

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3, 2021

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Journal of Social Sciences

Published by
Faculty of the Social Sciences
Enugu State University of Science & Technology
www.esutjss.com

US Isolationist Foreign Policy Stance under Trump: An Interrogation of Themes, Perspectives and Implications for the Future of US Overriding Strategic Interest and Influence in the Middle East Region

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Abstract

This study on US Isolationist Foreign Policy Stance: An Interrogation of Themes, Perspectives and Implications for the Future of US Overriding Strategic Interest and Influence in the Middle East Region addressed four objectives; examined major themes and perspectives that has guided US foreign policy in the Middle East; appraised the US Foreign Policy Vis a Vis Isolationism as an Option; reviewed implications of the isolationist policy on US overriding strategic interest and Influence in the Middle East; and exposed other measures or options pursuant to US strategic interest in the Middle East. The methodology employed was qualitative in which secondary materials were collected and reviewed to extract relevant data and draw conclusions. Isolationism strictly speaking was perceived as impossible in the world that has become a global village characterized by information and communication technology, internet, easy travel, and miniature means of mass destruction. Nevertheless despite the America First policy, the need to strike a balance on the assumed traditional role of the US as world police must not be undermined in the case of the Middle East neither by the Trump administration nor any successive one at that. It is recommended that the US should constructively engage other major state actors in finding lasting solution to the security challenges resulting from the quest to control the political economy of the various Middle East states. There is need to identify and promptly deal with intransigent states in the Middle East should be vigorously pursued to bring them to conformity; and the US should also rethink and redefine the limits of its isolationist policy stance in the Middle East and to continue to play its traditional stabilizing role in the region to prevent the region from reclining into a theater war, crises and terrorism.

Keywords: communication technology, economy, isolationist policy, middle east, political economy

Introduction

Contextually, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was relatively limited until the mid-1900s; prior to this time, European powers built relations in the Middle East, particularly through the League of Nations after World War I. During the 1950s, the Cold War heightened concern about the Middle East. In 1965, U.S. policy towards the region changed, reflected in more lenient immigration laws as people fled political crises in Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, and Afghanistan in the 1970s (Keller, 2000). Since the end of WWII culminating in the post cold war era; the Middle East has remained largely more volatile than ever resulting in almost been perceived as the corner stone of US foreign policy in decades for various

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reasons; Since the 1990s, the U.S. has engaged in helping facilitate a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as other germane political, economic, security (anti-terrorism) and human rights issues etc. (David & Curdy, 1996).

In the light of the above, and widely acclaimed as the police of the world, the U.S. since the end of the WW II has long served as a pillar of global security and stability, promoting democracy and prosperity; consistently opposing human rights abuses and repressive, oppressive and suppressive rogue regimes across the world especially in the Middle East. Yet in the post-Cold War era, the question of what role the U.S. should play on the world stage, and the extent to which the U.S. can serve as “the world’s policeman,” continues to be debated, and has become a central component in conversations surrounding military spending and foreign policy. Thus decreases in spending during the Obama administration (“leading from behind”) and the “America First” policy of the Trump administration represent issues of continuity and change or shifts in foreign policy direction.

To this end, in his 2014 published title; *America in Retreat: The New Isolationism and the Coming Global Disorder*, Bret Stephens cautioned about some of the potentially dire consequences brought on by this foreign policy doctrine of isolationism. This is against the backdrop of United States long been referred to as the “indispensable nation” that has promoted democracy and prosperity, and opposed dictatorships and human rights abuses, across the globe through its economic, diplomatic, and military engagement. The same U.S. that has served as a champion of universal freedom and human rights, a pillar of international security and order, and a deterrent to the aggression of rogue regimes (Bret, 2014).

Indeed, the Trump administration succinctly has described the Middle East region as “home to the world’s most dangerous terrorist organizations,” namely ISIS and al-Qaeda, and lists “Iranian expansion, state collapse, jihadist ideology, socio-economic stagnation, and regional rivalries” as chief among threats to U.S. security interests. As the Trump administration implements its National Security Strategy, the U.S. will have the opportunity to address challenges in the Middle East.

