslims. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 resulted in no fewer than five wars between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries and two major Palestinian uprisings.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, which included portions of Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, recognised the geographic location of the State of Israel on the territory of the State of Palestine. Resolution 18, also known as the Partition Plan<sup>3</sup>, was adopted by the United Nations in 1947 and aimed to create separate Arab and Jewish states within the boundaries of the British Mandate of Palestine. The State of Israel, the West Bank (west of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip were each given a portion of the territory.

Starting with Egypt, Israel concluded the first peace agreement in the region, 'Camp David' ending more than 30 years of conflict with Egypt. In 1987, confrontations with the Israelis erupted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, leading to the first Palestinian intifada, or 'stone uprising.'

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<sup>3</sup> In UN Resolution 181, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to approved the partition plan on 29 November 1947, by a vote of 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions. After the British announced that they were ending their authority over Palestine, the question of sovereignty was considered by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The UNSCOP report recommended the division of the British Mandate controlled area of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem as an “international” city. According to the plan, the two states, roughly equal in size and natural resources, would cooperate on major economic issues, and share their currency, roads, and government services across the territory. The Zionist leadership reluctantly accepted the partition plan because it offered at least two of their demands - sovereignty and control over immigration. The Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab nations rejected it outright, refusing to accept the establishment of a Jewish state in the region. Available at : <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/038/88/PDF/NR003888.pdf?OpenElement> [Last accessed: 20.01.2023]

In the year 1991, Israel concluded peace agreement under the framework of 'The Oslo Accords' with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (P.L.O.), the 'Declaration of Principles Agreement' which provided for a Palestinian presence in both the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho. Which then waited five years for negotiations to begin on the final stage for the final demarcation of the borders, as well as agreeing on core issues, including water and capital, the supposed capital of the State of Palestine, which was decided to be East Jerusalem.

Both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (P.A.) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for five years. Then, permanent status talks on the issues of borders, refugees, and Jerusalem would be held.

Jerusalem is divided into two parts, East and West, dating back to the day of the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel shortly after the 1948 war, following its occupation of West Jerusalem and complete occupation of the rest of the city of Jerusalem in the 1967 war.

The Israeli-Palestinian agreement at that time was linked to United Nations Resolutions 242 and Resolution 338. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (S/RES/242) on 22 November 1967, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. It was adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. British Ambassador Lord Caradon (1907-1990) sponsored the resolution, and it was one of five drafts under consideration. The Preamble refers to the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in which every State in the area can live in security".

Operative Paragraph One affirms that fulfilment of the principles of the Charter requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which should include the application of the following two principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

The three-line United Nations Security Council Resolution 338, adopted on 22 October 1973, called for a ceasefire in the Six-Day War, following a joint proposal by the United States and

the Soviet Union. The resolution called for the ceasefire to take effect within 12 hours of its adoption. The 'appropriate auspices' meant American or Soviet rather than UN auspices. This third clause helped to establish the framework for the Geneva Conference (1973), held in December 1973.

The resolution was adopted at the 1747<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UN Security Council by 14 votes to none, with one member, the People's Republic of China, not taking part in the vote. Fighting continued despite the terms of the resolution, leading to Resolution 339, which resulted in a ceasefire.

The resolution states: The Security Council calls upon all parties to present fighting to cease firing and to terminate all military activities immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy;

Calls upon all parties concerned to begin immediately after the ceasefire the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts. It decides that negotiations under appropriate auspices to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East shall begin immediately and in parallel with the ceasefire.

Worldwide, the Oslo Accords were seen as a turning point in the conflict, marking the first time that the Palestine Liberation Organisation recognised Israel as a 'state', and that Israel recognised the P.L.O. as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Oslo II Accords, added in 1995, expanded the original agreement by requiring Israel to withdraw completely from 6 towns and 450 communities in the West Bank.

The Palestinians began the Second Intifada in 2000, which lasted until 2005. It was sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control of the West Bank, a stalled peace process and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to al-Aqsa Mosque - the third holiest site in Islam. In response, the Israeli government authorised the construction of a wall around the West Bank in 2002, in defiance of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The United States attempted to restart the West Bank peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority in 2013. However, the formation of a unity government in 2014 between Fatah, the official Palestinian Authority party, and Hamas, a breakaway faction, halted the peace negotiations. Hamas, one of the two main Palestinian

political parties, was founded in 1987 after the first intifada and is a breakaway from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In 1997, the U.S. designated Hamas as a foreign terrorist organisation.

The Israeli military and Hamas engaged in a military conflict in the summer of 2014 due to hostilities in the Palestinian territories. Hamas fired some 3,000 rockets into Israel, and Israel responded with a significant offensive in Gaza. In late August 2014, Egypt brokered a ceasefire agreement that halted the fighting, but not before 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians had died. Following a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared that the Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial borders established by the Oslo Accords. Palestinians in Gaza staged weekly protests near the border with Israel between March and May 2018.

In May 2018, fighting broke out between Hamas and the Israeli military in the worst period of violence since 2014. Before a ceasefire was reached, militants in Gaza fired more than a hundred rockets into Israel; Israel responded with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during the twenty-four hour flare-up.

The administration of Donald J. Trump has made Israel and the Palestinians a top foreign policy objective. In 2018, the Trump administration reversed long-standing U.S. policy and cut off funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which helps Palestinian refugees. It also moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Israeli government welcomed the decision to move the American embassy, but other Middle Eastern and European governments and Palestinian officials condemned it.

East Jerusalem is the claimed capital of a future Palestinian state, while Israel claims 'all and united Jerusalem' as its capital. The Trump administration's long-awaited 'Peace to Prosperity' plan was unveiled in January 2020. However, it was rejected by the Palestinians because it backed possible Israeli annexation of West Bank settlements and sovereignty over an 'undivided' Jerusalem.

After Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Bahrain agreed to normalise relations with Israel in August and September 2020, becoming the third and fourth nations in the region to do so. The agreements, known as the Abraham Accords, came more than 18 months after the United States hosted Israel and several Arab nations for

ministerial talks in Warsaw, on the future of peace in the Middle East. Both Hamas and Palestinian Authority's leader Mahmoud Abbas both rejected the agreements.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is complex and has regional, national, political, cultural and religious roots. The land is what both Israelis and Palestinians desire. The extent to which the region's powers have demonstrated their contribution to the resolution of this conflict will be understood in the thesis in order to work towards their regional stature and develop scenarios for possible conflict resolutions.

*Statuesque of Palestine:* The Palestinian issue has deeper dimensions than the issue of the Palestinians alone, as it is linked to the Arab-Islamic heritage, especially the city of Jerusalem.

The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip Oslo II, signed on 28 September 1995, divided the Palestinian territories into three distinct areas in the West Bank, namely Areas A, B and (C), each with different security and administrative arrangements and authorities, for a transitional period of five years:

- Areas (A): entirely under Palestinian control, mainly urban areas, cities, and towns, such as Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm, and Qalqilya: with the authority to maintain internal security and the deployment of Palestinian Authority police patrols in the streets.
- Areas (B): under Palestinian civil and Israeli security control, villages adjacent to the cities in areas (A).
- Areas classified as (C): the entire presence of the Israeli army and under Israeli control. It includes settlements, roads, strategic areas, and areas adjacent to the borders of "Israel"! Area C is home to (150,000) Palestinians in more than (500) civilian communities and about (325,000) Israeli settlers in more than (200) settlements and outposts. It contains 63% of the most fertile land. It is rich in natural resources in the West Bank, most of the area of the Jordan Valley, which contains the largest (uninhabited) land reserve in the West Bank and a large part of its natural resources.<sup>4</sup>

The Oslo Accords aim to transfer Areas (B) gradually and Areas (C), sometimes known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to Palestinian rule (A). However, none of the lands in Areas (C) were given to the Palestinian Authority and the West Bank as a whole, as well as Areas (A)

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<sup>4</sup> Palestinian academic society for the study of international affairs. p.151. Available at: <http://www.passia.org/maps/view/> [Last accessed: 15.01.2023]

(17.2% of the West Bank) and Areas (B) (23.8%), which consist of 227 non-contiguous settlements and are cut off from each other and from their land and other resources, remained an occupied territory. Area C contains about 40% of privately owned Palestinian property where illegal settlements have been erected.<sup>5</sup>

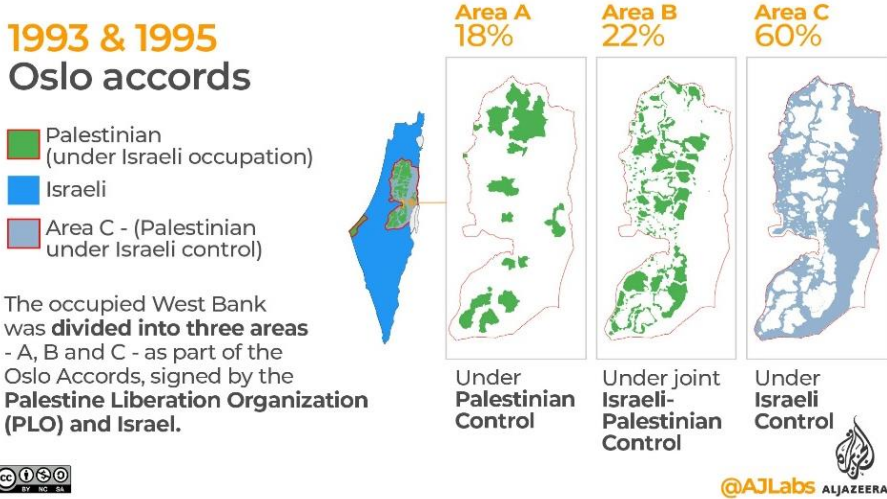


Figure 1: Division of areas in the West Bank according to the Oslo Accords<sup>6</sup>

**I. 2. Theoretical framework**

Several theoretical frameworks have attempted to describe and address the difficulties of securing a particular geographic area, with the intention of maintaining regional security as a significant priority in the global arena. These theories offer viewpoints on the elements that influence cooperation, conflict, and stability within a particular geographic area, which helps to understand regional security dynamics.

In the search for theories to explain relations between countries (Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran), each theory has found an approach and factors to interpret these relations. There is no

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian academic society for the study of international affairs. p. 151. Available at: <http://www.passia.org/maps/view/> [Last accessed: 15.01.2023]

<sup>6</sup>Palestine and Israel: Mapping an annexation, Aljazeera. Available at: <https://2u.pw/ebgH8b> [Last accessed: 20.01.2023]



single comprehensive theory to understand the complexity of the Middle East. For the purposes of the thesis, the author has divided the theoretical framework into the following parts:

In terms of theoretical approach, the research will discuss theories that are directly related to the research questions. One of the most important is the regional security complex theory, and the other is the theory of hegemony.

The author will also discuss the balance of power theory, which deals with the threat and security dilemma in the region, to find out the region's complexities in terms of power and the arrangement of actors.

Hegemony would be the complete military domination of the region. This means complete security from military invasion or defeat by any of the neighbouring powers. In history, only the United States has been an undisputed hegemon.

Imperialism means the extension of a nation's influence, whether cultural, economic, or military. It is inherently invasive, whereas hegemony quickly becomes passive and even beneficial after the conflict necessary to establish the initial position.

### **I.2.1. Realism Theory**

Realism is a significant theoretical framework in international relations, emphasizing the competitive and conflict-driven nature of global politics. This theory suggests that the absence of a central governing authority in the international system creates an environment of competition and self-interest among nation-states. Understanding this perspective highlights the importance of military power and security in international relations.

Legro and Moravcsik argue that realist theory is based on three core assumptions: the anarchic nature of the international environment, the unitary nature of analysis, and the lack of a cohesive authority regulating states' behaviours within the international system. Additionally, they propose that states' interests are viewed as fixed and inherently conflictual.<sup>7</sup> Dahl famously defined power as "A's ability to get B to do something B would not otherwise do."<sup>8</sup>

In the field of international relations, the concept of "A B" refers to sovereign states, which are composed of individuals who operate based on natural laws. Realists believe that these

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<sup>7</sup> LEGRO, J., & MORAVCSIK, A., 1999. pp. 12-17

<sup>8</sup> KINSELLA, D., RUSSETT, B., & STARR, H., 2013. p. 71.

individuals are primarily driven by self-interest and the pursuit of power and dominance over others. They argue that states prioritize increasing their power to avoid being forced to act in the interests of other states. Additionally, realists emphasize that a state's ability to negotiate is closely linked to its material wealth. In the absence of a global authority, realists stress the capacity of states to use coercion or incentives to influence other states. This perspective portrays the international system as a self-interested and competitive environment, often referred to as a "self-help" system due to the absence of a central governing authority.<sup>9</sup>

In a self-help system, preventing war relies on maintaining a balance of power and capabilities. This idea comes from the security dilemma, which suggests that when a country increases its global power, it can cause other states to either form alliances with other countries or strengthen their own power internally, as they see it as a threat.<sup>10</sup>

When countries reach a balance, it's called a balance of power. This means that no single country or group of countries controls the world. According to this idea, when countries have similar amounts of power, it's more likely that there will be peace. Neorealism is a complex theory. It is similar to realism but deals with its problems. According to Brooks, Mearsheimer stresses that a country's power comes from the things it can do..<sup>11</sup>

Material capabilities must include military assets like nuclear weapons and hardware and latent power like economic power and a productive population.<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to incorporating an economic base, realists and neorealists disagree on two main issues: natural law and the decision-making process.<sup>13</sup> Brooks explains that beyond the arguments about human nature in classical realism, neorealists simply replace one aspect of human nature (aggression) with another (fear). This defensive approach affects decision-making by considering probabilities and military readiness. Realism and neorealism's dissatisfaction in a chaotic environment means that states always aim to balance the military capabilities of potential aggressors.<sup>14</sup>

The idea that the balance of power ensures peace was considered like a law. However, scholars, especially the creator of power transition theory (PTT), A.F. K Organski, have questioned the reliability of the balance of power theory. Organski discovered that "The popularity of the balance of power theory comes not only from the general desire for a political law but also from the fact that this theory claims to explain processes that happen automatically."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> KINSELLA, D., RUSSETT, B., & STARR, H., 2013. p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., 2006. p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., 2006. p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., 2006. p. 72-73.

<sup>13</sup> BROOKS, S. G., 1997. pp. 449-450.

<sup>14</sup> BROOKS, S. G., 1997. pp. 446-450.

<sup>15</sup> ORGANSKI, A. F. K., 1958. p. 283.

Morgenthau, a traditional realist, emphasizes power as the ultimate objective, whereas Waltz, a defensive neorealist, contends that states' interests can vary from mere survival to unipolarity. Brooks posits that the core of the realist divide rests on whether the potential for conflict alone influences states or makes decisions based on the likelihood of aggression.<sup>16</sup>

In all cases, realism focuses primarily on understanding the factors that drive distributive bargaining among states in all situations.<sup>17</sup>

In international relations, the interests of states are not fixed, and national policies can vary within the system, leading to different behavioral patterns. Many scholars in the field of international relations agree that there are clear advantages to being a hegemon. Still, realists have historically overlooked endogenous growth and the nature of orders created by dominant powers. Moravcsik argues that a theory must have explanatory power to be valuable. Realists are increasingly finding themselves incorporating liberalism, institutionalism, and epistemic theories to explain events in the international community to their detriment. Realism, as observed by Moravcsik, lacks consideration for preferences and satisfaction, and nations rarely sacrifice their future for foreign policy. As the saying goes, "Few wars are total, few peace's Carthaginian."<sup>18</sup> The realist perspective in international relations significantly emphasizes power and national interest as the fundamental elements shaping global interactions. It suggests that the pursuit of national interests and the quest for power are the driving forces behind countries' behaviour on the world stage. When considering this perspective in the context of the Middle East, it becomes apparent that realist theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the region's dynamics, particularly about power and its implications.

However, it's important to note that the realist theory focuses predominantly on traditional aspects of interstate relations, such as security and influence, as well as the pursuit of national interests. Furthermore, the theory encompasses interconnected concepts, particularly the discussion of power, which will be further explored within the relevant context. This provides a solid foundation for analysing the Middle East's complex dynamics and power's role in shaping the region's international relations.

### **1.2.2. Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory**

Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) is not just another theoretical framework but a significant tool that offers a comprehensive understanding of the organisation and management of security in various global regions. By emphasizing regional interdependence and the distinctive dynamics of cooperation and conflict, RSCT effectively elucidates the

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<sup>16</sup> BROOKS, S. G., 1997. p. 446.

<sup>17</sup> LEGRO, J. W., & MORAVCSIK, A., 1999. p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> MORAVCSIK, A., 1997. p. 524.

intricacies of international security, transcending conventional state-centric perspectives. Its insights are invaluable in shaping our understanding of the complex world we live in.

Buzan's pioneering concept of regional security is not just a theoretical construct but a reality that shapes the security landscape of our world. It emphasizes the interdependence of multiple countries within a specific geographic area, leading to interconnected security dynamics driven by mutual action and reaction. B. Buzan defines regional security as the scenario in which the primary security concerns of states are closely intertwined, resulting in their national security situations being interlinked. This understanding is crucial in today's globalized world, where regional security issues often have far-reaching implications for individual nations.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Hamid Rabie defines regional security as a group of countries belonging to one region that seeks to establish military and organisational cooperation for the countries of that region to prevent any foreign or external force in it. The region and the essence of that policy is regional dependency, on the one hand, confronting the forces alien to the region from another side and protecting the status quo from a third side.<sup>20</sup>

Professor Medhat Ayoub defines regional security as: “Taking gradual steps aimed at coordinating defense policies between more than one party, leading to adopting a unified defense policy based on assessment unifying sources of threats and ways to confront them.”<sup>21</sup>

Regional security cooperation takes many forms of security arrangements; according to Geoffrey Kemp, these arrangements are complex formulas that differ in their security forms (joint security, collective security, cooperation security, or a combination of these formulas) whose parties (regional powers, or some of them regional powers with powers External (and its frameworks are formal and informal according to the agreement of the countries of the region).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> BUZAN, B., 1982. p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> RABIE, H., 1984. p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> AYOUB, M., 2003. p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> ABDULLAH, S., 2008. p. 26.

The conclusion of the Cold War signified a change like threats. No longer confined to political unity, these threats expanded to encompass various cross-border challenges. This shift made stakeholder collaboration a crucial and unavoidable requirement for ensuring national, regional, and international security. As a result, different theoretical approaches, cognitive perceptions, and conceptual frameworks have emerged to help explain this new reality.

The foundation of liberal theory rests on the fundamental principle of international cooperation to achieve peace and security. In international relations, liberalism is particularly inclined towards promoting collaboration over conflict. Stephen Walt describes liberalism as a multi-faceted intellectual system. Within liberal thought, the institutional approach is a crucial perspective for comprehending and advancing international peace and security.

Robert Cohen and Joseph Annie are considered the most influential theorists of the institutional trend, which emphasizes the role of International and regional institutions in helping achieve security and cooperation because they can provide information and reduce operations costs, make commitments more reliable, and establish focus points for coordination.<sup>23</sup>

Regional institutions also work to enhance internal security through the powers they now possess and elements that allow them to control some aspects of internal issues; institutional liberalism is based on the assumption that the spread and increase in the number of organisations and the growth and complexity of the network of interdependence will lead to peaceful behaviour cooperation between countries and units.

Liberalism aims to redefine security by considering broader perspectives, highlighting the significance of wealth, well-being, and the environment. By introducing non-state actors, security protects state security against threats from other states and non-state actors. The liberal concept of security extends beyond the state to include institutional, economic, and democratic factors, deemed more pivotal than the military factor (per the realistic approach) in establishing peace. This is because minimal policies determine the security agenda and foster cooperation between countries.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> TAHIR, M., 2016. p. 251.

<sup>24</sup> BOUSSET, T., 2019. p. 16.

After the dominance of the liberal and standard approach, theories more related to the individual as a unit of analysis of cognitive perceptions emerged, including the concept of regional security and analysis at the regional level. Due to the spread of new security threats, their diversity, and the state's inability to confront them alone, and due to their rapid spread, security has become regional security is a certainty and a requirement to challenge and confront these threats, as regional security is linked to intellectual trends.

The regional security complex theory posits that the regional level is paramount in understanding international security relations. It underscores the distinctiveness of this level, setting it apart from the global and local levels, and regards it as the primary unit of analysis for security issues. While acknowledging the influence of external actors and powers on security dynamics, most countries define their security relations based on regional considerations, with the region playing a central role in shaping security dynamics.<sup>25</sup>

The theory of the regional security complex is based on several theoretical foundations and principles, which are as follows:<sup>26</sup>

1. Regional security complexes are considered the main component of international security.
2. The geographic factor is one of the most critical factors affecting the security component.
3. Threats are transmitted more easily and quickly at the regional level, and Walt believes that world geography is an influential factor in security.
4. The degree of mutual security dependence between the parties of the regional region is increasing, and this is due to historical factors. Cultural and geographic.
5. The idea of a security complex cannot be made universal because complexes are more vulnerable to hacking.

The importance of the security complex theory lies in that it deals with security threats precisely in a specific area, which facilitates understanding all the variables of the security phenomenon in its regional surroundings, which makes the regional analysis take into account taking into account the logical differences, which allows security studies researchers to carry out the process of security comparison between regions.

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<sup>25</sup> AL-MUSALMANI, A., 2018. p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> ABDULLAH, S., 2008. p. 26.

Clark and Morgan consider that the post-Cold War world has given more importance to the regional level to analyze and understand forms of conflict and cooperation in various world regions.<sup>27</sup>

The relationships of regional security complex are determined according to a set of variables: *Enmity/Friendship: Amity/Enmity*: The dynamics of regional security complexes are determined by historical relations of enmity, friendship, and cohesion geography, which results from the state of mutual security dependence, which is called the spectrum of relations. Cases of hostility and friendship have a significant impact on regional security relations and determine the nature of regional outcomes so that this relationship becomes control over the foreign policy outcomes of countries towards each other so that there is an expectation of peaceful relations and regional cooperation and the absence of war or competition and tension, which hinders the process of building a regional security complex.

The friend/enemy crisis cannot be traced back to the issue of the “balance of power.” anarchic structure of the international system; however, there are many issues that can affect it, which may be related to ideology, historical background, cohesion or geographic proximity, which plays a decisive role in strengthening security interactions, whether towards stability or instability.<sup>28</sup>

The RSCT is characterized by intense inter-state security interdependence in the Middle East. Countries within this region perceive their security as interconnected with that of their neighbors due to historical, cultural, religious, and political factors. The Middle East RSCT includes key states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Egypt, and Turkey, along with smaller but significant actors like the UAE, Qatar, Iraq, and Syria.

*Pattern of Amity and Enmity*: The Middle East is marked by complex patterns of amity (friendship) and enmity (hostility). Several prominent rivalries and alliances define the security dynamics: Saudi Arabia vs. Iran: A principal axis of conflict driven by sectarian divides (Sunni vs. Shia), competition for regional dominance, and differing political ideologies.

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<sup>27</sup> ABDULLAH, S., 2008. p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> BUZAN, B., 1982. p. 58.

Israel vs. Arab States/Iran: Israel's conflict with its Arab neighbors and Iran over territorial disputes, the Palestinian issue, and regional hegemony.

Turkey's Ambitions: Turkey's strategic interests in the region include its involvement in Syria and relations with the Gulf States.

*Sub-complexes within the RSCT:* The Middle East can be further divided into sub-complexes where specific local dynamics play out: Levant Sub-complex: Involving Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, focusing on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Syrian Civil War, and Hezbollah's influence.

Gulf Sub-complex: Encompassing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Iran, and Iraq, characterized by the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, oil politics, and internal GCC disputes.

Maghreb Sub-complex: While less central to broader Middle Eastern politics, countries like Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria have security dynamics that occasionally intersect with the main RSC.

*External Powers' Influence:* Global powers significantly influence the Middle Eastern RSCT:

United States U.S.: Its longstanding involvement, primarily through military presence and alliances with countries like Israel and Saudi Arabia. Russia: Increasingly assertive, especially in Syria, aiming to expand its influence and counterbalance the U.S. China is emerging as an economic player through investments and the Belt and Road Initiative. The European Union plays a significant role due to its historical connections to the region's countries and colonial past. It also wields influence through its policies and directions. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it serves as a crucial mediator between the two sides.

*Transnational Security Issues:* Several transnational issues transcend national boundaries within the RSCT:

Terrorism: Groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda operate across borders, affecting multiple states.

Sectarianism: Sectarian divisions exacerbate conflicts and influence political alliances.

Resource Security: Competition over water and oil resources fuels tensions. *Evolution and Transformation:* The Middle Eastern RSCT is not static; it evolves in response to political changes, wars, and peace processes. Arab Spring: The uprisings that began in 2010 led to significant political upheaval and shifts in regional alliances. Nuclear Deal with Iran: Altered regional actors' security perceptions and policies. Recent Peace Agreements: Normalization of



relations between Israel and several Arab states (e.g., UAE, Bahrain) reshapes traditional alliances and enmities.

The security situation in the Middle East is constantly changing and unpredictable. The future will be shaped by several factors:

1. Internal political developments include regime changes, democracy-building efforts, or internal conflicts.
2. Changes in the strategies of external powers, including shifts in U.S. policy, China's growing influence, and Russia's military involvement.
3. The resolution of the Palestinian question is the region's most significant conflict.
4. The impact of new technologies and economic initiatives on regional stability and cooperation.

In conclusion, Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the Middle East's intricate and interconnected security dynamics, emphasizing the significance of regional interactions and the influence of external actors in shaping the security landscape.

After the exit of many countries from the balance of power, the Middle East scene, especially after the U.S. occupation of Iraq (2003) and the Arab Spring (2011), resulted in the absence of Egypt, Libya, and Syria on the balance of power scene. The challenge for the region is restructuring itself according to the balance of power mechanism. States must protect themselves and gain more power for the new situation.

The goal of the balance of power is to maintain the state's credibility and existence to preserve its security in a time of rivalry, which creates a security dilemma between the countries. When a country adopts a policy and aims at improving its security by arming itself after recognizing a threat from another country and the other country also adopts a policy of improving security that leads to a security dilemma. The security dilemma becomes another dynamic that means the balance of power, and the security dilemma fuels competition.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. pp. 135-137.

Moreover, the security dilemma binds countries to the dynamics of action. Because no country can feel total security in a world of competing units, competition for power and a vicious cycle of accumulation of security and power will arise.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the balance of power theory predicts that the pursuit of security by a nation tends to result in the creation of a balance of power on a systemic level. This is often accompanied by the prediction that war is less likely when power is balanced because no nation can be confident of winning a war, and thus, no nation is tempted to initiate one.<sup>31</sup>

Iraq emerged from the region after its occupation in 2003 and with the sequence of events in the Middle East. The Arab Spring (2011) led to a 'collective' out of the balance of power in the region for many countries, headed by Egypt, a country that might have been a future regional power. So, the imbalance case created a new situation on the inside, at the state level and outside, to seek and guarantee the state's position in the balance of power in the region.

According to both theories, the balance of power and the security dilemma in the Middle East, there are results of mobility from several countries to take a 'new' position in the region and start arrangements to ensure security and continuation in local and international status.

Most factors are linked to the changes in the U.S. policy towards the Middle East. These factors include the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S., the United States invasion of Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan (2001), the rise of non-state actors, the Arab Spring (2011), and the fall of authoritarian rules.

The changes in the Middle East created a regional system that the world powers cannot easily bypass, particularly by the U.S. In addition, there is an emergence of competition among states over the Regional Leadership, which also has repercussions on internal alliances and wars by proxy. Among these events, the Palestinian issue, a factor of instability in the Middle East, is still one of the region's key drivers.

The Middle East is currently considered as a multipolar region. The complexity of the scene in the Middle East between local actors and world powers makes it difficult for any country to establish hegemony over the entire region, but it is not impossible.

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<sup>30</sup> TANG, S., 2009. pp. 590-591.

<sup>31</sup> SHIMKO, K. L., 2005. p. 125.

The emergence of small countries adds to the complications for a number of reasons. Geographically, these countries may have strategic locations that make them important actors in regional politics and alliances. In addition, demographically, their populations may have cultural or ethnic ties that affect their regional influence. Countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, for example, exert direct or material influence through their economic power and strategic alliances.

Furthermore, the events in the region raise the aspirations of its actors. The geopolitical interest conflict impacted the system of alliances and alignments. The intense competition between the powers intensified the division of the spheres of influence in the Arab region, particularly in Syria.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are working to maintain the situation and change the region in their favour. As for Turkey, it seeks to secure its regional position by working to secure its borders and its interference in Syrian affairs, while Israel and Egypt have kept their influential powers.

In this confusing arena in the Middle East, the Palestinian question remains an 'unclosed window' for regional instability. What strategies were characteristic of the behaviour of regional actors before the 2011 Arab Spring, and how did it change toward the conflict afterward? The emergence of regional actors, such as Israel, which is part of the Palestinian cause, made it difficult for Israel to be more deeply integrated into the region without solving the conflict with the Palestinians.

### **I. 3. Hypotheses**

The thesis will specifically look at the status of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a tool to measure the competition in the region between the main actors, given that a solution to the conflict will lead to stability in the region. The intervention of the actors in this regard shows the extent of their potency and influence.

**Hypothesis 1.** The thesis assumes that there are no regional powers in the Middle East at present or in the future, and that the existing powers are middle or secondary.<sup>32</sup>

**Hypothesis 2.** The powers in the Middle East have been reluctant to engage in regional cooperation, focusing instead on protecting their own interests. Their decisions are often influenced by external powers from outside the region.

**Hypothesis 3.** The thesis assumes that the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (a fair and reasonable solution for both parties) will lead the region to a new phase of stability.

Considering this hypothesis, the main players in the region are Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

#### **I. 4. Expected results**

The results show the extent to which the theoretical analysis is crucial to the study of the area, regardless of the distant factual factor. At the same time, they highlight that the practical results of field research can influence the actual results of academic research and lead it in a new direction through new theoretical conclusions.

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<sup>32</sup> These classifications help to understand the dynamics of international relations and the varying degrees of influence that different countries exert on the global stage.

A secondary power is a state that has significant power and influence, albeit less than the dominant global powers (often referred to as superpowers or great powers). These states play a crucial role in international affairs and can act as key actors in global and regional politics. Examples: the United Kingdom, France, and Japan can be considered secondary powers in the context of the United States and China as superpowers.

For more details see: Paul, T.V., Wirtz, J.J., & Fortmann, M. (2004). *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*. Stanford University Press.

Ikenberry, G. J. (2001). *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton University Press.

A middle power is a state that is not a superpower or a great power but still has moderate influence and capacity to shape international events and policies, especially through coalition-building and diplomatic efforts. These countries often act as mediators and advocates of multilateralism.

Examples: Canada, Australia, and South Korea.

For more details see: Cooper, A. F., Higgott, R.A. & Nossal, K.R. (1993). *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*. UBC Press.

Despite the apparent lack of clarity in the definition of the Middle East, there is a clear definition of the Middle East region from the political and geographic point of view, and the Middle East region is approaching the definition from the geographic point of view used by the world powers to designate a place.

The Middle East is a failed model of regional cooperation (regionalism) because it contains a group of countries of varying strength that seek to ensure self-protection for a number of reasons, represented by the weakness of the countries in the region caused by colonialism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the interference of world powers.

The lack of cooperation and the inability to resolve the existing conflicts in the Middle East, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, confirms that there is no dominant regional power, but rather the presence of influential powers in the region's politics. The U.S. is trying to prevent this by weakening these powers and not allowing them to interfere in any way. It is also constantly playing with the balance of power in order to create instability and fuel competition, but this is a dead end. This means that there is no sign of a single power from the dominant region with complete control. Although the concept of regional power is not consistent across the region, the regional actors have influential power in shaping the regional order.

The intervention of world powers is an obstacle to any successful regional cooperation in the Middle East, and the intervention of the U.S. as the dominant power is a significant failure factor of the successful model of regional cooperation in the region, with a clear bias of the U.S. policy towards Israel. The U.S. will continue to support relatively small countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, keeping the internal competition between the region's actors active.

The rapid events that happened in the Middle East that are changing its geopolitical map would help to find a fair solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

A solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be one of the best strategic options for the region's countries, specifically for Israel. Israel cannot, in any way, integrate the region and its problems and impose more control and even alliances without setting satisfactory solutions to this conflict.

What imposes the form of alliances in the region is the common interests driven by external powers; in this case, it is the U.S. that controls the game of alliances.

The shape of the expected future alliances – Turkey-Israel, Saudi Arabia-Turkey, Saudi Arabia-Israel – is theoretically tricky in the current period, even the alliance of Iran and Turkey is not excluded. Nevertheless, each of these alliances has its positive and negative effects (results) on the region.

## **I. 5. Methodology and approach**

The thesis uses a comprehensive approach based on the qualitative analytical approach, which will clarify the factors that led to the rise of regional actors in the Middle East through the analysis of the primary sources, e.g., statistics and figures, documents, and data. Furthermore, secondary sources, books, and articles have been studied to understand the changing relationship between the regional actors and the United States.

The author is from Palestine, a Middle Eastern region. The Palestinian people are still suffering from the Israeli occupation and are looking forward to a solution to their problem. The rapid events in the Middle East, which are changing its geopolitical map, would help to find a fair resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Although Israel has become an influential power in the region, it cannot make any direct alliance without bringing a reasonable solution to the Palestinian people.

The author has the advantage of being a native speaker of Arabic, which helps him to explore the policies of Palestine and Saudi Arabia and the positions of other Arab countries on the examined topic.

The author is well-connected in the region, especially with Palestinian diplomats in the Middle East. This gave him privileged access to the necessary information and communication with the key figures needed for the thesis.

The methodology of the thesis was evaluated on the basis of its research objectives and structure. The complexity of the situation in the Middle East, including internal and external powers, theoretical frameworks, US policy in the region, and power dynamics related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, was taken into account.

As such, the thesis relies on the comparative analysis by comparing the policies of the region's key actors and measuring their leadership strategies before the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 and

beyond. This period has been chosen for its importance and significant indications of regional changes.

The empirical research focused on understanding the policies of the actors concerned through their view of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the extent to which it has defined their strategic and political agenda. It should be noted that the power struggle in the region focuses on personal protection, identifying areas of influence and control depending on their interests in the region. The thesis also aims to compare what has been written and analysed theoretically 'outside' with the current reality 'inside'.

For the purposes of the thesis, after comparing the leadership rivalry in the Middle East, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran through their strategies and alliance in general and regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular, choosing the Arab uprising in 2011, the author aims to identify what is changing and for what reason. The author chooses the time of the Arab Spring (2011) to measure before and after because this event has significantly affected the balance of power in the region.

The author will use two empirical research tools: interviews and surveys. The interviews were conducted with different representatives of the Palestinian Authority and with various foreign representatives in the Palestinian territories.

1. Assistant to the Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.
2. Secretary-General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem.
3. Palestinian Authority's diplomats and ambassadors.
4. Various Palestinian political parties.
5. Palestinian Social Activist in a non-governmental organisation.
6. Palestinian Governors.
7. Slovenian Representative to Palestine.
8. The British Consulate General in Jerusalem.
9. Turkey –Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency 'TIKA', Turkish Cultural Centre in Palestine.

The author's idea behind the interviews was to enrich the text and to get to know the issue closely through the field experience and knowledge of the interviewees, because practical experience is always different from written or applied policies.

The second tool is a survey that aims to get the opinion of some research centres and academics in the countries of Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Palestine and to collect their point of view about the region and the strategies of these countries regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the importance of the Middle East.

The survey was an important part of gaining a deep understanding of the Middle East's reality. It went beyond the traditional focus on the state as the main influencer, exploring the presence of other, more complex factors in the regional security system and the region's future. The questionnaire was designed to anticipate scenarios and provide a realistic assessment of the Palestinian issue. It was based on the theoretical findings within the theoretical framework of the thesis and the application of Buzan's model of the regional security complex to the Middle East.

The questionnaire was designed in four different languages, Arabic, Turkish, English, and Iranian, and it is being approved for distribution by the Doctoral School.

The study community consisted of academics in a group of people from the countries of "Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Palestine" in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data from the study sample and included (42) questions divided into (8) dimensions. The dimensions include the definition and the importance of the Middle East, the regional power in the Middle East, the significance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the region, the world powers, the impact of the conflict, the expected alliances, the internal Palestinian situation and the future of the region.

The author has deliberately chosen this tool with specific dimensions in order to comprehensively cover the different aspects of the dissertation discussed in the chapters. The intention is to compare the theoretical understanding of these dimensions with the practical perceptions of the respondents in the selected countries through the survey.

Collecting information was not easy, as it was very challenging due to the large number of questions. It is not easy to fill in, except by specialised people who are close enough to the



study and have sufficient knowledge, in addition to the close follow-up by the author with the respondents, to fill it in and complete it as required.

After completing the questionnaire, the author was interested in analysing the results and preparing summaries for each axis to have appropriate information for completing the interviews, making comparisons, and drawing final results.

The dissertation contains the following chapters:

Chapter I. provides a detailed background to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and outlines the theoretical framework, hypotheses, expected findings, methodology and study approach for the research.

Chapter II. discusses the status of the Middle East as a region in order to find an appropriate definition without losing sight of its background roots and colonial legacy. The chapter's main goal is to find a conceptual framework for the Middle East in order to better understand the current status of the region better

Chapter III. presents the approach to the definition of regional power, the conceptualisation of regional power in the Middle East. It also discusses the main theories for better understanding the Middle East region, namely the balance of power theory and the security dilemma.

Chapter IV. discusses the main factors that have led to the rise of the major regional actors and underlines each process in the light of today's international system, with an overview of the main alliances expected in the region.

Chapter V. provides a comprehensive look at the role of U.S. policy in the region. This chapter will clarify the scene, the factors, and the possible future outcome of the U.S. policy in the region. The analyses of U.S. strategies and policies towards the region will clarify its status in the Middle East and predict its future position.

Chapter VI discusses the impact of the relationship between the United States and its main ally in the region, Israel, on the Middle East and the Palestinian question. It also examines how these dynamics influence possible solutions.

The European Union is widely recognised as a major international player in the Middle East and a key mediator in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Chapter VII. considers the role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the European Union's Middle East strategy. It discusses the European Union's engagement with both parties and its relations and partnerships with

Palestine and Israel. It provides an overview of the European Union's main interventions in the region and makes recommendations for the future.

The enduring Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a crucial factor in shaping Russia's approach to the Middle East. As a key diplomatic player in the region, Russia seeks to carefully navigate its relations with both Palestinians and Israelis while advancing its broader geopolitical agenda. Chapter VIII. will explore the intricacies of foreign policy in the Middle East and delve deeply into the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with a particular focus on the involvement of external powers.

Chapter IX. focuses on the importance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in China's Middle East strategy. China plays a crucial and escalating role in influencing Middle East politics. This chapter of the thesis will highlight the primary strategies of the world's major powers towards the conflict, providing clarity on the current landscape and expectations

Chapter X. examines the role of the other influential powers in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The Middle East is characterised by complex geopolitical dynamics and fierce competition between actors. In addition to established regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel, the chapter examines the impact of other influential entities in the region and provides an in-depth analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its impact on the broader geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.

Chapters XI-XII. present the author's empirical research and findings. The author's empirical research will be based on interviews with stakeholders. The research will also seek the opinion of research centres and academics in each country, such as Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Palestine and Egypt, on their position in the region, their hopes for the future and their vision of the strategic importance of the Middle East.

The final chapter summarises the main findings of the thesis. The three Scenarios are based on empirical research. The importance of this chapter stems from the fact that it is a practical result from the 'inside' of the reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is experienced by those who are directly affected by it. I live every paragraph in it in my capacity. I was born, grew up and still live in Palestine. I witnessed the entry of the first Palestinian forces into my town in 1994, when the implementation of the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and the Israelis began. It affected my daily life. I experienced on a daily basis the external

interventions of the world powers, for example in the form of subsidies, aid or the effects of their interventionist policies. At the same time, what happens between the Palestinian and Israeli official levels, whether it is calm or escalation, affects us directly. We are the ones who pay the price. Everything is directly related to us, the two people: the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Furthermore, from my place of work in the municipality of my city, we are building institutions and trying to develop through some Palestinian procedures and policies to reach a level that we call the 'supposed state,' that should have existed according to the Oslo Accords.

Our daily talks about possible ways of resolving this conflict, about possible prospects for the future of this conflict in a way that guarantees a decent life for the Palestinian people, who live under the last direct occupation in the world.

No matter how biased the talk is towards the Palestinian people, we are talking about occupied people who do not have life necessities versus a state with the necessities of everything.

It is also natural that my perspective differs from that of the West. What is written and analysed abroad does not necessarily reflect reality. There are hidden details between the lines, known only to those who experience them, which I have tried to present professionally and objectively.

The thesis examines the means of regional actors in the Middle East. It distinguishes between states that are candidates for leadership and those that are posturing for hegemony. What are their strategies to prove their leadership?

What is the expected alliance? Will more than one country dominate the region as a regional power? The thesis focuses on the main processes that led to the rise of the regional powers in the Middle East as a result of the changes in U.S. foreign policy towards the region after the end of the Cold War.

## **II. Understanding the Contemporary Middle East**

What we see today of modern nation-states in the Middle East, especially in the Arab world, where many artificial states are products of imperialism and power-sharing conflicts between the states that existed in the 19th century, and the colonial greed that did not take into account the particularities of the region. About a century ago, many Arab regions were part of the

Ottoman Empire. Many historical and political events led to the end of the Ottoman Empire (formally in 1924) and the emergence of the new states across the Middle East. The role played directly by the British was far greater than that of any imperial state. Three separate events led to the existing political turmoil.

There is a strong connection between the imperial legacy and the contemporary Middle East scene. The chapter focuses on the colonial era's historical background and colonialism's legacy in the Middle East and the post-colonial Middle East.

The area is a site of permanent conflicts, and perhaps the most significant tension in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, the rivalry in the Middle East, whether at the level of states in the composition of countries or in the continuity of survival, remains a determining factor.

## **II. 1. The origins of the term 'Middle East'. Why is it called the Middle East?**

Reflecting on the origins of the term 'Middle East' takes us back to the British colonial geopolitics of the early 20th century. Great Britain's colonies in South Asia made the Middle East a region of strategic importance and the crux of the journey to the east to India; hence, the term 'the Middle East' was coined. Since its inception, this British term has referred to a mysterious region in Asia between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, i.e., the Middle East is the region between the 'Far East' and the 'Near East'.<sup>33</sup>

Karen Culcasi (2010), in her analysis of the construction and naturalisation of the Middle East, examined every possible document, statement, paper, new, and even map mentioning the Middle East. As a result, she found that no specific area could identify the Middle East as a region, according to the documents she examined (from the 19th to the 20th century).<sup>34</sup>

This, in turn, reinforces our view that the Middle East is only a term for the geographic definition of the place, not for the borders or countries. Who determines the colonial powers' point of view and how they see the region depends on the interests and benefits they stand to gain.

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<sup>33</sup> CULCASI, K., 2010. p. 585.

<sup>34</sup> CULCASI, K., 2010. pp. 590-592.

The end of the First World War I (1914-1918) and its aftermath are not the exclusive grounds for the contemporary Middle East but also undermining the Ottoman Empire, a systematic process. It began in Algeria, occupied by the French in 1835, then in Egypt occupied by the British in 1888, and continued continued with the Italian occupation of Libya in 1912.

By the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was derisively called the 'sick man of Europe' because of its shrinking territories, economic decline, and growing reliance on the rest of Europe.<sup>35</sup>

The decision of the Ottomans to align with the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary against the 'Allied' side of Britain, France, and Russia in October 1914 motivated the British to make plans to eliminate the Ottoman Empire and expand their territory in the Middle East. The Ottomans had controlled Egypt since 1888 and India since 1857. The Ottoman Empire was between these two important colonies, and the British were determined to invalidate it as part of the World War.<sup>36</sup>

The three main events that genuinely shaped the Middle East were the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration.<sup>37</sup>

Between July 1915 and January 1916, Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the 'Amir', or governor of Makkah, communicated with the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, about the revolt against the Ottoman Empire in order to obtain promises of support for an independent state and the creation of a kingdom.

This communication is later known as the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. Roger Spooner (2015) pointed out that two important deals are highlighted in the correspondence. The first was the establishment of an independent Muslim state in Arabia, and the second was whether Palestine would be included in this treaty. Whatever the Correspondence contained, the British did not implement it.

In the Sykes-Picot Agreement, publicly known in 1917, when the Russian Bolshevik government exposed it, the British and French agreed to divide the Arab world between them.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> BLAKEMORE, E., 2019. p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> HINGORANI, A. M., 2017. pp. 94-95.

<sup>37</sup> HINGORANI, A. M., 2017. pp. 95-97.

On a symbolic level, the Sykes-Picot Agreement is linked to a powerful idea in the collective memory of the region's people; it was an insult. We face different problems after decades, but their roots are found in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.<sup>39</sup>

The Sykes-Picot Agreement transformed the region into colonial spheres of influence, dividing it between the Mandate and Protectorate and demarcating the borders to serve the interests of the British and French. The Agreement is, until today, considered a classic mark of imperial dishonesty and betrayal.<sup>40</sup>

In the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917,<sup>41</sup> Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, sent a letter to Baron Rothschild, a leader of the Zionist community. The letter declared the British government's support for the aims of the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

The Balfour Declaration was the most dangerous shift in the region, not only geographically or demographically, but qualitatively, creating a new state that had never existed before. In the following years, Britain played a unique role in bringing fundamental changes to the region. The creation of Israel was also a critical factor in the agreements on the division of the region, which have changed the region's shape forever.

Firas Alkhateeb (2016) describes this situation as “the quagmire” that the British created would dominate Middle Eastern politics throughout the twentieth century.”<sup>42</sup>

The Middle East has undergone fundamental and radical changes that have shaped the region to this day. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent events and agreements between the victorious powers in the First World War created a region filled with endless conflicts. The contradictory agreements made by the British in secret were aimed at sharing the Ottoman legacy, ensuring control of the region, and taking advantage of available

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<sup>38</sup> GRAHAM, D. A.: *How Did the 'Secret' Sykes-Picot Agreement Become Public?* pp. 3-4. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/05/sykes-picot-centennial/482904/> [Last accessed: 03.01.2020]

<sup>39</sup> ABDALHAKIM, A., pp. 3-5.

<sup>40</sup> LOEVY, K., 2017. p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> Israel Ministry of Foreign affairs, MFA, p.1 Available at : <https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/the%20balfour%20declaration.aspx> [Last accessed: 05.01.2020]

<sup>42</sup> ALKHATEEB, F., 2016. p. 158.

resources. Neither Britain nor France, in its division of the region, did take any religious, ethnic, or cultural considerations. Instead, the goal of the division was to ensure their control.

## **II. 2. The Colonial Legacy and the Contemporary Middle East**

After the World War I, Yemen became a British colony, while Algeria was ruled by the French and Libya by the Italians. However, the rest of the region, with the exception of Turkey, Iran, and Arabia, was under the control of imperial powers exercised in various forms and under different names, including ‘Mandates’ and ‘Protectorates.’

The impact of the Sykes-Picot Agreement on the region could be explained by the fact that it was hidden from the Arabs without their knowledge. It broke Britain's central promise to the Arabs that they would gain independence if they rose up against the Ottomans.

