

"War in the Gardens of Babylon. Middle East after the Iraqi War"

Edited by Bülent ARAS (2004)

ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The September 11 terror attacks have been at the forefront of the international relations agenda, marking a pivotal turning point in global politics and security. This tragic event led to profound changes in U.S. foreign policy and security strategy, significantly impacting the international arena. In the aftermath, it has become essential to monitor and evaluate developments closely, as the repercussions of U.S. actions in the Middle East extend far beyond the region, affecting global stability and security, necessitating constant evaluation and adaptation to address the evolving challenges in this critical region.

Keywords: Iraqi War, Middle East, US, defensive strategies, security policies , UN, ideologies, modernisation, crisis

1. INTRODUCTION

The book *War in the Gardens of Babylon. Middle East after the Iraqi War* published in 2004 by TASAM – Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies – edited by Bülent ARAS, is a collection of different perspectives on a number of serious Middle Eastern problems. Bülent Aras compiled articles of outstanding authors explaining the aftermath of September 11 terror attacks and Iraqi War. The articles examine the issue in a broad perspective through focusing on foreign policy strategy of the USA towards Europe-Asia and specifically the Middle East, the crises it has confronted with in the region, the developments in the countries of the region, the stance and the policies of the countries in the neighborhood of the region.

The chapters of the book explores various aspects of U.S. foreign policy, relations with Europe and Asia, regional crises, internal transformations of Middle Eastern countries, and neighborhood policies. The U.S. strategy of "absolute cosmopolitanism" after 9/11 is examined, leading to a radical change in international relations, with overwhelming force projection and U.S. global influence. Moreover, are highlighted the strategic implications of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the importance of military relations, and the challenges to international security.

In fact, what the authors explain, in different point of views, is the many transnational issues that affect the region and require external and internal interventions. Therefore, plans to transform the region have been contentious, notably the American Greater Middle East Initiative, later toned down as the "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa" at the G8 summit in June 2004. Democratically elected governments in the region could evaluate and accept or reject external projects, but most Middle Eastern countries lack this capacity.

The Greater Middle East Initiative, gaining prominence since the early 1990s, aims to create order and stability across a vast region. However, it seems more focused on transforming the masses to perceive their problems differently rather than directly addressing core issues like the Palestinian question, Iraq's restructuring, and fundamentalist terror. The initiative's primary goal appears to be safeguarding US interests, which Middle Eastern populations struggle to reconcile with the ongoing tragedy in Iraq.

The region needs a balance of stability, freedom, democracy, human rights, and economic development. The feasibility of the Greater Middle East Initiative will depend on the American administration's genuine engagement with the region's problems. Key issues, especially the Palestinian conflict, are structural problems influenced by the international system. If the initiative fails to address these core issues, it risks being as ineffective as previous attempts. The future impact of American policies remains to be seen.

2. METHOD

This book addresses Middle Eastern politics, international relations, and foreign involvement through nine comprehensive chapters by distinguished experts. Topics include US policies in Eurasia, Russian Middle East policy, Turkey and the Iraqi dilemma, US-Jordan relations, the Iraq War, Saudi policies post-9/11, and the Greater Middle East.

3. SAMPLE

In order to analyze internal and external reforms that affect the Middle Eastern region, the authors focus on different states intervening in the region, going from US to central Asia. Thus, this include Eurasia region where Russia and China have an impact on the Greater Middle East – from Iran to Palestine –, and regional powers like Turkey trying to have their say also in the region.

4. MEASURING TOOLS USED

No presence of measuring tools.

5. COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

No presence of data.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Globally, the book is an extensive analysis of the political and strategic dynamics of the Middle East in the aftermath of September 11, with particular attention to external policies of the US and their regional and global impacts. Therefore, the chapters explore the political and strategic transformations in the region because of the regional crisis. Meanwhile relations between the US, Russia, China, UE and the other global actors are examined in their effects on the international stability and security. It is, then, necessary a balanced approach that takes into consideration stability, freedom, democracy, human rights and economic development. However, it is usually observed that US policies are usually aggressive and unilateral having per consequence negative impacts on peace and security.

The first chapter “US Macht-politik in Eurasia and the Re-fashioning of the Greater Middle East”, written by Vassilis K. Fouskas, begins with an analysis of U.S. strategy in Europe-Asia and the key strategic region of the Middle East. It is argued that U.S. power politics has shifted from a balance-of-power game during the Cold War to an open projection of overwhelming force, ignoring the position of key Western allies of the United States, such as France and Germany. In fact, the United States has adopted a policy of “cosmopolitan absolutism,” resulting in open force projection, ignoring the balance of power mechanisms and consensus processes within the core Western alliance. This policy has led to a heightened projection of power against any enemy perceived as a threat, regardless of the national and class interests of the other major players in Eurasia, such as Germany, France, Russia and China. This new strategy has undermined the national and class interests of the other major players, making it impossible for them to adhere to U.S. policy. Moreover, Fouskas states that this new strategy could lead to a proliferation of wars, conflicts and terrorism around the world instead of containing them.

