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Exploring the Impact of the Biden Administration and Arab Monarchies on the Two-State Solution and Governance in Gaza

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Received 4 June 2024 | Accepted 21 July 2024 |

Published online 23 December 2024

Abstract

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is significantly influenced by the Biden Administration's policies and Arab monarchies' strategic interests. The 2023 Gaza war has reshaped the political landscape, emphasizing the need for sustainable resolution. A thorough examination of the aftermath of the 2023 Gaza attack is imperative for grasping the current prospects for the two-state solution and regional governance under the Biden administration, and the influence of Arab monarchies. Employing a quantitative approach, our findings indicate a consensus among study participants favoring the involvement of diverse Palestinian factions in Gaza's governance to advance peace efforts. Arab monarchies' actions significantly impact trust in their mediation role, underscoring their pivotal role in shaping regional peace prospects. Similarly, attitudes toward the

Biden administration's stance influence trust in its role as a mediator, despite criticisms of perceived biases. Remarkably, demographic factors do not yield statistical differences in attitudes towards governance and the two-state solution.

Keywords

Arab States – Biden administration – Gaza – governance dynamics – Hamas – inclusive governance – two-state solution – 2023 War on Gaza

1 Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most enduring and deeply entrenched disputes in modern history, characterized by a complex interplay of historical grievances, territorial claims, and religious aspirations. At its core lies the question of land ownership and sovereignty, with both Israelis and Palestinians asserting legitimate rights to the same territory. The concept of a two-state solution, which has been viewed as a possible route to ending this ongoing conflict, is the establishment of independent Israeli and Palestinian states living side-by-side.

However, achieving the two-state solution has proven to be a formidable challenge, hindered by a multitude of factors that have perpetuated the cycle of violence and impeded progress towards peace (Bao 2018; Lustick 2019; Munayyer 2019; Nimni 2020). Historical animosities dating back decades, including the displacement of Palestinian refugees and the establishment of the state of Israel, continue to fuel deep-seated resentments and mistrust between the two sides (Karmi 2020; Rioli 2022). Territorial disputes over key areas such as East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip further complicate efforts to delineate borders and establish viable states (Bashir 2016).

Religious considerations also play a significant role in the conflict, with Jerusalem serving as a holy city for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. The religious significance of the city has heightened tensions and contributed to competing claims of sovereignty, making it a focal point of contention in peace negotiations (Jamal 2022; Lustick 2022). Moreover, the presence of extremist groups on both sides, as well as the proliferation of armed militias and terrorist organizations, has perpetuated violence and destabilized the region, posing significant challenges to peacebuilding efforts (Lazaroff 2022).

In addition to these historical and territorial complexities, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also shaped by contemporary political dynamics and

competing interests of regional and international actors (Persson 2017; 2020). For years, the international community has advocated for a two-state solution to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, aiming to secure democratic rights for both populations within their own sovereign states. However, this vision starkly contrasts with the growing power imbalance in Israeli-Palestinian relations. This is evidenced by the *de facto* annexation of significant portions of the West Bank, the blockade imposed on Gaza, and Israel's diminishing enthusiasm for negotiations, prioritizing its expansionist agenda over democratic principles (Strömbom and Persson 2023). Geopolitical rivalries, strategic alliances, and security concerns intersect to influence the behavior and policies of key stakeholders, further complicating efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. The involvement of external powers (Ibid), including the United States (Daugirdas and Mortenson 2017), European Union (Huber 2021; Müller 2019), and various Arab States (Strömbom and Persson 2023), adds another layer of complexity to the conflict, with each actor pursuing its own agenda and priorities (Jamal and Kensicki 2020).

Against this backdrop of historical grievances, territorial disputes, and geopolitical rivalries, the quest for a two-state solution remains elusive (Jamal 2022). Despite intermittent efforts to revive peace talks and negotiate a comprehensive agreement, political obstacles, security concerns, and entrenched positions continue to impede progress towards a resolution. Nevertheless, the urgency of addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting reconciliation remains paramount, as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only threatens regional stability, but also undermines the prospects for peace and security in the broader Middle East.

In recent years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has entered a new phase marked by significant shifts in the political landscape, driven in large part by key developments such as the inauguration of the Biden administration in the United States and the evolving roles of Arab monarchies in the Middle East. These changes have introduced fresh dynamics and possibilities for reshaping the trajectory of the conflict, particularly concerning the prospects for a two-state solution and the governance dynamics within Gaza, a Palestinian territory central to the dispute.

The Biden administration's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents a departure from the policies of its predecessor and a return to a more traditional stance characterized by a commitment to a negotiated two-state solution (Katulis 2023). President Biden has expressed his support for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, emphasizing the need for both parties to engage in meaningful dialogue and compromise to achieve a durable peace agreement (Mitchel and Smith 2024). Moreover, the

administration has signaled its intention to reengage with the Palestinian leadership and restore humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, signaling a renewed diplomatic effort to address the root causes of the conflict (Lazaroff 2022; Serhan 2021).

Concurrently, the evolving roles of Arab monarchies in the Middle East have added a new dimension to the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, with several Gulf states signaling a willingness to normalize relations with Israel in recent years (Persson 2020). This strategic realignment reflects a broader geopolitical calculus driven by shared concerns over Iran's regional influence, as well as economic and technological interests. While these developments have the potential to create opportunities for regional cooperation and conflict resolution, they also raise questions about the future of Arab support for the Palestinian cause and the viability of the two-state solution (Shemer-Kunz 2023).

Against this backdrop, the policies and diplomatic initiatives of the Biden administration, coupled with the strategic interests of Arab monarchies, have the potential to exert significant influence on the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By leveraging their respective positions and relationships with key stakeholders, including Israel and the Palestinian Authority, these actors may play a pivotal role in shaping the parameters of future negotiations and advancing efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement. Moreover, their engagement could have profound implications for governance dynamics within Gaza, where Hamas maintains *de facto* control and ongoing challenges to effective governance persist.

