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6. The Roots of Present Conflicts in the Middle East

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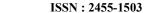
Introduction

The term 'Middle East' appears have more topical origins and may have originated and indebted its widespread acceptance in the modern times to its official use by the British India Office in the 1850s.[*] Since many years the lifeline of the British Empire passed through the Middle East, therefore whatever happened in the area was bound to have an outcome on Great Britain and the other colonial nations. The term 'Middle East' was first coined in the early 20th century as a subjective concept with a political content rather than a cultural or geographical expression.[†] Having conceived by the British officials and used for their strategic objectives, the term has become increasingly popular. However, the territory, geographical region and, the countries covered by this term have changed over time. For this reason, it has always been controversial where the Middle East is exactly located and also where does it begin and end. Nevertheless, the common tendency is the inclusion of the Arabic speaking world, Israel, Iran and Turkey to the Middle East. The term 'Middle East' was conceived almost more than a century ago by an American Rear Admiral cum Geo-Strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, there seemed to feel a need which gained ground, became respectable, and was accepted largely thanks to the World War II time usage in official as well as popular circles.[‡] In some respects the Middle East illustrates the theory developed by Mahan in 1902[§]; originally it referred to the Asian region south of the Black Sea between the
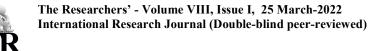
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[*] Beaumont, Peter; Blake, Gerald H; Wagastaff, J Malcolm, The Middle East: *A Geographical Study*, David Fulton, 1988, p.16

[†] Pinar Bilgin, "Whose 'Middle East'? Geopolitical Inventions and Practices of Security", *International Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2004)

[‡] S. H. Longrig, *The Middle East : A Social Geography,* London, 1958, p.11.

[§] Koppes, CR , *"*Captain Mahan, General Gordon and the origin of the term "Middle East*". Middle East Studies* **12**: 95–98. (1976*).*

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Mediterranean Sea to west and India to the east. He used this geographical term Middle East[**] to 'designate the area between Arabia and India[††] and to describe the region from a naval perspective as a "land island" exposed to control by outside powers when their national interests seemed to be at stake.[‡‡] Mahan based his theory on the 19th century struggle between Great Britain and Czarist Russia, for control of greater Asia by extension of the Middle East that is often described historically as "The Great Game."[§§] The British sought to protect India, their 'jewel in the crown' by a land barrier extending northward through Afghanistan to Central Asia. On their side the Russians worked to expand their land empire southward in search of warm-water port. Mahan realized not only the strategic importance of the region, but also for its center, the Persian Gulf.[***] He believed the area surrounding the Persian Gulf as the Middle East, and said that after the Suez Canal it was the most important passage for Great Britain to control in order to keep the Russians from advancing towards the British India.[†††] Therefore their respective national interests collided directly in the Middle East. The emergence of the Middle East as a distinct region after World War I and the rise of Cold War in the later years intensified the need to closely understand the region on the side of the Western countries. That is why new and strategic approaches have been designed for a better understanding of the region.

Geo-political Importance, Social Structure and Economic Characteristics: Geographically, the Middle East has long been an important bridge connecting Europe, Africa and Asia through Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean and as much as it commands the strategic approaches to the three continents, the shortest and most convenient air and water routes from Europe to Asia go through the Middle East. Throughout its history, culture, trade, and ideas have flowed through the Middle East

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[**] Mahan first used the term in his article "The Persian Gulf and International Relations", published in September 1902 in the *National Review*, a British journal.
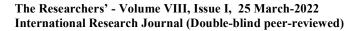[††] *Lewis, Bernard , The Middle East and the West. (1965). p. 9.*
[‡‡] Goldschmidt, Arthur Jr. (1999). *A Concise History of the Middle East.* Westview Press. p.8
[§§] There was conflict between Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul and Sikhs of Punjab in 1837 in which the Sikhs were defeated but this conflict as well as the arrival of the Russian envoy in Kabul made the British (allies of Sikhs) nervous regarding the security of the western frontier of India. These events played out during the so-called Great Game between the Russian "bear" and the British "lion," with both empires contending for regional dominance and Afghanistan getting caught between them as a "Buffer State".
[***] Palmer, Michael A. *Guardians of the Persian Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833–1992.* New York: The Free Press, 1992. pp. 12–13.
[†††] Laciner, Dr. Sedat. "Is There a Place Called 'the Middle East'?", *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, June 2nd, 2006.
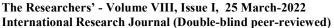
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"crossroads". The region was also the domain of many great empires throughout the centuries. Every major empire in the Old World has either been encompassed in this area, in whole, or in part, or has cast covetous eyes on it. It is a geographical and cultural expanse located between the South-western Asia and North-eastern Africa stretching from the Atlantic coast of Morocco in North Africa to the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan where the Indian sub-continent begins. Therefore, the Middle East is an inter-continental rather than continental geographical entity.

One of the important factors is also the physical and human geography which has played a significant role in shaping the development of the Middle East. As we know that geo-politics is a method of foreign policy analysis that focuses on how territory influences political behavior of the region. The geo-political position of the region and its geographical characteristics have played significant role in the growth of conflicts in the region. The geo-political importance of the region had dictated significant role in the world affairs and during the course of history and has closely affected both domestic and foreign politics of the region. Geo-political factors (natural resources, borders, climate, and demographics) have influenced political, social, and economic development in the Middle East. In addition to that social structure of a nation considerably affects capabilities of States which played an important role in the Middle East. In this regard one of the most strategic points is the national, ethnic or religious characteristics of the dominant groups in the region. Besides ethnic and religious composition of people, quantity and quality of human capital, large population, literacy rates, education, rural-urban distribution of population etc. affects politics in the region directly or indirectly.

The region that is now called the Middle East, has hosted great human civilizations in the past: Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian that covered a mixture of ethnic groups, languages, customs and traditions throughout history and it has always been in interaction with the surrounding regions. This interaction has led to the need for knowing the region closely. History witnessed that the region was successively the part of the Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Mongol, Tatar, and the Ottoman empires, each contributing to a new fusion of culture and civilization. The Middle East is very diverse when it comes to religions since it is the birth place and spiritual center for world's three great monotheistic religions:

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Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as the others like Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Druze, Yezidi, and Baha'ism. But Islam is the largest religion in the Middle East more than 90% people of the Middle East are Muslims of different denominations. Economic characteristics of any region also crucially shape development. However, European geopolitics in the first half of the 20th century in the wider Middle East region contributed a lot to regional instability overall.

Historical Background of the Middle Eastern Crises: Only few regions of the world incite more attention, debate, or international crisis than the Middle East which has been an important arena of the world events since the beginning of the written history. The Middle East is arguably the epicenter of the world crisis, chronically war-prone and the site of the world's most prolonged conflicts. Throughout its history the Middle East has been strategically, economically, politically, culturally and religiously an sensitive area. It appears to be the region where anarchy and insecurity seen by the realist school of international politics remains the main feature of States system and where the realist paradigm retains its greatest relevance. The roots of conflict and much of the State behavior are to be found in the peculiar historical construction of the region. During the course of the Middle Age, the European Crusaders conquered eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea from the Muslims to seize the Holy Land[‡‡‡] that practically resulted into opening of Asia for trade with the Western Europe. A series of Crusade wars (1095-1272 AD) brought the Holy Land and adjacent areas on the Mediterranean coast from Antioch to the Sinai Peninsula under the Christian rule. The Crusaders carved out feudal states in the Middle East and subsequently, the Crusades are an important early part of the story of the European expansion and colonialism. These wars had perhaps more political and economic motives than religious. The French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801AD) by Napoleon Bonaparte was the first military incursion by an aggressively expansionist European Power in the Middle East, which began the era of modern history in the Middle East. Napoleon's view of Egypt as a stepping stone to India underlined its strategic position. However, Napoleon's realm lasted only for three years, and the Anglo-French competition was superseded by a British invasion and occupation in 1882 and this shock of massive defeat suffered by the Ottoman troops was to change the history of Egypt. Following this event the strategic importance of the Middle East as the gateway to Asia was accepted by the Europeans and made efforts to neutralize it. The

