

**ISRAEL-LEBANON CONFLICT: ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS ON THE
MIDDLE EAST****¹AKIOJA, Ejiroghene and ²Prof. A.E Orhero**

¹Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University,
Abraka.

²Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences Delta State University,
Abraka.

Article Received: 30 September 2025, Article Revised: 20 October 2025, Published on: 10 November 2025

***Corresponding Author: AKIOJA, Ejiroghene**

Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka.

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.3852>

ABSTRACT

The Israel–Lebanon conflict represents one of the most persistent and multifaceted confrontations in the Middle East, rooted in deep-seated historical grievances, territorial disputes, ideological rivalries, and external interventions. This study critically examined the causes and effects of the conflict, highlighting how it has evolved from conventional state-centric warfare to a more complex interplay involving non-state actors, particularly Hezbollah. The conflict's origins are traced to the presence of Palestinian armed groups in southern Lebanon during the 1970s, Israel's 1982 invasion, and the subsequent emergence of Hezbollah as a major resistance force. The 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah marked a significant turning point, demonstrating the growing capability of non-state actors to challenge conventional armies. This research explores how the conflict has been exacerbated by the involvement of regional and international actors such as Iran, Syria, the United States, and the United Nations, turning Lebanon into a theatre of proxy warfare. It also assesses the broader implications for Middle Eastern stability, including sectarian polarization, refugee crises, economic destabilization, and the erosion of national sovereignty. Using qualitative analysis, a historical research design was adopted, and the study relied on secondary data from academic journals. The study reveals that the Israel–Lebanon conflict is not an isolated struggle but a reflection of the broader geopolitical and ideological dynamics that continue to

shape the Middle East. It concludes that without comprehensive regional dialogue, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and the curbing of external interference, the cycle of violence and instability is likely to persist. The study reaffirmed that Israel–Lebanon conflict is deeply rooted in a complex history of territorial disputes, ideological differences, and the activities of non-state actors such as Hezbollah, which continue to undermine peace efforts in the region. This reemphasizes the need to understand modern Middle Eastern conflicts as interconnected and multi-dimensional, rather than isolated national disputes.

KEYWORDS: Israel–Lebanon conflict, Hezbollah, Middle East, territorial disputes, non-state actors, proxy warfare, regional stability, sectarian polarization, geopolitical dynamics, conflict resolution.

INTRODUCTION

The Israel–Lebanon conflict, which has spanned several decades, represents one of the most protracted and complex geopolitical crises in the Middle East. Its modern intensity became especially pronounced from the early 2000s, with the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah marking a significant milestone in regional hostilities. While the roots of this conflict can be traced to historical grievances, border disputes, and ideological divergences, its escalation in recent years has been heavily influenced by both internal political instability in Lebanon and the broader regional dynamics involving powerful external actors (Norton, 2018; Mansour, 2016). The period from 2006 to 2025 reflects a crucial era for examining this conflict, as it has witnessed both intense military confrontations and periodic political negotiations that underscore the fragile nature of peace and the persistence of insecurity.

The 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war, also known as the July War, was triggered by Hezbollah’s cross-border raid, which resulted in the capture of two Israeli soldiers and the death of others. Israel responded with widespread airstrikes and a ground invasion, leading to over a thousand deaths, primarily Lebanese civilians, and significant infrastructure destruction in Lebanon (Blanford, 2017). The war revealed the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, wherein a state actor confronted a non-state actor that had embedded itself within the civilian population. This dynamic blurred the lines between combatant and non-combatant zones, leading to humanitarian concerns and drawing criticism from international observers. According to Norton (2018), this war also underscored the failure of both Israeli and Lebanese leaderships to establish a long-term strategy for peaceful coexistence, while simultaneously exposing the limitations of international diplomatic interventions.

Since 2006, the conflict has evolved beyond military confrontations. It has become deeply entangled in the broader regional rivalries, particularly the Iran–Israel standoff. Hezbollah’s open alignment with Iran and its military entrenchment in Southern Lebanon have heightened Israeli security concerns. Israel has frequently accused Hezbollah of stockpiling advanced weapons, including precision-guided missiles, and constructing tunnels across the border, posing a continuous threat to its northern regions (Levitt, 2021). In response, Israel has conducted numerous airstrikes on what it claims are Iranian or Hezbollah targets in Syria and Lebanon, actions that often increase regional tensions. As Mansour (2016) notes, these tit-for-tat operations reflect the broader power struggle in the Middle East, where Lebanon serves as a proxy battlefield for regional powers.

The internal political landscape of Lebanon has also played a critical role in shaping the trajectory of the conflict. Lebanon's fragile sectarian political system, compounded by economic crises and popular discontent, has often limited the government’s ability to control or regulate Hezbollah's military operations. Harb (2022) observes that Hezbollah's dual role as both a political party and a paramilitary force has contributed to Lebanon's diplomatic isolation and internal divisions. This duality has made it difficult to forge a unified national strategy on security and foreign relations, especially when events along the Israeli-Lebanese border escalate into cross-border skirmishes. The 2019–2021 Lebanese protests and subsequent economic collapse further weakened the state's capacity, thereby enhancing Hezbollah’s autonomous operations and reinforcing Israel’s security fears.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), has sought to maintain peace and monitor hostilities in Southern Lebanon. Yet, the effectiveness of UNIFIL has been questioned due to its limited mandate and constraints on enforcement. According to Makdisi and El-Masri (2016), while UNIFIL has helped reduce large-scale conflicts, it has been largely ineffective in disarming Hezbollah or preventing the buildup of weapons in the border areas. The international community’s efforts at diplomatic mediation, including those led by the United States, France, and Russia, have often been intermittent and limited by competing interests.