2 Theoretical Framework

Applying a constructivist framework, it is possible to analyze how Palestinians interpret and construct their understanding of the roles played by the Biden administration, Arab States, and the two-state solution in the aftermath of the 2023 Gaza war. First of all, constructivism asserts that people build their conception of reality from identities, norms, and shared ideas in society (Katzenstein 1996). As a result, the study can explore Palestinian perceptions of the Biden administration's and Arab monarchies' goals and activities. Historical narratives and media portrayals may impact participants' assessments of the Biden administration's diplomatic activities and aid policies, which may be shaped by their own experiences and expectations (Risse 2000). Similarly, cultural, religious, and geopolitical elements may influence their perceptions of the roles played by Arab governments in the conflict, demonstrating how reality is socially constructed (Wendt 1999).

According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), constructivism also highlights the influence of norms and ideas on the conduct of states. The survey can investigate Palestinian perceptions of international norms concerning human rights, self-determination, and conflict resolution. Their opinions of justice, national identity, and past grievances may have an impact on how they feel about the two-state solution (Checkel 1998). Additionally, the survey can look into how normative factors like expectations of statehood, sovereignty, and democratic governance influence people's perceptions of Gaza's governance (Barnett 2002).

Finally, constructivism emphasizes how crucial socialization and identity are in forming people's views and preferences (Adler 1997). Their opinions on the Biden administration's position, the engagement of Arab governments, and the viability of the two-state solution may be influenced by collective memories of previous conflicts, experiences of occupation, and cultural narratives of resistance (Mitchell 2002). Furthermore, interactions with political movements, educational institutions, and social networks may have an impact on their expectations for the future as well as their views on Gaza's government (Fearon and Laitin 2000).

3 The US-Palestine Relationship

The United States maintains a firm stance against extending political recognition to Palestine until a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel is reached (Bao 2018). This position underscores the US commitment to fostering negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians as the primary avenue for achieving a sustainable resolution to the conflict. However, the relationship between the US and Palestinian national bodies, as well as the Palestinian people, is intricately linked to the broader US-Israel relationship (Bashir 2016). This interdependency significantly shapes US policy towards Palestine and influences its diplomatic engagements in the region.

In US policy, the problem of Palestinians living in camps outside of Israel's sovereign borders is framed mainly as a humanitarian one. Through institutions like the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, the US has generously donated money to sustain Palestinian refugees over the years (Karmi 2020). Despite this support, Palestinian officials' attempts to garner public support for a political settlement with Israel are hampered by the marginalization of the Palestinian refugee issue.

The US has steadily moved away from rigidly following international law and legal limits for conflict resolution when mediating disputes between Israelis and Palestinians. Rather, stances that are more realistically viewed by

the parties concerned and in line with US and Israeli interests are typically reflected in negotiations (Lustick 2019). Important concerns like the status of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank are affected by this practical approach.

While the US Congress has reached a cooperative consensus on Jerusalem's status as Israel's undivided capital, there have been subtle shifts in US policy as evidenced by the Trump administration's decision to relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem and the Biden administration's subsequent decision to refrain from mentioning the city explicitly (Munayyer 2019). In line with broader US preferences on territorial problems, US politicians also typically support the incorporation of some Israeli settlements in the West Bank into Israel through land swaps.

It is impossible to overestimate the US Congress' impact over how US policy is shaped toward Israel and Palestine. Congress is an important decision-maker when it comes to funding, Palestinian statehood, and Middle East peace policy – especially when it comes to administrations that Hamas influences (Nimni 2020). Though significant policy changes are frequently limited by larger geopolitical realities and historical commitments, changes in the US electorate and political dynamics also have an impact on changes in US foreign policy toward Israel and Palestine.

The US's involvement in the war has shaped Palestinian perceptions of the US's position in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Official relations between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the US government were halted in 2017 after the US recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital (December 2017). According to a survey conducted in 2017, 55 percent of Palestinians said that the US posed the greatest threat to their country (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha). Seventy-one percent of Palestinian citizens were against the Trump administration and Palestinian leadership holding new talks in 2020. If Biden wins, only 21 percent of respondents anticipated a favorable shift, compared to 34 percent who thought US policy would remain the same and 35 percent who thought it would worsen (PCPSR 2020).

The disbelief in US attempts at mediation persisted even when the White House changed hands. When it came to the Palestinian-Israeli problem, in March 2021, 51 percent of Palestinians did not think that the US would take a more balanced stance, and 48 percent were against starting talks again with the US in the lead (PCPSR 2021a). Resuming talks with the US was opposed by 56 percent of Palestinians in December 2021, while 39 percent supported it (PCPSR 2022a). Nonetheless, the US was seen as the most powerful nation in persuading the Israeli and Palestinian sides to resume the peace process (46%); by contrast, only ten percent mentioned Europe and three percent mentioned Russia (PCPSR 2021b). Furthermore, in general, the US was seen as the one

with the ability to exert pressure on Israel, the PA, and Hamas (Pollock 2022). Just 11 percent of Gazans, 13 percent of West Bankers, and 21 percent of East Jerusalem residents desired that the US completely avoid involvement in Palestinian and Middle Eastern matters as of June 2022 (Pollock 2022).

4 Role of Arab Monarchies

Despite being a major step toward peace between Israel and the Arab world, the Abraham Accords did not resolve the fundamental issue with the Palestinians or put an end to hostilities between the parties involved. Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain signed the Accords in September 2020. Israel and Morocco reached an agreement mediated by the US in December 2020 (Council on Foreign Relations 2020). Nonetheless, the Accords have been viewed as a betrayal and with skepticism by the Palestinians. According to Hoffmann (2021), neither the United Arab Emirates nor Bahrain have demonstrated a willingness to confront Israel or utilize their newfound connections to promote Palestinian rights.

Israel has traditionally viewed maintaining its national security and avoiding undue isolation as requiring it to deepen its ties with neighboring governments (Dajani and Rock 2022; Greenblatt 2020). Israel was offered complete normalization and recognition in exchange for a complete pullback to the 1967 lines and comprehensive peace with all of its neighbors, including the Palestinians, during the 1991 Madrid summit and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which set a new standard for Israel (Albzour 2019; Greenblatt 2020).