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[‡‡‡] 'Holy Land', Christian term for Palestine, because of its association with Jesus and the Old Testament.
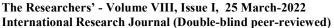
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19th Century European diplomacy was flooded by the 'Eastern Question'[§§§] as many problems created by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire like Crimean Wars, the Balkan Crisis, Opening of Suez Canal and the continuing disputes over Turkish Straits were dealt with. At the end of the 19th century Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany considering the possibilities of the area as a bridge to vast German Empire in the East, devoted a major part of his foreign policy to acquiring a foothold in Asia. Towards the end of the 1800s questions arose as to how the Jewish people could overcome increasing persecution and anti-Semitism in Europe. In the 1870s hatred of Jews took a new form, called *anti-Semitism* which was coined in 1879, described opposition to Jews on racial grounds. In 1896 Theodor Herzl, a Jewish journalist, published a book *The Jewish State,* in which he analyzed the causes of anti-Semitism and proposed its solution, i.e. the creation of a Jewish State. In 1897 Herzl organized the first Zionist Congress in Basel and formulated the Basel Program, which defined Zionism's goal as the creation "for a national home for the Jewish people secured by public law." The Biblical Promised Land led to a political movement, 'Zionism', to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, in the Middle East. The traditional conflicting characteristic of the Middle Eastern societies has brought the region to the forefront of the world affairs in the recent past. For example the Lebanese Civil War, Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War I and II, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Palestinian Self-Rule Movement, and the ISIL crisis have from time to time drawn in the outside powers. Although these Middle Eastern conflicts have been confined to their area of origin or mediated by outside powers to reduce the tension levels, some Middle Eastern government policymakers continued to fear that they might spread to involve other nations in a broader war, i.e. "the Domino theory,"[****] which is often besought as a guide to the modern international relations. The domino theory holds that tensions or unresolved disputes between two nations will widen as neighboring nations are drawn inevitably into the disputes, even without taking sides. The uninvolved nations then become involved, as particular dispute becomes buried in the rivalries of the competing national interests.[††††] At some point, a specific incident triggers a general war, as a nation after nation drops like a domino in the flared up conflict just like what happened in World War I. All the conflicts in the Middle East are therefore the direct products

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[§§§] The term 'Eastern Question 'used to describe the diplomatic problems posed in Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries regarding the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

[****] The United States justified its support of the South Vietnamese government in the Vietnam War (1959-1975) by the "domino theory": the belief that if all of Vietnam fell under communist rule, communism would quickly spread to other countries in Asia and beyond.

[††††] William Spencer, *Op.cit*, p.22.

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of European interventions in the region. Historically, the Middle East was a region without defined borders, even the Ottoman Empire, which ruled for more than five centuries, did not mark off its territories into provinces with precise boundaries until 1800s. When the Europeans dominated the region, they brought in different set of rules in the Middle East. They laid down the borders sanctified by treaties, playing ruler against ruler, divided and conquered the territories that laid the groundwork for the present conflicts.

The Middle East in between two World Wars: The term modern Middle East was coined after the World War I, when the Ottoman Empire became the allies of the Central Powers and was defeated by the Triple Entente Powers. There was a deal between the Imperial Britain and France to carve out and divide as well as control the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As in the past the cake of African Continent was sliced up amongst the various European empires at the Berlin Conference in 1885, parts of the Middle East were also to be sliced up, which would require artificial borders, support of monarchies, dictators and other leaders that could be regarded as puppets or at least could be influenced by these external powers. The borders of the modern Middle East region were drawn up by the victorious powers of the World War I, as laid out in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement.

In the Sykes-Picot Agreement[‡‡‡‡] Great Britain had agreed to divide the Ottoman lands into British, French, and Russian areas of control upon defeating the Ottomans. The former core areas of the Ottoman Empire became the State of Turkey. The Armenian provinces were given to Russia, Lebanon and most of the present day State of Syria to France, and modern-day Iraq and the rest of Syria to Great Britain. France controlled Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia while Great Britain was in charge and control of Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and southern Yemen. The Sykes-Picot Agreement is comprehended by many scholars as a turning point in Western–Arab relations which contradicted the promises made to Arabs[§§§§] through Colonel T. E. Lawrence for a national Arab homeland in the area of Greater Syria, in exchange for their cooperation with British forces against the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence was ruined by guilt since he had encouraged the Arabs on Britain's behalf, thinking that they would get their independence after the war,

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[‡‡‡‡] For detailed study see, Fromkin, David, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East.* New York: Owl. 1989, pp. *286, 288,*
[§§§§] *Hawes, Director James (21 October 2003). Lawrence of Arabia: The Battle for the Arab World. PBS Home Video.* Interview with Kamal Abu Jaber, former Foreign Minister of Jordan.

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but in fact they were being manipulated by British diplomacy, if not deceit. The main terms of the agreement were reaffirmed by the inter-Allied San Remo Conference[*****] of 19th–26th April 1920 and the ratification of the resulting League of Nations mandates by the Council of the League of Nations on 24th July 1922. These powers were accepted to recognize the provincial independence of Syria and Mesopotamia, while claiming mandates for their administration. Despite of such approval that question had been left unsolved and that is why even today the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claims one of the goals of its insurgency is to reverse the effects of the Sykes–Picot Agreement.[†††††] A *Jihadist* of ISIL warned in the video named *End of Sykes-Picot* "this is not the first border we will break; we will break other borders,"[‡‡‡‡‡] Abu Bakar al Baghdadi (ISIL leader) declared in a speech in July 1914 at the Great Mosque of al Nuri in Mosul that "this blessed advance will not stop until we hit the last nail in the coffin of the Sykes–Picot conspiracy".[§§§§§] According to Christopher Neff (Franco-German Geographer) the geopolitical architecture founded by Sykes-Picot Agreement has disappeared in July 2014 and with it relative protection of religious and ethnic communities in the Middle East. He further claims that ISIL has in someway restructured the geopolitical structure of the Middle East in summer 2014, particularly in Syria and Iraq.[******] On the other hand the British had also made vague promises in 1915 and 1916 (Hussein-McMahon Correspondence) to support Arab independence in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire in return for Arab support of British forces against the Ottomans.

As a further complication, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned into a number of separate nations, initially under the British and French Mandates, and the decline and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire marked the beginning of new stage of conflict over territory centering on the lands of Palestine. The British Empire, especially, played a major role in the region. From 1920 to 1947, the British Empire had a mandate over Palestine.[††††††] At that time, Palestine included all of Israel and today's Occupied Territories of Gaza Strip, and West Bank, etc. The increasing number of Jewish people immigrating to the Holy Land

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[*****] In between Britain, France and Belgium,

[†††††]Phillips, David L. "Extremists in Iraq need a history lesson". *CNBC,* "Watch this English-speaking ISIS fighter explain how a 98-year-old colonial map created today's conflict". *LA Daily News.* 7 February 2014.

[‡‡‡‡‡] Tran, Mark and Weaver*,* Matthew, "Isis announces Islamic caliphate in area straddling Iraq and Syria"*, The Guardian, (30 June 2014).*

[§§§§§] "Exclusive: First Appearance of ISIS Caliph in Iraq Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi (English Subtitles)". *LiveLeak.com. 5 July 2014.*

[******] Sykes–Picot Agreement - *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia.htm, retrieved, 1.1.2016

[††††††] For detailed study see, William Spencer, *The Middle East* , McGraw-Hill, USA, 2004, pp. 97-98

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increased tensions in the region. During World War I, in 1916, it convinced Arab leaders like Sheriff Hussen of Makka and others to revolt against the Ottoman Empire. In return, the British government promised to support the establishment of an independent Arab State in the region, including Palestine. Yet, in contradiction to this, and also to get support of the Jewish people, in 1917, Lord Arthur Balfour, the then British Foreign Minister issued a declaration historically known as the Balfour Declaration[‡‡‡‡‡‡] which announced the British Empire's support for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Therefore the Balfour Declaration was a British wartime measure designed to rally world Jewry for the Allied cause. It was a miscellaneous assortment into which almost anything could be read and as such was to have most significant consequences. Regarding Balfour Declaration one must note that there is no mention in it of a Jewish State. All it contemplated was the establishment in Palestine of a *National Home* for the Jewish people. There was an all-important limiting provision that, in its fulfillment, *"nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine,"* a strangely elliptical reference to the Arab population comprising no less than 90 percent of the total population of Palestine. In short, it was a provision, if any attention was to be paid to it and it rendered it completely insignificant. Balfour Declaration regarding Jewish National Home in Palestine was double-talk from its very inception. Frankly, it constituted nothing less than a most cruel deception.[§§§§§§] Certainly the immediate determination was to win for the Allied cause in World War I the support of Jews and the others in the warring nations and in neutral countries such as the United States of America. On the other hand in long-range terms, the purpose behind British policy rested on the importance of Palestine as a strategic point on the land and sea routes to India and, above all, as the terminus at the Mediterranean Sea of pipelines from the rich oil-bearing regions of the Middle East. From the establishment of the British mandate over Palestine in 1922 until its termination in 1948, with creation of the State of Israel, British policy fluctuated between one or the other of the two mismatched provisions of the Balfour Declaration, depending on the shifting international situation and the degree of pressure brought to bear on by the United States of America on the British under the pressure of the Zionist lobby in America. In spite of all these underlying motives, the Zionist movement saw the declaration as an important achievement encouraging Jewish settlement and development in Palestine. As we know that the

