

Research Article

Dominant Power and Its Bandwagoning Effect on Justice in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This research contributes to complementing the study of realism in international relations through bandwagoning by analyzing interdependence in the alliance of Muslim countries in the Middle East. The United States, as a dominant power, always takes part in the political map in the Middle East, which is considered strategic, by offering political, military, and economic assistance. The response of countries in the Middle East varies, depending on their national agendas and diplomatic relations. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, several Muslim countries in the Middle East lost the value of impartial justice and depended on the interests of allies with the United States. The principle of independent justice has become blurred, leading to bias in the actions of Muslim countries that tend to support the United States. This research uses the concept of bandwagoning popularized by Kenneth Waltz in Theory of International Politics. This alliance contributes to the value of justice to follow the dominant power rather than uphold justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The method used in this research is qualitative, with a descriptive approach based on secondary data collection. The analysis in this research compares several specific phenomena in the Middle East region, focusing on Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Bahrain. This study uses national interest mapping to show that the interdependence of Muslim countries choosing to ally with the United States influences political actions and decisions without regard to the principle of impartial justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is a strategic region with rich natural resources like oil and natural gas. Energy resources are a strength that shows the existence of Muslim countries in this region. However, the abundance of natural resources only sometimes produces stability. Instead, it causes geopolitical and geostrategic conflicts with various interests. This area is of global concern from an economic, political, and security perspective because of its strategic position. For most of its modern history, the Middle East has been besieged by international conflicts; almost two centuries later, the region is again faced with intense crises where superpowers and regional powers compete for territorial influence (Rashed, 2019). This dynamic causes difficulties in resolving conflicts because of the many parties involved and various interests in the Middle East. Control over energy resources in the Middle East is critical to national energy security and plays a role in global economics and politics.

Internal conflicts and regional rivalries shape the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East. Tensions in the Middle East are caused by various factors, including ideology, history, and race, although historically, the region has been comprised of Islamic communities. Apart from cross-border identities, the identity crisis in Arab countries also



stems from ethnic and sectarian realities. The Kurdish problem, the Muslim-Christian conflict, and the Shia-Sunni split in modern Arab history are examples of identity conflicts that led to national disasters (Ahmadian, 2019). Due to the world's dependence on energy supplies from the Middle East, this region has become a target for superpower countries such as the United States, Russia, and China. Socio-economic pressures, conflicts, and extra-regional involvement have undermined the foundations of regional order, significantly impacting identity, borders, balance of power, and alignments (Aras & Kardaş, 2021).

The Middle East has become a competitive arena for global powers seeking to expand their influence. As one of the dominant powers, the United States exerts significant influence through political, military, and economic support. The strength of the United States' influence can even shape domestic and foreign policy in the region. For the United States, the Middle East region has a favorable position to advance its national interests. In this region, the United States maintains energy resources, promotes democratic ideas, fights against terrorism, and ensures the security of its allied countries, especially Israel. The United States is trying to form a strategic alliance to open access to energy resources and ensure the flow of oil and gas on the global market. This alliance is essential for the United States to contain other major powers that also have interests in the region, such as Russia and China. The United States will, for the foreseeable future, remain the dominant extra-regional military power in the Middle East, with an unrivaled network of regional bases and numerous assets permanently or temporarily deployed to the region (Juneau, 2014).

The United States has been involved in various moments in the Middle East region, especially the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is still ongoing to this day. The conflict has a significant impact on regional and global political dynamics. Historically, Israel has received support from the United States to such an extent that Arab countries in the Middle East generally consider Israel to be a Western proxy state in their midst; they believe Israel to have an unnatural influence on US foreign policy in Middle Eastern countries (Reich & Powers, 2012). During the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States used its influence to shape the foreign policies and actions of countries in the Middle East. Generally, US foreign policy towards the Middle East is driven by geostrategic, economic, and domestic concerns (Khan, 2015). The United States secures its interests by exerting diplomatic pressure on its alliance countries to limit support for Palestine.

Israeli-Palestinian political tensions are a continuation of previous events with various new escalations that prolong the series of conflicts. One of the most protracted political disputes in the history of world civilization is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Conflicts continue between Jewish and Arab communities with conflicting historical and territorial claims regarding the Palestinian territories (Ahmed et al., 2024). The conflict has two sides, namely, on one side is Israel, a Jewish state with a majority Jewish population, which was founded based on the ideology of Jewish national self-determination known as Zionism. On the other hand, Palestinians, who speak Arabic and are predominantly Muslim, believe that they are Indigenous (Mock et al., 2014). The involvement of external parties, namely Arab countries, and the presence of the international community, as well as conflict dynamics in terms of financial, political, and military support, can prolong the dynamics of the conflict (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Decades-old Palestinian-Israeli tensions flared again in 2023. Israel has expanded its military operations to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, an area where most Palestinian refugees are asked to seek refuge (Aljazeera, 2023). Chronologically, in the Israeli-Palestinian War in 2023, starting on October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunni Islamic group Hamas carried out a series of surprise attacks from the Gaza Strip by land, sea, and air against Israel (Zanotti & Sharp, 2023). Military force was used in airstrikes and ground operations in the Gaza Strip and, particularly in the city of Rafah by Israel in response to the hostage situation that began in October 2023, as efforts to free the hostages were unsuccessful and caused significant casualties in Gaza (Ahmed et al., 2024). Israel responded to the attack by declaring war on Hamas, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed an emergency government with several opposition members and stopped Israel's supply of electricity, food, and fuel to Gaza (Zanotti & Sharp, 2023).

This research contributes to complementing the study of realism in international relations through bandwagoning by analyzing the interdependence in the alliance of Middle Eastern Muslim countries and the United States as the dominant power, ultimately impacting the principle of justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By focusing on these dynamics, the research offers a viewpoint on the implications of bandwagoning for regional stability and conflict resolution.

Situations in complex conflict areas involve human rights issues related to the treatment of civilians and refugees. Efforts at international mediation from various parties through negotiations and ceasefires have not resulted in a solution. Peace agreements often only reduce the intensity of violence, but long-term solutions are

complex for both parties to achieve. Countries in the Middle East support Palestine's desire to obtain and support a peaceful solution through negotiations, each with differences in approach and level of relations with Israel. However, conflicts of interest play a role in the relations between Middle Eastern countries regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their relations with the United States. This situation reflects a dilemma between public rhetoric and practical action, where countries in the Middle East criticize Israel and support Palestine but also pursue diplomatic and economic relations with Israel for strategic gain. On the other hand, these countries must maintain close ties with the United States to fulfill domestic and regional interests. Departing from the background above, the question raised in this research is, "What is the tendency of dominant power towards achieving justice in the Middle East region?"

