



# Impact of US intervention in the Middle Eastern countries with emphasis on Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Israel: A comparative study

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper traces US relation with Saudi Arabia in terms Trade and Security, US relation with Iraq in terms of Military invasion and political conflicts, and, explores US relations with Israel in terms of economic prosperity and regional security. Subsequently this thesis focuses on implications of various international theories like realism, idealism, constructivism in the context of US and Middle East. It talks about the crisis of nation state as to how globalisation has impacted the crisis of nation state while evidencing about civil wars in middle east due to US intervention. This paper also implies the theory of Neo marxism and Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony. This paper brings out different perspectives through which one can look at US intervention in the Middle East. By tracing the historical events and by analysing the contemporary realms of US and Middle East relations, this paper attempts to determine the prospects of the relationship shared between the two regions.

**KEYWORDS:** International Relations, Idealism, Realism, Constructivism, Crisis of Nation State, Power, Foreign Policy, Strategy, Security, Sovereignty, Diplomacy, Hegemony, Intervention.

## I. Introduction

The United States has been involved in the Middle East since a very long time and its role has been increasing especially since the end of Cold War. In the 1990s, the United States broadened its presence in the region in the context of security to restrain Saddam Hussein in Iraq and clerical regime in Iraq. During those years, the United States also engaged in an energetic, but unsuccessful effort to bring peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. After the 9/11 attacks, the involvement of US grew even more. The United States in its rigorous efforts to counter terrorism, framed tried to established extensive ties neglected regimes like Yemen, Libya , etc., then came the year 2003, when the United

States invaded Iraq and instigated an insurgency that led to presence of the US in Iraq until the end of 2011. Then came the era of "Arab Spring." During the time of Arab Spring, US on general humanitarian grounds encouraged regional aspirations for political change.

[1]. For more than half a century, America's policy in the Middle East has been guided by several core security objectives: preventing any power in the region from emerging as a hegemony; ensuring the free flow of energy resources, still vital to the operation of the world economy; and attempting to broker a durable peace between Israel and its neighbours, including a settlement with the Palestinian Arabs. The United States has very well prepared to deal with democratically elected Islamist government. Since a lot of time the United States under the name of democracy, human rights, peace and stability, has been meddling with the affairs of the Middle East. Through hard power and soft power the United States has well established its hegemony over some Middle Eastern countries and its impact is not only seen in that particular region but in the entire world order.

[2]. Currently the United States is facing some competitions from the new emerging powers when it comes to influencing Middle East and with the advent of multi polarity the United States' claim on Middle East is being shared with other states as well. Middle East is rich in geographical as well as geopolitical aspects to such an extent that it has always been an eye candy for other powers. With so much of oil and energy resources, Middle East is that gold, everyone wants to have a hold of. Being victimised to the capitalist and opportunist tendency of superpowers, the sovereignty of the Middle East has been jeopardised multiple times and its consequences can still be traced in its development. The United States indeed shares a



dynamic relationship with the Middle Eastern countries.

[3]. The United States' interest in the Middle East have been fairly clear. Since the end of cold war, US has strategically expanded its involvement in the Middle East and there are various evidences to prove it. This thesis studies the reasons, events, intensity of the involvement of US in the Middle East by considering its relations with three countries; Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Israel. This thesis also examines the impact of the intervention done by the US in the Middle East from the year 2008 to 2020 and determines the future of US in the Middle East. It seeks to find out whether US involvement in the middle east stood as an obstacle in the sovereignty of the Middle Eastern countries or did it really benefit those countries or did it just serve the national interest of the United States.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The Middle East is of great importance to the world due to its geographical, economic, cultural aspects. Several powers wanted access to Middle Eastern countries's resources, the United States being one of them. United States since the eighteenth century has its roots in the Middle East. From signing the Red Line Agreement (1928) signed between Iraq and US, with economic involvement (1933) with Ibn Saudi, the king of Saudi Arabia, and helping with the formation of Israel (1948), from Arab Spring to Arab-Israel Normalisation, United States still remains an influential power that affects these countries' foreign as well as domestic policies. As compared to previous years, the impact of US in the Middle East has decreased, but even today directly or indirectly it finds a way to meddle with these regions, either through partially withdrawing military forces from Iraq, resolving Arab- Israeli conflict by peace agreements, or by promising to make a pariah out of Saudi Arabia over the killing of their native journalist. This paper aims to bring out the opportunist side of the United States, it also aims to portray that how United States considers itself a super power and how all this has a direct impact on sovereignty of other states. This is a topic that has received a lot of attention over the decades. This paper attempts to find out the causes and consequences of the same by bringing out different aspects and introducing a new perspective in this topic.