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[‡‡‡‡‡‡] Don Peretz, *The Middle East Today*, McGraw-Hill USA, 1971, p.100
[§§§§§§] J. Rives Child, "Bitter Roots: The Bases of Present Conflicts in the Middle East",DOCID:3928739 UNCLASSIFIED, Approved for release by NSA on 12th January 2011, Transparency Case:63852, p.12

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primary objective of the Balfour Declaration was the promotion of Jewish immigration into Palestine. So far this is not realizable without impartiality to the rights of the preponderant Arab population. It is also important to bear in mind that not all Jews are Zionists since Rabbi Judah Magnes, a distinguished Jewish American, head of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem until his death in 1948, urged a bi-national State for Palestine predicting an Arab-Jewish partnership.[*******] If such an advice prevailed really there would have been peace in the Middle East but nobody is ready to talk in support of this solution. An attempt by the British Government to organize a conference in London to work out a mutual agreement between Arabs and Jews having proved fruitless, it issued a declaration on 17[th]May 1939, fixing unilaterally its future policy. Jewish immigration into Palestine would be permitted until the Jewish proportion of the population of that country had risen from the then existing ratio of 28 to 33-1/3 percent. The Government observed that the framers of the Palestine mandate "could never have intended that Palestine would be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country."[†††††††] Outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 suspended implementation of the new administrative measures contemplated for Palestine. The next important development affecting Palestine was the historic meeting on 24th February 1945, between President Roosevelt and the King of Saudi Arabia, which took place in the Suez Canal. With the conclusion of agreements in the early 1930s with American oil interests for the exploitation of what was to prove one of the richest sources of petroleum in the world, diplomatic relations had been established between the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. These were destined to develop into very close ties, the closest of those with any Arab State and only disturbed by the appearance upon the scene in 1948 of the newly created State of Israel, which has remained until the present time unrecognized by any Arab State except Egypt and Jordan. In the course of the historic meeting between President Roosevelt and the Saudi King, the former gave his personal assurance to the latter that the United States would not change its Palestine policy without full and prior consultation with both Arabs and Jews which was reaffirmed by President Truman, in a formal communication of 5[th]April 1945, to King ibn Saud. But just after four months in August 1945, President Truman requested the British to facilitate the admission into Palestine of 100,000 Jewish Immigrants and a few months later, in December 1945, resolutions were passed by the United States Senate and Congress for unrestricted Jewish

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[*******] Ibid, p.13
[†††††††] Ibid
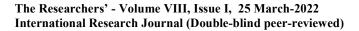
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immigration into Palestine, limited only by the economic absorptive capacity of that country. On the other hand, the British, the French, and the Soviets departed from many parts of the Middle East during and after World War II. Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle Eastern States on the Arabian Peninsula generally remained unaffected by World War II. However, after the war, the following Middle Eastern States had independence restored or became independent: Lebanon-22nd November 1943, Syria-1st January 1944, Jordan-22nd May 1946, Iraq- 26th October 1947, and Egypt- 1947. However, as an indirect result of the Balfour Declaration, Israel was established as an independent State in 1948 in the mandated area which created an apprehension among the Arabs. The struggle between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine calmed for a while in the 1947 with the United Nations plan to partition Palestine. This plan attempted to create an Arab State and a Jewish State in the narrow space between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. While the Jewish leaders accepted it, the Arab leaders rejected this plan. The armies of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt attacked but were defeated by the Israeli army. While the Jewish people were successful in creating their homeland, consequently, Palestinians were driven out of the new Israel into refugee camps in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and other regions. At least 750,000 people are said to have been driven out or ethnically cleansed. Following the end of mandates in the Middle Eastern States, the people of the region resisted and revolted against the European imperialism. However, the departure of the European powers from direct control of the region, the establishment of Israel, and the increasing importance of the oil reserves and industry, marked the creation of the modern Middle East and by the mid-1960s, the people living in the areas drawn up as States or mandates by the Sykes-Picot agreement had achieved their independence.

Decolonization and the Cold War in Middle East: The combined effects of two World Wars had weakened the political and economic domination of the Middle East by European powers which led to waves of decolonization after the World War II. The Middle Eastern nationalism, first awakened in the era of the World War I, succeeded in the wake of the World War II that resulted in the years 1946–50 with the first great wave of decolonization. Great Britain and France fulfilled their wartime promises by evacuating and recognizing the sovereignty of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria in 1946 and Iraq in 1947. Later on Oman and Yemen remained under British administration until the 1960s, Kuwait and the

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United Arab Emirates until 1971. However, following the World War II, European nations generally lacked the wealth and political support required to suppress faraway revolts; they also faced opposition from the new superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, both of which had taken positions against colonialism. Subsequently, this region was transformed into a world of emerging Middle Eastern nations, and their strategic locations as well as natural resources tempted the great powers (the USA and the USSR), and such enticements changed into the Cold War.[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] During this period international politics were heavily shaped by the intense rivalry between these two great blocs of power and the political ideologies i.e. Democracy and Capitalism in the case of the United States and its allies, and Communism and Socialism in the case of the Soviet bloc. Decolonization and the bipolar Cold War between the USA and the USSR transformed the terms of international penetration in the Middle East.

The strategic importance of the Middle East was derived from its vast oil reserves, the Suez Canal, and its position on the southern rim of the erstwhile USSR. While the Islamic kingdoms and republics were not drawn to Communist ideology, the Soviets hoped to expand their influence by pressurizing Turkey and Iran to involve themselves in the internal disputes of the region, for instance the Arab-Israeli dispute. The Cold War actually raised the stakes as the USSR was perceived to challenge the West's regional interests. Indeed, the Cold War began when the Truman Doctrine, responding to Soviet pressures for a share of Iranian oil and access to the Turkish straits, extended Western protection to these states. Thereafter 'containment' of Soviet communisms 'threat' to the region droved the USA and Western foreign policy. In this contest, oil, Israel and 'containment' were intimately linked: the Soviets had to be denied control of Middle East oil through which they could strangle Western Europe but Western support of Israel inflamed pro-Soviet sentiment in the region. As direct imperialist control in the region weakened after World War II, nationalist movements and regimes sought to fill the gap and exploit Soviet power as a counter to the West. In these conditions, the Western powers had to find new, indirect ways of protecting their interests than before but, at least initially, their efforts proved largely counter-productive. The unfolding of the relation between the super powers and the region during the Cold War will be explored below through an analysis of the two main regional attempts to restructure a more equal relationship with the 'core' issues: (1) the rise and fall of Nasserite Pan-Arabism, and (2) the rise and containment of OPEC. During this

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[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] The term Cold War is used to describe the post-World War II struggle between the USA and the USSR and their allies, which lasted from the mid-1940s until the end of the 1980s.

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particular period, the Middle East was a theater of ideological struggle between the two super powers and their allies: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Central Treaty Organization CENTO formerly Bagdad Pact -United States of America on one side, and the Warsaw Pact-Soviet Union [§§§§§§§] on the other, as they competed to influence regional allies. Within this contextual framework, the United States sought to divert the Arab world from Soviet influence. The Middle East in the Cold War was an area of extreme importance and also of great instability. The region lay directly south of the Soviet Union, which traditionally had great influence in Turkey and Iran. The area also had vast reserves of oil, not crucial for either superpower in the 1950s but essential for the rapidly rebuilding American allies in Europe and Japan. The original American plan for the Middle East was to form a defensive border along the north of the region. Thus Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan signed the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and joined CENTO for mutual defense and security that functioned between 1959 and 1979. The Eastern bloc's response was to seek influence in States such as Syria and Egypt. Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria made arms deals with Egypt and Syria, giving Warsaw Pact members a strong presence in the region. Egypt was one of the region's most important prizes with a large population and political power throughout the region for the British, but the British forces were thrown out by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956, when he nationalized the Suez Canal. Thus, the Suez stalemate was a turning point indicating an ever-growing rift between the Atlantic Cold War allies, which were becoming far less of united than they were in the immediate aftermath of the World War II. In 1956 Suez War, Great Britain, France and Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal since these diminishing and second rate empires feared further loss of power. While Egypt was defeated, international pressure forced their withdrawal. After the 1956 Suez Crisis, Egypt agreed to the stationing of a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Sinai Peninsula to ensure all parties would comply with the 1949 Armistice Agreements.[********] The American President Dwight D. Eisenhower persuaded the United Kingdom and France to retreat from a badly planned invasion with Israel that was launched to regain control of the canal from Egypt. While the Americans were forced to operate secretly, so as not to humiliate their allies, the Eastern Bloc nations made loud threats against the "imperialists" and worked to portray themselves as the defenders of the Third World. President Nasser was later lauded around the globe, but especially in the Arab world. While