When this independence was not achieved after World War I, the Arab political orientation – in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean – gradually shifted to Nationalism, whose main objective was eliminating the colonialists.<sup>43</sup>

‘A nation-state’ is a set of changing rhetorical and institutional practices consisting of citizens with an emotional commitment and imagination of identity. The nation has a state that governs a specific territory and seeks to impose a collective identity on all citizens through state education, usually focusing on linguistic unity. It represents a political, diplomatic, and economic entity with sovereignty in all these areas.<sup>44</sup>

Nationalism, in turn, created another struggle for identity among the Arabs, who also failed to resolve this dilemma.<sup>45</sup> Even if states gain their independence, it is illusory because the fate of these countries depends on imperialist policies and foreign interference in various forms of life.

Nevertheless, what did the colonial powers do? Did they create an entire nation-state? None at all because the Middle East is a geopolitical system that cannot be established, and it has been

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<sup>43</sup> OSMAN, T., 2013. pp. 1-5.

<sup>44</sup> COLE, J., & KANDIYOTI, D., 2002. p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> OSMAN, T., 2013. pp. 1-5.

developed and naturalised as a specific geographic location through the development of the term 'Middle' East, the unclear but continued meaning of its geographic location.<sup>46</sup>

Imad El-Anis (2011) argues that there is a clear distinction between the current system and the previous regimes that existed in the Middle East. The system that preceded the state system between the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was characterised by a regional empire with a few internal borders and a claim to sovereignty. This observation is important when considering the argument that borders, sovereignty, and multiple 'ways' of organising people into groups help to define international relations, and that such factors will make the region to be less stable.<sup>47</sup>

From then on, the Middle East, and the Arab states in particular, entered a new phase, different in form and substance from the past. This has had a massive impact on the current division of states, the emergence of the national dimension and ethnic and religious conflicts. This is contrary to what was later claimed by the colonial powers. Their behaviour and actions suggested that their mission in the region is humanitarian, and they promote the region's people to liberation.

These powers divided the Middle East to maintain control over these emerging countries, to ensure the existence of these colonial states, and to exploit the wealth of these countries. Furthermore, some ideological changes should be made to guarantee the hegemony of the colonial power.

Usually, the feeling of cultural superiority accompanies military and financial superiority, and the colonial powers, Europe first and then the United States of America, have always been destroying native culture in their way of destroying local governments and their trade at the same time. This, of course, is what characterises imperialism.<sup>48</sup>

As a result of the subjugation of these areas to European control, the situation in the region was such that many centres that were once considered centres of social and political life for

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<sup>46</sup> CULCASI, K., 2010. pp. 594-597.

<sup>47</sup> EL-ANIS, I., 2011. p.13.

<sup>48</sup> GAY, F., 1974. p. 154.



Muslims – Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad – were transformed into places where new ideas, such as secularism and nationalism, converged.<sup>49</sup>

Edward Said (2006) argues that the European position of supremacy over the region and its people has further contributed to the unequal nature of the relationship with Europe, which he called ‘Orientalism’.<sup>50</sup> The Middle East was a British-French cultural project until the end of World War II, and the rise of the United States' role in its controlling of the region is part of Western civilisation, extending since ancient times.<sup>51</sup> Edward Said viewed Orientalism as the authoritative use of knowledge about the East, after ‘Sharqana’, and its domestication in preparation for colonisation and control.

As mentioned earlier, the education imposed by the European powers on the countries of the region and their assistance in achieving stable nation-states was done through the imposition of new forms of ideology that conformed to Western norms, which, in turn, created a state of contradiction in the Middle Eastern societies, mainly Islamic Arabs. Accordingly, cultural alienation and the emergence of resistance movements against Western cultural influence created a new phase in the region.

Moreover, building a State in the Middle East was fraught with difficulties. Under Ottoman rule, despite its shortcomings, the region had a particularly cohesive culture and politics. At the same time, the idea of a nation-state was new and strange for the Islamic Arab societies.

Meanwhile, when the European powers declared their arrival in the region a ‘civilising mission’, the colonial powers did little to educate the people. They educated a small collaborating elite (favoured group). When the British left Egypt, 77 % of the population was illiterate, per capita income was £ 42 a year, and the average life expectancy of an Egyptian man was 36 years.<sup>52</sup>

In sum, the legacy of colonial division has created lasting seeds of conflict in the region. The Middle East today is a permanent imbalance of powers, a place of religious, ethnic, and existential conflicts, not least the cradle of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Subsequently, the area

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<sup>49</sup> ALKHATEEB, F., 2016. pp. 153-154.

<sup>50</sup> SAID, E., 2006. pp. 25-28.

<sup>51</sup> SAID, E., 2006. p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> HARDY, R., 2016. p. 2.

was divided, and the people were separated into more than one country: Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, etc. This is still the cause of many rebellions and warfare today.

### **II. 3. The United States in the Middle East**

The colonial era in many Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries can be split into several periods: informal Imperialism, formal colonial domination, and neo-colonialism. The collapse of neo-colonialism in recent decades has led to a post-colonial era in which the United States and the former Soviet Union (Russia) are unable to enforce their will on countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq, given the region's history of hegemony and the ongoing competition between the major powers of the Cold War.<sup>53</sup>

The United States' ability to influence the region has decreased considerably. It could not do it alone; therefore, it cooperated with other countries, as in the case of Iran's nuclear programme (the P5+1 committee)<sup>54</sup> and the involvement of countries such as Russia and China.<sup>55</sup>

United States' Foreign Policy towards the Middle East since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 differs from the current policy of U.S. administration. The U.S. involvement in the Middle East policy has weakened its regional position.<sup>56</sup>

The real change in U.S. policy in the Middle East has contributed to the formation and rivalry for regional power and a new regional order in the Middle East. The decline of the U.S. would also lead to a policy of filling the vacuum policy, which means giving more space and opportunities for world powers to begin their polarisation and gain a new foothold. This can be seen in Russia's role in Syria. Russia has directly intervened in the Syrian war under the eyes of the US administration, establishing military bases and participating directly in the fighting alongside the regular Syrian forces of President Bashar al-Assad (2020).

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<sup>53</sup> COLE, J. R. I., & KANDIYOTI, D., 2002. pp. 190-191.

<sup>54</sup> The P5+1 refers to the UN Security Council's five permanent members (the P5), namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany.

<sup>55</sup> HASS, R. N., 2008. pp. 1-3.

<sup>56</sup> CRISTOL, J., & STIVACHTIS, Y. A., 2018. pp. 48-50.

## II. 4. World Powers and the Middle East

After the end of World War II. (1939-1945), the international scene turned into a bipolar between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The situation remained bipolar, to some extent, until the end of the Cold War, when the world transformed into unipolar with the U.S. at the head of power.

As mentioned previously, the United States has not become the sole player in the political landscape in the Middle East because of several changes like international relations and the emergence of rising powers. We can see some measures regarding the decline of U.S. policy, such as the Russian intervention and Syrian events since 2011.

The European Union (EU) has engaged with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through a variety of policies, including the promotion of political and economic reform while respecting the specificities of the region, and regional cooperation among the countries of the region and with the EU.<sup>57</sup>

The central policy is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in the framework of which the EU worked with its Southern and Eastern Neighbours to foster stabilization, security, and prosperity, in line with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy which is an integral part of EU foreign policy.<sup>58</sup>

On the one hand, the European Neighbourhood Policy has emerged as a compromise between EU member states concerning the Union's interests towards its Eastern and Southern neighbours with central values such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, most Europeans agree that the United States is the only powerful actor capable of changing the strategic role of regional actors and pushing them to resolve their disputes and bring progress to the Middle East. For example, the Israeli-Arab conflict will depend on regional ownership and total U.S. commitment.

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<sup>57</sup>European External Action Service (EEAS). Middle East and North Africa (MENA), §1.

<sup>58</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), § 2.

<sup>59</sup> Soós, E., 2016. p. 52.

Regarding Russia and China, they are traditionally united in their opposition to ‘destructive foreign interference’ in regional affairs. China is engaged with all major regional powers in complex military, technological, and political fields. Because they have their interests everywhere, they cannot stand in the various ongoing rivalries.<sup>60</sup>

In the regional order of the Middle East, Russia and China view the region from the perspective of converging interests; they would not interfere deeply in the region's affairs. Like Beijing's plans, Moscow's strategy for the Middle East relies on maintaining good relations with all countries in the region. It focuses on increasing opportunities with minimal commitments or the possibility of losses.<sup>61</sup>

All the world powers agree that the Middle East is a region of conflicting interests, which means ensuring the stability of the countries of the Middle East guarantees the flow and benefits from the region.

## **Conclusion**

The British played a far greater role in shaping the modern Middle East than any other actor in the region. The Sykes-Picot agreement is still regarded as a classic example of imperial dishonesty and betrayal.

Beyond the current situation in the Middle East, colonial ambitions cannot understand what is happening in the Middle East today without linking it to the beginning of a purely colonial point of view, which aims at sharing wealth and taking control of natural resources. This will remain the primary motivation for world powers' policies towards the region.

After the European powers got involved in the region, the area began to enter into new phases of new norms and lifestyles, which were among the main reasons for Arab Nationalism, Islamism, and also terrorism.

For the world powers, the Middle East is a region of crucial permanent regional conflicts, a place where power and influence can be measured and exercised at the same time. Some world powers – Russia and China – see the region in terms of the convergence of their interests, not to interfere deeply in the region's affairs.

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<sup>60</sup> SUCHKOV, M., 2018. p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> WORMUTH, C., 2018. p. 2.

After the involvement of European powers in the region, the area began to enter new phases of new norms and lifestyles, which were among the main reasons for Arab nationalism, Islamism and also terrorism. A new regional order was established with the rise of regional powers in the Middle East, parallel to the decline of the United States's foreign policy towards the region after the end of the Cold War (1947-1990).

The region will remain uncertain as long as no viable solutions are taken on the ground, which takes into account the complexity of the religious and ethnic issues and the solution of intractable problems, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict.

### **III. Regional Powers in the Middle East**

To move forward in analysing the political reality of the Middle East and the regional status of the powers, it is necessary to find an appropriate definition of the regional power.

There is no single definition of regional power because it is measured in terms of military and physical capabilities, geographic position, and other dimensions that need to be taken into account in the analysis. Finding an appropriate definition will help us understand the reality of regional power in the Middle East so that this definition and its theories will be applied to the current reality in the region.

Regional power consists of two parts: the power and the region; then, the dilemma of the power will be analysed, while the Middle East as a region is another dilemma that will be discussed in later chapters.

This chapter aims to adopt an appropriate definition of regional power as a tool for measuring regional powers in the Middle East.

#### **III. 1. The Middle East as a region**

The Middle East is of immense importance due to its strategic geographic location, abundant economic resources, and significant geopolitical influence. Throughout history, major world powers have been drawn to the region because of these factors.

The area witnessed many changes after the end of the Cold War (1947-1990), which directly affected the system of international relations. Moreover, a new regional order was established with the rise of the regional powers in the Middle East, in parallel with the decline of the United States foreign policy towards the region.

The lack of a clear definition of regional power, in general, makes it difficult at times to analyse. Perhaps the difficulty of defining the Middle East as a region also increases.

This chapter aims to find a definition of regional power in a more precise way that facilitates the measurement and analysis of regional powers in the Middle East.

Regional power combines power and region, and each word has a meaning; on the one hand, power is a something that is measured as a whole; it cannot be measured only in terms of hard power or military capabilities. Power is also influence, capability and opportunity, which means that there are other tools to measure power.

On the other hand, the region is a harmonious geographic area with identity, language, culture, etc. However, it is not enough to define each part of the term separately to know the meaning of regional power as a single term, and this is what the chapter aims to explore and adopt a meaning that will later be used for measurement.

### **III. 2. Conceptualizing the regional power in the Middle East**

Defining the term regional power and placing it in the broader context requires finding a definition of the region in the first place and searching whether the Middle East is considered a region or not.

The region definitions, usually based on geographic proximity, social and cultural cohesion, political institutions and economic interdependence, geographic convergence, common historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds, and international interactions, should be considered necessary to define the region.<sup>62</sup>

However, which of these common characteristics apply to the Middle East? The short answer is: not all of them, but some of them may apply to the Middle East, and is it possible for it to

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<sup>62</sup> SEVER, A., & STIVACHTIS, Y.A., 2018. p. 18.

be a region in the complete sense or not? The subject will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Most social scientists who study the Middle East agree that it is a region made up of the Arab states plus Iran, Israel and Turkey.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, the approach of regional power is a major seed of theoretical concepts of regionalism. The concepts of regionalism have helped to rediscover the role of regional actors whose relative independence has sometimes been neglected when regional affairs are examined only through the lens of the Cold War.<sup>64</sup>

In his theoretical analysis approach, D. Nolte (2010) defined a regional power as: *“a state which articulates the pretension ‘self-conception’ of a leading position in a region that is geographically, economically and political-ideationally delimited; which displays the material ‘military, economic, demographic,’ organizational ‘political’ and ideological resources for regional power projection; which truly has great influence in regional affairs ‘activities and results’”*.<sup>65</sup>

Miriam Prys (2010; 2013) identifies four dimensions of regional power: the self-perception of the regional role, the perception by other states in the region that the regional power has a unique role, the provision of public goods, and the influence of the preferences and values of other states in the region. These variables yield three regional powers: the detached power, the regional hegemon, and the regional dominator.<sup>66</sup>

The traditional approach to defining regional power depends on the military capabilities of the State, economic power, and strategic geographic location. The other critical approach is to assess the country's leadership capacity, influence, and legitimacy in the international arena.

In practice, a regional power must fulfil at least three conditions: it must have a leading regional position, displaying material and ideological resources for regional power protection, and exercising real influence in regional affairs.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> BECK, M., 2014. p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> BECK, M., 2014. pp. 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> NOLTE, D., 2010. p. 893.

<sup>66</sup> Prys, M., 2010. p. 490.

<sup>67</sup> NOLTE, D., 2010. p. 894.

The recent situation in the Middle East is characterised by frequent competition rather than cooperation, and a focus on hard power rather than soft power. This has led to lower global energy capabilities and a lack of regional development by local actors. Additionally, the U.S. plays a distinct role as an outsider-regional power in the area.<sup>68</sup>

The Middle East has not been a successful example of regional cooperation or integration.<sup>69</sup> This is evident in the region's political scene, where there is no lasting stability and chaos. Therefore, if the concept of regional power is based on the principle of leadership as defined, in addition to the other components, no regional power will meet the region's requirements.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, what is happening in the Middle East is an attempt by the countries that are qualified to be future regional powers to be effective in the Middle East and in the world. Apart from the theory, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Israel are candidates to be regional powers in the Middle East, noting that not considering them as regional powers is incompatible with the reality of their power and influence in the region.

On the other hand, political leadership in the Middle East focuses primarily on the religious dimension. In addition to the other factors, such as military and economic ones, religion is a standard feature between the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey. So, if we assume that the rivalry will be between Saudi Arabia and Iran or Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who will lead the Islamic world? In return for the first assumption, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the rivalry will be for the leadership, from a religious perspective, and from a direct sectarian perspective, Sunnis versus Shiites.<sup>71</sup>

On the ground, there is a rivalry between these powers for leadership and to gain more alliances, and an explicit scene of rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, for example, is the proxy war statutes in the Yemen conflict; Saudi Arabia supports the Yemeni government against the Houthi group (Shiiti) which supported by Iran.

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<sup>68</sup> BECK, M., 2014. p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> SEVER, A., STIVACHTIS, Y.A., 2018. p.18.

<sup>70</sup> BECK. M., 2014. pp. 4-5.

<sup>71</sup> Sunnis: Muslims of the branch of Islam that adheres to the orthodox tradition and acknowledges the first four caliphs as rightful successors of prophet Muhammad.

Shiites: are members of a branch of the Islamic religion which regards Mohammed's cousin Ali and his successors, rather than Mohammed himself, as the final authority on religious matters.



### **III.3 The Balance of Power Theory**

The balance of power theory, defined by H. Morgenthau, is ‘the balance of power refers to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality’.<sup>72</sup>

It is natural for a state to primarily seek to protect itself and its legitimacy and be aware of what is happening in its neighbouring countries. Establishing balanced relations with other countries ensures its survival, existence and control.

According to M. Sheehan (1996), the mechanism of the balance of power is that states must have certain political objectives, which may conflict with the political objectives of other countries. The state is of great importance in guaranteeing its continuity and independence. This is supported by the diplomacy within military powers – primarily their own, but supplemented by that of allies if necessary.<sup>73</sup>

The concept of balance of power is a fundamental principle in international relations, focusing on maintaining the credibility and security of a state during periods of rivalry between countries. It revolves around the idea that no single nation should be allowed to dominate others, as this could lead to instability and conflict. However, the pursuit of greater security by individual countries within this framework can create security dilemmas and ultimately lead to competition within the balance of power structure. This intricate dynamic often shapes the interactions and strategies of nations in the global arena.<sup>74</sup>

### **III. 4. The Security Dilemma Theory**

The security dilemma theory is somewhat similar to the balance of power theory. However, the difference is that the acceleration of the possession results in a reaction. One party strengthens military capabilities or uses certain weapons or even alliances, increasing tensions that may lead to conflict.

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<sup>72</sup> MORGANTHEU, H. J., 1996. p. 187.

<sup>73</sup> SHEEHAN, M., 1996. p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 5.

To understand what is happening in the Middle East in particular, and in light of a competitive and unstable environment, the states seek to strengthen themselves by increasing their military capabilities or alliances to ensure their survival and the continuation of their influence.

The principle of fear leads countries that have entered into civil wars, such as Yemen and Syria, and countries that have become the scene of international and global rivalries, such as Libya. It is natural for the region to enter the spiral of the security dilemma in order to ensure its survival.

John Hez coined the term security dilemma as follows:

*“Groups and individuals live side by side without organizing into a higher unit. It must be concerned with their security from being attacked, subjugated, controlled, or exterminated by groups and other individuals. To seek security from such attacks, they are driven to gain more and more power to escape the effects of the power of others.”<sup>75</sup>*

Moreover, the security dilemma binds countries to the dynamics of action. Since no country can feel total security in a world of competing entities, there will be competition for power and a vicious circle of accumulation of security and power will arise.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, the balance of power theory predicts that the pursuit of security by a nation tends to result in the creation of a balance of power on a systemic level. This is often accompanied by the prediction that war is less likely when power is balanced because no nation can be confident of winning a war, and thus, no nation is tempted to initiate one.<sup>77</sup>

The situation in the Middle East after the exit of several countries from the balance of power, especially after the United States' occupation of Iraq (2003) and the Arab Spring (2011), resulted in the absence of Egypt, Libya, and Syria on the balance of power scene. The challenge for the region is restructuring itself according to the balance of power mechanism, and States need to protect themselves and gain more power for the new situation.

Iraq emerged from the region after its occupation in 2003 and with the sequence of events in the Middle East. The Arab Spring (2011) especially led to a 'collective' balance of power in the region for many countries, led by Egypt, one of the countries that might have been a future

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<sup>75</sup> Herz, J. H., 2009. p. 231.

<sup>76</sup> TANG, S., 2009. pp. 591-593.

<sup>77</sup> SHIMKO, K. L., 2005. p. 125.

regional power. In other words, this imbalance has created a new situation, both internally, at the level of the state, and externally, to seek and guarantee the position of the state in the balance of power in the region.

According to both theories, the balance of power and the security dilemma in the Middle East, there are results of mobility from several countries to take a 'new' position in the region and start arrangements to ensure security and continuity in local and international status.<sup>78</sup>

Interestingly, the main features of the international relations system are anarchy and instability, so the security dimension of states ensures their survival and stability. This is the reason behind the arms race, keeping pace with technology and alliances. What happened in the Middle East, from the state of vacuum or the gap in the region's balance of power due to several events, naturally led to a change in those balances, which led to the emergence of new powers, and others are absent.

It is important to note that given the character of the international system today, namely the emergence of non-state actors, the struggle of states will not be limited to armament, but will support such efforts. For example, Iranian support for the Houthi group in Yemen is matched by Saudi support for the regime there, up to and including direct intervention by Saudi Arabia.

This can also be seen in the direct Saudi intervention in the attempts to overthrow the regime in the movement during the Arab Spring in Bahrain in 2013, while there was talk about Iranian support for the Shiites during the Saudi direct intervention. This event highlights the religious dimension of the conflict. Finally, the security of neighbours and allies ensures the security of states.

#### **IV. The rise of the regional powers in the Middle East**

After the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, the balance of power in the Middle East started to change. The other event that turned the whole scene upside down was the 'Arab Spring'<sup>79</sup> in

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<sup>78</sup> Soós. E., 2015. p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011. But their purpose, relative success, and outcome remain hotly disputed in Arab

2011. Libya, Egypt, and Syria are no longer in the balance of power in the Middle East, creating a significant power gap in the region. Moreover, the strategy of the U.S. to shift its power from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific led to a new rivalry for hegemonic power in the Middle East.

Most factors and drivers are linked to the changes in U.S. policy towards the Middle East. Several events can also be viewed as the drivers of change in the Middle East: the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise of non-state actors, the Arab Spring 2010, and the fall of authoritarian regimes.

The changes in the Middle East have created the so-called regional system and power which at least cannot be bypassed easily by the world powers, particularly the US. In addition, competition between states for regional leadership is emerging, with repercussions for internal alliances and proxy wars.

The main focus of this chapter is to highlight the key factors contributing to the rise of regional powers in the Middle East. It focuses on two key factors: the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring in 2011, which marked the shift in U.S. foreign policy towards the region after the end of the Cold War. The central aim of the chapter is to establish a precise definition of regional power, which will be used for the comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the dissertation. It also seeks to examine the most important events that have led to the rise of regional powers in the Middle East.

#### **IV. 1. Today's International System and the Middle East**

The nature of the current international system is anarchic and unstable. It does not resemble the multi-power system of the pre-World War II era. It is not based on two powers, as in a bipolar era, or on a single dominant power, as in the post-Cold War era. However, the current international system is characterised by a group of centres of power with different distributions. None of these powers can control the international system.<sup>80</sup>

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countries among foreign observers, and between world powers looking to cash in on the changing map of the Middle East.

<sup>80</sup> HASS, R. N., 2008. pp. 1-3.

Moreover, power is no longer monopolised by the nation state. However, it has become the power of many non-state actors, such as international and regional organisations, militias and non-governmental organisations.<sup>81</sup>

At the regional level, the polarisation system has created great importance for the role of regional states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia and the presence of organisations at the region's level, such as the Gulf Cooperation Organisation. Functional organisations include the International Energy Agency (IEA), OPEC, multinational corporations, financial or commercial and media organisations such as al-Jazeera, and armed militias such as the Mehdi Army in Iraq. Power is no longer concentrated but dispersed among these groups.<sup>82</sup>

Perhaps the emergence of regional systems is considered the second most important change after the changing nature of international actors; even if there is no global opponent to the United States, there are competitors and opponents at the level of each regional 'territory'. For example; China is inescapable in East Asia, as is Brazil and Latin America, Iran, Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, and Russia in its region.<sup>83</sup>

Middle Eastern views are full of competition between regional powers rather than outside powers. As the regional powers become more active, outside powers decrease their actions.<sup>84</sup> Regarding the Middle East and based on the theory of the balance of power, the natural state of the imbalance of power is that the powers of countries decline due to reasons and other countries show their place, along with the security dilemma this made new region order and rivalry between those powers shaping the new region relations with the U.S. in particular and the world powers in general.

The theoretical approach will be based on the definition of regional power and the balance of power and security theory to analyse the factors that have led to the rise of the Regional Powers in the Middle East.

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<sup>81</sup> HAS, R. N., 2008. pp.1-3.

<sup>82</sup> HASS. R.N., 2008. p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> AZEM, A., 2018. p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> LIANGXIANG, J.: *The Rise of Regional Powers and the Future Middle East Order*. Available at: <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-rise-of-regional-powers-and-the-future-middle-east-order> [Last accessed: 04.10.2018]

Several factors have led to the imbalance of power in the Middle East and the emergence of regional powers. These presumed regional powers, which may not be regional powers with whole meaning, are qualified for many reasons and will be influential in regional and international affairs.

The U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003 is considered one of the beginning factors of change in the region. Iraq was seen as an influential regional power, and its emergence from competition led to an imbalance of power in the Middle East and the Gulf region.

The occupation of Iraq in 2003 is, on the one hand, the actual assertion of complete US control over the Middle East and a practical and direct change in US policy towards the region, and, on the other hand, the US fear of the influence of its allies, so it begins to guarantee Saudi Arabia and its strategic interests in the region.

“The Iraq War was not supposed to be a costly debacle; but rather it was intended as the first step in a larger plan to reorder the Middle East”.<sup>85</sup> Going back a little further, direct U.S. intervention also dates from Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

U.S. policy has always been in the Middle East to benefit from rivalries and competition between the region's powers.<sup>86</sup> The U.S. supported Iraq in its war against Iran in 1979, and it is the same that declared war in 1990 and 2003, fully occupied when its direct interests and allies were in danger.

We can say that Saudi Arabia then began to play a more significant role in the region, precisely after Iran's control – to some extent – on the Iraqi scene and strengthened its presence and, more importantly, strengthened Iran's Shiite presence or rule in Iraq.

The other, and perhaps the most influential factor, is the Arab Spring of 2011, which resulted in the exit of Egypt, Libya, and Syria, respectively, left a gap in the balance of power in the region and allowed the emergence of a more significant role for the powers and other countries: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, and Turkey.

The Arab Spring holds the potential for a new round of conflict at the regional leadership level.<sup>87</sup> What happened in Bahrain in 2011 and in Yemen in 2014 can indicate the state of

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<sup>85</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., & WALTZ, S., 2006. p. 58.

<sup>86</sup> BECK, M., 2014. pp. 9-10.

<sup>87</sup> BECK, M., 2014. p. 5.

conflict and Saudi-Iranian competition for leadership in the region, and the realisation of their visions of regional power and control. It seems that further weakening of the Arab state system has led to the emergence of transnational identities such as tribalism, sectarianism, and ethnicity – rather than regional unity.<sup>88</sup>

The political uncertainty resulting from the Arab Spring and the changes in the balance of power triggered by the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was exacerbated. While Egypt remained entangled in its contradictions and polarisations and Iraq and Syria descended into chaos, Iran enhanced its image to the discontent of the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia.<sup>89</sup>

Saudi Arabia saw the Arab uprising as a challenge to regional stability. The kingdom pressed the United States to protect its Egyptian ally and was angered by Qatar's apparent support for Egyptian protesters and, later, the Muslim Brotherhood. It was clear that the Saudis felt weak. Its traditionally cautious and traditional foreign and regional policy has shifted towards a more obvious emphasis on regime survival, regional stability and keeping Iran in trouble.<sup>90</sup>

We can consider the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring as factors that helped to start the competition for new powers in the region to lead and impose regional control. In contrast, excluding some countries, such as Egypt, from the game of competition may be temporary, and therefore, Egypt may enter again. Incomplete in all its aspects.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the Middle East is not seen as a single, integrated, and harmonious region, and it is an Arab country in addition to Iran, Turkey, and Israel. These factors can be an engine that needs time to show its effects until one of the countries can prove its competence in leadership and the various requirements of regional power.

## **IV. 2. Iran and Saudi Arabia**

The Middle East includes the Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. The Islamic religion is the common factor between these countries – except Israel. Islam is divided between Sunnis

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<sup>88</sup> SEVER, A., 2018. p.1.

<sup>89</sup> KHADER, B.: *Shifting geopolitics in the Arab World 1945-2017*. 2018. pp. 47-4. Available at: [https://www.um.edu.mt/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/349200/MedAgenda-BicharaKhader-2018.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/349200/MedAgenda-BicharaKhader-2018.pdf). [Last accessed: 04.01.2019]

<sup>90</sup> KHADER, B., 2018. pp. 34-35.

and Shiites, and the first thing that comes to mind in terms of leadership is who leads the Islamic world. The debate about who leads the Islamic world in the Middle East has come to the fore, and the answer here is about Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Iraq is considered a power that has had significant influence in the Middle East; Gregory F. Gause mentions that “the transformation of Iraq from a player into a playing field has indeed been the main prerequisite of Iran's rise to greater regional ambition”.<sup>91</sup>

After the fall of the regime in 2003, the country entered into chaos and civil war. As a natural state, as we mentioned in the balance of power, an alternative power has to be replaced and take over leadership. In other words, the Sunni world leadership. With the sequence of events leading up to the Arab Spring in 2011, Iran's control of Iraq to a certain extent and its continued support for Bashar Assad's strategic ally, Saudi Arabia has to play an increasing role as the Arab regimes around it fall one by one.

In the context of the Iraqi civil war, a sectarian conflict has highlighted the centuries-old divisions between Islam, Shiites, and Sunnis. The regional rise of Iran as the leading Shiite power in the region and a country with a political system based on religious legitimacy has, in the words of Jordan's King Abdullah II, defied the ‘Shiite crescent’ stretching from Iran to Lebanon.<sup>92</sup>

On the ground, however, if we want to talk about the Shiite crescent against the Sunnis, only about 10 to 15 percent of all Muslims in the world are Shiites. In the Middle East, the twelfth Iranian form of Shia Islam is only different in Iraq (about 60 percent) and Bahrain (about 70 percent). But it is a minority in several other countries.<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, the task of controlling Iran will not be easy. We can talk about the forces that Iran supports, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza-Palestine. However, the influence of these non-state actors is mainly about gaining advantages for themselves and their regions. For Iran, they are a foothold in the form of geographical distance, firstly and secondly in the form of sensitive events and conflicts in the region.

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<sup>91</sup>Gause, G. F., 2010. p. 156.

<sup>92</sup> POPP, R., 2011. pp. 39-40.

<sup>93</sup> POPP, R., 2011. pp. 47-49.



The Arab Spring and its impact on the region may be considered weakly mechanised, and most analyses revolve around the question of the security dilemma of the remaining countries in peace.

Important factors that may affect the security landscape in the region include: the survival of the Assad regime, Iran's use of the Arab revolutions to strengthen its influence in the region (including its confrontation with Western governments); the nature of Egypt's orientation towards Israel and Iran; Saudi Arabia's position on events in the region (e.g. Yemen); Turkey's involvement in the Middle East unrest between Israel and the Palestinian people.<sup>94</sup>

The Iranian role, whose importance lies in the traditional role of both Israel and Saudi Arabia in opposing Iran's ambitions, especially its potential nuclear capability of Iran. This gives it greater importance. Pressure on Iran comes from inside and outside, including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations.<sup>95</sup>

To clarify, both factors, the invasion of Iraq and the Arab Spring, in parallel with the U.S. policy towards the Middle East, have created a new foreign policy status for Saudi Arabia and Iran according to new changes.

Tehran is looking for its existence, and so is Riyadh in the light of this new situation imposed by the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011 of the fall of regimes and a change in the map of the entire region, and the regional competition has become more evident than before, between these two parties.

Saudi Arabia initially wanted to establish the Gulf region in the beginning (just as it did not allow Tehran to interfere in the events of the revolutions inside Bahrain), and Tehran wanted to extend its influence through the role it played in Iraq.

#### **IV. 2. 1. Iran**

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<sup>94</sup> ERIKSSON, M.: *Re-Orient? An overview of the Arab Revolutions and the Balance of Power in the Middle East*. 2012. pp. 8-9. Available at: <https://www.foi.se/en/foi/research/security-policy/studies-on-peace-support-operations/publications.html>. [Last accessed: 20.01.2023]

<sup>95</sup> ERIKSSON, M., 2012. p. 69.

After the 1979 revolution, Iran began to use religious discourse, to build Shiite political geography to expand its influence over the Shiites and to pursue a foreign policy of turning them into strategic tools of Iranian propaganda.<sup>96</sup>

The policy of Iran to create a Shia Crescent was defined by the neighbouring Sunni countries as a source of threat and a security problem. Iran intrinsically follows a pragmatic foreign policy with the ambition of becoming a regional leader. Therefore, Iran chose public diplomacy, which takes place from the state towards the people, instead of classical diplomacy from state to state.<sup>97</sup>

Iran's growing influence after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, Iraq was considered a real threat to the Iranian dream, given that Iraq's population is about 60% Shiites. On the other hand, Iran considered the Arab Spring of 2011 an Islamic awakening movement and needed to lead it.<sup>98</sup> The military intervention in Bahrain to stop the popular movement against the government, which Saudi Arabia decided against Iranian intervention in Gulf affairs, is a strong indicator of Saudi-Iranian competition and Iran's exploitation of the Arab Spring to try to expand its influence.

#### **IV. 2. 2. Saudi Arabia: the petro-dollar policy**

Although Saudi Arabia is ambitious to lead the Islamic world as a central state, Muslims are drawn to it because of the holiest places. It is considered a great religious value to Muslims, the cradle of the holy places (Mecca and Medina), and a religious and spiritual destination, annually visited by millions of Muslims worldwide every year.

Saudi foreign policy has been based on the goal of leading the Muslim world, which includes the security of the regime. Since the occupation of Iraq in 2003, Iran and Saudi Arabia have started to build a stronger role in the region, with a solid sub-regional alliance with the United States.

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<sup>96</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 141.

<sup>97</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. pp. 142-143.

<sup>98</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 143.

Saudi Arabia follows the current status quo; the balance of power and the Axis security system exist internally and externally. Saudi Arabia considered what was happening in the Middle East during the Arab Spring process as a threat to itself and the regional situation it sought to protect.<sup>99</sup>

In response to the current situation, Saudi Arabia has formulated its foreign policy based on three primary factors. Firstly, the Arab Spring and the resulting competition among regional regimes have elevated Saudi Arabia's influence in regional affairs. Secondly, Saudi Arabia perceives Iran as a rival in religious leadership and views it as a threat that requires careful management. Thirdly, Saudi Arabia is focused on enhancing its role as a strategic ally of the U.S. and Israel in the Middle East.<sup>100</sup>

Saudi Arabia, instead of Iraq, became an anti-hegemonic force against Iran in the Middle East. Thus, the historical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia escalated after the Arab Spring. There have been proxy wars between these countries, in the Gulf States, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria.

However, in the competition for leadership in the Middle East, which has religious aspects, both countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia, aspired to lead the Islamic world and therefore formulated a foreign policy on this basis.

According to Table 2, from a military point of view, Iran ranks 17th in the world, surpassing Saudi Arabia in terms of manpower and navy. In comparison, Saudi Arabia is characterised by the economic weakness of its oil reserves, in addition to a military budget that is almost ten times larger, which may give Saudi Arabia an advantage in the development of technical and military technology and the purchase of more military equipment.

The basic assumption of the balance of power theory, which considers the international system anarchic, is that in times of danger, states resort to increasing their capabilities in relation to each other, either through internal efforts to strengthen themselves or external

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<sup>99</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 143.

<sup>100</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 144.

efforts to harmonise and reorganise with other countries. Thus, Saudi Arabia undoubtedly needs a strong ally to ensure a balance of power with Iran.<sup>101</sup>

**Table 2: Iran – Saudi rivalry hard power – Military excludes the nuclear**

Military	Iran	Saudi Arabia
GFP <sup>102</sup> Ranks	17 of 145	22 of 145
Total population (Million)	86.758.304	35.354.770
Squared Land Area (km)	1.648.195	2.149.690
Manpower available	48.584.650	18.384.278
Tanks Strength (Combat)	4.071	1.273
Total Aircraft	541	897
Submarines	19	0
Proven Oil Reserves	158.400.000.000( bbl)	266.500.000.000 (bbl)
Defense Budget	\$ 5.550.000.000	\$ 46.725.000.000

*Source:* Data extracted from the Global Fire Power index<sup>103</sup>

#### IV. 3. Seeking a new balance for U.S. policy in the Middle East

The United States' ability to influence the regions has become much less; it can no longer do it alone; it needs to cooperate with other countries, as in the case of Iran's nuclear programme and the involvement of countries such as Russia and China, given the emergence of

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<sup>101</sup> SUN, M.: *Balance of Power Theory in Today's International System*. 2014. p. 1. E-international Relation. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/02/12/balance-of-power-theory-in-todays-international-system/> [Last accessed: 27.02.2023]

<sup>102</sup> Global Firepower (GFP) has provided a unique analytical display of data on 145 modern military powers. The GFP ranking is based on each nation's potential ability to wage conventional war on land, sea and in the air. The results incorporate values relating to manpower, equipment, natural resources, finance, and geography represented by over 60+ individual factors used to formulate the final GFP rankings – which provide an intriguing glimpse into an increasingly volatile global landscape where war where war seems all but inevitable.

<sup>103</sup> Global Firepower index. Available at: <https://www.globalfirepower.com> [Last accessed: 27.02.2023]

significant powers, as in the case of North Korea, China's ability to influence them is more remarkable than that of the United States.<sup>104</sup>

U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Middle East since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 is different from what it is today, after 30 years of U.S. involvement in Middle East policy that has weakened its regional standing.<sup>105</sup> It has become clear that the capabilities of the U.S. are limited, and the search for alternatives, including the concept of regional power, seems to have exhausted the dynamics of the regions and the actors within them.<sup>106</sup>

In 1993, the United States implemented a policy of double containment of Iran and Iraq by strengthening the role of its allies Turkey, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Apart from a direct presence through its bases in Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States changed its Middle East policy again, and occupied Iraq in 2003 through pre-emptive strikes under the Bush Doctrine. The failure of the U.S. to manage the conflict in Iraq and to turn Iraq into an international playing field has increased rather than diminished Iran's role in the region.

During the Obama administration, foreign policy was reorganised to rebalance the U.S. power into the Asia-Pacific region against China; accordingly, the Obama administration withdrew its military presence in the region by shifting to a policy of leading from behind. It may be true that the US administration has been pursuing a strategy of maintaining its influence in the Middle East through its allies. Accordingly, the U.S. shifted its power to China, a superpower candidate, and left the Middle East to its allies: Israel and Saudi Arabia.<sup>107</sup>

The U.S. has long believed that it has a fundamental interest in a stable international economy, which depends on a globally secure and free flow of oil. This is how the bargain with Saudi Arabia originally came about.<sup>108</sup> The story is that the U.S. is trying to gain less cost in its domination of the Middle East in favour of supporting the establishment of a

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<sup>104</sup> HASS, R. N., 2008. p. 16.

<sup>105</sup> CRISTOL, J., 2018. pp. 53-55.

<sup>106</sup> BECK, M., 2014. pp. 4-5.

<sup>107</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 141.

<sup>108</sup> JUNEAU, T., 2014. p. 141.

regional power in the Middle East, a real one that would be like a permanent alliance for the U.S. to save its interests in the Middle East.<sup>109</sup>

There is a significant gap in many areas and the strength (hard and soft) between the U.S. and the other world powers – Russia, China and the EU – the United States is still the world's superpower, so the American-Russian situation is outside the debate. Russia's annual national income does not exceed 8 % of the U.S. national income; i.e. the US economy is almost 13 times larger than Russia's; according to the International Monetary Fund, Russia's national income fell by 24% between 2012 and 2017.<sup>110</sup>

We are not discussing U.S. power, but analysing the changing roles and types of political analysis based on developments. The question is not whether there is a decline in U.S. policy towards the Middle East or whether the U.S. can no longer fully control of the region, as some say in a (5 + 1) committee on the Iranian nuclear file. Alternatively, is there a change in the forms and instruments of control and give the allies a more significant role and opportunity while ensuring the results 'for the U.S. is to ensure control of the region'.

The withdrawal of the U.S. from the Middle East since the Obama administration has left a huge vacuum for other players to fill. Iran could influence the Iraqi government because of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

On the other hand, regional actors have felt the need to play a more prominent role to protect their interests and protecting their security. For instance, Saudi Arabia's active involvement in Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and even Iraq can be attributed to its concerns about Iran's expansion in the absence of the United States. Saudi Arabia used to rely on the U.S. for protection, but those days are over.<sup>111</sup>

There is a fundamental change in U.S. policy in the Middle East. This does not mean weakness but a reshaping of the region. There will be a more significant role for the traditional allies and securing U.S. interests in the region in terms of the continued flow of oil to world markets and the protection of its strategic ally, Israel.

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<sup>109</sup> JUNEAU, T., 2014. p. 142.

<sup>110</sup> AZEM, A., 2018. p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> LIANGXIANG, J., 2018. p. 3.

#### **IV. 4. A preliminary picture. The expected alliances in the Middle East**

There is no doubt about the U.S.'s unique power, but it is also a political, economic, and military burden. When we talk about Russia or emerging nations like Iran and Venezuela being a pole or part of international polarisation, and China's unwillingness or inability, at least for the time being, to become a pole of political and military expansion globally, this does not mean the establishment of monotheism and polarisation, but a system called polarisation that Richard Haas talks about and changing forms of competition and distribution of power and the emergence of non-state actors.<sup>112</sup>

Russia lost much of its military power in the region after the Cold War. Its only remaining military installation is a secondary naval facility in Tartous, Syria. Its only regional partners, Iran and Syria, are isolated and weak. Russia cannot offer forces to maintain a military deployment in the region. China, for its part, has no military capability or ambition in the Middle East and is unlikely to acquire one for many years. It is therefore not a factor in the regional balance of military power.<sup>113</sup>

The West believes that Russia has been very aggressive in Syria, but Russia was defending its last ally in the Middle East. The survival of Bashar Assad's government is vital for Russia, and without Syria Russia will lose its strategic influence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region without Syria.<sup>114</sup>

However, in a short period of six years, from 2011 to 2016, it soon became clear that Saudi Arabia, despite the support of the Gulf states and the United States, was not able to establish regional hegemony in the Middle East; Saudi Arabia was neither able to overtake Iran nor to fill the gap left by the United States.

However, despite its immense financial and oil power, Saudi Arabia has never been a military power capable of establishing a regional hegemony. On the other hand, historically, no regional power has been able to establish regional hegemony in the Middle East on its own. Throughout history, there has always been a multipolar balance of power system that has

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<sup>112</sup> AZEM, A., 2018. p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> JUNEAU, T., 2014. p. 142.

<sup>114</sup> LIANGXIANG, J., 2018. p. 3.

dominated Middle Eastern politics, and it was obvious that Saudi Arabia could not become a regional power or regional leader on its own.<sup>115</sup>

Therefore, it is expected to have close alliances, especially to besiege Iran, and Saudi Arabia in turn will lead it through a Saudi-Turkish alliance or a Saudi-Israeli alliance.

In the case of the Middle East, the Saudi-Turkish alliance may be more acceptable. However, according to the difficult economic conditions that Turkey is currently experiencing now and the events that happened between Saudi Arabia and Turkey after the story of journalist Jamal Khashoggi<sup>116</sup> in the Embassy in Turkey in 2018, the role played by Turkey is different. On the one hand, the leaking of records on the matter could hamper the alliance. On the other hand, the implicit competition between Saudi Arabia and Turkey for the leadership of the Muslim world, in general, may also prevent that alliance.

As far as the Saudi-Israeli alliance is concerned, it is out of the question because of the position of the Arab states against Israel and the rejection of direct normalization, because of the status of the Palestinian issue is stalled, and the lack of solutions. It may, therefore, be difficult for King Salman to decide on a direct alliance with Israel. The magic solution would be to create a tripartite or quadripartite alliance of Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt as a front. Moreover, it is also possible to add other countries to mobilise and focus the work, as Israel is trying to make the issue and the Iranian threat on the priority of the Middle East agenda and ignore the Palestinian cause as much as possible.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>115</sup> EKŞİ, M., 2017. p. 149.

<sup>116</sup> A prominent Saudi journalist, he was close to the Saudi royal palace before the authorities took revenge on him and prevented him from writing. In 2017, he decided to settle in the United States of America, and on 2 October 2018, he was brutally killed inside his country's consulate in Istanbul. His murder on Turkish soil caused a state of instability in Turkish-Saudi relations, as the Turkish government publicly accused the Saudi government of being responsible for his killing and considered it a clear violation of its territory and of relations between the two sides. For more details see: <https://2u.pw/nVDPdG>



Developments in the Middle East since the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring in 2011, in parallel with the decline of the US towards the region, have led to the rise of a new regional order in the Middle East.

The events of the Middle East underline its importance and dynamism for the world powers, whether in terms of securing the flow of oil or the continuity in the form of what is happening in the region, such as Russia.

There is no confirmed Regional Power in the Middle East. Due to the attempts within the framework of the balance of power in the region, the Middle East region is still directly subject to the policy of the United States, in addition to international actors such as Russia, China and the European Union. The Middle East is not considered a single, integrated, and harmonious region, but it includes Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. These factors can be an engine until one of the countries can prove its leadership competence and fulfil the requirements of a regional power.

Competing leadership in the Middle East will fuel rivalry between the remaining powers, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel. Predictable alliances will undermine Iranian expansion in the region.

Despite the various events in the Middle East that cast a shadow over the Palestinian issue, the Palestinian issue will remain the main driving force in the Middle East as long as it remains unresolved.

## **V. The role of the United States's policy towards the Middle East's main actors**

The United States holds a position of a global superpower, and the Middle East region is keenly interested in U.S. policy due to its strategic alliance with Israel and the region's geopolitical significance and energy reserves. A careful examination of U.S. policy towards the region is of utmost importance due to its significant impact on the region's politics and developments. Delving into the intricacies of U.S. policy is essential for shaping future scenarios for the region and also for addressing the Palestinian issue.

## V. 1. The United States and Saudi Arabia

In the thirties of the twentieth century, the U.S. formally built a robust economic and strategic cooperation model with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because of the presence of oil. U.S. policy was able to consolidate its influence in the Kingdom, making it its most important strategic ally in the world. Throughout the century, the Kingdom has moved closer to being one of the tools for implementing the U.S. global and regional strategy, rather than an ally that could contradict its ally if that alliance conflicted with its strategic interests.<sup>117</sup>

The U.S. adopted a prudent policy against the Kingdom. This policy was based on measuring the level of quantitative accumulation of the Islamic dimension in Saudi politics in the future and the extent of its ability to influence the position of the U.S. in the Arab and Islamic spheres. From there, it began to lay the foundations and sources of tension that can be moved within the Kingdom itself or its geographical territory, the U.S. can use them if necessary.<sup>118</sup>

The main interest of the United States in the region is oil supplies. However, the security of friendly regimes is not essential if other means of obtaining oil are available. For example, the internal conflict in Yemen is Saudi Arabia's top priority today, as it was in the 1960s. However, the U.S. administration focuses on oil fields and their transportation routes (the Strait of Hormuz) and remains silent on the ballistic missiles that fall on the Saudi territory. On the other hand, the U.S. has shown the most severe reactions to deter attacks targeting on oil tankers. This is one of the most critical results when relations are based on interests, and not shared values.<sup>119</sup>

The Kingdom was a tool used by the U.S. to balance the Iranian role in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine. It was also a tool to settle the situation in Iraq and the disputes between the Palestinian factions so that Iran would not contain them. Saudi Arabia was also a tool in the sectarian conflicts provoked by the U.S. in the region within the religious and sectarian fragmentation policy that the U.S. adopted between the region's countries. It has been a tool to fuel the sectarian conflict between Iran on the one hand and the Arab countries on the other

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<sup>117</sup> ABDESHAFI, I., 2014. p. 125.

<sup>118</sup> ABDESHAFI, I., 2014. p. 45.