When the Abraham Accords were signed, the region was more divided into opposing zero-sum political blocs and polarized, contesting, and polarizing than before; the 2011 wave of revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia prompted this change (Schiff 2018; Wahidullah 2022). Previously, opposing axes of resistance and moderation had served as the framework for how Western powers positioned themselves in the region. However, in response to a public push for increased political opening, democratization, and enfranchisement, new fault lines surfaced (Wahidullah 2022).

During the Abraham Accords, regional polarization and split into opposing ideologies and political blocs occurred due to the 2011 protests in Egypt and Tunisia. Western players shifted their positions along resistance and moderation axes, but new fault lines emerged due to public pressure for increased political opening, democratization, and enfranchisement (McManus 2022; Wahidullah 2022). The four-country blockade against Qatar was a significant aggression within the Gulf Cooperation Council and bolstered Israel's cooperation with the UAE. Both Emirati and Israeli leaders viewed US policy oscillations

and continuity as opportunities to restructure their regional national security interests (Schiff 2018; Wahidullah 2022).

The Abraham Accords were shaped by the Trump administration's unorthodox approach to the Israel-Palestine issue, aligning with international consensus and the Greater Israel leanings of Israeli hard-right figures like PM Netanyahu and the Evangelical community. The Trump administration relocated its embassy in Israel, closed its mission to the Palestinians, and ended assistance to the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA. They pursued an Israeli agenda of normalizing with Arab States, aiming to further marginalize the Palestinians. The Accords were seen as a vindication of Netanyahu's approach of preventing a land for peace arrangement with the Palestinians and his hardline negation of Palestinian statehood. The Palestinian leadership felt betrayed and faced consequences for its own weakness (McManus 2022; Wahidullah 2022).

Supported by the US and Israel, the normalization treaties have been welcomed since they might encourage peace and open up communication between Arab actors and Israel (Al Jazeera 2022). With Israel and Arab nations like the UAE and Bahrain strengthening their connections, Biden and his team have broadened and reinforced their influence. In March 2022, foreign ministers from Egypt, Bahrain, the UAE, and Morocco convened at a forum known as the "Negev Summit." The US, UAE, and India comprise the I2U2 Group, which seeks to expand collaboration on trade synergy and economic growth.

With only six percent strongly preferring or favoring the normalization of relations between Arab States and Israel, the seventh wave of the Arab Barometer (2022) shows that Palestinians have the least amount of support for the Abraham Accords. Similarly, it seems that fewer Arab countries are supporting the Accords (Pollock 2022). According to a Washington Institute survey conducted in March 2022, people's perceptions of the Accords' favorable aspects ranged from eight percent in Lebanon to 13 percent in Egypt (Pollock 2022). Even in nations whose initial support for the Accords was higher, this downward tendency is obvious; in November 2020, the percentage of Saudis, Bahrainis, and Emiratis in favor of the accords dropped from 41%, 45%, and 47% to 19%, 20%, and 25% in March 2022, respectively (Pollock 2022).

5 **Palestinians Trust of Initiatives of the Two-State Solution and Normalization with Israel**

Between 1993 and 1999, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel established a foundation for normalization, with the PA administering Palestinians' education, health, tourism, taxes, and social welfare (Shlaim 2005). Despite tensions

and crises, Israel and the PA maintained security and intelligence cooperation (Podeh 2022). Some support collaborating or normalizing with Israel as long as it removes settler colonial structures (Albzour et al. 2019). The PA continues to cooperate with Israel on economic matters (Peskin 2019), particularly before the outbreak of the Second Intifada, in areas such as education, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism (Shlaim 2005), health and medical affairs (Blit-Cohen and Jaber 2015), civil society, and politics (Dajani and Baskin 2006). Despite the ongoing tensions, the PA continues to cooperate with Israel on various aspects.

The anti-normalization movement advocates for a complete ban on contact with Israelis, causing Palestinians to develop a negative attitude towards cooperation with Israel (Podeh 2022). The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was founded to pressure organizations and members that cooperated with Israel. The emergence of Palestinian rejectionist movements, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, has significantly reduced Palestinian normalization. Normalizers are stigmatized and depicted as collaborators with colonial powers (Lim 2012). To achieve a just solution to the Palestinian problem, continued cooperation with Israel must end. Civil cooperation, particularly education, has been discontinued, and efforts are being made to resolve humanitarian problems between the two sides, including food, water, and electricity (Bar 2005).

The Oslo process failed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict permanently. Various attempts followed, including Camp David negotiations in 2000, the Arab Peace Initiative (2002–2007), the Roadmap to Peace (2002), Gaza disengagement (2005), the Annapolis conference (2007), Abbas-Olmert talks (2008), the Kerry initiative (2013–2014), and the Paris conference (2017). These efforts aimed to build confidence, reach a conflict-ending agreement, manage the conflict, revive peace talks, facilitate a Final Status Agreement, and ultimately find a two-state solution (Lehrs 2016; Lewin 2015; Mekelberg and Shapland 2018; Schiff 2018).

Since the early 1990s, various attempts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have failed, resulting in a crippled Palestinian economy, an increase in Israeli settlers in illegal settlements, and an entrenchment of occupation with no real prospects for peace (Mekelberg and Shapland 2018). The Palestinian leadership has always advocated for peaceful resolution and political action at an international level, while the Israeli leadership has spent significant time and effort promoting the Israeli cause internationally (Black 2017). Israel's close ties with influential political figures in the US and Europe have made the international community reluctant to push Israel too far into compromises, leaving it more vulnerable to terrorist attacks (McManus 2022). Palestinian

younger generations reject this perspective, suffering politically, economically, and socially while Israel settles into peace (Black 2017).