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[§§§§§§§] the Soviet-dominated, established in 1955
[********] Rauschning, Dietrich; Wiesbrock, Katja & Lailach, Martin (eds.) (1997). Key Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly 1946-1996., Cambridge University Press. , p. 30

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both superpowers courted Nasser, the Americans balked at the funding of the massive Aswan High Dam project. The Warsaw Pact countries were closely allied both militarily and economically and happily agreed, however, and signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Egyptians and the Syrians. In the following years there were numerous minor border clashes between Israel and its Arab neighbors, particularly Syria and in early November, 1966, Syria signed a mutual defense agreement with Egypt.[††††††††]

Roots of Conflict in the Middle East

The Middle East is one of the most conflict-prone regions of the globe as well as conflict in the Middle East is a frequent feature in international politics. The periodic outbreak of local or sub-regional conflicts are a characteristic feature of Middle Eastern societies, which stem from their tribal or ethnic origins and have brought the region to the fore front of the world affairs in the recent years. Actually conflict was literally built into the Middle East regional system, but not simply because of the anarchy of a States system, as theory of Neo-realism holds. Thus far these Middle Eastern conflicts have been confined to their areas of origin or mediated by outside powers to reduce tension levels. However, it was the external imposition of a very defective system that generated at least four strong sources of conflict: which are as follows:

(1) The struggle against imperialist control,

(2) The frustration of identity by the arbitrary imposition of colonial borders,

(3) The struggle over Palestine, and

(4) The struggle over control of the region's oil reserves.

The irredentism and revisionism nurtured by these conflicts became common in Middle Eastern societies and when the power machineries of different States were captured by social forces or identity groups on opposing sides of these issues, and therefore conflict was institutionalized at the inter-state level. The Middle East has been greatly shaped by the great powers, the nineteenth-century expansion of capitalism and imperialism into the region reflected a combination of superior Western technology, market, and military power which infiltrated and ultimately reduced the Middle East to an economic periphery of the core and subsequently implemented a very defective Western State system on it. Even after independence

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[††††††††] Some sources date the agreement to November 4, others to November 7. Most sources simply say "November". Gawrych (2000) p. 5

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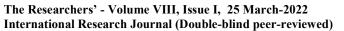of Middle Eastern States, Western capitalism continued to penetrate the Middle East and external powers were drawn in the region's strategic transit routes, oil resources, in the creation of Israel, to gain a Western foothold from the relative power vacuum rising from the regional fragmentation. The ultimate outcome of these conflicts is that they are all direct effects of Western intervention in the Middle East. For much of its history, the Middle East was a region without defined borders, other than the intangible limits fixed for Muslims by their religion. Western dominance, building on old animosities while generating new one, laid the foundation for contemporary conflicts. The role of natural resources is particularly important to an analysis of the causes of conflict. For instance the importance of resource scarcity and abundance in different regions drives the region to conflict. A combination of population growth and an increasing ratio of people with higher education have led most Middle Eastern governments to swamp their bureaucracies with new graduates. Further hampering economic development is the high military spending. Much conflict and friction in the Middle East has occurred between the two major denominations of Islam: Sunni (about 85%) and Shia Islam. Sunni and Shia each have several sects and sub-branches. Inter-Islamic rivalry and conflict has been present since the region's early history. Even several countries of the region have experienced internal Shia-Sunni conflicts and the Shiite Iranian regime is feared by its Sunni Islamic neighbors.

Heritage of Conflict--Israel and Oil: Towards the close of the 1800s questions arose as to how the Jewish people could overcome growing harassment and anti-Semitism in Europe. Since time immemorial there was a long cherished desire among the Jewish people for the biblical Promised Land which led to a political movement known as Zionism, to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, in the Middle East. The British Empire had a mandate over Palestine from 1920 to 1947 in that period Palestine included all of Israel and today's occupied territories, of Gaza, West Bank, etc. and at the same time the growing number of Jewish people immigrating to the Holy Land increased tensions in the region. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 has been the source of considerable regional conflict and instability, and the prolonged conflict has hampered political and economic development in the entire region. Due to its geographic location and natural resources, the Middle East is generally considered to be of great strategic importance to the main players in the world politics. In the Middle East, the underlying
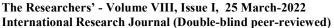
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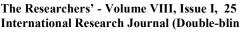
conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors became entangled with the direction of the super-powers to push one another out of the region. War has profoundly shaped the Middle East regional system. The Middle East has two of the world's most enduring conflict centers; Israel and Oil, each originating due to the influence and intervention of the West in the region. As we know that during the early years of British-mandated Palestine, Jewish settlement which formed 11% of the population of Palestine in 1922 increased to 29% in 1936. British support of Zionism was opposed by the Arabs in the form of revolt that lasted from 1936 to 1939. Very shrewdly in an effort to appease the Arab world, Great Britain issued the White Paper of 1939 that made restrictions on Jewish immigration and land sales to Jews and also providing for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within ten years. On the other hand Britain's weakening commitment to Zionism, combined with the Holocaust during the World War II caused Jews in Palestine and worldwide to step up their demands for a Jewish State. In 1947 Britain decided to leave Palestine, and called on the United Nations (UN), the successor to the League of Nations. On 14th May 1948, when the British mandate over Palestine expired, Jewish authorities declared the establishment of the State of Israel. It should be noted that the aspirations of the Palestinians for a State of their own in Palestine was the focal point for Arab-Israeli conflict as this conflict developed after 1948, the dispersal of Palestinians into the neighboring Arab lands caused further friction. The establishment of Israel at the expense of the indigenous Palestinians led to a chain of conflicts, each of which added new grievances and issues complicating the possibility of a peaceful resolution. Actually this new round of the Arab-Israeli conflict has originated from a domestic level dissatisfaction shaped by these struggles which, when institutionalized in rival States, is expressed in conflict at the States system level, frequently over territory. This domestic and State level politics encourages nationalist outpouring of sentiments which has led to irredentism. Revolution in various States such as Egypt and Iran has brought leaders to power that look for to spread their ideology; in mobilizing new social forces and, it has tended to strengthen certain States and upset balance of power in the region.

In the Gulf, the *Shatt al Arab* was a bone of contention between the Turkish and Iranian Empires for centuries, due to its importance as a trade outlet to the Gulf and also later on for its oil reserves and significant transit route. It is well known fact that more than half of the world's proven oil reserves are
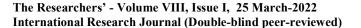
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located in the Middle East; that is to say, the Middle East contains more oil than the rest of the world combined. Following the World War II, a loose coalition of nationalists, clerics, and non-communist left-wing parties, known as the National Front, united under Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq, a career politician who wished to reduce the powers of the monarchy and the clergy in Iran. Most important, the National Front, angered by years of foreign exploitation, wanted to regain control of Iran's natural resources, and, when Dr. Mosaddeq became prime minister in 1951, he immediately nationalized the country's oil industry. Britain, the main benefactor of Iranian oil concessions, imposed an economic embargo on Iran and pressed the International Court of Justice to consider the matter. The court, however, decided not to intervene, thereby silently lending its support to Iran. Regardless of this apparent success, Dr. Mosaddeq was under both domestic and international pressure. British leaders Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden pushed for a joint U.S.-British coup to oust Dr. Mosaddeq, and the election of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in the United States in November 1952 encouraged those inside the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who wished to support such an action. The struggle over natural resources and oil routes therefore led to the Western overthrow of Dr. Mosaddeq as he emerged the leader of the 'Oil Nationalization Movement' which sought to transfer control over the oil industry from foreign-run companies to the Iranian government. Nationalization of Iran's oil was a major factor in the Iranian revolution which set the stage for the first and second Gulf wars. Conflicts over Israel and oil have tended to feed on each other, as in the 1973 oil embargo triggered by the Arab–Israeli war of that year also marked the first successful use of oil as a political weapon in the Arab-Israeli conflict. From October 1973 to November 1974, the oil-producing Arab countries of OPEC maintained an embargo on oil exports to Western nations friendly to Israel. The embargo had a particularly negative effect on the American economy. Most Americans were unaware of the dependence of the country on foreign petroleum products until the oil embargo.