1.1 Literature Review

This literature review examines previous studies on the relationship between dominant power and justice in the Middle East to provide a comprehensive understanding. It seeks to identify patterns of power dominance and their impact on the distribution of justice in the region. By drawing on previous studies, the literature review provides insights into how regional conflicts and external interventions contribute to geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East.

Miller's study of dominant powers in the Middle East explains that Middle Eastern politics are influenced by regional conflicts and external interventions involving significant countries. The presence of dominant powers in the Middle East is due to its strategic location, energy resource interests, and economy. The United States became the only assertive hegemon after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Miller, 2004). Moradi explores the existing relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States in terms of security and strategic terms. Although both have significant interests as partners, tensions arise due to political, ideological, and cultural conflicts. However, Saudi Arabia tends to support the United States against regional dominant powers such as Iranian hegemony and Shia dominance in the Middle East (Moradi, 2013). Litsas examines international relations theory and foreign policy analysis to investigate Turkey's relations with Israel and the United States. Turkey has chosen to enhance its regional and international status by weakening its relationship with Israel in a bandwagon effort for certain benefits. However, this behavior has led to Brutus Syndrome, which results in close allies of powerful actors turning against it (Litsas, 2014). Abbas explained US oil dominance in the Middle East through US foreign policy. As a major consumer and player in the world oil market, the United States continues to change its foreign policy to meet its energy needs and economic interests. The relationship between the United States and the Middle East remains bound by mutual benefits in the petrodollar system despite international challenges and debates (Abbas, 2019). Honig and Arsenault describe the basic logic of realism driving regional actors in the Middle East region. Sociopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-economic elements influence this mechanism of realism in the Middle East. Nonetheless, force remains the primary consideration, and states seek subversive and ideological power as regional conditions limit the use of military and economic power (Honig & Arsenault, 2020). The Trump administration's foreign policy is perceived as isolationist and marks a rapid transformation in the United States' global leadership. The Trump administration's foreign policy is considered an isolationist ideology that has radically reversed America's global leadership. The United States' interventionism in the Middle East experienced a waning decline that predates the Trump Doctrine. It does not stem from ideological change or the superpower's financial and military exhaustion. Instead, due to the structural dynamic, the Middle East no longer poses a credible threat to the United States. The United States can shed its mantle of hegemony in the absence of a catastrophic terrorist attack (Yom, 2020).

Quigley explains the study of justice in the Middle East, stating that in the long-running Palestinian-Israeli conflict, considerations of justice should be the main focus of sustainable peace efforts. The international community needs to ensure that negotiations consider universal standards of justice. The justice required relates to territorial division, Israeli settlements in Palestine, and refugee return. With an approach that prioritizes justice, the resulting agreement has a greater chance of lasting long-term (Quigley, 2004). Shamsi highlighted the paradox of the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict settlement that was based on the premise of the identity and rights of the two peoples involved, as well as Israeli sovereignty in the Mandate Palestinian territories. However, this approach is considered ineffective because it supports the ideology of Jewish settlement that divides the Palestinian people and ethno-nationalism, which is regarded as anachronistic. Thus, it is necessary to review the premises of the agreement by reconsidering the principles of collective rights to suit broader political unification efforts (Shamsi, 2016). Browne analyzes the challenges faced in achieving peace in Israel-Palestine, focusing on the

failure of previous political efforts. The prolonged conflict with an increasingly intense Israeli occupation has resulted in the marginalized aspirations of Palestinian refugees. Such attacks emphasize the limits of transitional justice to create a climate of conciliation that enables peace (Browne, 2017). In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, justice theory tends to support Israel's territorial rights. Support for Israel without considering deep historical factors and political positions. Meanwhile, self-determination theory may support a "two-state" solution, but like justice theory, its assumptions can be challenged on many fronts (Moore, 2020). Bracka criticizes the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Middle East, particularly in the context of transitional justice efforts in Palestine. The ICC faces significant challenges regarding jurisdiction over Gaza and Israeli settlements. The transitional efforts include Palestinian statehood, complementarity, gravity, and the interests of justice. The ICC dominates international discourse on human rights violations in Israel and Palestine but needs to be fully equipped to deal with the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The existing literature review has incorporated various previous studies relevant to the research topic. However, a comprehensive study of dominant power involving the concept of bandwagoning and its impact on justice in the Middle East has yet to be discussed in depth. Through a critical analysis of previous studies, this literature review aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the dominance of power exercised by superpowers such as the United States in alliance with Middle Eastern countries that have prevented independent justice in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This thorough understanding is essential to fill the gaps in the existing literature and provide opportunities for future research, both in theoretical and practical contexts, to explore the complex dynamics affecting regional stability in the Middle East.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to describe and understand the phenomenon of dominant power and its impact on justice in the Middle East. This approach is used to identify the dominant power of superpowers and regional actors that can affect the distribution of justice and fundamental rights in the Middle East. It enables a broader contextual understanding of complex issues. If the research is qualitative, the conclusions are based on incommensurable observations that address different aspects of the issue and are usually analyzed informally (Gerring, 2017).

The data collection technique is secondary data, not obtained directly from the research object but from documentation studies. Secondary data allows researchers to explore information on data that already exists on a large scale. Although secondary analysis is flexible and can be used in several ways, it is also an empirical exercise and a systematic method with procedural and evaluative steps, just as it is in collecting and evaluating primary data (Johnston, 2014). It can help analyze previous studies and make comparisons with studies that have appeared before. Secondary data shorten time, focus on analysis, and facilitate data interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Unraveling Diplomatic Relations and Dominant Power Dynamics in the Middle East

Dominant powers in the Middle East region have been essential in determining political and security dynamics. To unravel the history and dynamics of the emergence of dominant powers in the Middle East requires understanding the region. The history of dominant power in the Middle East is influenced by foreign interference during the colonial period, regional contestation between Arab states, and the Cold War. Western countries' interest in the Middle East is increasing due to their dependence on the export of energy resources from the region. Powerful countries began to take an interest in the Middle East when British influence in the region declined.

The emergence of dominant powers in the Middle East is closely linked to the history of global geopolitics, especially after World War II. The involvement of Western countries as superpowers in the Middle East can be traced back to World War II when the United States and the Soviet Union competed to increase their influence in the Cold War phase. In this phase, the Middle East became a battleground between two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East not only led to armed conflict, but the most prolonged lasting conflict was political. The collapse of the Soviet Union as one of the superpowers was utilized by the United States to maintain its influence in the Middle East. The United States used propaganda to fight the influence of communism and uphold democracy around the world. From this perspective, the Soviets may have faced many challenges, especially local nationalism. However, for these obstacles to work, the United States had to maintain its military presence and political interests in the region (Campbell, 1972).