The interplay between the Biden administration's policies, the evolving roles of Arab monarchies, and the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has created a dynamic and fluid political landscape with far-reaching implications for the prospects of peace and stability in the region. The 2023 war on Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the enduring complexities and challenges surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, echoing the ongoing struggle for a sustainable resolution and stable governance dynamics within the region. Against the backdrop of the Biden administration's diplomatic initiatives and the evolving roles of Arab monarchies, the conflict in Gaza underscores the urgent need for renewed efforts to address the underlying grievances and advance the prospects of a two-state solution.

Reevaluating the Biden administration's and the Arab monarchies' effects on the two-state solution and regional governance is imperative in the wake of the 2023 attack on Gaza. Though the literature review provides an insightful analysis of the role of Arab monarchies and the larger dynamics of US-Palestine relations, it ignores the unique opportunities and challenges brought up by the recent conflict. By exploring the impact of these external factors on the trajectory of the conflict and governance dynamics in Gaza, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the shifting geopolitical landscape and its implications for peace and stability in the Middle East. The war has undoubtedly altered the political landscape and intensified the urgency of finding a sustainable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As such, a thorough examination that considers the repercussions of the 2023 attack on Gaza is crucial to comprehending the current prospects for the two-state solution and governance in the region under the Biden administration (BID) and the influence of Arab monarchies (ARA). To address the following questions, the researchers postulated a unique model, which is depicted in Figure 1.

6 Research Questions

1. How do perceptions of the Arab monarchies (AVA) and Biden administration's (BID) actions and policies in response to the conflict impact trust in their roles as mediators in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
2. Are there statistical differences in attitudes towards a two-state solution and governance dynamics in Gaza following the 2023 war, considering the intersection of demographic factors such as gender, academic level, and place of residence with the roles of the Biden administration and Arab monarchies?

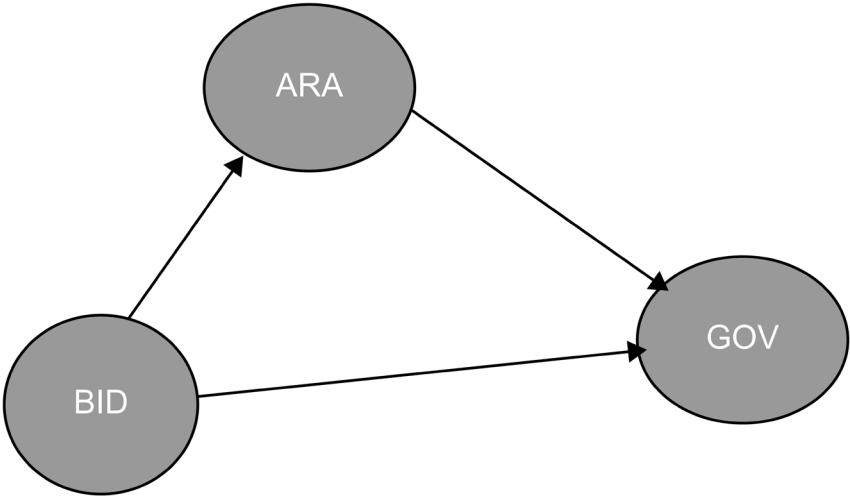


FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model of the study

7 **Methods**

This cross-sectional study uses a quantitative approach to investigate attitudes towards governance in Gaza (GOV) and their impact on support for a two-state solution. A representative sample of 394 students will be surveyed using structured questions, and statistical analysis techniques will be employed.

8 **Participants**

All participants in the study are enrolled at An-Najah National University in Nablus, West Bank, representing a diverse range of regions within the West Bank, including Jerusalem and the 48 Region. However, students from Gaza and the diaspora are not included. The response rate (2%) of 394 out of approximately 20,000 students is considered satisfactory and provides a representative sample of the University’s student body, ensuring the findings are reflective of the broader student population within the West Bank context. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the study participants. It reveals that out of 394 respondents, 29.9% are male and 70.1% are female, indicating a higher representation of females in the sample. In terms of academic background, 33.8% are from scientific disciplines, 56.3% are from humanities disciplines, and 9.9% are graduate students. Regarding academic level, 19.5%

TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics

Variable	Level	N	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	118	29.9
	Female	276	70.1
Faculty	Scientific	133	33.8
	Humanities	222	56.3
	Graduate	39	9.9
Academic level	First year	77	19.5
	Second year	88	22.3
	Third year	97	24.6
	Fourth year or higher	132	33.5
Place of residence	City	150	38.1
	Village	222	56.3
	Camp	22	5.6

Note: N total for each variable = 394

are in their first year, 22.3% in their second year, 24.6% in their third year, and 33.5% are in their fourth year or higher. In terms of residency, 38.1% reside in cities, 56.3% in villages, and 5.6% in camps. These demographic details offer insights into the composition of the study sample, providing a foundation for analyzing the survey findings.

9 Study Tools

Quantitative data were collected through the distribution of an Arabic-language, self-administered questionnaire to the research population. The questionnaire was self-administered, prepared by the authors, and conducted online using Google Forms. Participants accessed the survey via this web-based platform, allowing them to complete it at their convenience. This method ensured broad reach within the university and facilitated data collection from a diverse group of students across various regions of the West Bank. By utilizing Google Forms, the survey efficiently gathered responses from a large number of participants, contributing to a representative sample of the student body.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including gender, faculty, academic level, and place of residence. The second section comprised twenty-nine items aimed at

capturing students' perspectives on Gaza's governance. Respondents indicated their agreement with these items using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5).

A comprehensive collection of 45 items was created at the start of the research procedure in order to capture a variety of characteristics relevant to respondents' impressions of Gaza's governance. These items were thoughtfully constructed and organized in accordance with the study's intended goals. Subsequently, the set of items was reviewed by arbitrators who provided feedback and evaluations on each item's relevance, clarity, and appropriateness for the study's focus. Following this evaluation process, the items were refined based on the arbitrators' feedback, resulting in the reduction of the item pool to 29.