More than seven decade-old Israeli-Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring conflicts anywhere but for almost past four decades, the region has also hosted many of the bloodiest intra and inter-state wars with many extra-regional powers participating as actors in them. The roots of the modern Arab–Israeli conflict are bound in the rise of Zionism as well as Arab Nationalism towards the end of the 19th century

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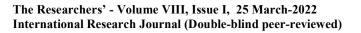
that is a conflict between the Arabs and Jews in the Middle East over the land of historic Israel and Palestine, this territory regarded by the Jewish people as their historic homeland is also regarded by the Pan-Arab movement as historically and currently belonging to the Palestinians,[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] and in the Pan-Islamic context, as Muslim lands. The sectarian conflict between Palestinian Jews and Arabs began in the early 20th century and reached its zenith into a full-scale 'Civil War' in 1947, transforming into the First Arab–Israeli War in May 1948 following the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel which led to a series of Wars among the Arab nations, Palestinian refugees, and the State of Israel. Violence was ongoing during almost the entire period from 1950 through 1967. In 1967 Egypt, Syria, and Jordan massed their armies on Israel's borders, and several Arab States called for war. Egypt demanded the withdrawal of UN observers from the Sinai Peninsula. Assuming the Arabs would attack; Israel struck first, in June 1967, and caught the Arabs by surprise. In the Six-Day War that followed, Israel destroyed the armies and air forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. It also gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank and, the Golan Heights region (South-western Syria), and East Jerusalem. The 1967 Arab–Israel war was the initial precipitant of a chain of events that brought a revival of Western power in the Middle East. The war had its own regional causes but was facilitated by American reaction to Nasser's growing success.

President Nasser's ability to use bi-polarity to pursue his ambitions declined as he pushed his challenge to the Western interests further without securing sufficient Soviet protection. First, Egypt had long propagated the principle that Arab oil was for all the Arabs, not the legacy of the client Sheikhs and Western oil companies. The war established Israel as the first military power in the region and left it in control of more defensible boundaries and in a position to threaten Damascus, Cairo, and Amman.[§§§§§§§§] The nature and outcome of the war caused a significant realignment in the competition for power between the Arab States, and brought secular nationalism into widespread disfavor among Arabs, and led to a concurrent rise in the growth and influence of Islamism in the Arab world. The nature of the conflict has shifted over the years from the large scale regional Arab–Israeli conflict to a more local Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as large-scale hostilities mostly ended with the cease-fire agreements that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The 1973 War had far-ranging effects on the participant nations and their

[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡]*"The Palestinian National Charter – Article 6". Mfa.gov.il. Accessed and Retrieved on 19th January2013.*
[§§§§§§§§] Oren, Michael, *Six Days of War.*, Oxford University Press. (2002). p.307
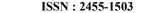
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relations with the world superpowers. Egypt moved steadily away from the USSR, which had provided military and economic aid to Egypt since the 1950s, and into a closer relationship with the United States of America. Syria emerged from the war as the strongest defender of the Arab solidarity and the closest Middle Eastern ally of the USSR. In Israel, the Yom Kippur War caused internal problems since the Israeli military's lack of readiness called into question the capabilities of the country's leaders and resulted into the resignations of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and the then defense minister Moshe Dayan. Finally, the war signaled an increased commitment by the United States to negotiate and guarantee Arab-Israeli agreements which would center on the return of Israeli-held lands to Arab control, in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel and security guarantees. In the Middle East, the underlying conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors became intertwined with the maneuvering of the superpowers. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973 drew in the United States and the USSR, creating the possibility of intensification to a direct confrontation between them. From the 1970s the Palestinians, led by Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) resorted to a prolonged campaign of violence against Israel and also against American, Jewish and western targets generally, as a means of weakening Israeli resolve and undermining western support for Israel. The Palestinians were supported in this, to varying degrees, by the regimes in Syria, Libya, Iran and, Iraq. The high point of this campaign came in the 1975 United Nations General Assembly Resolution (UNGAR) 3379 condemning Zionism as a form of racism and the reception given to Arafat by the United Nations General Assembly.[*********]

Since 1979 several peace accords have been signed and attempts have been made to resolve the conflict, but without success. The Camp David Accords were signed by Egyptian President Anwar al Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17th September 1978 at Camp David[††††††††††] which led directly to the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. The accords and the peace treaty were both accompanied by "side-letters" of understanding between Egypt and the U.S. as well as Israel and the U.S.[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] However, the peace treaty, concluded between Egypt and Israel, ended the prospects of a united Arab military coalition. In accordance with *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*: "The

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[*********] Resolution 3379 was revoked in 1991 by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 4686.
[††††††††††] Camp David Accords – Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs
[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] The Camp David Accords." *Jimmy Carter Library and Museum*. 21st July 2001. 28th April 2008.

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normalization of relations (between Israel and Egypt) went into effect in January 1980 and ambassadors were exchanged in February of the same year. The boycott laws were repealed by Egypt's National Assembly in the same month, and some trade relations began to develop, albeit less than Israel had hoped for. On the other hand the 1978 South Lebanon conflict was an invasion of Lebanon up to the Litani River carried out by the Israel Defense Forces which was a military success for Israel, as PLO forces were pushed north of the river. In response to the invasion, the UN Security Council passed Resolutions 425 and, 426 calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was created to enforce this mandate, and restore peace and sovereignty to Lebanon. UNIFIL forces arrived in Lebanon on 23rd March 1978, setting up its headquarters in Naqoura. However, hostilities continued, and as the Lebanese Civil War intensified, the fighting stepped up in the south again, with a second Israeli invasion in 1982 resulting in a 1982 flare-up that persisted over the next decade. The Lebanon War of 1982 was also called Operation Peace for Galilee by Israel in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded southern Lebanon because of the assassination attempt on Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, by the Abu Nidal Organization, a mercenary organization opposed to the Palestine Liberation Organization.[§§§§§§§§§] After attacking the PLO, as well as Syrian, leftist and Muslim Lebanese forces, Israel occupied southern Lebanon and eventually surrounded the PLO and elements of the Syrian army. The PLO was surrounded in West Beirut and was subjected to heavy bombardment; they negotiated passage from Lebanon with the aid of Special Envoy Philip Habib and the protection of international peacekeepers. In addition to these a number of lesser conflicts took place between the Arabs and Israelis. The Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that started in the late 1980s in protest against the continued Israeli occupation called in Arabic the *Intifada* (literally, 'resurgence') has changed the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict more decisively than any other event in the recent history. The intifada not only caught the Israelis but also the PLO by surprise. Having lost their Beirut base due to the Israeli invasion of 1982, PLO leaders found themselves in an unusual situation, identified internationally with a conflict from which they were physically separated (relocated to Tunis) and could not control directly or even influence it to any great degree.[**********] Young Palestinians confronted Israeli troops with nothing more than throwing stones. Many suicide activists killed Israeli

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[§§§§§§§§§] Chomsky, N., *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*. London, Pluto Press., (1999). p.196
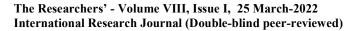[**********] Dr. William Spencer, Middle East, McGraw Hill Companies, 2004, p. 30

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soldiers and caused extensive damages. Many innocent civilians were killed on both sides. 1993 saw the Oslo Peace Accord, whereby Israel recognized the PLO and gave them limited autonomy in return for peace and an end to Palestinian claims on Israeli territory. The interim Oslo Accords led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, though a final peace agreement has yet to be reached. This has been largely criticized as a one-sided accord, which benefits only Israel, and not the Palestinian people. It resulted in Israeli control of land, water, roads and other resources. In 1995, the then Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, who had been instrumental in the latest peace processes, was assassinated by a Jewish extremist. In April 1996, Israeli forces bombed Lebanon for 17 days, with Hezbollah retaliating by firing rockets upon the populated areas of Northern Israel. Israel also shelled a UN shelter killing about 100 out of 800 civilians who had taken shelter there. October 1998 saw the 'Wye River Memorandum' outlining some Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank but Israel suspended it in January 1999 due to internal disagreements on its implementation but later on in May 2000, Israel withdrew its forces in accordance to the memorandum. In the past Peace agreements were signed between Israel and Egypt in 1979, and Israel and Jordan in 1994. Despite the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan and the generally existing cease-fire, the Arab world and Israel generally remain at odds with each other over many issues.