Iraq crisis brought about a radical change in the entire framework of contemporary international relations, establishing a new paradigm of political conduct. The U.S. strategy in the Greater

Middle East aims to transform the entire region by bringing the new geoeconomies of oil and gas resources in the entire EurAsia under U.S. monetary and security control.

In addition, the role of the United States and the United Kingdom in global military and economic policy is analyzed, emphasizing the power dynamics between the United States, Russia, China and the European Union. The importance of control over energy resources and economic interests in the context of international relations is emphasized.

Stephen Blank, in “The Greater Middle East and Its Strategic Profile” examines strategic revolution unveiled by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with a focus on the interconnection between Central Asia and the Middle East. The strategic transformation of these military theaters, the implications of military relations, and the growing importance of coalitions are highlighted. Emphasis is placed on how new military capabilities may influence the way future wars are conceived, considering both the threat of weapons of mass destruction and the spread and use of advanced military technologies. It also examines the evolving strategic relationships among states involved in the new “theater of operations,” highlighting geopolitical implications and emerging challenges to international security. Moreover, because U.S. failed to bring peace, security, prosperity and democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan, it brought the potential risk of states or their allies, or independent non-state terrorists, acting to achieve what the U.S. National Security Strategy calls “the crossroads of radicalism and technology.” This could lead to lasting instability in the region and open the way for those who wish to exploit contemporary trends for war. In addition, the paper points out that U.S. failure could undermine the credibility and legitimacy of American power, paving the way for even more serious and frightening conflicts. Consequences could include the threat of weapons of mass destruction, proliferation of conventional weapons, destabilization of alliances, and threat to the security of the United States, its allies, and U.S. forces. In fact, the geopolitical and military implications of strategic transformations in the “Greater Middle East,” emphasize the complexity and importance of adopting innovative approaches to address emerging challenges in the region.

The third chapter of Robert O. Freedman, “Russian Policy Toward the Middle East Under Putin”, analyzes Russian policy toward the Middle East under Putin, focusing on Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Initially, it highlights the economic and strategic importance of these countries to Russia, including business interests, arms sales, and energy cooperation. Indeed, during Putin's rule, Russia has maintained a close relationship with Iran based on economic and strategic

interests. Bilateral cooperation has been highlighted by Russia's supply of weapons to Iran, including supersonic jets, tanks and submarines, as well as the construction of a nuclear reactor complex in Bushehr. Russia has also supported Iran in regional issues, such as maintaining the ceasefire in Tajikistan and supporting the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. In addition, both countries have denounced U.S. efforts to establish a unipolar world. The main Russian interests in this relationship have been the sale of nuclear weapons and reactors, as well as the desire to demonstrate Russia's independence from the United States. Russia has also sought to exploit the oil wealth of the Caspian Sea, despite Iran's concerns. Putin sought to strengthen economic and trade ties, leveraging the sale of nuclear reactors, weapons and natural gas. Russian policy has been influenced by the situation in Chechnya and relations with the United States, with which he has clashed over issues such as sanctions on Iraq. Putin's role in demonstrating Russian independence and dealing with national elections has also influenced foreign policy. In addition, problems and tensions in relations with Turkey are highlighted, including clashes over gas export routes and concerns over terrorism and separatist issues.

“Best of Times, Worst of Times: The Fortunes of the United Nations in the Middle East” of Jerry Pubantz and John Allphin Moore, Jr., examines the role and interaction of the United Nations with events and political dynamics in the Middle East. The text begins with an analysis of the role of the United Nations in crisis management in the region, focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Iran-Iraq conflict, the Gulf War, U.S. involvement and attitudes toward the UN. The author examines the relationship between the United States and the United Nations, pointing out how the two actors have often acted in divergent ways. Initially, the two entities had distinct and often divergent histories of involvement in the Middle East, with the United States assuming the role of “honest broker” and central actor in the region, while the United Nations sought to manage the region's multiple crises. However, with the end of the Cold War and the onset of the first Gulf War, the two courses of action merged, opening up tantalizing prospects for comprehensive peace in the region, but also putting the United Nations in the high-risk position of being perceived as little more than an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. This convergence also raised the prospect that any future divergent U.N. policy would produce an American backlash and unilateral U.S. actions in the Middle East. In subsequent years, relations between the U.S. and the UN regarding Middle East issues have become increasingly antagonistic, particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, there have been moments of cooperation, as in the case of the UN's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, in which Secretary-General Kofi Annan played a key role with U.S. support.

Overall, U.S.-UN relations regarding Middle East issues have been characterized by periods of cooperation and divergence, with both sides seeking to influence and manage the dynamics of the region in different ways. In summary, the paper offers an in-depth perspective on the geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East and the role of the United Nations, providing a detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities shaping the region and international relations.