The researchers employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to uncover underlying structures in respondents' perceptions of Gaza's governance to reduce the data into a more understandable set of summary variables. The EFA was performed using JASP version 18.3, and it involved parallel analysis with oblique promax rotation and main component extraction. Loadings greater than 0.4 were required in order to identify significant correlations between items and factors. Eleven items were found throughout the study and were divided into three main domains as shown in Table 2 below. The analysis revealed that respondents' perspectives on Gaza's governance (GOV) were the primary contributing factor, explaining 44% of the variance in the dataset. Additionally, opinions regarding the perceived roles of Arab monarchies (ARA) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict significantly influenced responses, accounting for 21% of the variance. Furthermore, perceptions of the Biden administration's (BID) actions explained 12% of the variation, indicating their impact on respondents' viewpoints. Collectively, these three factors explain 77% of the observed differences in respondents' perceptions.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) developed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was utilized to provide a comprehensive analysis of the measurement and structural models, ensuring the questionnaire's validity and reliability. The measurement model was initially developed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Second, the structural model of the research topic was tested and the causal relationships between each construct were examined using SEM as shown in Table 3 below. This analysis was performed using the statistical analysis software packages JASP 18.3, AMOS 24, and SPSS 26.

The study reveals perfect positive relationships between items Q8, A8, and X8, with p-values of < 0.001 . For items Q5 under ARA, the estimates are 0.937, indicating a strong relationship. For items Q6 and Q7 under ARA, the

TABLE 2 Loading factors for the items on the EFA analysis components

Factor	Item	Factor loadings	Variance
GOV	8) The inclusion of various Palestinian factions in the governance of Gaza would enhance the peace process.	0.96	0.44
	7) Local governance councils could contribute positively to stability and progress during the interim period.	0.891	
	4) I believe that a coalition government would be the most preferred governing structure for effective governance in Palestine.	0.796	
	6) Hamas and Islamic Jihad should govern Gaza during an interim period as part of a path to a two-state solution considering their influence and support among Palestinians.	0.788	
ARA	7) Arab monarchies provided significant support to Palestinians during the 2023 war on Gaza, demonstrating their commitment to achieving a two-state solution.	0.889	0.21
	5) The involvement of Arab monarchies in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Gaza is essential for rebuilding trust in the region.	0.758	
	6) Arab monarchies don't possess the necessary diplomatic leverage and influence to effectively mediate between Israel and Palestine and advance towards a two-state solution.	0.646	
	8) The financial aid offered by Arab monarchies to Palestinians affected by 2023 war on Gaza positively influenced the prospects for a two-state solution.	0.638	
BID	8) The Biden administration emphasizes the importance of upholding international law and UN resolutions if they are for the sake of Israel.	0.869	0.12
	7) The Biden administration does not ensure balanced mediation, taking into account the concerns and aspirations of both Israel and the Palestinians.	0.862	
	9) The United States actively support and encourage Arab-Israeli normalization efforts as part of its broader strategy to promote regional stability.	0.86	
TOTAL			0.77

Note: ARA = Arab Monarchies; BID = Biden Administration; GOV = Governance in Gaza

TABLE 3 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results

Domain	Item	Estimate	P	SRW	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω	CR	AVE
ARA	Q8	1.000		0.792	0.85	0.87	0.88	0.84
	Q5	0.937	< 0.001	0.742				
	Q6	0.726	< 0.001	0.775				
	Q7	0.938	< 0.001	0.742				
BID	A8	1.000		0.912	0.80	0.81	0.84	0.83
	A7	0.926	< 0.001	0.844				
	A9	0.921	< 0.001	0.840				
GOV	X8	1.000		0.861	0.83	0.84	0.82	0.81
	X7	0.976	< 0.001	0.841				
	X4	0.890	< 0.001	0.766				
	X6	0.953	< 0.001	0.821				
TOTAL					0.88	0.91		

Note: ARA = Arab Monarchies; BID = Biden Administration; GOV = Governance in Gaza

estimates are 0.726 and 0.938, respectively. For items A7 and A9 under BID, the estimates are 0.926 and 0.921, respectively. For items X7 and X6 under GOV, the estimates are 0.976 and 0.953. Standardized regression weights range from 0.742 to 0.861, indicating high internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent factor is above 0.5, with a total AVE of 0.89, indicating acceptable levels of variance captured by the factors.

Subsequently, utilizing the approach proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the findings underwent scrutiny to assess discriminant validity. Table 4 shows positive correlations between Governance (GOV), Arab monarchies (ARA), and the Biden administration (BID). The correlation coefficients indicate the degree of relationship between these constructs. For instance, the correlation between GOV and ARA is 0.92, indicating a strong positive relationship between governance in Gaza and the perceived roles of Arab monarchies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, the robust positive correlation coefficients between governance and Arab monarchies (0.91) and governance and the Biden administration (0.90) underscore the high reliability of these constructs. These findings emphasize the reliability and interconnectedness of perceptions across variables under examination.

In structural equation modeling, it is standard practice to assess the structural model using predetermined standards. RMSEA, 2/df ratio, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), incremental fit index (IFI), adjusted GFI (AGFI), comparative

TABLE 4 Discriminate validity

Domain	M	SD	GOV	ARA	BID
GOV	4.5025	0.72047	0.920		
ARA	4.0907	0.81816	0.520	0.91	
BID	4.0651	0.99872	0.488	0.45	0.90

Note: ARA = Arab Monarchies; BID = Biden Administration; GOV = Governance in Gaza

fit index (CFI), and significant level of the chi-square statistic (χ^2) are among the criteria. These standards serve as markers for evaluating the model's goodness of fit. Table 5 below presents a thorough examination of the suggested model in comparison to these standards, demonstrating that every goodness-of-fit index falls within the specified ranges. The model's fit indices are displayed in Table 5's results. The sample size may have an impact on the chi-square (χ^2) value, which is significant and indicates a difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices. With a ratio of χ^2/df of 2.8, the model fit appears to be reasonable and falls within an acceptable range. Additional fit indices that assess how well a model fits the data in comparison to a null model are the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI), Bentler-Bonett Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI), Bollen's Relative Fit Index (RFI), and Bollen's Incremental Fit Index (IFI). These indices, which range from 0.935 to 0.967, indicate that the model and the data are well-fitted.