The United States, which eventually became the sole superpower, increasingly asserted its power in the Middle East. The United States now dominates the Middle East in a region historically permeated by competing Western powers, with no severe challengers to US hegemony (Hudson, 2016). The main reasons are global strategic interests, control over energy resources, and military intervention to maintain stability and security in the Middle East. With a strong economic interest in energy resources, especially oil, the United States plays a vital role in ensuring political stability and security in the region. Consistent support for Israel in military, economic, and political aspects also strengthens the influence of the United States in the Middle East. Through diplomatic and arms support, the United States has assured Israel of its commitment to Israel's security, thereby benefiting the United States by guaranteeing regular access to critical resources in the Middle East (Roth, 2009).

Politically, the United States has strong diplomatic relations with Israel. The harmony of this relationship determines US foreign policy in the Middle East. US support for Israel has been a consistent feature of US foreign policy in the Middle East for more than 40 years, and the US/Israel relationship is often described as unwavering (Christol, 2018). In terms of security, US support in the form of military aid is used by countries in the Middle East to maintain internal stability. Such alliances also deal with external threats and secure energy resource supply lines. The United States even has military bases in several Middle Eastern countries under the pretext of maintaining regional security.

Terrorism, rising in recent decades, is another attractive factor. The United States shows its opposition to terrorism in various ways. It is done to lead public opinion that the Middle East is a terrorist hideout. The United States narrates terrorism in the Middle East as a direct threat to the national security of the Middle East, especially its alliance countries. They believe that the region is a breeding ground for terrorist movements that are hostile to the United States and can carry out violent attacks against the US homeland, as well as US interests abroad (Hudson, 2016). According to American intelligence and security reports, the Middle East is a significant source of state-sponsored international terrorism; the number of terrorist groups has increased, and they have become more violent (Pinto, 1999). The United States is conducting a global campaign that military and intelligence actions are necessary to prevent the next terrorist attack.

Economics is also an essential consideration for the entry of dominant powers in the Middle East region. Although the United States is trying to increase domestic production and reduce oil supplies, oil imports from the Middle East continue, as the Middle East is the world's leading energy supplier of natural gas and petroleum. Meanwhile, the primary income of the countries in the Middle East is energy resources, and the United States is one of the largest consumers. The presence of the United States in the Middle East region is significant for regional economic stability. Similarly, Muslim countries in the Middle East are also expanding their investments in the United States. Economic relations between two countries reduce the likelihood of these countries engaging in armed conflict (Russett & Oneal, 2001; Kilchevsky et al., 2007). The following is an explanation of the diplomatic relations between the United States and several countries in the Middle East:

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia-United States diplomatic relations are built on military, political, and commercial understandings developed during and immediately after World War II (Blanchard, 2016). The United States and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations marked by exchanging letters of credence and the appointment of the first US ambassador in 1940 (USA Gov, 2023). The close ties between the United States and Saudi Arabia began with oil energy cooperation, one of the Middle East's most critical and complicated relationships. During World War II, the importance of Saudi Arabia's oil energy resources made the country a strategic ally of the United States. In its diplomatic development, the two countries depended on each other to ally. The February 14, 1945 meeting between President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and King Abd al Aziz aboard the US ship Quincy is considered by many observers of United States-Saudi Arabia relations as the starting point of a more robust political relationship between the two countries that is sustainable (Blanchard, 2016). During the Cold War, their relationship was based on a shared strategic interest in countering Soviet domination in the Middle East. With abundant oil reserves, Saudi Arabia became an essential ally for the United States to maintain world energy stability and fight communism in the region.

In addition to being Saudi Arabia's leading trading partner in the Middle East, the United States and Saudi Arabia have strong economic ties. The United States and Saudi Arabia have signed a Trade Investment Framework Agreement. Saudi Arabia launched its Vision 2030 program in April 2016, laying out plans to diversify the economy through increased trade and investment with the United States and other countries (USA Gov, 2023). The Middle

East's strategic geographic location as a conduit between Europe, Asia, and Africa is vital for trade and military operations for the United States. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 38% of US arms exports go to the Middle East. The region received the most US arms exports between 2019 and 2023, with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Israel the largest recipients (Barrucho, 2024).

Based on data compiled by the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), the United States exported \$13.7 billion to Saudi Arabia, with the main products being automobiles (\$1.72 billion), aircraft, helicopters, spacecraft (\$664 million), and refined petroleum (\$325 million). Over the past 5 years, United States exports to Saudi Arabia have increased at an annualized rate of 17.7%, from \$6.04 billion in 2017 to \$13.7 billion in 2022. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia exported \$19.9 billion to the United States, the main products of which were crude oil (\$16.6 billion), refined oil (\$4.7 billion), and mineral fertilizers or mixed chemicals (\$476 million). Over the past 5 years, Saudi Arabia's exports to the United States have increased at an annual rate of 17.6%, from \$8.86 billion in 2017 to \$19.9 billion in 2022 (OEC, 2024).

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has experienced significant fluctuations throughout history. Disagreements and regional confrontations characterize the complexity of the relationship between the superpower and the kingdom. Although the United States and Saudi Arabia share common goals in terms of national security, they have differences regarding regional issues, most notably the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1973, relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia heated up when the Arab-Israeli conflict occurred, and this tension changed the political and economic dynamics. Saudi Arabia responded to the United States support for Israel with a statement of opposition through the implementation of an embargo and reduction of oil production. Following the embargo, Saudi and U.S. officials sought to reinvigorate bilateral relations based on a shared rejection of communism, renewed military cooperation, and economic initiatives that promoted the recycling of Saudi petrodollars to America through Saudi investments in infrastructure, industrial expansion, and U.S. securities (Blanchard, 2016).

Although the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has had its ups and downs, the harmonization between the two countries has remained stable, and the two countries are getting closer again. The United States needs Saudi Arabia as one of the largest military arms sales customers, while Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producer supplying the United States. Saudi Arabia applies cooperative politics towards the United States and its allies, where the closeness is based solely on symbiotic mutualism. The United States' support for Saudi Arabia is shown in military and economic terms, including arms sales and military training. In return, Saudi Arabia is committed to stabilizing oil prices and ensuring a steady energy supply for the United States and its allies. Saudi Arabian leaders always seek closer security ties when they feel threatened and minimize when considering it too dangerous (Pollack, 2002). Thus, this strategic relationship is maintained by shared interests in energy and security despite occasional disputes and tensions.

