

# America's Hegemonic Middle East Policy

By [Prof. Mohssen Massarrat](#)

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The U.S. government is not marking any progress in Iraq, and the number of Americans who reject their president's Iraq policy is growing day to day. The White House surprises us with the terrible news that it wants to provide Saudi-Arabia, the Gulf states and Egypt – all Sunni Arab countries – with weapons worth \$34 billion. It is no arms dealer but the Bush administration that uninhibitedly announces the new armament plan as if it the purchaser were in fact its own federal states. To prevent misgivings from its adversaries' build-up, Israel shall receive a similar amount of military aid.

The political justification for this business is obvious. It's about Iran; more precisely, it's about the demonization of the Islamic Republic as the core state of Shi'ite Islam – a view of Iran which the CIA's PR agencies have built up and pushed in recent years. One thing is becoming increasingly clear: the United States military–industrial complex has a completely consistent long-term plan for the Near and Middle East region: arms race, arms race, and once again arms race.

The origins of this plan go back to the first “oil price shock” in 1974 when Henry Kissinger and his aides were looking for ways to recycle the oil states' skyrocketing petro-dollars into the U.S.-dominated financial system. The solution was quickly found. The monarchical government of Iran – now the United States' outstanding archenemy – was chosen as the key player for an enormous arms transfer. Shah Reza Pahlavi's ambition to take the lead in the Middle East as the military hegemonic power came at just the right time for both the State Department and the Pentagon. Iran's ruler – formerly Israel's most important regional ally – had all his wishes fulfilled. He received – in a great number – the U.S. Air Force's newest super weapons, such as the F-16 jet which at that point had not been sent to any other country – not even Israel. This manoeuver was justified with the argument that a counterweight was needed vis-à-vis Soviet allies – Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and Hafez al-Assad's Syria, which at the time were also the most extreme representatives of Arab nationalism. Saudia-Arabia felt pressured into similarly substantial acquisitions of U.S. weapons, so that she could – according to the Realist school of thought – install a ‘balance of power.’ This was how the first externally coordinated arms race in the history of the Middle East was set up.

Iraq, Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries did not wait all too long, and imported large numbers of weapons from the Soviet Union (Saddam Hussein also from France), in order to defy the preponderant military power of the Tel Aviv–Tehran–Riyadh axis. Thus, in the second half of the 1970s, the region had become by far the world's largest market for arms imports.

Since then war, conflict and enmity have rampaged in the region, since then the dreadful

logic of a vicious circle has reigned, with periodic destruction, episodic reconstruction, and permanent armament, while the military–industrial complexes of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany and the Soviet Union, or Russia, have registered high growth rates. At the same time, the petrodollars from the oil states could be channeled back into the international financial system. A precondition for maintaining the U.S. dollar in its function as key currency.

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in late 1979 was the first reaction to the arming of America’s allies. The resulting chain reaction from the Afghan civil war to the flaring up of a new type of international terrorism preserves its dynamic until today. The causes of the Iraq–Iran war between 1980 and 1988 are decisively linked to the arms race that began in the previous years. The deadly battles for the Shatt al-Arab were followed by Saddam Hussein’s occupation of Kuwait in 1990, and one year later the next Gulf War broke out. It can be suggested that the conquest of Iraq was planned as the next building block in the aforesaid long-term strategy – a possible military strike against Tehran would be the next.

With this underlying strategic planning in mind, the Iraq War with its spiraling costs of \$400 billion to date, which initially appears to be absolutely absurd and irrational, starts to gain an eerie rationality. The same is true for the even more absurd and more irrational war plans against Iran. Those who are involved with all might in heralding a new round of the arms race, not only intend to consolidate their strategy, but to make it irreversible for decades to come. The addressees of this lunatic calculation are the same states as in the 1970s – only the fronts have changed: for the U.S., Iran no longer has the role of ally but of the main enemy.

The consequences are indisputable: the Near and Middle East is stuck in a latent war situation. The partly extreme tensions between the states in the region are being conserved, ethnic conflicts are being fanned, separatist tendencies of transnational minorities (Kurds, Turkmen, Azeris, Balouchis, Pashtuns) are boosted. Hamas and the PLO in Palestine, Hezbollah and other forces in Lebanon, ultimately Shi’ites and Sunnites are played against each other. Chaos and permanent instability in one of the most sensitive regions of the world seem to be the only “rational” instrument of controlling this madness.

After millions of victims, the destructions of infrastructure, civilizational treasures and social fundamentals for modernization and democratization, as well as civil wars and terrorism – none of this can shake the U.S. strategy in the slightest as long as oil flows and prices of up to \$200 per barrel are prevented.

Despite the conventional wisdom, this is not contradictory – but quite the opposite. With chaos and instability persisting, the need for petro-dollars turns to be the most effective motor which boosts oil production and keeps it at the highest possible level. Thus far, it makes no sense to chalk this up as an error of the Bush administration that it has destabilized the whole region. Instability is its real objective.

Highly alarming, the military–industrial complex’s long-term interest for survival aligns with the United States’ overall hegemonic interests to control the oil fields of the entire Near and Middle East and to consolidate the dollar as the key international currency. This is also in full accordance with Israel’s unpeaceful security interests. Despite the existence of some silent criticism, we should expect that this long-term strategy will be carried by the entire American political elite – possible small changes by the Democrats are of no significance here.

If all this is correct – and nearly all indicators suggest that it is – then the United States is carrying out a Middle East policy which amounts to a crime against humanity. A worldwide anti-war alliance would be necessary – and solely able – to stop the looming catastrophe. First and foremost though, Europe’s governments must end their U.S. appeasement policy.

*Mohssen Massarrat is professor of political science and economics at the Department of Social Sciences of Osnabrück University (Germany). His many books and articles cover the fields of international economics, socio-ecological economics, the economics of energy, peace and conflict studies, as well as the Near and Middle East. As Germany’s leading expert on the so-called Iran conflict, he has been the initiator of many appeals to German Chancellor Merkel to oppose the U.S. war drive on Iran.*

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