A reasonable fit of the model to the data is also indicated by the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which is 0.068 and falls within the acceptable range.

10 Results

To answer the first question (How do perceptions of the Arab monarchies and Biden administration's actions and policies in response to the conflict impact trust in their roles as mediators in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?), examination of Causal Path Properties, Including Standardized Path Coefficients and Explained Variance R^2 were used.

Following a comprehensive examination of causal path attributes utilizing standardized path coefficients and variance explained (R^2) in the hypothesis

TABLE 5 Model fit indices

Index	Value
Chi square (χ^2)	$\chi^2 (41) = 115.8, P = 0.00$
χ^2/df	2.8
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.967
T-size CFI	0.945
Tucker-Lewis Index (TFI)	0.955
Bentler-Bonett Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.955
Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.951
Bollen's Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.935
Bollen's Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.967
Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI)	0.967
Root mean square error of approximation	0.068

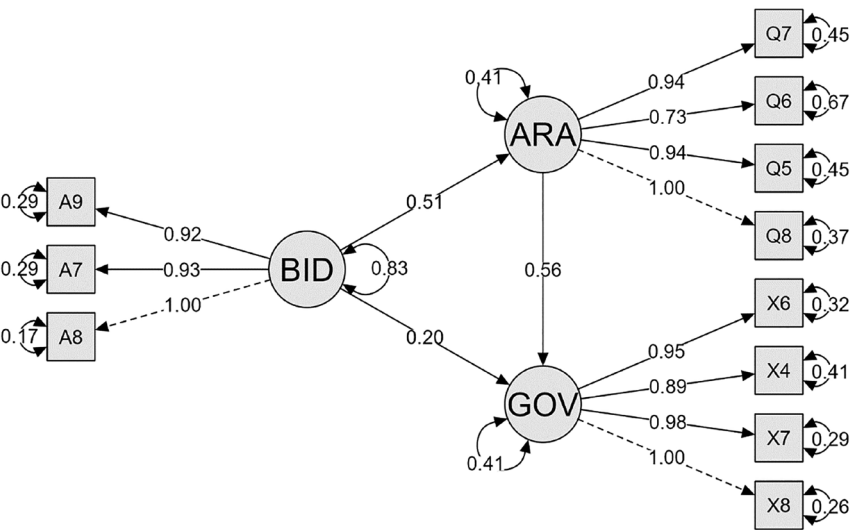


FIGURE 2 Model inner and outer variables

testing phase, the analysis that followed concentrated on the inner variables of the model, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The Biden administration's direct effect on governance is estimated to be 0.20, with a p-value of 0.001 indicating statistical significance. This relationship accounts for 44% of the variance in governance. The indirect effect

through Arab monarchies is estimated to be 0.51, explaining 43% of the variance. The total effect of the Biden administration on governance, including both direct and indirect paths, is estimated to be 0.485, accounting for 44% of the variance.

The key finding related to the (BID) domain indicates that perceptions of the Biden administration's stance on various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict significantly influence trust in its role as a mediator. The Biden administration's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is criticized for perceived imbalances in mediation efforts, indicating a failure to consider the interests of both Israel and Palestinians. However, the administration prioritizes upholding international law and UN resolutions, especially when beneficial to Israel, indicating a specific stance on legal matters and international relations. The administration also supports Arab-Israeli normalization efforts as part of a broader strategy to promote regional stability, fostering relations between Israel and Arab States.

Based on the analysis, a significant finding emerges: perceptions of Arab monarchies' actions and policies, notably their substantial support during the 2023 Gaza conflict, involvement in post-conflict reconstruction, and financial aid to affected Palestinians, profoundly influence trust in their ability to facilitate a two-state solution. This underscores the pivotal role of Arab monarchies' multifaceted support in shaping perceptions and cultivating optimism about regional peace and stability prospects.

The first domain (GOV) demonstrates a common theme of investigating various aspects of governance arrangements and structures, including the involvement of specific groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the role of local governance councils, and the inclusion of different Palestinian factions. The study's findings demonstrate that, of the options put forth for Palestine's governance structures, the notion of involving different Palestinian factions in Gaza's governance is thought to be especially popular and advantageous for advancing the two-state solution and peace process.

The findings presented in Table 6 highlight the intricate relationship between the Biden administration (BID) and governance (GOV) dynamics. Firstly, the direct effect of BID on GOV, quantified at 0.20, signifies the extent to which the actions or policies of the Biden Administration directly impact governance in the context under study. The high z-value of 12.3 confirms the robustness of this relationship, indicating a statistically significant association ($p < 0.001$).

Moreover, the analysis reveals an indirect effect of BID on GOV mediated through Arab monarchies (ARA). This indirect pathway suggests that the influence of the Biden administration on governance is partially mediated by the

TABLE 6 Effect estimates of direct and indirect paths on governance (GOV) from the Biden administration (BID)

Effect	Domain	Estimate	z-value	p
Direct	BID → GOV	0.200	12.30	< 0.001
Indirect	BID → ARA → GOV	0.285	10.50	< 0.001
Total		0.485	9.21	< 0.001

Note: ARA = Arab Monarchies; BID = Biden Administration; GOV = Governance in Gaza

actions or interventions of Arab monarchies. The estimated indirect effect of 0.285, coupled with a z-value of 10.5, underscores the strength and significance of this mediated relationship ($p < 0.001$).

When considering both direct and indirect pathways combined, the total effect of BID on GOV is calculated at 0.485. This comprehensive assessment captures the overall impact of the Biden administration on governance, accounting for both its direct influence and the mediation through Arab monarchies. With a z-value of 9.21, the total effect remains statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), underscoring the substantial influence of the Biden administration on governance dynamics within the studied context.

To answer the second question (Are there statistical differences in attitudes towards a two-state solution and governance dynamics in Gaza following the 2023 war, considering the intersection of demographic factors such as gender, academic level, and place of residence with the roles of the Biden administration and Arab monarchies?), Four Way Analysis of Variance was used; the results are shown in Table 7.

