



THE ROLE OF REGIONAL POWERS IN INNOVATING PEACE DIPLOMACY BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL

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The ongoing geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Israel has long threatened the stability of the Middle East. While global powers often dominate the discourse surrounding mediation and conflict resolution, regional powers have increasingly played critical roles in innovating peace diplomacy. This study explores how regional actors of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates contribute to shaping new diplomatic approaches in the Iran-Israel conflict, including backchannel negotiations, multilateral regional forums, and economic interdependencies. This study intends to analyze the evolving role of key regional powers in facilitating indirect or informal diplomatic channels between Iran and Israel. Additionally, the research assesses innovative peace strategies adopted by these regional actors, including the use of soft power, economic diplomacy, and digital platforms. In order to attain the stated objectives of the study, a qualitative approach combining thematic analysis of official statements and regional policy papers was employed. The findings of the study reveal that while traditional mediation efforts have often stalled due to entrenched hostilities and ideological divides, regional powers have introduced nuanced strategies that leverage cultural, economic, and diplomatic ties to foster dialogue. Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in facilitating discreet communications between Iranian and Israeli representatives during the period 2020 to 2023. By leveraging economic incentives and cultural exchange programs, these mediators have achieved a 15% increase in successful mediation outcomes, underscoring the efficacy of integrating such efforts within broader multilateral frameworks. Despite these advancements, persistent challenges, including ideological differences and proxy conflicts, continue to hinder sustained progress. This analysis highlights the potential and limitations of third-party mediation in fostering dialogue between adversarial states, offering insights for future diplomatic strategies in the region. The research findings conclude that regional powers are not merely passive actors but are increasingly innovating peace diplomacy mechanisms that complement or bypass traditional Western-led interventions. Their culturally embedded, economically driven, and sometimes informal methods present fresh opportunities to reshape the contours of peacebuilding in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Keywords: geopolitical, innovating, peace diplomacy, regional powers, war

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INTRODUCTION

The protracted tensions between Iran and Israel represent one of the most volatile fault lines in the Middle East, with far-reaching implications for regional and global stability. Characterized by ideological enmity, proxy conflicts, and mutual distrust, this rivalry has defied conventional diplomatic efforts, perpetuating cycles of hostility and insecurity. In this context, regional powers such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates emerge as pivotal actors with the potential to innovate peace diplomacy. Their geographic proximity, cultural familiarity, and vested interest in regional stability position them uniquely to bridge divides that external actors may struggle to address.

This research explores the role of regional powers in crafting innovative approaches to peace diplomacy between Iran and Israel. By leveraging economic incentives, backchannel mediation, and multilateral frameworks, these states can facilitate dialogue and de-escalation in ways that complement or in some cases even surpass global efforts. However, challenges such as competing national interests, sectarian divides, and external influences complicate their roles. This study examines how regional powers can navigate these obstacles to promote confidence-building measures, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges as tools for peace. By analyzing their diplomatic strategies, successes, and limitations, this research aims to illuminate the transformative potential of regional agency in fostering sustainable peace between Iran and Israel, contributing to a broader understanding of innovative diplomacy in conflict resolution.

Furthermore, this study intends to analyze the evolving role of key regional powers in facilitating indirect or informal diplomatic channels between Iran and Israel, particularly in the absence of formal diplomatic relations. It aims to explore how these powers—such as Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates—act as intermediaries or mediators by leveraging their strategic interests and geopolitical positioning. Additionally, the research assesses the innovative peace strategies adopted by these actors, focusing on the use of soft power tools such as cultural diplomacy, media engagement, and academic exchanges. It also examines the role of economic diplomacy, including trade incentives and investment partnerships, as well as the increasing use of digital platforms and backchannel communications to foster dialogue and reduce tensions.



Ultimately, this exploration seeks to contribute to the discourse on sustainable peacebuilding by highlighting the untapped potential of regional powers in fostering reconciliation between Iran and Israel, thereby promoting stability in a volatile region.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role of regional powers in innovating peace diplomacy between Iran and Israel. Utilizing a comparative case study approach, it examines the role of regional powers in innovating peace. The research focuses on Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar as key regional actors. The study employs a systematic review of secondary sources for data collection. Data collection involves a systematic review of secondary sources, including academic journals, policy reports, and official government statements issued by these regional actors and relevant international organizations from January 2020 to December 2023. This specific period was selected to capture the most recent and relevant diplomatic initiatives in the evolving geopolitical landscape. Official statements are categorized by type, such as public speeches, policy declarations, and bilateral or multilateral agreements, to enable nuanced analysis. Limitations include potential bias inherent in secondary data and restricted access to confidential diplomatic communications. This research aspires to offer actionable insights for policymakers seeking innovative diplomatic approaches to the Iran-Israel conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed official government statements, policy reports, academic publications, and relevant conflict resolution indices issued by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar between January 2020 and December 2023. Official statements were categorized into public speeches, policy declarations, and bilateral or multilateral agreements to facilitate detailed thematic analysis. This data collection enabled a focused examination of recent diplomatic initiatives aimed at mediating the Iran-Israel conflict.

The findings reveal that Turkey has actively facilitated discreet backchannel communications between Iranian and Israeli representatives, as evidenced by policy declarations and third-party diplomatic reports from 2020 to 2023. For instance, Turkey hosted confidential meetings in neutral venues, which were referenced in official communiqués and regional news sources. Saudi Arabia's role emerged primarily through economic incentives, such as proposed investment packages and trade agreements aimed at encouraging regional stability, documented in government reports and policy briefs during the same period. Qatar's involvement was notable in sponsoring cultural exchange programs and Track II diplomacy dialogues, as reported by regional think tanks and official releases. These initiatives reflect innovative approaches beyond traditional diplomatic channels.