This paper therefore by focusing on the isolationist foreign policy of the US exposes the specifics in terms of themes and perspectives with recourse to national and global security threats that face the U.S. in the Middle East, a region that has long been a centerpiece of its foreign policy, and home to both some of her most important allies and most pressing challenges and how all these impact on US overriding strategic interest and influence in the Gulf Region especially going forward. This paper indeed provides insight into pressing foreign policy issues that seriously border on not only regional security and stability in the Middle East but more so global security and the continued influence and role of US in determining the course of action in the region and beyond.

Statement of the problem

In the past couple of decades the Middle East has continuously assumed the status of theater of warfare, crises and intense acts of global terrorism. This may not be unlinked with a number of prevailing factors; existence of largely undemocratic or autocratic regimes, Islamic fundamentalism, predominantly oil economy and absence of respect for fundamental human rights. These issues create serious challenges of tension among states and constitute threat to global peace. More so, following the end of cold war the economic relevance of crude oil became a global necessity and the quest to control same made the Middle East the bride of many powerful international state actors. However, in recent years, turmoil has rocked the Middle East in the form of increased violence and volatility in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings and the proliferation of Islamist-extremist terrorist groups with radical anti-Western ideologies. The region appears to be more unstable now than ever, with a wide range of conflicts and crises.

Today, there are only about 35,000 American soldiers in the Middle East, just a fraction of the 285,000 that President George W. Bush sent in 2003. This shrinking troop presence is evidence of “Washington’s declining enthusiasm for the Middle East,” according to Robert Satloff (2019) of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The disorder in the region “limits how much the United States can shape its trajectory, no matter how much it invests.” Additionally, the U.S.’s so-called pivot to Asia to some extent has the potential to shift resources currently in the Middle East toward Asia. At the same time, Foreign Affairs (2019) also notes, “the potential for state-on-state conflict in the Middle East is higher today than at any point in the last two decades,” particularly between Israel and Iran as well as between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. These defining moments no doubt calls for consequential re-strategizing of priorities

To the above extent it is worthwhile to appraise and bring to the public domain the US isolationist policy as it pertains the Middle East and the attendant implications going forward pursuant to US strategic interest in the Middle East region.

Objective of the Study

In the main this study examined US Isolationist Policy: an Interrogation of themes, perspectives and implications on US overriding strategic influence in the Middle East Region under the Trump Administration. Pursuant to the above, the following specifics shall be addressed;

1. To examine major themes and perspectives that has guided US foreign policy in the Middle East;
2. To appraise the US Foreign Policy Vis a Vis Isolationism as an Option;

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3. To review implications of the isolationist policy on US overriding strategic interest and Influence in the Middle East; and
4. To expose other measures or options pursuant to US strategic interest in the Middle East.

Methodology

The methodology employed by the study was qualitative in which secondary materials were collected and reviewed to extract relevant data and draw conclusions. Qualitative research emphasizes words, rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Furthermore, it predominantly emphasizes a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research; in which the emphasis is placed on capturing inferences from a general field into particular situations. Also, qualitative research entails a perspective of social concepts as an increasingly shifting sphere based on individual contributions. Data were sourced through relevant text materials and archival documents. These include: texts, journals, online articles, magazines, archives and the likes. Content analysis of logical sequence of relevant data was done to arrive at certain conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

In the field of international relations, realism has long been a dominant theory, from ancient military theories and writings of Chinese and Greek thinkers, Sun Tzu and Thucydides being two of the more notable, to Hobbes, Machiavelli and Rousseau. It is the foundation of contemporary international security studies. The twentieth century classical realism is mainly derived from Edward Hallett Carr's book: *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (Wikipedia, 2019). The realist views anarchy and the absence of a power to regulate the interactions between states as the distinctive characteristics of international politics. Because of anarchy, or a constant state of antagonism, the international system differs from the domestic system. Realism has a variety of sub-schools whose lines of thought are based on three core assumptions: groupism, egoism, and power-centrism. According to classical realists, bad things happen because the people who make foreign policy are sometimes bad (Wikipedia, 2019).