The lack of statistical significance in the interaction effects, evidenced by the non-significant p-values ($P > 0.05$) across all interaction terms, implies that the collective impact of gender, faculty, academic level, and place of residence on the dependent variables does not deviate significantly from the anticipated norm.

11 Discussion

The first domain (GOV) demonstrates a common theme of investigating various aspects of governance arrangements and structures, including the involvement of specific groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the role of local governance councils, and the inclusion of different Palestinian factions. The

TABLE 7 Results of four-way ANOVA

Source	ss	df	ms	F	P
Gender (G)	0.697	1	0.697	1.320	0.251
Faculty (F)	0.688	2	0.344	0.651	0.522
Academic Level (AL)	0.301	3	0.100	0.190	0.903
Place of Residence (POR)	0.096	2	0.048	0.091	0.913
G * F	0.274	2	0.137	0.260	0.771
G * AL	1.403	3	0.468	0.886	0.448
G * POR	0.203	2	0.101	0.192	0.825
F * AL	2.585	6	0.431	0.816	0.558
F * POR	1.158	4	0.289	0.548	0.700
AL * POR	0.887	6	0.148	0.280	0.946
G * F * AL	1.836	5	0.367	0.695	0.627
G * F * POR	0.074	1	0.074	0.140	0.708
G * AL * POR	2.305	4	0.576	1.092	0.361
F * AL * POR	3.603	6	0.600	1.137	0.340
G * F * AL * POR	2.362	2	1.181	2.237	0.108
ERROR	179.482	340	0.528		

study’s findings demonstrate that, of the options put forth for Palestine’s governance structures, the notion of involving different Palestinian factions in Gaza’s governance is thought to be especially popular and advantageous for advancing the two-state solution and peace process. Research by Lustick (2022) and Jamal (2022) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging historical grievances and territorial disputes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Inclusive governance structures can help address these issues constructively, fostering trust and facilitating dialogue among rival factions. Studies by Persson (2017, 2020) highlight the role of inclusive governance in advancing peacebuilding efforts by incorporating diverse perspectives and interests.

Power dynamics are crucial in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, shaping interactions among factions. Addressing historical power imbalances is essential to ensure equitable representation and prevent tensions from escalating (Strömbom and Persson 2023). Inclusive governance models prioritize fair representation and active involvement of all factions, addressing the challenge posed by extremist groups (Lazaroff 2022). By incorporating diverse perspectives, inclusive governance approaches enable comprehensive decision-making and address the concerns of all segments of society. Mitigating power

imbalances is fundamental to the efficacy of inclusive governance structures, as it promotes trust and collaboration among factions, laying the groundwork for lasting peace. Promoting inclusivity is essential in conflict-ridden environments, as it fosters trust and cooperation among factions (Persson 2017, 2020). Overcoming barriers to participation, such as discrimination and marginalization, is essential. By promoting inclusivity, governance structures tap into the collective wisdom of diverse stakeholders, yielding more informed and sustainable outcomes (Jamal 2022; Lustick 2022).

Equitable representation is crucial in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it promotes social cohesion and reduces the risk of exclusion and radicalization. Strömbom and Persson (2023) emphasize the need for structured mechanisms for dialogue and negotiation within inclusive governance structures. These mechanisms enable stakeholders to address grievances, resolve conflicts, and make collective decisions transparently and accountably, fostering reconciliation and mutual understanding among rival factions.

Based on the analysis, perceptions of Arab monarchies' actions and policies, notably their substantial support during the 2023 Gaza conflict, involvement in post-conflict reconstruction, and financial aid to affected Palestinians, profoundly influence trust in their ability to facilitate a two-state solution. This underscores the pivotal role of Arab monarchies' multifaceted support in shaping perceptions and cultivating optimism about regional peace and stability prospects.

On the one hand, the collaboration between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in spite of ongoing hostilities, shows a practical strategy meant to fulfill shared needs and interests (Shlaim 2005; Podeh 2022; Peskin 2019). But the anti-normalization movement, embodied by the BDS movement, and rejectionist groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas, who view cooperation with Israel as betrayal, will not tolerate this cooperation (Podeh 2022; Lim 2012).

In addition, the repeated failure of peace initiatives – from the Oslo Accords to later negotiations – highlights the deeply ingrained difficulties and challenges impeding a long-term settlement of the conflict (Lewin 2015; Mekelberg and Shapland 2018). Palestinian society has suffered significant socioeconomic consequences as a result of this protracted conflict, including economic stagnation, the growth of Israeli settlements, and a general disenchantment among younger generations (Black 2017; Mekelberg and Shapland 2018).

In this regard, Palestinian trust in Arab monarchies' ability to mediate a two-state solution is greatly influenced by opinions of their actions and policies, especially with regard to their backing of crises like the Gaza conflict of 2023. In light of prior obstacles and disappointments with peace initiatives and attempts to normalize relations with Israel, such support could help to

ignite optimism and faith in Arab mediation and participation in the peace process.

The key finding related to the (BID) domain indicates that perceptions of the Biden administration's stance on various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict significantly influence trust in its role as a mediator. The Biden administration's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is criticized for perceived imbalances in mediation efforts, indicating a failure to consider the interests of both Israel and Palestinians. However, the administration prioritizes upholding international law and UN resolutions, especially when beneficial to Israel, indicating a specific stance on legal matters and international relations. The administration also supports Arab-Israeli normalization efforts as part of a broader strategy to promote regional stability, fostering relations between Israel and Arab States.

The findings regarding the Biden administration's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlight several critical factors that influence perceptions of its role as a mediator. Firstly, the criticism directed towards the administration for perceived imbalances in its mediation efforts underscores the importance of impartiality and fairness in facilitating a peace process (Lustick 2019). Any perceived bias towards one party over the other can undermine trust and credibility in the mediation process, hindering progress towards a resolution. The US provides Israel with necessary weapons, sends soldiers to fight alongside the army, and attends Israeli war cabinet meetings with other US officials during the last conflict (Berman 2023). These practices also affect important concerns like the status of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank (Munayyer 2019).