<sup>119</sup> AJUZ, Z., & DEKMAK, H., 2019. p. 3.

side, and between Sunnis and Shiites within many Arab countries, such as Iraq and Lebanon, and even within the Kingdom itself as a deferred tool to be used when the U.S. wants.<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, the U.S.-Saudi relationship are strategic and cannot be reduced to one issue, such as the Iranian nuclear subject. The Kingdom is important in the American and Chinese balance in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>121</sup>

U.S. President D. Trump in 2017 strengthened Saudi Arabia's regional position and weight through partnerships, agreements, and arms sales contracts. Despite Trump's unclear and noisy policy, he attempted to change the international system's rules by requesting the states to pay for their protection, and this is what happened to the Kingdom, for example. However, a close relationship between the two sides remained.<sup>122</sup>

Directly, the U.S.-Saudi relationship is a petro-dollar relationship based on the economy and security. The state of change in the Middle East, and the rise and fall of other countries has strengthened Saudi Arabia's position regionally. They have allowed it to lead the region and play a greater role in its conflicts, but this could only be done with American support.

## **V. 2. The United States and Iran**

Since the end of the Second World War, the U.S. has sought to extend its influence in Iran for economic reasons. In 1953, British and American intelligence assisted in toppling the government of the elected Prime Minister Muhammad Mosaddeq to control Iranian oil, which they successfully achieved until the Islamic Revolution in (1979).<sup>123</sup>

Bill. A.J. (2003) says that the U.S. practices the policy of containment and control over all countries that threaten their regional interests and can confront their desires using complex

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<sup>120</sup> ABDESHAFI, I., 2014. p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> ABDULLAH, Z., 2019. pp. 154-155.

<sup>122</sup> ABDULLAH, Z., 2019. p. 155.

<sup>123</sup>BBC: US-Iran relations: A brief history. 6 January 2020. pp. 1-3. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24316661> [Last accessed: 22. 10.2020]

diplomacy 'sanctions.' The use of regional allies in the Middle East, the Arab Gulf, and Israel to confront this power and limit its control or relatively independent decisions.<sup>124</sup>

He adds that the U.S. was quick to condemn regional powers because they did not comply with the wishes of the U.S., describing them as 'rogue,' 'rebellious' or "outlaw" states. For example, in 1985, President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) stubbornly identified these independent actors when he referred to a federation of outlaw states – Cuba, Iran, Libya, Nicaragua, and North Korea'.

In short, the United States seeks to prevent the rise of independent-minded regional hegemony. The more independent their behaviour, the more pressure the United States will put on them. The more significant the difference in global views of global and regional dominance, the greater the political tension between them.

Iran has since wavered its overt or hidden subordination to the West. After the Islamic revolution, its relations with the Soviet Union were regularized. After that, diplomatic crises, hostility, and sanctions emerged until Iran was declared in 2003 by President W. Bush as an axe of evil alongside Iraq and North Korea.

After Iran developed its nuclear programme, tensions increased between the two sides. In 2015, US-Iran agreed with former President Obama (2009-2017) to limit and stop the Iranian programme in return for easing sanctions on Iran. Trump administration came in 2018 and withdrew from this agreement, which increased the tension between the two countries and returned matters to their first square. This emphasis on solid policy with Iran and an extension of the U.S. policy to dominate the region.

Recently, the current scene in the Middle East, the state of chaos in the region, the absence of regimes that are considered controlling powers in Iraq and countries in a state of civil war, Syria, Yemen and the retreat in American policy in the region forced the United States to tend to support its allies (Saudi Arabia and Israel) and use them to limit Iran's interference in the

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<sup>124</sup> BILL, A. J., 2001, pp. 1-3.

region. The aim of the U.S. policy and its support for allies (Saudi Arabia and Israel) is to contain Iran and achieve stability in the region in a way that guarantees its interests.<sup>125</sup>

The civil war in Yemen is considered an arena of Saudi-Iranian conflict and a proxy war, just like the Cold War. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia strive to be leadership states.

### **V. 3. The United States and Turkey**

The U.S. established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Turkey in 1927. The two sides signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation in 1947. The U.S. considers Turkey a major NATO ally and an important regional partner.<sup>126</sup>

In addition, Turkey's geographical advantage has given it strength at the intersection of its security interests with the United States. In their congressional research service report, J. Zanotti and C. Thomas (2020) estimated that United States-Turkish relations would depend on several factors: “whether Turkey makes its Russian S-400 system fully operational<sup>127</sup>; how various regional crises (Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Eastern Mediterranean disputes with Greece and Cyprus) unfold and influence Turkey’s relationships with key actors (including the United States, Russia, China, the European Union, Israel, Iran, and Sunni Arab states); whether Turkey can project power and create its sphere of influence using military and economic cooperation including defense exports; and whether President Erdogan can maintain broad control over the country given its economic problems and human rights concerns”.<sup>128</sup>

In his speeches to the United Nations General Assembly over the past decade, the Turkish president has called for the rules of the international system, and the Security Council in particular, to be changed.

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<sup>125</sup> The Middle East: Intensifying Competition for Hegemony over a New Regional Order. Strategic Annual Report. 2019. pp.1-3. Available at: [https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic\\_comment/2019/12/column-38.html](https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/strategic_comment/2019/12/column-38.html) [Last accessed: 25. 10.2020]

<sup>126</sup> U.S. Department of State. p. 1. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-turkey/> [Last accessed: 25.10.2020]

<sup>127</sup> Missile defense system.

<sup>128</sup> ZANOTTI, J., & THOMAS, C., 2020. p. 18.

Turkey has unequivocally taken on a more significant role in the Syrian conflict under the pretext of securing its borders. This assertive stance is evident in its deployment of military forces to Libya, reflecting a strong level of cooperation and implicit approval from the United States. However, Turkey's bold actions have led to an economic crisis, with the Turkish lira experiencing an unprecedented decline since Erdogan's deviation from the "zero problems" policy.

After the agreement on the missile defense system bought by Turkey from Russia came into force, the U.S. president publicly threatened to impose sanctions on Turkey.

Another perspective on the Middle East scene is the leadership of the Islamic world. The three countries studied, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, want to lead within the religion, and this is what the U.S. tried to do when the administration of former President Obama tried to market Turkey as a moderate Islamic model.

Another perspective of the Turkish position is Turkey's unique geopolitical position, straddling Europe and Asia, which presents both opportunities and challenges. This positioning forces Turkey to navigate complex relationships with neighbouring countries and global powers.<sup>129</sup>

## **Conclusion**

What is happening in the Middle East is a struggle between the main powers in the region backed by the outside supra-regional power of the U.S.

The U.S. relationship with Turkey is multifaceted, marked by strategic cooperation as NATO allies and tensions over regional policy and defense procurement decisions. While they collaborate on security issues, significant differences persist, particularly regarding Syria and Turkey's democratic practices.

Strategic Partnership with Tensions: The U.S.-Saudi relationship is a long-standing strategic partnership focused on energy security, counterterrorism, and balancing Iranian influence.

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<sup>129</sup> SZIGETVÁRI, T., 2020. pp. 17-20.

Despite shared interests, there have been tensions in recent years over human rights issues, the war in Yemen, and differing approaches to regional conflicts.

**Adversarial Relationship:** The U.S. and Iran have had a predominantly adversarial relationship since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Key issues include Iran's nuclear programme, regional influence, and support for militant groups. Diplomatic efforts, such as the 2015 nuclear deal, have faced challenges and opposition from regional allies.

The U.S. engages with these major Middle Eastern powers through strategic alliances, economic ties, and aggressive policies that reflect complex and often contentious regional dynamic.

## **VI. The role of the Israeli lobby in the United States. How does the U.S. work against its interests?**

According to Robert Dahl, interest groups are “a group of people who work together to pursue or protect shared objectives and interests in a broader context”.<sup>130</sup> Lobbies and Pressure groups are distinct phenomena of the American political system, and these organisations are critical in shaping and exerting pressure on Washington's decision-making centres. This pressure is the product of certain advantages of power that allow this political or economic community to operate there, as well as political knowledge of rules, constitutions, and democracy.<sup>131</sup> In 2010, for example, the US Supreme Court ruled that lobbyists can engage in electoral campaigns up to 60 days before the election, strengthening interest groups' role in the political sphere.<sup>132</sup>

As Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) described, the Israeli lobby in the United States is a loose alliance of individuals and organisations actively working to shape American foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction.<sup>133</sup> They also point out that the U.S. Zionist lobby has a broad and

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<sup>130</sup> DAHL, A. R., 1981. p. 235.

<sup>131</sup> MOHTASIB, N., 2006. pp. 24-26.

<sup>132</sup> NOGRIS, T., 2016. pp. 1-3.

<sup>133</sup> Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, S., 2006. pp. 6-8.

powerful presence in the United States-Middle East foreign policy, as U.S. support for Israel has threatened its strategic interests.

This chapter aims to highlight and evaluate the most significant results from the study conducted by Mearsheimer and Walt (2006). It also examines the roots of the Zionist lobby's influence in the United States. The main aim of the chapter is to show that U.S. support for Israel is not against the country's national interests, nor is it against the extension of its regional dominance, which prevents potential legitimate resolutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

## **VI. 1. The Israeli lobby power resource**

Israel and the United States have strong ties. U.S. support has been crucial in Israel's militarisation since its establishment in 1948. Furthermore, it is the primary funding source for the Israeli army. According to a study released by the Congressional Research Center, U.S. assistance to Israel exceeded \$121 billion in December 2016, up from \$3 billion in October 1973.<sup>134</sup>

The Zionist lobby in the United States employed two basic strategies: exerting pressure on Congress and the executive branch to support Israel, persuading others to support Israel's side, and pushing public discourse to portray Israel positively by spreading lies about it as a targeted by neighbours who threaten its existence.

Specifically, the Zionist lobby uses two different tactics. First, to gain influence in Congress, where the weight of the Zionist lobby is centralised in the American Israeli Public Relations Committee 'AIPAC', which comprises some 4,500 senior Jewish representatives in American society. Second, the control of the presidential campaign. The strong influence of Jewish voters in presidential elections gives them leverage over the executive branch. Despite their small numbers, only about 3% of the population, they fund about 60% of the campaign costs of both candidates. The dominance of the media and the involvement of studies and research

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<sup>134</sup> SHARBINI, S.: *The influence of the Zionist lobby in the United States and its reflection on the American policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*. 2018. pp.1-4. Available at: <http://www.acrseg.org/40970> [Last accessed: 12. 03.2021]



institutions also play an important role in shaping public opinion and putting pressure on the US administration.<sup>135</sup>

The Israeli lobby's impact has grown significantly as a consequence of a number of circumstances and factors. First, the position of the organisations and the people who make up this lobby. Second, the official U.S. policy.<sup>136</sup> In short, wealth, the ability to manipulate decision-making centres (the presidency and Congress) and the ability to manipulate public opinion (the media and research centres) are the sources of power that the Israeli lobby possesses in the United States.

## **VI. 2. Mearsheimer and Walt's (2006) findings**

One of the most controversial studies in recent years is "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy 2006," written by John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt M. of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. This article, first published in the London Review of Books in March 2006, provoked outrage and appreciation for raising a historically taboo topic in the United States: the influence of the Israeli lobby on American foreign policy. Both the University of Chicago and Harvard University denied responsibility for the study's content and findings, stressing that it did not reflect anything other than the authors' point of view. Several researchers said the study's authors had received a barrage of harsh criticism.<sup>137</sup>

The Middle East was chosen as the most critical area for the study because of the massive impact of U.S. foreign policy and the current state of instability in the region. The study's basic hypothesis is that 'the primary objective of U.S. foreign policy should be its national interest first and foremost,' but 'the priority of U.S. policy in the Middle East over the past several decades has been its alliance with Israel, especially after the 1967 Six-Day War.'<sup>138</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) add that 'Such situation is unprecedented in American political

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<sup>135</sup> SHARBINI, S., 2018. pp. 1-4.

<sup>136</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., & WALT, S., 2006. pp. 6-8.

<sup>137</sup> John J. Mearsheimer (M) of the University of Chicago and Stephen M. Walt (W) of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Originally published in the London Review of Books in March 2006.

<sup>138</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J. & WALT, S., 2006. pp. 3-4

history' and that 'shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives do not justify the extraordinary amount of financial and diplomatic support offered by the U.S. to Israel.'<sup>139</sup>

Mearsheimer and Walt also attribute a role to U.S. domestic politics and to the efforts of the Israeli lobby to convince Americans that America's and Israel's interests are essentially the same. They argue, for example, that during the Cold War and with the advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Israel could not, as was widely believed, protect American interests there. For example, they assert that during the Cold War and when the Islamic revolution in Iran arose, Israel could not protect American interests there, as widely believed. The US therefore had to build alliances and form a rapid intervention force to protect its regional interests. The study also shows that the common terrorist threat to Israel and the United States has an inverse causal relationship, rather than the other way around; the United States is experiencing a terrorist crisis partly because of its close ties with Israel.

The researchers also reported that Israel cannot be an entirely trustworthy partner for several factors. Most notably, Israeli officials' persistent ignorance of U.S. demands and violations of promises made to senior American leaders, such as vows not to create settlements or massacre Palestinians, as well as hacking and leaking sensitive technical knowledge to potential competitors such as China.<sup>140</sup>

According to the report, the Zionist lobby is no different from other lobbies in the United States, except that it is the most powerful and has unparalleled influence. The study also reveals that the lobby's position is enhanced as a result of two dimensions: the connections and capacities that these lobbies have, which Arab and non-Arab groups lack, and the Zionist lobby's political and economic capabilities, which it employs in both official and unofficial operations, as well as its constant reliance on the Jewish voice and resources, provide it with this foothold. The study also reports that fanatical Christians such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson are said to be among the lobby's founders.

According to the report, special interest groups attempted to manipulate foreign policy. However, none of them reached the point where they were willing to substitute other state interests for US national interests, as the Zionist lobby does. As a result, as long as the Zionist

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<sup>139</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J. & WALT, S., 2006. pp. 4-5.

<sup>140</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J. & WALT, S., 2006. pp. 11-12.

lobby continues to influence foreign policy on the Palestinian issue, the US cannot play an honest role leading to a just and lasting solution.

Finally, Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) argued that there are many reasons for US leaders to separate themselves from the lobby and pursue a Middle East strategy more in line with broader American interests. In particular, using American influence to achieve a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians will contribute to the broader goals of fighting terrorism and promoting stability in the Middle East.<sup>141</sup>

### **VI. 3. The Middle East as a Project**

The findings of both researchers are abstract facts based on the assumption that the United States should be a leader and a fair state, but the reality is slightly different. The United States has a different perspective on the Middle East, and its role in the region and internationally is consistent with its role in the region by supporting Israel and does not contradict its overall strategy.

Historically, the United States' hegemony in the Middle East and North Africa has been illustrated by its ability to transform or create major regional crises, to shape the actions of regional states, and to reconfigure the domestic balance of power between local governments when necessary.<sup>142</sup>

The countries of the Middle East have a colonial legacy that binds them to the Western world. Most of the countries in the region were created by treaties signed by Western countries after the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Some countries were part of the United Kingdom, while others were part of the French Republic. They were divided into two categories: provisions and mandates. The situation remained unchanged until 1945, when the role of these powers began to increase and the United States emerged as the dominant and controlling power in the region.

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<sup>141</sup> MEARSHEIMER, J., & WALT, S., 2006. pp. 39-40.

<sup>142</sup> YOM, S.: *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Logic of Hegemonic Retreat*. 2020. pp. 1-5. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12777> [Last accessed: 12. 03.2021]

Edward Said argues that European supremacy over the region and its people further contributed to the unequal relationship with Europe, which he calls 'Orientalism'.<sup>143</sup> The Middle East was a British-French cultural project until the end of the World War II, and the rise of the United States' role in controlling the region is not different from Western civilisation's attempts to expand since ancient times.<sup>144</sup> Edward Said viewed Orientalism as an authoritarian use of knowledge about the East to domesticate it in preparation for colonisation and control.<sup>145</sup>

The supremacy of the United States remains unchallenged. The U.S. demonstrates unwavering support for Israel to allow Israel to strike a balance against the Arabs and regional forces, and it becomes clear that there will be no reconciliation or mediation between Israel and the Palestinians. It could be claimed that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is aimed at maintaining U.S. control over the global economy. However, the United States' Middle East foreign policy strategies have damaged the country's reputation and status as a powerful global force.<sup>146</sup> As a result, the U.S. role in the region is to maintain the supply of raw materials from the region to the rest of the world, and the U.S. will go to any lengths to guarantee that this continues. Perhaps the researchers' 'e. g. Mearsheimer and Walt's point of view on the goal of peace and stability was on Israel's side. While this appears to be the case, the facts suggest otherwise.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter aimed to discuss the influence of the Israeli lobby in the United States and to review the findings of the 2006 Mearsheimer and Walt report. The two researchers (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006) examined the strategic interests of the United States and how they intersect with the long-term interests of Israel at a level that does not compromise the interests of the United States and ensures its legitimacy as a global superpower. The

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<sup>143</sup> SAID, E., 2006. pp. 25-27.

<sup>144</sup> SAID, E., 2006. pp. 27-29.

<sup>145</sup> SAID, E., 2006. pp. 29-31.

<sup>146</sup> RATHNAYAKE, R. M. S. S., 2016. p. 261.

researchers assumed an idealized picture of the United States of America “or what it should be as a world leader and pioneer”, but the facts say otherwise. The United States' efforts in the Middle East since taking over as the world's leading in 1948, after the end of the Second World War, have been to maintain and extend its influence and power in the region for its own benefit. Israel has benefited from US policy in the region, reinforced by the active Israeli lobby.

Even though both researchers are intellectual members of the realist class, they attempted to correct the direction of U.S. policy, which is in total contradiction with the realist school. In fact, US policy does not care about the form of the ruling regimes, "democratic or not", in its cooperation with them, but focuses on interests, which is the main engine of international relations. This study concludes that there is no prospect of a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or future regional stabilization, if U.S. policy remains unchanged and the preservation of the lobby influences foreign policy.

## **VII. The role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the European Union's Strategy towards the Middle East**

The European Union has been involved in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through its various foreign policies, developed continuously in proportion to the general political reality.

EU's vision of conflict resolution harmonized with its core values, such as justice, democracy, good governance, and the rule of law in any current or future solution to the conflict. The EU's position on the conflict consists of three central positions: its position in the peace process, political support, and practical and financial support.

As stated in the European Security Strategy, “The Resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a strategic priority for Europe. Without this, there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle East”.<sup>147</sup> It stresses that the European Union has been “central to efforts towards a settlement in the Middle East, through its role in the Quartet, co-operation

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<sup>147</sup> European Security Strategy. 2003. p. 36. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/publications/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world/> [Last accessed: 16.04. 2024]

with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, with the Arab League and other regional partners.”<sup>148</sup> Within the framework of an international partner as part of the ‘Quartet,’ the European Union is engaged with the United States, Russia, and the United Nations in the peace process.

Strong political and economic relations have been established between the European Union and Israel, and the European Union and the Palestinian Authority through ‘Association Agreements and European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans.’<sup>149</sup>

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has emerged as a compromise between EU member states concerning the EU's interests towards its eastern and southern neighbours. The ENP is a vital part of EU foreign policy with the central values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion.<sup>150</sup> The revised Policy aims to build more effective partnerships between the EU and its neighbours toward a more stable EU Neighbourhood in political, socioeconomic, and security terms.

The ENP of the European Union sets ambitious objectives based on commitments to shared values and effective implementation of political, economic, social, and institutional reforms. Moreover, it is part of the European Union's response to the Palestinian Authority's political and economic reform agenda. This Reform has been developed to consolidate democracy, accountability, transparency, and justice in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>151</sup>

Palestinians became part of the ENP as the EU-PA Action Plan was signed in 2004. The action plan aims at maintaining and ensuring the political and economic existence of a future Palestinian state and, therefore, calls on the Palestinian Authority to continue to work on reforms to promote respect for democracy, human rights, and financial accountability.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> European Security Strategy. 2003. p. 18.

<sup>149</sup> European External Action Service (a), para 1. *The EU and the Middle East Process*. Available at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/mepp/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/mepp/index_en.htm) [Last accessed: 15.03.2024]

<sup>150</sup> SOÓS, E., 2016. p. 52.

<sup>151</sup> Action Plan: *EU/Palestinian Authority Action Plan*. 2004. p. 1. Available at: <https://library.euneighbours.eu/content/eu-palestinian-territories-enp-action-plan> [Last accessed: 20.04.2024]

<sup>152</sup> BENLI, M., A., 2008. p. 113.

The EU-Palestinian Territory Action Plan is a political document laying out the strategic objectives of the cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and the EU, with its implementation aimed at encouraging and supporting the Palestinian Authority's national reform objectives and further integration into European economic and social structures. The action plan, adopted in May 2005 and covering a five-year timeframe, targets the approximation of the Palestinian Authority legislation, norms, and standards to those of the European Union.<sup>153</sup>

Deeply, the EU is fully engaged in the Annapolis Process towards a two-state solution and is contributing sustained financial and budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority and capacity building, including by deploying judicial, police, and border management experts on the ground.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, the EU enhances its regional presence by providing 'Border Assistance through EUBAM Rafah.' The EU strongly supports civil society activities that promote peace, tolerance, and non-violence in the Middle East.<sup>155</sup>

In the first section, the chapter will show the position of the EU in support of Palestine; in the second section, the chapter will discuss the EU-Israeli ties; in the third section, the chapter will discuss in brief the EU joint strategy in support of Palestine, in the fourth section the chapter will analyze the Regional approaches to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the role of EU. Finally, the chapter will trace the official Palestinian point of view about the EU's role in support of Palestine.

The chapter concludes that, as a result, the EU plays a vital role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and is considered the 'most reliable' partner for the Palestinians. Furthermore, the EU could gain many benefits through its contribution to the resolution of the conflict, namely, the reduction of the Palestinian Authority's annual financial dependence and expenditures, as well as the creation of a robust international personality and its ability to resolve conflicts and create a new reality of the balance of power and the U.S. control of the region.

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<sup>153</sup> Action Plan: *EU/Palestinian Authority Action Plan*. 2004. p. 1.

<sup>154</sup> European Security Strategy. 2003. p. 18.

<sup>155</sup> European External Action Service. 2016. pp. 4-5.

## **VII.1. The European Union's position in support of Palestine**

The European Union has gone through several stages in supporting the Palestinians. European Economic Community EEC recognized the existence and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people through a joint statement issued by the nine EEC Governments in 1973.

In the Brussels Declaration of November 1973, the European Community (EC) went even further than the UN Resolution in stressing the 'legitimate rights' of the Palestinians.<sup>156</sup> The Venice Declaration in 1980 recognized the right to security and existence for all states in the region, including Israel, and the need to fulfill the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.<sup>157</sup> The EEC agreed in this declaration on supporting the right of self-determination of the Palestinians, which was considered an important step that implicitly implies the possibility of a future state for the Palestinians as occupied people.<sup>158</sup>

The Declaration set the standards in many respects. Still, it was somehow far from the position of the UN General Assembly, which in the same year affirmed Palestine's right to establish its independent state.<sup>159</sup>

At the same time, the Venice Declaration is vital because it stressed the illegality of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the non-acceptance of any unilateral initiative aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem.<sup>160</sup>

After the end of the Cold War 1989-1990, with the fact that the United States became the superpower in the world and its vision of the new Middle East, the 1991 Madrid peace process<sup>161</sup> began to move forward with solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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<sup>156</sup> BENLI, M., A., 2008. p. 106.

<sup>157</sup> European External Action Service. 2016. p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> BADARNA, M., 2019. p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> BOURIS, D., & HUBER, D., 2017. p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> BENLI, M., A. 2008. p. 106.

<sup>161</sup> On March 6, 1991, President George H. W. Bush told Congress, "The time has come to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict." Bush's declaration was followed by eight months of intensive shuttle diplomacy by



The U.S. considered the EU's role in financing the peace process as a model for regional economic cooperation but has not been seen as a critical player in developing solutions or apolitical actors.<sup>162</sup>

The EU co-sponsored the road map for peace in June 2002, stressing the need to build Palestinian institutions and economic recovery to strengthen and viability of a future Palestinian state and statehood and calling for the immediate freezing of settlement activity and the proactive dismantling of settlement sites as stipulated in the road map.<sup>163</sup>

Finally, it seems that the position of the European Union was more apparent than ever before, supporting the option of a Palestinian state in the Berlin Declaration.<sup>164</sup> Middle East peace process of the agenda of the European Council meeting in Berlin on March 24, 1999. The part contained the following statement: The Heads of State or Government of the European Union reaffirm its support for a negotiated settlement in the Middle East to reflect the principles of "land for peace" and ensure the security of both collective and individual Israeli and Palestinian peoples. In this context, the European Union welcomes the decision by the

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Secretary of State James Baker, culminating in the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991. The Conference, co-chaired by Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, was attended by Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese delegations, as well as a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. For the first time, all of the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict had gathered to hold direct negotiations—a historically unprecedented event. The Madrid Conference opened October 30, 1991, and ended on November 4. Though the parties largely stuck to their traditional positions and did not negotiate seriously with each other, they nevertheless agreed to remain in dialogue. Bilateral talks between Israeli officials and their Arab counterparts would begin in Washington in December 1991, while multilateral negotiations began in Moscow in January 1992. From the beginning, the bilateral talks were generally regarded as the more significant of the two tracks. While these talks acquired greater momentum following the election of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in June 1992, they failed to yield results before the Clinton administration took office. Ultimately, the Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-Palestinian tracks established at Madrid would be circumvented by the parties themselves. Frustrated by the Palestinian delegation's inability to move forward without Arafat's approval, the Israelis decided to negotiate directly with the PLO, culminating in the signing of the Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993. King Hussein and the Israelis likewise decided to move forward independently of the Madrid framework, holding direct talks which produced a peace treaty by October 1994. For more details see: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/madrid-conference> [Last accessed: 14.01.2024]

<sup>162</sup> BENLI, M., A., 2008. p. 107.

<sup>163</sup> European External Action Service. 2016. p. 1.

<sup>164</sup> March 1999 25-Presidency Conclusions. Berlin European Council. 25The Berlin Declaration, Part IV: Other Declarations. The European Union also calls for an early resumption of negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the Middle East Peace Process, leading to the implementation of UNSCRs 242, 338 and 425. For more details see: [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/acfb2.html](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/acfb2.html) [Last accessed: 12..03.2023]

Palestinian National Council and associated bodies to reaffirm the nullification of the provisions in the Palestinian National Charter, which called for the destruction of Israel, and to reaffirm their commitment to recognize and live in peace with Israel. However, the European Union remains concerned about the current deadlock in the peace process and calls upon the parties to implement the Wye River Memorandum fully and immediately. The European Union also calls upon the parties to reaffirm their commitments to the basic principles established within the framework of Madrid, Oslo, and subsequent agreements in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. It urges the parties to agree on extending the transitional period established by the Oslo Accords. Then supported Jerusalem as the capital of both Palestine and Israel in the conclusions of the 2009 Council.<sup>165</sup>

Since 2009, the EU has supported US administration initiatives that encourage both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume bilateral negotiations, leading to a two-state solution while at the same time continuing to support the building of a Palestinian state.<sup>166</sup>

In the context of the final status agreement, the EU foreign ministers in 2013 expressed their full support for the sustainability of the peace process and the enhancement of cooperation between them and the Palestinians and Israelis working in tripartite groups to face any future challenges.<sup>167</sup>

## **VII. 2. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the EU-Israeli relations**

As it is internationally known and due to the historical past between Europe and the injustice treatment the Jews living in the heart of Europe were suffering from, the EU is highly sensitive towards any action against Israel and does not want to be accused of anti-Semitism. That is why the EU is adopting a policy of separating the economy from politics and being bilateral when dealing with Israel.

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<sup>165</sup> BADARNA, M., 2019. p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> European External Action Service. 2016. p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> European External Action Service. 2016. p. 2.

The 1995 Association Agreement in 2000 established the main legal relations between Israel and the European Union, which included free trade arrangements for industrial goods, concessional arrangements for trade in agricultural products, and the opening of greater prospects for trade in agricultural services in 2005. Relations between the two sides are framed within the ENP, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).<sup>168</sup>

Israel has also become part of various EU programmes, such as scientific and technical cooperation, youth programmes, and business dialogue. Israel has also become part of the ENP, and the EU-Israel Action Plan was signed in 2004.

According to the Action Plan, Israel can receive funds from the new ENPI financial instrument. Since 2007, two million euros has been allocated annually to implement the Action Plan.<sup>169</sup>

At the bilateral level, Israel benefited from a high level of integration into the European market. It was the first non-EU country to participate in EU programmes, including the EU Research and Development Programme.<sup>170</sup> The EU's bilateral relationship with Israel, especially after the collapse of the Oslo Accords in 2000, sought to achieve two goals: the two-state solution in Israel and Palestine and the deepening of cooperation between the EU and Israel.<sup>171</sup>

The analysis of EU policies shows that EU actors prioritise cooperation to achieve a two-state solution.<sup>172</sup> For example, under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU rarely imposes preconditions on its relations with Israel. This often leads to increased cooperation, especially at times of heightened conflict. An example of a precondition is the postponement of the 'upgrade' of EU-Israel relations, a move that could be interpreted as an attempt to restore some credibility to EU policy after Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009). However, the EU made it clear that the postponement was not intended to 'punish' Israel. Despite the formal

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<sup>168</sup> PACE, M., 2016. pp. 405-406.

<sup>169</sup> BENLI, M., 2008. p. 113.

<sup>170</sup> HUBER, D., 2018. p. 357.

<sup>171</sup> TOCCI, N., 2010. p. 55.

<sup>172</sup> TOCCI, N., 2010. pp. 61-63.

delay in upgrading, practical cooperation between the EU and Israel continues to deepen, unaffected by the postponement.

### **VII. 3. The European joint strategy in support of Palestine**

According to the EU, Palestine is a sui generis case for aid delivery and cooperation with the Union's political objective of achieving the two-state solution. Under these constraining conditions, much of the support provided by the EU has focused on offering protection, improving the livelihoods of Palestinians, and preparing their institutions for statehood".<sup>173</sup>

As the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) emphasized, motivated by the dual aims of strengthening the Middle East Peace Process and contributing to Palestinian state-building, the EU and its member states have been the most prominent donors of financial assistance to the Palestinians. However, these efforts have not achieved the desired change, as the EU failed to develop a coherent strategy to address Israel's violations of international humanitarian law and has accepted practices that undermine its political objectives.<sup>174</sup> Despite the national positions of the member states, the Office of the Representative of the EU and the member states have worked for a joint European Union programme in Palestine since 2011.<sup>175</sup>

EU Joint Programming combines political and development dimensions and has been understood in Palestine in its two dimensions: (i) aid effectiveness and (ii) political dimension. It comprises five pillars: Governance Reform, Fiscal Consolidation and Policy, Rule of Law, Citizen Safety and Human Rights, Sustainable Service Delivery Access to Self-Sufficient Water and Energy Services, and Sustainable Economic Development.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. p. 9. Available at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final\\_-\\_european\\_joint\\_strategy\\_english.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_-_european_joint_strategy_english.pdf) [Last accessed: 12.09.2023]

<sup>174</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. p. 9.

<sup>175</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. p. 9.

<sup>176</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. pp. 10-12.

Since 2015, the EU member state and the Palestinian Authority have worked closely on relevant and highly interrelated planning processes, i.e., the Palestinian National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 and the European Common Strategy 2017-2020.<sup>177</sup>

Implementing the Joint European Strategy is crucial, and a good balance between ambition and realism must be ensured. No political solution can be achieved except by lifting the occupation, bearing in mind that the EU member states domestic agendas and internal political cycles.<sup>178</sup>

In time EU considers Palestine as one unit, despite the Oslo Accords divisions (it is currently divided into the following areas: East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank with its regional divisions of A, B, and C territories according to Oslo Accords,<sup>179</sup> with increased economic opportunities in areas C to enable Palestinian institutions and to promote stability and security for both Palestinians and Israelis.<sup>180</sup>

The EU considers the Palestinian Authority one of the drivers of development; at times, the Israeli occupation is the primary driver of poverty in Palestine, without political progress (ease of restrictions, lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip, a permanent peace agreement). The Palestinian economy will continue to perform without its potential and will not be able to experience sustainable growth and development.

Trade between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has virtually disappeared today, boosting Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. The Palestinian Authority is the largest employer in the West Bank. Current revenue collection model retrogressive: 92% of tax revenue is from

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<sup>177</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. p. 11.

<sup>178</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. p. 12.

<sup>179</sup> The Oslo Accords, under which the PA was created in 1994, were intended to lead to a final negotiated settlement between the parties. These Accords led to several administrative and security arrangements for different parts of the West Bank (divided into Areas A, B and C). The Oslo Accords, under which the Palestinian Authority was established in 1994, were aimed at reaching a final negotiated settlement between the parties for an interim period of five years and pending a final settlement.

Negotiations between the Government of Israel and representatives of the Palestinian people would begin by the third year of this interim period. More than 20 years after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority which has had limited jurisdiction since its establishment, has full civil and security authority only in Area A (18% of the West Bank), while only the President of the Palestine Liberation Organisation has access to East Jerusalem.

<sup>180</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. pp. 12-13.

consumption and only 8% from income tax; according to estimates, Palestinians spend 94% of their disposable income.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the European Union's commitment to the Middle East peace process, European development expertise capable of contributing effectively to the two-state solution and building sustainable livelihoods for all Palestinians' attempts to achieve a long-term political solution have failed. New realities on the ground are constantly hampering the realization of the two-state solution; these include illegal demolitions and settlement expansion.

The report of the Middle East Quartet of 1 July 2016 raises legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions, compounded by the statements of some Israeli ministers that there must never be a Palestinian state. Thus, the most innovative approach and development tools will not be sufficient to give meaning to the two-state solution and rebuild confidence among all parties.<sup>182</sup>

European aid represents about two-thirds of donor funding, most bilateral development partners in Palestine, and seeks to protect the viability of a two-state solution for an independent, democratic, contiguous, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. For over 20 years, the EU has supported the Palestinians and their quest for self-determination to support this vision. Since 2007, the European Union, Member States, Norway, and Switzerland have disbursed U.S. \$ 1.2 billion annually as development assistance to Palestine.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*, pp. 23-28.

<sup>182</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>183</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*, pp. 29-32.

## **VII. 4. Regional approaches to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the role of the European Union**

Most Europeans agree that the United States is the only powerful actor enough to change the strategic role of regional actors and push them to resolve their disputes. Thus, any progress in the Israeli-Arab conflict will depend on regional ownership and total U.S. commitment.<sup>184</sup>

This resulted from the diplomatic absence of the U.S. in the escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the U.S. refusal to diplomatically engage with Iran during the presidency of George W. Bush, whereby it sought a military solution to regional problems, most notably with the 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>185</sup>

Turkey has aimed to play a role in the Middle East by participating in initiatives to address regional challenges. These include conflicts between Lebanon and Syria, and efforts to stabilize Iraq and Lebanon. Additionally, following the election of President Barack Obama, Turkey proposed mediating between Iran and the United States, working with Brazil. It also attempted to mediate a compromise on Iran's nuclear programme. Turkey's foreign policy decisions are significantly influenced by domestic political dynamics, including the ruling party's agenda and public opinion.<sup>186</sup>

Saudi Arabia and Egypt have taken the regional initiative to mediate the conflict between Hamas and Fatah because they assume that reconciliation between the two factions is a precondition for the sustainability of any agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The mediation efforts of Saudi Arabia in 2007 resulted in the Mecca Agreement<sup>187</sup> and the formation of a government of national unity. The agreement lacked United States support to breach the border between Gaza and Egypt in January 2008, which prompted Egypt to

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<sup>184</sup> BAUER, M., HANELT, C., & AYMAT, E., 2010. p.110

<sup>185</sup> BAUER, M., HANELT, C., & AYMAT, E., 2010. p. 110.

<sup>186</sup> SZIGETVÁRI, T., 2020. pp. 181-185.

<sup>187</sup> Mecca Agreement: an agreement between Hamas, represented by Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashal, and Fatah, represented by PNA President Mahmoud Abbas, signed in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on 8 February 2007. The purpose of the agreement, sponsored by Saudi King Abdullah, was to end clashes between the two organisations in the Gaza Strip, the result of tensions following Hamas' victory in the controversial 2006 elections, and to form a national unity government under incumbent Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. The agreement collapsed in May 2007, and the resulting clashes ended with Hamas in control of the Strip. More details visit: [https://ecf.org.il/media\\_items/1197](https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1197)

proactively seek to mediate a reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and mediate a truce; compared to the high expectations of the initiatives mentioned above often, they show mixed results only in terms of sustainability and success.<sup>188</sup>

This is partly because entrepreneurs often lack the resources to follow through with their initiative and insist on agreements being reached. However, the failure of these initiatives should not be unfairly attributed to the initiators alone but also to the lack of clear international support.<sup>189</sup>

Moreover, political uncertainty was derived from the Arab Spring. Changes in the balance of power unleashed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003 were reinforced, while Egypt remained entangled in its contradictions and polarizations. Iraq and Syria sank into chaos, and Iran raised its image to the discontent of the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia.<sup>190</sup>

Regarding the scene in the Middle East, there is a consensus that the Middle East has not been a successful example of regional cooperation or integration over the years.<sup>191</sup> The landscape of the Middle East shows that it is a competitive behaviour rather than cooperative behaviour, and this is evident in the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, which is understood as a hard power rather than a soft power.

Security is a prerequisite for economic development. Launch of the ENP review in parallel with work on the EU's Global Strategy, which also aims to stabilise the EU neighbourhood.<sup>192</sup>

The U.S.'s ability to influence the region has become much less. It can no longer do it alone; it needs to cooperate with other countries, as in the case of Iran's nuclear programme with the committee (P5+1)<sup>193</sup> and the involvement of countries such as Russia and China.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> BAUER, M., HANELT, P., & AYMAT, E., 2010. p. 112.

<sup>189</sup> BAUER, M., HANELT, P., & AYMAT, E., 2010. pp. 115-117.

<sup>190</sup> KHADER, B., 2018. pp. 47-49.

<sup>191</sup> SEVER, A., 2018. pp. 32-33.

<sup>192</sup> European External Action Service, *European Joint strategy in support of Palestine (2017-2022)*. pp. 30-32.

<sup>193</sup> The P5+1 refers to the UN Security Council's five permanent members (the P5); namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany.

<sup>194</sup> HASS, R. N., 2008. pp. 1-2.



All these regional and sub-regional factors gave the EU an excellent opportunity to get involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and make a big difference. Nevertheless, the United States keeps the EU as a second key player, limiting its capabilities and policy instruments.<sup>195</sup>

The Europeans` position towards the Palestinians has been expressed gradually over the decades. Despite the support of the European Council for Palestinian self-determination in the Venice Declaration of 1980, it was only until the end of the Oslo process in 1999 that the Union shyly supported a Palestinian state. With the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 and the United States backing away from Middle East diplomacy under Bush's first administration, the EU felt bold to express its vision of peace Area.<sup>196</sup>

Most EU declarations on the conflict since the 1970s have condemned Palestinian violence and terrorism; the EU also condemned the Israeli illegal settlements in which construction contradicts the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Laws of Occupation.

With the collapse of the Oslo process (1993) and the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000, the EU Intensified its calls to stop and reverse the settlement construction and condemned all range of violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by the two parties, ranging from Palestinian suicide bombings to Israeli incursions, extrajudicial killings, and forms collective punishment.

Also, the construction of the Israeli wall in the West Bank has repeatedly stressed that Israeli security and Palestinian self-determination should be pursued exclusively within the limits of international law. In 2001-2006, the EU focused mainly on issues related to democracy and governance in the Palestinian Authority.

Finally, since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005 and the political separation between Hamas – Gaza Strip – and the West Bank, which Fatah controls In June 2007, two other issues prominently were featured in the EU's standard declarations on the conflict: convictions of Israeli military incursions and blockade of the Gaza Strip as well as the condemnations of indiscriminate rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli cities.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> TOCCI, N., 2009. p. 383.

<sup>196</sup> TOCCI, N., 2009. p. 389.

<sup>197</sup> TOCCI, N., 2009. p. 390.

The embargo on Hamas was seen not only as a demonstration of double standards by the EU but also as a sign that the EU was following the steps of the United States regarding its policy towards the conflict. This has led to a new problem of credibility for the EU as far as the Arabs are concerned. Finally, the embargo led to further radicalization.<sup>198</sup>

The vote was clear and closer to the truth of the EU's regional role. During the Palestinian Authority's failed efforts to obtain the State's recognition by the Security Council in 2011 and the subsequent UN General Assembly in resolution 2012 to promote Palestine as a 'non-member observer state.'<sup>199</sup> A split in the tripartite vote among the member states European Union, where the Czech Republic was the only EU country to vote against promotion along with the other eight: Canada, Israel, the United States, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and Panama.<sup>200</sup>

## **VII. 5. How did the Palestinians realize the European Union's support**

The EU has several issues to discuss in light of the changes on the ground in the Middle East and the world in general, noting the important change taking place within the EU at the

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<sup>198</sup> BENLI, M., 2008. p. 115.

<sup>199</sup> Non-member observer State status in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19. In that resolution, the Assembly accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, without prejudice to the acquired rights, privileges and role of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the United Nations as the representative of the Palestinian people, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and practice. It also reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and expressed hope that the Security Council would consider favourably the application submitted on 23 September 2011 by the State of Palestine for admission to full membership in the United Nations. The Assembly also affirmed its determination to contribute to the attainment of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and fulfills the vision of two States: an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. It expressed the urgent need for the resumption and acceleration of negotiations within the Middle East peace process, and urged all States and the specialized agencies and organisations of the United Nations system to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination, independence and freedom. This present report provides information on the steps taken regarding the change of Palestine's status in the United Nations, which does not apply to organisations and bodies outside of the United Nations, as well as the progress made, or lack thereof, in resuming the Middle East peace process. The Permanent Mission of Israel and the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations have been consulted in the preparation of the present report. For more details see: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-182149/>

<sup>200</sup> BOURIS, D., & HUBER, D., 2017. p. 3.

political level is the rise of the currents of illiberal democracies in the EU and the Member States countries, which is consistent with the US policy in the region and the possibility to act in bias towards Israel at the expense of the Palestinian cause.<sup>201</sup>

For two and a half years, the European Council of Ministers has not issued any official statements on the Palestinian issue. This lack of action ignored the numerous violations and events taking place in the region, despite the fact that the EU is seen by the Palestinians as an important player in both economic and political aspects, which will undoubtedly affect Palestinian-European relations and partnership in the future.

The EU has always worked to unify the member states' stances and take a united position on international issues, namely the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Union has no one vote but the vote of individual states, but the rise of some European countries with direct interests in Israel, specifically economic ones, sometimes precludes it.<sup>202</sup>

Since its inception, the European Union has significantly contributed to the Palestinians through its various policies and direct relationship with the Palestinian Authority. It is considered the most reliable partner by the Palestinians and committed to its agreements with the Palestinian Authority, especially the financial ones. Moreover, to consolidate the principles of international legitimacy and work to achieve a two-state solution, and to condemn all forms of violence in the region, as well as the establishment of Israeli settlements within the borders of the fourth of June, 1967. As a result, their actions have included marking the products of the illegal settlements not to be dealt with in the European market under the partnership agreements with Israel.<sup>203</sup>

What is currently happening on the international scene and the escalation of the crisis between the two sides are attributed to the policy of U.S. President Donald Trump in the region and his ideological bias, which is in Israel's favour. The dire situation touches the basic constants and international legitimacy in every sense.

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<sup>201</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.

<sup>202</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.

<sup>203</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.

At the Palestinian political level, we are working to gain more support and recognition from the world's countries in our Palestinian state to strengthen its legal and international character and create new facts on the ground that no one can overcome.

The Unions are trying to play a balanced role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, resulting in statements and condemnations. From a Palestinian point of view, this is inadequate, as the Palestinian facts on the ground and Israel's daily violations against the Palestinian people are apparent and escalating.<sup>204</sup>

The EU's support for a Palestinian state on the ground with full sovereignty under the resolutions of international legitimacy adopted by the EU will create an environment for resolving the conflicts in the Middle East. The EU will undoubtedly demonstrate the ability to solve problems and conflicts; on the one hand and the other hand, the Palestinian state will work on forging partnerships and signing economic agreements. The Palestinian people are renowned for their human element and ability to overcome difficulties and the impossible. We mainly depend on our vital element, human resources, as it is considered one of our valuable investments, which will gradually reduce our financial dependence on the EU.<sup>205</sup>

The issue of Jerusalem is one of the most sensitive issues in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, along with the issue of refugees, water, and borders. We appreciate the role of the European Union in supporting the rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state.<sup>206</sup>

The European Union depends on the resolutions of international legitimacy, 242/1967 and 338/1973, which provide for establishing a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel while preserving the security and safety of all parties in the region.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.

<sup>205</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs.

<sup>206</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Mr. Hanna Essa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem.

<sup>207</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Mr. Hanna Essa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem.

The EU supports Palestine in building the institutions of their state and provides all the necessary funds; and also supports the refugee issue through the financial support of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).<sup>208</sup>

The EU is the mediator and consistently condemns Israel's demolition of homes, settlements, and human rights violations in the West Bank – the 1967 borders.

Jerusalem has a special status and it is the capital of two states, and this is a stable European position in this area. The European Union rejected the U.S. administration's intention to transfer embassies to Jerusalem, the recognition by U.S. President D. Trump that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel on 6/12/2017, and the confirmation that it is the capital of two states.

The EU must play a greater role in influencing US policy in the Middle East, particularly in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Europe can develop if it wants to, through its power as a Union or through the initiatives of its states.<sup>209</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the context of the EU foreign policy, the EU has used soft policy tools through its diplomacy channels, individual member states' initiatives on behalf of the EU and its direct bilateral relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The EU was keen to strengthen its bilateral relationship with both sides of the conflict. Still, its relationship with the Israeli side was much more robust, separating the economy from politics, which has many implications and strengthens the idea of soft tools and that the conflict cannot be resolved by these tools only. It is undeniable that the direction of Israel and its repeated human rights violence against the Palestinians and their land are escalating. At the same time, the EU is changing nothing on the ground. The Israeli violations, which received direct U.S. support under President Trump's administration, are a severe and threatening idea

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<sup>208</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Mr. Hanna Essa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem.

<sup>209</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 29 July 2019 with Mr. Hanna Essa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem.

of the two-state solution, especially after giving President Trump's last promise – Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel.

The idea of the EU and its adoption of the resolutions of international legitimacy and the rule of law, which is consistent with its fundamental principles, contradicts the practice of the current US administration and weakens its positions and works to build the institution of the future Palestinian state.

Establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state would greatly benefit the European Union politically and economically through the sovereignty of a Palestinian state that could sign agreements and cooperate, thereby strengthening its economy and reducing its dependence on the Union's financial support.

On the other hand, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will strengthen the EU's status as a determined force rather than an influential one and create a state of international stalemate in US power and exclusivity in the Middle East because it is in full conformity with the principles of the Union in the rule of law and the promotion of democracy.

As time passes and the facts on the ground change, the issue of resolving the two states becomes difficult and even impossible. It is time for the European Union to present a new model as a new Venice Declaration in which the Union and its member states join most countries and recognize Palestine as a sovereign state on its territory.

As a result, the EU plays a vital role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and is considered the most reliable partner for the Palestinians. Moreover, the EU could gain many benefits through its contribution to the resolution of the conflict, namely, the reduction of the Palestinian Authority's annual financial dependence and expenditures, as well as the creation of a robust international personality and its ability to resolve conflicts and create a new reality of the balance of power and U.S. control of the region.