The effects of the Israel–Lebanon conflict extend beyond the immediate parties involved. It has significantly influenced the security architecture of the Middle East by contributing to arms proliferation, refugee crises, and political polarization. For instance, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese were displaced during the 2006 war, many of whom still face

challenges in resettlement or return. Meanwhile, repeated clashes have impeded economic development, especially in Southern Lebanon, while also causing disruptions in northern Israeli communities (Fawaz, 2023). The conflict has also had a spillover effect on neighboring countries, particularly Syria, whose civil war has allowed for increased Iranian and Hezbollah influence, thus altering the balance of power in the region (Berti, 2016).

The Israel–Lebanon conflict remains emblematic of the failure of post-colonial state-building in the region. The inability of both countries to establish secure, internationally recognized borders or to develop robust institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution continues to fuel hostilities. This has been exacerbated by the influence of identity politics, religious extremism, and external patronage from global powers, making the conflict not only a national issue but also a regional dilemma with global implications. As Gerges (2019) points out, the failure to resolve such conflicts perpetuates cycles of violence that hinder the region's prospects for long-term stability and peace.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the root causes of the Israel–Lebanon conflict in the Middle East?
2. How have regional and international actors influenced the escalation or resolution of the Israel–Lebanon conflict?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the Israel-Lebanon Conflict and its causes and effects on the Middle East. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the root causes of the Israel–Lebanon conflict in the Middle East.
2. Investigate the influence of regional and international actors in exacerbating or resolving the conflict.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical framework

Realist theory, also called political realism, was used in this study as the main framework for analysis. It is one of the oldest and most influential theories in international relations. Its origins go back to classical political thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, but it was formally developed in the 20th century by scholars like Hans Morgenthau, whose key work **Politics Among Nations** (1948) established its core principles.

Morgenthau argued that politics, like society, is governed by objective laws based on human nature, with the idea of interest defined by power at the center of international politics. Realism became especially prominent after World War II as a response to the failures of idealism and the League of Nations, emphasizing the anarchic nature of the global system and the importance of state survival and national interests.

The realist theory posits several core assumptions. First, it views the international system as anarchic, meaning that there is no overarching central authority above the states. Second, states are the primary and rational actors in international politics, each striving to ensure its own survival and security. Third, power is the most critical resource in the international arena, and states continuously seek to accumulate it to enhance their position or defend their sovereignty. Fourth, there is a constant possibility of conflict because states must rely on self-help to protect their interests, and mistrust prevails due to the uncertainty of other states' intentions. Fifth, moral considerations are often subordinated to national interest, as states are primarily concerned with outcomes that ensure their security and power.

Realism also emphasizes the inevitability of conflict due to the competitive and uncertain nature of international relations. Scholars like Kenneth Waltz later developed neorealism or structural realism, which focused more on the structure of the international system rather than human nature. According to Waltz (1979), the anarchic structure compels states to behave in ways that prioritize relative gains and power balancing. In this view, peace is only achievable through a balance of power, deterrence, and strategic alliances rather than idealistic cooperation.

The Israel–Lebanon conflict provides a critical framework for understanding the persistent hostilities and power struggles in the region. The conflict, especially between Israel and Hezbollah, is deeply rooted in a zero-sum perception of security, survival, and strategic dominance. Realism helps explain why diplomatic efforts often falter and why military strategies and deterrence dominate interactions. States like Israel prioritize their territorial security and deterrence posture, while non-state actors like Hezbollah act as rational players within the constraints and opportunities of the regional power dynamics, often backed by external state actors such as Iran and Syria. This aligns with the realist notion that actors, state or non-state, behave strategically within an anarchic system to secure their interests.

Regional rivalries, such as those between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the influence of global powers like the United States and Russia, reflect the realist idea that international politics is driven by competing national interests and the balance of power. These actors support different sides not necessarily out of moral considerations but to advance their strategic footholds in the region. The repeated breakdown of ceasefires, the limits of peacekeeping missions, and the entrenchment of military alliances all underscore the realist belief that sustainable peace in the Middle East is unlikely without a robust balance of power and credible deterrence mechanisms. Therefore, realist theory is not only appropriate but essential for this study as it illuminates the motivations behind the actions of the key actors in the Israel–Lebanon conflict and frames the enduring instability in the Middle East as a product of an anarchic international system, strategic rivalries, and power calculations that often override ethical or humanitarian concerns.

The realist theory of international relations offers a compelling framework for analyzing the Israel–Lebanon conflict and its broader effects on the Middle East from 2006 to 2025. At its core, realism is predicated on the assumption that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no overarching authority to regulate the actions of states. In such an environment, states act primarily in pursuit of their survival and interests, often defined in terms of power and security (Waltz, 1979). This perspective is particularly relevant in understanding the recurring hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, especially when viewed through the prism of national interest, military strategy, and regional dominance. The 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war and subsequent intermittent clashes illustrate the logic of power balancing and deterrence. Israel, viewing Hezbollah as a proxy for Iranian influence in Lebanon and a direct security threat on its northern border, has consistently employed its superior military capability to neutralize or contain Hezbollah's actions. This behavior aligns with the realist principle of self-help, where states, and by extension powerful non-state actors, must ensure their survival in an anarchic system (Mearsheimer, 2001). Israel's strategy, including pre-emptive strikes and intensive intelligence operations, reflects the realist belief that military preparedness and projection of strength are essential to national security.