Secondly, the administration's prioritization of upholding international law and UN resolutions, particularly when it benefits Israel, reflects a specific approach to legal and diplomatic matters. According to Trofimov (2023), the US has come under fire for its double standards, silent complicity, and inaction in the face of calls for an end to violence against Palestinians. The "US's continued support for Israel against the Palestinian struggle for nationhood" (Muzaffar 1995:7). This stance may contribute to perceptions of inconsistency and lack of adherence to established norms and principles, which can decrease trust in the administration's ability to navigate complex international relations.

Additionally, the administration's support for Arab-Israeli normalization efforts as part of a broader strategy to promote regional stability signifies a proactive approach to fostering relations between Israel and Arab States. By actively engaging in diplomatic initiatives aimed at improving regional dynamics, the administration demonstrates a commitment to advancing peace and

cooperation in the Middle East. That is why Israel prioritizes strengthening relationships with neighboring countries for national security and prevents isolation (Dajani and Rock 2022; Greenblatt 2020). During the 1991 Madrid Summit and 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, Israel was offered full normalization in exchange for a retreat to 1967 lines (Albzour 2019; Greenblatt 2020).

The Biden administration directly influences governance in Gaza. Additionally, there's an indirect effect of BID on GOV mediated through Arab monarchies (ARA). This indirect pathway indicates that the influence of the Biden administration on governance is partly mediated by the actions or interventions of Arab monarchies. The Biden administration's influence on Gaza's governance is largely indirect due to the region's complex political landscape. Gaza is governed by Hamas and the US and other countries do not have formal diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority. According to surveys by PCPSR, Palestinians expressed skepticism about the US's balanced stance in March 2021, with 51% doubting it and 48% opposing talks led by the US. Similarly, in December 2021, 56% opposed resuming talks with the US, while 39% supported it. Nonetheless, the US was seen as the most influential nation in persuading both Israeli and Palestinian sides to resume peace talks (PCPSR 2021a, 2022a). Additionally, the US was perceived as having significant leverage over Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas (Pollock 2022). A Washington Institute survey in June 2022 found that only a small percentage of Palestinians desired complete avoidance of US involvement in Palestinian and Middle Eastern matters (Pollock 2022).

The study findings revealed no statistical differences in attitudes towards a two-state solution and governance dynamics in Gaza following the 2023 war that could be attributed to the demographic variables (gender, academic level, and place of residence). This could be attributed to a number of factors. To begin with, the common experience of war might have served as a unifying factor, causing opinions from different demographic groups to converge. Furthermore, the uniformity of attitudes may be facilitated by the impact of external players such as the Biden administration and Arab monarchies if they are viewed similarly across demographic groups. Furthermore, a strong sense of national or cultural identity may eclipse demographic divides and promote unanimity in the face of governance challenges. Moreover, social norms that discourage the expression of opposing opinions and Gaza's rather homogeneous political scene may further exacerbate the impression of homogeneity in attitudes across various demographic groups.

The uniformity of attitudes in Gaza may be attributed to the shared experience of conflict, which may have led to a convergence of attitudes and priorities across different demographic groups. The lack of diversity in

governance structures and political representation in Gaza may also contribute to this uniformity, as individuals may feel marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes. Social norms and expectations within Gaza society may discourage the expression of divergent views, further exacerbating the impression of homogeneity.

The implications of this uniformity for future governance and peacebuilding efforts in Gaza are significant. It suggests that efforts to promote inclusive governance structures and foster dialogue among diverse stakeholders may face challenges in gaining traction. Without meaningful representation and participation from all segments of society, governance arrangements may lack legitimacy and fail to address the needs and concerns of marginalized groups. Additionally, the uniformity of attitudes may hinder efforts to build trust and reconciliation among rival factions, as governance structures may struggle to address historical grievances and power imbalances, perpetuating cycles of conflict and instability.

12 Limitations

It is important to consider a number of limitations when interpreting the study's results. First, the 394-student sample size does not fully capture the range of perspectives and demographics seen in Gaza, which could restrict how broadly the findings can be applied. Second, because of its cross-sectional form, the study only offers a moment in time view of attitudes, making it unable to establish causal linkages or monitor changes over time. Thirdly, the study's structured survey technique might have oversimplified the complexity of attitudes toward governance and the two-state solution by failing to capture the depth and nuance of respondents' perspectives. Finally, although the research provides insights into Gazan people sentiments, it's possible that the findings won't apply to other conflict situations or environments with dissimilar political or demographic dynamics.

13 Future Research Recommendations

Numerous directions for further investigation can be pursued in order to overcome the shortcomings and expand upon the consequences of this work. First, in order to monitor how views evolve over time and evaluate the long-term effects of outside actions on governance dynamics and support for a two-state solution, longitudinal studies could be carried out. Second, to get more

in-depth understanding of public opinions regarding governance and peacebuilding initiatives, qualitative research techniques like focus groups and interviews could be used in addition to quantitative methods to capture complex viewpoints. Thirdly, comparing various conflict contexts or areas could make it easier to spot trends or distinguishing elements that affect governance dynamics and peacebuilding efforts.

14 Implications

The study's findings hold several implications for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners involved in conflict resolution and governance reform efforts. Firstly, they draw attention to the fact that external actors – like the Biden administration and Arab monarchies – have the power to shape public opinion and attitudes toward governance and peacebuilding efforts in Gaza. To promote trust and cooperation between opposing factions, it is crucial to advance inclusive governance frameworks that take into account a variety of viewpoints and settle long-standing grievances. Finally, perceptions of the roles played by outside parties in mediation attempts can provide valuable information for developing diplomatic plans and public diplomacy campaigns that support regional peace and stability.

Replication Data

The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, along with the online appendix, are available at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CtCbXBa6pc29zWgZTl2HzhoXpcYzxi7h?usp=drive_link.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to all study participants who answered the survey.

Funding

We did NOT receive any funds at all to conduct this study.

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