## **VIII. The role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Russian Strategy towards the Middle East**

Russian intervention in the Syrian crisis in 2011, which occurred alongside the outbreak of the revolution and the destabilisation of President Bashar al-Assad's regime, marked a significant turning point in the country's active engagement in the Middle East. This intervention highlighted Russia's expanding role in the region's power dynamics and its impact on its intricate challenges.

The Middle East is currently undergoing a profound transformation in power dynamics, with the United States no longer maintaining exclusive dominance. This shift has opened the door for the rise of new regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, and Russia, and to a certain extent, Saudi Arabia and Israel. China's economic manoeuvres have also played a role. In this dynamic landscape, China, Russia, and the United States pursue distinct goals and strategies that shape their policies towards the region.

This chapter examines Russia's comprehensive policy in the Middle East, with a particular focus on its approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. By examining Russia's strategic choices and its role as a mediator in the conflict, we can better understand its policy and its impact.

### **VIII. 1. Russia's Middle East Policy**

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, dated 30 November 30, 2016, outlines the basic principles, priority areas, goals, and objectives of Russia's foreign policy. It specifically addresses Russia's foreign policy approach to the Middle East in four separate articles, providing valuable insight into Russia's stance on the region.<sup>210</sup>

Article 14 of the Concept states that the Middle East region is considered one of the regions where extremist ideology and the activities of terrorist groups are spread. The Concept

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<sup>210</sup> Foreign policy concept of the Russian federation, Ministry of foreign affairs. 2016. Available at: <https://interkomitet.com/foreign-policy/basic-documents/foreign-policy-concept-of-the-russian-federation-approved-by-president-of-the-russian-federation-vladimir-putin-on-november-30-2016/> [Last accessed: 15.11.2022]

addresses the Middle East in four separate articles, providing insight into Russia's foreign policy approach to the region.<sup>211</sup>

The growing threat of international terrorism is an urgent concern that poses a significant threat to global security. This threat is primarily attributed to two key factors: the increasing interconnectedness of the world through globalisation and external interference. The imposition of ideological values and instructions to modernise systems has further exacerbated this problem, leading to negative reactions and heightened tensions.

Article 27(i) supports Russia's establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East. The most direct is Article 94, which reads as follows: “*Russia will continue making a meaningful contribution to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, supporting collective efforts aimed at neutralizing threats that emanate from international terrorist groups, consistently promotes political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts in regional States while respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right to self-determination without outside interference.*”<sup>212</sup> As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, Russia will strive to achieve a comprehensive, fair, and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects consistent with international law.<sup>213</sup>

Meanwhile, Article 95 pointed out that Russia intends to develop bilateral relations with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, building on the ministerial meeting of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum and continuing the strategic dialogue with the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Foreign policy concept of the Russian federation, Ministry of foreign affairs. 2016. Available at:[https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/fundamental\\_documents/1538901/](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1538901/) [Last accessed: 15.11.2022]

<sup>212</sup> Foreign policy Concept of the Russian Federation. 2016.

<sup>213</sup> The Quartet was established in 2002 and consists of the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia. Its mandate is to help mediate Middle East peace negotiations and to support Palestinian economic development and institution building. For more details see: <http://www.quartetoffice.org/page.php?id=4e3e7y320487Y4e3e7> [Last accessed: 12. 02. 2024] Foreign policy concept of the Russian federation, Ministry of foreign affairs. 2016.

<sup>214</sup> Foreign policy Concept of the Russian Federation. 2016.



Russia's recent intervention in the Middle East is a strategic move and an opportunity to make a positive impact. The Russians recognise that the Palestinian cause is always of concern to Muslims, and Russia can take advantage of its presence in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation as an observer member to develop relations with Islamic countries. This potential for positive change adds depth to Russia's intervention in the region.<sup>215</sup>

Therefore, Russia's ambitious vision in the Middle East is therefore summed up in its fight against terrorism, which it sees as a threat to world peace. It considers the Middle East region as a focal point for it, and this is what gives it cover for its intervention in the region as a permanent member of the Security Council. The working document strengthens its relations with the countries of the region, especially the Gulf oil states, and its direct intervention in the nuclear affairs of the region, especially the Iranian nuclear issue. The document also referred to Russia's position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its role through the Quartet, to the need to find a comprehensive and urgent solution to the issue to guarantee the rights of minorities and ethnic groups wherever they are and through international legitimacy.

In addition, Putin's overall goal in the Middle East is to consolidate Russia's position and role as a significant external power in one of the world's hottest regions and achieve economic benefits by attracting investment from the rich countries of the Persian Gulf to Russia and benefiting from the energy, gas, oil, food and other markets. Supporting and maintaining energy prices through coordination with the region's leading oil and gas producers is also vital.<sup>216</sup>

## **VIII. 2. The Russian-Israeli Relationship**

Despite the initial unclear features of the nature of Russian-Israeli relations, the complexity of their alliance is a fascinating aspect of international politics. Israel, an ally of the United States, and Russia, an ally of Iran, which Israel considers a threat, are in a unique position.

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<sup>215</sup> Russia's efforts to play a greater role in the Palestinian cause. Strategic Council for Foreign Relations. Islamic Republic of Iran. p. 1. Available at: <https://www.scfr.ir/en/politics/133233/russias-effort-to-play-a-greater-role-in-palestinian-cause/> [Last accessed: 20.11.2022]

<sup>216</sup> TRENIN, D.: *Russia in the Middle East: Moscow's objectives, priorities, and policy drivers*. 2016. p. 1. Available at: [https://carnegeendowment.org/files/03-25-16\\_Trenin\\_Middle\\_East\\_Moscow\\_clean.pdf](https://carnegeendowment.org/files/03-25-16_Trenin_Middle_East_Moscow_clean.pdf) [Last accessed: 20.9.2022]

Relations between the two sides are close and solid, with more than a million Israelis of Russian origin living in Israel and more than half a million Russian tourists visiting Israel every year. This, along with cooperation between the two sides in the military, technology and other areas, adds to the intrigue of their relationship..<sup>217</sup>

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Russia has attempted to mediate in order to advance both parties' interests in achieving a lasting peace. The apparent collaboration between Russia and Israel in the Syrian war is arguably the most significant factor. Iran and Bashar al-Assad troops have objected, but Russia has kept Syrian airspace open for Israeli attacks. Putin was the first Russian leader to visit Israel. Putin has since described Israel as a 'special state' founded on common goals and a long history of cooperation. The 'boxing strategy' enables Israel and Russia to put aside their differences, keep their alliance distinct from other strategic alliances, and concentrate on finding points of agreement..<sup>218</sup>

Russia and Israel have different views on the extent to which U.S. involvement in the Middle East is beneficial. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action "JCPOA"<sup>219</sup> is supported by Russia's cooperation with Iran in Syria, including the provision of weapons. In contrast, Israel views Tehran as the main danger and has launched a political-military campaign against it. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, Russia believes that Israel can scuttle the Middle East strategic plan envisioned by Moscow, mainly through military action and influence in

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<sup>217</sup>KATZ, M. N.: *Russia and Israel: an improbable friendship*. 2016. pp. 103-104. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep21138.15.pdf> [Last accessed: 09.07.2022]

<sup>218</sup>BIJAN'S, A.: *Russia's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with emphasis on the "Deal of the Century"*. 2020. p. 2. Russian International Affairs Council. Available at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/abijan/russias-approach-to-the-israelipalestinian-conflict-with-emphasis-on-t/3> [Last accessed: 08.01.2023]

<sup>219</sup> On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union (EU), and Iran reached a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful. October 18, 2015 marked Adoption Day of the JCPOA, the date on which the JCPOA came into effect and participants began taking steps necessary to implement their JCPOA commitments. January 16, 2016, marks Implementation Day of the JCPOA. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has verified that Iran has implemented its key nuclear-related measures described in the JCPOA, and the Secretary State has confirmed the IAEA's verification. As a result of Iran verifiably meeting its nuclear commitments, the United States and the EU have lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Iran, as described in the JCPOA. For more details visit: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/index.htm> [Last accessed: 08.01.2023]

Washington. At the same time, Israel is also viewed by Moscow as a potential channel of communication with the United States.<sup>220</sup>

However, Russia's relationship with Israel remains a strategic partnership based on shared goals and mutual trust. The relationship between the two countries is highly pragmatic, driven by interests and characterised by selective cooperation. The current cooperation on Syria is temporary, and conditions can change at any time. In the event of a security conflict - over Syria or Iran, for example - Russia and Israel may not be able to prevent relations from deteriorating. The limits of Russia's overture to Israel lie in the unexpected dynamics of the conflict in Syria and the diverging interests regarding the role of Iran and the United States in the region.<sup>221</sup>

### **VIII. 3. Russia's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

Russia is strengthening its relations with the leadership of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This is part of Russia's consistent strategy towards the Middle East to build a network of influence among regional actors and to enhance its image as an attractive political partner. In developing relations with the Palestinians, Russia is taking advantage of Israel's sensitivity to Russian activity in Syria, the poor relations between Palestine and the U.S., and the deadlock in the peace process.<sup>222</sup>

Russia is one of the most critical political supporters of the Palestinians among the world powers. The close ties established by the USSR survived the end of the Cold War. They have deepened with Fatah, which controls the leading Palestinian institutions - the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA). The increased cooperation with Palestine in recent years has its origins in the intensification of Russia's foreign policy towards the Middle East, visible since its intervention in the Syrian civil war in 2015.

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<sup>220</sup> BIAN'S, A., 2020. p. 3.

<sup>221</sup> AVERBUKH, L., & KLEIN, M.: *Russia-Israel relationship transformed by Syria conflict: political interests overshadow social and economic ties*. 2018. p.7 (SWP Comment, 37/2018). Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. Available at: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-59408-2> [Last accessed: 08.01.2023]

<sup>222</sup> WOJNAROWICZ, M.: *Palestine in Russia's Foreign Policy*. 2020. p. 1. Available at: [https://pism.pl/publications/Palestine\\_in\\_Russias\\_Foreign\\_Policy](https://pism.pl/publications/Palestine_in_Russias_Foreign_Policy) [Last accessed: 25.1.2023]

However, Russia's actions with the Palestinians are mainly focused on diplomacy, taking advantage of the stagnation in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the collapse of PA-U.S. relations under President Donald Trump. At the same time, these actions are part of Russia's broader strategy of strengthening ties with a wide range of entities and participating in the most important political processes in the Middle East, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The specificity of the Russian approach is that it maintains a permanent political dialogue (at the level of the Foreign Ministry) with the PA leadership and other Palestinian groups, primarily with Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip. Unlike the U.S. and the EU, Russia does not recognise Hamas as a terrorist organisation, which allows the group to break its international isolation and strengthen its position in the intra-Palestinian rivalry with Fatah. There have been seven official meetings between Hamas delegations and Russian ministers since 2015 (not counting other consultation forms). In March, the head of the Hamas Politburo, Ismail Haniyeh, met in Moscow with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov. Russia has also provided humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip after major escalations between Israel and Hamas, such as in 2014.<sup>223</sup>

Russia is actively participating in regional political processes and has supported efforts at intra-Palestinian reconciliation. Moscow hosted talks between Fatah and Hamas in 2017 and 2019. The most recent increase in the political dialogue with various Palestinian groups suggests that a new initiative in this area is being planned. The role that Russia has recently played in Syria has been important for Palestinian developments, as it has become possible to restore relations between Hamas and the Assad government, which were severed in 2012 due to the state of civil war. The opportunity for their return may be possible by Russia's support for Syria.

## **Conclusion**

The Russians have developed a new strategy to increase their security and ability to establish a balance on both levels. Building a network of influence among regional actors and

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<sup>223</sup> WOJNAROWICZ, M., 2020. p. 3.

strengthening its image as an attractive political partner is part of Russia's consistent strategy towards the Middle East. In developing relations with the Palestinians, Russia is taking advantage of Israel's sensitivity to Russian activity in Syria, the weak ties between Palestine and the United States, and the impasse in the peace process.

Russia's actions with the Palestinians are mainly focused on diplomacy. The peculiarity of the Russian approach is that it maintains a permanent political dialogue (at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) not only with the leadership of the Palestinian Authority but also with other Palestinian groups, primarily with Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip. Russia also acts as a mediator between the Palestinian parties and the countries of the Middle East, mainly Syria.

At the same time, despite all this beauty and hierarchy in Russian foreign policy, it has not and will not exceed the U.S. will in the region, even with Israel. From the researcher's point of view, Russia is a state and an international power that plays a functional role under the eyes and with the approval of the U.S. administration.

## **IX. The role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Chinese Strategy towards the Middle East**

With its national strength, China is one of the most critical emerging international powers, as it is the largest in the world in terms of population and has the fastest growth rate in the world, at a rate of more than (8.38%) annually. China is one of the most prominent international players in the industrial sector, and it has become capable of producing everything at the lowest prices. It has been nicknamed the factory of the world. It has also become one of the world's major trading powers.<sup>224</sup>

These indicators have enabled China to take second place as the world's most important economy, overtaking the industrialised countries that had held this position for decades, notably Japan and Germany. Suppose China is compared to the United States in economic terms. In this case, China has been able to achieve economic growth in recent years to such an

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<sup>224</sup> MUNTASIR, R., 2017. pp. 1-3.

extent that the size of the Chinese economy, which did not exceed (6.7%) the size of the American economy when the Soviet Union collapsed at the beginning of the 1990s, has reached more than half the size of the American economy.<sup>225</sup>

Several observers believe that if the growth rates in the two countries continue at their current pace, China is likely to remove the United States from the top of the international economic system within two decades, according to many economists.

Therefore, China's policy towards the world is essential and it has deep-rooted relations with many regions of the world, one of which is the Middle East, which China considers to be one of the vital regions, the key words being energy sources.

### **IX. 1. China's Middle East Policy**

The roots of China's strong relationship with Middle Eastern countries in particular and Arab countries in general go back to the ancient Silk Road, which connected China with Arab countries for trade exchange.

The relationship between China and the Middle East has been peaceful, based primarily on economic interests and trade exchanges. It is based on several constants: The economic focus is on investment and trade exchange. China is one of the largest exporting countries to the Middle East, and the volume of trade exchange between China and the Arab countries reached 239.8 billion US dollars by the end of 2020.<sup>226</sup>

Cooperation in the field of production capacity: the Middle East region represents a source of sustainable energy that China needs in large quantities, and at the same time, the countries of the Middle East region represent a large market for Chinese products, especially the markets of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Arab-Chinese cooperation in mutual relations witnessed a remarkable development after establishing the Arab-Chinese Cooperation Forum (2014) which aimed at civilizational and cultural engagement and increasing rapprochement between the two sides.

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<sup>225</sup> MUNTASIR, R., 2017. pp. 1-3.

<sup>226</sup> Arabic.News.Cn: *The trade volume between China and the Arab countries is 239.8 billion US dollars in 2020.* p. 1. Available at: [http://arabic.news.cn/2021-06/21/c\\_1310019399.htm](http://arabic.news.cn/2021-06/21/c_1310019399.htm) [Last accessed: 02.02.2023]

China's influence in the Middle East has been increasing for years, primarily through the 'Belt and Road'<sup>227</sup> initiative, a massive global infrastructure and economic development project launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, whose goal appears to be building an economic network and infrastructure linking Asia with Europe and Africa.

Energy and the Belt and Road Initiative are central to China's relationship with the Middle East, launched in 2013. In 2015, China officially became the world's largest importer of crude oil, with almost half of its supplies coming from the Middle East. The Middle East is strategically crucial for trade routes and sea lanes linking Asia with Europe and Africa. Given its dominant role in energy markets, China's relationship with the region is centred on the Gulf states.<sup>228</sup>

China seems to have a vision of a multipolar order in the Middle East based on non-interference in, and partnerships with, other states – one in which the country will promote stability through 'developmental peace' rather than the Western notion of 'democratic peace.'<sup>229</sup>

China has adapted its policy towards the Middle East, particularly the Arab world, in a way that is consistent with China's hypothetical position, which is mainly pro-Arab, given its energy interests and its traditional political and ideological interests in Third World countries. Some even say that China's geopolitical power will increasingly depend on access to the vast oil supplies in the Middle East.<sup>230</sup>

Despite China's attempts to consolidate its presence on the Middle East scene, the United States and the Quartet remain the leading diplomatic players in the Middle East scene.

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<sup>227</sup> China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), sometimes referred to as the New Silk Road, is one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects ever conceived. Launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, the vast collection of development and investment initiatives was originally devised to link East Asia and Europe through physical infrastructure. In the decade since, the project has expanded to Africa, Oceania, and Latin America, significantly broadening China's economic and political influence. For more details see: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

<sup>228</sup> LONS, C., FULTON, J., DEGANG, S, AL-TAMIMI, N.: *China's great game in the Middle East*. 2019. p.1. European Council on foreign relations. (ecfr.eu). Available at: [https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/china\\_great\\_game\\_middle\\_east.pdf](https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/china_great_game_middle_east.pdf) [Last accessed: 03.01.2023]

<sup>229</sup> LONS, C., FULTON, J., DEGANG, S. & AL-TAMIMI, N., 2019. p. 2.

<sup>230</sup> SHAI, A., 2011. p. 36.

## **IX. 2. The China-Israeli Relationship**

China and Israel have established official diplomatic relations in 1992, and in the same year, a trade agreement was signed between the two governments. In 1993, the two countries also signed an agricultural agreement and extensive cooperation in the same field, as well as a cultural exchange agreement, which was expanded to include education and other fields.<sup>231</sup>

China's relationship with Israel is distinguished and linked to mutual partnership relations, which means that Israel depends on China in some sectors and industries. China relies on and benefits from Israel in several sectors. Israel was considered the second largest supplier of weapons to China after Russia in terms of technological and advanced weapons. Israel wanted to generate income and ensure that its military technology sales would not lead China to sell certain weapons to Israel's enemies in the Middle East.<sup>232</sup>

Israel has been interested in establishing strong relations with China, a rising and accelerating economic power simultaneously. The roots of ties go back to before the nineties of the last century, specifically after the United States opened up to China in the seventies of the previous century and a political measure in the first place to limit and influence.

However, the conditions were not available for those relations to be made public. China pursues a clear policy of non-interference in the political affairs of countries and calls for peaceful interaction and renunciation of violence and to stay away as much as possible from political disputes that harm its national interests. War bells are ringing everywhere, and China is not interested in tilting one side at the expense of the other in the Middle East.

Relations between the two sides began freely in the early nineties of the last century, after the peace process in the Middle East between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and the beginning of mutual recognition between them.

The period 1989-1991 witnessed great progress in Sino-Israeli relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the myth of the American Jewish lobby, and the 1991 Gulf War pushed China to modernise, as did the realisation that, as a member of the Security Council, China could not

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<sup>231</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China, pp. 1-2. Available at: <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceil/eng/zygx/t159775.htm> [Last accessed: 05.01.2023]

<sup>232</sup> SHAI, A., 2011, p. 12.



participate in the peace process as a legitimate power without diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>233</sup>

### **IX. 3. China's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

China's policy towards the Middle East and Palestine has gone through several stages of development. The historical development is proportional to the changes taking place in the international arena and its objectives in the world

Achieving national security and world peace by adopting a policy of joint international action to support its external policy and economic strength. The continuation of China's policy by upholding the principles and foundations of China's relations with the East and the Middle East and their stability, supporting the Palestinian cause and calling for the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through peaceful methods and avoiding military and armed struggle.

The interest of the Chinese is in developing and maintaining Sino-Arab relations in the economic, political, and commercial fields and the field of oil and energy production to achieve expected gains.

Moreover, work to develop the cultural dimension by increasing the level of exchanges through the Maritime Silk Road, a bridge of communication between the two civilisations.<sup>234</sup>

Despite China's shift towards greater support for the Palestinian cause and harsher criticism of Israel's actions in the Palestinian territories, especially after the outbreak of the uprising in 2000, Beijing is aware of its problems with its Uyghur population, i.e., the Muslim population of Xinjiang. Likewise, suppose China continues to criticise Israel and defend the strict right to self-determination for the Palestinians. In that case, its campaign may backfire because if China criticises Israel for opposing the right to self-determination, what prevents foreign states and institutions from supporting China's Muslim and Tibetan minorities if they demand reciprocity?<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> SHAI, A., 2011. p. 25.

<sup>234</sup> KARKOURI, H., 2017. p. 157.

<sup>235</sup> SHAI, A., 2011. p. 32.

Despite its official positions, China is exercising extreme caution in its approach to the situation. At present, the Chinese response consists mainly of issuing verbal statements and condemnations, without any indication of implementing sanctions or changing its dealings with the Israeli side as a result of this stance.

## **Conclusion**

China's interest in the Middle East comes primarily from its need for the essential resources available in the region, especially oil and other raw materials. China plays an important and active role, but it is far from directly influencing the thorny issues of the Middle East.

Its policy was (dissociation) and an attempt to practice a policy of moderation between the parties so that it does not satisfy one party at the expense of the other, and in a way that strategically guarantees its interests.

China threatens the active powers in the Middle East, specifically the United States. China still enjoys a good reputation and is the first trading partner among the region's countries. Its interests with the countries are intertwined and constantly growing. The United States will not be able to dissuade any of its allies from not dealing with China or from reducing its commercial influence. The balance is tilted in China's favour if the matter is calculated from a practical and profitable point of view.

China has distinguished relations with Israel on several levels, and China needs Israel as much as Israel needs China in commercial and technological issues. In its policy towards the thorny issues of the region, specifically the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China practices a peaceful policy and condemns violence. On the sensitive issues in the region, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China pursues a policy of peace and condemns violence. However, it has not linked its positions to sanctions, for example, to discourage a party to a conflict or force it to stop doing something that harms one of its partners. The aim is to ensure that China's interests are effectively safeguarded.

If China continues with this policy approach, it cannot be considered as an active part in resolving the region's conflicts as a regional power or an alternative to the United States of

America in the Middle East, and the matter is nothing more than a sharing of interests and external competition between international parties in the region.

## **X. The role of other influential powers in the region: Egypt, Qatar, United Arab Emirates**

The Middle East is an arena full of rivalries, and this is an integral part of its composition, or as it is intended for it. In addition to the influential powers in the region's politics, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Israel, and there are also the influential powers of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

When talking about the Gulf states, specifically small countries such as Qatar, the Emirates, and Bahrain, to some extent, we see that these countries, despite their small size, influence the region's politics.

M. Szalai examines how the relatively small size and population of these Gulf states affect their foreign policy decisions. Despite their size, these states use significant economic resources, especially oil and gas, to exert influence disproportionate to their size.<sup>236</sup>

On the relationship between foreign policy and regime stability Szalai argues that the foreign policies of these states are deeply intertwined with the need to maintain internal stability and regime security. This often leads to strategies aimed at mitigating both internal and external threats.<sup>237</sup>

Egypt is the most populous Arab country and has a strong influence on the region's politics. It borders Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, which are at the centre of the ongoing conflict. Egypt plays a pivotal role in mediating between the Israeli and Palestinian sides over the Gaza Strip, which borders Egypt through the Sinai desert and was administered by Egypt in the 1960s.

The United Arab Emirates and Qatar are two small countries with limited land area and population. However, they have significant economic influence and play an important role in mediating conflicts in the region and beyond.

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<sup>236</sup> SZALAI, M., 2022. pp. 15-18.

<sup>237</sup> SZALAI, M., 2022. pp. 53-55.

This thesis chapter explores the intricate policies of Egypt, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates and their far-reaching impact on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as important players in the region. It also aims to shed light on the keen interest of global powers in aligning with these countries and their influence on regional policies. Furthermore, the chapter highlights their pivotal role in shaping a competitive landscape among the region's countries and striving for a balanced power dynamic that prevents any single entity from dominating the region.

## **X. 1. Egypt**

The population of Egypt is one hundred and four million people, according to the Egyptian Central Statistics Authority.<sup>238</sup> It is the largest country by population in the region. Egypt is located in the north-eastern corner of the African continent, and it has an Asian extension represented in the Sinai Peninsula, bordered in the north by the Mediterranean Sea, in the south by Sudan, in the east by the Red Sea, and in the west by Libya. The area of the Arab Republic of Egypt is about 1,002,000 square kilometres. The inhabited area is 78,990 square kilometres, 7.8% of the total area.<sup>239</sup> Egypt's geographical location and large population give it weight in the region.

Since the Arab Spring revolutions that broke out in Egypt in 2011, Egypt's role has been much reduced from what it was in the past. Egypt has lost its position as a mediator and sponsor of the peace process proportionally due to its preoccupation with its internal affairs and its pivotal role in the region. The state of political instability and the noticeable decline in Egypt's global competitiveness ranking, both economically and locally, have made it a latent power that does not know when it will rise again. According to the World Powers Index 'WPI' classification, Egypt ranks seventh in the region, ahead of Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, Iran, the UAE and Qatar.

Egypt has only limited natural resources of oil and natural gas, and the ongoing demographic pressure is a particular problem. One of Egypt's regional strengths is the size of its market and

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<sup>238</sup> Egypt Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAMPS) p. 1. Available at: <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/> [Last accessed: 02.01.2023]

<sup>239</sup> Republic of Egypt. Presidency. p. 1. Available at: <https://www.presidency.eg/ar> [Last accessed: 03.01.2023]

the number of cheap workers who supplement labour shortages in other Arab countries. Its economic power is relatively weak compared to other powers in the Middle East.<sup>240</sup>

Egypt was described as “the richest, best-educated, and only industrialised Arab country in the late 1960s.” Egypt enjoyed the regional military and economic power status after the Suez Crisis (1956). It was also the leading military power in the Arab world from the 1950s to the 1970s, counterbalancing the power of the Jewish state. In the twentieth century Egypt was involved in armed conflicts against Israel in 1956, 1967, and 1973.<sup>241</sup>

An active foreign policy and the exploitation of its strategic location at the centre of the region since the early 1980s have helped to compensate for its weak economic power. In the 20th and 21st centuries, Egypt had one of the largest standing armies in the region.

Cairo built its leadership role by promoting unity and solidarity among all Arabs, Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism, socialism, etc. called the principle of positive neutrality (the neutral position in the Cold War). Egypt's position and power in the region has been strengthened by establishing and maintaining its relations with Arab, Islamic, and Third World countries, as well as its hostile relations with the West and Israel. Egyptian diplomacy's most tremendous success in Arab unity was the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) and the union of Egypt and Syria in 1958. In the UAR, Nasserism refers to the ideology of the Egyptian president at the time, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970).<sup>242</sup>

Egypt has become a significant influence on the region's security, economy, and culture, on the political development of some countries in the Middle East, and on the agenda of regional organisations, while many Arab countries have called for Egypt to be the leading country in these organisations. Egypt's strong position in the Middle East was also recognised even by the major players in the world. Abdel Nasser's successor in office, Anwar Sadat (1970-1981), signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. This action was strongly criticized by other Arab countries, leading to a state of isolation and hatred.<sup>243</sup>

It was not until the new era of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) that Egypt was able to break out of its isolation and reassert itself as a regional power. This was due to both

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<sup>240</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2017. p. 171.

<sup>241</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2017. pp. 171-172.

<sup>242</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2016. pp. 171-172.

<sup>243</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2016. pp. 171-172.

Egypt's economic importance and its military power, as it was considered "the main actor to bring about peace or wage war in the Arab-Israeli conflict." Egypt had a strong diplomatic position and great military power; it therefore, had great potential for organising and resolving disputes and regional conflicts. For this reason, the Mubarak government linked Egypt's standing in the region to its efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Cairo became a crucial player in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, an active mediator in local disputes, and a frequent participant in many regional peace initiatives. It was one of the most important actors in the Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1990s.

For this reason, many believed at this time that "the maintenance of a meaningful peace throughout the region would depend heavily on Egyptian goodwill". Under Nasser, since the late 1980s, Mubarak has at least managed to improve the country. Egypt's importance in regional politics was represented by its role as a peacemaker and its ability to solve the problems that the Middle East faced.<sup>244</sup>

Egypt now lags behind many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region and ranks last in the quality of basic education. The International Finance Corporation's 2014 Business Performance Data report ranked Egypt 128th out of 189 countries in terms of the ease of doing business and completing transactions.<sup>245</sup>

About the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular, Egypt still has an important political role to play, as it is the border country with Gaza, and there is contact with the Hamas movement, which runs the Strip and cooperates in managing international crossings such as the Rafah crossing.

Egypt would like to regain its role as a significant regional actor and as a primary negotiator between Israel and Hamas, a role that came to the fore when Cairo helped negotiate a ceasefire during the Israeli-Palestinian clashes in Gaza in May 2021.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2016. pp. 172-173.

<sup>245</sup> The American University in Cairo: *Low Egypt Rankings Due to Frail Economy, Poor Administrative System*. Online. pp. 1-2. Available at: <https://www.aucegypt.edu/news/stories/low-egypt-rankings-due-frail-economy-poor-administrative-system> [Last accessed: 02.02.2023]

<sup>246</sup> AZIZ, R.: *Egypt, Israel, and Hamas: Opportunities for Progress in Gaza*. 2022. Washington institute for Near East policy. p.1. Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/egypt-israel-and-hamas-opportunities-progress-gaza> [Last accessed: 08.01.2023]

Egypt's restoration of its role as an actor in the diplomatic negotiations between Israel and Palestine is noteworthy. For decades, Egypt was considered the main mediator between the two parties for decades. However, its influence and position in the region declined due to the economic and political difficulties that followed the 'Arab Spring' revolution in 2011. Cairo was particularly wary of expanding Hamas' relations with Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. It is also concerned that Israel's recent wave of normalisation with various Arab countries will undermine the peace gains that Egypt has obtained from Washington since the signing of the 'Camp David'<sup>247</sup> Accords.<sup>248</sup>

To dispel these fears and achieve its regional goals, Cairo must show a certain degree of influence over Hamas and take real diplomatic action.

Egypt as a country has, and will continue to have, its importance in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict due to many of the factors mentioned above, and it will remain. However, its role as an influential power during the emergence of other powers that have recently strengthened its relations with Israel, its role will be challenging.

## **X. 2. Qatar**

Qatar is a peninsula in the middle of the western coast of the Arabian Gulf, with an area of 11,521 square kilometres and a population of about 2.6 million. It gained independence from Britain in 1971, and Qatar has emerged as one of the world's most important oil and gas producers.<sup>249</sup>

1939 Oil was discovered in Qatar, but its exploitation was delayed due to the outbreak of World War II. Oil replaces fishing and pearling as the primary source of income. In August

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<sup>247</sup> The Camp David Accords, signed by President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in September 1978, established a framework for a historic peace treaty concluded between Israel and Egypt in March 1979. President Carter and the U.S. Government played leading roles in creating the opportunity for this agreement to occur. From the start of his administration, Carter and his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, pursued intensive negotiations with Arab and Israeli leaders, hoping to reconvene the Geneva Conference, which had been established in December 1973 to seek an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute. For more details see: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david> [Last accessed: 16.01.2023]

<sup>248</sup> AZIZ, R., 2022. p. 2.

<sup>249</sup> Qatar Electronic Government. p. 1. Available at: <https://hukoomi.gov.qa/ar/about-qatar/about-qatar> [Last accessed: 02.02.2023]

1990, Iraq occupied Kuwait, and Qatar allowed foreign forces to use its territory. Qatari forces later took part in the liberation of Kuwait. The Qatari state-owned Al-Jazeera channel – with its Arab and international branches – would have raised Qatar's status in the media world.

The state of Qatar is using the income from its vast gas reserves to fund its regional and global ambitions. It has participated in attempts to reach a peace agreement in Afghanistan, and has won the honour of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup.<sup>250</sup>

Qatar has been mediating various conflicts and disputes in the Middle East for over a decade, and its efforts have achieved mixed results, ranging from relative success to abject failure. Among the most prominent cases mediated by Doha: the release of Bulgarian nurses in Libya in 2007. The Doha Agreement between the Lebanese parties in 2008, the mediation between the Yemeni government and the Houthis to stop the fighting in 2008, the truce between Hamas and Israel in the years 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021, the Darfur Peace Document in 2011, the reconciliation between Djibouti and Eritrea in 2011, the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah in 2012, the Darfur Agreement in 2013, the release of nuns detained in northern Syria in 2014, the prisoner exchange between the Taliban and the United States in 2014, the release of Lebanese soldiers held captive by the Syrian Al-Nusra Front in 2015, the Tabu and Tuareg agreement in Libya in 2015, the 2015 negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban movement, the 2015 agreement between the Government of Sudan and the “Sudan Liberation Army” in 2017 and U.S. talks with the Taliban on withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2019.<sup>251</sup>

Thus we are talking about the most important problems facing the region and its most difficult files, all of which have been given to the Qatari side to intervene in order to show its political and regional presence as an influential power.

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<sup>250</sup> BBC NEWS: *Facts about Qatar*. 2022. pp. 1-3. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-39114086> [Last accessed: 02.02.2023]

<sup>251</sup> BBC NEWS: *Qatar mediation: aims, objectives, and costs*. 2022. pp. 1-2. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-62022664> [Last accessed: 02.02.2023]



The name of the influential powers in the region has always been associated with the possession of the geographical position and the large population represented by Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Possession of competing for military forces and equipment, Qatar, according to the classification of the World Powers Index, 'WBI' classification of the powers of the Middle East region, Qatar is ranked sixth, ahead of Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran.

During the Arab Spring of 2010, Qatar moved away from its traditional foreign policy role as a diplomatic mediator to embrace change in the Middle East and North Africa and support countries in transition. Qatar's political stability and economic wealth are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, and its international reputation as a mediator gave it the confidence to play an interventionist role during the Arab Spring.

The leadership supported the rise of Islamist political power in transition countries. It has led regional responses to the unrest in Libya and Syria by seeking Arab solutions to Arab problems.

Qatar's comparative advantage in mediation is its ability to mediate indirect negotiations and back-channel communications between sworn enemies and to balance relations between groups of mutually hostile adversaries.

Qatar can play a prominent role as a back-channel mediator between groups that US officials may not be able to reach directly. Nevertheless, its participation in political processes is effective.<sup>252</sup>

A study by the American United World International Centre found that the State of Qatar plays a vital role in the region, as evidenced by the resolution of conflicts and convergence of views on several international crises and issues, particularly the recent escalation between the United States and Iran. Doha occupies an advanced position in terms of economic resilience and is characterised by effective economic, political, diplomatic and cultural policies; its partnerships are in line with its strategic plans.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> ULLERKSEN, C.C.: *Qatar and the Arab Spring: Political Drivers and Regional Implications*. 2014. Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. pp.1-3 Available at: <https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/09/24/ar-pub-56730> [Last accessed: 05.02.2023]

<sup>253</sup> Khaliji online: Qatar is the pillar of stability in the Middle East. 2020. pp.1-2. Available at: <http://khaleej.online/K8dAVB> [Last accessed: 05.02.2023]

Qatar also hosts the 'Al-Udeid' base, the most extensive military base for the United States in the Middle East. Doha and Washington also have significant economic, security, and political relations, as Washington attaches great importance to stability in the Gulf region.

Its gross domestic product has reached more than \$170 billion thanks to gas exports. Its wealth allowed it to pump considerable investments in many countries, including Britain, Germany, America, and even islands in the far Pacific Ocean. This tremendous financial power was reflected in the Qatar's role and its foreign policy in the region, especially after the decline of the role of traditional powers following the 'Arab Spring revolutions.' These are the Egyptian and Saudi roles and, to a lesser extent, the Syrian role.<sup>254</sup>

There are several possible explanations for Qatar's role in the region. The author believes that the role played by Qatar is to be a substitute for the traditional powers in the region in a way that achieves and preserves U.S. interests and keeps the arena of competition burning between the forces of the region in a way that ensures that there is no power controlling it and achieves interests. External powers are more entitled to the interests of the region's countries.

Qatar plays a vital role in the region through money and the media. On the level of the Palestinian issue, Qatar is working to stabilise the Gaza Strip through its relationship with Hamas, sending money to it and mediating in economic and crossings affairs. While Qatar's role in the sector remains limited, as Egypt plays a vital direct role, and Qatar alone cannot guarantee its stability without future Egyptian-Qatari cooperation.

Qatar's pivotal role in the region is summed up in the sustainability of money in its diplomacy, which will not be sufficient to ensure the longevity of its power and influence.

### **X. 3. United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) is located east of the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered to the north and northwest by the Arabian Gulf, to the south and west by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to the southeast by the Sultanate of Oman. The U.A.E has a coastline on the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. The country extends over an area of approximately 71,023.6 square kilometres of land. This area includes a group of islands in the Arabian Gulf.

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<sup>254</sup> BUFJLIN, Y.: *Qatar puzzle - what role does it play in the region?* 2014. pp. 1-2. Available at: <https://p.dw.com/p/1CyNw> [Last accessed: 07.02.2023]

The territorial sea covers an area of approximately 27,624.9 square kilometres. According to the U.A.E Federal Centre for Competitiveness and Statistics, the total number of residents of the country of U.A.E citizens and expatriates living in the country will be 9,282,410 people in 2020.<sup>255</sup>

The U.A.E is a federal state consisting of seven emirates, and the federation was established on the second of December 1971. In the past, the region's economy relied heavily on agriculture in oases, fishing, and the trade in dates and pearls. However, after the discovery of oil in the 1950s brought about radical change in the structure of economic life.

he change at the level of the generation that took the reins in 1990 and 2004, with Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in Dubai and Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, is one of the main reasons for the rise of the U.A.E as a significant player in regional and even international affairs until before the outbreak of the Arab Spring 2010.<sup>256</sup>

Mohammed bin Rashid and Mohammed bin Zayed were seen as modernising and ambitious figures. In the context of his approach to the turmoil in the region in 2011, Mohammed bin Zayed reconciled Emirati relations with Saudi Arabia. The U.A.E. participated alongside U.S. and NATO forces in the Balkans in the 1990s and in Afghanistan in the 2000s. The difference after 2011, however, is the scope and strength of Emirati policy and the willingness of the Emiratis to act unilaterally to secure their interests.

The United Arab Emirates views political Islam as a threat, in the sense that it does not agree with the Muslim Brotherhood, and this is what justified the U.A.E.'s subsequent intervention to support the government of Muhammad al-Sisi in (2013) at the expense of overthrowing the government of Muhammad Morsi, who was elected after the Egyptian revolution of 2011.

The U.A.E. opposed the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia. After the Arab Spring, it supported non-Islamic regimes such as Sisi in Egypt and Khalifa Haftar in Libya. They also backed the

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<sup>255</sup> The United Arab Emirates Government Portal. pp.1-2. Available at: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/fact-sheet> [Last accessed: 10.02.2023]

<sup>256</sup> YOUNG, M.: *Punching Above Its Weight*. 2020. p. 1. Available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/diwan/2020/07/punching-above-its-weight?lang=en&center=middle-east> [Last accessed: 05.02.2023]

opposition in Syria against the Al-Assad regime. Some analysts believe that the UAE's intervention was aimed at ending Turkish interference in the region.

The U.A.E intervened directly in the Yemeni civil war alongside Saudi Arabia during the revolution. The Saudi-Emirati Coordination Council shows that Abu Dhabi and Riyadh are now seen as the new centre of Gulf politics. This initiative was first launched in 2016 and then restarted in 2018.

The United Arab Emirates supported the Southern Transitional Council, whose leadership is still based in Abu Dhabi. In contrast, Saudi Arabia supported the Yemeni government headed by Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, based in Saudi Arabia, where disputes and clashes occurred between the two groups over influence.<sup>257</sup>

The aim of the war in Yemen, which is considered a proxy war, was between the disgraced Emirati and Saudi regime and the Iranian-backed Houthi group.

Unlike Qatar, the Emirati policy has created direct enemies for its behaviour and interference in wars and conflicts. In the Arab reality after the Arab revolutions, the picture appears as if the roles among the Gulf countries were distributed specifically through money, which influences the balance of states and regimes. The Emirates played a role as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and each country adopted a policy that complemented the other, apparently due to the imbalance of power in the region and the search for local, regional alternatives. The UAE and even Qatar will not be able to achieve this through the power of money alone. Nevertheless, they will remain influential powers for the time being, until other powers with the military and geographical status that both countries lack emerge.

Through its direct interventionist policy, the U.A.E. sought to allay its fears of the rise of Islamic currents in countries whose regimes had collapsed as a result of internal revolutions. Concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the U.A.E.'s and Bahrain's time was up in late 2000, when they signed the Abraham Accord (2020) under U.S. auspices to normalise relations with Israel, establish diplomatic channels and cooperate in many economic and security fields. From the Palestinian point of view, this agreement removed the U.A.E. from the circle of countries that support the rights of the people. The Palestinians have lost hope in their potential role in the conflict.

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<sup>257</sup> Young, M., 2020. pp. 2-3.

By normalising its relations with the Gulf states, Israel sought to shift the focus to addressing the Iranian threat and enhancing security in the region. This was part of an effort to promote stability and cooperation in the Middle East.

## **Conclusion**

Since the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011, Egypt's role has decreased. Egypt has lost its position as a mediator and sponsor of the peace process due to its focus on internal affairs and regional responsibilities. Political instability and a decline in global competitiveness have left Egypt as a dormant force, uncertain of when it will rise again.

Qatar plays the role of a diplomatic mediator, which is similar to the policy of containing the region's problems. Qatar's role and the extent to which it will help it achieve a stable regional position is unclear, as it relies mainly on money and the media to promote its policies. In reality, it is a country of small size and population.

The United Arab Emirates tried to enter directly, not as a mediator in the region's politics, but rather as a party, and this was evident in its intervention in the Syrian revolution and its support for the opposition and in Libya and Yemen. Undoubtedly, the U.A.E. is larger in size and population than the State of Qatar. However, it remains a small country compared to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. Nevertheless, the strength of its economy and its extensive local and global connections have given it a leading position in the competition for Saudi Arabia's role. It also pursues an extremist policy towards Islamic movements led by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Economic resources play a pivotal role in the foreign policy of these states. Economic diplomacy, including investment, aid, and trade relations, is used to build influence and secure political support.<sup>258</sup>

It remains for us to say that what is new is the entry of the Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, into diplomatic relations and formal agreements with Israel through the Abraham Accord. This is a new shift in the course of the

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<sup>258</sup> Szalai, M., 2022. pp. 151-153.

conflict. Having lost its Arab depth after the Arab Spring revolutions, the Palestinian cause began to lose its Gulf depth through this agreement.

### **XI. Survey on ‘The influence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the region's Major powers politics.’**

The survey targeted a group of academics, intellectuals, and research centres in the targeted countries to collect indicators and match their analysis with the conclusions of the theoretical research in the thesis.

The survey focuses on researching the role of the regional powers (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel) in addition to Palestine and their level of intervention in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and at the same time, researching the nature of the Middle East in general, and whether academics from these countries consider it a region in the true sense of the word, or is it just a political term only.

Conducting a survey on the influence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the region's major powers' politics aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of public perception, inform policy, contribute to academic research, and enrich public discourse. By capturing diverse viewpoints and analysing the data, the survey offers valuable insights to guide future actions and studies related to this long-standing conflict.

Furthermore, assessing perceptions: to gauge public opinion and perceptions about how the conflict influences the political strategies and decisions of major regional powers and

The most important aspect of conducting the survey is to understand how different demographic groups view the involvement of major powers, potentially guiding diplomatic approaches; this will allow the research to make appropriate comparisons on the influence of the conflict on different major powers and analyse variations in their political responses.

It is crucial to conduct this survey to compare the theoretical framework of the dissertation with the existing literature on the subject (outside) and the actual reality (inside). This comparison will provide valuable insights and enhance the credibility of the thesis.

The survey consisted of eight dimensions and a series of questions in each dimension. The survey dealt with the first dimension of defining the Middle East, which is a geographical or political definition, and knowing to what extent the targeted countries belong to it (geographically or politically) and what its significance is, in addition to addressing the success or failure of the Middle East in regional cooperation as a model. This dimension aims to find out how academics in the countries covered by this survey view the Middle East geographically or politically, which of course leads us to understand the trends and interests of the countries in the Middle East. This will allow us to draw conclusions later.

The second dimension discussed the regional powers and how the respondents consider and classify their countries regarding power, control, and influence. The third dimension dealt with the extent of the impact of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the targeted countries of the survey, how it has affected their policies, and the extent of their interference in the conflict

The fourth dimension deals with the role of world powers (the United States, the European Union, China, Russia) in the Middle East and, the level of their intervention, and the extent of their role in the success of internal regional cooperation or their bias towards one of the parties to the conflict.

The fifth dimension was about the impact of the conflict on the powers of the region and their policies and their importance as a priority in the region. The sixth dimension dealt with the expected alliances and the possibility of their occurrence from the respondents' point of view. The seventh dimension was about the internal Palestinian situation, the state of division, and its impact on the regional states' policies. The eighth and final dimension talked about the future of the Region.

## **XI. 1. Method and Procedure**

This section will include the survey community and sample distribution according to Sex, Age, Educational qualification, and Location variables.

### **XI. 1.1 Survey Community**

The survey community consisted of academics in a group of countries (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Palestine) in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022.

### **XI.1. 2 The survey sample**

The survey was conducted on a sample of (100) received (87) academics in a group of countries in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022; they were chosen randomly. Tables (1), (2), (3), and (4) distribute the study sample according to its independent variables.

**Distribution of the Survey sample according to the sex variable**

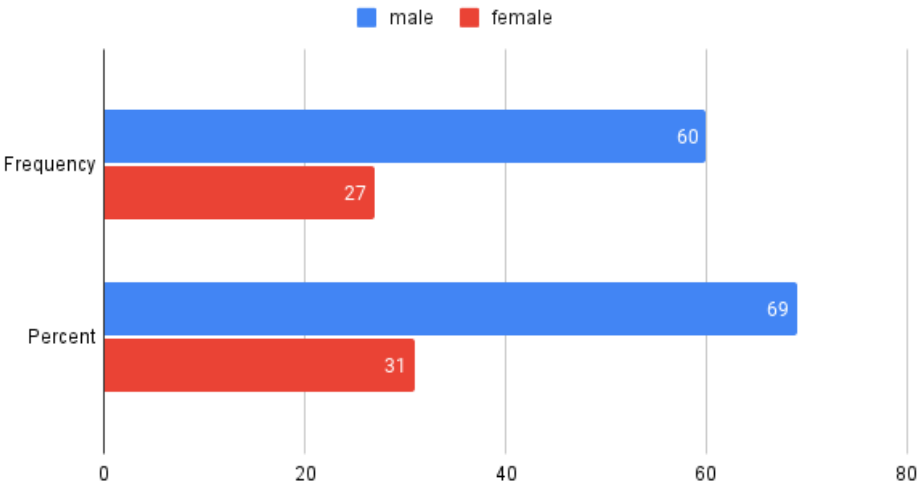


Table No. 1.

Source: compiled by the author

**Distribution of the Survey sample according to the age variable**

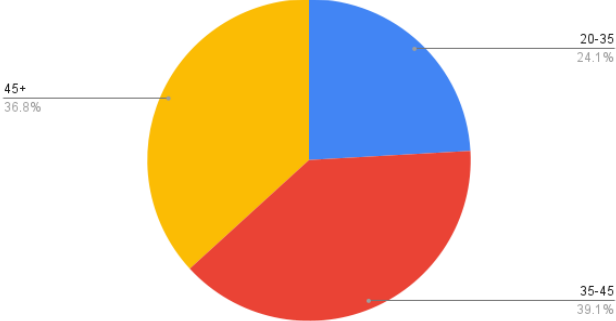


Table No. 2.



