



The Issue of Western Foreign Policy in the Middle East

This issue has great relevance to the present and the future as focus within the USA, UK and other Western nations falls upon their policy on affairs in the Middle East. It is a trademark of Western nations to insert themselves, and their military, into other nations. In recent history the Middle East has become the primary target as colonial powers lost their hold in their, primarily Asian and African, colonies and instead focused on attempting to bring peace and democracy to the Middle East in which many nations have been locked in political instability for years.

Benefits have ensued as a result with resources and protection being provided to those in war-torn districts. The West has encouraged diplomatic relations within the area and had an influence on the removal of Islamist terrorist groups from towns and villages that were greatly suffering from the fear and control of these groups. Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Palestine and Israel have received the largest amount of aid from Western nations. This aid has come in the form of COVID vaccines and supplies, according to the World Bank the Middle East/ North Africa received nearly US\$30 billion in aid in 2019.

On the other hand, there are a lot of issues with current policy that can cause, and have caused, more problems than existed initially. For example, "Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) all have questions about the extent and durability of American security commitments to their neighbourhood". US tensions with Iran have not helped either as the leader of the now-abolished coalition in Iraq continues to attempt to negotiate with the nuclear superpower. The US' historical and current actions in the Middle East are condemnable to some, and laudable to others.

Also, the UK's "war on terror" did not follow its course as they evacuated troops from Afghanistan in 2021. UK foreign ministers, such as Dominic Raab, have been widely criticised for the way in which it was handled. The headlines were filled with images of citizens hanging from airplanes that carried UK ambassadors and military personnel out of a country in a desperate situation. Criticism focused on the abandonment of those who wished to leave, simply on the basis that they did not hold UK citizenship. Mr Raab claimed that 8,000 Afghans were evacuated, over half of the total number. The nation's population, however, stands at approximately 39 million, and many claim that the Western nations removed any safety or security they provided and left the citizens that they claimed to protect out in the cold. It remains to be seen whether the UK, US and others will answer the pleas for help from many within Afghanistan, as the state falls further into the grips of the Taliban.

The UN itself has had a huge influence on the issue, how far this influence extends into governments of member states is debatable. The UN has co-operated with forces in Middle Eastern nations via Peacekeepers, negotiators, and other units, to encourage peace and prosperity in the region. The UN made the highly political, although it was not billed as such, decision to recognise Palestine as its own member state of the UN, with sovereignty, in 1947. 20 years later, 'Canada and Denmark urged the Security Council to consider the grave situation in the Middle East which was threatening international peace and security. Since October 1967, the item has been entitled "The situation in the Middle East"'. Clearly the UN



has a vested interest in an area that has been wrought with problems over the last century, has the UN, the P5 obviously dominated by Western nations, interfered or helped?

It is a complex issue that spans history, geopolitics, terrorism and international aid. Each aspect must be addressed in order to come to a resolution that benefits the global community and suffering citizens alike. Whether the changes that are to be made should be drastic or slow and controlled, is debatable but what is not, is that change is needed. As globalisation increases, so does poverty, terror, and power struggles. It is the role of the security council to ensure that further conflict does not break out as a result of Western Foreign Policy in the Middle East.

Points to consider

- How far should Western nations be encouraged to influence Middle Eastern nations' current events?
- If all Western troops were to withdraw, would the result be beneficial or disastrous?
- Should the military remain the primary method of aid provision?
- To what extent should we define 'the Middle East' and 'the West'?

Useful links

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/questions/nations/index.html>
- <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46344/3>
- <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/securing-humanitarian-assistance-in-the-middle-east-is-more-urgent-than-ever/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/g7-leaders-statement-on-afghanistan-24-august-2021>