Egypt

After its liberation from the protectorate of Great Britain in 1922, Egypt established a partnership with the United States. The United States was one of the first countries to recognize Egypt's independence on 26 April 1922, through a letter from President Warren G. Harding to King Ahmed Fuad, delivered by the American Diplomatic Agent and Consulate General in Cairo (Historian, n.d). Cooperation between the United States and Egypt is based on mutual interests for security stability, economic revitalization, and regional peace in the Middle East. The policies of the United States include realizing a stable and prosperous Egypt where the government protects the fundamental rights of its citizens and fulfils their aspirations. Egypt and the United States forged a strategic alliance that played an essential role in the stability of the Middle East, including economic, military, and intelligence cooperation. Strategic support from the United States comes from political, diplomatic, and ample arms supplies. Another US interest in good relations with Egypt is to maintain Egypt's moderate voice in the Arab councils and, in some cases, rely on Egypt to persuade less moderate Arab states to compromise (Sharp, 2011).

Egypt is increasingly important to US interests in the Middle East and the region, as it is a strategic location for international trade through the Suez Canal. As the largest Arab country in control of the Suez Canal, Egypt wields significant power over this vital waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea as a trade route between Europe and Asia. Maintaining stability in the Middle East and maintaining a solid relationship with Israel are two critical issues of great importance to the United States national security. Given Egypt's role in the Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the United States' considers Egypt a significant ally in maintaining peace in the region. Egypt was the first Arab country to have official diplomatic relations with Israel by signing an agreement

by President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. It marked a new era in Arab-Israeli relations and changed the political dynamics in the Middle East.

In the economic sphere, US companies in Egypt mainly engage in oil and gas production exploration, renewable energy, telecommunications, information technology, and hospitality. Referring to investment data shared by the OEC, in 2022, Egypt exported \$1.88 billion to the United States, with the main products being non-knitted men's suits (\$328M), knitted sweaters (\$281M), and knitted t-shirts (\$234M). Over the past 5 years, Egyptian exports to the United States have increased at an annual rate of 22.7%, from \$675 million in 2017 to \$1.88 billion in 2022. The United States exports \$3.65 billion to Egypt, with the main products being soybeans (\$1.97 billion), natural gas (\$763 million), and coal briquettes (\$396 million). Over the past 5 years, United States exports to Egypt have increased annually to 3.56%, from \$3.06 billion in 2017 to \$3.65 billion in 2022 (OEC, 2024).

The close relationship between Egypt and the United States went through a crisis, especially during the Cold War. Under the leadership of President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970), Egypt tended to move closer to the Soviet Union, taking place after the Suez Crisis in 1956. This closeness caused tension between Egypt and the United States, which was concerned about the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East. This tension not only worsened relations between Egypt and the United States but also affected the geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East during the Cold War. However, relations improved again under the leadership of President Anwar Sadat, especially after the Camp David peace agreement with Israel. Relations receded again during the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. Human rights issues and domestic political changes in Egypt are often a source of tension, although cooperation in security and anti-terrorism remains strong. Currently, under the presidency of Abdul Fattah as-Sisi, Egypt and the United States have engaged in ongoing collaborative efforts to expand commercial ties, increase foreign direct investment, ensure safe transit through the Suez Canal, and modernize the Egyptian military, and combat terrorism (Embassy of Egypt, n.d).

Related to the Israeli conflict, diplomatic relations between Egypt and Palestine have long been good; Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser, in 1964, during the Arab League Summit, proposed establishing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) then Egypt became the first country to support the declaration of Palestinian independence on November 15, 1988. However, the relationship between the two was strained when, in 2013, Hamas militants allegedly opened fire on the Rafah border, so the Egyptian government chose to close the Rafah border. The outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian war on October 7, 2023, put Egypt in the spotlight because it refused to accommodate Palestinian refugees and even closed the Rafah border between Egypt and Palestine (Usher, 2023). Sameh Shoukry, Egypt's Foreign Minister, argues that this destabilizes Egypt's domestic security and jeopardizes the Israeli-Egyptian peaceful relations that have lasted more than 40 years.

Egypt has a complex stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a balanced approach. Despite having signed a peace treaty with Israel, Egypt criticizes Israel's acts of occupation and military invasions in the Palestinian territories. Egypt is committed to diplomatic efforts to achieve sustainable peace between Israel and Palestine. At the same time, Egypt maintains the diplomatic relations necessary to maintain regional stability. While it publicly supports the Palestinian struggle for independence, it diplomatically maintains close ties with the United States.

Qatar

Qatar is a small country that has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world, especially in the Middle East region, judging by its rapid economic growth. The United States recognized the state of Qatar on September 5, 1971, when the United States Department of State announced it. Diplomatic relations were established on March 19, 1972, when United States Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary William A. Stoltzfus, Jr. presented his credentials to the government of the country of Qatar (Historian, n.d). The United States and Qatar have forged a solid relationship for over fifty years to achieve significant political, economic, and security objectives. The two countries regularly support each other's counter-terrorism and violent extremism, border control, and aviation security initiatives. The US-Qatar defence and security partnership includes Qatar hosts Al Udeid Air Base (AUAB), the largest US Air Force installation outside the United States. Qatar bears most of AUAB's annual operational costs. AUAB is also home to the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Headquarters and Air Force Central Command (AFCENT); these strategic platforms facilitate US and Coalition operations outside the Middle East and are critical in providing support to US forces throughout the region (USA Gov, 2024).

The United States-Qatar Trade Data sourced from OEC exposes that in 2022, the United States exports \$4.31 billion to Qatar, with the main products being gas turbines (\$1.36 billion), jewellery (\$203 million), and cars (\$134 million). Over the past 5 years, United States exports to Qatar have increased at an annualized rate of 81.8%, from

\$217 million in 2017 to \$4.31 billion in 2022. Qatar-United States Trade In 2022. Qatar exported \$1.06 billion to the United States, with the main products being refined petroleum (\$1.65 billion), nitrogen fertilizer (\$709 million), and crude aluminium (\$394 million). Over the past 5 years, Qatar's exports to the United States have increased at an annualized rate of 65.5%, from \$85.3 million in 2017 to \$1.06 billion in 2022 (OEC, 2024).

In general, diplomatic relations between Qatar and the United States cannot be said to be volatile but experience challenges and changes from time to time. In 2017, the Qatar crisis referred to the termination of diplomatic and economic relations between countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt, with Qatar. This event has affected the relationship between Qatar and the United States quite complex. However, the United States seeks to maintain close relations with Qatar, even though this crisis creates tensions and affects regional dynamics in the Middle East. Despite regional tensions, the United States has affirmed its commitment to Qatar as a strategic partner in the Middle East.

In addition to maintaining close relations with the United States, Qatar has had good relations with Israel since 1995. Although they do not have official diplomatic ties, the relationship between Qatar and Israel is shown by an Israeli trade office in Doha, also used as an embassy office (Henderson, 2023). In addition, Qatar is considered to send aid to Israel more often than to Palestine. One of the primary motivations for Qatar to establish good relations with Israel is the perception that Israel will help Qatar influence the United States through the Israeli Jewish community. At the time of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2023, Qatar showed its position as a mediator who was considered trustworthy and could exert political influence on the policymakers of both parties. The establishment of the Hamas political office in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in 2012 was inseparable from the request of the United States, as well as the establishment of the Taliban political office in the Afghanistan conflict to keep communication open and run conductively. Qatar is increasingly developing into a regional leader, repeatedly offering to broker peace between Israel and Arab countries and trying to negotiate with the parties to the conflict (Grafov, 2021).