Source: compiled by the author

### Distribution of the Survey sample according to the educational qualification variable

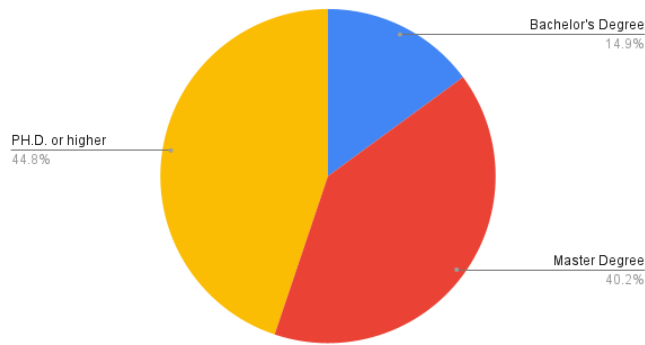


Table No. 3.

Source: compiled by the author

### Distribution of the Survey sample according to the location variable

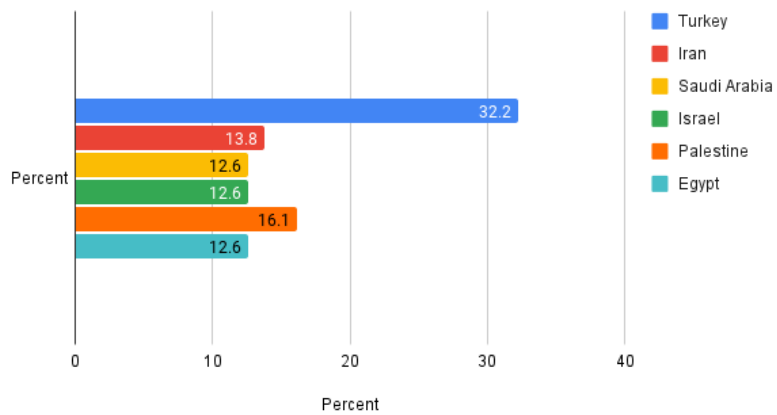


Table No. 4.

Source: compiled by the author

### **XI. 1. 3. The Survey Approach**

In this survey, the descriptive approach was followed due to its relevance to its nature. This approach collects data and performs statistical analysis to extract the required results.

### **XI. 1. 4. The Survey Tool**

Depending on the research literature, previous studies, and expert consultation, a questionnaire was built to collect data from the survey sample, which included (42) questions divided into (8) dimensions.

### **XI. 1. 5. Validity of the tool**

Honesty means that the scale used in the research measures what should be measured, as the information collected matches the objective facts. The paragraphs constituting the questionnaire and their relevance to the survey's objectives and variables indicated some appropriate modifications to become distributed to the study sample in its final form.

### **XI. 1. 6. Statistical processing**

After data collection, its data was entered into the computer to be processed by the statistical program for social sciences (spss). Percentages, weighted arithmetic averages, t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance were used.

### **XI. 1. 7. Results**

#### **1. Results related to “The Definition and the Importance of the Middle East.”**

To answer the questions of this dimension, cross tables were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each response according to the place variable.

#### **1.1 Results related to the first question: Do you think there is a clear definition of what is called the Middle East?**

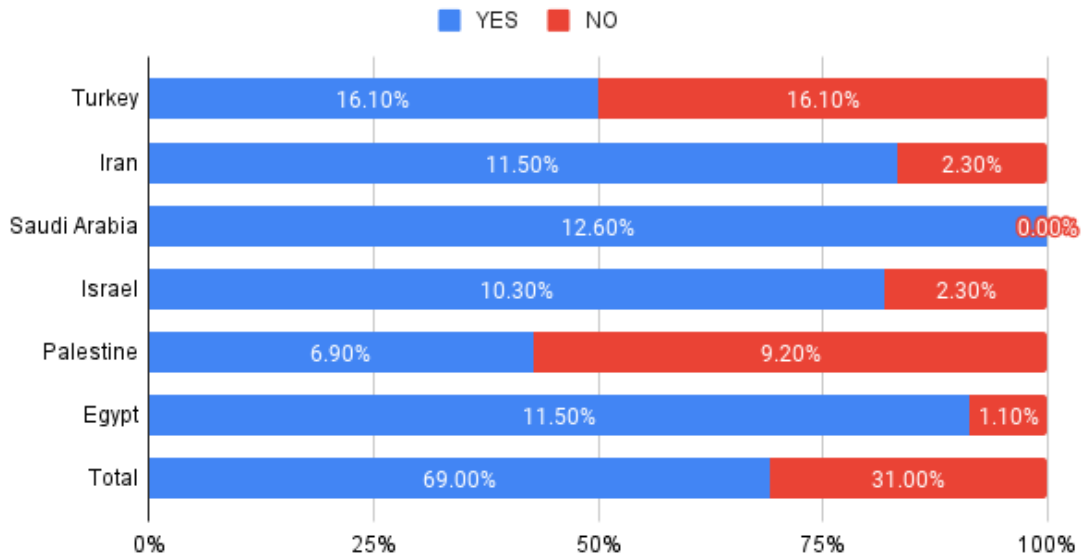


Table No. 5.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.5 shows that Turkey is where most believe there is a clear definition of the so-called Middle East, where the percentage of those whose responses were 'Yes' (16.1%). At the same time, Palestine got a minor response, as its percentage was (6.9%), and the response of the sample in Iran (11.5%), while the response of the sample members in Saudi Arabia reached (12.6%), and in Israel (10.3%), and in Egypt, the response of the sample members reached (11.5%), and the total degree of the sample members who believe that there is a clear definition of what is called the Middle East (69.0%).

As for the response of the sample members with 'No,' it was the highest response among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (16.1%); that is, half of the sample members in Turkey believe that there is a clear definition of the so-called Middle East, while the other half of the sample not believe. The lowest response was 'No' among members of the sample in Saudi Arabia, which amounted to (0.0%), and the response of the sample members in Iran and Israel was 'No' (2.3%), and the response of the sample members in Palestine was (9.2%), and the percentage of response to the sample members in Egypt (1.1%)

The results also show that 69.0% of the survey sample believes a clear definition of the so-called Middle East exists. While (31.0%) do not believe a clear definition of the Middle East exists.

We believe that the most significant percentage was heading for the fact that there is a clear definition of the Middle East, and this will also depend on the rest of the questions in the same dimension, and that Turkey had the largest share of affirmation that there is a clear definition of the Middle East, which means that it has clarity in its vision for the region.

**1.2 Results related to the second question: Do you believe that your country is considered geographically part of the Middle East?**

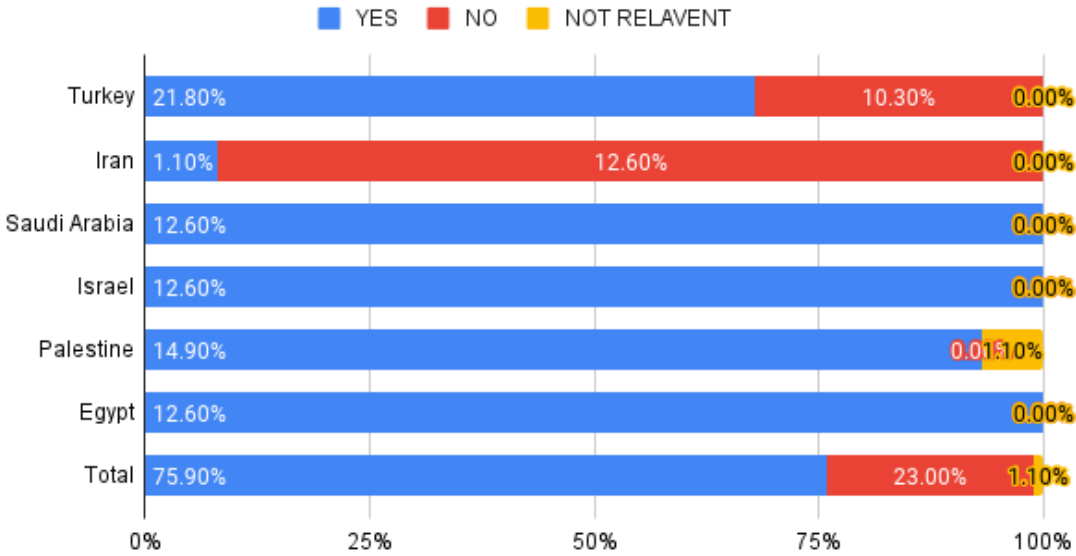


Table No. 6.

Source: compiled by the author

Turkey is the country where most people think their country is geographically located in the Middle East, with 21.8% agreeing, while Iran was the least responsive, with a percentage of 1.1%, and the response of the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt reached (12.6%). In comparison, the response of the sample members in Palestine was (14.9%).

The lowest response to 'No' was in the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (10.3%), and the highest response was in Iran, where the response of the sample members reached (12.6%). In contrast, the response of the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, and Palestine was (0.0%), for the response of the sample members to (not relevant), was the highest response among the sample members in Palestine, where the

percentage amounted to (1.1%). It reached the rest of the sample members in the rest of the countries (0.0%).

The overall results of the table show that 75.9% of respondents believe that their country is geographically part of the Middle East, while (23.0%) believe that it is not and (1.1%) see no connection.

The results show that Iran is a country that does not believe that it is geographically part of the Middle East. In contrast, the remaining countries have the highest percentages of people who tend to think that they are geographically part of the Middle East. The paradox of Turkey's results, however, is that it has always preferred to be treated as a European rather than a Middle Eastern country.

**1.3 Results related to the third question: Do you believe your country is politically part of the Middle East?**

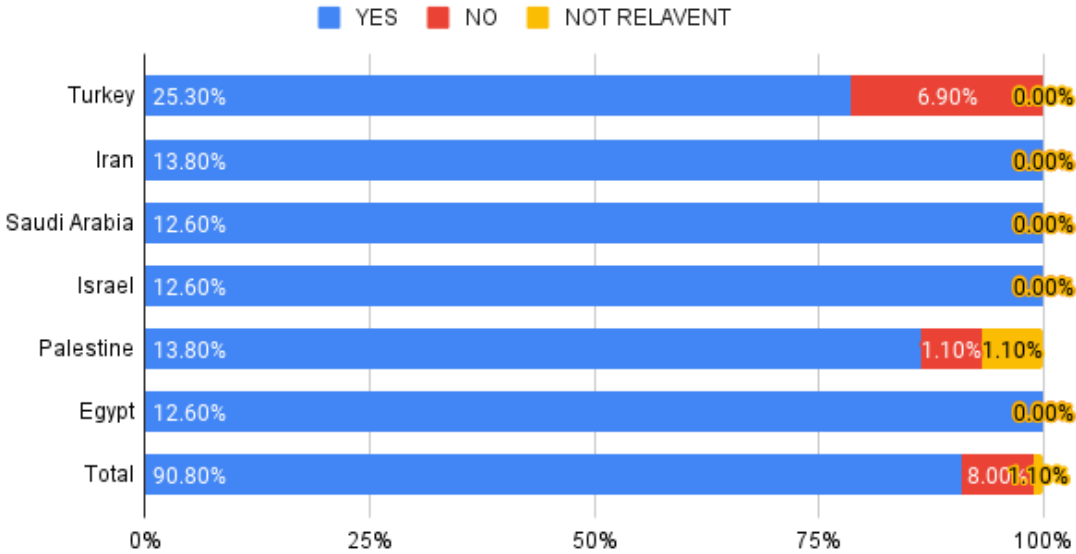


Table No. 7.

Source: compiled by the author

It is clear from the previous results that Turkey is the country that most believe that their country belongs to the Middle East politically, as the response rate of those who answered ‘Yes’ reached 25.3%, while Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt were the tiniest countries in which the sample response was 12.6%, and the response of the three countries reached 12.6%.

The sample members in Iran and Palestine (13.8%) and the response of the sample members as a whole reached the total score (90.8%).

The response of the sample members to ‘No’ was the highest response among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (6.9%), and the lowest response among the sample members was in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt, where the percentage was (0.0%). Palestine (1.1%) and the total score for the sample as a whole reached (8.0%)

Concerning the response of the sample members to ‘Not Relevant,’ the response of Palestine was (1.1%), and the response of the rest of the sample members in the rest of the countries was (0.0%).

The results indicators in this question clearly show that all the targeted countries in this survey believe they belong politically to the Middle East.

The result is, of course, inevitable, as well as another confirmation of the policies of Iran and Turkey and their sense of political belonging to the region.

**1.4 Results related to the fourth question: Do you believe the term ‘Middle East’ has an exclusively geographical connotation, regardless of the number of nations it refers to?**

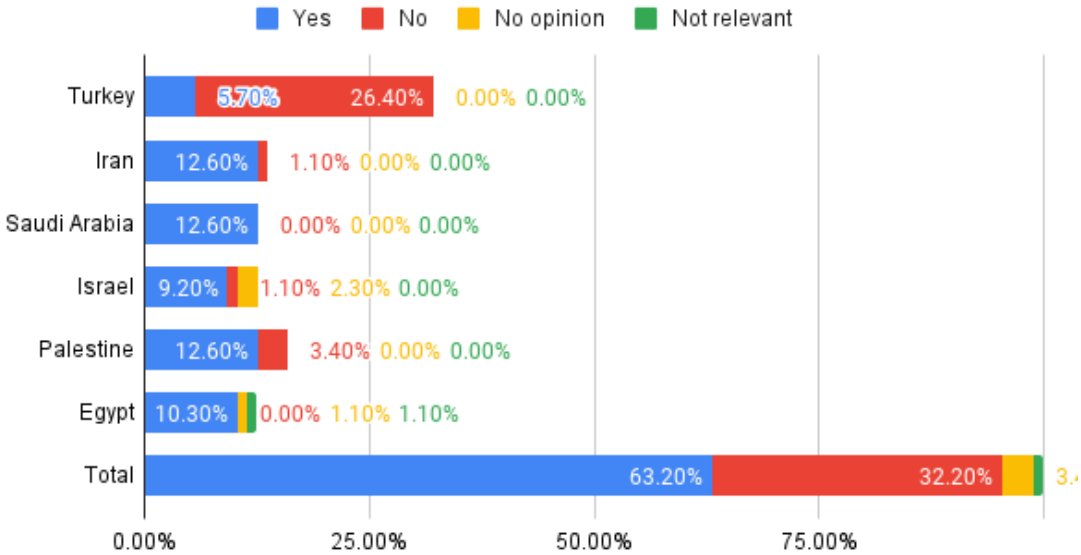


Table No. 8.

Source: compiled by the author

The sample in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine had the most respondents who thought that the term Middle East had an exclusively geographical connotation exclusively, regardless of the number of countries it referred to, where the percentage reached (12.6%). In contrast, the response of the sample in Turkey was the less responsive, reaching (5.7%), and it was among the sample members in Israel (9.2%), and it was among the sample members in Egypt (10.3%), and the response of the sample members as a whole reached the total score (63.2%).

We note that the highest response to 'no' was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (26.4%), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where the percentage reached (0.0%). The response of the sample members in Palestine was (3.4 %), the percentage of respondents in Iran and Israel reached (1.1%), and the total score for all members of the total sample reached (32.2%).

The highest response to 'no opinion' was in Israel, where the percentage reached (2.3%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine (0.0%), and the percentage among sample members in Egypt was (1.1%). Moreover, the total score on 'No opinion' was 3.4%.

The highest response of the sample members to 'not relevant' was in Egypt, where the percentage reached (1.1%), and it was among the rest of the sample members in the rest of the countries (0.0%), and the total degree of the sample members reached (1.1%).

Respondents in Turkey believe that the Middle East does not have an exclusive geographical meaning, while respondents in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Israel believe that it does.

### **1.5 Results related to the fifth question: Do you think the Middle East is a successful model of regional cooperation?**

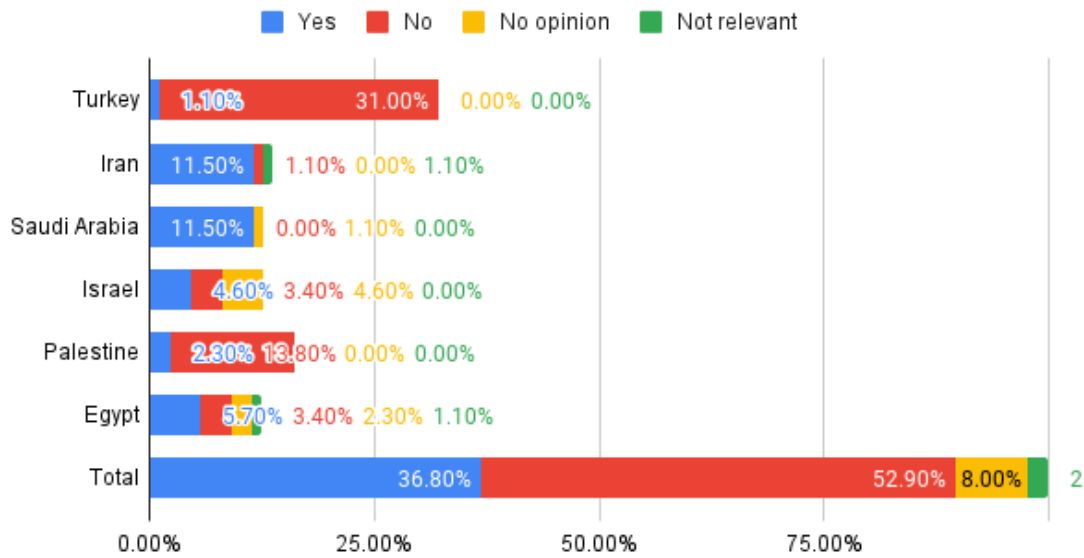


Table No. 9.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.9 shows that Iranians and Saudis responded most to the fact that the Middle East is a successful model for regional cooperation, where the percentage of those who answered ‘yes’ was 11.5% for each country. The response of the sample members in Turkey was (1.1%). It was among the sample members in Israel (4.6%), Palestine (2.3%), and Egypt (5.7%). The total response of all sample members from all countries was 36.8% who answered ‘yes,’ meaning that the Middle East is a successful model for regional cooperation.

As for the highest response to ‘no,’ it was among the respondents in Turkey, where the percentage reached (31.0%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Iran was (1.1%). It reached among the sample members in Iran (1.1%). The total score in Israel and Egypt was (3.4%), and in Palestine (13.8%), the total score of ‘No’ (52.9%).

The highest response to ‘no opinion’ was in Israel, where the percentage reached (4.6%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, Iran, and Palestine (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Egypt was (2.3%) and The total score on ‘No opinion’ was (8.0%).



The highest response of the sample members to ‘not relevant’ was in Iran and Egypt, where the percentage amounted to (1.1%). It was among the rest of the sample members in the rest of the countries (0.0%), and the total percentage of all sample members reached (1.1%).

It is evident from the results that both Iran and Saudi Arabia were the highest in considering that the Middle East is a successful model for regional cooperation. In contrast, the rest of the countries, led by Turkey, considered that the Middle East is not a successful model for regional cooperation and the fact that the results of Saudi Arabia and Iran, in particular, are different from what the literature has dealt with. The fact is that the Middle East is a failed model of international cooperation. The author may attribute these results to the fact that the question did not specify the areas of cooperation and the respondents’ belief in both countries “cooperation, for example, at the level of the Council of the Union of Gulf States” is considered cooperation and a model of regional cooperation, knowing that what is meant by the question is that “the Middle East as a single entity” with all its geographically connected countries) is distinguished by its cooperation on the level of regional issues.

**1.6 Summary of the results of the first dimension: The definition and the Importance of the Middle East.**

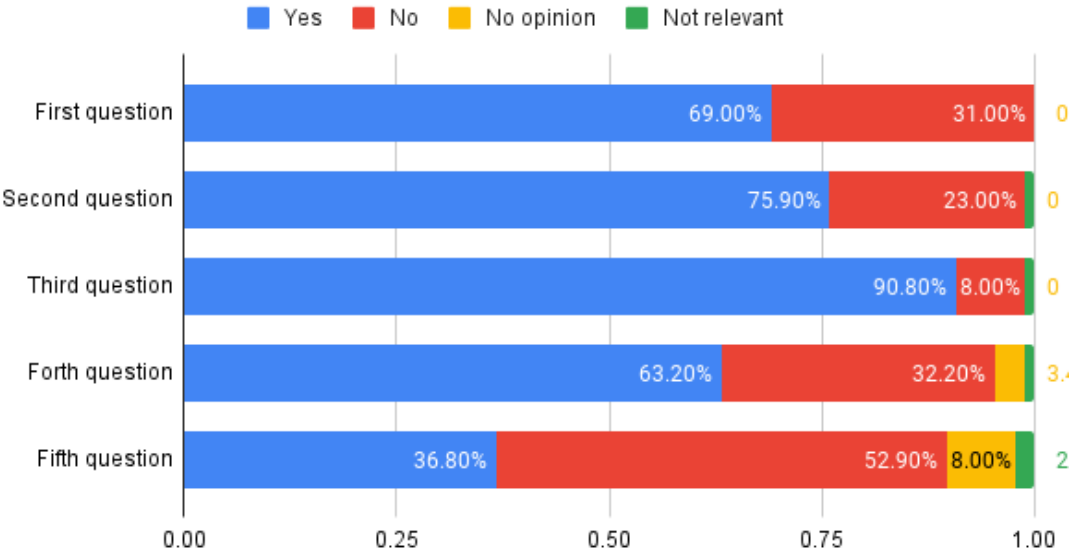


Table No.10.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The first question results show that 69.0% of the respondents answered ‘yes,’ meaning there is a clear definition of the so-called Middle East, and 31.0% answered ‘no.’

As for the second question, 75.9% of respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question “Do you believe that your country is considered geographically part of the Middle East?” and 23.0% answered ‘no,’ while 1.1% answered not relevant.

The third question was, “Do you believe your country is politically part of the Middle East?” The percentage of those who answered ‘yes’ was 90.8%, 8.0% answered ‘no,’ and 1.1% answered ‘Not relevant.’

As for the fourth question, “Do you believe that the term ‘Middle East’ exclusively has a geographical connotation, regardless of the number of nations it refers to?” the results show that 63.2% of the respondents answered ‘yes,’ and 32.2% answered ‘no’ and 3.4% had ‘no opinion’ and 1.1 % answered ‘not relevant,’ it is clear that the answer closes to assuring that the Middle East is a geographical connotation exclusively.

For the fifth question, “Do you think that the Middle East is a successful model of regional cooperation?” The results show that 36.8% of the respondents answered ‘yes,’ 52.9% answered ‘no,’ and 8.0% answered ‘no opinion.’ In comparison, 2.3% answered ‘not relevant,’ It is clear that most respondents are close to ensuring that the Middle East is not a successful regional model.

The overall result of this dimension is, in the author’s opinion, that most responses tend to indicate that the Middle East is an exclusively geographical indication. Iran is the only one that does not consider itself geographically part of the Middle East, and this is not new, but what is new is that the respondents in Turkey answered that Turkey is Part of the Middle East. All countries in which this survey was conducted consider themselves politically part of the Middle East. According to the answers, the Middle East is not a successful model for regional cooperation, and this is a fact.

## 2. Results related to the ‘Regional Power’

To answer the questions of this dimension, cross tables were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each response according to the place variable.

### 2.1 results related to the first question: Do you think there is a Dominant regional power in the Middle East?

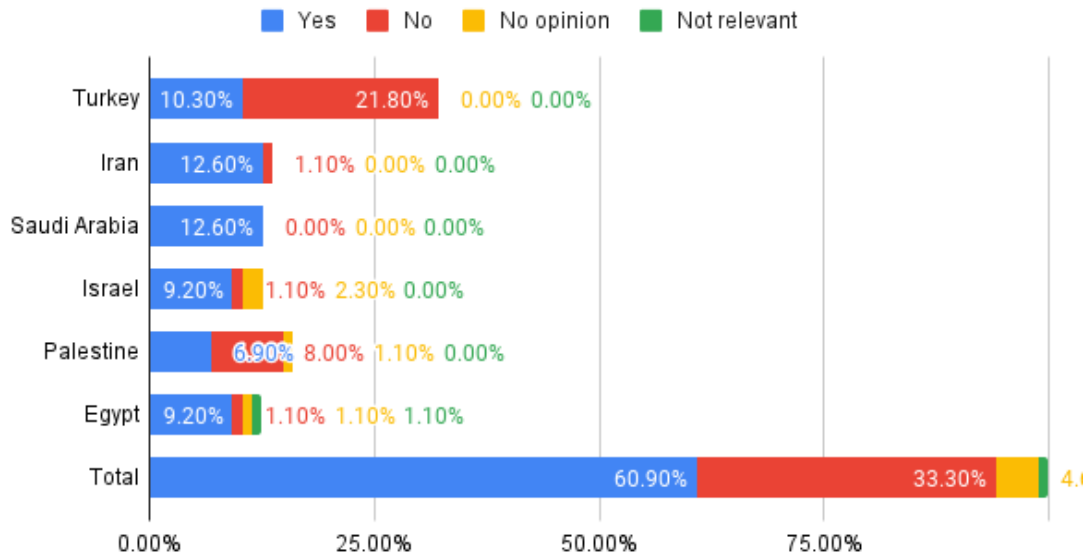


Table No.11.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response to the question “Do you think that there is a Dominant regional power in the Middle East?” was among the sample members in Iran and Saudi Arabia, where the response of each of them to ‘yes’ was 12.6% while the lowest response among the sample members was in Palestine, where the percentage of those who answered yes was 6.9%. The percentage among the sample members in Turkey was (10.3%), and in Israel and Egypt is (9.2%). The total score of all sample members from all countries who answered ‘yes’ was (60.9%).

The highest response to ‘no’ is in Turkey, where the percentage reached (21.8%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia (0.0%). The percentage among the sample members in Iran, Israel, and Egypt was (1.1%), and it was Palestine (8.0%) has a total score of ‘no’ (52.9%). The total score of the sample as a whole who answered ‘no’ was (33.3%),

The highest response to ‘no opinion’ was in Israel, where the percentage reached (2.3%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, where the percentage reached (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Palestine and Egypt (1.1%), and the total score was ‘No opinion’ (4.6%).

The highest response of the sample members to ‘no relevant’ was in Egypt, where the percentage reached (1.1%), and it was among the rest of the sample members (0.0%), and the total degree of the sample members reached (1.1%).

Based on the analysis, the author sees that both Iran and Saudi Arabia are closer to the presence of a dominant regional power in the Middle East. At the same time, the indicators are low in the rest of the countries in which the survey was conducted, and we see that the answers may have had some ambition from the sample members in both countries mentioned Iran and Saudi Arabia, or so they think or desire.

**2.2 Results related to the second question: Do you think there is an Influential regional power in the Middle East?**

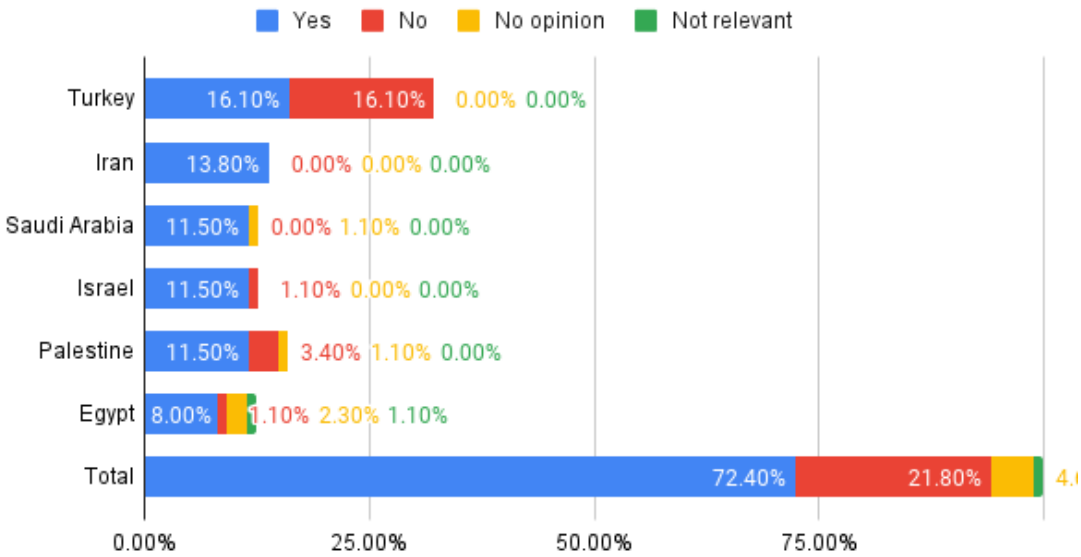


Table No. 12.

Source: compiled by the author

We can note from the results that the highest percentage on the question “Do you think that there is an Influential regional power in the Middle East?” with ‘yes’ was among the sample

members in Turkey, where the percentage amounted to (16.1%). The lowest response among the sample members was in Egypt, where the percentage reached (8.0%). The response of the sample members in Iran reached (13.8%), and the response of the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Palestine (11.5%), and the response of the sample members reached a total degree (72.4%).

As for the highest response to 'no,' it was among the respondents in Turkey, where the percentage reached (16.1%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Iran and Saudi Arabia (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Israel and Egypt was (1.1%), and it was in Palestine (3.4%), the total score of the sample as a whole who answered 'No' was (21.8%),

The highest response to 'no opinion' was in Egypt, where the percentage reached (2.3%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, Iran, and Israel, where the percentage reached (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Palestine and Saudi Arabia (1.1%), and the total score was 'No opinion' (4.6%).

The highest response of the sample members to 'not relevant' was in Egypt, where the percentage reached (1.1%), and it was among the rest of the sample members in the rest of the countries (0.0%), and the total degree of the sample members reached (1.1%).

As the results came, the total sum of the sample members who agree that there is an influential regional power in the Middle East is high. At the same time, it is noted that the sample members in Turkey are divided equally between 'yes' and 'no,' which may indicate their belief that there is no adequate power in all fields.

### **2.3. Result related to the third question: How would you describe your country's 'classification'?**

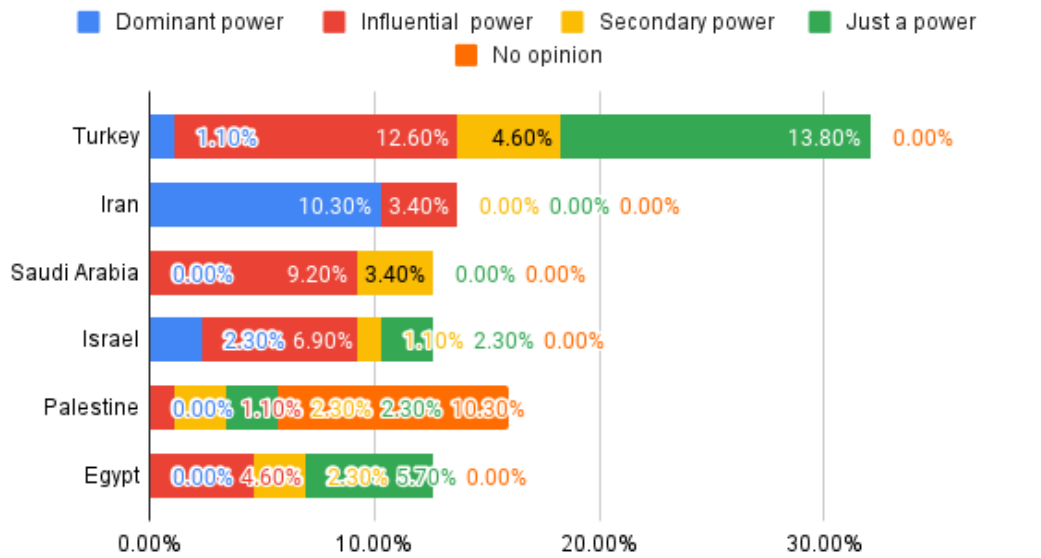


Table No. 13.

*Source:* compiled by the author

It is clear from Table No.13 that the highest response to the question “In what way would you describe your country's ‘classification’?” as a dominant power’ was the highest. The response among the sample members in Iran, where the percentage reached (10.3%). The lowest responses were for each of the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Egypt, where the response rate for each of them was (0.0%); for Israel, the response rate was (2.3%), while the response of the sample members in Turkey was (1.1%). The percentage of the total score was (13.8%).

The highest response to ‘influential power’ was reached among the sample members in Turkey (12.6%), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, where the percentage reached (1.1%). In comparison, the sample members in Iran reached a percentage (3.4%). While the percentage of the sample members in Saudi Arabia reached (9.2%), the percentage of the sample members in Israel reached (6.9%). The percentage among the sample members in Egypt was (4.6%), and it is noted that the response of the total sample members to this question is (an influential force). It reached (37.9%).

As for the highest response for those who believe that their country is a 'secondary power,' it was the highest response among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (4.6%), while the lowest response among the sample members was in Iran, where the percentage amounted to (0.0%). The response of the sample members in Israel reached (1.1%), and the percentage reached, and the percentage of the sample members in Saudi Arabia reached "3.4%"; the percentage of the sample members in Palestine and Egypt reached (2.3%), and we note that the percentage of the response of the total sample members was (13.8%).

We also note that the highest response to 'just a power' was the highest response among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (13.8%), while the lowest response among the sample members was in Iran and Saudi Arabia, where the percentage reached (0.0%). The percentage reached The percentage among the sample members in Israel and Palestine was (2.3%), the response among the sample members in Egypt was (5.7%), and the percentage on the total degree of the total sample was (24.1%).

The results also show that the highest response to 'no opinion' was among the sample members in Palestine, where the percentage reached (10.3%). In comparison, the response of the sample members to the rest of the countries was (0.0%), and (10.3%) of the response of the sample members reached 'No opinion.'

The answers of the sample members in Turkey focused on considering their country as an influential power and just a power, which are logical answers that simulate the current reality of the Turkish state. In contrast, the answers of the sample members in Iran regarded their state as a dominant power. The author suggests that reactions to Iran are emotionally driven and may not accurately reflect the current state of the country. In contrast, the author stresses that Iran is an influential power that shapes the politics of the region. Furthermore, the responses of individuals in other countries, such as "Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, and Israel", are seen as a more accurate reflection of their current realities.

**2.4 Results related to the fourth question: In your opinion, do you think your country can be a regional power (leadership, ability to resolve conflicts and intervention, presence of regional institutions)?**

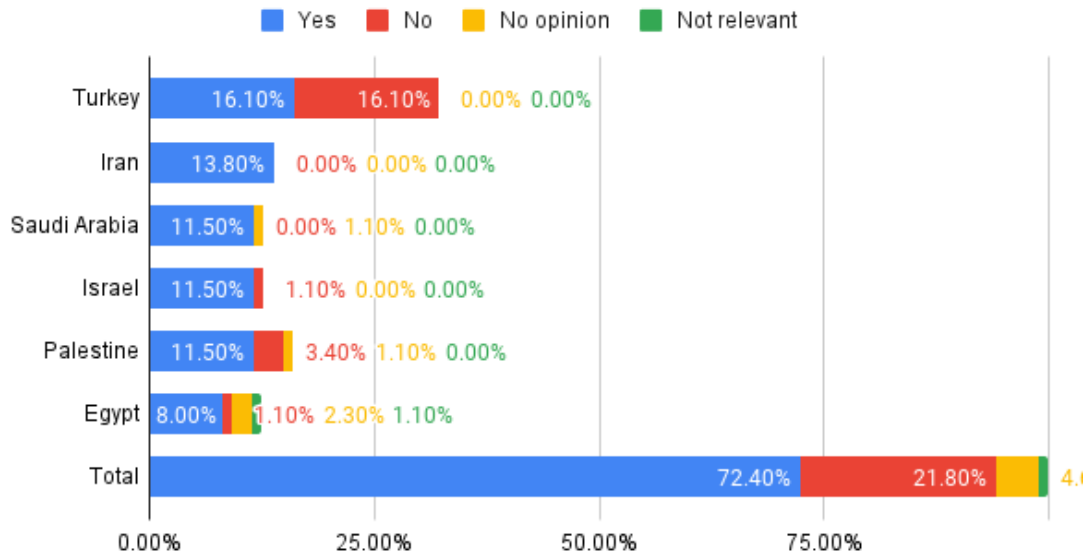


Table No. 14.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response of the sample members for ‘yes’ was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (16.1%). The lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, where the percentage was (0.0%), while it reached sample members in Iran (13.8%). It reached the sample members in Saudi Arabia and Egypt (12.6%), and the total score of the total sample members reached ‘yes’ (72.40%). We note that the highest response to ‘no’ was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (14.9%). The lowest response rate for each sample member was in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt, where the percentage reached (0.0%). The response of the sample members in Palestine reached (12.6%), and the total score for all members of the total sample reached ‘no’ (21.80%).

As for the highest response to ‘no opinion,’ it was among the respondents in Egypt, where the percentage reached (2.3%), while it was (1.1%) among the sample members in Iran and Palestine while in rest was (0.0%). Therefore, the total score on ‘no opinion’ was (4.3%). The response of the sample members to ‘Not relevant’ for all sample members was (0.0%).



Through the analysis results, it is clear that all countries – except for Palestine – strongly aspire to become a regional power or that it could be through the response of the sample members in the targeted countries.

**2.5. Summary of the results of the second dimension: Regional Power**

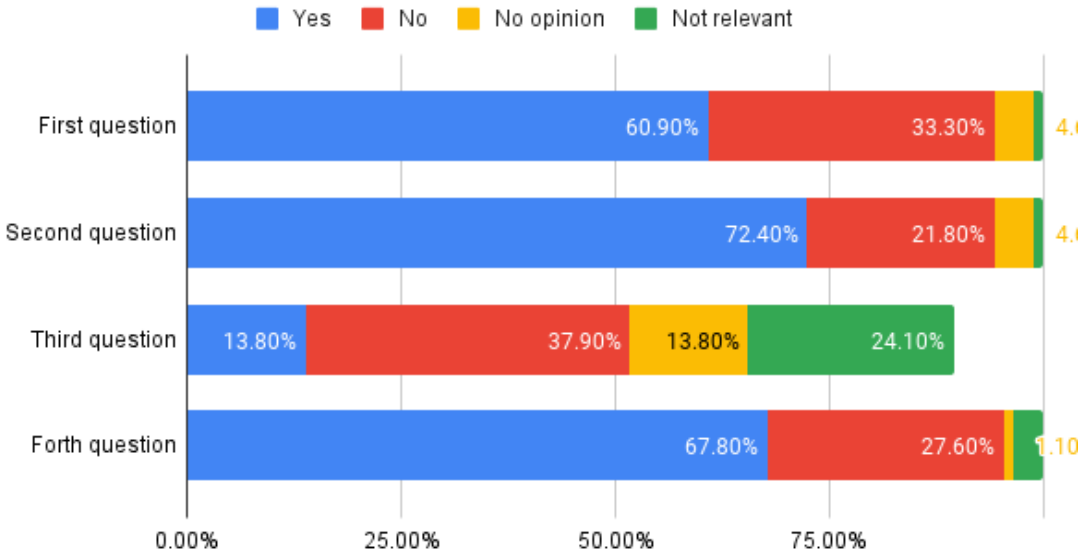


Table No. 15.

Source: compiled by the author

The summary of ‘Regional Power’ shows that the response of the sample members to the first question ‘yes’ was (60.9%), while the response of the total sample to the same question with ‘no,’ the percentage reached (33.3%), and the percentage of the sample members on the total score ‘No opinion’ is (4.6%), and the percentage of ‘Not relevant’ is (1.1%).

About the second question, the percentage of ‘yes’ reached (72.4%), the percentage of ‘no’ reached (21.8%), and the percentage of respondents with ‘no opinion’ reached (4.6%). The percentage of respondents to ‘No opinion’ reached (4.6%). Moreover, the percentage of ‘irrelevant’ is (1.1%).

The third question with 'yes' reached a percentage of (13.8%), while the percentage of 'no' reached (37.9%), and the percentage of 'no opinion' reached (13.8) %, while the response to 'not relevant' is (24.1%).

Concerning the fourth question, the response of the sample members reached 'yes' (67.8%), and 'no' reached (27.6%), and their responses were to 'no opinion' (1.1%), and the percentage reached 'not relevant' (3.4%).

It is evident from the analysis that the response to the first question that there is a dominant power was the highest in Iran and Saudi Arabia, followed by Turkey, then Egypt and Israel. This may be an indication of the respondents' belief that their countries are dominant or will be, or perhaps they do not know precisely what it means: "It is capable of solving the region's problems and has regional institutions and constitutes a regional power in every sense of the word," and this in the current reality of the Middle East does not exist.

The response index for the second question, about influential regional power, was high for all countries. This shows that there is an influential power in the Middle East region. It reflects the current reality of the region, with the presence of an influential internal power in the policies of the countries targeted in this survey.

Regarding the third question, the responses of the targeted countries in the survey, Turkey was classified as an influential power. In contrast, Iran was classified as a dominant power, and this, the author's view, may be an ambition rather than a reality, as the Iranians may see their country as a dominant power.

Moreover, the recent discussion about regional power has focused on envisioning the region's future and identifying which countries have the potential to become dominant regional powers. This evaluation considered vital attributes such as leadership, conflict resolution abilities, and influence over regional institutions. In descending order, the rankings are as follows: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt. These rankings shed light on the aspirations and concerted efforts of the countries to engage with regional issues and shape their regional policies.

### 3. Results related to “The Significance of the Palestinian – Israeli Conflict in the region”

To answer the questions of this dimension, the arithmetic averages, and standard deviations were extracted, bearing in mind that the scale used in this dimension is the five-point Likert scale. Paragraphs with positive content were given (5) degrees for each answer ‘Strongly agree,’ (4) degrees for each answer ‘Agree,’ (3) degrees for each answer ‘Neither agree nor disagree,’ (2) points for each answer ‘disagree,’ and (1) degree for each answer ‘strongly disagree,’ which mean the highest response is (5), so the arithmetic mean here is from (5). The following table shows the results.

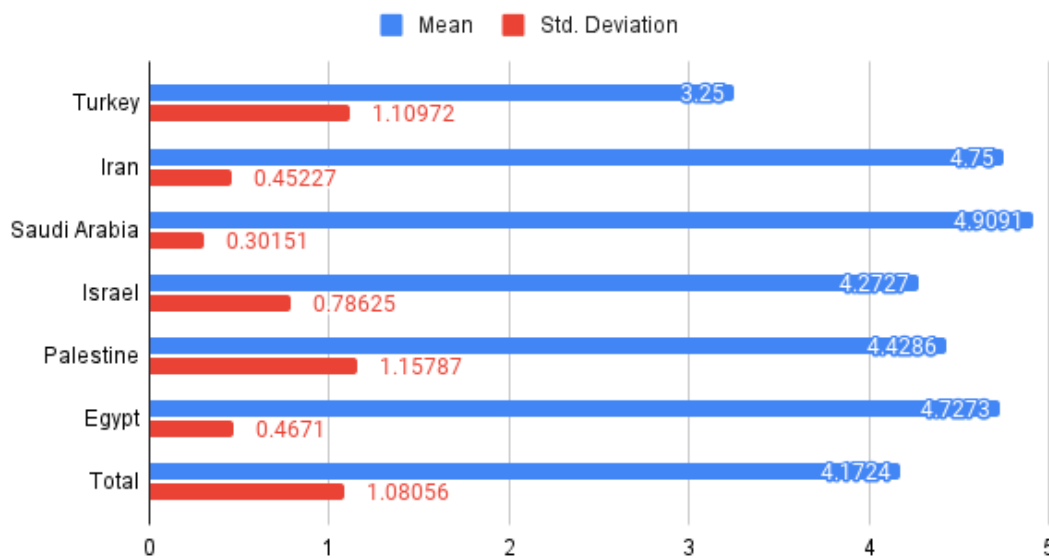


Table No. 16.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No. (16) shows that the highest response to the first question, which states: “There is a direct impact of the conflict on your country,” was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia, where the arithmetic mean was (4.9091), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, where the arithmetic mean reached (3.2500), in Iran was (4.7500), in Israel was (4.2727), in Palestine was (4.4286), in Egypt was (4,7273), and the total score for the sample as a whole was (4.1724).

The author agreed with these results as Saudi Arabia is trying to get more involved in the general conflict and Palestinian internal division in particular.

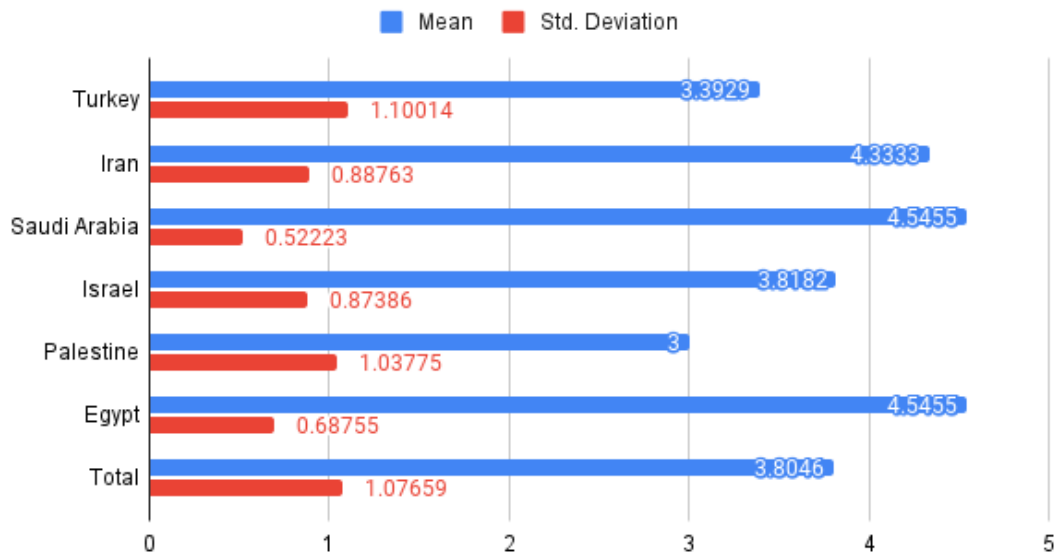


Table No. 17.

*Source:* compiled by the author

As for the second question, which states: “Is your country interfering in the conflict to resolve it?” the highest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where the arithmetic mean reached (4.5455), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, where the arithmetic mean was (3.0000). Turkey reached (3.3929), Iran was (4.0000), Israel reached (3.8182), Egypt was (4.7273), and the total score of the sample as a whole was (3.8046).

The author sees that this answer is also compatible with the Saudi role in the region. With the conflict, they tried to, with Saudi initiatives, which were more on the level of ending the internal Palestinian division than on the level of ending the conflict itself with Israel.