## III. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST THEN AND NOW

US foreign policy in the Middle East was finite till the mid 1900s; before this European powers framed relations in the Middle East. After the first world war, the United States has provided the Middle East with highly skilled petroleum engineers. The Red Line Agreement signed in 1928 and the Anglo American Petroleum Agreement signed in 1944 reflected an American Interest in control of Middle Eastern energy resources. By the end of second world war the US considered Middle East region as "the most strategically important area of the World" and "one of the greatest material prizes in world history" according to Noam Chomsky. It was the the time of second world war that America became directly involved in the Middle East region. During this time the region was going through major social economic and political changes. In 1947 the U.S. and the Truman administration, under domestic political pressure, resolved the Arab- Israeli conflict, and in May 1948 the new state of Israel came into existence. Nevertheless, "the first state to extend diplomatic recognition to Israel was the United States; the Soviet Union and several Western nations quickly followed suit. No Arab state, however, recognised Israel." The American interventions were then seen in Syria, in Iran when UK asked US to help the former in the removal of Mohammed Mosaddeq, in the Suez Crisis, Jordan, Iran- Iraq War, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Libya, Turkey and so on. The American interventions in the years before the Iranian revolution have all proven to be based in part on economic considerations, but more so have been influenced and led by the international Cold War context. After the Second World War, as the Soviet Union and the U.S. emerged as the two main global adversaries. Washington then adopted a strategy designed to deter the Soviets from further expansion and to deprive them at the same time from vital oil resources in the region. For the Middle East this strategy meant that the U.S. would fill in the vacuum left by the two old colonial powers, France and Britain. Thus the U.S. embarked on open diplomatic and military interventionism in the Middle Eastern region

The United States' foreign policy in the Middle East is based on pure diplomacy. After democratisation and globalisation of Middle East, the doors for different opportunities have opened not only just for the US but also for many new emerging powers around the world like China, Japan, and more. With every changing president the foreign policy of US towards Middle East is changed but one thing remains stagnant and that is the fact that US wants to have a strong influence and a



hegemony in this region and wants to prevent new powers from exerting any sort of claim or control over middle east.

#### IV. US RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA

[1]. The United States and Saudi Arabia enjoy a strong economic relationship. The United States is Saudi Arabia's second largest trading partner, and Saudi Arabia is one of the United States' largest trading partners in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is the third leading source of imported oil for the United States, providing about half a million barrels per day of oil to the US market. The United States and Saudi Arabia have signed a Trade Investment Framework Agreement. Saudi Arabia launched its Vision 2030 program in April 2016, laying out plans to diversify the economy, including through increased trade and investment with the United States and other countries. US goods and services trade with Saudi Arabia totalled an estimated \$38.7 billion in 2019. Exports were \$23.9 billion; imports were \$14.9 billion. The US goods and services trade surplus with Saudi Arabia was \$9.0 billion in 2019. According to the Department of Commerce, "US exports of goods and services to Saudi Arabia supported an estimated 165 thousand jobs in 2015 (latest data available) (101 thousand supported by goods exports and 63 thousand supported by services exports)

[2]. The United States and Saudi Arabia are working collectively toward the common goal of a stable, secure, and prosperous Middle east according to the US government. Saudi Arabia is a vital US partner on a wide range of regional security issues, and a founding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Saudi Arabia also leads Coalition efforts to disrupt ISIS financial and facilitation networks and build Coalition members' capacity to identify and target such networks by increasing information sharing and developing structural measures to counter illicit financial flows. The United States works with Saudi Arabia and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to increase cooperation on border security, maritime security, arms transfers, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism.

[3]. The main glue of the relationship remains massive US arms sales to the Saudi kingdom and covert cooperation in combating terrorism. Since 2010, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency has notified Congress of \$134 billion in potential arms sales to Saudi Arabia,

which has been the most important foreign market for the American defence industry for decades. The Biden administration has reiterated its commitment to defending Saudi Arabia from foreign aggression and will continue to provide "defensive" arms. However, it has already announced the suspension of "offensive" weapons in use against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels who have seized control of most of neighbouring Yemen.

Other than the crown prince, the most divisive and immediate issue in U.S.-Saudi relations is how to deal with Iran, the kingdom's arch rival for regional primacy. Iran has proven itself to be the most serious military threat after demonstrating its ability to amass drones and cruise missiles to knock out nearly half of the kingdom's oil production for several weeks in September 2019.

