



Military Factor and Western Interference in the Middle East Domestic Affairs

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Abstract

Immediately after the Second World War the British, U.S. and Russia deepen their interference in the Middle East domestic and military affairs. The U.S. that emerge as the strongest from the war attempt to restructure the global network of business where free trade and profit would be generated without restriction. This was aimed to forestall Soviet Union foreign ambitions in the Middle East specifically in 1946. The silent political tension between U.S.A and Soviet Union continued to increase later to be known as the Cold War Era. Visible suspicious emerged; instead of armed conflict, mutual hostility were expressed in term of propaganda, economic measures and a general policy of no cooperation. As for the British interest in the Middle East, the occupation of the Palestine as British mandate was heavily maintained and secured. The main purposes for this colonial adventure was the availability of almost one-third of the words known petroleum reserves embedded in the Middle East. Furthermore, Middle East region possessed supply line, communications facilities, and air bases vital for defense of much British Empire. While Russia seeks alliance with Syria, Turkey and Iran to gain control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and to push for warm water from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. The Soviet Union expansionism in to Middle East was an inescapable and harsh reality of the post-world war era. The America were solidly in support of the creation of Israel State to serve her imperial interest in the Middle East political stages. American policy makers also secure the royalty of the House of Saudi Arabia and that of the Gulf States for alliances. The aim of this paper therefore, was to discuss the stages of influence of the Western imperialist in altering the Middle East political set - up.



INTRODUCTION

The fall of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19th century set the stage for the western powers to partition the Middle East. They arbitrarily carved out the vast territory inhabited by the Arab peoples to create artificial nation-states. These were created for colonial convenience and to break apart the Arab nations, making it easier to be control and occupied (Sarah 1970). The incursion of the Western globalist power in the Middle East witness recurrent regional crisis from 1946 - 2011 during the Arabs spring that shake some of the existing traditional monarchical and caliphate system of governance (Tobias 2025). The USSR also attempt to break down the structure which Britain has maintained before the World War so that Russia power and influence can sweep unimpeded across Turkey and through the Dardanelles in to the Mediterranean, and across Iran and through the Persian Gulf into the India ocean. Against this background therefore, this paper analyzed historical background of some Western power influence especially U.S. and Britain in the Middle East affairs. Their policy center on the issue of armed forces and power, and regime change where necessary in favor of the Western interest. Inevitably, the dynamics of internal control in the Middle East, national defense, power tussle, and the politics of weapons of mass destruction as well as international politics of arms supply all come to play in the 21st century Middle East conflicts (Thomas 1974: 325). In essence, the Western ambitions to control the resources of the Middle East led to modern state of melee in the region. If the Western countries remove itself from prejudice they can collectively use their influence with both the Arab regional government and western-educated trained officer elites to push for everlasting political solutions to the numerous crisis in the Middle East.



Western Influence in the Domestic Affairs of the Middle East

Since the Middle East is situated geographically between continents, it was routinely subjected to encroachment, occupation, transit and manipulation by outside powers. In the latter part of the 19th century, foreign competition seek to secure strategic interest in the Middle East and Arabian peninsula which was ostensibly welcomed by local politicians, royal families and some distinct tribal groups. Indeed, the region has been framed by territorial and dynastic struggles along political power that was habitually wielded by dynastic, religious and land owing elites (Kenneth 1991:5).

Despite the extreme internal strife of the local tribal Arab's, they nevertheless express antipathy toward the West when international community supported the recognition of Israel in 1948. Hostility for the Western influence and opposition to its physical presence were further aggravated after the British and France left Egypt and Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. They ostensibly sided with the State of Israel State to take the Suez Canal from Egypt and topple Egyptian President Nasser in October, 1956 that was viewed as another example of the West desire for physical control of Arab political destiny. There was overt revulsion for Western presence on Arab soil (Kenneth 1991:6-7).

Prior to 1946 that witnessed vigorous colonial incursion in the Middle East affairs, the U.S. was a major actor in pursuing military adventure in the major regions of the world. The U.S. started her policy of militarization of Middle East as far back as 1936 by sponsoring regime change in Iraq for regional predominance in the Arabs world. The Iraqis was alleged to have experience the first military coup in the Middle East. This coup was led by General Bakr Sidki that subsequently opened the ambitions of other army officers to initiate coups. In fact, Iraq witnessed a total number of six military



coups from 1936-1968. The U.S. further ignited the right wing of Iraqis Ba'ath Party in 1963 to leads successful coup against Iraqi leader, Abdul Karim Qassim after unsuccessful U.S. assassination attempt on his life (Anthony 2003).