Al Jazeera, a foreign broadcasting media located in Doha and fully funded by the Qatari government, became a pioneer in broadcasting the latest news on the battlefield; they intensely covered and broadcast photos and videos of the impact of Israeli attacks on Palestine. This fact certainly makes the United States and Israel disappointed with Qatar. In May 2024, Al Jazeera's representative office in Israel was forcibly closed on the orders of the Israeli president because it was considered inciting and leaning toward Hamas militants. Before the closure incident, several Al Jazeera journalists were also victims of Israeli shooting attacks. The Qatari government has repeatedly criticized Israel for violating international humanitarian law (Henderson, 2023), but the Qatari government has joined the ranks of rejecting Israel's oil embargo proposal.

Qatar has consistently supported Palestine in its conflict with Israel with a just and sustainable two-state solution. In its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict publicly, Qatar supports Palestine by providing substantial financial assistance for economic progress and humanitarian initiatives, including supporting the reconstruction of post-conflict Gaza for the Palestinian people. Qatar also actively supports Palestinian diplomacy in international forums and opposes Israel. However, pragmatically, Qatar maintains close ties with the United States regarding regional strategy.

Bahrain

The establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bahrain began in 1971 (Historian, n.d). The two countries maintain close ties to mutual interests in economics, education, and geopolitics. A hallmark of the United States-Bahrain relationship is the United States' access to Bahrain's naval facilities. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, a Navy port in Manama, Bahrain, is the headquarters of the US Navy's V fleet, which oversees all naval operations in the United States Central Command area. Bahrain hosts the US Navy's V Fleet, a critical component of the United States security strategy in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East region. Bahrain's decision to allow the US V Fleet on its territory permanently also applies to Israel. By 2022, Bahrain will enable Israel to station Navy officers in Bahrain to communicate and coordinate with the US V Fleet in combating terrorism and securing the Persian Gulf (Katzman, 2013).

The trade cooperation between Qatar and the United States alliance, according to OEC data, is that in 2022, the United States exported \$885 million to Bahrain through the leading products, which are automobiles (\$90.7 million), aircraft parts (\$57.8 million), and gas turbines (\$47.3 million). Over the past 5 years, United States exports to Bahrain have increased at an annualized rate of 35.4%, from \$194 million in 2017 to \$885 million in 2022. In 2022, Bahrain exported \$869M to the United States with the main products of raw aluminium (\$928M), aluminium

plating (\$177M), and aluminium wire strands (\$129M). Over the past 5 years, Bahrain's exports to the United States have increased at an annual rate of 45.8%, from \$132 million in 2017 to \$869 million in 2022. (OEC, 2024).

The diplomatic relationship between the United States and Bahrain has also had ups and downs but remains strategic and robust. The United States and the international community often criticize Bahrain for human rights issues, especially after the crackdown on pro-democracy protests during the Arab Spring in 2011. Diplomatic relations between the two countries have been turbulent due to the crackdown on demonstrators and political opposition. In economic relations, the United States and Bahrain signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2006; global financial and trade policies often influence the dynamics of their relationship. Due to their strategic interests in the region, the two countries maintain a stable and favourable relationship.

In addition to its alliance with the United States, Bahrain is the fourth Middle Eastern country after the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Jordan to recognize Israel. The recognition marked the official establishment of full diplomatic relations between Bahrain and Israel, which was signed on October 18, 2020, in Manama (the capital of Bahrain), mediated by the United States as part of the Abraham Accords (Ahren, 2020). Regarding Israel's military aggression against Palestine, the Bahraini parliament decided in November 2023 to repatriate the Israeli ambassador. However, at the same time, Bahrain also rejected Iran's proposal to embargo oil shipments to Israel. Bahrain and several other Arab countries are pushing for a just two-state solution for Israel-Palestine. Some Bahrainis rejected the deal when the Bahraini government chose to normalize relations with Israel. There is an Islamic resistance group in Bahrain, the Al-Ashtar Brigades, which conducts drone attacks on Israeli territory in support of the Palestinian cause. The group's attack on April 27, 2024, targeted a large transportation company in the Eilat region of southern Israel (Middle East Monitor, 2024).

In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Bahrain often balances its support for Palestine and maintains strategic ties with the United States and Israel. In 2020, Bahrain signed a normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel, suggesting it was in line with US policy in the Middle East, despite criticism from pro-Palestinian parties. In contrast, Bahrain supported Palestinian rights in international forums, expressed its commitment to Palestinian rights, and opposed the Israeli occupation. Bahrain's actions reflect the complexity of Middle East politics, where countries must balance domestic and regional policies while maintaining foreign interests as a strategic necessity.

3.2. Double Standrd of Justice in Alliance Politics in the Middle East

Since globalization, relations between countries have become crucial to maintaining the world's stability, security, and welfare. Through cooperative relationships, countries compete to overcome challenges that require cooperation with other countries. They only considered which countries could help them overcome their competitive challenges. The importance of alliance relations between countries is manifested in several interdependent areas of cooperation. Three forms of collaboration are prioritized among countries for alliances: economic, political, and security cooperation. By definition, alliances are allied relationships such as coalitions, entente, pacts, or blocs and formal agreements (Kaplan, 2006). Robert Osgood in Kaplan (2006) defines an alliance as a formal agreement that promises states to cooperate in using their military resources against a particular state or states and usually obliges one or more of the signatories to use force or to consider (unilaterally or in consultation with its allies) the use of force in certain situations).

The alliance can also be understood as a necessity and not an option because each country is part of a system that must compete to maintain its interests and existence. Alliances, which are a form of strategic global world order, can also prevent the dominant position of a country in a region. In partnerships, countries with greater power can usually use alliances to maintain their influence in the area (Saiia, n.d). It aligns with the "bandwagoning concept," where second states will seek alliances with superpowers, in this case, the United States. Ultimately, partnerships between states develop into dependencies between states allied with each other.

According to Stephen Waltz, alliances are formal or informal relationships between two or more sovereign states (Miglietta, 2002). The countries in the alliance eventually need help to look neutrally at resolving problems or conflicts around them, especially outside the alliance. The alliance's actions often influence foreign policy and diplomatic relations by common interests and obscure objectivity. Consequently, they support or oppose certain parties to maintain strategic ties with the alliance, exacerbating tensions. It can be attributed to an argument written in a book entitled *Power and Interdependence*, which states that "it is more difficult for state leaders to calculate the manipulation that occurs from interdependence" even here a national interest becomes ambiguous" (Keohane & Nye, 2012).