Beginning in the 1960s, with increasing criticism of realism, Kenneth Waltz tried to revive the traditional realist theory by translating some core realist ideas into a deductive; top-down theoretical framework that eventually came to be called neo-realism. *Theory of International Politics* brought together and clarified many earlier realist ideas about how the features of the overall system of states affects the way states interact: "Neo-realism answers such questions as: Why the modern states-system has persisted in the face of attempts by certain states at dominance; why war among great powers recurred over centuries; and why states often find cooperation hard. In addition, the book forwarded one more specific theory: that great-power war would tend to be more frequent in multi polarity (an international system shaped by the power of three or more major states) than bipolarity (an international system shaped by two major states or superpowers)." The main theories of neo realism are balance of power theory,

balance of threat theory, security dilemma theory, offense-defense theory, hegemonic stability theory and power transition theory.

Major Themes and Perspectives on US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

The quest as to why the Middle East matters today in US foreign policy is a question that will set the ball rolling in this section. To deal with the issues the goals of U.S. Policy in the Middle East will be dissected in a succinct thematic perspectives.

National Security and Diplomacy

The Trump administration's National Security Strategy (2017) asserts that "the interconnected problems of Iranian expansion, state collapse, jihadist ideology, socio-economic stagnation, and regional rivalries have convulsed the Middle East." It lists jihadist terrorists as the "most dangerous terrorist threat to the Nation" and focuses on sharing intelligence and working with allies to disrupt digital, financial, and material networks that supply these groups. The U.S. was heavily involved in the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS, and while the U.S. remains a key player in the Middle East based on its alliances, the Trump administration has made efforts to recede from the region by withdrawing troops.

Economic and Trade Interests

The Trump administration's National Security Strategy (2017) stresses continued support for countries in the Middle East to "modernize their economies." However, the administration also seeks to apply "maximum pressure" on the Iranian regime in the form of international sanctions, with the end goal of driving "Iran's oil exports as close to zero as possible" (CRS, 2018). According to foreign relations analyst Martin Indyk, the U.S. is no longer dependent on Middle Eastern oil as it has focused on its own domestic natural gas production, which means ensuring "the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf area at reasonable prices" is still important but no longer "a vital strategic interest." More so, Arms sales are also a central component of U.S. economic relations in the Middle East; between 2013 and 2017, almost half of U.S. arms exports went to the region, primarily to Saudi Arabia as well as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. is also Israel's single largest trading partner, primarily in semiconductors and telecommunications equipment (David, 1999; The Guardian, 2018).

Universal Human Rights

With respect to human rights, The State Department maintains that "a central goal of U.S. foreign policy has been the promotion of respect for human rights, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." The Trump administration's National Security Strategy (2017) explicitly notes that "there can be no greater action to advance the rights of individuals than to defeat jihadist terrorists and other groups that foment hatred."

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Consequently, Amnesty International (2018) insists that across the Middle East “with virtually no exceptions governments have displayed a shocking intolerance for the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.” Protesters and activists across the region from Iran to the United Arab Emirates to Palestine to Lebanon have been detained for criticizing authorities or peacefully demonstrating.

Also civilian populations have been made to suffer through armed conflicts in the region, particularly those caught in the civil wars in Syria and Yemen. Human Rights Watch (2019) reports that as of November 2018, there have been almost 7000 civilian deaths and almost 11,000 civilian injuries in Yemen and the UNHCR (2019) estimates over 12 million people have been displaced by the Syrian civil war. The Global Coalition seeks to stabilize areas liberated from ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Evidently, in recent years, turmoil has rocked the Middle East in the form of increased violence and volatility in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings and the proliferation of Islamist-extremist terrorist groups with radical anti-Western ideologies. The region appears to be more unstable now than ever, with a wide range of conflicts and crises. No wonder the Trump administration characterized the region as “home to the world’s most dangerous terrorist organizations,” namely ISIS and al-Qaeda, and lists “Iranian expansion, state collapse, jihadist ideology, socio-economic stagnation, and regional rivalries” as chief among threats to U.S. security interests, thus the need for the Trump administration in its National Security Strategy sought to address these challenges in the Middle East.

In the light of the above therefore, the issues on which further clarifications are deemed imperative in this paper are; to ascertain the appeal of isolationism; whether it is desirable or better still a veritable and worthwhile policy option for the US at a time like this especially in the Middle East. In the section that follows we shall attempt to address these issues raised.