At the same time, Hezbollah's rise and resilience can also be interpreted through the realist lens. Although not a state actor in the conventional sense, Hezbollah operates as a quasi-state within Lebanon, wielding significant military, political, and social power. In realist terms,

Hezbollah seeks to maximize its power within Lebanon while serving as a strategic asset for Iran's broader regional ambitions. This behavior demonstrates the realist assumption that actors, whether state or non-state, pursue relative gains and often resort to conflict or strategic alliances to secure their position within the international or regional order (Gilpin, 1981; Taliaferro, 2000). Hezbollah's accumulation of weapons, use of asymmetric warfare, and defiance of Israeli military superiority are all consistent with a realist approach to survival and power consolidation in a hostile environment. Realism also explains the broader regional implications of the Israel–Lebanon conflict, especially in terms of the shifting alliances and rivalries in the Middle East. States such as Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the United States have all been drawn into the Israel–Lebanon dynamic, either directly or through proxy engagements. For instance, Iran's military and financial support for Hezbollah can be seen as part of its realist strategy to counterbalance Israeli and American influence in the region (Walt, 1987). This form of external balancing, supporting proxies to undermine adversaries, is a hallmark of realist thinking, particularly in multipolar regions where no single state can dominate outright.

Moreover, realism helps explain why repeated efforts at peace between Israel and Lebanon have often failed or yielded only temporary truces. From a realist perspective, enduring peace is difficult to achieve in an environment where trust is minimal, and the stakes—security, territory, and influence—are existential. Each side views compromise as a potential vulnerability, and the absence of a central authority to enforce agreements only exacerbates the problem (Morgenthau, 1948). This has led to a pattern of ceasefires punctuated by renewed hostilities, as seen in various escalations post-2006, including the flare-ups in 2012, 2018, and most recently during the regional tensions in 2023.

Furthermore, the realist theory sheds light on why international institutions and peacekeeping efforts, such as those by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), have had limited success. Realists argue that international organizations are often tools of powerful states and lack the coercive power to enforce peace where core national interests are at stake (Keohane, 1984; Krasner, 1999). UNIFIL's inability to fully disarm Hezbollah or prevent cross-border skirmishes demonstrates the limited utility of international institutions in deeply rooted power struggles. From a realist standpoint, peacekeeping is only effective when it aligns with the interests of the dominant actors involved.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict is a multidimensional social phenomenon that arises when individuals, groups, or states perceive incompatible goals or interests and pursue them through opposition, competition, or confrontation. According to Coser (2021), conflict is a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the opponents aim to neutralize or eliminate their rivals. Deutsch (2020) emphasized that conflict occurs when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be simultaneously achieved, creating tension that may escalate into violence if not managed constructively. Burton (2022) asserts that conflict often emerges from unmet human needs such as identity, recognition, or security, which can only be resolved through deep structural change or dialogue. Galtung (2023) advanced the idea that conflict must be understood in terms of its structural, cultural, and direct dimensions, where violence is not just physical but embedded in societal systems and narratives.

Concept of Non-State Actors

Non-state actors have increasingly become pivotal players in both domestic and international affairs, prompting numerous scholarly definitions from various perspectives. According to Weiss and Thakur (2017), non-state actors are entities that participate or act in international relations without being an organ of a sovereign state. Similarly, Risse (2021) views non-state actors as organizations or individuals that possess the capacity to influence policy, governance, or decision-making processes beyond formal state structures. These actors can include civil society groups, multinational corporations, armed insurgents, terrorist networks, and transnational advocacy networks. Nye and Keohane (2012) argue that the rise of globalization has given non-state actors unprecedented access to global platforms, thereby increasing their influence and visibility on global issues. Krasner (2020) further emphasizes that non-state actors often operate within complex networks that both challenge and complement state authority.

Biersteker and Hall (2015) identify the role of non-state actors in redefining sovereignty through their involvement in humanitarian aid, environmental activism, and digital governance. In support of this, Clapham (2020) explains that non-state actors often emerge in contexts of weak or failed states where they assume quasi-governmental functions, offering services such as education, security, and health care. Hoffman (2018) notes that non-state actors also include violent groups that seek political change through insurgency, secession, or terrorism, often operating outside international legal frameworks. Likewise, Chesterman

(2019) points out that private military companies and other corporate entities act as non-state actors by providing security services typically reserved for state military forces. Slaughter (2017) introduces the concept of networked governance, where non-state actors work alongside governments in transnational policy-making and implementation. Hurd (2020) adds that these actors possess normative power, influencing global norms and practices even in the absence of formal authority.

Concept of International Actors

International actors refer to both state and non-state entities that play significant roles in shaping the dynamics of international relations through diplomacy, economic influence, military power, humanitarian intervention, or ideological advocacy. These actors are not limited to sovereign states alone but include intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations, regional blocs such as the Arab League or the European Union, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations, religious movements, and even powerful individuals. As Jackson and Sørensen (2021) observe, international actors possess the capacity to shape global and regional order, intervene in conflicts, mediate peace, or exacerbate tensions depending on their interests and ideologies. According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2022), the presence of multiple actors in the international arena transforms conflicts like that between Israel and Lebanon from local disputes into regional or global crises with far-reaching effects.

In the Israel–Lebanon conflict, international actors have been instrumental both in escalating tensions and mediating peace efforts. The United States, for instance, has consistently supported Israel militarily and diplomatically, shaping the power imbalance in the region (Byman, 2023). Conversely, Iran has played a central role as a regional actor backing Hezbollah, a dominant non-state actor in Lebanon, thereby internationalizing the conflict and shifting its local nature into a proxy battlefield of regional rivalries (Ehteshami, 2021). According to Gerges (2022), the involvement of such international actors has transformed the Israel–Lebanon confrontation into a critical front in the broader Sunni-Shia and US-Iran regional power struggle.

