

# **Peace and Economic Interdependence in the Middle East**

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***Abstract:***

Can economic interdependence pacify the Middle East? While Middle Eastern countries have, for the most part, avoided the global trend of regionalism, this study provides empirical evidence that Middle Eastern countries with significant trade ties to other countries in the region do cooperate more and fight less. In addition to confirming the liberal notion of peace through trade, this study shows that several conditions outlined by the selectorate theory of political survival must be fulfilled if economic interdependence in the Middle East is to be achieved. A case study outlining Israeli and Turkish economic cooperation is used to show the selectorate model's regional compatibility. The regional applicability of the selectorate theory leads us to conclude that politically liberal countries are more likely to maintain economic relations with one another than with autocratic ones. Since liberal countries will be more economically interdependent with one another they will also be more peaceful towards one another. Ultimately, then, this study concludes that political liberalization is one way of enhancing regional economic interdependence and consequently the prospects for a more peaceful Middle East.