Interrogating US Foreign Policy Vis a Vis Isolationism as an Option

In the main and given current realities the United States and indeed the Western world face four quite different challenges on the horizon: China, Iran, Russia and North Korea. All these threats were analyzed at length in the 68-page U.S. National Security Strategy assessment of December 2017, written by then-national-security adviser H. R. McMaster and his staff for the White House. Simplistically, the encompassing theme of that blueprint was dubbed “strategic realism.” In popular parlance it may have been better known as a new “Jacksonianism” — defined loosely as something like the self-composed epitaph of the Roman strongman Sulla found in Plutarch’s life of the general (“No friend had ever surpassed him in doing kindness, and no enemy in doing harm”), or perhaps the reactive principle enshrined in the motto of the Stuart dynasty of Scotland, *Nemo me impune lacessit* — “No one provokes me with impunity” (U.S. National Security Strategy, 2017).

Suffice to say, one overarching goal of the NSS white paper was to synthesize U.S. and allied interests while isolating enemies and winning over neutrals — and all in the context of a new

domestic paradigm of enhancing the economy of the American interior while securing the nation's borders (America First). That assessment of continued, though recalibrated, engagement abroad explains the considerable increases in U.S. defense spending, the preservation of some 800 military bases and installations, the steady deployment of 170,000 active military personnel overseas, and the assignment of 30,000 State Department officials outside the U.S (Sami, 2020). In reality Isolationist powers simply do not commit such massive resources outside their borders; declining nations "in retreat" do not allot such forces to protect the interests of so many allies. The aims of restoring economic vitality in the U.S. interior, pressuring China for reciprocal trade, and establishing a secure southern border and energy independence are not just campaign props, but foreign-policy assets that allow America to extend its strategic reach, if need be, well beyond its borders and on its own terms (Hanson, 2020).

There is nothing radical in the American idea that NATO allies must meet their promises of military investment if the alliance is to survive in the 21st century. It may not be considered irrational that US military, after over two decades in a stalemated Afghanistan, should rethink its strategic agenda and indeed the utility of its continued presence? What is controversial in concluding that policies that led to interventions in Libya did not enhance U.S. interests or regional stability? The Iraqi War is now mostly seen, in a cost-to-benefit analysis, fairly or not, as not having been worth the price in blood and treasure. And if isolationism is defined by taking out General Qasem Soleimani of Iran, or bombing ISIS into retreat, or taking unprecedented action in moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, or reestablishing good relations with Egypt and the Gulf monarchies, then such isolationism is a strange sort of blinkered standoffishness (Donaldson, 2019).

Truth be told, and germane to the present reality, Hanson (2020) asserts that the U.S. today is in a far better position to deal with its strategic challenges than it was in 2016. One reason that the Middle East has ceased being the world's hotspot is current U.S. foreign policy. The decision to accelerate tracking and horizontal drilling has crashed oil prices, robbing the Middle East of billions of dollars in U.S. importation revenue and making its oil optional, not essential, in American strategic thinking.

It needs be recalled the Obama policy of championing Iran over both Israel and moderate Arab states and by extension Iranian terrorist surrogates, such as Bashir al-Assad's Syrian government, Hezbollah, and Hamas is deservedly in shambles. It was destroyed by the Trump administration's departure from the flawed Iran deal; it's leveling of tough "snapback" trade sanctions on Tehran, and the forging of a new de facto tripartite alliance of America, Israel, and moderate Arab states against Iran. The effort to bleed Iran economically through sanctions and boycotts, and the retaliatory strikes on its military aggression abroad most notably the killing of Soleimani, the arch-terrorist-architect put Iran in an especially vulnerable position. Its position became even worse when oil prices crashed in February 2020 and Tehran clumsily tried to hide the fact that its Chinese patron's imported corona virus had reached epidemic proportions throughout Iranian territory (Hanson, 2020).

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Again, Obama's failed multiyear effort at a reset with Russia (2009–2014) only whetted the appetite of Vladimir Putin to absorb eastern Ukraine and Crimea and to carve out an imperial zone of operations in Syria — given that the Putin regime has often seen American outreach not as magnanimity to be repaid in kind but as timidity to be leveraged. John Kerry, the Obama administration's secretary of state, invited the Russians back into the Middle East after a 40-year hiatus, ostensibly to become a stabilizing influence in controlling Syrian weapons of mass destruction. They have never left, although the cost of their presence suggests it may ultimately prove as unwise as other such Mideast interventions have been for a long array of Western nations (Congressional Quarterly, 2014).