The United Nations has also acted as a significant international actor through peacekeeping missions such as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), attempting to de-escalate tensions and create buffer zones (Bellamy & Williams, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these interventions has often been limited by competing geopolitical interests

among powerful UN Security Council members. According to Pinfari (2022), international actors often pursue their own strategic or ideological interests, and in the case of the Israel–Lebanon conflict, this has contributed to the prolongation of violence and the difficulty of reaching a lasting peace.

Concept of Middle East

The Middle East, about the Israel–Lebanon conflict, represents a complex and historically contested region marked by overlapping identities, religious divisions, colonial legacies, and geopolitical rivalries. It is geographically situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and politically defined by a constellation of Arab states, Iran, Israel, and Turkey, all of which have been entangled in varying degrees of tension, war, and diplomacy. According to Makdisi (2021), the Middle East cannot be understood merely as a geographic label but as a politically constructed space shaped by imperial interests and modern power struggles, particularly those manifesting in conflicts like that of Israel and Lebanon.

The Israel–Lebanon conflict exemplifies the fragmentation and competing visions of sovereignty in the Middle East, where local disputes are rarely isolated from broader regional dynamics. As Khalidi (2020) asserts, the region's borders and alliances are products of colonial imposition and continued foreign intervention, which have generated chronic instability. Lebanon, as a multi-sectarian society, often reflects the region's broader fault lines, particularly between Sunni, Shia, and Christian populations, while Israel's presence and military engagements in Lebanon highlight the strategic significance of territorial control and ideological confrontation in the region. According to Fawaz (2022), the Middle East's identity is deeply tied to narratives of resistance, religion, and survival, which are central to both Israeli and Lebanese political discourses. Hezbollah's rise in southern Lebanon and its confrontation with Israel are often interpreted as part of a regional axis of resistance backed by Iran, thereby implicating the Israel–Lebanon conflict within larger Shia–Sunni and Arab–Israeli tensions. Norton (2021) emphasizes that the Middle East's security architecture is shaped not by formal alliances alone, but by asymmetric warfare, proxy battles, and ideological coalitions, all of which are visibly at play in the Israel–Lebanon conflict.

Concept of Hezbollah

Hezbollah, also known as the Party of God, is a Shia Islamist political and militant organization based in Lebanon that has played a central and defining role in the Israel–Lebanon conflict. Emerging in the early 1980s in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon

in 1982, Hezbollah has since evolved into one of the most powerful non-state actors in the Middle East. According to Saab (2023), Hezbollah represents both a resistance movement and a political actor deeply entrenched in Lebanese governance, with a military wing that operates independently of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Its foundation was heavily influenced by the Iranian Revolution, and it maintains strong ideological, financial, and military ties with Iran, positioning itself as part of the so-called “axis of resistance” against Israel and Western influence in the region.

In the Israel–Lebanon conflict, Hezbollah's role has transformed the nature of warfare in the Middle East. Azani (2022) notes that the group pioneered hybrid warfare strategies, blending conventional guerrilla tactics with sophisticated missile technologies, which significantly altered Israel's military doctrine. The 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah marked a turning point, showcasing Hezbollah’s capacity to sustain military confrontation against a state actor while gaining political capital across the Arab world. According to Harb (2021), this war also solidified Hezbollah’s image as a defender of Lebanese sovereignty despite the devastating toll it took on Lebanon’s civilian infrastructure and population. Blanford (2020) emphasizes that Hezbollah’s legitimacy among Lebanese Shia communities is deeply rooted in its resistance narrative, which portrays Israel as an occupying force and itself as the guardian of national pride and dignity. This narrative has helped Hezbollah consolidate power not only militarily but also politically through parliamentary representation and strategic alliances within Lebanon’s complex sectarian system. Saouli (2021) argues that Hezbollah’s integration into state institutions while retaining its autonomous armed wing challenges conventional notions of state sovereignty and undermines Lebanon’s neutrality in regional conflicts.

Concept of Israel–Lebanon Conflict

The Israel–Lebanon conflict refers to the protracted and multifaceted hostilities between the State of Israel and various Lebanese actors, particularly Hezbollah, that have unfolded over several decades. It is rooted in a complex interplay of territorial disputes, sectarian divisions, ideological confrontations, and regional power struggles. As El-Hokayem (2021) explains, the conflict cannot be viewed solely through a bilateral lens, as it has evolved into a broader proxy struggle involving external actors like Iran, Syria, and the United States. The origins of the conflict can be traced back to the Palestinian refugee crisis and the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in southern Lebanon during the 1970s, which

triggered Israel's military incursions, most notably the 1982 invasion. According to Frantzman (2023), this intervention reshaped Lebanon's internal political dynamics and created the conditions for the rise of Hezbollah, which emerged as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation.