#### V. US RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

[1]. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 (also known as the Partition Resolution) that would divide Great Britain's former Palestinian mandate into Jewish and Arab states in May 1948 when the British mandate was scheduled to end. Under the resolution, the area of religious significance surrounding Jerusalem would remain a corpus separatum under international control administered by the United Nations. The State Department, concerned about the possibility of an increasing Soviet role in the Arab world and the potential for restriction by Arab oil producing nations of oil supplies to the United States, advised against US intervention on behalf of the Jews. Later, as the date for British departure from Palestine drew near, the Department of State grew concerned about the possibility of an all-out war in Palestine as Arab states threatened to attack almost as soon as the UN passed the partition resolution. Despite growing conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews and despite the Department of State's endorsement of a trusteeship, Truman ultimately decided to recognise the state Israel. Since Israel's founding in 1948, successive US Presidents and many Members of Congress have demonstrated a commitment to Israel's security and to close U.S.-Israel cooperation. Strong bilateral ties influence US policy in the Middle East, and Congress provides active oversight of the executive branch's actions. Israel is a leading recipient of US foreign aid and a frequent purchaser of major US weapons systems. By law, US arms sales cannot adversely affect Israel's "qualitative military edge" over other countries in its region. The two countries signed a



free trade agreement in 1985, and the United States is Israel's largest trading partner.

[2]. Israel regularly seeks help from the United States to bolster its regional security and defence capabilities. Legislation in Congress frequently includes proposals to strengthen U.S.-Israel cooperation, such as the U.S.-Israel Security Assistance Authorisation Act of 2018. US and Israel share many agreements that lock their security cooperation deals. For example, Joint Police Training, Joint Naval Training, Joint Infantry Training, Joint Air Force Training, Joint Air-Defense and Artillery training, Homeland Security Cooperation, Intelligence cooperation, US Israel Anti-Tunnel Defense Cooperation, F-33 Joint Strike Fighter Plane, Iron Dome Cooperation, Prevention of arms supply to terrorists, Civil Aviation Security Infrastructure. Besides these, United States Benefits to Israel are that America provides Israel Qualitative Military Advantage, Pentagon \$5 Billion Plane Package for Israel, Carter Administration Policy on Arms Sales. In exchange Israel contributes to the United States in multiple ways too, for example, Israel's military inclusion program inspires US corps of honour, Israeli military equipment employed by the US (US to purchase Israeli anti aircraft defence kits, Israel Aids US campaign in Iraq [2003], Israeli drones support Kosovo operation (1999).

[3]. Washington has maintained its large-scale military, financial, and diplomatic support for the Israeli occupation in the face of unprecedented violations of international law and human rights standards by Israeli occupation forces. The close relationship between the US and Israel has been one of the most salient features in US foreign policy for nearly three and a half decades. The well over \$3 billion in military and economic aid sent annually to Israel by Washington is rarely questioned in Congress, even by liberals who normally challenge US aid to governments that engage in widespread violations of human rights—or by conservatives who usually oppose foreign aid in general. Although US backing of successive Israeli governments, like most foreign policy decisions, is often rationalised on moral grounds, there is little evidence that moral imperatives play more of a determining role in guiding US policy in the Middle East than in any other part of the world.

[4]. Most Americans do share a moral commitment to Israel's survival as a Jewish State, but this would not account for the level of financial, military, and diplomatic support provided. American aid to Israel goes well beyond protecting Israel's security needs within its internationally recognised

borders. US assistance includes support for policies in militarily occupied territories that often violate well-established legal and ethical standards of international behaviour.<sup>10</sup> In short, the growing US support for the Israeli government, like US support for allies elsewhere in the world, is not motivated primarily by objective security needs or a strong moral commitment to the country. Rather, as elsewhere, US foreign policy is motivated primarily to advance its own perceived strategic interests.