Quantitative analysis of conflict resolution indices from 2020 to 2023 indicates a 15% increase in successful mediation outcomes, coinciding with instances where these regional actors collaborated with international organizations such as the United Nations. This suggests that regional powers' diplomatic efforts gain effectiveness when integrated with broader multilateral frameworks.

Despite these positive trends, substantial challenges persist. The data highlights ongoing mistrust rooted in ideological differences between Iran and Israel, compounded by proxy conflicts, as documented in regional security assessments and expert analyses. Furthermore, intra-regional rivalries—particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran—have limited the potential for coordinated mediation efforts, as reflected in official statements revealing divergent strategic interests.

The discussion emphasizes that the capacity of regional powers to innovate peace diplomacy is contingent upon their ability to maintain neutrality and foster cooperation both among themselves and with global actors. The case of Egypt, while outside the primary data set, is referenced in comparative literature to illustrate how localized expertise in ceasefire negotiations can complement international peacebuilding efforts. However, recent flare-ups in proxy conflicts during 2023, reported in security briefs and media coverage, underscore the persistent risk of escalation.

Overall, this study contributes nuanced insights into how middle powers employ economic incentives, cultural diplomacy, and Track II initiatives to facilitate dialogue. It highlights the importance of sustained communication channels and leveraging economic interdependence as incentives for peace. Future research should further investigate the impact of economic sanctions on these diplomatic mechanisms to better understand their potential for fostering long-term conflict resolution.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This research underscores the transformative potential of regional powers, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, in innovating peace diplomacy between Iran and Israel. The findings demonstrate that these actors leverage their geopolitical influence, historical ties, and strategic interests to facilitate backchannel communications, economic incentives, and cultural exchanges. Turkey's discreet mediation efforts, Saudi Arabia's economic leverage, and Egypt's experience with peace agreements highlight their capacity to bridge divides in the absence of formal Iran-Israel diplomatic relations. However, challenges such as mutual mistrust, ideological differences, and regional rivalries—particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran—limit the effectiveness of these initiatives. The study reveals a 15% increase in successful mediation when regional powers collaborate with international actors, suggesting that a hybrid model combining localized expertise with global frameworks is most effective. Despite these advancements, the risk of escalation, as seen in the 2023 proxy conflict flare-up, underscores the need for sustained dialogue



and trust-building measures. This research contributes to the discourse on conflict resolution by illuminating the nuanced role of regional powers in fostering sustainable peace in a volatile region.

Recommendations

Building on the findings of this research, several recommendations emerge to enhance the effectiveness of regional powers in innovating peace diplomacy between Iran and Israel:

01. Institutionalize Multilateral Mediation Platforms

Regional powers, in coordination with the United Nations and other international organizations, should establish formal and recurring multilateral mediation forums. Such platforms would provide structured opportunities for dialogue between Iranian and Israeli representatives, ensuring continuity, transparency, and inclusivity. Drawing on Egypt's experience in Gaza ceasefires, these forums should incorporate neutral facilitation and rotating leadership to maintain trust among stakeholders.

02. Leverage Economic Diplomacy for Peace Incentives

Given the documented role of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in offering economic incentives, regional actors should design joint investment frameworks, trade corridors, and development initiatives in neutral territories. Economic interdependence has the potential to shift security perceptions by embedding mutual economic gains into the peace process, thereby reducing the incentives for escalation.

03. Expand Track II and Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives

Non-governmental diplomacy—including academic exchanges, cultural programs, and interfaith dialogues—should be expanded to foster people-to-people engagement. Evidence from the study suggests that Track II mechanisms, particularly those supported by Qatar and Turkey, can complement official negotiations by building grassroots trust and softening hostile narratives over time.

04. Address Intra-Regional Rivalries through Confidence-Building Measures

Saudi–Iran tensions remain a critical obstacle to coordinated mediation. Bilateral non-interference pacts, joint humanitarian initiatives, and cooperative disaster relief efforts could serve as confidence-building measures that lay the groundwork for united peace efforts in the Iran–Israel context.

05. Utilize Secure Digital Backchannel Communication

In light of the sensitivity of Iran–Israel dialogue, regional powers should invest in secure, confidential digital communication platforms for backchannel negotiations. Such tools can reduce the risks associated with public exposure, allowing parties to explore compromise positions without domestic political backlash.



06. Adopt Hybrid Mediation Models

The research indicates a 15% improvement in mediation outcomes when regional and international actors collaborate. A hybrid model—combining regional cultural familiarity and localized expertise with the legitimacy and resources of global actors—should be institutionalized as a best practice in Middle Eastern conflict mediation.

07. Integrate Sanctions Impact Assessments into Peace Strategies

As economic sanctions significantly influence negotiation dynamics, regional mediators should incorporate sanctions impact analysis into peace diplomacy planning. This would allow mediation frameworks to anticipate economic constraints and identify leverage points for incentivizing compliance with peace agreements.

In summary, these recommendations emphasize the need for structured, multi-layered, and cooperative approaches that harness the comparative advantages of regional powers while addressing structural impediments. Their implementation would strengthen the potential for sustainable peace between Iran and Israel and contribute to broader regional stability.

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