
The US Interests in the Middle East

Motivations for choosing the study

The US has, since the end of the Second World War, been in constant engagement with and has been at the center of controversies surrounding the Middle East, which in the years after World War 2 saw a large amount of political instability, the formation of Israel and Syria, and a rejection of colonial occupation by the French and British. The exact motives of the US in the Middle East has always been shrouded in controversy, declassified CIA documents show that a lot of coups that saw a change in government like the overthrowing of Mohammed Mosaddeq in Iran were sponsored by the US. The Arab Spring has once again turned the economic and political environment in the Middle East very unstable, and with the diminishing might of the US in world politics, it is important to understand what role it will play in the world of Middle Eastern politics.

Origin and Nature

The British were the first external country to engage in any sort of politics in the Middle East. This happened in 1914 when British soldiers were sent to Basra, located in modern day Iraq, to protect oil supplies from a Persian attack. At this time, the US colonial expansion was mainly focused on Latin America and the Caribbean. The US's relationship with the Middle East first started when then president, Harry Truman had to urge the USSR to remove its troops that had been stationed in Iran during World War 2. The first few decades of this relationship was centered on limiting the Soviet influence in the region, evidenced by the Eisenhower doctrine and the various funding of coups to overthrow communists by the CIA. The politics became more centered on religion and the Arab countries post the Declaration of Israel as a sovereign state in 1948. The conflicts essentially were centered on control of regions for the oil economy to run smoothly, which is vital to the US, along with the protection of the only Jewish state in the world that is Israel. Post 9/11, terrorism has become a major factor in dictating US policies toward the Middle East, as evidenced by the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the Bush administration in retaliation to the events of the same. The Nature of this conflict is complex and is based on a host of factors, which can be broadly divided into Issues relating to the existence and defense of Israel. The mistrust of America by the Arabic powers The political instability and civil wars in various places of the Middle East The US has adopted various different strategies to tackle the problems in the Middle East, including military intervention financing of arms and aid covertly via the CIA and a "do nothing approach" The US needs for there to be enough peace in the Middle East so as to be able to continue the oil trade, which is vital for the US economy.

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Islamism, the Arab Spring, and the Failure of America's Do-Nothing Policy in the Middle East

This article examines the US policy in dealing with the various conflicts arising out of the Arab Spring, the role the US played in the fall of The Muslim Brotherhood's democratically elected party in Egypt, as well as the lack of a role it has been playing against human rights abusers and institutions that have threatened the democracy of the people in the Middle Eastern countries. It argues that the US has failed in the Middle East and has become a sidelined player in the conflicts that exist. It also details the complicated relationship between the Arab states and Israel, and America's role in the same. (Hamid, 2015)

The U.S. and the Middle East Since 1945 to 2008

This article chronicles the complex relationship between the US and the various countries of the Middle East. It shows the change in US relations with the Middle East through presidents Truman in 1945, i.e., post-World War 2, all the way through to the end of President George Bush's term in 2008. This article highlights the use of the Middle East as a location for proxy wars between the US and the USSR in the 50s until the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Tristram, The U.S. and the Middle East Since 1945 to 2008, 2017)

Where U.S. Troops Are In the Middle East

This article is about the US reaction to the sudden disruption of diplomatic ties between the Arab countries and Qatar, the complicated nature of the same, as well as the multiple differing statements put out by the United States, from the president Donald Trump's Twitter to the Official briefing from the state department. (McCarthy, 2017)

Impacts of the Iraq War on the Middle East

This article chronicles the impact of the US invasion of Iraq on the Middle East. It has mainly shown the world the limitations of the US in trying to change the politics of the Middle East. It has caused the opportunity for the growth of ISIS, from the vacuum that the withdrawal of troops from Iraq created in the region. The occupation of Iraq also resulted in a further worsening of relations between the Shia and Sunni sects of Muslims, which was one of the major reasons of the revolutions and deposition of dictatorships in the Arab Spring of 2010. (Manfreda, 2017) What, Exactly, Are U.S. Interests In Iraq's Turmoil? This article examines the US reaction to the invasion and controlling of certain parts of Iraq by ISIS, the public response as well as the underlying threat to the United States that it felt due to the situation in Iraq having a profound

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effect on the oil industry, which is what America heavily depends on. (Welna, What, Exactly, Are U.S. Interests In Iraq's Turmoil?, 2014)

Current situation

The main issues facing US interests in the Middle East today can be classified under Issues relating to Israel Issues relating to ISIS Israel The delicate situation between Israel and Palestine was aggravated on December 6th, 2017, when the president of the US announced that America would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that it planned to move its embassy there, from the city of Tel Aviv where it is currently located. This move has garnered sharp criticism from the EU and the Arabic countries, although the long-term effects of this move are yet to be seen Qatar In June of 2017, Saudi Arabia along with several Arab countries abruptly cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar. These countries included Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt. The severing of relations included withdrawing ambassadors and imposing trade and travel bans. The official reason for the same was the Saudi claim that Qatar was supporting terrorist activities in the region. The US President applauded the move while the State Department of the US advised a peaceful resolution of conflicts. The prime reason that this is a concern for the US is that Qatar houses the largest number of American soldiers in the Middle East, an alienation of Qatar would make the fight against ISIS more difficult, since the Qatari nationals who are part of the effort will not be able to use the American bases in the UAE, and the bases in Qatar, usually fed in supplies via the UAE, will have to be supplied over a different path.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned by the US out of their dealings in the Middle East are Policy extremes of military intervention or policies of ignorance are both not viable to establish control or influence in the Middle East, as shown by the failure of the occupation of Iraq, and the turmoil caused by revolutions in the Arab Spring of 2010. There should be a proper long drawn out a plan for the pulling out of troops after a military intervention, to ensure the stability of the government that the country has been left with. Was this stability achieved, ISIS would not have grown into the global threat they are today. The intervention of a foreign power in another countries interior affairs always leads to instability in the long run. This was seen in Egypt, Yemen and Jordan, which culminated in the position they are in today, which is one of political and economic unrest, and no stable form of democratic government.

Recommendations for the future

Use military intervention as a last ditch effort only, not as a viable means of promoting

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nationalist agenda. Avoid getting entangled in other countries local affairs, focus on combating terrorism Gradually move to an advisory role instead of an active participant, in this way the US will be able to be aware of all developments that are occurring, but also not have the need to cooperate with any one country or set of countries.

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