Strategic, economic, and security interests shaped the alliance between the United States and Middle Eastern countries. After World War II, the United States began establishing close ties with several regional countries to gain access to oil resources vital to the world economy. These alliances have been strengthened by shared interests in fighting terrorism and stopping the influence of other great powers such as Russia and China. Countries in the region receive significant military and economic aid from the United States in return for supporting US foreign policy. The United States continues to have a strong presence in the Middle East through this strategic alliance. At the same time, countries in the region receive political support from the United States and its allies. However, this relationship is often disrupted by conflicts related to human rights and differences of opinion on disputes in the region, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Farouk, 2019) explains that the Arab world formed a collective security architecture with the United States, namely the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), as a US project related to security, military, politics, and economics. However, so far, MESA has been structured to meet the United States' need to reduce the presence of China or Russia while exerting influence by ignoring the priorities and constraints of potential Arab member states.

In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the alliance between the United States and Middle Eastern countries has experienced various complex dynamics. Since the mid-20th century, the United States has been a critical ally of Israel with significant military, economic and diplomatic support. America's relations with Arab countries in the Middle East, however, are essential to regional stability and the strategic interests of the United States. In recent decades, the United States has assisted efforts to improve relations between Israel and several Arab states through mediation. Significant military and diplomatic assistance to Israel, including a veto in the United Nations Security Council aimed at protecting Israel from sanctions, is evidence of the practice of double standards. This policy exacerbates conflict in the region and ignores human rights violations against Palestinians. According to some Arab countries and the international community, America's support for Israel is a contributing factor to tensions in the region. It has drawn criticism from some who believe this unconditional support demonstrates a double standard that ignores human rights and justice.

In the political context, justice can ensure the protection of human rights, distribute interests fairly, and reduce the potential for conflict with neighbouring countries. Without justice in politics, tensions between countries will lead to a prolonged humanitarian crisis. If we look further, justice is fundamental in the context of political alliances. Political alliances aim to create transparency and equal and mutually supportive treatment among member states. Justice, from the perspective of political alliances, focuses on the equal interests of the allied parties and tends to ignore the countries around the alliance. Differences in perspective or giving fair meaning are limited to the alliance circle. It then encourages differences in the sense of justice in a political relationship. The following logic is described in this study:

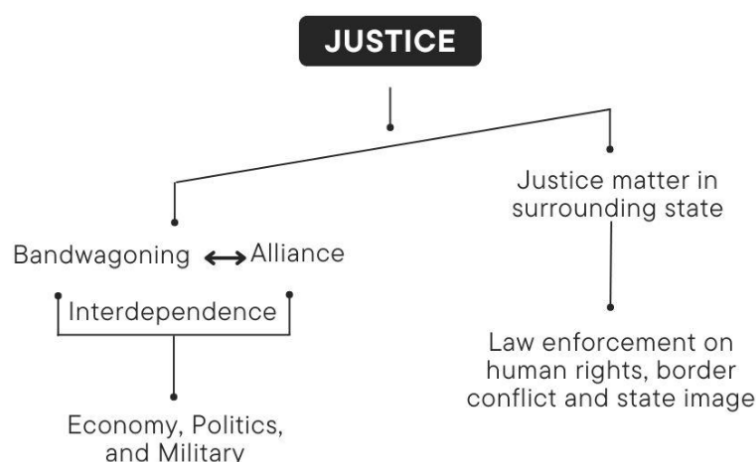


Figure 1. (a) Flow of Justice in Alliance and Bandwagoning Relationship

The plot above shows that the context of justice when associated with alliances that refer to behaviour that tends to "bandwagoning," will place economic, political, and military aspects as the heaviest points. It is due to the belief that these aspects can compensate for justice or human rights problems in neighbouring countries. Problems that arise in neighbouring countries due to injustice and human rights violations are considered to trigger regional security conflicts. Therefore, the surrounding countries, in this case, the Muslim countries in the Middle East, need

to protect their security by joining alliances with countries considered more potent in the Middle East, namely the United States.

This choice will undoubtedly lower the image of Muslim countries for choosing to join the United States amid the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, the most essential image of a country is reflected in economic activity. If a country has a negative image, its products' quality will usually be reconsidered, and vice versa; if the country's image is positive for a product, it will be readily accepted by the world community (Irina & Andrei, 2018). It is undoubtedly essential in the smooth running of economic activities. However, considering that the focus of the economic activities of Muslim countries is mainly on the sale of oil and other natural resources that are usually the source needed by large countries such as the United States, image-related matters do not have a significant effect. This situation can occur because most economic activities run without relying on the world image; security or military cooperation is needed. Security or military cooperation causes the emergence of conflict triggers in the form of groups and surrounding countries. It is necessary to cooperate with superpowers that are considered to be able to protect their security militarily from tensions that may arise due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Indirectly, alliances create entrapment that leads to dependence. Entrapment can be created because of the ambiguous meaning of an interest to be achieved between the region and its alliance countries. One example of a case is in the Middle East, where many Muslim countries have begun to side with and alliance with Western countries such as the United States. The alliance between Muslim countries and superpower countries, such as the United States, indirectly makes the meaning of interests for Muslim countries and interests for alliances with Western countries ambiguous and different when they want to be applied in defending Palestine. When entering the entrapment in an alliance, a question will arise about Muslim countries that should fight for the rights of the Palestinian state, which is part of the realization of justice in the Middle East. It becomes ambiguous when questioning the meaning of justice in the context of alliances made by other Muslim countries with the United States. Justice is a different context when it comes to defending the interests of each country.

Muslim countries in the Middle East have shown various responses to the influence of foreign powers, especially the United States. Some declare anti-dominance, while others forge strategic alliances and harmonious relations with the United States. The interdependence between Muslim countries in the Middle East and the United States is complex and multifaceted. In addition to the aspect of interests that can influence a country's policies, the interdependence of interests can affect the perspective and implementation of justice. Justice is essential as one of the tools in regulating norms and is vital for fair politics. Justice is also the basis for making political decisions with neighbouring countries. It is needed so that relationships between groups and between countries can lead to the word "fair" in achieving the interests of each country.

Justice itself has several perspectives that experts interpret. According to Miller, justice contextually has various moral judgments. According to Miller (2004), contextualism also supports a principle of justice that can be justified rationally without reducing a fact. In this case, it focuses more on the relationship between a point and a principle that uses normative defence using a pluralistic approach to avoid reductionism, relativism, and intuitionism. (Buckley, 2012). Given the different meanings of justice, something consistent is needed that leads to a universal sense of justice. However, when dealing with the interests of alliances, standards and meanings of justice often lead to double standards or blurring the definition of universal justice. This is usually the case with political partnerships worldwide, including in the Middle East.