Iran-Iraq War: Owing to many of the desperate events of the late 1970s in the Middle East the causes of which were complex culminated in the Iran-Iraq War during 1980s. Open warfare started on 22nd September 1980, when Iraqi armed forces invaded western Iran along the countries' joint border and occupied a large portion of Khuzestan province. This prolonged military conflict was ended by a 1988 cease-fire, though the resumption of normal diplomatic relations but the withdrawal of troops did not take place until the signing of a formal peace agreement on 16th August 1990. The roots of the war lay in a number of territorial and political disputes between Iraq and Iran. The War started in retaliation to Iranian artillery attacks across the border and efforts by Iranian agents to subvert and use the Iraqi Shia Muslim population through propaganda to overthrow the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Although Iranians and Arabs are nearly all Muslims they have different historical background, ethnic origins and geographical position. Iranians have retained a lofty sense of their many important contributions to the human
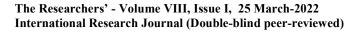
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civilization since antiquity. Unlike the Iranians, Arabs derive their sense of unity and distinctiveness as people of Islam which was brought to them by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century AD. One factor is the ancient animosity between Persians and Arabs which dates back to the same time when Arab armies defeated the Persian Army at the Battle of Qadisiya†††††††††† in 637 AD and Persians were converted to Islam but they looked down on the Arabs as uncivilized nomads. The invasion of 1980 was a reminder of the earlier Arabs success over the Persians.

Iran and Iraq have been at sword's point over a number of issues: First among them was Iraq's breaking off diplomatic relations with Iran in 1971, after claiming sovereignty rights over the three islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tumb at the mouth of the Persian Gulf which had been included by the British in their protectorate over eastern Arabia and transferred them to United Arab Emirates (UAE). But at the same time Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi challenged the transfer on the grounds that historically they had belonged to Iran and an Iranian Commando Force seized the islands and subsequently the Iraqi denounced the occupation as a violation of Arab sovereignty. The second issue was the Shah's support for Kurdish guerrilla forces that had been fighting the Iraqi government to obtain autonomy for their homeland. The third issue was the Shah's resentment against Iraq's granting asylum to Ayatollah Khomeini in 1963. The fourth issue was that Iraq accused the Khomeini regime of mistreatment of Khuzestan Arabs and of sending agents to incite its own Shia Muslims population to rebel against the Saddam Hussein's regime. However, all these disagreement intensified after the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. The personal hatred of Saddam and Khomeini certainly contributed to the War. The two had been bitter enemies since 1978, when Saddam ordered Khomeini expelled from Iraq and accused him for working with Iraqi Shia Muslim leaders to undermine the regime. One issue often overlooked as cause of War is a territorial dispute, dating back to many centuries that have been aggravated by European intervention in the Middle East. The dispute concerns the *Shatt al Arab*, the 127 miles waterway from the junction of Tigris and Euphrates Rivers south to the Persian Gulf, which was a bone of contention between the Ottoman and Persian empires for centuries, due to its importance as trade outlet to the Gulf. Conflict intensified as both countries built up their oil exports in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1979, the Shah of Iran threatened to occupy Iran's side of the waterway with gunboats, and he began a program of military support to Kurdish rebels

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†††††††††† P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,*, McMillan, London , 1946, p. 155
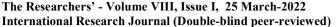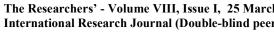
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fighting the Iraqi government. However, in 1975 there was an agreement between both the countries on their differences and Iraq agreed to recognize Iranian ownership of the Shatt al Arab and Iran agreed to stop supporting the Kurdish rebels in Iraq. Following the fall of Shah in 1979, in September 1980 Saddam Hussein announced that the 1975 treaty was null and void and demanded Iran's recognition of Iraqi sovereignty over the entire Shatt al Arab and return of the three islands seized by the Shah's forces in 1971 as well as the transfer of the predominantly Arab areas of the Khuzestan province to Iraqi control.[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] As a result of all these demands Iran-Iraq War began and lasted for almost eight years which ended in August 1988 after both sides accepted a cease-fire sponsored by the United Nations (UN). The War was one of the longest and most destructive of the 20th century, with likely more than one million casualties. The War was also extremely destructive to each country's economy.   Despite the conflict's length and cost, neither Iran nor Iraq made significant territorial or political gains, and the fundamental issues dividing the countries remained unresolved at the end of the War. Both Iran and Iraq sacrificed their considerable oil wealth to the War effort for nearly a decade, and Iraq was forced to borrow heavily, especially from its allies on the Arabian Peninsula.

The Gulf War and its Aftermath: The Gulf War (1990-1991) was an international conflict that was triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990 under the leadership of Ṣaddam Hussein who ordered the invasion and occupation of Kuwait with the apparent aim of acquiring Kuwait's large oil reserves and canceling a large debt Iraq owed to Kuwait and as well as expanding Iraqi power in the region. In 1990 Iraq's relations with Kuwait worsened since Iraq accused Kuwait of going beyond the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production quotas for oil and "stealing" more than $2 billion in oil from a contested reserve (Rumaila Oil Fields) that lay across both the countries. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein also demanded Kuwait to cancel the debt Iraq owed during the Iran-Iraq War and revived Iraq's claims of sovereignty over Kuwait. When Hussein mobilized Iraqi troops on the border in late July 1990, Kuwait had neither the military might nor the external protection to prevent an invasion. Ultimately on 2nd August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait and quickly overwhelmed the Kuwaiti forces. An international force assembled in the neighboring Saudi Arabia and expelled Iraq from Kuwait after six weeks of fighting in early 1991. Although Iraq called its occupation of Kuwait a recovery of a part of its

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[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] William Spencer, *The Middle East* , McGraw-Hill, USA, 2004, p.23
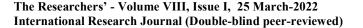
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historical homeland, which had been stolen from it by the British and given its independence under false premises, the action was viewed as aggression by all the countries in the world. The conflict culminated in fighting in January and February 1991 between Iraq and an international coalition of forces led by the United States mandated by United Nations. Historically Kuwait had been part of the Ottoman province of Basra before 1918, and thus in a sense part of Iraq, but Iraq had recognized its independence in the 1960s.The Iraqi-Kuwaiti border dispute was not a new development it had been the focus of tension in the past since Kuwait was nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire from the 18th century until 1899. When Great Britain granted Kuwait independence in 1961, Iraq revived an old claim that Kuwait had been governed as part of an Ottoman province in southern Iraq. Iraq's claim had little historical basis, however, and after intense global pressure Iraq recognized Kuwait in 1963. On the other hand, there were occasional clashes along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, and relations between the two countries were sometimes tense. But during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) Kuwait assisted Iraq with loans and diplomatic backing, hence their relations were improved and by 1990 Iraq had fallen in to a debt of $80 billion and demanded that Kuwait waive its share of the debt and help her with other payments. At the same time, Iraq claimed that Kuwait was pumping oil from a field (Rumaila Oil Field) that overlapped the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border and was not sharing the revenue. Iraq's complaints against Kuwait grew increasingly harsh, but they were mostly about money and did not suggest that Iraq was about to revive its old territorial claim on Kuwait. On 2nd August 1990, the Iraqi Army, which had been mobilized along the border, invaded and occupied Kuwait, quickly over coming light resistance. The invasion divided the Arab States, notably Yemen and Sudan, agreed with Iraq's contention that Kuwait was historically a part of Iraq and that Kuwaiti arrogance was partly responsible for the conflict. Others took the opposite view; Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accused Saddam Hussein of breaking a solemn pledge of not to invade Kuwait. Saudi Arabia fearing that it might be Iraq's next victim, requested U.S. to help under bilateral defense treaty to protect its territory. U.S. President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev issued a joint pledge for action to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. A massive military buildup followed, largely made up of U.S. forces, and other countries including some Arab States. These coalition forces operated under the terms of UN Security Council *Resolution 660* of 6th August 1990, calling for an immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restoration of the country's legitimate government.
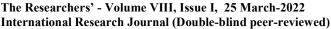
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A similar resolution approved by the League of Arab States denounced Iraq's aggression against the "brotherly Arab State of Kuwait" and demanded immediate Iraqi withdrawal and restoration of Kuwaiti independence. The UN embargo continued in effect for six months but failed to generate an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, despite its severe impact on the Iraqi population. Consequently, the coalition forces launched the so-called Operation Desert Storm on 16th January 1991. With their total air superiority and superior military technology, they made short works of Iraq's army, as thousands of Iraqi soldiers fled into the desert or surrendered where they were. One month into the 'Air War', the Iraqis began negotiating with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) over a plan to withdraw from Kuwait. Had this initiative come before the start of the coalition's attack, it might have split the coalition; now it simply seemed a sign that the War was weighing heavily on Iraq. The War made diplomacy difficult for Iraq: officials had to travel overland to Iran and then fly to Moscow to ferry messages back and forth. Sensing victory, the coalition united behind a demand for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. On 24th February 1991 the coalition launched its long-anticipated land offensive. Two days after the ground war began; Iraq announced it was leaving Kuwait. The cease-fire came shortly before coalition forces would have surrounded the Iraqi forces. On 2nd March 1991 the UN Security Council issued a resolution laying down the conditions for the cease-fire, which were accepted by Iraq in a meeting of military commanders on 3rd March 1991. More extensive aims, such as overthrowing the Iraqi government or destroying Iraqi forces, did not have the support of all the coalition members. Most Arab members, for example, believed the War was fought to restore one Arab country and not to destroy another. The United States also worried that extending the goal would have involved them in endless fighting. The Iraqis achieved none of their initial goals. Rather than enhancing their economic, military, and political position, they were economically devastated, militarily defeated, and politically isolated. Yet because the government and many of the military forces remained intact, the Iraqis could claim mere survival as a moral victory. The end of the fighting left some key issues unresolved, including UN sanctions against Iraq, which did not end with the War. On 2nd April 1991, the Security Council laid out strict demands for ending the sanctions: Iraq would have to accept liability for damages, destroy its chemical and biological weapons, forego any nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs, and accept international inspections to ensure these conditions were met. Iraq resisted, claiming that its withdrawal
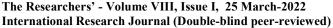
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from Kuwait was a sufficient compliance. Many Western observers believed the victory was hollow because Saddam Hussein was still in power. However, in Kuwait the prewar regime was restored, and in 1992 the Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, honored his pledge in exile to reconvene the country's parliament. The UN continued to maintain most of the economic embargo on Iraq after the war, and several coalition countries enforced other sanctions, such as the no-fly zones. In 1995 the UN amended the sanctions to allow Iraq to sell limited amounts of oil for food and medicine (Oil for Food), it also designated some of the revenue to pay for damages caused by the War; Iraq initially rejected this plan but then accepted it in 1996.