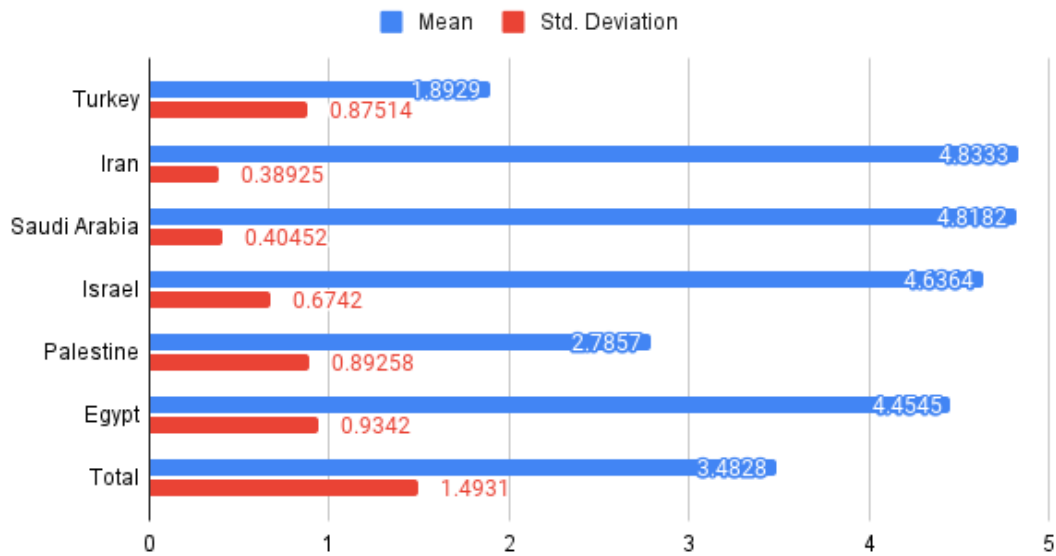


Table No. 18.

*Source:* compiled by the author

As for the third question, which states: “Does your country’s intervention in resolving the conflict aim at gaining its regional status?” it was found that the highest response was among the sample members in Iran, where the arithmetic mean reached (4.8333), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, where the mean was Arithmetic (1.8929), in Saudi Arabia reached (4.8182), in Israel reached (4.6364), and in Palestine was (2.7857), while in Egypt was (4.4545), the total score of the sample as a whole was (3.4828).

This question attempts to measure the importance of the intervention in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by the region's powers to prove its leadership, personality, and influence. Accordingly, the answers indicate that Iran is in its intervention in the conflict – as the results showed that it is the most involved in gaining regional status rather than resolving the conflict itself.

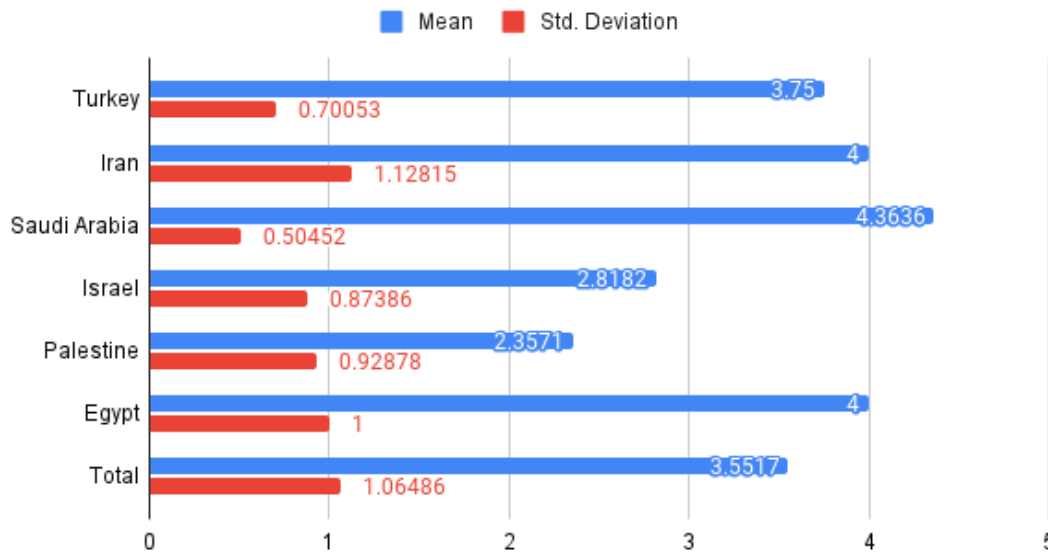


Table No. 19.

*Source:* compiled by the author

As for the fourth question, which states: “Do you think that your country's policy is sufficient towards resolving the conflict?” the highest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia, with (4.3636), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey with (2.3571). Turkey was (3.7500), Iran was (4.0000), Israel was (2.8182), and Palestine was (2.3571). Finally, Egypt was (4.0000), and the total score for the sample as a whole was (3.5517).

The results show that the indicators in Turkey express their dissatisfaction with the level of Turkey's intervention in resolving the conflict and that the policy pursued by Turkey is insufficient, while Saudi Arabia believes that it is the same. The author is convinced that these results reflect the reality in terms of the inability of the Turkish policy towards the conflict to contribute to its resolution. Moreover, dissatisfaction with the political level offered by Saudi Arabia or as desired by the Palestinians from both sides.

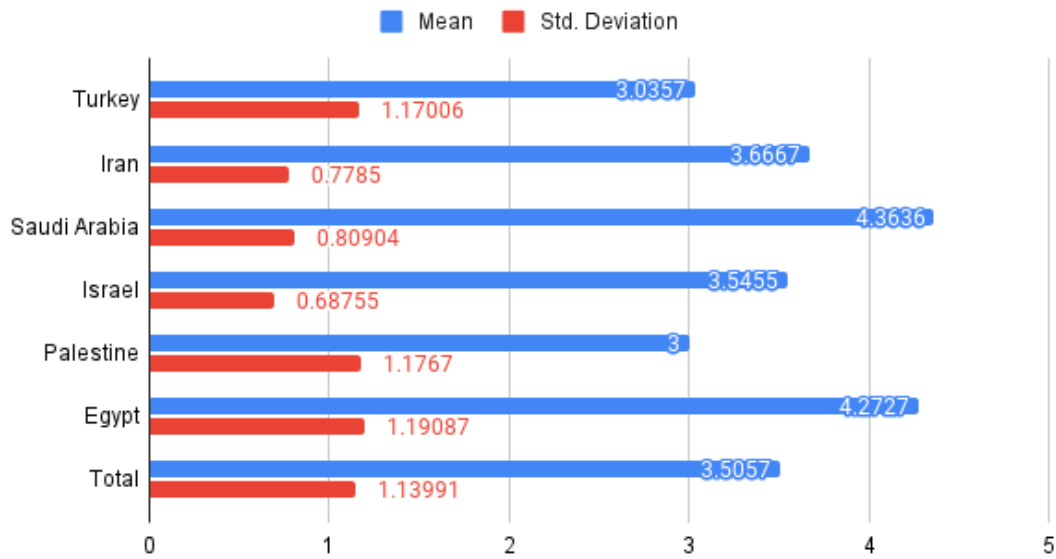


Table No. 20.

*Source:* compiled by the author

As for the fifth question, which states: “There is a change in your country's policy towards the conflict after the events of the Arab uprising of 2011,” it was found that the highest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia, with (4.3636), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, with (3.0000). While Turkey reached (3.0357), Iran reached (3.6667), Israel reached (3.5455), and Egypt was (4.2727), the total score for the sample as a whole was (3.5057).

In sum, there has been a change in the policies of the countries of the Middle East after the Arab uprising of 2011; what the author sees is consistent with the outcome of this question, as Saudi Arabia is now playing a more significant role in the region, as well as Turkey and Egypt, looking for a new place in the regional balance of power, so what happened has motivated these countries.

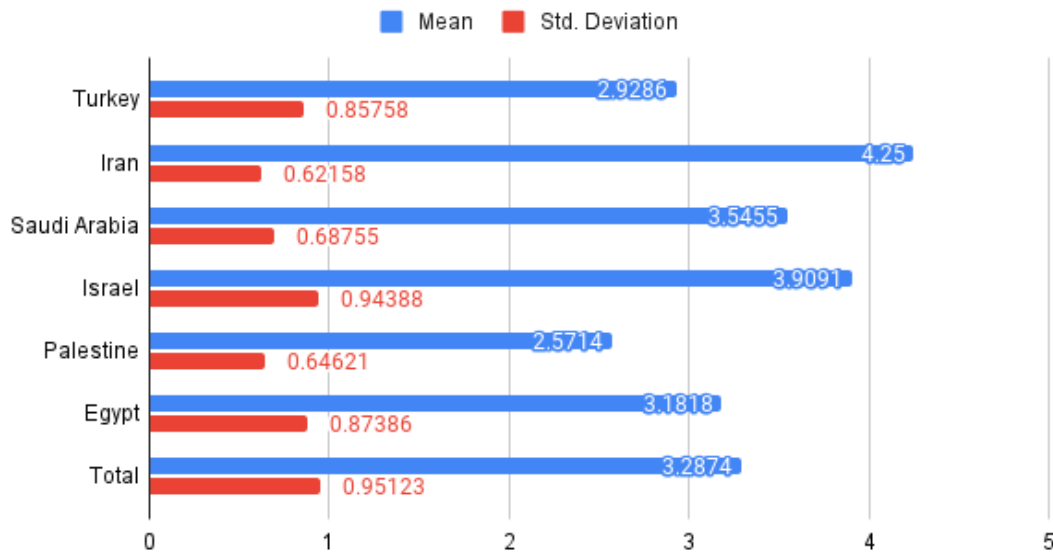


Table No. 21.

*Source:* compiled by the author

As for the sixth question, which states: “An internal coalition has been formed between your country and the parties involved in this conflict,” it was found that the highest response was among the sample members in Iran, where the arithmetic mean reached (4.2500), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, with (2.5714). Moreover, in Turkey was (2.9286); in Saudi Arabia was (3.5455). In Israel was (3.9091), and in Egypt was (3.1818) the total score of the sample members as a whole was (3.2874).

To some extent, the indicators reflect the nature of the existing alliances on the Palestinian side. There is an implicit alliance between Iran and the Islamic Jihad movement in Gaza; before that, it was with the Hamas movement. However, with the decline of polarity and even ideology in general in international relations and the severe restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of money and weapons into Palestine in the two parts of the West Bank and Gaza, the alliance is without actual meaning on the ground apart from strengthening the status of the state itself and Iran as a model.



The results related to the seventh question, which states: “How do you consider this coalition, if any,” which is a continuation of the previous question, as cross tables were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each response according to the place variable.

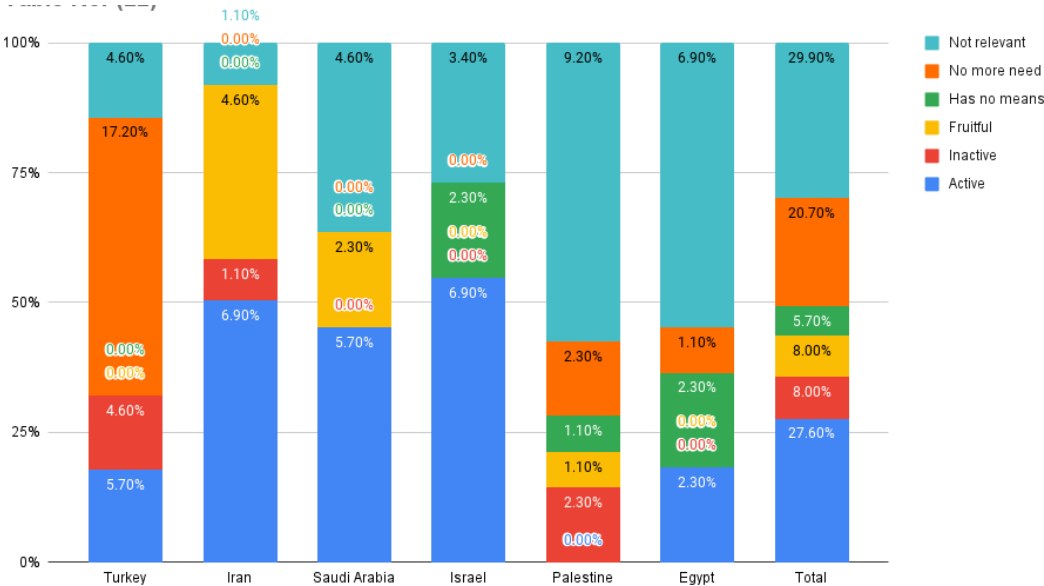


Table No. 22.

Source: compiled by the author

Table No.22 shows that the highest response of the sample members to ‘active’ was among the sample members in Israel, where the percentage reached (6.9%), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, where the percentage reached (0.0%). The sample in Turkey and Saudi Arabia reached (5.7%), and it reached among the sample members in Egypt (2.3%), and the total percentage of all members reached ‘active’ (27.6%).

We note that the highest response to ‘inactive’ was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (4.6%). The lowest response was for each of the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt, where the percentage reached (0.0%), and the response of the sample members. In Iran reached (1.1%), and the sample members in Palestine reached (2.3%), and the score for the total sample members reached (8.0%).

The highest response to ‘fruitful’ was among the sample members in Iran, where the percentage reached (4.6%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in

Turkey, Israel, and Egypt, where the percentage reached (0.0%), and the percentage reached in Saudi Arabia (2.3%), while in Palestine (1.1%). The total score of 'Fruitful' was (8.0%).

The results show that the highest response to 'has no means was among the sample members in Israel and Egypt, where the percentage reached (2.3%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, where the percentage was (0.0%), and the percentage reached Among the sample members in Palestine (1.1%), the total score was of 'Has no mean' (5.7%).

We note from the results that the highest response of 'no more need' was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage amounted to (17.2%). The lowest response was among the sample members in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, where the percentage reached (0.0%). In contrast, in the response of the sample members in Palestine, the percentage reached (2.3%), the percentage among the sample members in Egypt was (1.1%), and the total score of 'No more need' reached (20.7%).

The results show that the highest response of 'not relevant' was among the sample members in Palestine, where the percentage reached (9.2%), while the lowest response was among the sample members in Iran, where the percentage reached (1.1%). The percentage reached among the sample members in Turkey and Saudi Arabia (4.6%), the percentage of Israel was (3.4%), and the percentage of the total score was (29.9%).

It can be noted from the analysis that the direct impact of the conflict on the countries targeted in this research was the highest responses in Saudi Arabia, and this is, in fact, yes, the conflict has a direct impact on it because of the religious position represented by Saudi Arabia, as well as the Saudi ambition to intervene in the issues of the region. In contrast, the responses in Turkey reflect that the 'conflict has no direct impact,' and this meets the reality of Turkish interference in the conflict. On the contrary, it has no effect, as evidenced by the strength of Turkish-Israeli relations in several areas.

As for the indicator of intervention to resolve the conflict, the highest responses were in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This reflects the reality of the situation and the mediation practiced by both countries in the conflict, directly and indirectly, specifically Egypt.

The indicator of intervention to gain a regional position was the highest response among the sample members in Iran and the lowest in Turkey, which is also consistent with the current Iranian ambition.

As an indicator of whether the country's policy was sufficient to resolve the conflict, the responses were the highest in Saudi Arabia and the lowest in Turkey. This is evidence that is consistent with Saudi policy on the ground and its level of intervention in the conflict, and another indicator where the lowest responses were on the Turkish side, which reflects the desire to increase and raise the level of Turkish policy in intervening in the conflict, which is actually at its lowest level.

Concerning the indicator of changing the countries' policies after the Arab Spring of 2011, the highest responses were in Saudi Arabia, and this is a natural indicator, especially after Saudi Arabia became preoccupied with the current conflict in Yemen and its support for the Yemeni regime against the Houthi group there, who are affiliated with the Shiite movement.

The data suggest that Iran has the highest level of perceived internal coalition building among the parties to the conflict. This is consistent with Iran's implicit alliance with the Islamic Jihad organisation in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as its previous alliance with Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. Interestingly, Israel has the highest perception of this coalition as 'Active', despite not previously acknowledging its existence. On the other hand, Turkey's responses indicate a perception that the coalition is 'Inactive', with this view being seen as 'fruitful' in Iran. This situation is worrying for Israel and local powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Furthermore, Israel and Egypt have the highest response indicating that the Coalition 'has no means', while Turkey has the highest response indicating 'no more need'.

Regarding the last question, the author sees a conflict in the answers regarding the classification of the coalition and a convergence only in the case of Iran, in particular regarding its position on the coalition of the Palestinian parties.

#### **4. Results related to the “World Powers.”**

To answer the questions of this dimension, the arithmetic averages and standard deviations were extracted, noting that the scale used in this dimension is the triple Likert scale. The response is (3), so the arithmetic mean here is from (3), and the following tables show the results:

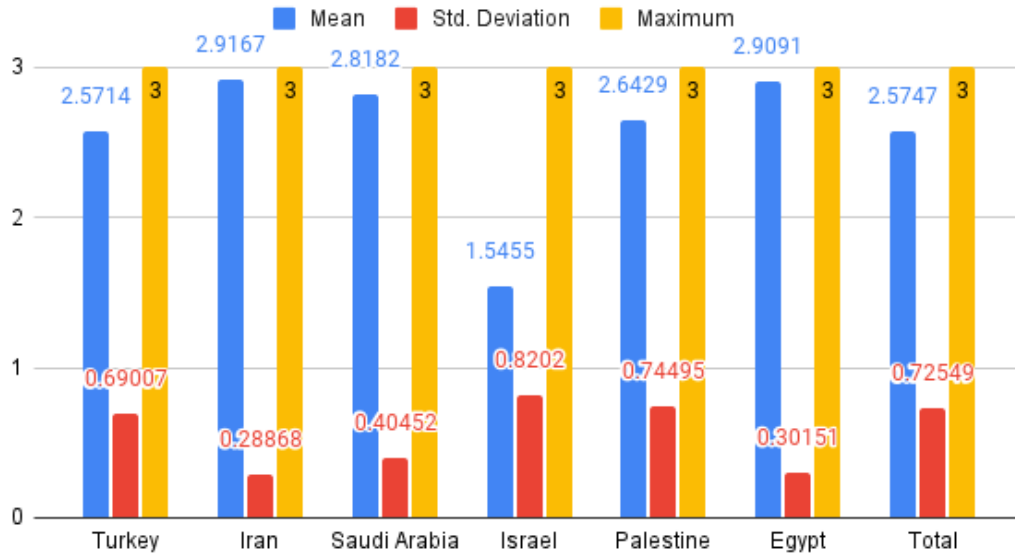


Table No. 23.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.23 shows the highest response to the first question: “The intervention of external powers ‘world power’ is an obstacle to successful regional cooperation in the Middle East?” Was among the sample members in Egypt, where the arithmetic mean reached (2.9091), and the lowest response among the sample members reached in Israel, with (1.5455), and in Turkey reached (2.5714), in Iran reached (2.9167). The arithmetic mean of the sample members in Saudi Arabia reached (2.8182), in Palestine (2.6429), and the total score for the sample as a whole was (2.5747).

The author agrees with this result, as most countries, led by Egypt, consider external interference as a reason for the lack of a prosperous regional model in the region, while the lowest responses were in Israel, and this justifies its need for the intervention of external powers in its favour.

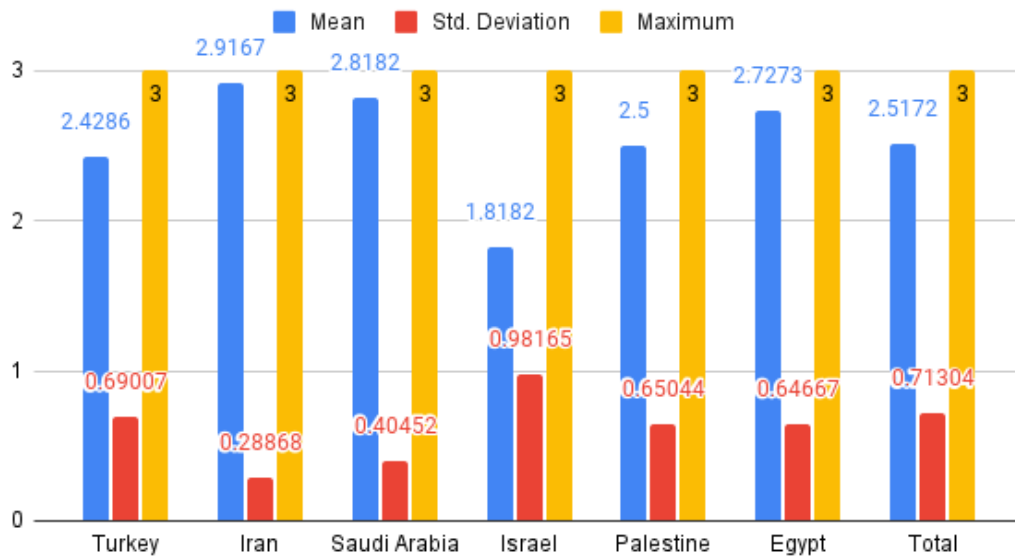


Table No. 24.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response to the second question, which states: “The United States of America’s U.S. position as a dominant power in the Middle East is the main cause of the failure of a regional model for cooperation,” was among the sample members in Iran, with (2.9167), and the lowest response was among the sample in Israel, where the score reached (1.8182), and in Turkey reached (2.4286), in Saudi Arabia reached (2.8182), while the arithmetic mean of the sample members in Palestine reached (2.5000). Moreover, in Egypt (2.7273), the total score for the sample as a whole was (2.5172).

The United States is considered a supra-regional power in the Middle East, and this is absolute control. It does not want successful regional cooperation that might affect its interests or its strategic ally, Israel. The writer agrees with the conclusion that Iran sees the American intervention as the biggest failure to achieve successful regional growth. This is out of enmity with America itself, but at the same time, Iran does not agree with more than one country, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

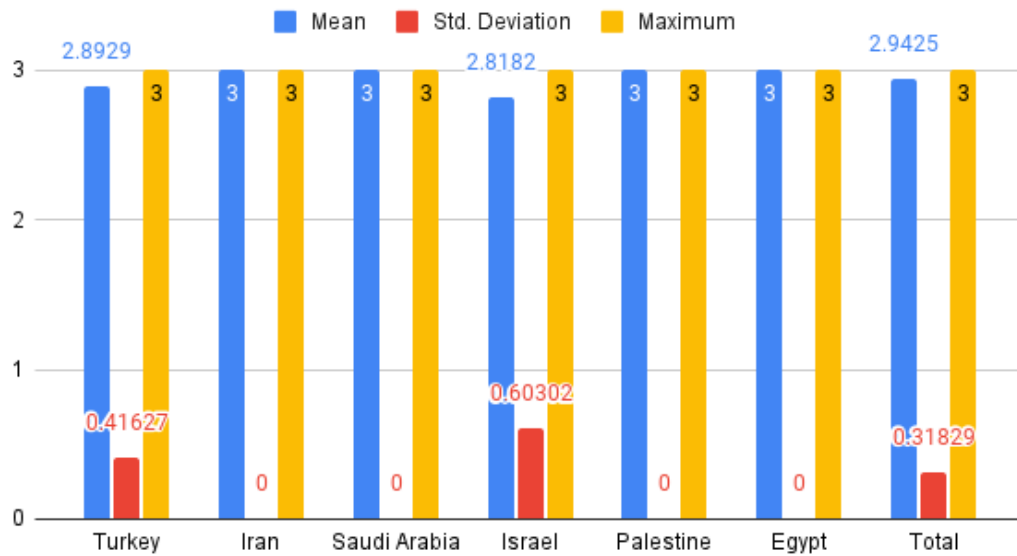


Table No. 25.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The results related to the third question, which states: “The United States is biased in its policy toward Israel,” indicate that the highest response was among the sample members in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Egypt, with (3.0000), and the arithmetic mean of the sample members in Turkey reached (2.8929), While in Israel reached (2.8182), the total score for the sample as a whole was (2.9425).

The results of this question are typical, as all countries agree that the U.S. is biased towards Israel, implicitly and publicly.

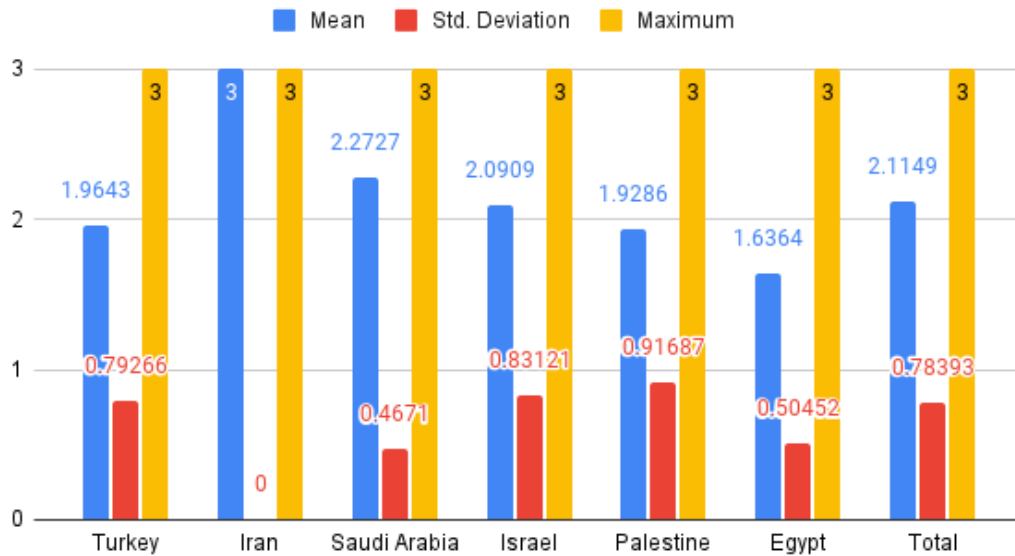


Table No. 26.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response to the fourth question, “The United States' policy toward the Middle East is in decline,” was among the sample members in Iran, where the arithmetic mean was (3.0000). The lowest response was among the sample members in Egypt, with (1.6364), and in Turkey, reached (1.9643); in Saudi Arabia, was (2.2727); in Israel (2.0909); and in Palestine reached (1.9286), the total score for the sample as a whole reached (2.1149).

Iran believes that U.S. policy is declining, as the results indicate, while Egypt does not see this, with the rest of the results being equal between those who support this decline and believe that it is not declining.

Iran sees a decline in the United States's role in the region and even wants it, while Egypt strategically does not want that because of U.S. support.

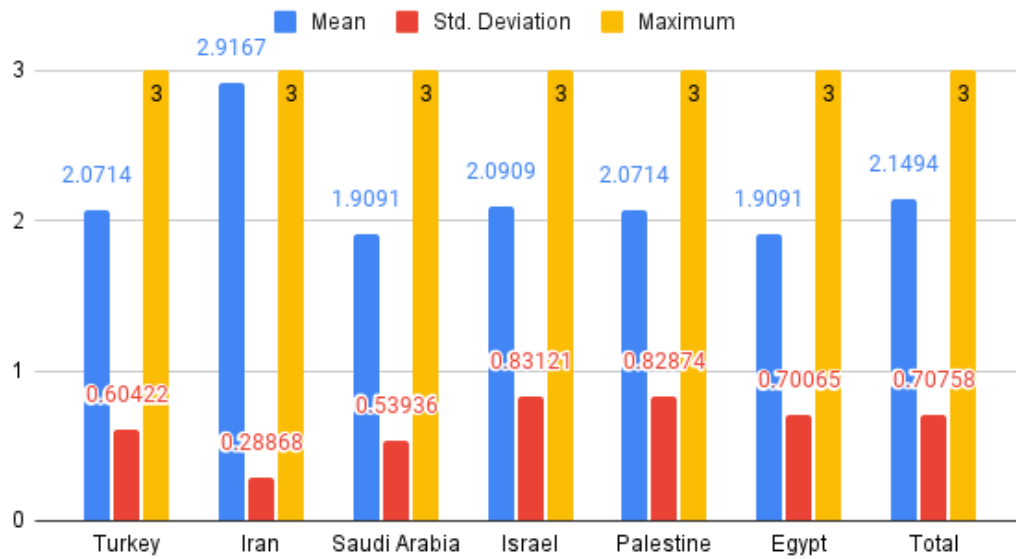


Table No. 27.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Concerning the fifth question, which states: “The U.S. Hegemony in the Middle East is declining but not falling,” It was found that the highest response among the sample members was Iran (2.9167), and the lowest response among the sample members in Saudi Arabia and Egypt was (1.9091). The arithmetic mean of the sample members in Turkey was (2.0714), the arithmetic mean of the sample members in Israel reached (2.0909), the arithmetic mean of the sample members in Palestine was (2.0714), the total score of the sample as a whole reached (2.1494).

The results of this question are similar in terms of content to the previous question. The decline in the role of the United States – as Iran desires – does not mean its complete downfall, but rather that there is a rearrangement of the region with its components and powers.

Regarding the ranking of countries according to the strength of each country’s intervention in the Middle East, it was the highest response to the sample members who believe that the U.S. is the most interfering country in the Middle East, the sample members in Iran and Turkey, with (3.0000). The lowest response was among the sample members in Egypt, with (2.1071); in Saudi Arabia, it was (2.8182); in Israel, it was (2.9091); and in Palestine, it was (2.7857); the total score for the sample as a whole reached (2.6437).



As for the European Union, it reached the highest response among the sample members in Egypt, where the arithmetic mean reached (2.8182), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, with (1.7143), in Turkey reached (2.4643), Iran reached (2.1667), in Saudi Arabia reached (2.7273), and in Israel reached (2.1818), the total score for the sample as a whole reached (2.3448).

Regarding Russia reached the highest response among the sample members in Iran, with (2.9167). The lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, reaching (1.7143), Turkey (1.8571), Saudi Arabia (2.3636), and Israel (2.7273), which was in Egypt (2.7273). The total score for the sample as a whole reached (2.2644).

As for China, it reached the highest response among the sample members in Turkey, where the arithmetic mean was (2.2143), and the lowest response was among the sample members in Palestine, with (1.5714), and in Iran reached (1.9167), in Saudi Arabia reached (2.0000), and in Israel reached (2.0909), in Egypt reached (1.8182), the total score of the sample as a whole reached (1.9770).

Through the total score (average calculation) of the sample members in all the countries targeted in this survey, the author sees that the indicators are high in terms of considering that the intervention of world powers is an obstacle to any successful regional cooperation in the Middle East and that the intervention of the U.S. as a dominant power is a significant failure factor of the successful model of regional cooperation in the region, with a clear bias of the U.S. policy toward Israel.

It is also clear that Iran is the highest country that sees US policy as declining, as opposed to Egypt, which sees the opposite, as can be seen from the responses. Likewise, concerning the hegemony of the United States, it is declining but will not end. The highest responses were in Iran and the lowest in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Here, the author believes these answers are directly related to the nature of the hostile relations that the U.S. has with Iran and its compatible relationship with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In terms of the ranking of countries in terms of the strength of their intervention in the region, the results were as follows: the United States, then the European Union, then Russia and China.

**5. Results related to the “Conflict Effect”**

To answer the questions of this dimension, cross tables were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each response according to the place variable.

**5.1. Result related to the first question: “The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is still the top priority for the Middle East?”**

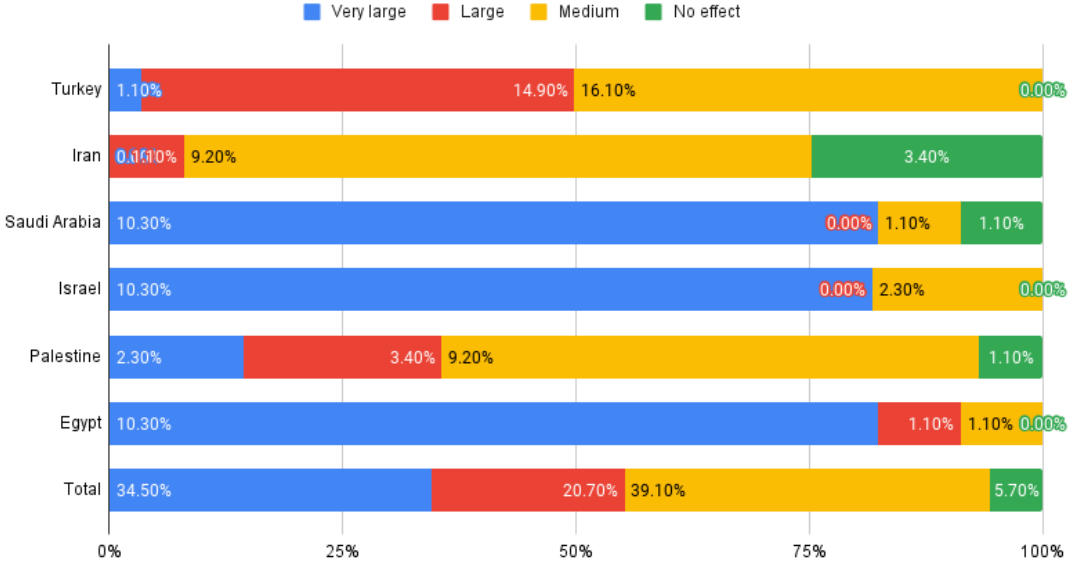


Table No. 28.

Source: compiled by the author

The results show that the ‘Medium’ obtained the highest percentage in the average responses among the targeted countries in this research.

The author believes that this result is expected. After the Arab uprising, the countries' policies changed, and the balance of power also changed; the dispute became rife with armed conflicts and instability. Many countries, such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen, the countries of the region became preoccupied with themselves more than their interest in the problems of neighbouring countries; it is natural that the priority of the conflict reaches medium, may be lower than that of some countries in practice.

**5.2. Result related to the second question: “Do you think the conflict directly impacts the Middle East stability?”**

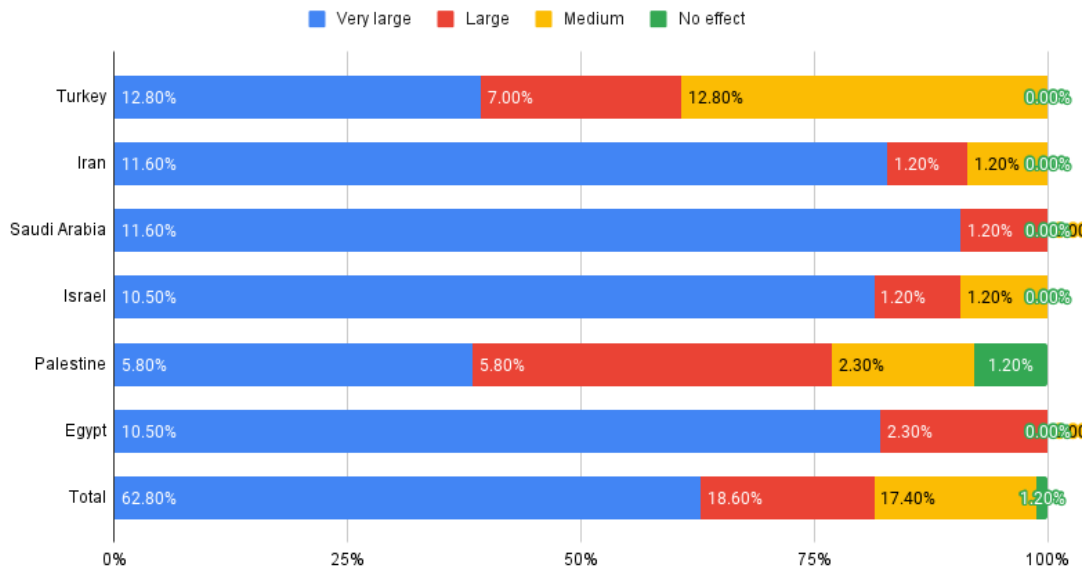


Table No. 29.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The results show that ‘very large’ obtained the highest percentage in the average of responses among the targeted countries in this research regarding how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affects the stability of the Middle East. This result is natural and meets the current reality, and this conflict has always existed; without future and radical solutions, the region will not feel any stability and security.

**5.3. Results related to the third question: “Do you believe that solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will positively impact solving the problems of the Middle East?”**

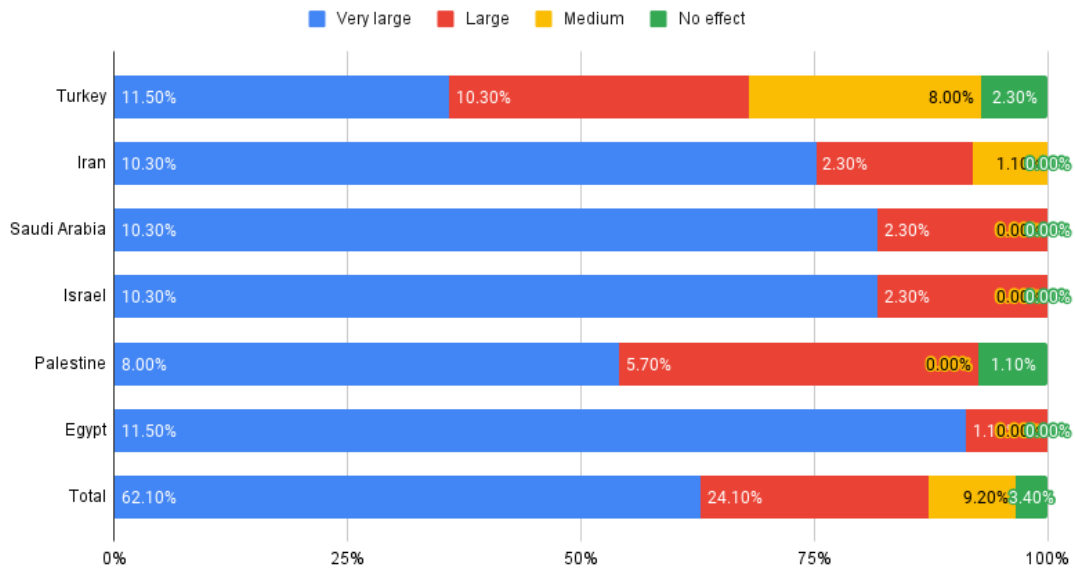


Table No. 30.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The results show that ‘very large’ obtained the highest percentage that solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will positively affect the solutions to the region's problems. The author believes this is the only conflict in the region that, if resolved in a just and fair manner, will move the region towards stability because other conflicts in the region differ from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in terms of type and content. It is possible to put an end to them.

#### 5.4. Result related to the fourth question: “c?”

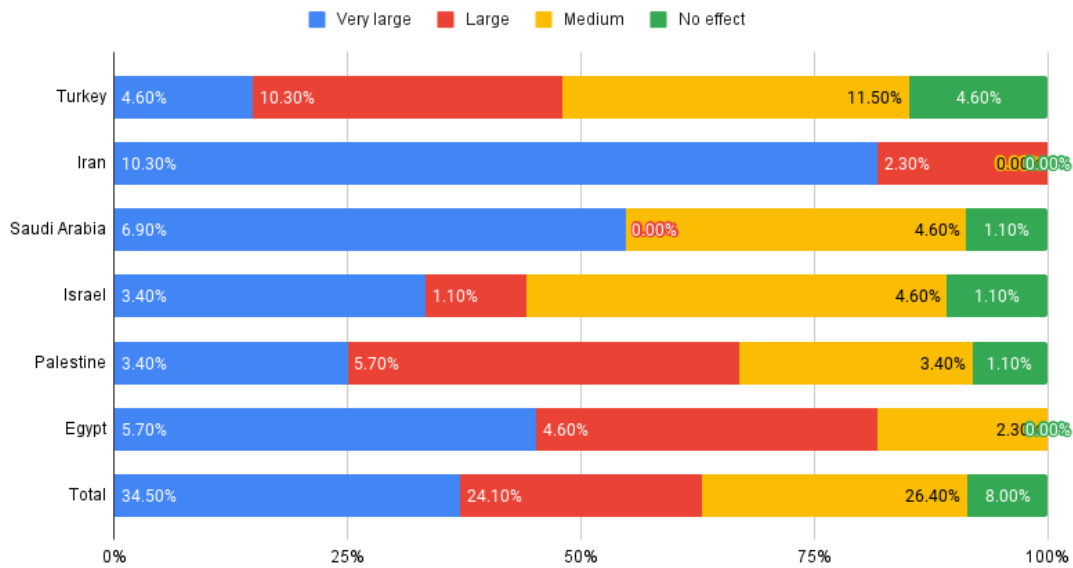


Table No. 31.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest degree of change was in Iran, Saudi Arabia, then Egypt in a very large and medium way in Turkey, then Israel, and large in Palestine concerning the change in the priorities and policies of these countries after the Arab uprising of 2011. The indicator ‘very large’ obtained the highest percentage, and the author’s opinion is that this result is natural; after the Arab uprising in 2011, countries have become more involved in their policies “concerning internal affairs and ensuring their stability” than their interference in the affairs of the region.

**5.5. Results related to the fifth question: “Israel’s position as a strong country in the region is considered a success factor in resolving the conflict.”**

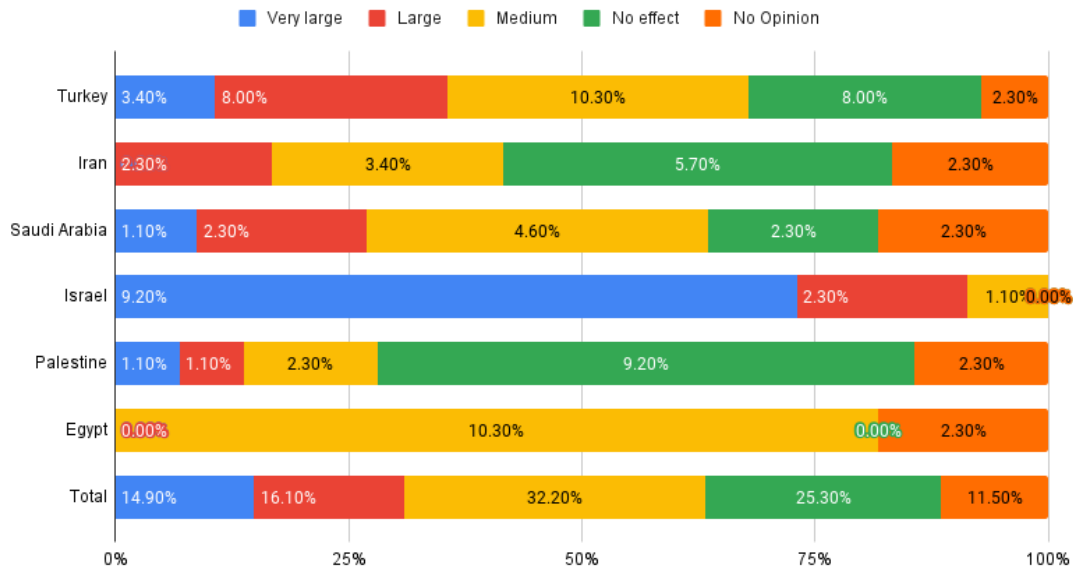


Table No. 32.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Israel's position as a strong country is considered a success factor in resolving the conflict; the results fluctuated between medium and no effect. The author attributes this result to the fact that it is assumed that Israel's power is a factor in resolving the conflict regarding the ability to take action. The decision or the imposition of specific directions to resolve the conflict, but so far this has not happened, and accordingly, these responses were made by the respondents not to consider its power as a positive factor enhancing the solution to the conflict

**5.6. Result related to the sixth question: "Israel's position as a strong country in the region is considered a failure factor in resolving the conflict."**

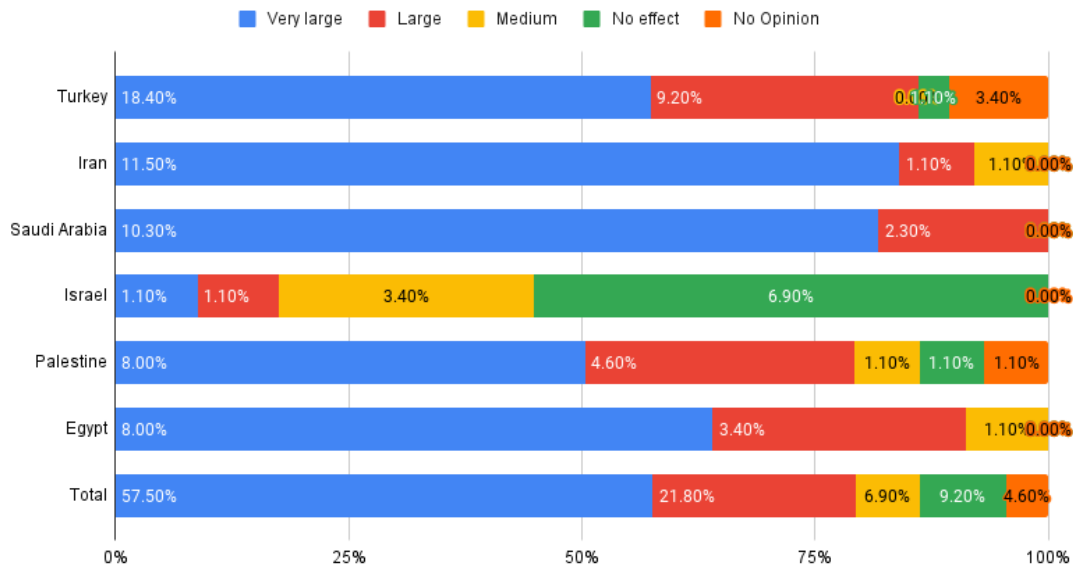


Table No. 33.

*Source:* compiled by the author

It is evident from the indicator ‘very large’ that Israel's position as a strong country is considered a failure factor to resolve the conflict. This indicator, according to the author’s opinion, is what reflects the current reality of the situation in the Middle East, specifically on the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as Israel's power and position in the region push it towards ignoring the Palestinian issue and the conflict and its attempt to impose a reality on the ground in proportion to Israel's interests without taking into account the priorities of the Palestinian situation or even taking its options and needs seriously. This is based on the power of Israel and the weakness of the Palestinians and is in line with the reality of the situation in the Middle East as a region.

## 6. Results related to the “Expected Alliances”

To answer the questions of this dimension, cross tables were used to determine the frequencies and percentages of each response according to the place variable.

### 6.1. Result related to the first question: “What are your thoughts on the formation of a regional power through the alliance and cooperation of more than one country.”

Table No. (34)

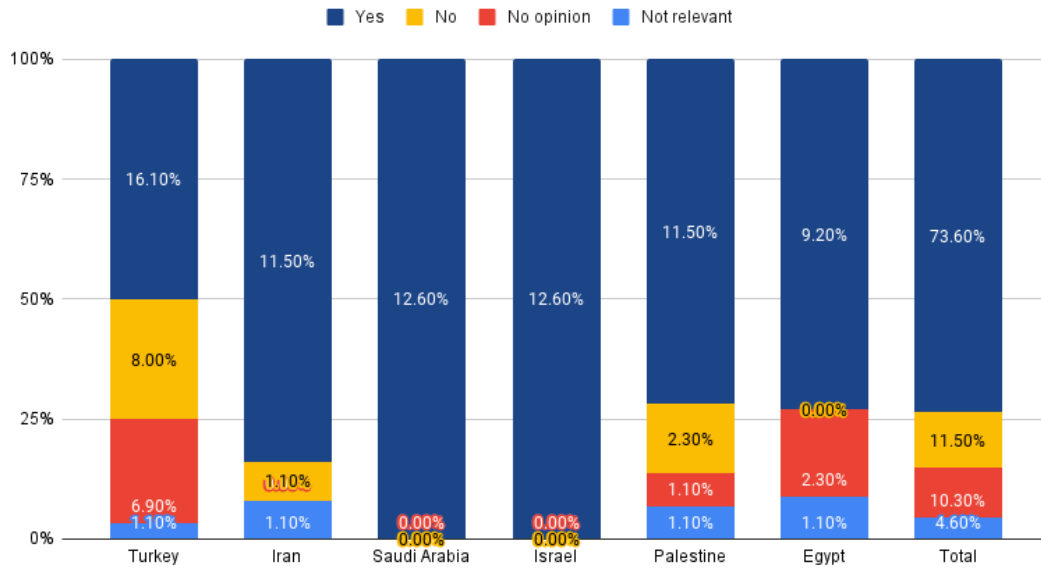


Table No. 34.