Justice in the impartial realm currently happening in the context of alliances in the Middle East is in line with the opinion of justice, according to Polemarchus. Polemarchus said, "Justice is giving each man his due, meaning harming your enemies and helping your friends." (Ferrari, 2018). The definition that Plato had considered was ambiguous because there was no way we could label friends as good and enemies as evil. Plato also criticized what if it turns out that friends are only as good as they seem when the party is doing something evil. Plato's opinion against the meaning of justice, according to Polemarchus, is happening in the alliance of Middle Eastern countries. Muslim countries that now obscure the universal value of justice and lead to individual values encourage Muslim countries in the Middle East to consider the United States as a big country that brings something good. However, in reality, the alliance that is interpreted by Muslim countries in the Middle East as a friend who does good things for them is actually doing bad things to other countries or indirectly neglecting the value of justice to other countries.

Thus, the meaning of justice forms a double standard when related to the dependence of an interest. Secondary-state countries will see a fair alliance between members as a balanced justice but ignore the justice relations in the surrounding countries because they are considered to have left the context of justice between the alliances formed.

The justice given to the conflicting state is limited to support, not excessive support. Therefore, in the context of partnerships, justice only applies to those who can produce equal benefits for a country.

This fact contradicts the following verse of the Quran, which emphasizes the importance of the value of justice, even against enemy countries. Through this verse, it is hoped that the dominance of power or the alliance of Middle Eastern countries formed by the US should not hinder the principle of justice for Palestine.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ءَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do." (QS. Al-Maidah: 8).

3.3. Bandwagoning and Justice Implications in the Middle East

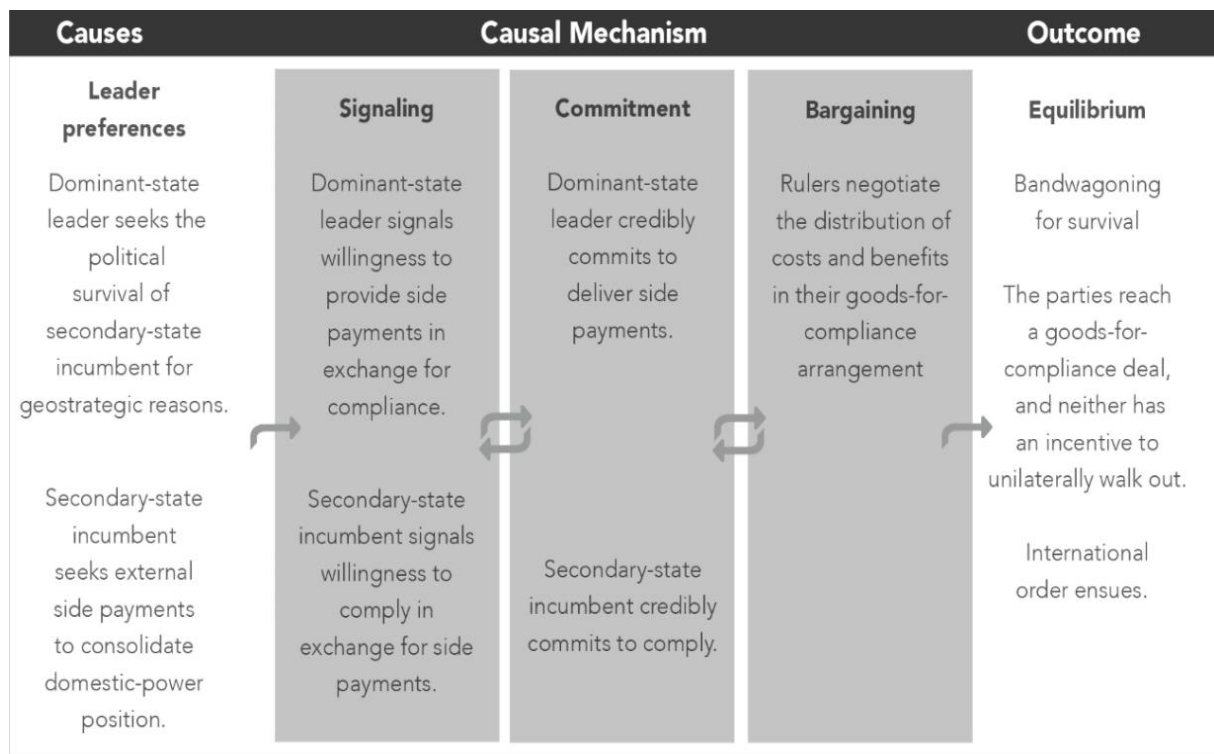
According to the realist perspective, the balance of power creates massive competition that emphasizes only one primary focus: military power. This view emphasizes that cooperation is unnecessary to protect a state. The most powerful state in a competitive region is less likely to be attacked. However, the advent of new approaches that offer cooperation to fulfil national interests expanded the paradigm of political relations between states. State leaders began not only to concentrate on building fortresses or military power but also sought to build alliances or cooperation with other states that seemed to benefit them. Areas of collaboration between alliances began to cover various aspects, such as economics and economics. The approach that enlarges the state's power and interests through partnerships is a phenomenon that a neo-realist perspective can explain. In this case, the United States made alliances with several countries in the Middle East to enlarge the economic and political power of the United States.

A perspective developed from the old realist tradition is that the neo-realist perspective uses soft-balancing behaviour. Three conditions may occur in soft-balancing behaviour: 1). The position of hegemonic power and military behaviour is of great concern but has not become a significant threat to countries in the second-tier power position; 2). The dominant country is usually the source of needs both for economic needs and as a source of security needs that cannot be replaced; 3). The dominant country cannot quickly attack due to balancing efforts made by other countries, or it could be that the dominant country is balancing without any intention of military action (Spektor & Fasolin, 2018).

International relations demand a balanced system to overcome the threat of a dominating great power. In this system, the name "bandwagoning" became known. Bandwagoning is a theory popularized by Kenneth Waltz that tries to explain that the power struggle is not only about balancing power but also about bandwagoning. However, balancing is an approach that is often used to overcome the threat of great power. Balancing, on the other hand, assumes that the state already has a guarantee of its security and only strengthens its power, which continues to increase every time a more significant power threat arises. On the other hand, bandwagoning is focused on creating a countervailing force and seeing opportunities for alliances or cooperation with superpowers to avoid conflict and make it easier for the country to achieve its national interests.