The 2006 war marked a pivotal moment in the Israel–Lebanon conflict, where a brief but intense confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah exposed the limitations of conventional military power in asymmetrical warfare. Slim (2020) argues that this war redefined conflict parameters in the Middle East by showcasing Hezbollah's strategic use of guerrilla tactics, media narratives, and fortified civilian areas, all of which challenged Israel's military superiority. The war also had a devastating impact on Lebanon's infrastructure and civilian population, raising questions about the proportionality of Israeli force and the responsibilities of non-state actors like Hezbollah under international law. According to Barak (2022), the conflict is sustained by deep-rooted mutual distrust and cyclical violence, where periods of relative calm are punctuated by sudden flare-ups triggered by border skirmishes, assassinations, or rocket attacks. These cycles are further entrenched by the absence of a formal peace agreement, despite numerous UN resolutions, including 1559 and 1701, which call for disarmament and respect for Lebanese sovereignty. Picard (2023) emphasizes that the failure of the Lebanese state to assert full control over its territory has allowed Hezbollah to operate autonomously in the south, reinforcing Israel's security concerns and perpetuating a state of perpetual alert.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed a historical design to explore the Israel–Lebanon conflict (2006–2025), focusing on its causes, effects, and geopolitical implications in the Middle East. Historical design enables a systematic analysis of past events through archival materials, documents, and reports to understand long-term trends and influences. This approach allows for a deeper contextual understanding of diplomatic failures, military confrontations, and regional power dynamics involving actors like the UN, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The study utilized secondary data collection, relying on existing records such as government documents, treaties, scholarly publications, and reports from international organizations. Secondary data was chosen for its relevance, credibility, and accessibility in addressing historical and political questions. Key sources included academic journals, media reports, and historical archives, which provided diverse perspectives on the conflict's evolution. The

method of data analysis adopted was qualitative content analysis, a systematic approach for interpreting textual and recorded data to identify patterns and meanings. Content analysis aligns with the historical design, enabling critical examination of diplomatic communications, policies, and media narratives. It enhances objectivity, replicability, and depth by allowing analysis of both explicit and implicit content. This method supports triangulation of multiple data sources, ensuring accuracy and reducing bias.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSION

Research Question 1: What are the root causes of the Israel–Lebanon conflict in the Middle East?

The Israel–Lebanon conflict is a multifaceted and protracted struggle rooted in deep historical grievances, regional rivalries, religious and sectarian divides, and complex socio-political dynamics. Understanding the root causes of this conflict requires an examination of a range of interconnected factors that have shaped relations between the two states and their non-state actors from the mid-20th century to the present. The conflict is not merely a bilateral issue between Israel and Lebanon; rather, it is a manifestation of broader regional tensions, particularly the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Iran–Israel rivalry, and the interplay of local Lebanese sectarian divisions and external influences. One of the foundational causes of the Israel–Lebanon conflict is the Arab–Israeli dispute that followed the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War led to the establishment of Palestinian refugee camps in neighboring countries, including Lebanon. The presence of these refugees placed significant social and political strain on Lebanon’s fragile sectarian balance and over time served as a major source of friction between Lebanese factions and between Lebanon and Israel (Khalidi, 2020). Lebanon, although not a principal military actor in the 1948 war, found itself increasingly entangled in the Arab nationalist cause and in the consequences of the unresolved Palestinian issue. The introduction of armed Palestinian groups, especially after the relocation of the PLO to Lebanon following their expulsion from Jordan in 1970, marked a critical turning point in Lebanese-Israeli relations. These groups launched attacks into northern Israel from bases in southern Lebanon, prompting retaliatory strikes and contributing to the deterioration of security along the border (Cobban, 2005; Sayigh, 1997).

The complexity of Lebanon’s domestic politics further amplified the conflict. Lebanon's confessional political system, which allocates power along religious lines, created deep-

seated structural weaknesses. The division of power among Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shi'a Muslims often resulted in political paralysis and a lack of national consensus on issues of security and foreign policy (Makdisi & Marktanner, 2009). During the 1975–1990 Lebanese Civil War, Israel intervened militarily in Lebanon, claiming it aimed to secure its northern border and remove the PLO threat. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon led to a prolonged occupation of southern Lebanon and the siege of Beirut, which not only failed to eliminate the PLO's influence but also paved the way for the rise of Hezbollah, a Shiite resistance movement backed by Iran (Fisk, 2001; Norton, 2007).

Hezbollah's emergence in the early 1980s represents another fundamental root cause of the conflict. Formed in response to the Israeli occupation, Hezbollah espoused a strong anti-Israel ideology and rapidly developed a formidable military wing. The group gained legitimacy among Lebanon's Shiite population through its resistance operations, social welfare programs, and political activism (Saab, 2018). Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon until 2000 provided Hezbollah with a platform to frame itself as a legitimate force of national liberation, even as its military capabilities and cross-border attacks increasingly destabilized the region. The 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, triggered by a cross-border raid in which Israeli soldiers were kidnapped, further entrenched the hostilities. The war caused significant civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction in Lebanon, while southern Israel suffered from Hezbollah's rocket attacks (Byman, 2011). The inability of the Lebanese state to exert control over Hezbollah's actions and Israel's perception of Hezbollah as a proxy for Iranian aggression remain central to the conflict's continuation (Harb, 2021).

Iran's role in supporting Hezbollah highlights the regional dimension of the Israel–Lebanon conflict. Iran, since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, has positioned itself as a leader of resistance against Israel and the West. By backing Hezbollah financially, militarily, and ideologically, Iran has extended its influence into the Levant and posed a strategic challenge to Israel's security interests. This proxy dynamic has made Lebanon a battleground for the broader Iran–Israel confrontation (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Israel views Hezbollah's missile arsenal and fortified positions in southern Lebanon as an existential threat, while Hezbollah and Iran consider Israel a colonial and illegitimate presence in the region. This mutual hostility has created a highly volatile and militarized border zone where any spark could lead to full-scale war, as seen in periodic escalations since 2006.