America oversees interest as earlier noted center on control and the desire to harness economic potentiality of the Middle East to lift her economic standard back at home and abroad. To this end America supported Saddam Hussein in the 1968 counter-coup that leads to nationalization of Iraq oil in 1972 to favor American interest. This gesture ensures Saddam Hussein to be a reliable friend of the U.S. The U.S. A. and its Western allies are at the forefront to intrude and supported the Kurdish rebels in 1973-1975 over border dispute with Iran, by offering the resistance group over \$16 million in arms with a solid promise to back them in their struggle for autonomy. This agreement was breached by the U.S. during Iran and Iraq agreement in 1975 to seal off their borders and the Iraq government ambition to violently suppress the Kurdish rebellion. U.S. quickly switched side and ends support for Kurds and denied them refuge at a time they needed them most. Saddam Hussein continued to terrorize the Kurdistan through his period of reign. In fact, from 1985-1990 U.S. gifted Saddam Hussein billions of arms uses to murder thousands of the Kurdish opposition in Iraq (Amatzia 2000).

Most of the recorded and successful regime change in the Middle East was carried out by the CIA espionage agents. Regime change not just occurred in Iraq but in Syria as well where they backs military coup in overthrowing democratic elected government in 1949. The military coup was headed by Colonel Husni Zain in March, 1949. Two counter coups were carried out in less than nine months by Colonel Sami Hinnawi and Colonel Adid Shishakli respectively. Syria alone was said to have witnessed about eight military coups between 1949 -1971 (Rubin, 1998).



The same scenario of western intervention was extended to Iran in 1953 where the CIA overthrows democratic elected Iranian government, placing the Razi Shah in power. This was carried out against the decision of Iranian parliament that nationalized the British Anglo-Iranian oil company in 1951 initiated by Mossadegh (Prime minister). British and America were not happy over this nationalization, hence they ruthlessly organized economic sanction and trade restriction against Iran (Edam 2023). By 1954 U.S. helps to fund huge military and police build-up geared towards internal riot against the government of Iran. The notorious secret police organization called the Savak were trained to disturb the Iranian parliament until Iranian oil was re-privatized in favor of the U.S. (Justice 2002).

The intervention of the Western powers became visible when Syria and Egypt take step in 1957-1958 towards unifying and managing their economics benefits to reflect the revolutionary yearning of the Arab masses as well as unite against western imperialism. The same CIA dispatched six fleet of ship convoy with huge arms delivered to U.S. loyalist for regime change. It was claimed by Syria and Egypt that they uncover “at least eight separate conspiracies to overthrow one or the other government to prevent the merger of the two countries (Justice 2002).

By and large the years from 1950s, 1960s and 1970s remained the most noted period of military coups in the Middle East directly or indirectly sponsored by the West. In order to forestall military coups the democratic elected Arab leaders evolved a systematic lobby through incentives for the army to keep them away from governance. So much that by the 1980s there was fewer cases of coups as political leaders in the region had learned to survive these military coups. Yet, the military remained a very important tool and is playing a significant role in



shaping the politics of the Middle East (Rubin, 1998: 28).

Furthermore, the emerging political leaders evolved a system of ‘divide-and-rule’ in the Middle East in order to prevent military coups. Many military units that spy on each other were created, officers suspected of disloyalty, or even excessive ambitions, are periodically purged. Higher- ranking officers are frequently rotated to avoid letting them establish strong ties of loyalty with their troops or subordinates. It became difficult for this separate units of military divisions to coordinate among themselves and thus any likely cooperation with foreign power became difficult (Overfield, 2002: 372).

It should be noted that in the earlier periods of independence in the Middle East States, the military was the only institution that had the cohesiveness and tools to take over power. Thereafter, the officers who took power finally learned how to keep it, and the civilians too, discovered the same lesson. However, the understanding between the political elites and the top military officers in recent time yielded positive result, as the officers are less eager to try to seize power while also defeating any plots more effectively before they could be well organized. As a result, the armed forces in the Middle East found a new role of serving as the guardian of the incumbent regimes rather than its principal challenger (Agwu 2005:312).

Another reason for successful coup avoidance in the Middle East is the leader’s solidarity and personal connection to the armed forces. For example; Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Hafiz al-Assad of Syria were former commanders of their countries’ air forces; King. Husayn of Jordan was a graduate of the British military academy; Late Saddam Hussein and Yasir Arafat of Iraq and Palestine were frequently seen appeared in army uniform; King Abdullah of Jordan was a former commander of Jordan military



units and it appeared that, Syrian ruler Bashir al-Asad (an eye doctor with no military background) was made an officer and rapidly promoted after it became clear that he would succeed his father (Ali 2023).

One cannot denied the fact that the armed forces in the Middle East are playing important roles in the politics of the region. They help in preserving the regimes' stability and internal control; their main duties are to take care of the national defense and power projection. However, the solid American support of Israel against her adversaries in the Middle East clearly shows the inability of the Arab countries to defeat or completely destroy Israel during the Arab-Israel wars of 1967 and Lebanon in 1973 and 1982 (Stephen 2008:158). In terms of power projection, the Arab States failed to eliminate, dominate, defeat, or forces significant concession from the side of Israel.