Bandwagoning is a theory that explains the behaviour of a weaker country toward a stronger country. In the concept of bandwagoning, the behaviour of a country approaching a large country is a behaviour that tries to align itself, and indirectly, this form of behaviour leads to bandwagoning behaviour. In Mearsheimer's view, bandwagoning is not a productive option in the realist world. Although the bandwagoning state may gain more absolute power, the dangerous aggressor state will gain more power. According to (Spektor & Fasolin, 2018) in the journal "Bandwagoning for Survival: Political Leaders and International Alignments," a causal mechanism can explain interactions in bandwagoning behaviour. The mechanism connects causal forces as independent variables and observable outcomes. The interaction is depicted in the following table:

Table 1. Variables in Bandwagoning Behavior (Spektor & Fasolin, 2018)



The chart shows that the leaders of the dominant state and those in the secondary-state position both have a desired interest. The desire of the dominant-state leader signals its willingness to provide what the secondary state needs, and vice versa. The secondary state will show a sign of its willingness to comply with the agreement as a payment that the dominant state has provided. It is then realized in a joint commitment accompanied by bargaining that can benefit each party. The agreement and commitment will produce an equal outcome for the parties involved. Thus, a new order is formed due to the emergence of behavior that tends to follow the dominant state. This behaviour can also lead to the same policy or response between the dominant and secondary states in international issues. Waltz says a balance is achieved to pursue interests and avoid possible threats. Bandwagoning is also considered a power management strategy that can occur through institutions and non-institutions that lead to cooperation while still referring to the distribution of power (Levick & Schulz, 2020).

Referring to Waltz's opinion, another purpose of bandwagoning is to avoid threats that occur. Secondary-state countries in the Middle East prefer the decision to reject Iran's proposal to embargo oil to Israel as a form of sanction for attacks on Palestine. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Bahrain prefer to avoid the dire possibilities that will be received; implementing an oil embargo on Israel will impact alliances and economic, political, and military interdependence with the US.

Bandwagoning has several characteristics summarized through European countries' behaviour: 1) When a country bandwagon is based on pursuing benefits, it does so voluntarily. 2) When a country bandwagoned for security or survival purposes, it did so out of urgency or emergency. 3) When the state participates with a country that it thinks can win the war, it can also be said to be a party to the action of "joining the bandwagon," where the concept is very attached to the character of bandwagoning (Yeung, 2016). Based on this character, bandwagoning is a form of action chosen voluntarily and tends to follow a situation that benefits a country's position. Countries that carry out bandwagoning behaviour adjust in advance to strategic goals that have been adjusted to political interests and power expansion. Looking at the character of bandwagoning behavior, countries that carry out bandwagoning do not always clearly see which side they will side with. Countries rarely think about or care to properly examine if the nation they choose to support is in the correct or incorrect position. It happens because they only focus on the big countries that can provide or guarantee the country's security while doing economic cooperation that will bind more commitment between the superpower and the secondary state.

The bandwagoning action also reflects the social behaviour of several people in a country who gather and agree to bandwagoning. Thus, the bandwagoning behaviour of a country can also be seen from the existing social behaviour at that time, which is influenced by the surrounding environment or political conditions. It can not be separated from a statement in the classic psychological theory of social conformity, which says that humans

sometimes change their perspectives or opinions to conform to the majority (Lamers et al., 2022). However, if applied to the geopolitical order of the country, a country will change its perspective or support to adjust to a superior power (referring to the superpower). This view is certainly in line with the concept of survival held by every country. In this action or behaviour, it can also be seen if the secondary state will often adhere to the actions and beliefs of the superpower in guiding its behaviour or attitude. Indirectly, their previous beliefs, which were used to determine policies or attitudes, have changed.

In this case, several countries in the Middle East (secondary states) bandwagon with the United States (dominant state) only secure their national interests, especially in economy and military power. All decisions made by secondary state leaders will be highly dependent and influenced by beliefs towards the dominant state, regardless of whether the country they defend is right or wrong. Based on social conformity theory, it can also be seen that there is a change in perspective when witnessing an event; in the past, countries in the Middle East, in solidarity, implemented an oil embargo on Israel during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. However, this was different during the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in November 2023, where several oil-producing countries in the Middle East refused to impose an embargo on Israel for fear that it would affect their national income.

The attitude of secondary states that prioritize worldly interests such as economic and military gains, over upholding justice for Palestine is very much at odds with the verse below:

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَجِبُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ

"They are the ones who favour the life of this world over the Hereafter and hinder others from the Way of Allah, striving to make it appear crooked. It is they who have gone far astray (QS Ibrahim: 3)."

In line with the verse above, secondary states are not maximally supporting Palestine and lack solidarity among Muslim countries. It can be said that secondary states do not carry out the command of the Prophet Muhammad SWT as written below:

مَنْ لَمْ يَهْتَمَّ بِأَمْرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ

"Whoever is not care / concerned with the affairs of the Muslims is not among of us" (Al-Hadits).

The online news site Le Monde explained that on November 11, 2023, four influential countries in the Middle East rejected the proposed oil embargo and termination of diplomatic relations with Israel (Le Monde, 2023). The countries that refused realized that if they were embargoed, it would cause disappointment to the dominant state (the United States). It was feared that it would affect the region's economic, political, and military power and the Middle East. Through efforts to normalize relations with Israel mediated by the United States, several Middle Eastern countries seemed to be asked not to demand responsibility for the oppression and massacres that Israel continues to carry out against the Palestinian people. For the normalization of relations, there are transactional efforts between Middle Eastern countries and the United States; if the Middle Eastern countries have good relations with Israel, it will open up opportunities for them to benefit economically from the United States.

Undeniably, the wealth of countries in the Middle East is derived from the oil sector. To meet their national needs, they continue to increase oil revenues and will not be willing to embargo their oil exports. Countries in the Middle East are carrying out many grand projects, so with their pragmatic nature, they need a lot of financial support to realize their national development.

4. CONCLUSION

Efforts to achieve justice in the Middle East region, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are strongly influenced by the presence of dominant powers such as the United States. Several Middle Eastern countries, through bandwagoning efforts, have allied with the United States to protect their national interests, especially in economics, politics, and defence. The strategic potential of the Middle East region is its natural resources, especially oil and gas, which have led to geopolitical conflicts and alliances. Countries in the area tend to maintain good relations with the United States to keep their economic conditions stable but often sacrifice the neutral and universal concept of justice not to consider which side is wrong and which is correct.

The relationship between the United States and several countries in the Middle East is based on the principle of mutualism. The United States is a supplier of military equipment for countries in the Middle East, and vice versa; Middle Eastern countries benefit from the United States as the world's largest oil importer. The alliance that runs causes political decisions, and its actions are not in favour of the principle of justice. When Iran proposed that oil-

producing countries embargo Israel as a sanction for humanitarian crimes against the Palestinian people, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, and Bahrain chose only to condemn Israel's actions. However, they rejected the embargo proposal to maintain good relations with the United States, which is a close ally of Israel, and to keep their national income safe from oil exports.

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