*Source:* compiled by the author

It seems that the 'yes' answer was the highest of the overall results on the possibility of the formation of a regional power through the alliance of more than one country in the Middle East. The data indicate a strong inclination towards the possibility of the formation of a regional power in the Middle East through the collaboration of several nations. The author deliberately asked this question to highlight the potential for a collective approach to shaping the region's future rather than relying on a single dominant power.

**6.2. Result related to the second question: “Do you consider the Saudi-Israeli alliance possible?”**



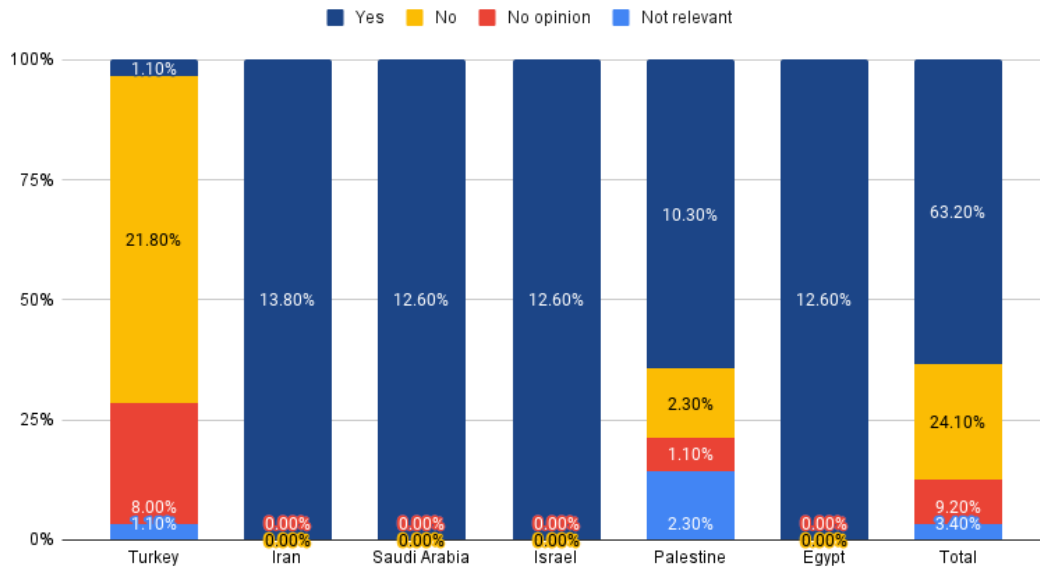


Table No. 35.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.35 shows the highest total response rate of ‘yes’ possibility of the Saudi-Israeli alliance. The respondents in Turkey were higher in the direction of answering ‘no.’ Practically on the ground, the author believes that the result of this question is natural and possible when the Israeli openness to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states is in full swing in the security aspects. At the same time, before the Arab Spring 2011 in particular, it was impossible to think about it.

### **6.3. Result related to the third question: “Do you consider the Iranian-Israeli alliance possible?”**

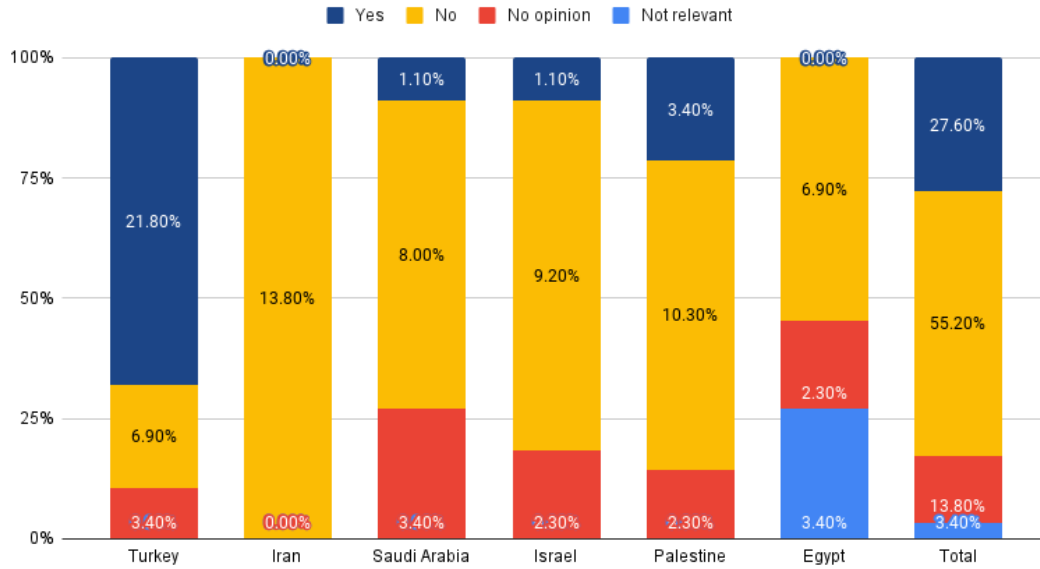


Table No. 36.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest total response rate of ‘no’ to the possibility of an Israeli-Iranian alliance, while the paradox was found by the respondents in Turkey, where the response ‘yes’ was highest than ‘no.’ The result is natural that it is not possible to establish an Israeli-Iranian alliance, while the author attributes the responses in Turkey to uncertainty in politics in general and that anything is possible.

#### **6.4. Result related to the fourth question, "Do you consider the Turkish-Israeli alliance possible?"**

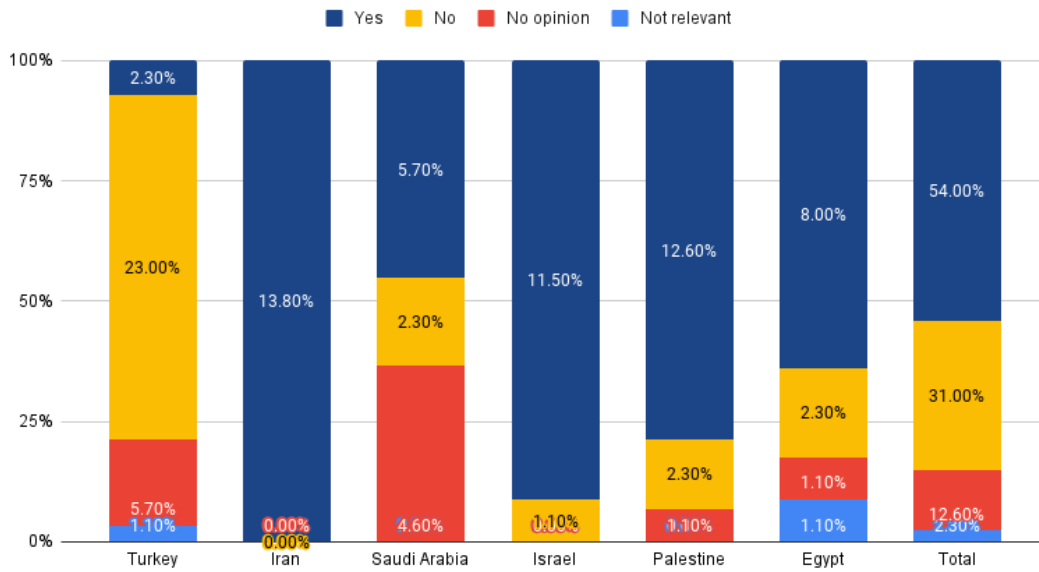


Table No. 37.

Source: compiled by the author

The highest total response rate of ‘yes’ to the possibility of a Turkish-Israeli alliance, the highest rate of ‘yes’ response among the countries was in Iran, and the lowest rate of ‘yes’ was in Turkey, where in Turkey the majority tended to answer with ‘no.’

The author sees how the Iranian view Turkey as “the possibility of an alliance with Israel,” which may be considered a kind of political downfall, and that the respondents in Turkey do not see this alliance as possible. While the reality of cooperation between the Turkish and Israeli sides exists on the economic and security levels on the ground, the author of the dissertation agrees with the result of this question that this alliance is possible.

#### 6.5. Result related to the fifth question: “Do you consider the Saudi-Iranian alliance possible?”

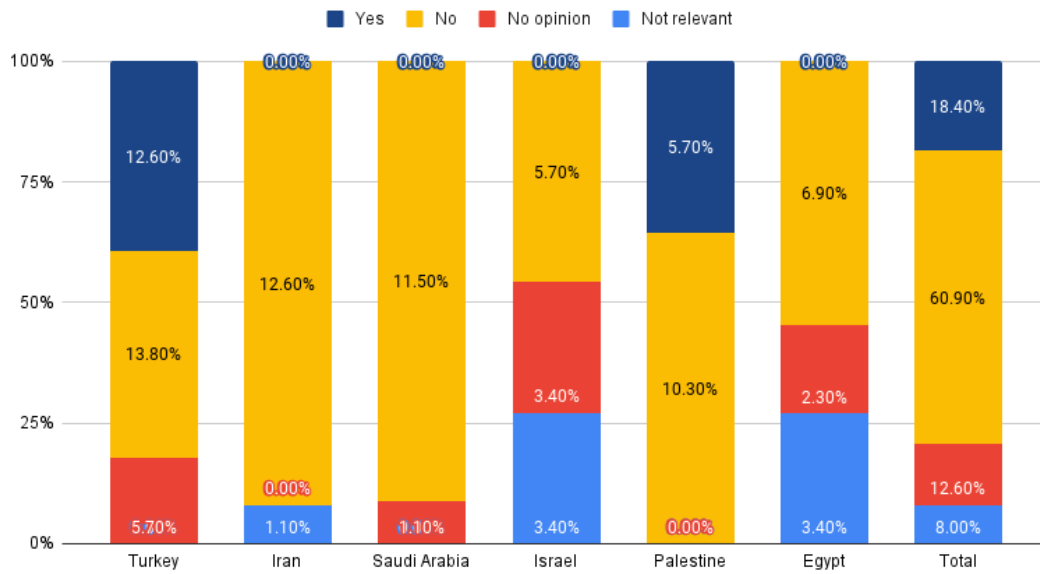


Table No. 38.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.38 shows the highest total response rate, ‘no,’ to the possibility of the Saudi-Iranian alliance, while the respondents in Turkey were almost equally divided between ‘yes’ and ‘no.’

The author agrees with the result of this question, as it is impossible for a Saudi-Iranian alliance or even cooperation in the affairs of the Middle East, and the lack of clarity in the answers of the respondents in Turkey refers to the Turkish political uncertainty in both Iran and Saudi Arabia “the mistrust.”

**6.6. Result related to the sixth question: “Do you consider the Turkish-Iranian alliance possible?”**

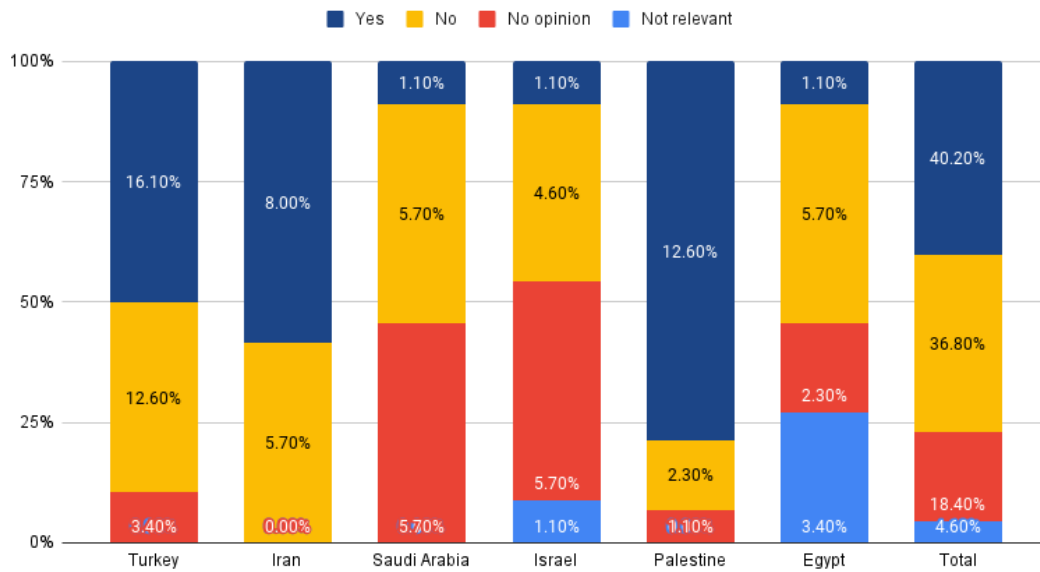


Table No. 39.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest total response rate was ‘yes’ to the possibility of a Turkish-Iranian alliance. In both countries, Turkey and Iran, the respondents’ answers were ‘yes’ more than they answered ‘no,’ and this is close to unity in the view to some extent, knowing that the answers of the two countries in the possibility of an alliance with Israel in the questions it showed as if each side “Turkish and Iranian” was suspicious of the other.

In politics, everything is possible, and within the framework of the realist theory, interests always meet, even if the principles differ.

**6.7. Result related to the seventh question: “Do you consider the Turkish-Saudi alliance possible?”**

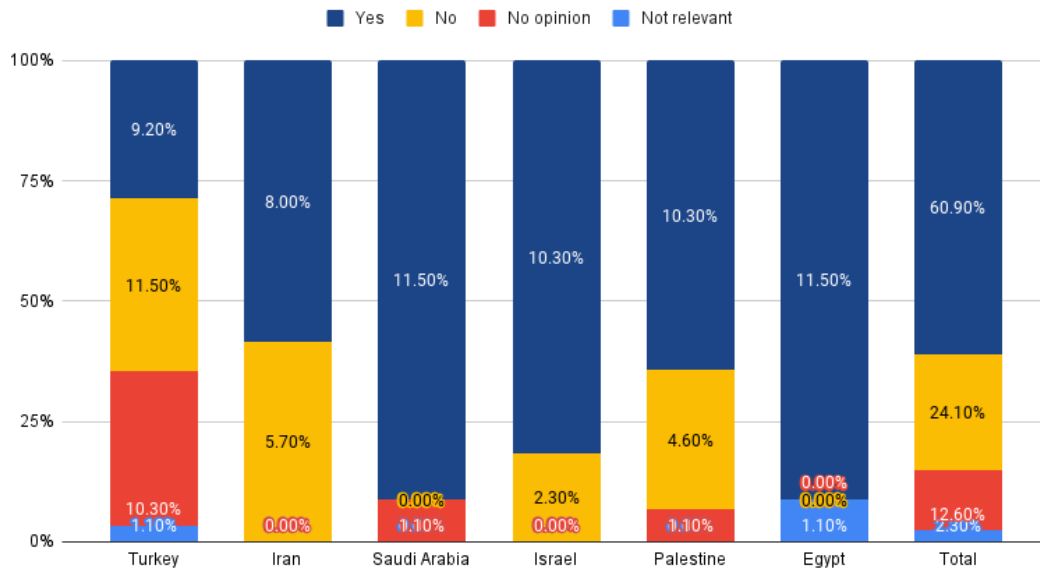


Table No. 40.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.40 shows the highest total response rate, ‘yes’ to the possibility of the Turkish-Saudi alliance, and that the ‘yes’ response index in all countries is higher than its counterpart in the ‘no’ response.

The author considers that the result of this question is different from the practical reality in the Middle East. There is an invisible conflict between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the religious sphere. Both parties see themselves as leaders of the Sunni Muslim world, and Turkey, like Saudi Arabia, sees itself as a model, and both parties' policies reflect this tendency. For example, sponsoring and building mosques worldwide was under the Saudi umbrella and is now under the Turkish umbrella. This alliance might have been impossible. But the changing map of the region and its contradictions after the Arab Spring in 2011 make anything possible.

**6.8. Result related to the eighth question: “Do you believe that the United States is interested in supporting a new regional power in the Middle East in the near future?”**

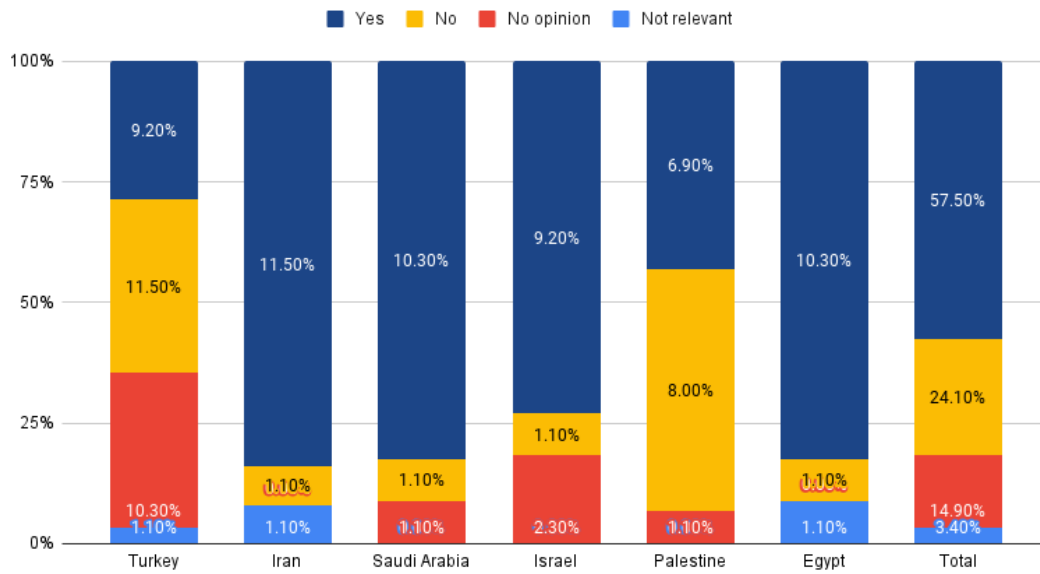


Table No. 41.

Source: compiled by the author

Table No.41 shows the highest overall response rate, ‘yes’ that the U.S. is interested in supporting a new regional power in the region in the near future.

The author believes that the results of this question are close to the results reached in previous chapters of the thesis: the policy of the U.S. is in decline in the region at the expense of supporting a regional power in the region to replace it and reducing the burdens of the U.S. expansion abroad while preserving its interests.

### 7. Result related to the “ Internal Palestinian Situation”

To answer the questions of this dimension, the arithmetic averages, and standard deviations were extracted, bearing in mind that the scale used in this dimension is the five-point Likert scale. Paragraphs with positive content were given (5) degrees for each answer ‘very agree,’ (4) degrees for each answer ‘agree,’ (3) points for each answer ‘neutral,’ (2) degrees for each answer ‘disagree,’ and (1) degree for each answer ‘very disagree,’ the highest response is (5). The following tables show the results:

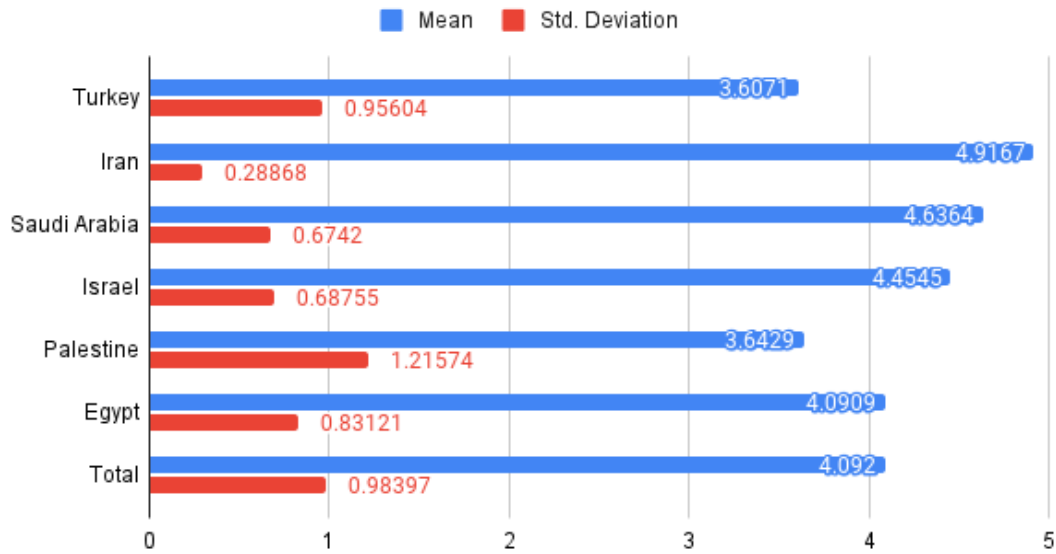


Table No. 42.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The table No.42 shows that the highest response to the first question, which states: “There is a direct impact of the internal Palestinian division on the nature of alliances in the region,” in Iran with (4.9167), and the lowest response in Turkey with (3.6071), and the in Saudi Arabia reached (4.6364), in Israel reached (4.4545), and in Palestine reached (3.6429), and with Egypt (4.0909), the total score for the sample as a whole reached (4.0920).

The author disagrees with the results of this question, and Iran does not care about the agreement of the Palestinian side as much as it cares about its protection in the region. The author agrees with the Turkish state's third arrangement in the division's impact on their policy, as Turkey played a supportive role for the Gaza Strip more than for the West Bank.



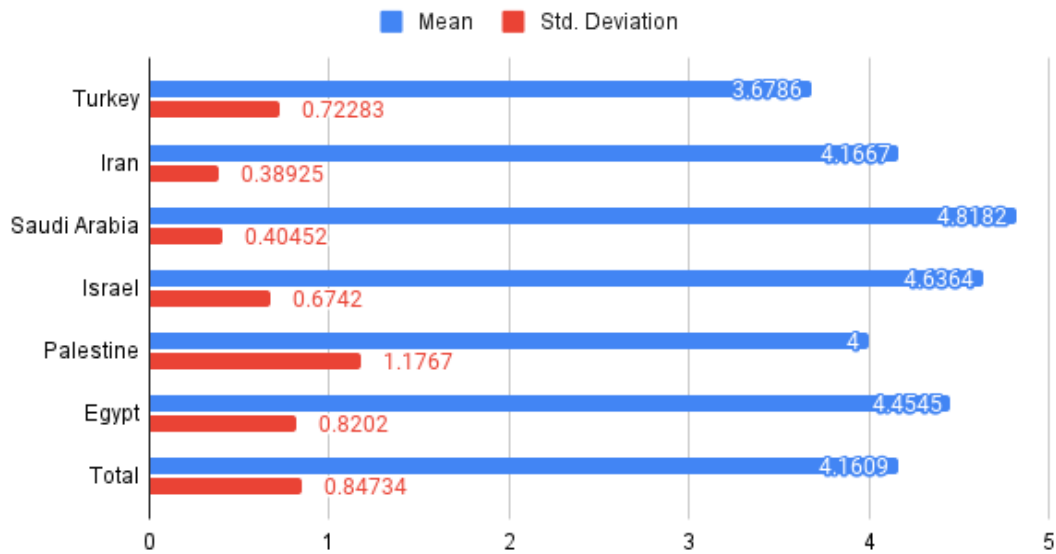


Table No. 43.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response to the second question, which states: “There is a direct impact of the internal Palestinian division on resolving the conflict in general,” was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia, with (4.8182), and the lowest response was reached among the sample members in Turkey, with (3.6786), and in Iran reached (4.1667), in Israel reached (4.6364), and for Palestine reached (4.0000), and in Egypt (4.4545), the total score for the sample as a whole (4.1609).

In general, there is a direct impact of the Palestinian internal division on resolving the conflict. There has been a state of fragmentation and even contradiction in alliances between Gaza and the West Bank. The author agrees with the results of this question, as Saudi Arabia played a significant role in trying to achieve reconciliation between the two parties in more than one initiative, but it did not succeed.

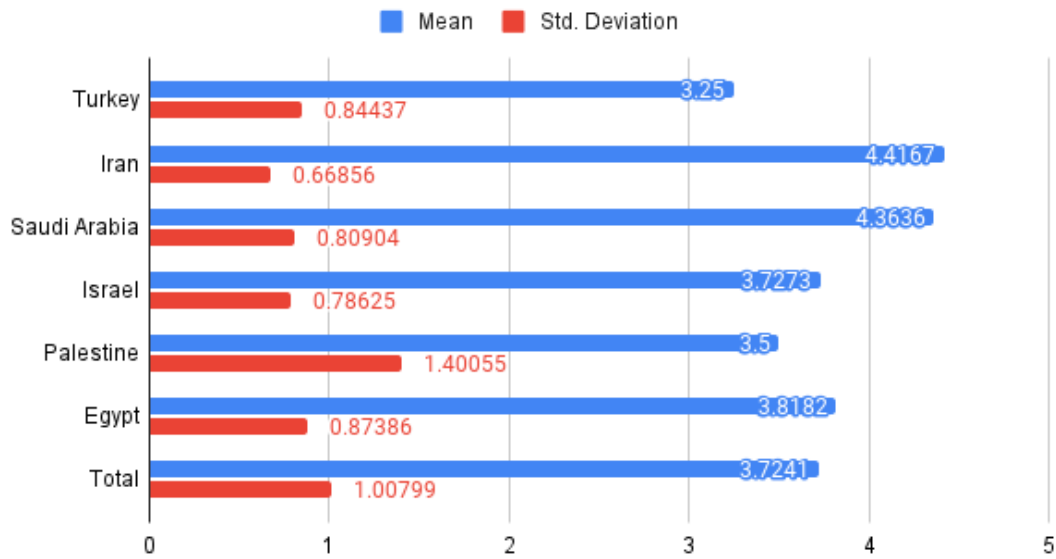


Table No. 44.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.44 shows the highest response to the third question: “The Arab Uprising of 2011 has had a direct impact on the growth of the Palestinian schism ‘division’ the mediation countries are preoccupied with themselves” in Saudi Arabia, with (4.3636). The lowest response reached among the sample members in Turkey, with an average of (3.2500); Iran reached (4.1667); Israel reached (3.7273); Palestine reached (3.5000), meanwhile in Egypt (3.8182), the total score of the sample as a whole (3.7241).

The author believes that the Arab uprising in 2011 directly affected a change in the policies of the region's countries, which became more preoccupied with their internal affairs than with the problems of the region itself. It also played a role in strengthening the state of division.

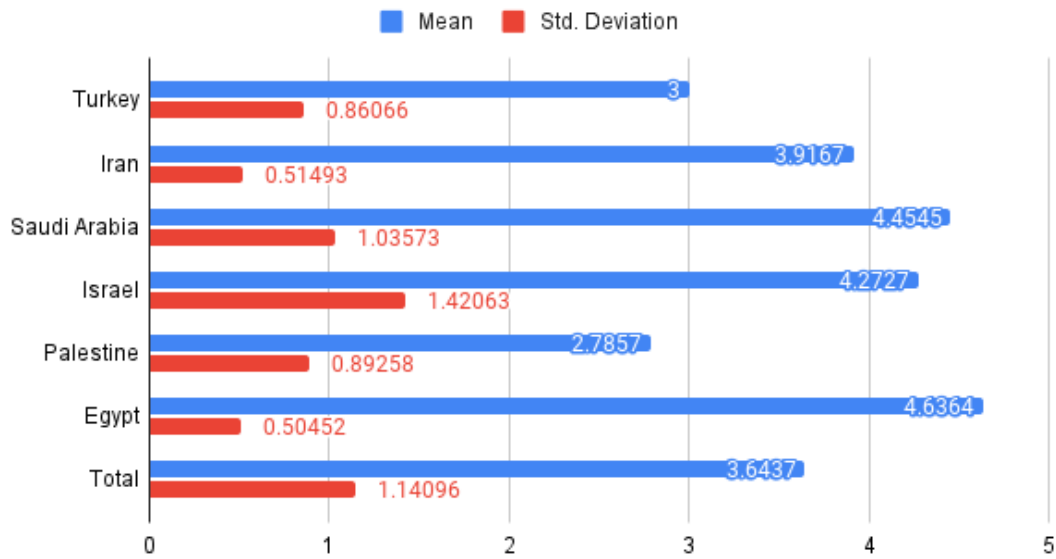


Table No. 45.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response to the fourth question, which states: “Your country intervenes to end the Palestinian schism,” was among the sample members in Egypt, with (4.6364), and the lowest response among the sample members in Palestine, with an average of (2.7857). The average in Iran reached (3.9167), Saudi Arabia reached (4.4545), Israel reached (4.2727), and Turkey reached (3.0000), the total score for the sample as a whole (3.6437).

The author agrees with the results, as Egypt is one of the most interfering mediating countries in the conflict, and also agrees with the order of countries' intervention, as Turkey plays a marginal role in it.

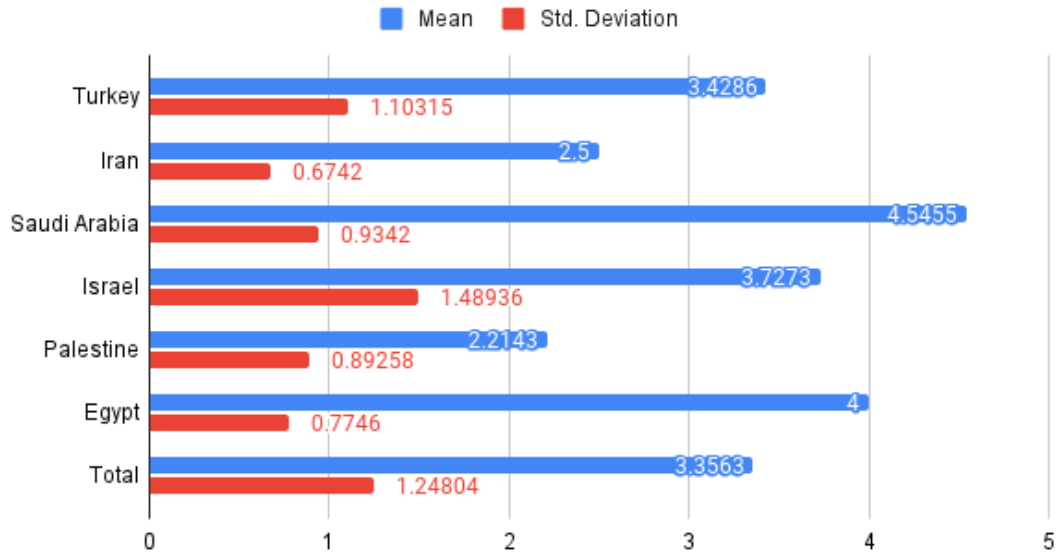


Table No. 46.

*Source:* compiled by the author

Table No.46 shows that the highest response to the fifth question, which states: “Are you satisfied with your country’s policy to end the Palestinian schism?” was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia with (4.5455), and the lowest response reached among the sample members in Palestine with (2.2143), in Turkey reached (3.4286), and in Iran reached (2.5000), in Israel reached (3.7273), as for Egypt reached (4.0000), the total score of the sample as a whole (3.3563).

The author agrees with the results of this question, as the mediating countries are satisfied with what they are offering to end this division, which none of them could do. The author attributes this to more than one reason, on top of which, as previously mentioned, the preoccupation of the mediation countries with their internal affairs after the events of the Arab uprising, their intervention to gain regional status and not to resolve the conflict, their interference imposed by their political and Islamic reality – sowing ashes in the eyes to satisfy their people.

## 8. Results related to the future of the region

The eighth dimension was with one question: “Do you think that the region will enjoy “peace and stability, violence, wars, foggy, don’t know” in the next five years? The results are as follows:

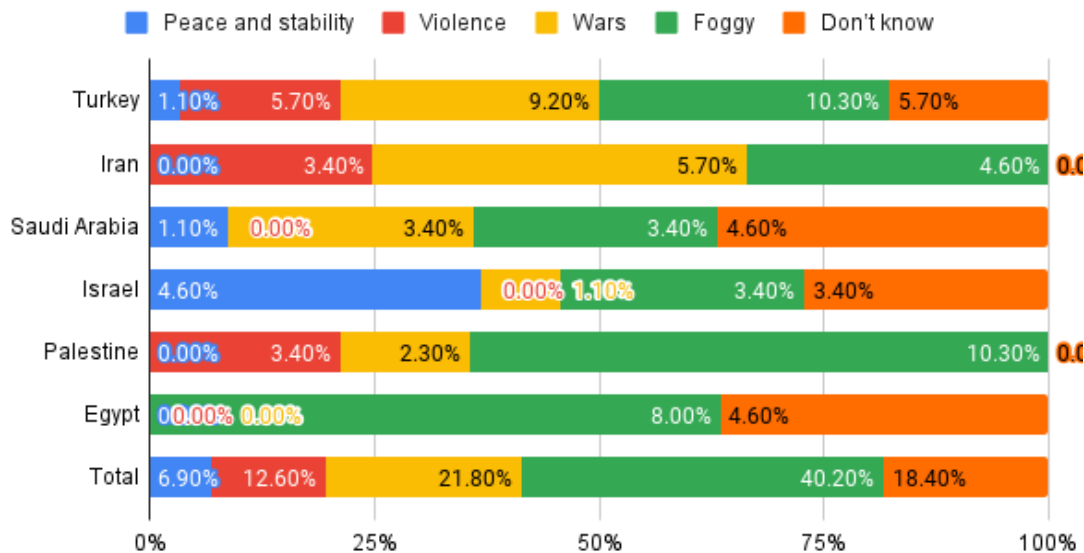


Table No. 47.

*Source:* compiled by the author

The highest response of ‘peace and stability’ among the sample members was in Israel, where the percentage reached (4.6%). The lowest response among the sample members was in Iran, Palestine, and Egypt (0.0%), and the percentage among the sample members in Turkey and Saudi Arabia (1.1%), the total degree of ‘peace and stability’ (6.9%).

The highest response of ‘violence’ was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (5.7%). The lowest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt (0.0%), and the percentage of the sample members in Iran and Palestine (3.4%), the total degree of ‘violence’ (12.6%).

The highest response to ‘wars’ was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage amounted to (9.2%), and the lowest response among the sample members was in Egypt (0.0%). The percentage of the sample members in Iran was (5.7 %). It reached among the sample members in Saudi Arabia (3.4%), and it was among the sample members in Israel

(1.1%), and it reached among the sample members in Palestine (2.3%), the total degree of 'wars' reached (21.8%).

It is evident that the highest response of 'foggy' was among the sample members in Turkey and Palestine, where the percentage reached (10.3%), and the lowest response among the sample members was in Saudi Arabia and Israel (3.4%), and the percentage among the sample members in Egypt (8.0%), the percentage among the sample members in Iran (4.6%), the total degree of 'foggy' (40.2%).

The table shows that the highest response of the sample members of 'don't know' was among the sample members in Turkey, where the percentage reached (5.7%). The lowest response was among the sample members in Iran and Palestine (0.0%). The percentage of the sample members was in Saudi Arabia and Egypt (4.6%), and the sample members were in Israel (3.4%), with a total score of 'don't know' (18.4%).

The table shows that the indicator of 'foggy' obtained the highest overall score among the sample members at a rate of 40.2% regarding the region's future. Paradoxically, the sample members in Israel had the highest response toward peace and stability, which may be ambitious. The sample members in Turkey are divided between wars and foggy, while the sample in Iran is divided between foggy and more about wars. The author believes that this result reflects the reality of the situation in the region.

## **XI. 1. 8. Findings of the survey**

Surveys are a fundamental tool in social sciences for gathering empirical data to validate or challenge theoretical frameworks. Specially to explore whether the results of a recent survey met preliminary expectations and examine the relationship between the survey results and the theoretical concepts discussed in the dissertation. Specific examples from the survey results are used to illustrate these points.

The thesis explored two fundamental perspectives within its theoretical framework: the balance of power theory and the Buzan's regional security complex. The former is rooted in the idea that states maintain their local status and relationships within the regional and international environment, emphasizing protection, preservation of existence, and the cessation of threats. The latter delves into a deeper understanding of states' relationships and

regional security, extending beyond the state as the basic unit of analysis to consider historical-geographical connections and regional dimensions. The changes in the Middle East following Iraq's departure from the region's power structure in 2003 have prompted countries to reassess their positions in line with regional dynamics and ongoing developments. The questionnaire was designed to align with the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The results of the survey were generally in line with the researcher's expectations and aligned with the theoretical framework of the thesis. A notable finding, for example, was the perception of the Middle East as a geographical description under the influence of the policies of major countries, rather than as a region with uniform decisions and definitions.

The current chaos in the region and the interests of the regional countries are proving to be influential. According to the balance of power theory, these countries are no longer as invested in the Palestinian issue as they once were. Survey results indicate that the Palestinian issue now occupies a lower or middle position on the agenda and concerns of regional countries. The significant rise of Israel and its ability to intervene more clearly in the region's affairs has added to the complexity of the conflict. In contrast, the other powers in the region have been preoccupied with their internal affairs and the balance of power.

The Middle East Regional Security Complex (RSCT) is marked by a deep-seated interdependence among states regarding security. This interdependence stems from historical, cultural, religious, and political factors, leading countries within the region to view their security as intricately linked to that of their neighbours. Curiously, the survey's analysis of regional power revealed that most respondents believe there is a dominant power in the Middle East. This aspect illustrates the challenges of having a dominant regional power in the area. The authors attribute this to the influence of external powers from outside the region, mainly led by the United States. Nevertheless, security alliances can be formed among multiple powers to exert control over the region. The author believes that it is interests rather than principles that shape states' policies.

The theory of realism and the balance of power is manifested in the impact of the Palestinian division on regional alliances and on the conflict itself. The division among Palestinians has affected regional alliances and the conflict. The West Bank is governed by the Palestinian Authority while Hamas controls the Gaza Strip. Their different policies have led to distinct political approaches and international alliances regarding the conflict.

The survey covered eight dimensions, each dimension had a set of questions for measurement and analysis. Some responses simulated the reality of the region, while others were new and different. The general objective of the survey was to know the clarity of the name of the 'Middle East' and its meaning to the respondents, as well as its strategic importance as a determinant of the foreign policy of the targeted countries.

The survey also looked at the extent to which Israel, as a strong state, is reflected as an influential factor in resolving the conflict, or as a failed one. At the same time, the survey focused on the extent and order of intervention by world powers and the diminished role of the United States and its support for a new regional power to replace it or implement its policies.

The survey delved into the intricate dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to ascertain its significance and priority in the policies of the targeted countries. Moreover, it sought to understand how the internal division among Palestinians influenced the policies of these countries. The survey culminated in a forward-looking exploration of the region, offering insights and a vision for the next five years.

### **1. The definition and Importance of the Middle East**

The results showed that 69.0% of the survey sample believes a clear definition of the so-called Middle East exists. While (31.0%) do not believe a clear definition of the Middle East exists. We believe that the most significant percentage was heading for the fact that there is a clear definition of the Middle East and that Turkey had the largest share of affirmation that there is a clear definition of the Middle East.

The results show that 75.9% of the correspondents believe that their country belongs to the Middle East geographically, while (23.0%) don't, and (1.1%) see 'no relationship.' Meanwhile, Iran is a country that does not believe it belongs to the Middle East geographically.

The results indicate that 90.8% of the survey sample show that all the targeted countries in this survey believe that they belong to the Middle East politically; 8.0% answered 'no,' 1.1% answered 'not relevant.' The result is a specific, confirmed sense of political belonging to the region.



Regarding the geographical significance of the Middle East, the results show that 63.2% of the respondents answered 'yes,' 32.2% answered 'no,' 3.4% answered 'no opinion,' and 1.1% answered 'not relevant.' The answers are close to ensuring that the Middle East has a geographical connotation exclusively. Meanwhile, the sample members in Turkey believe that the Middle East does not have a geographical significance exclusively but goes beyond that, while the rest of the sample members in "Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Israel" believe so.

The majority of the samples were close to ensuring that the Middle East is not a successful model of regional cooperation, with 36.8% of the respondents answering 'yes,' 52.9% answering 'no' and 8.0% answering 'no opinion' and 2.3% answering 'not relevant.' Meanwhile, Iran and Saudi Arabia were the highest in considering that the Middle East is a successful model for regional cooperation. In contrast, the rest of the countries, led by Turkey, considered that the Middle East is not a successful model for regional cooperation and the fact that the results of Saudi Arabia and Iran, in particular, are different from what the literature has dealt with it in general that the Middle East is a failed model of international cooperation.

Finally, despite the apparent lack of clarity surrounding the definition of the Middle East, there is a clear definition of the Middle East region from the political and geographical point of view, and the Middle East region is approaching the definition from the geographic point of view used by world powers to indicate a place. Meanwhile, the Middle East is a failed model in regional cooperation regionalism, as it contains a group of countries of varying strength seeking to secure self-protection for them.

## **2. Regional power**

The summary of regional power showed that the response of the sample members tends to agree that there is a dominant power in the Middle East with 60.9%, with 33.3% disagreed. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are closer to the presence of a dominant regional power in the Middle East. At the same time, the indicators are low in the rest of the countries in which the survey was conducted. We see that the answers may have had some ambition from the sample members in both countries mentioned Iran and Saudi Arabia or so they think or desire.

The percentage reached (72.4%) agreed that there is an influential power in the Middle East, with (21.8%) disagreeing; as the results came, the total sum of the sample members who

agreed that there is an influential regional power in the Middle East is high, while it is noted that the sample members in Turkey are divided equally between 'yes' and 'no,' and this may be an indication of their belief that there is no effective power in all fields.

When analysing the power of their targeted countries, respondents from Turkey primarily identified their country as an "influential power" and "just a power", which seems to resonate with the current state of Turkey. Conversely, participants from Iran characterised their country as a 'dominant power', a view that may be emotionally driven and could benefit from a broader perspective. On the other hand, the responses from sample members in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine and Israel were considered to be a more accurate representation of their current reality.

Strangely, the summary of regional power in the survey showed that high responses tend to agree that there is a dominant power in the Middle East. All countries - except for Palestine - in the region strongly aspire to become a regional power, and none of the countries in the region possesses the fundamental components of a dominant regional power. Instead, it is influential, aims to become a regional leader and a relative preponderance of material resources, and seeks to gain recognition of its status by at least some countries in the region and, if necessary, by world powers.

If we consider that the order represents the conditions in which the units of the international or individual regional systems operate,<sup>259</sup> the Middle East does not operate within a clear, well-defined order because the region lacks a supreme regional authority. This absence of a central authority, however, does not lead to chaos, but rather creates a unique order for the Middle East, characterised by a blend of order and chaos. In contrast to other regions, the Middle East is not defined by a particular order, because the supreme authority is represented by the world powers and not by the internal regional powers.

### **3. The importance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the region**

It is noted from the previous analysis that the direct impact of the conflict on the countries targeted in this research was the highest responses in Saudi Arabia, and this is, in fact, yes, the

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<sup>259</sup> PONÍŽILOVÁ, M., 2017. p. 185.

conflict has a direct impact on it, and this is represented in the mediating role that Saudi Arabia plays in intervening in this conflict, or in the packages of financial support it provides to the Palestinian Authority.

As for the indicator of intervention to resolve the conflict, the highest responses were in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This reflects the reality of the situation and the mediation practiced by both countries in the conflict, directly and indirectly, specifically Egypt.

The indicator of intervention to gain a regional position was the highest response among the sample members in Iran and the lowest in Turkey, which is also consistent with the current Iranian ambition.

In terms of whether the countries' policies were sufficient to resolve the conflict, the responses were highest in Saudi Arabia and lowest in Turkey. This is another piece of evidence that is consistent with Saudi policy on the ground and its level of intervention in the conflict, and another indicator where the lowest responses were on the Turkish side, reflecting the desire to increase and raise the level of Turkish policy in intervening in the conflict, which is actually at its lowest level.

With regard to the indicator of changes in countries' policies after the Arab Spring of 2011, the highest responses were in Saudi Arabia, and this is a natural indicator, especially after Saudi Arabia's preoccupation with the current conflict in Yemen and its support for the Yemeni regime against the Houthi group there, which is linked to the 'Shia' movement.

Regarding the indicator of forming an internal alliance between the parties of the conflict, Iran was the highest, and this is evident by its relation with the Islamic Jihad organisation in Gaza and the West Bank.

International alliances with the parties of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and with the Palestinian factions, in particular, are unavailable, as they were in the past during the polarization of Palestinian parties and neighbouring countries or even world powers.

The issue of alliance and polarization at the time was a source of strength for the Palestinian factions, such as the alliance between the Palestinian and Russian socialist parties or the alliances of Palestinian factions with Arab regimes, such as the alliance of the Palestinian 'Baath Party' with the Iraqi regime during the era of Saddam Hussein.

These alliances were considered sources of strength for the two parties, the Palestinian in obtaining financial or military support, and the other party benefit proving strength and interference in the region's affairs.

Currently, the State of Qatar has entered the system of alliances with Palestinian parties, as is the case now with the Qatari alliance with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. However, it differs notably: with Israeli approval, in exchange for security guarantees, while Hamas receives monthly funds from the State of Qatar.

The survey examines the level of involvement of the targeted countries in the conflict, whether their interventions were aimed at resolving the conflict or at enhancing their regional standing. The results of the questionnaire rank these interventions according to their level of involvement. The main focus is to illustrate the extent of political change in these countries following the 2011 Arab Spring, which significantly influenced their policies. This influence either shifted their attention from the conflict to addressing internal issues, or led them to begin to reshape their regional position within the power dynamics of the region. In both cases, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been de-prioritised and marginalised.

#### **4. The World Powers**

The indicators are high in terms of considering the intervention of world powers as an obstacle to any successful regional cooperation in the Middle East, and the intervention of the U.S. as a dominant power is a major failure factor of a successful model of regional cooperation in the region, with a clear biased of the U.S. policy toward Israel.

It is also clear that Iran is the country with the highest perception that U.S. policy is in decline, unlike Egypt which has the opposite perception.

Likewise, concerning the hegemony of the United States, it is declining but will not end. The highest responses were in Iran and the lowest in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Here, these answers are directly related to the nature of the hostile relations the U.S. has with Iran and its compatible relationship with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Regarding the ranking of countries in terms of the strength of their intervention in the region, the results were in order, the United States, the European Union, and Russia, then China. Moreover, this arrangement is as it is in reality. The United States is still holding all the

strings. However, it is pushing the global and local powers to intervene more effectively, allowing Russia and Turkey to interfere in Syrian affairs.

The results of this dimension are consistent with what was discussed in the previous chapters of the thesis, as the Middle East has never been a successful model in regional cooperation, and the presence of external interference is one of the most significant obstacles to achieving any success. The United States is still the supra-regional power dominating the region with other roles for the global powers, the European Union, Russia, and China. However, it is still subject to the U.S. will and desire and has no freedom of action or influence but instead plays a functional role. Perhaps the United States wants to reduce the burden of its global expansion, and in the Middle East region as well, by giving more space to global powers to intervene, as it did with Russia, allowing it to interfere in Syrian affairs, as well as its continuous demands for China to play a more significant role than just a trading partner in the region.

## **5. The Conflict Effect**

The results show that the 'Medium' level obtained the highest percentage because the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is still a top priority. The results show 'very large' to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affects the stability of the Middle East. This result is natural and meets the current reality. Without future and radical solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the region will not feel any stability and security.

Also, the result (very large) obtained the highest percentage to the fact that solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will positively affect the solution to the region's problems. The author agrees that this is the only conflict in the region that, if resolved and fairly, will move the region towards stability because the other conflicts differ in form and content from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is possible to put an end to them.