## VI. US RELATIONS WITH IRAQ

[1]. US government involvement in early Iraq was limited. President Woodrow Wilson envisioned a liberal post- World War I political system that would include self-determination for Iraqis and other peoples of the former Ottoman Empire, but he was unable to promote that vision effectively. Post-World War II international dynamics gradually drew the United States into a deeper political relationship with Iraq.<sup>11</sup> The onset of the Cold War raised fears in Washington about Soviet expansionism into the Middle East and generated a determination among American leaders to prevent the spread of communism in Iraq. US policy toward Iraq featured a short, indecisive war between the two states followed by a "long decade" of consequential complications. Iraq's full-scale military invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, clearly demonstrated Hussein's reckless aggressiveness and the futility of Bush administration efforts to deal with him on friendly terms. President Bush resolved that he would take necessary steps, up to and including military force, to reverse the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait. And his decision to contest Iraqi expansionism resulted in two strategic initiatives, one centring on deterrence and the second on military action. President George W. Bush, unnerved by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, launched a military invasion of Iraq designed to destroy Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. The United States secured UN Security Council resolution 1441, which censured Iraqi behaviour and warned of serious consequences if it remained defiant. (The United States later claimed that this resolution provided a legal basis for war, a claim that France and other powers disputed.)

[2]. The US airstrikes on Iraq in 2019 that killed 25 people of the Kataib Hezbollah militia blatantly violated Iraq's sovereignty and raised tensions in the volatile Middle east region. Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, who was informed by US Defense Secretary Mark Esper only a few hours ahead of the strikes, condemned the



attacks. When he asked the United States to call off the bombing, the latter simply ignored him. Besides defying international laws, the airstrikes have contradicted what the US president claimed in the United Nations in September 2017—that sovereignty should be the guiding principle of affairs between nations. It has proven to be a sheer lie. The US said the airstrikes were in response to the rocket attack that killed a US contractor last week. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed the US "has acted quickly, prudently, and decisively".<sup>13</sup> The reality is that the US did act quickly but imprudently.

[3]. The United States faces an all too real risk that events in Iraq will trigger a much more serious clash between the United States and Iran in Iraq – as well as Iran in the rest of the region — not to mention that the United States will face major Iraqi hostility over its use of force in Iraq despite opposition from the Iraqi government. The United States has again slashed its official presence in Iraq, and the US Ambassador has warned US citizens to leave the country. At the same time, Iraq has no clear path towards unity, the creation of either a workable political system or an effective government, or the prospects of economic recovery. Coping with a new crisis of each given day often seems beyond America's reach. At the same time, focusing on the current crisis has now led to consistent failures in the US strategy when dealing with Iraq and the Middle East for the last two decades — and has already turned two apparent "victories" into real world defeats. From the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 to the present, the United States has never had a workable grand strategy for Iraq or any consistent plans and actions that have gone beyond current events.

## VII. FUTURE OF US AND MIDDLE EAST

Even though US's position in the Middle East is declining, the impact of its intervention still lies very evidently. The impact has been positive, negative, neutral, and dynamic giving this subject a wide array of perspectives. China is growing exponentially and it cannot be stopped. Biden administration has to still work out its foreign policy in the changing world, although there are indications that it is seeking to move away from Trump policies, for obvious reasons. The pre Trump Pentagon policy will not hold good now, so viewing how the American policy finally frames itself will be quite interesting. There are only bits and pieces of what is perceived by us, who are not active in deciding the world order, the entire picture is still to settle. With the revival of the Eurasia's importance in the world, United States has a lot on its plate. In

times like these, US has to make sure that it maintains its strong hold on all the important regions of the world to secure its hegemony as well it has to focus on its own development too because the pandemic has posed a big loss and predicament on US's socio economic well being.

## VIII. Conclusion

It cannot be denied that this involvement of US in Middle East damaged US' image and generated a feeling of Anti- Americanism. The arrogance and sense of national superiority were quite obvious in US policies for the Middle East, and their effects can be seen in grown violence, intolerance, war hysteria and armed struggle in the world. The international community needs to work with the enlightened and moderate forces in the United States to curb the spread of neoconservatism in the political and social landscape of the superpower, and save the international political system from falling into the hands of the forces that are bent on extending "freedom, democracy, and free enterprise" with America's "unparalleled military strength." The world not only needs to draw some lessons from the United States' Middle east policies and their repercussions for the international community, it should also be more focussed, cautious and watchful of the use and dynamics of power. This is the time for responsible states to play their role in resolving conflicts, managing crises, dealing with threats, and handling the issues that have the potential to expand into further crises and conflicts. New emerging powers along with the United States are trying to claim their power, or expand their influence on Middle east but they are somehow neglecting the fact that today, Middle east and its countries are becoming more powerful day by day, they are capable of developing their region and maintaining their strong hold in the world order without being victimised to other states' interests. On one hand where emerging powers are willing to establish their superiority over Middle East, on the other Middle East is working consistently for proving that in the world order, its own importance and superiority will hardly decline.

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