The repeated failures of the international community to broker a lasting peace have exacerbated the conflict. United Nations resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 1701, have called for Israeli withdrawal and the disarmament of Hezbollah, respectively, but enforcement has been weak or ineffective. The Lebanese government's limited capacity to implement these resolutions due to internal political fragmentation and the strength of Hezbollah has left a security vacuum in the south. Meanwhile, Israel's unilateral security measures, such as border fortifications and airstrikes on suspected Hezbollah sites, have done little to resolve the underlying tensions and often provoke further retaliation (United Nations, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2023).

The wider geopolitical environment also significantly influences the ongoing conflict. The United States' strong backing for Israel, combined with Iran's support for Hezbollah, has internationalized the Israel–Lebanon conflict. Regional actors like Syria, traditionally influential in Lebanon, have also added to instability by arming various militias and manipulating Lebanese politics for strategic advantage (Picard, 2002). These external interventions have solidified Lebanon's role as a battleground for proxy wars rather than an independent entity capable of maintaining its sovereignty and peace. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran further complicates Lebanese politics, as opposing factions receive support from different regional powers, weakening national unity and hindering efforts to disarm Hezbollah or pursue comprehensive peace talks with Israel.

Research Question 2: How have regional and international actors influenced the escalation or resolution of the Israel–Lebanon conflict?

The Israel–Lebanon conflict, a prolonged and multifaceted dispute, has consistently drawn the attention of regional and international actors, whose actions have either contributed to its escalation or sought to mediate and resolve it. Understanding the influence of these actors is crucial in analyzing the dynamics of the conflict and the broader implications for peace and security in the Middle East. Their roles—whether through direct military intervention, diplomatic engagements, economic sanctions, peacekeeping missions, or ideological alignment, have shaped the course of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, especially in the context of Hezbollah's prominence and Israel's regional security concerns.

At the regional level, actors such as Iran and Syria have historically played significant roles in the conflict. Iran, for instance, has been a staunch supporter of Hezbollah, providing it with military aid, financial resources, and ideological backing. This support has not only

emboldened Hezbollah's capacity to resist Israeli actions but has also entrenched the group within Lebanon's socio-political framework (Salem, 2020). Iran's influence can be interpreted within the broader context of its strategic rivalry with Israel and its ambition to expand its sphere of influence across the Levant. Similarly, Syria has maintained a complex relationship with Lebanon and Hezbollah, often supporting anti-Israeli resistance as part of its regional posture, particularly before the Syrian civil war altered its geopolitical leverage (Makinde, 2022).

Conversely, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have aligned more closely with Western powers, particularly the United States, in opposing Hezbollah and countering Iranian influence in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia's diplomatic initiatives and economic pressure have aimed at limiting Hezbollah's control within Lebanon's political structure, thereby indirectly affecting the trajectory of the Israel–Lebanon conflict (Obasi, 2023). These actions, while not involving direct military confrontation, have intensified the regional proxy dimension of the conflict, making a peaceful resolution more complex.

On the international stage, the United States has consistently supported Israel diplomatically, militarily, and financially, framing its involvement within the larger framework of counterterrorism and regional stability. Washington's stance has often emboldened Israel's assertiveness in confronting Hezbollah and defending its borders. For instance, U.S. vetoes at the United Nations Security Council have frequently shielded Israel from international condemnation or sanctions, thereby reinforcing the asymmetrical nature of the conflict (Zartman, 2020). At the same time, U.S.-led peace initiatives, such as the 2006 ceasefire negotiations that resulted in UN Resolution 1701, demonstrate the dual nature of America's role, as both a conflict escalator and a peace broker (United Nations, 2021).

The European Union (EU), by contrast, has pursued a more balanced and multilateral approach, emphasizing humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and dialogue. EU nations have provided significant funding for post-conflict recovery in Lebanon, especially after the 2006 war, and have supported the strengthening of Lebanese state institutions as a counterbalance to Hezbollah's dominance (Eze, 2022). The EU's involvement, though less militarized than the U.S., has nonetheless been instrumental in shaping peacebuilding efforts and promoting long-term stability in the region. The role of the United Nations, particularly through the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), has also been central to international peacekeeping efforts. UNIFIL's deployment along the Blue Line aims to prevent the

resumption of hostilities and monitor ceasefire agreements. While its effectiveness has often been questioned due to limitations in mandate and operational constraints, it remains one of the most visible symbols of international commitment to conflict de-escalation (United Nations, 2021). The presence of peacekeepers has arguably contributed to the reduction of direct large-scale confrontations since the 2006 war, although sporadic skirmishes and violations continue.

In recent years, other global powers such as Russia and China have shown increased interest in Middle Eastern affairs, including Israel–Lebanon conflict, primarily to expand their geopolitical influence and counter Western dominance. Russia, for example, while maintaining cordial relations with Israel, has also preserved its alliance with Iran and Syria, thereby positioning itself as a potential mediator in regional conflicts. This balancing act allows Russia to exert diplomatic pressure while maintaining strategic flexibility (Adebajo, 2020). Similarly, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its growing economic investments in the region reflect a more subtle but expanding form of influence, which may, in the long term, shape the conflict's economic dimensions and external dependencies (Makinda & Okumu, 2021).

The engagement of international actors often mirrors broader patterns of global power struggles, where local conflicts are embedded within the strategic competitions of major powers. Scholars such as Eze (2022) and Obasi (2023) argue that external interventions often prioritize national interests over genuine conflict resolution, thereby prolonging instability and weakening local peace initiatives. This critique underscores the importance of inclusive peacebuilding approaches that center the voices and agency of the affected populations in Lebanon and the broader Middle East.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The following findings are observed:

1. The study found that the Israel–Lebanon conflict is rooted in a combination of territorial disputes, sectarian tensions, and the rise of non-state actors, particularly Hezbollah. Historical grievances dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon created a foundation of mutual hostility. The unresolved status of disputed territories such as the Shebaa Farms, as well as Hezbollah's resistance ideology supported by Iran, have kept the conflict alive. Inadequate diplomatic efforts and weak Lebanese state institutions also contribute to the recurrence of hostilities.