It is clear that the highest degree of change was in order in Iran, Saudi Arabia, then Egypt, in a very large and medium way, in Turkey, then Israel, and large in Palestine about the change in the priorities and policies of these countries after the Arab uprising of 2011. Also, the indicator 'very large' obtained the highest percentage. The author sees this result as natural since, after the Arab uprisings in 2011, countries have become more involved in their policies

“concerning internal affairs and ensuring their stability” than their interference in the region's affairs.

The results fluctuated between medium and no effect to the indicator that ‘Israel’s position as a strong country is considered a success factor in resolving the conflict.’ The author attributes this result to the fact that Israel’s power is a factor in resolving the conflict regarding the ability to take action. However, so far, this has not happened. Accordingly, these responses were made by the respondents not to consider its power as a positive factor enhancing the solution to the conflict, indeed to consider it as a negative factor.

An inevitable result (very large) is to consider ‘Israel's position as a strong country a factor in the failure to resolve the conflict. This indicator reflects the current reality of the situation in the Middle East, specifically on the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as Israel's power and position in the region push it towards ignoring the Palestinian issue and the conflict and its attempt to impose a reality on the ground in proportion to Israel's interests without taking into account the priorities of the Palestinian situation or even taking its options and needs seriously. This is based on the power of Israel and the weakness of the Palestinians and is in line with the reality of the situation in the Middle East as a region.

In summary, The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is no longer a top priority in the region; it has fallen to the middle rank. This decline did not affect the fact that the conflict-affected the region's stability. The rise of Israel significantly and its ability to intervene in the region's affairs more clearly increased the complexities of the conflict. In contrast, the other powers of the region were preoccupied with their internal affairs and the balance of power. The results of this axis reinforce the author’s point of view that Israel seeks to turn its back on the conflict, neglect it, and direct the region towards other common security problems, such as the Iranian issue.

## **6. The Expected Alliances**

The Saudi-Israeli alliance is practically on the ground, and the result of this question is natural and possible, with 63.2% of the total response agreeing with this formation when the Israeli openness to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states is in full swing in the security aspects. At the same time, before the Arab Spring 2011 in particular, it was impossible to think about it.

The highest total response rate of 'no' with 55.2% to the possibility of an Israeli-Iranian alliance, while the paradox was found by the respondents in Turkey, where the response 'yes' was the highest with 21.8%. This result is natural in that it is impossible to establish an Israeli-Iranian alliance, while the author attributes the responses in Turkey to uncertainty in politics in general and that anything is possible.

The highest total response rate of yes was 54% to the possibility of a Turkish-Israeli alliance, the highest rate of 'yes' response among the countries was in Iran, and the lowest rate of 'yes' was in Turkey, where in Turkey, the majority tended to answer with 'no.' How the Iranian view of Turkey (the possibility of an alliance with Israel), which may be considered a kind of political downfall, and that the respondents in Turkey do not see that this alliance is possible. At the same time, the reality of cooperation between the Turkish and Israeli sides exists on the ground's economic and security levels. The author agrees with the result of this question that this alliance is very possible.

The highest total response rate was "no," with 60.9% to the possibility of the Saudi-Iranian alliance. At the same time, the respondents in Turkey were almost equally divided between the "yes" and "no" responses. The author agrees with the result of this question, as there cannot be a Saudi-Iranian alliance or even cooperation in the affairs of the Middle East, and the lack of clarity in the answers of the respondents in Turkey refers to the Turkish political uncertainty in both Iran and Saudi Arabia meaning mistrust.

The highest total response rate was "yes," with 40.2% to 36.8 "no" to the possibility of a Turkish-Iranian alliance. In both countries, Turkey and Iran, the respondents' answers were "yes" more than they answered "no," and this is close to unity in the view to some extent, knowing that the answers of the two countries in the possibility of an alliance with Israel in the questions it showed as if each side (Turkish and Iranian) was suspicious of the other. In politics, everything is possible, and within the framework of realist theory, interests always meet, even if the principles differ.

The highest total response rate was "yes," with 60.9% to the possibility of the Turkish-Saudi alliance, and the "yes" response index in all countries is higher than its counterpart in the "no" response.

The author considers that the result of this question is different from what exists in the practical reality in the Middle East. There is an invisible conflict between Turkey and Saudi

Arabia in the religious field. Both parties see themselves as a leader of the Sunni Muslim world, and Turkey considers itself a model, as well as Saudi Arabia, and the policies of both parties reflect this trend. For example, sponsoring and building mosques worldwide was under the Saudi umbrella and is now under the Turkish umbrella. This alliance might have been impossible, but the change in the map of the region and its contraventions after the 2011 Arab Spring is moving towards making everything possible.

The highest overall response rate, which was yes, is that the U.S. is interested in supporting a new regional power in the region in the near future, with a total response of 57.5%. The results of this question are close to the results reached by the author in previous chapters of this survey that the policy of the U.S. is in decline in the region at the expense of supporting a regional power in the region to replace it and reduce the burdens of the U.S. expansion abroad while preserving its interests.

This dimension is concerned with showing how difficult to have a single dominant regional power in the region. The authors attribute this to supra-regional external powers that interfere in regional affairs, led by the United States. However, security alliances between multiple powers aiming to control the region can occur.

The dimension discusses the expected alliances from the point of view of the respondents. The author discusses how they see their countries' readiness from an academic perspective, most of which were acceptable, except for the Turkish-Saudi alliance, with a high indicator of its occurrence, so it is difficult in theory. However, it is expected that the author believes Interests determine the priorities of states' policies, not principles.

## **7. Internal Palestinian Situation**

The highest response was in Iran that there is a direct impact of the internal Palestinian division on the nature of alliances in the region; meanwhile, the lowest response was in Turkey. This is actually what is on the ground, as Iran has allied with the Islamic Jihad movement instead of an alliance with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, Turkey has become closer to the Hamas movement due to its political proximity to the State of Qatar, which is active as a mediator and financially supports Hamas.

Regarding the direct impact of the internal Palestinian division on resolving the conflict generally, the highest support response was in Saudi Arabia, and the lowest was in Turkey.



Saudi Arabia interferes, fluctuates with the Palestinian Authority between ebbs and flows, and rejects a relationship with Gaza ruled by Hamas because it refused to deal with the Muslim Brotherhood, as Hamas is considered an extension of it.

Recently, Turkey has become more evident in its relationship and alliances with the region. It has clarified its vision of achieving its strategic interests first, away from its slogans of supporting the people of Palestine. It tried more than once to mobilize the international community to lift the blockade on Gaza and gain that in the media. Still, its steps did not last long after strengthening strategic relations with Israel and building them in other locations such as Syria and Libya.

The Palestinian division left apparent effects on the nature of alliances in the region. The political reality in Palestine was divided into two parts: the West Bank, which the Palestinian Authority controls, and the Gaza Strip, which Hamas controls. There are ideological differences between the two parties, like alliances and the regional extension of the regional powers and even world powers.

In the same issue, and as is the case with the Palestinian division reflecting on the nature of alliances, the Arab Spring 2011 revolutions also reflected in strengthening the division on the one hand and forgetting the Palestinian issue on the other hand, as the countries of the region and mediation, in particular, are preoccupied with themselves, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The highest response was among the sample members in Saudi Arabia; the lowest response was in Turkey.

Regarding the intervention of countries to solve the Palestinian division, the highest responses were in Egypt, then Saudi Arabia, followed by Israel, then Iran, and the lowest in Palestine, while Turkey was almost in the middle position. This indicator reflects some extent, the nature of the current reality, as Egypt and Saudi Arabia are mediating countries to end the Palestinian division. However, all negotiations failed because the Palestinian side – Palestinian Authority or the Hamas movement – was the reason, and the mediator did not make any actual efforts or pressure to make it work. Thus, all mediation sessions for reconciliation end with nothing.

As for satisfaction with the states' policies towards resolving the Palestinian division, the highest indicator was in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey, and the lowest was in Palestine, then Iran.

From the author's point of view, this indicator reflects the reality of the situation in the region. The results show these countries' highest level of intervention in resolving the Palestinian division as if they were saying: This is what we can do. The mediating countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and even Turkey, did not exert any pressure on any side to force it to accept the reconciliation agreement because, in the end, it meant the unification of the Palestinian voice and its return. However, it seems that the division serves these countries' interests and even brings them closer to Israel more and more.

The Palestinian division has left its precise effects on the form of alliances in the region and on the conflict itself. The Palestinians were divided between the West Bank, governed by the Palestinian Authority, and the Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas. Both sides have different policies and agendas. They also have different ways of dealing with the conflict politically and in terms of international alliances.

The other factor that deepened and prolonged the divide was the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011. The countries of the region remained preoccupied, and attempts to heal the Palestinian rift through reconciliation failed. This had a direct impact on the conflict and exacerbated its difficulty, even temporarily.

## **8. The Future of the Region**

As for the region's future, the arrangement was as follows, according to the highest indicators in the countries included in the questionnaire. Foggy got the highest percentage, then wars, followed by violence, then I do not know, and the least of them is peace and stability. The region lives in a state of uncertainty and is far from peace and stability in the near future.

The author entirely agrees with the results of this dimension, as foggy got the highest percentage of the region's future in the next five years, while peace and stability were minor indicators.

Defining the Middle East in an absolute way is not clear – and the fact that it represents a region is also not absolute, i.e., it represents a geographical, political, or geopolitical area, and this is consistent with the foggy, as there is no dominant power in it that can at a minimum, control its affairs and resolve its disputes, in a way that serves its interests collectively.

The option of war is possible at any moment, as the region is still experiencing ongoing competition between the powers of the region. The balance of power continues, and alliances continue as well.

The state of fog also reflected the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which began with the internal division in 2006 and met with the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011 and continued for the time being in a state of foggy and lack of clarity of visions for any horizon for its solution, which represents one of the pillars of stability for the region if a just and fair solution is found for the Palestinians. The author also agrees with the conclusion that the region will be far from peace and stability as long as this conflict is unresolved, just, and comprehensive.

Perhaps this dimension aims at limiting the options that can occur or predict them, i.e., the current reality of the Middle East with its current components of states and other nuclei, but no one knows absolutely what will happen next, in such a case as the Middle East and its mixing of cards statues, changes may occur like states. It may be that new states are being born due to the wars now taking place in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and others. This, too, would add uncertainty to the Middle Eastern scene.

To an extent, the results of this dimension were consistent and even reinforced the current reality in the Middle East in general and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular.

## **XII. Conclusions**

The focus of the thesis is to know the extent of the influence of the regional powers in the Middle East region as part of the international system, on the assumption that the international system is composed of several regional systems, which have become a state of the current international system cannot be bypassed. In addition, knowing its ability to resolve regional conflicts, the focus is on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The thesis dealt with the status of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a tool to measure competition in the region between the main actors, given that a solution to the conflict will lead the region to stability. The intervention of the actors in this regard shows the extent of their potency and influence.

Meanwhile, the existence of a regional power does not necessarily mean finding a just solution to any conflict taking place in the region. However, the dominant power in the system may lead to its stability within a specific geographic framework. To achieve the interests of the dominant regional powers, these powers seek to ensure permanent or temporary stability in the region, controlling conflicts to achieve the security and safety of the region in its geographic unity and ensuring a fair and balanced relationship with the world powers in the international system.

To prove or deny the thesis's hypotheses, proceeding according to a logical sequence was necessary, beginning with agreeing on a definition of regional power and then determining what the region is and whether it is considered geographically well-defined.

The author prepared a table of powers based on the World Power Index (WPI) to classify the candidate powers as regional powers. Then, based on the definition of power as the ability to influence, the impact of each power was measured on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The conclusion will be divided into four parts and presented in a gradation based on the results of the empirical research, in line with the conclusion on the hypotheses that are set forth:

- The thesis assumes that there are no regional powers in the Middle East currently or in the future, and the existing powers are middle or secondary.
- The powers of the Middle East are not interested in regional cooperation but seek to preserve themselves and achieve their interests; simultaneously, they are managed and influenced by the outside' sub-regional power.'
- The thesis assumes that solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with a fair and just solution will take the region to a new stability phase.

The first part of the conclusion will deal with the central hypothesis; the second part will discuss the expected scenarios of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict based on the research findings.

The research on the powers of the region and their influence in the region itself and on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular, through their policies, the results of the research showed that the imbalance of power began in the Middle East after the occupation of Iraq in

2003; new players began trying to take a position in the region, most notably Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.

Many countries, led by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, are trying to work independently through fluctuating their relations with external powers and international competition. For example, Turkey could exploit its position as a member of NATO to implement several policies on the ground, such as securing its borders with Syria in anticipation of the expansion of Kurdish groups and working in coordination with the United States on several internal fronts in Syria. At the same time, it cannot act alone but rather in coordination with external powers that have influence there.

There is no dominant regional power in the Middle East, and the Middle East is not regionally homogeneous in every sense of the word but rather a geographic meaning that changes according to the resources and interests of external powers. Meanwhile, the Middle East is managed from the outside through the control of world powers, most notably the U.S. and the region's countries are distributed around its axis despite the entry of the EU, China, and Russia.

All the countries targeted in the research consider themselves part of the Middle East region politically, and some do not agree to be part of the Middle East geographically, such as Iran and Turkey. The region's geographic unity defines its features as independent of others and the Middle East as a geographically changing region; therefore, no particular order distinguishes the region.

The connection of the region's countries with external powers refers to the origins of its artificial state and its connection to colonial ambitions, which aim to share wealth and control natural resources. Most of the countries in the region did not exist as they are now; instead, they emerged due to sharing the inheritance of the Ottoman Empire following the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1917).

The region's countries compete with each other, with the support of external powers, mainly the United States, and there is no successful regional cooperation between them. And they do not even seek to do so but seek to preserve themselves and their interests.

The other important factor, the continuation of the state of competition, was the Arab Spring uprising in 2011, which resulted in the exit of several countries due to their internal crises,

such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and other countries that have become a war arena in which the powers of the region compete either directly or through war by proxy.

The powers of the region compete for leadership, which drives their passion. The main competition engine for the region's countries is leadership, summarized in the Islamic world's leadership. This applies to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, as each country views itself as the leader of the Islamic world.

On the level of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, the targeted countries in the thesis aim to intervene in the conflict to achieve two goals: the first is to gain a leading regional position the second is to search for permanent or temporary solutions. What is essential is not the search for solutions but their ability to implement any proposals or solutions or even sponsor agreements and ensure their full implementation by the participating parties.

In reality, the intervention of the leading countries is to sponsor a temporary solution, whether on the level of calm or temporary reconciliation. No country that was a party to sponsoring the agreements imposed any sanctions on a party in case of breach of any part of the agreement. The sponsorship of these countries is minimal, and the main reason is the role played by the United States in the region.

Each country seeks to assert its position, and the U.S. exerts considerable influence through its regional policy by supporting a particular state and enhancing its role. This is the basis of the U.S. approach to Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, while seeking to strengthen the role of its key ally, Israel.

Iran is trying to approach a centre position to be in control, but U.S. policy towards it prevent it from doing so. Turkey today lives in an unstable political and economic situation due to its direct military intervention in the region's affairs – Syria, Libya, and Azerbaijan – and the U.S. policy against it, which prevents it from playing a greater role in the region.

At the same time, the region's countries are no longer interested in regional cooperation rather than preserving their positions and countries. The events in the region and the dynamics of change are also reflected in the order of priorities.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has fallen from its once prominent position as the top priority in the region, now holding a secondary or lower rank for some countries. The region's countries are primarily preoccupied with internal issues and closely monitoring the policies of

Israel and the strategies of the United States. They are mainly focused on countering Iran and containing its expansionist intentions, which they consider to be the most pressing concern for the region.

Like neighbouring countries, Palestine is also preoccupied with itself. The internal Palestinian division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 2006 left apparent effects on the map of alliances in the region and progress in any future solutions with Israel. The other negative factor is Israel's substantial rise and ability to intervene in the region's conflicts and influence them, as is the case in Syria, militarily and politically. The decline of the region's powers benefited Israel and eventually led to a decline in the status of the Palestinian cause.

Regarding the role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the European Union's Strategy towards the Middle East. In the context of the EU foreign policy, the EU has used soft policy tools through its channels of diplomacy, the initiatives of individual member states on behalf of the EU, and its direct bilateral relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The EU was keen to strengthen its bilateral relations with both sides of the conflict. However, its relationship with the Israeli side was much stronger, separating the economics from politics, which has many implications and strengthens the idea of soft tools and that the conflict cannot be resolved by these tools only. The establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state would benefit the EU politically and economically through the sovereignty of a Palestinian state that could sign agreements and cooperate, strengthening its economy and reducing its dependence on financial support from the European Union.

For the role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Russian strategy towards the Middle East, Russia's foreign policy relied on cooperation with the two parties to the conflict and the call for the implementation of international legitimacy decisions and the two-state solution. It did not exert any pressure on the Israeli side to implement any of this, and this is also due to the U.S. hegemony in the region and not giving any outside party the freedom to act. What distinguishes the Russian strategy is that it has open lines even to movements that the U.S. considers terrorist, such as Hamas, which gives it more power to influence if it has the opportunity in the future.

On the level of the role of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Chinese strategy towards the Middle East, its policy was (dissociation) and an attempt to practice a policy of moderation

between the parties so that it does not satisfy one party at the expense of the other and in a way that guarantees its interests strategically. China poses a threat to the active powers in the Middle East. Specifically, the U.S. China still enjoys a good reputation among the region's countries and is a first trading partner, and its interests with countries are intertwined and in continuous growth. The U.S. will not be able to dissuade any of its allies from not dealing with China or reducing its commercial influence; the balance is tilted to China if the matter is calculated from a practical and profitable point of view.

China has distinguished relations with Israel on several levels, and China needs Israel as much as Israel needs China in commercial and technological issues.

In its policy towards the thorny issues of the region, specifically the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China practices a peaceful policy and condemns violence. However, it did not link its positions to sanctions, for example, to discourage a party to the conflict or force it to stop doing something that harms one of its partners. The goal is to preserve China's interests effectively guaranteed.

In terms of U.S.-Israeli relations, the link is organic from the inside. Israel is not an external ally but rather a deciding party in U.S. foreign policy from the inside by its infiltration through the lobbies. The U.S. efforts in the Middle East since taking over as the world's leading power in 1948, following the end of WWII, have been to maintain influence and expand its power in the area for its gain. Israel benefited from the U.S. policy in the region, which was reinforced by the active Israeli lobby. Furthermore, there will be no prospects for a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or future regional stabilization if the U.S. policy remains unchanged and the lobby preservation in its impact on foreign policy and Zionist lobbies preserve their impact on the U.S. foreign policy.

This internal regional rivalry can be seen as a reflection of the external rivalry of the world's powers. The change in the U.S. foreign policy and the evident decline in the U.S. global hegemony prompted powers such as China and Russia to enter as new competitors in the region. Perhaps the clear U.S. policy is to manipulate the balance of the regional powers to ensure that no dominant powers in the regions keep their hegemony.

The U.S. became not the sole player in the political landscape in the Middle East because of several changes like international relations and the emergence of rising powers. We could see some indicators of the U.S. policy decline, such as the Russian intervention in Syrian events



since 2011. As a result, this opened the door wide for new world powers to intervene in the region's affairs.

After the Arab Spring 2011, the features and roles of the region's countries have changed politically, Turkey has become closer, but it has no role in influencing the conflict to solve it. Saudi Arabia is preoccupied with limiting Iranian influence in the Gulf. The Yemen war is direct evidence of that; Iran has become more restrictive after tightening the screws it was imposed on it by the United U.S., as well as the Qatari intervention – under U.S. auspices – in the Gaza Strip, which reduced its influence in its relations with the Islamic Jihad movement in the Strip.

The Egyptian role has receded a lot from what it was in the past. Since the Arab Spring revolutions that broke out in Egypt in 2011, Egypt has lost its position and declined in its interest in its internal affairs.

Qatar has a diplomatic mediation role, with a policy similar to that of containing the problems that plague the region, particularly the control of Islamic movements – Hamas in Gaza, for example. It relies mainly on money and the media to promote its policies.

The UAE tried to enter directly, not as a mediator in the region's politics, but rather as a party, and this was evident in its intervention in the Syrian revolution and Yemen.

So, we see that each country is in a functional role that aims first to protect itself and its interests and preserve U.S. interests after its limited retreat from the region. So, the countries of the region are managed from abroad.

Despite the positive developments in relations between some Arab countries and Israel, the failure to reach a radical solution to the Palestinian issue, which is the core of the conflict, makes any attempts at cooperation or even mere rapprochement temporary and unviable.

It may seem easy to separate the issue of the occupation of Palestinian lands from the interactions between Israel and the rest of the Arab states. Nevertheless, the overlapping dimensions, including religious dimensions such as the status of Jerusalem, such as the right of return of refugees, such as settlement construction, and political/legal such as borders and sovereignty, have extensions and repercussions outside the geographic scope of the Palestinian territories themselves, making the issue, in the last analysis, not Palestinian only but Arabs and Muslims everywhere.

Therefore, it is difficult to be sure that establishing, developing, or announcing relations with Israel means the end of this issue. It is inconceivable that these relations have the elements of success and survival while the Palestinian issue continues with its interlocking dimensions referred to without a radical, just, and comprehensive solution.

Accordingly, as long as there is no just solution to the Palestinian issue, the region will not enter into a state of stability. It is already so; despite Israel entering into new and declared relations and normalization with the surrounding countries and establishing economic and security partnerships, the state of instability and security will remain the master of the situation because what is happening in Palestine from escalation and internal conflict with the Israelis will impose itself on the Arab arena, as the issue of Palestine is not linked to their geographic location only, but rather to its religious and ideological status and concerns the matter of every Muslim wherever he is.

## **XII. 1. Expected scenarios for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the light of the current reality in the Middle East**

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has reached in light of the current reality in the Middle East region and the state of blockage on the horizon. The Middle East lives without a dominant power that would solve the region's conflicts and intervene in them. The existence of dominant power does not necessarily mean finding solutions to the region's conflicts, but it is an essential and auxiliary factor.

The Middle East region is managed by external world powers, in the legacy of the artificial states made by the colonial powers, headed by the U.S., the strategic ally of Israel. Throughout the history of the conflict, no deterrent international sanctions were taken against Israel to discourage it from its crimes against the Palestinian people or even force it to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy.

In light of a changing Middle East and changes in its entities, alliances, and interests, the Palestinian issue remains the focus of instability despite its declining rank from priority to medium and even low levels in some countries. Several studies presented alternative options and a set of forward-looking scenarios for these complex situations for this conflict.

The study from the Rand Institute estimates the net costs and benefits over the next ten years of five alternative trajectories: a two-state solution, coordinated unilateral withdrawal,

uncoordinated unilateral withdrawal, nonviolent resistance, and violent uprising.<sup>260</sup> Another study focused on the costs and future scenarios of the Palestinian resistance factions and identified the options with three options: the survival of the status quo, the quasi-state being less than a state and more than self-rule, and national liberation and salvation.<sup>261</sup>

In recent years, the Israelis have discussed possible models for resolving the conflict with the Palestinians, the most important of which are a unified state that covers the entire geographic territory without internal borders, self-rule with a state on independent Palestinian land, and a single federal state divided into two provinces, Jewish and Palestinian, with broad powers, or confederation, which is a model in which there is a division into two states: Palestinian and Jewish with defined open borders between them, while a government is established at the confederal level, combining Israeli and Palestinian elements, and making decisions in specific areas such as security and trade.<sup>262</sup>

The scenarios we will clarify will be from a regional perspective, as the thesis concluded that there is no dominant regional power in the region when the strength of the Israeli state and its network of relations with the Arab world is growing. Under these circumstances, the scenarios for solutions are limited and complex at the same time.

## **XII. 1. 1. Scenario 1. Two state solution**

The option of the two-state solution is considered a carrot that is being brandished by the local and even international parties in this conflict, and it is the option upon which the Oslo Accords of 1993 were signed and supported by international legitimacy, starting with Partition Resolution 149 and Resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations.

At the regional level, this option is no longer available, as the features of the Middle East have changed in terms of the rise of Israeli power, the decline of the Arab role preoccupied with its local issues, and, in addition to that, the expansion of the circle of Israeli-Arab relations

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<sup>260</sup> ROSS, A. C., & EGEL, D. AND OTHERS: *The Costs of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict*. 2015. RAND Corporation, June 2015.

<sup>261</sup> RAHHAL, O.: *The future of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the possible scenarios facing the resistance factions 2021-2023*. Available at: <https://www.amad.ps/ar/post/468462/> [Last Accessed at: 2.10.2022]

<sup>262</sup> ABU AMER, A.: *Alternatives to the "two-state solution" present costly scenarios for the occupation.2022*. Available at: <https://felesteen.news/post/110023/> [Last Accessed at October. 2022]

through its signing of cooperation agreements with Gulf states and other country headed by Morocco. In addition, the most crucial factor is the absolute U.S. bias towards Israel and the non-exercise of any other world powers to put pressure on any side, the most important of which is Israel, to implement the terms of this agreement in a specific way.

At the local level, this option is no longer available in an absolute manner<sup>263</sup>. As settlement expansion continues, and the bypass roads of the settlements cut off the cities of the West Bank, the cities of the West Bank live in a state of isolation, as every city is besieged and at any time can be closed by the Israeli army.<sup>264</sup>

The Oslo framework was envisioned as a two-state solution predicated on the separation paradigm 'some called it divorce' in which the Palestinian state would be established on 22% of the land and Israel on the remaining 78%. Because of the Israeli settlements, for that to happen, Israel would have to annex at least 5% of the West Bank and make a territorial swap on a 1:1 basis of land inside the green line. While that annexation and territorial swap might place about 75-80% of the Israeli settlers under Israeli sovereignty, the remaining 70,000-100,000 settlers would be left behind, meaning they would either have to move back to Israel correctly or to the annexed area.<sup>265</sup>

The expansion of the Israeli settlements and Israeli control of land and infrastructure in the West Bank, along with the fact that those settlers in the hinterland are the most ideological and extreme, makes this option unlikely and unfeasible. Coupled with the objection of most

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<sup>263</sup>Confidence is sinking to new lows, with support for a two-state solution between Palestinians and Israelis dropping to just a third on each side, and opposition to the detailed provisions of a permanent peace agreement to implement the two-state solution growing. The number of Israeli Jews who support one unequal state under Israeli rule is only slightly higher of support for the two-state solution, but both peoples still prefer two states over any other democratic framework for conflict resolution. A Joint Poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah and the International Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University with funding from the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah and the Representative Office of Japan to Palestine through UNDP/PAPP. The joint poll was conducted during December 2022. For more details see: [https://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Press%20Release\\_Eng%20\\_Joint%20Poll%2024JAN2023.pdf](https://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Press%20Release_Eng%20_Joint%20Poll%2024JAN2023.pdf)

<sup>264</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 January 2022 with Mr. Marwan Zaid, Fatah Party Activist.

<sup>265</sup> BASKIN, G.: *The solution to Israel-Palestine*, Insight.2023. p.1. Available at: <http://gershonbaskin.com/> [Last accessed at 28.01.2023]

Young Palestinians and a majority of Israelis to this option, the Oslo two-state solution model seems completely unviable.<sup>266</sup>

On the internal Palestinian level, the situation is getting more difficult with the days; the status of the Palestinian cause is declining on the Arab and international levels, in addition to the division that the Palestinian people have experienced since 2006 between the West Bank and Gaza, which since then has not succeeded in any initiatives to end it, or even a future vision for that. The Palestinian people were divided internally between a Palestinian authority that manages the affairs of the West Bank with Israeli hegemony and arbitrariness through its intransigence and adherence to not allowing the Authority to freely administer Area (C) according to the Oslo Accords, which constitutes about 60% of the West Bank; also it is the only connected area compared to areas (A) and (B) which led to a state of instability and uncertainty in dealing with daily life and the life of the Palestinian population in terms of freedom of movement, construction, and investment.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, we see what is happening

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<sup>266</sup> BASKIN, G., 2023. p.2.

<sup>267</sup> Under the 1993 Oslo Accords, the West Bank was split into three administrative divisions, with Area A controlled by the Palestinian Authority, Area B under split control, and Area C fully under Israeli control. Area C, the only contiguous section of the West Bank and contains the most fertile land and valuable natural resources, was supposed to be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction, according to the accords, but that has not happened. Instead, Area C is today home to around 650,000 settlers, with 70% of the land under their control and off-limits for Palestinian development. Meanwhile, Palestinian access to Area C (30%) remains heavily restricted. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in report titled “Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: The toll of the additional restrictions in Area C, 2000–2020”, that:

1. Israel includes 70% of the area called (C) within the borders of the settlement regional councils, and this means that the exploitation of these areas is impossible even for agriculture or harvesting crops.
2. The Palestinian economy loses 25% of the gross domestic product of the West Bank due to restrictions on Area C.
3. The total of this loss for the period 2000 “the expiry of the Oslo Accords” and until 2020 amounted to 50 billion dollars.
4. The West Bank and Jerusalem settlements contribute a total of \$30 billion annually to the Israeli economy, which is about double the annual Palestinian GDP.
5. All areas (A) and (B) in the West Bank are isolated, unconnected islands, numbering 166 islands while areas (C) are a connected area.
6. The number of settlers increased from about 200,000 in the year 2000 to 650,000 now.
7. There are 150 illegal settlement outposts in the West Bank in addition to the legal settlements from the Israeli perspective.
8. According to a study by UNCTAD, the total cost of the blockade on the Gaza Strip amounted to 16.7 billion dollars until 2018. If it did not exist, the poverty rate would have become 15% instead of 56% now.

in the Gaza Strip after Hamas took control of it and administered it separately from the case in the West Bank. Even the map of alliances has begun to impose itself. The Gaza Strip has an Islamic identity, and this justifies its proximity to Qatar or Iran - depending on the situation and the local and international political mood and between a West Bank that dominates. The Palestinian Authority controls it through the largest faction - the Fatah movement - which is the most open and sometimes described as secular.

The international circumstances at the signing of the Oslo Accords are different from the reality now. The Middle East is living in a state of changing dynamism. There is a state of the rise of the right in all parts of the world, accompanied by the rise of right-wing governments in Israel in light of the continued weaknesses of the Palestinian Authority and the loss of its Arab and international depth, and thus What will force Israel to accept this option, given that none of the world powers exert any pressure on it to implement its obligations? We live in light of a complicated reality and a reality without a future horizon, but merely the conduct of daily business and nothing more.<sup>268</sup>

## **XII. 1. 2. Scenario 2. One state Model, single bi-national state Model**

What applies to the two-state solution also applies to the one-state Model, a single bi-national state model. After U.S. President Trump announced his endorsement of the Jewishness of the Israeli state, the ideas became utterly unworkable in the national sense.

The escalation of feelings of hatred between Palestinians and Israelis and the rise of right-wing governments will leave a tangible impact on the state of mistrust between the two sides and make it difficult to think about a state of stability, peace, and realistic solutions to this conflict. Both sides, in the end, want the land.<sup>269</sup>

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9. New farmers in the settlements receive subsidies amounting to 307 thousand dollars per farmer and the tax exemption rate reaches 70% compared to other regions.

10. The settlement economy in the West Bank and Jerusalem constitutes 12.4% of the Israeli economy. For More details see: <https://unctad.org/press-material/publication-palestine-report-united-nations-general-assembly>.

<sup>268</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 January 2022 with Mr. Marwan Zaid, Fatah Party Activist.

<sup>269</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 January 2022 with Mr. Marwan Zaid, Fatah Party Activist.

The one bi-national state is unacceptable for Israeli policy because Palestinians would be the majority decision makers, more or less unviable. Ethnical cleansing of occupied Palestinian territory 'not realistic' Continuation of occupation, deteriorating of situation, expanding and deepening the conflict, until the final solution of two states.<sup>270</sup>

The estimated number of Palestinians at the end of 2022 was about 14.3 million Palestinians: 5.4 million in the State of Palestine, more than a third of whom reside in the Gaza Strip, and about 1.7 million Palestinians in the 1948 lands, and about 6.4 million in Arab countries and about 761 thousand in foreign countries. It is expected that the number of Jews will reach 7.1 million by the end of 2022. Thus, the number of Palestinians and Jews in historical Palestine will be equal by the end of this year, when the number of Palestinians and Jews will be about 7.1 million each.<sup>271</sup>

The demographic conflict is the most prominent feature in the coming years. Therefore, no solution other than the two-state solution will have any future or success, as no party can accept that it is a majority at the expense of another party.<sup>272</sup>

In their study by Ladadweh, W & Shikaki, K (2022) on the importance of the numerical dimension as a weapon for the struggle of the Palestinians to obtain their rights, the researchers presented an analysis that the demographic factor may decide the fate of the Palestinians and Jews people. However, the Palestinians must adopt a strategy of exploiting the numerical importance. This success depends on the internal Palestinian situation and overcoming its obstacles in ending the split and restoring the consideration of the political system, which suffers from weakness in confidence, economic decline, and instability in both the West Bank and Gaza, which help to encourage emigration abroad. Finally, the institutional weakness in the Palestinian Authority, in addition to the tragic effects of the

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<sup>270</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 March 2022 with Mr. V. Kuzma, Head of the Representative Office of the Republic of Slovenia in Palestine.

<sup>271</sup> H.E. Dr. Ola Awad, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) presents a brief on the status of the Palestinian people at the end of 2022, Available at : <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4397> [Last accessed at 27-02-2023]

<sup>272</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 6 January 2022 with Ms. Daisy Organ, Head of the political Team in British Consulate General –Jerusalem

occupation, is reflected in widening the gap between the qualitative competition between the Palestinian and Israeli sides regarding knowledge, technology, and the economy.<sup>273</sup>

This Model attempts to deal with the realities on the land of the settlers, where the Israeli settlers can remain where they are as citizens of Israel but as residents of Palestine. Returning Palestinian refugees may be Palestinian citizens but are residents of Israel. Perhaps the fastest Model to gain support among Palestinians and foreigners is this Model that focuses on citizens' rights and less on national self-determination. Theorists of this Model assume that the two-state solution is dead and that the option of dividing the land is rejected by Israeli decisions to continue building settlements all over the land. It is also rejected by the Palestinians, who see Palestine as more than the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>274</sup>

The one-state solution model, with full equal rights to citizenship regardless of race, colour, and religion, suffers from a fundamental problem that threatens the concept of a Jewish state. The second Model is a single bi-national state that recognizes individual and collective rights through a multicultural approach. Both communities would share the same land but remain separate nationally. However, the reality on the ground reflects the ambitions of a colonial settlement movement that promotes apartheid values and the construction of the separation wall as its most prominent features. It also reflects Israeli apartheid policies that will further reinforce the trend towards the concept of one state.<sup>275</sup>

### **XII. 1. 3. Scenario 3. Maintaining the status quo "frozen conflict"**

A 'Frozen conflict' is a situation in which active armed conflict has ended, although it might quickly become a 'hot' one once again. The term 'frozen conflict' is mainly applied to Post-Soviet conflicts, not merely to territorial disputes of those regions. They typically occur in areas of a country that are no longer under the central government's control. While disputes are doomed to stay unsolved, the lack of nonviolent remedies to the problem does not lead to greater armed activities. This situation weakens the central government's position and incites

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<sup>273</sup> LADADWEH, W. & SHIKAKI, 2022. pp. 9-10.

<sup>274</sup> BASKIN, G., 2023. p.3.

<sup>275</sup> HASSASSIAN, M.: 2019. p. 2.



other states that support the separatists to intervene in their affairs, either directly or indirectly.<sup>276</sup>

This option is closely related to the regional situation in the Middle East and the actual situation that the Palestinian people live in under a national authority that has lost its internal depth due to the division between the West Bank and Gaza. The internal affairs of countries after the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011 and the state of internal competition between the remaining countries that survived "Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates" and their struggle for the balance of power in the region.

In terms of concept, the frozen conflict applies to the case of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but in terms of application, there is some difference. The Palestinian issue is part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite Israel's openness to normalizing its relations with several Arab countries, "the Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco," and creating partnerships at the security level to fight Iran and consider it the first regional threat to the region. However, the Palestinian issue does not concern only the Palestinians themselves; it extends to the religious and Islamic depth, considering the land of Palestine as the land of an Islamic endowment. All Muslims everywhere are required to defend it and consider it their cause.

On the same level, the Israelis consider the land of Palestine to be the Promised Land, as mentioned in their book *The Torah* and thus its connection with the religious concept.

Since 1967, Israel and the U.S. have monopolized their efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian issue, and the two countries have decided that any proposal to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict must gain the approval of both countries. The two countries have no objection to discussing the margins of the Palestinian issue in international corridors, and there is no objection to the involvement of other countries in the diplomacy of the search for peace, provided that the core of the conflict remains under the U.S. umbrella. It is not binding on Israel and is not a cause for concern, but the U.S. is ready to use the right of veto if the issue is raised in the Security Council. The two countries have no objection to allowing European

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<sup>276</sup> CANDIAGO, L.: *Russia's approach to Frozen Conflicts, studying the past to prevent the future*. 2022. The Centre for International Relations and Sustainable Development (CIRSD), p. 1. <https://www.cirsd.org/en/young-contributors/russias-approach-to-frozen-conflicts-studying-the-past-to-prevent-the-future> [Last accessed: 04.01.2023]

diplomatic activity in the region, provided that it remains subservient and not original and is supported by pressure measures on Israel. Another example is the role given to Egypt and the Egyptian regime, and to show it as a key player in organizing matters and situations in the region.<sup>277</sup>

The Israelis have been trying, through their various policies, to work towards one concept, which is to 'twist' the Palestinian will to accept any form of solution through the concept of 'economic peace' since the 1990s, the last of which was U.S. President Donald Trump's initiative – peace for prosperity<sup>278</sup>.

Over the years of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, a close link has been established between the two through several means. These include (i) a "clean security past," which means that having a clean security record allows a person to obtain free travel, movement, and work facilities; (ii) complete dependency on the Israeli economy and primary services such as electricity and city master plans; and (iii) the policy of collective punishment.

The Palestinian National Authority has not been able, since its establishment, to create a suitable living environment for the Palestinians, and part of that is due to the cumulative Israeli policies that limit its work, as well as the shortcomings of the Authority in general in building the state of institutions as it should be. Consequently, the Palestinians are forced to look for other places to achieve abundant sources of income that Israel provides by allowing facilities, the most important of which is that its security clean background. The policy of collective punishment against violators of this system puts pressure on them to limit their activity against the occupation to search for a source of livelihood.

The close connection between the occupation and the occupied people made the concept of economic peace and facilities in return for welfare a profitable pressure card to some extent at the expense of the Palestinian will.

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<sup>277</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on March 3 March 2023 with Mr. Rami Sublaban, Project Manager, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination 'TIKA' in Palestine, Ramallah, State of Palestine.

<sup>278</sup> According to the White House: this vision is the most realistic solution to a problem that has plagued the region for far too long. It creates a path to prosperity, security, and dignity for all involved. If the parties can agree on this framework as a basis for negotiations, the potential for both the Israelis and the Palestinians and the region is unlimited. For more details see: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/peacetoprosperty/>

With an extreme right-wing government in Israel, there is a lack of any political horizon, and reading the future is complex. There are many options before the Palestinian people, including continuing to join international institutions, submitting the case of the occupation's crimes to the International Criminal Court, placing the international community before its responsibilities, and putting pressure on the occupation through (i) Recognition of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital (ii) Taking practical measures against settlements and settlers, and boycotting settlement products (iii) International missions as observers of the behaviour of the occupation, and forcing to stop all Israeli measures to implement these measures, the Palestinian people are required to unifying the internal front with true national unity, end division agreeing on a comprehensive national program, and restore the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Strengthening the Palestinian steadfastness can be with a return of interest in the land, 'reclamation and cultivation.' Also, Self-reliance in developing the Palestinian economy and attracting foreign investments in developing Palestinian production and industry. Meanwhile, consolidating the national culture by paying attention to identity, heritage, and history and expanding the principle of social solidarity. The result is the disengagement principle from the occupation in all dimensions: economic, social, production, water, and energy.<sup>279</sup>

There are no immediate solutions; the situation will remain as it is; instead, it will become more complicated because of the Israeli intransigence, the tendency towards right-wing extremism, the weakness of the Arab, the failure to punish the occupation for its crimes, and the pursuit of normalization with Arab countries in an attempt to end the Palestinian cause. It is difficult for the internal Palestinian situation to strengthen itself due to the blockade imposed on the Palestinian Authority and the failure of successive Israeli governments to adhere to any agreements. The scarcity of conditional European support, an economic system that shackles the Authority, prevents any opportunity for development or self-reliance. Also, the Authority lacks a comprehensive national vision to strengthen the nation's economy and advance the foundations of Palestinian society.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 February 2023 with Mr. Rafi' Rawajbah, Governor of Qalqilia City, State of Palestine.

<sup>280</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 25 February 2023 with Mrs. Mona Afanah, City Council of Qalqilia City and social activist, State of Palestine.

The solution lies only in the implementation by the Israeli side of the decisions of international legitimacy, including withdrawal from the Palestinian lands occupied in 67, dismantling settlements, and establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its legitimate capital.<sup>281</sup>

The problem lies in Israel's unilateral actions, commitment to UN resolutions, non-denial of Palestinian rights, and stopping all forms of occupation terrorism against the Palestinian people.<sup>282</sup>

The Palestinian government is working to deal with the events that are taking place in a realistic and balanced way through a deliberate program, which is one of the top priorities of the efforts to strengthen foreign relations and confront Israeli lies and propaganda, as well as to ensure balanced relations with the various powers and countries of the world. The Middle East is unstable and foggy, and the struggle of the Palestinian people continues on the ground through official and diplomatic channels. Although the U.S. remains the world's superpower in theory, the presence of other competitors such as Russia, China, and the European Union predicts a change in the global balance of power; I hope it will be in the interest of our cause and our people.<sup>283</sup>

The systematic weakening of the National Authority and the blockage of the horizon for negotiations since the year 2000, and the encroachment of the Palestinian lands that the Authority controls by carrying out repeated invasions and arrests of its areas of influence, weakened the Authority in the eyes of the citizens, as they "the ruler and the ruled" are under the same occupation and its practices, therefore Israel seeks through these policies on both sides "the ruling Palestinian Authority - the occupied people" to exhaust it and end it so that it accepts what is available, and we have become closer to the idea of ending the conflict, dissolving it and forgetting it. Without regard to resolving it, the point of view is closer to the fact that it is not a conflict that needs to be resolved but to dissolve and forget. Currently, no force corresponding to the Israeli will discourage it from its actions locally and regionally.

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<sup>281</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 28 February 2023 with Mr. Reha Erumcu, Head of Turkish Cultural Center in Palestine.

<sup>282</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 28 February 2023 with Mr. Hilal Mustafa, Head of Turkish Passport Office in Palestine.

<sup>283</sup> This argument is based on the interview made by researcher on 16 February 2019 with Dr. Manuel Hassassian, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Hungary.

## **XII.2. Practical remarks**

- The declining political influence of the United States may create opportunities for other influential powers, such as China, Russia and the European Union, to become more involved in the region's conflicts. It is imperative that a thorough analysis of the positive implications of this scenario be carried out and that a comprehensive solution to the conflicts be devised that will bring about favourable outcomes at both the local and international levels, while at the same time promoting economic benefits for all parties involved.
- Israel must return to international legitimacy and abide by the UN resolutions to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.
- Ending the internal Palestinian division, returning to the unity of the Palestinian decision, and uniting the two parts of the homeland, the West Bank and Gaza
- Solving the Palestinian issue justly is an essential step for Israel to enable its expansion in the Arab and Islamic regions.
- As a government, the Palestinians must restructure their national institutions, build bridges of constructive international relations, and address the world with the language of reason and international law.
- After the narrowing of spaces and the receding of the local and regional horizons, the return to the Palestinian self-factor is the basis for survival and adherence to the legitimate and historical rights of the Palestinian people.

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### **XIII. 1. APPENDIX**

#### **I. List of interviews**

Interviews conducted by the author

##### **1. Name of the person: Dr. Manuel Hassassian, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Hungary.**

Date of the interview: 14. 02. 2019.

Place of the interview: Embassy of State of Palestine to Hungary, Budapest

Questions:

How would you describe the role of the EU in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

What can the Palestinian Authority do in advance to gain more to achieve its objectives?

##### **2. Name of the person: Dr. Amal Jadou, Assistant of Palestinian Foreign Minister for EU Affairs**

Date of the interview: 29. 07.2019

Place of the interview: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ramallah, State of Palestine.

Questions:

How do you assess the EU's support for Palestine?

What can the Palestinian Authority do in advance to achieve thier objectvies?

##### **3. Name of the person: Mr. Hanna Essa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organisation in support of Jerusalem**

Date of the interview: 29. 07.2019

Place of the interview: Christian Islamic Organisation headquarter, Ramallah, State of Palestine

Questions:

How would you describe the role of the EU in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

What is the importance of Jerusalem in the conflict?

##### **4. Name of the person: Ms. Daisy Organ, Head of the Political Team in British Consulate General – Jerusalem**

Date of the interview: 06. 01. 2022.

Place of the interview: Microsoft teams meeting

Questions:

How would you describe the role of the British government in the conflict?

What is the future perspective of the conflict resolution (the possible scenarios)?

**5. Name of the person: Mr. V. Kuzma, Head of the Representative Office of Slovenia in Palestine**

Date of the interview: 25.03.2022

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

How would you describe the role of the EU in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? What could the EU do in advance?

How do you "estimate" the future of the region and the solution of the conflict?

**6. Name of the person: Mrs. Mona Afanah, Palestinian Social Activist and Qalqilia City Council**

Date of the interview: 25.02.2023

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

In light of the current situation, what is the horizon of possible solutions to the Palestinian conflict (for example, the two-state solution, there are no solutions, and so on)? what is the vision for the fair solutions?

Strengthening the internal Palestinian steadfastness in light of Palestinian isolation, how can this be self-fulfilling?

**7. Name of the person: Mr. Marwan Zaid, Fatah Party Activist**

**Date of the interview: 25.01.2023**

Place of the interview: Qalqilia City, State of Palestine.

Questions:

Can the two-state solution option be implemented in light of the current situation?

What are the other possible options for resolving this conflict?



**8. Name of the person: Mr. Rafi' Rawajbih, City Governor - Qalqilia**

**Date of the interview: 25. 02. 2023.**

Place of the interview: Email

Questions:

What is the possible solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

How important is the internal Palestinian factor in this conflict?

**9. Name of the person: Mrs. Mona Afanah, Qalqilia City Council, social activist**

**Date of the interview: 25. 02. 2023.**

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

What is a possible solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

How can the Palestinians remain steadfast in achieving their goals?

**10. Name of the person: Mr. Reha Ermumcu, Head of Turkish Cultural Center in Palestine**

Date of the interview: 28. 02. 2023.

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

From your point of view, what is the possible solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the current reality of the region?

**11. Name of the person: Mr. Hilal Mustafa, Head of Turkish Passport Office in Palestine**

**Date of the interview: 28. 02. 2023.**

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

From your point of view, what is the possible solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the current reality of the region?

**12. Name of the person: Mr. Rami Sublaban, Project Manager, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency 'TIKA' in Palestine**

Date of the interview: 03. 03. 2023.

Place of the interview: Via e-mail

Questions:

In your perspective what is the possible solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the current reality of the region's affairs?

What could the Turkish government do more to resolve the conflict?