The Iraq War (The Second Gulf War): The Second Gulf War was a military campaign that began on 20[§§§§§§§§§§] March 2003 with the invasion of Iraq by a multinational force led by troops from the United States of America and United Kingdom along with the smaller contingents from Australia and Poland invaded Iraq and toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein on 1st April 2003. This was the first and brief phase of conventionally fought war in which the above mentioned combined troops invaded Iraq and rapidly defeated Iraqi military forces. The military campaign was short and one-sided, b ut hard fought. It was concluded with the fall of Baghdad that marked the beginning of second phase which was a US-led occupation of Iraq, which is opposed by an insurgency which is still ongoing. After violence began to decline in 2007, the United States gradually reduced its military presence in Iraq, formally completing its withdrawal in December 2011.[**********] In fact the seeds for the I raq War of 2003 were sown by the 1991 Persian Gulf War when the allied forces expelled Iraqi troops from Kuwait, which Iraq invaded in 1990. The invasion led to a protracted US occupation of Iraq and the birth of a guerrilla insurgency against the occupation. The resulting destabilization of Iraq also created conditions for a Civil War to break out between Iraq's majority Shia Muslim and its minority Sunni Muslim population. In addition to attempting to quell the insurgency, US forces also found themselves trying to police the State engaged in a Civil War. The Bush administration maintained that it invaded Iraq because it believed the Hussein regime possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and posed a direct threat to the United States and its allies. The emphasis of the administration was only the ouster of

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[§§§§§§§§§§] Kevin Baker "The Quietest War: We've Kept Fallujah, but Have We Lost Our Souls?" *American Heritage*, Oct. 2006.
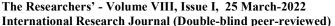[**********] " Iraq War", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2015

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Hussein from power would end that threat and prevent Iraq from giving those deadly weapons to the terrorist groups. After no such weapons were found, the Bush administration still argued that the invasion was justified because it ousted a tyrant responsible for numerous human rights violations. The creation of a democracy in Iraq, President Bush said, could have a transformative effect on the entire Middle East, helping bring peace to the region and isolate the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalist '*Jihadis*' (holy warriors), who believed in waging a *jihad* (holy war) against the West. By late April 2003, a serious and persistent guerrilla struggle had been launched in the Sunni Arab heartland against the foreign military presence in the country. The US took a decision at the time to liquefy the Iraqi army but the US failed to stop widespread looting and the guerrilla movement grew in strength and popular support in the center-north of the country that made it impossible for the United States to withdraw most of its troops in the fall of 2003. The total US military death toll had become doubled by the late August 2004 and reached more than 4,000 following the fifth anniversary of the invasion. The year 2007 was considered particularly a disastrous year for US forces since the War began and almost 894 US soldiers were killed in the year 2007 alone. In addition to this the totaled number of US wounded soldiers reached 30,000 by March 2008 as well as the other member nations of the coalition also suffered casualties. On the other hand around Tens of thousands of Iraqis were killed and wounded in the War, although it has not been publically disclosed by the US military officials. The War was also followed by a refugee crisis in Iraq. Critics of the War advanced a variety of theories to explain why the Bush administration was determined to invade Iraq; in fact Iraq has the Middle East's second largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia and may well possess the largest. Moreover, most of the Middle East's oil passes through the Persian Gulf's Strait of Hormuz, and Iraq is in a strategic position for observing the strait. Most of the countries in the European Union and Japan are largely dependent on this oil supply from the Middle East. The fast growing economies of China and India are also ever more needful on the safe passage of oil from the Persian Gulf. After the United States was asked to remove most of its military forces from Saudi Arabia, the United States no longer had significant military bases in the Gulf region. Therefore, the Bush administration sought a military presence in Iraq as a way to control oil supplies. For that reason in the 20th century, the region's significant stocks of crude oil gave it a new strategic and economic importance.

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The Arab Spring: Subsequent to the attacks of 11th September 2001, the United States and its allies have realized that main reason behind the rise of militancy in the Middle East that has directly threatened them is the backwardness of the region and lack of egalitarianism. Following the realization of this fact, the United States and its allies revised their policies towards the region in order to transform it in social, economic and political terms through comprehensive political and economic reforms. In regard to such reforms, George W. Bush administration used both the military means and the American soft power. For that reason, the US administration would always prioritize American interests, and intervene militarily whenever and wherever it is considered necessary.[††††††††††††] On the other hand, in most of the Middle Eastern countries, the growth of market economies was inhibited by political restrictions, corruption, overspending on arms, prestige projects and over dependence on the oil revenues. Slowly and gradually all these factors combined to raise the Middle Eastern conflict to a new height in the opening years of 21st century.

The advent of Arab Spring in December 2010 that overwhelmed the whole region was another challenge to the American policy. The Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave which began on 18th December 2010 in Tunisia with pro-democracy protests, riots, and civil wars in the Middle East and the North African region. The Tunisian Revolution, had a rippling effect and spread throughout the countries of the Arab League and its surroundings. The most radical discourse from Arab Spring into the still ongoing civil wars took place in Syria as early as the second half of 2011. The wave of Arab Spring is challenging some of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes and demonstrators expressing political and economic grievances faced violent crackdowns by their countries' security forces. By the end of February 2012, rulers had been forced out of power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen and, civil uprising had erupted in Bahrain and Syria, major protests had broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Sudan and minor protests had occurred in in Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia Djibouti, and Palestine.

Although the protests shared some techniques of civil resistance in sustained campaigns in the face of State's attempts at repression, many Arab Spring demonstrations were met with violent reactions from authorities as well as from pro-government militia and counter demonstrators. A major slogan of the

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[††††††††††††] Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.118, No.3, 2003, pp. 365-388; Joseph A. Kechichian, "Democratization in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC," *Middle East Policy,* Vol.11, No.4, Winter 2004, pp.37-57.

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demonstrators in the Arab world was 'the people want to bring down the regime.'[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] In fact, the lack of democracy in the region, gradually increasing educated-youth unemployment, the widening of gap between poor and rich, corruption and the reaction against the incumbent regimes led the masses into opposition demonstrations. Demands for political reform and fight against corruption were chanted at the mass demonstrations. The protest meetings rapidly turned in to revolutionary movements demanding the ouster of the incumbent regimes. The Arab Spring is widely believed to have been instigated by the disappointment with the local governments, predominantly by youth and unions which drew the global attention. The early uprisings of North Africa were inspired by the 2009-2010 uprisings in neighboring state of Iran.[§§§§§§§§§§§] The bid of statehood for Palestine at UN on 23rd September 2011 is also regarded as drawing inspiration from the Arab Spring after years of failed peace negotiations with Israel.