For all the uproar of its “collusion” with Russia, the Trump administration has repeatedly opposed the surreal German–Russian natural-gas deal. It upped sanctions on Russian oligarchs, jawboned NATO to beef up its expenditures and defenses, especially in the context of Russian bullying of Eastern Europe, and sold lethal weapons to Ukraine after the Obama administration had refused to do so. The U.S. pulled out of an asymmetrical 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that was continually violated by Moscow, and it increased defense spending in exact opposite of Obama-era appeasement of Russia.

To understand the isolationist stance of the Trump administration one has to put issues in proper perspective by appreciating the peculiarity of the Trump presidency. Donald Trump was the first president without either elective office or military service in his past. He was elected to the chagrin of the bipartisan foreign-policy establishment and most of the permanent administrative class of the State Department and the Pentagon. Trump also was the first president to question the 75-year-old post–World War II status quo, by asking whether there was a shelf life on America's role in subsidizing the defense of affluent Europeans and Asian allies, many of whom ran up huge trade surpluses with America and were not always so friendly to the U.S.

Trump was the first president to reject the standard view that granting trade concessions to dictatorial nations such as China is a necessary cost to ensure their good behavior on the dubious theory that globalized wealth inevitably leads to political liberalization and consensual government. He was instead elected on the argument that a hollowed-out American interior, an open border, millions of foreign nationals living illegally in the U.S., a stagnant economy and middle-class wages, and an inability to win often-optional wars in the Middle East were all unsustainable and weakened the economy and eventually would erode U.S. stature abroad. And he doubted the notion that military forces could achieve strategic results in the Middle East by fighting on behalf of dubious allies or coerced democratization, and in ways that limited or neutered conventional American military strength and advantage (Hanson, 2020).

Effective criticism of the Trump foreign policy not only would entail rejecting all these premises, but also would address why almost half the country believed in 2016 that many of their domestic problems arose from a foreign policy that had not yet adjusted to a world far different from what their grandparents had created in 1945.

With recourse to the Middle East, there's no doubt the region's wealth will necessarily influence interests around the world; and so will its pathologies. The West cannot be indifferent to the conquest of a country with large oil reserves (and therefore large revenues), which helps explain why George H. W. Bush organized a war to free Kuwait from Iraqi forces in 1991. Imagine if ISIS or al-Qaeda were to take power in Saudi Arabia and control its bank accounts; no amount of "homeland security" could then neutralize the resulting terrorist danger. Similarly, even though America and other Western countries tried to stay out of Syria's civil war, the conflict's ill effects reached them in the form of terrorist murders and millions of refugees. Indeed to say the least the region is "home to the world's most dangerous terrorist organizations," namely ISIS and al-Qaeda, and the US National Security Strategy (2017) lists "Iranian expansion, state collapse, jihadist ideology, socio-economic stagnation, and regional rivalries" as chief among threats to U.S. security interests. As the Trump administration implements its National Security Strategy, the U.S. will have the opportunity to address challenges in the Middle East and in the circumstance it would be far from reality to quickly conclude that US foreign policy under Trump is isolationist inclined. Rather it places strategic priority on issues that seek first to satisfy the core interests of the US above all else.

Implication of Isolationist Policy on US Overriding Strategic Interest and Influence in the Middle East

In the affairs of men every act has implications, which may be positive or negative. In the context of disengaging from the Middle East region, United States of America would simply forfeit its ability to shape events and by so doing may create a leadership vacuum in the region which China and Russia will be so eager to fill. Unarguably, many Americans would like to detach themselves from a violent, chaotic Middle East. So would many Israelis, for that matter. In a recent blue-ribbon panel, the U.S.–Israeli Commission on the Eastern Mediterranean discussed America's impulse to disengage from the region. The Obama-Clinton team adopted a policy of "pivoting" toward Asia that is, away from the Middle East. On his part, Donald Trump has denounced the Iraqi war and the U.S. intervention in Libya. In his foreign-policy statements castigating America's NATO allies, for example, and America's trade agreements; he rejects traditional U.S. internationalism (National Security Strategy, 2017).