2. The study found that international actors have played both constructive and obstructive roles in the Israel–Lebanon conflict. While the United Nations and countries like France have attempted to mediate peace and deploy peacekeeping forces (e.g., UNIFIL), major powers such as the United States and Iran have often prioritized strategic interests over peace. These competing foreign agendas have limited the effectiveness of diplomacy and led to biased interventions, which have prolonged the conflict rather than resolved it.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the Israel–Lebanon conflict from 2006 to 2025, revealing deep-seated and multidimensional dynamics that extend far beyond bilateral hostilities. At its core, the conflict is driven by entrenched historical grievances, territorial disputes, and the militarization of non-state actors like Hezbollah, whose presence continues to provoke recurrent tensions with Israel. These underlying causes have created a volatile environment where diplomatic efforts have struggled to take root, largely due to the influence of regional ideologies and foreign interventions.

Politically, the conflict has fractured the Middle East along sectarian and strategic lines, where states align based on ideological loyalties and geopolitical interests rather than collective security or regional cooperation. This has not only intensified rivalries between Iran-backed and Western-aligned blocs but has also undermined the internal political cohesion of countries like Lebanon, where external allegiances often supersede national unity. The socio-economic implications of the conflict, especially on Lebanon, are equally severe. Repeated wars have crippled infrastructure, displaced communities, drained national resources, and destabilized the livelihoods of millions. The ripple effects are felt across the region, with neighboring countries absorbing refugees and bearing economic burdens while contending with their internal challenges.

Moreover, international actors, while occasionally contributing to peace initiatives, have largely approached the conflict through the lens of strategic advantage rather than genuine reconciliation. The involvement of powerful states and organizations has often reflected competing interests, leading to partial interventions that have deepened rather than resolved the discord. This strategic misalignment has complicated the roles of institutions like the United Nations, weakened peace enforcement mechanisms, and eroded trust between the conflicting parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Middle Eastern countries, including Israel and Lebanon, should engage in sustained regional dialogue that includes all stakeholders, state and non-state actors, to address historical grievances and build mutual trust, with support from neutral international mediators.
2. Regional powers and international actors must refrain from fueling the conflict through arms supplies, proxy engagements, and ideological interference. Instead, they should prioritize diplomatic pressure, peace enforcement, and the upholding of international law.

REFERENCES

1. Adebajo, A. (2020). Russia's balancing act in the Middle East: Between Israel, Iran, and Syria. *Journal of Contemporary African and Global Affairs*, 6(2), 44–59.
2. Azani, E. (2022). *Hezbollah: The story of the Party of God from revolution to institutionalization*. Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Barak, O. (2022). *Israel's border wars and the politics of military restraint*. Cornell University Press.
4. Bellamy, A. J., & Williams, P. D. (2020). *Understanding peacekeeping* (3rd ed.). Polity Press.
5. Berti, B. (2016). Hezbollah and the war in Syria: From ideological alignment to military involvement. *Middle East Policy*, 23(3), 40–56.
6. Biersteker, T. J., & Hall, R. B. (2015). *The emergence of private authority in global governance*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Blanford, N. (2017). *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's thirty-year struggle against Israel*. Random House.
8. Blanford, N. (2020). *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's thirty-year struggle against Israel*. Random House.
9. Burton, J. (2022). *Conflict: Resolution and prevention*. Palgrave Macmillan.
10. Byman, D. (2011). *A high price: The triumphs and failures of Israeli counterterrorism*. Oxford University Press.
11. Byman, D. (2023). *Israel's strategic dilemma: Security, diplomacy, and deterrence in the twenty-first century*. Brookings Institution Press.

12. Chesterman, S. (2019). The politics and legality of private military companies. Oxford University Press.
13. Clapham, C. (2020). The global-system and non-state actors in weak states. *African Affairs*, 119(474), 233–250.
14. Cobban, H. (2005). The Palestinian liberation organisation: People, power and politics. Cambridge University Press.
15. Coser, L. A. (2021). The functions of social conflict. Free Press.
16. Deutsch, M. (2020). The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes. Yale University Press.
17. Ehteshami, A. (2021). Iran and the rise of its regional proxies in the Middle East. *Middle East Policy*, 28(2), 45–63.
18. El-Hokayem, E. (2021). The politics of Lebanon's Hezbollah: Between ideology and pragmatism. Carnegie Middle East Center.
19. Eze, C. (2022). European Union peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in Lebanon. *Journal of International Peace Studies*, 14(3), 78–96.
20. Fawaz, L. T. (2022). Resistance, identity, and the modern Middle East. Harvard University Press.
21. Fawaz, L. T. (2023). Conflict, displacement, and reconstruction: Lebanon's post-war challenges in the shadow of Israel. *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 59(2), 211–230.
22. Fisk, R. (2001). Pity the nation: Lebanon at war. Oxford University Press.
23. Frantzman, S. J. (2023). Drone wars: Pioneers, killing machines, artificial intelligence, and the battle for the future. Bombardier Books.
24. Galtung, J. (2023). Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization. Sage Publications.
25. Gerges, F. A. (2019). Making the Arab world: Nasser, Qutb, and the clash that shaped the Middle East. Princeton University Press.
26. Gerges, F. A. (2022). The new Middle East: Protest and revolution in the Arab world. Cambridge University Press.
27. Gilpin, R. (1981). War and change in world politics. Cambridge University Press.
28. Harb, M. (2021). Hezbollah's political identity and Lebanon's sectarian paradox. *Journal of Middle Eastern Politics*, 14(1), 65–82.
29. Harb, M. (2021). Hezbollah's state within a state: Power, politics and resistance in Lebanon. *Middle East Policy Review*, 18(4), 112–130.