The Political Fallacy of Weapons of Mass Destruction

The politically fallacy or deception of weapon Mass destruction in the view of President George H.W Bush was to raise the specter that Iraqi pursuit of nuclear weapons was a severe threat to the Middle East. He used this notion as one justification for taking decisive action against Iraq Saddam of possessing weapon of mass destruction (Jeffrey 2004). He refused to abide by the UN resolution that has appointed special commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) Hans Blix and Mohammed El Baradei for (IAEA) to provide periodic updates to the UN Security Council concerning the extent of Iraqi cooperation, what they had or had not discovered and what they believed remained to be done (Jeffrey 2004). During that period, 1991 the Bush administration , as well as Tony Blair administration of the United Kingdom, argued that Iraq was not living up to the requirement that it fully disclose its WMD activities, and declare that



if it continued along the path, “serious consequences will be followed, that is, invasion of Iraqi regime” (David 2003). Prior to this debate and investigation the Israel government had already bombed Iraqis Osirak nuclear reactor, before it became operational on the 7th June, 1981, in an attempt to prevent Iraqi acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability. The final attack came up on the 19th March, 2003 when U.S. ‘Launched operation Iraqi freedom’ to finish up the job by the elimination of Saddam Hussein with the help of local rivalries and opposition from the Shia clerics (Anthony 2003).

Historically, an effort from various countries in the Middle East to obtain weapons of mass destruction equipment (missile, nuclear, chemical and biological weapon) geared towards enhancing the strength of the regular forces was thwarted by the global powers. It should be remembered that governments control of such weapons if acquire need to be closely monitor and to be given to special military formation deemed especially reliable to protect its usage. On the whole Sir John Chilcot said this on the 16th July, 2023: the judgments about the severity of the threat posed by Iraqis weapons of mass destruction were not justified as propagated by the western media (Edam 2023).

Some of the analyst of Middle East history posited that obtaining these weapon are attempts to overcome a perceived deadlock in the balance of and projection of power in the Middle East, It remained clear evidence that the weapon of mass destruction adds a new dimension to the doctrine and strategy of the Middle East armed forces. These weapons have already been used in the Iran-Iraq war by Saddam Hussein provided by the U.S. (Ali 2023).

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was not left out in the quest for military alliances in the Middle East. Before switching to US Egypt received enormous military hardware’s



from the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Later in the 1970s Egypt joined the U.S.A camp for the supply of its weapons. The same applied to the Israel, when she lost her external supplies of France in 1967 and switch to U.S.A as an alternative source of weapon supplies in the 1970s (Anthony 2003). The United States of America and the USSR were the only two major powers able to supply all of a Middle Eastern military's import needs in the 1970s. Moving on to 1990, the Soviet Union had largely dropped out of the picture, though, Russia has returned to some extent in the intervention of providing weapons for Assad regime in Syria and Iran (Harry 1999). The end of the Cold War with the U.S.A. victorious penalized countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria, that depended on Soviet weaponry (Amatzia 2000).

The technological gap between the two main suppliers could also be expected to grow over time, with the U.S.A. equipment becoming increasingly superiors to Russian armaments there are important implications for an armed force's political stand in this situation, since the officer corps is likely to favor maintaining good relations with the country that is its chief arms supplier. Some Middle East leaders could not see beyond their noses when the Western powers pushed them against their neighbors, they blindly obeyed and the Western powers turned against them in the name of protecting the attacked nation. An example of this could be seen when late Saddam Hussein was pushed to invade Kuwait in 1990 – 1991 (Rubin 1995).

Apart from the supply of weapons, the outside suppliers have influence regarding training, doctrine and actual use of military force. Europe tried to pressure Turkey regarding the issues of Kurdish separatists by denying it certain types of equipment imports. The United States of America boycotted Iran and, even significantly, the international sanction against Iraq following the 1991 Kuwait war have no doubt has



profound effects on the relevant armed forces' competence and style (Morris 2004: 602-604).

Considerably, the U.S.A. supplied Middle Eastern military today is less likely to stage a coup against a pro-U.S. government. Moreover, such an army would be less likely to attack Israel or Saudi Arabia, since this may be viewed as an attack to U.S. and would lead to the loss of U.S. spare parts or an attack from the International Coalition Forces. It should be noted that the exception to the U.S. monopoly is most glaring in the area of weapons of mass destruction supply. Countries like Iran, Libya, Syria and many more can turn to alternative sources of arms and technology notably from China, North Korea and Russia. This situation also created a new policy dynamics for the armed forces of those Middle Eastern States. Since this weapon of mass destruction equipment is obtained without any political restraints, such arms might be more likely used, if not as weapons at least as strategic leverage for power projection (Curt 1985:12).

Conclusion

The rationale behind several Western intervention in the Middle East affairs mainly center on colonial project to manage and control their resources. This long historical imperialist ideology adversely affected the stability of the region. Even though some Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, UAE and Bahrain became major allies of the West in trade and military transaction arrangement; the smooth relation does not usher desire peace in the region. Most importantly the question of the right of the Palestinian to self-determination as a state. The rising power of Islamic Republic of Iran also constituted a source of concern to the western world who are determine not to see any regional power that may perhaps rival with Israel.



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