The Eastern Mediterranean is in extraordinary flux. Many of the transformations under way are negative. Iran's policy of nuclear hedging is giving impetus to the spread of nuclear weapons to multiple countries. ISIS achieved substantial economic and political power in Iraq and Syria and retains formidable ability to conduct and inspire terrorism abroad, despite its recent loss of ground in Iraq. Islamist extremist groups are fighting across the Middle East to upend political institutions, challenging the nation-state as such. The Syrian refugee crisis is aggravating the region's epidemic of Arab political instability and straining European immigration policies. While the Obama administration has aimed to disengage from the region, the Trump administration tries to reduce U.S. involvement there further.

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The desire to disengage from the Middle East is an especially strong element of the general American isolationist impulse. After decades of leading the democratic world in the Cold War and in multiple wars since 9/11, many Americans would like relief from world affairs. They would prefer to have nothing to do with foreign wars, with lands that breed jihadists, stagnate in corruption, or have populations that reject modernity or hate the United States. The preference is easy to understand, but it's not realistic. The issue is not whether isolationism is desirable; it is whether it's possible by a big power like the USA (Wikipedia, 2019).

To put the question more precisely: can Americans preserve their security, prosperity, and civil liberties without maintaining an active role in the world and specifically in the Middle East and its environs? The answer is no. As Americans try to "pivot" away from the region's problems, those problems, history teaches us, will follow after them and likely worsen. Suffice to say therefore that isolation is impossible in the world of Internet, easy travel, and miniature means of mass destruction. As Trump disengages, convinced that there is little to gain by US strategic engagement in the broader region and that his predecessors had the "light on the hill notion" wrong, the vacuum created by the US departure has been quickly filled. Russian flags now fly over US bases vacated in haste in Syria. Vladimir Putin has been on a state visit to Riyadh. His aides rotate through Beirut, Baghdad and Erbil, having already staked a claim in Damascus.

In mid-November, a Syrian tycoon with influential Kremlin ties spoke of the change in mood in the Middle East. "All my Saudi friends are saying to me: 'Those contacts and plans you've been telling us about for 16 years, implement them all now. You (Russians) guys are the future. The Americans have left.' It has also weakened US friends and allies in real terms. The one regional state the US had remained focused on, Iran, emerged emboldened from Trump's climb downs. "Maximum pressure" had been the term used to describe sanctions regime on Iran re-imposed and tightened by Trump, designed to cripple its economy and force it to renegotiate. The squeeze was working, but, paradoxically, having poked the bear and found it sleeping, Iran now had more room to manoeuvre regionally (Hanson, 2020).

The impact of the US failing to respond to an attack on Saudi oil facilities was that an act of war on a US ally had gone unpunished, and that ally was now willing to talk with the country that Washington had been determined to bring to its knees. Ways around the sanctions may follow.

But in the meantime, Iran is, for the first time facing a three-pronged threat to its reach and influence, with protesters challenging governments at home, as well as in Iraq and in Lebanon. The risk of security collapse is real and growing, and it remains unclear if Trump is prepared to own the consequences of actions that the US helped set in motion.

Measures or Options Pursuant to US Strategic Interest in the Middle East

The future of US foreign policy in the Middle East should be anchored on international security and the US cannot hurriedly abdicate its global police role; not when its core strategic interest is at stake. Edward Kolodziej has compared international security to a Tower of Babel and Roland Paris (2004) views it as "in the eye of the beholder". Security has been widely applied to "justify suspending civil liberties, making war, and massively reallocating resources during the last fifty years" (Wikipedia, 2020). Security as the capability of a country to protect its core values, both in terms that a state need not sacrifice core values in avoiding war and can maintain them by winning war. David Baldwin (1997) argues that pursuing security sometimes requires sacrificing other values, including marginal values and prime values.

"Security" is generally a normative term. It is applied by nations in order to be either expedient; a rational means toward an accepted end or moral, the best or least evil course of action. In the same way that people are different in sensing and identifying danger and threats, Wolfers argues that different nations also have different expectations of security. Not only is there a difference between forbearance of threats, but different nations also face different levels of threats because of their unique geographical, economic, ecological, and political environment.