30. Harb, M. (2022). Hezbollah's political paradox: Governance, resistance, and legitimacy in a failed state. *Arab Affairs Review*, 12(1), 88–106.
31. Hoffman, B. (2018). *Inside terrorism* (3rd ed.). Columbia University Press.
32. Hurd, I. (2020). *How to do things with international law*. Princeton University Press.
33. International Crisis Group. (2023). *Avoiding renewed war in Lebanon*. Brussels: ICG Report No. 246.
34. Jackson, R., & Sørensen, G. (2021). *Introduction to international relations: Theories and approaches* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
35. Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation under the security dilemma. *World Politics*, 30(2), 167–214.
36. Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
37. Khalidi, R. (2020). *The hundred years' war on Palestine: A history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books.
38. Khalidi, R. (2020). *The hundred years' war on Palestine: A history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books.
39. Krasner, S. D. (2020). Power, institutions, and the state system. *International Affairs*, 96(4), 887–905.
40. Kugler, J., & Lemke, D. (1996). *Parity and war: Evaluations and extensions of the war ledger*. University of Michigan Press.
41. Levitt, M. (2021). *Hezbollah: The global footprint of Lebanon's party of God*. Georgetown University Press.
42. Makdisi, K., & El-Masri, S. (2016). UNIFIL II: Emerging and evolving European engagement in Lebanon and the Middle East. In F. Bicchi & S. Carta (Eds.), *European involvement in the Middle East peace process* (pp. 151–173). Routledge.
43. Makdisi, S. (2021). *The mythologies of the Middle East: Colonial legacies and modern politics*. Cambridge University Press.
44. Makdisi, S., & Marktanner, M. (2009). Trapped by consociationalism: The case of Lebanon. *Topics in Middle Eastern and North African Economies*, 11(1), 1–24.
45. Makinda, S., & Okumu, F. (2021). China's Belt and Road Initiative and its strategic implications for the Middle East. *Asian Journal of International Affairs*, 5(1), 33–49.
46. Makinde, O. (2022). Syria's regional strategy and the shifting dynamics of Middle Eastern conflicts. *International Journal of Global Politics*, 9(2), 65–83.

47. Mansour, A. (2016). Regional rivalries and the Lebanon-Israel conflict: Iran's role in the balance of power. *Journal of Contemporary Security Policy*, 37(4), 567–584.
48. Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. W. W. Norton & Company.
49. Mearsheimer, J. J., & Walt, S. M. (2007). *The Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
50. Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. Alfred A. Knopf.
51. Norton, A. R. (2021). *Hezbollah: A short history* (Updated ed.). Princeton University Press.
52. Nye, J. S., & Keohane, R. O. (2012). *Power and interdependence* (4th ed.). Longman.
53. Obasi, N. (2023). Saudi Arabia's diplomatic role in the Lebanese crisis and the Gulf–Iranian rivalry. *Middle East Review*, 19(1), 101–119.
54. Organski, A. F. K. (1958). *World politics*. Alfred A. Knopf.
55. Picard, E. (2002). The political management of sectarianism in Lebanon. In R. Brynen, B. Korany, & P. Noble (Eds.), *Political liberalization and democratization in the Arab world* (Vol. 2, pp. 122–142). Lynne Rienner.
56. Picard, E. (2023). *Lebanon: A shattered state in the regional power game*. Routledge.
57. Pinfari, M. (2022). The role of international actors in the Middle East peace process. *Mediterranean Politics*, 27(2), 145–167.
58. Risse, T. (2021). *Transnational actors and world politics*. Routledge.
59. Saab, B. Y. (2018). Hezbollah and the Lebanese state: Competing authority and the struggle for legitimacy. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41(5), 723–748.
60. Saab, B. Y. (2023). Hezbollah's statecraft: Strategy, governance, and ideology. *Middle East Policy Review*, 18(1), 34–56.
61. Salem, P. (2020). Iran's influence in Lebanon: Hezbollah and the politics of resistance. *Middle East Policy*, 27(2), 36–51.
62. Saouli, A. (2021). Hezbollah and the politics of crisis: Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(3), 521–540.
63. Sayigh, Y. (1997). *Armed struggle and the search for state: The Palestinian national movement, 1949–1993*. Oxford University Press.
64. Slaughter, A.-M. (2017). *The chessboard and the web: Strategies of connection in a networked world*. Yale University Press.

65. Slim, R. (2020). The 2006 Lebanon war revisited: Lessons for asymmetric conflicts. *Middle East Security Studies*, 25(4), 301–324.
66. Taliaferro, J. W. (2000). Security seeking under anarchy: Defensive realism revisited. *International Security*, 25(3), 128–161.
67. United Nations. (2006). United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 (S/RES/1701). New York: United Nations.
68. United Nations. (2021). UNIFIL and the maintenance of peace along the Blue Line. United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Report, 18(3), 1–24.
69. Walt, S. M. (1987). *The origins of alliances*. Cornell University Press.
70. Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Addison-Wesley.
71. Weiss, T. G., & Thakur, R. (2017). *Global governance and the UN: An unfinished journey* (2nd ed.). Indiana University Press.
72. Zartman, I. W. (2020). *Peacemaking in the Middle East: The limits of power and diplomacy*. Routledge.