On the other hand, the long-term effects of the Arab Spring have yet to be seen, its short-term significance varied greatly across the Middle East and North Africa. For example, at the end of the 'Arab Spring,' long-lasting governments of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen that had become symbols of status quo were toppled. Although the transition was realized quickly in Tunisia and Egypt, it came after internal conflicts and foreign intervention in Libya and Yemen since governments used excessive force to suppress their opponents. In Bahrain, where the uprisings spread simultaneously, the government suppressed the opposition with the support of Saudi Arabia; thus, revolutionary wave ceased in the Persian Gulf region. The Assad administration in Syria also used extreme military force to disperse protest meetings, but failed to get the opposition under control and then, the Syrian opposition armed against the Assad government's use of excessive violence, transformed the 'Arab Spring' into a bloody Civil War. In other places, most notably in the monarchies of Morocco and the Persian Gulf, existing regimes co-opted the Arab Spring movement and managed to maintain order without significant social and political change. Alarmed about the uprisings to spread over their countries, conservative Arab governments like Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia undertook some anti-elitist measures and partial political reforms in order to prevent opposition protests. Thanks to these uprisings, people from the Middle East came to front as an actor

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[‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡‡] Abulof, Uriel, "What is the Arab Third Estate", *Huffington Post*, 10th March 2011.
[§§§§§§§§§§§] Karon Tony, "Iran, Egypt Caught in Churning of a Mideast Democracy Wave", *Time*, 15th February 2011

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capable of taking political initiative, and democratization has become a new political dynamic in the region.[***********] The attitude of hopefulness with regard to the Arab Spring, however, has faded away in a short period of time for two principal reasons. First, President Mohamed Morsi was overthrown by a military coup on 3rd July 2013, led by General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who restructured a new authoritarian regime in Egypt. Second, the Civil War in Syria turned into a regional and sectarian conflict. Regional and extra-regional powers support given to the fighting groups has led to a prolonged Civil War in Syria, where political attempts to resolve the conflict have remained inconclusive. Additionally, the failure to provide stability in Libya and Yemen after the removal of Qaddafi and Saleh governments has given rise to extremist movements in these countries and has disrupted the positive atmosphere of the Arab Spring particularly Syria and Libya, the apparent result of Arab Spring protests was a complete politico-societal collapse.

Conclusion

History witnessed that only few regions of the globe incite more attention, debate, or international crisis than the Middle East which has been an important arena of the world events since the dawn of the written history. The Geo-political position of the Middle East and its geographical features have played substantial role in the growth of conflicts and upheavals in the region. In fact the Geo-political importance of the region had dictated significant role in the world affairs for the Middle East during the course of history. European geopolitics in the first half of the 20th century in the wider Middle East region contributed a lot to the instability overall. The British Empire, especially, played a key role in the region since its lifeline had been passing through it to British India. It has been observed that the Middle East is chronically war-prone and the site of the world's most prolonged conflicts. Throughout its history the Middle East has been a major center of world affairs, strategically, economically, politically, culturally, and also religiously a sensitive area. The roots of conflict and much of State behavior are to be found in the peculiar historical construction of the regional system. The borders of the modern Middle Eastern region were drawn up by the victorious powers of the World War I, as laid out in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) in which Great Britain had agreed to divide the Ottoman domains into British, French,
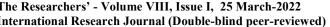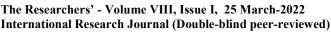

[***********] M. Scott Doran, "The Heirs of Nasser: Who will benefit from the Second Arab Revolution?" *Foreign Affairs,* May/June 2011; Jack A. Goldstone, "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011," *Foreign Affairs,* May/June 2011.

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and Russian areas of control upon defeating the Ottomans. These powers accepted to recognize the provincial independence of Syria and Mesopotamia, while claiming mandates for their administration. Actually the main terms of the agreement were reaffirmed by the inter-Allied San Remo Conference of 19th–26th April 1920 and the ratification of the resulting League of Nations mandates by the Council of the League of Nations on 24th July 1922. Despite of such approval the question had been left unresolved and that is why even today the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claims one of the goals of its insurgency is to reverse the effects of the Sykes–Picot Agreement.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire marked the opening of a new stage of conflict over the territory focusing on the lands of Palestine. On the other hand the British had also made ambiguous promises in 1915 and 1916 (Hussein-McMahon Correspondence) to support an Independent Arab State including Palestine in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire in return for Arab support of British forces against the Ottomans. In contradiction to this, and also to get support of Jewish people, in 1917, Lord Arthur Balfour, the then British Foreign Minister issued the Balfour Declaration which announced the British Empire's support for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, but there was no mention in it of a Jewish State. In short, the Balfour Declaration was a provision, if any attention was to be paid to it, which rendered completely insignificant the Declaration itself. As we know that the primary objective of the Balfour Declaration was the promotion of Jewish immigration into Palestine, so far this was not realizable without impartiality to the rights of the preponderant Arab population. The combined effects of the two World Wars had weakened the political and economic domination of the Middle East by the European powers which led to a series of waves of decolonization following the World War II and the region was transformed into a world of emerging Middle Eastern nations. However, their strategic location as well as natural resources tempted the great powers and such temptations transformed into the Cold War. Decolonization and the bipolar Cold War between the USA and the USSR reconditioned the terms of international penetration in the Middle East. The Middle East in the Cold War was an arena of extreme importance and also great instability but the United States of America and West's interests in the wider region have generally been due to oil. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 has been the source of considerable regional prolonged conflict and instability which hampered political and economic
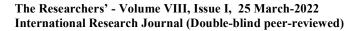
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development in the entire region. Due to its geographic location and natural resources, the Middle East is generally considered to be of a great strategic importance to the main actors in the world politics. In the Middle East, the underlying conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors became entangled with the involvement of Super powers which is still ongoing. The frustration on behalf of and injustice towards Palestinians has angered many citizens in the Arab world against the US-Israeli policies. Palestinian frustration has led to extremism in some cases this has caused the Israeli-Palestine conflict to be one of the most enduring conflicts. On the other hand the region has also hosted many of the wars with most of the international actors. The backgrounds of the modern Arab–Israeli conflict are seen in the rise of Zionism as well as Arab Nationalism towards the end of the 19th century that resulted into conflicts between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East over the issue of 'Palestinian Question.' Such sectarian conflict reached its zenith into a full-scale Civil War in 1947 and transformed into the First Arab–Israeli War in May 1948 which led to a series of Wars among Arab nations, Palestinian refugees, and the State of Israel that also drew the United States and the USSR, creating the possibility of intensification to a direct confrontation between them. However, since 1979 several peace accords have been signed and attempts have been made to resolve the conflict, but without success. The Iran-Iraq War was one of the longest and most destructive of the 20th century to each country's economy. Another war known as the Persian Gulf War started in August 1990 and ended in February in 1991 and as a result of this the UN continued to maintain most of the economic embargo on Iraq after the war, and several coalition countries enforced other sanctions. The US-Iraq War was a military campaign that began on 20th March 2003 with a US invasion of Iraq that led to a prolonged US occupation of Iraq which gave birth to a guerrilla insurgency against the occupation. However, the United States of America and its allies have realized that main reason behind the rise of radicalism in the Middle East that has directly threatened them is the backwardness of the region and lack of democracy. Following such realization by the United States and its allies caused them to revise their policies towards the region in order to transform it in social, economic and political terms through comprehensive political and economic reforms. Therefore, slowly and gradually all these factors combined to raise the Middle East conflict to a new height in the opening years of 21st century in the form of Arab Spring. This advent of Arab Spring which overwhelmed the whole region was another challenge to the American policy in the region.

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It has been observed that the Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, which challenged some of the region's embedded authoritarian regimes. For instance, protests in Tunisia and Egypt (January and February 2011), succeeded in a matter of weeks in toppling two regimes thought to be among the region's most stable. In Yemen, where the first protests appeared in late January 2011, President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Ṣaleḥ's base of support was damaged when a number of the country's most powerful tribal and military leaders aligned themselves with the pro-democracy protesters calling for him to step down. When negotiations to remove Saleh from the power failed, loyalist and opposition fighters clashed in Sana'a. The al-Ḥouthi Rebellion also launched in June 2004 in Yemen by Zaydi Sayyids who initially expressed their more general discontent by condemning the Ṣaleḥ regime as pro-American and pro-Israeli, resulted in many casualties in the coming years and this crisis still continues today. In Bahrain mass protests were also demanding political and economic reforms in mid-February 2011, led by Bahraini human rights activists and members of Bahrain's marginalized Shiite majority, although protests were violently suppressed by Bahraini security forces. In Libya protests against the regime of Muammar al-Qaddafi in mid-February 2011 quickly escalated into an armed revolt. A protest also broke out in southern Syria in mid-March 2011 for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad and spread through the country. The Assad regime responded with a brutal crackdown against protesters, drawing condemnation from international leaders and human rights groups. In spite of the upheaval, Assad's hold on power appeared strong, as he was able to retain the support of critical military units composed largely of members of Syria's ʿAlawite' minority, to which Assad also belonged. The effects of the Arab Spring movement were felt elsewhere throughout the Middle East and North Africa as many of the countries in the region experienced at least minor pro-democracy protests.