Barry Buzan (2000) views the study of international security as more than a study of threats, but also a study of which threats that can be tolerated and which require immediate action. He sees the concept of security as not either power or peace, but something in between. The concept of an international security actor has extended in all directions since the 1990s, from nations to groups, individuals, international systems, NGOs, and local governments.

In the light of the above, the multi-sum security principle should be adequately explored in the present context to obviate the malady of the Middle East security challenges to global security. It is noteworthy that traditional approach to international security is usually focused on state actors and their military capacities to protect national security. However, over the last decades the definition of security has been expanded to accommodate the 21st century globalized international community, its rapid technological developments and global threats that emerged from this process. One such comprehensive definition has been proposed by Nayef Al-Rodhan. What he calls the "Multi-sum security principle" is based on the assumption that "in a globalized world, security can no longer be thought of as a zero-sum game involving states alone. Global security, instead, has five dimensions that include human, environmental, national, transnational, and trans-cultural security, and therefore, global security and the security of any state or culture cannot be achieved without good governance at all levels that guarantees security through justice for all individuals, states, and cultures." (Wikipedia, 2019)

Each of these five dimensions refers to a different set of substrates. The first dimension refers to human security, a concept that makes the principle referent object of security the

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individual, not the state. The second dimension is environmental security and includes issues like climate change, global warming, and access to resources. The third substrate refers to national security, defined as being linked to the state's monopoly over use of force in a given territory and as a substrate of security that emphasizes the military and policing components of security. The fourth component deals with transnational threats such as organized crime, terrorism, and human trafficking. Finally, the integrity of diverse cultures and civilisational forms tackles the issue of trans-cultural security. According to this multi-faceted security framework all five dimensions of security need to be addressed in order to provide just and sustainable global security. It therefore advocates cooperative interaction between states and peaceful existence between cultural groups and civilizations. In the above context therefore, isolationism is indeed a fallacy and complex to be assumed as a foreign policy stance by such a country that has played leadership role on a global scale for over half a century.

Recommendations

To the extent of the issues and concerns of the subject matter of this paper the following recommendations are deemed apt:

1. There is need for the US to constructively engage other major state actors in finding lasting solution to the security challenges resulting from the quest to control the political economy of the various Middle East states.
2. The need to identify and promptly deal with intransigent states in the Middle East should be vigorously pursued to bring them to conformity.
3. The US should rethink and redefine the limits of its isolation foreign policy stance in the Middle East and to continue to play its traditional stabilizing role in the region to prevent the region from reclining into a theater war, crises and terrorism.

Conclusion

This paper was an attempt at interrogating the isolationist policy of the US with respect to the Middle East. Certain themes and perspectives germane to US strategic interest in the region were examined and the implications thereto. In the light of the issues assessed the paper upholds that neither the Middle East nor any other large region can be quarantined as a matter of policy. Reason is that nuclear or biological weapons developed there could strike anywhere, and cyber attacks launched from there could infect computers anywhere. Consequently, isolationism is impossible in the world that has become a global village characterized by information and communication technology, internet, easy travel, and miniature means of mass destruction.

More so, besides the prevalence of high technology, there's the question of who will protect freedom of navigation on the seas. Since the sun set on the British Empire, the United States has been instrumental in keeping the world's seas open to commerce. No other country or alliance is ready and able to assume the role. Without open sea lines of communication, much

of the world's trade would cease to flow. If, in hopes of disengaging from the Middle East or cutting its defense budget, the United States were to relinquish this essential role, the harm to the global economy, including America's economy, would be catastrophically cataclysmic.

To this end therefore, disengagement from the Middle East would not isolate the United States; it would simply forfeit America's ability to shape events. This is not an argument for any particular kind of engagement as it does not, for example, militate for U.S. ground troops to be deployed to Syria. But it is an argument against believing that non-intervention would spare America from paying a price for what happens in the region. In pursuing for the America First policy therefore the need to strike a balance on the assumed traditional role of the US as world police must not be undermined neither by the Trump administration nor any successive one at that.

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