In the fifth chapter, “The War in Iraq and the Ideology of Clashism”, Seifudein Adem explains the Iraq war in light of the ideology of "clashism," a concept introduced by Samuel Huntington, and the implications on world politics. The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the result of an American imperial impulse, historically linked to the past, and demonstrated how the world has been drawn into a clash of civilizations. The article critiques Francis Fukuyama's view of the end of history, arguing that the ideology of Islamism cannot be dismissed as weightless, and that the persistence of conflicts in the world today demonstrates the falsity of this theory. It also criticizes the U.S. administration for waging a war in Iraq that is considered illegitimate and internationally unpopular, without the approval of the U.N. Security Council. In fact, the invasion was justified by shifting pretexts, such as the disarmament of Iraq and the liberation of the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's regime, and how the emphasis was on the need for imperial tutelage of the Iraqi people after the removal of the regime. The selective use of international law by the U.S. administration, which invoked the Geneva Conventions only when it was convenient for it, while ignoring international law when it decided to invade Iraq, is criticized. Moreover, the role of the Western media, which the author says helped legitimize the ideology of clashism through biased and manipulated coverage of events, omitted or distorted information that did not align with the official narrative. Therefore, the U.S. administration's belligerent policies will have long-term consequences and that the ideology of clashism seems to be a guiding element in U.S. foreign policy, despite official denials. It is emphasized that the power to define reality is a powerful weapon in international relations and that knowledge can be a tool to achieve specific goals as well as a reflection of truth.

The sixth chapter “Will Iran Be Next?” of Mark Gaffney, analyzes the geopolitical situation around Iran's nuclear program and its implications for regional and global stability. The focus is on the Bushehr nuclear reactor in Iran, which is the subject of tension between Iran and the U.S./Israel because of suspicions that Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and claims to pursue only peaceful

purposes, but the discovery of two nuclear sites at Natanz and Arak has increased concerns. The Bushehr project, which began in 1974, was variously influenced by the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, revived with the help of Russia, despite pressure from the United States. Iran refused to adhere to the IAEA's new 1993 safeguards, weakening international confidence. Russia agreed to supply slightly enriched uranium and take back spent fuel, thus reducing the risk of plutonium detour. Moreover, the author criticizes U.S. policy, which has promoted nuclear energy for economic development, but now accuses Iran of proliferation. Iran denies the charges and emphasizes its right under the NPT to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The United States and Israel doubt Iranian intentions and fear that Iran may develop nuclear weapons. Israel has expressed doubts as to why oil-rich Iran needs nuclear energy for power generation. However Israel's nuclear policy has been accused of nuclear trade with other states, including India, and provided weapons technology assistance to regimes such as South Africa during apartheid. Therefore the author criticizes the duplicity of U.S. policy, which has sought to thwart Russian assistance to Iran but has ignored Israel's nuclear trade. It is suggested that a healthy solution to the current crisis would be a reform of the NPT, including the abolition of the withdrawal clause and the creation of a robust common security mechanism. This would require the abandonment of the UN Security Council veto in the event of a nuclear threat or attack, allowing for swift action. The author acknowledges that such a proposal might not be considered by the Bush administration, which has shown contempt for international treaties.

Robert J. Bookmiller explains, in the seventh chapter, "Abdullah's Jordan: America's Anxious Ally", that since 1999, King Abdullah II of Jordan has worked to strengthen ties with the United States and expand Jordan's role in international forums. He has focused on influencing the Palestinian question, the peace treaty with Israel, and relations with Iraq, Jordan's former major trading partner. Abdullah's support for the war on terror and U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq has sometimes conflicted with other Arab states' views. Despite this, Jordan has promoted policies like the International Criminal Court and the landmine ban, which often differ from U.S. positions. After 9/11, Abdullah quickly condemned the attacks, offered assistance to the U.S., and supported the war on terror. This led to the ratification of the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), making Jordan the first Arab or Muslim state with such an agreement. The FTA eliminated quotas and duties on Jordanian imports, providing unrestricted access to the U.S. market. Jordan supported U.S. efforts in Afghanistan with humanitarian aid and security contributions while expressing concerns about potential broader conflicts with the Islamic world. Despite efforts to avoid war in Iraq, Abdullah prepared Jordan

for its impacts, securing oil supplies from other sources. After Saddam Hussein's fall, Jordan sent medical aid to Iraq and supported democratization efforts in the region. Jordan has taken an active international role, participating in UN peacekeeping, promoting international laws, and joining multinational organizations like the Human Security Network. Abdullah's foreign policy has established Jordan as a key U.S. ally and significant international player, balancing its superpower ties with commitments to human rights and humanitarian law. The U.S.-Jordan FTA has significantly impacted Jordan's politics and economy, elevating its status and reinforcing its partnership with the U.S. Economically, the FTA opened the U.S. market to Jordanian exports, eliminated quotas and duties, and attracted foreign investment, helping modernize and liberalize Jordan's economy.

The eight chapter “Turkey and Iraqi crisis”, written by Bülent Aras, evoke the relations between Turkey and Iraq that have been historically complex, characterized by cultural and ideological discontinuities. Turkey has pursued a pragmatic policy toward Iraq, focusing on maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity, influenced by factors like the Kurdish issue, U.S. involvement, and the economic impact of sanctions. Turkey opposes an independent Kurdish state and has balanced relations with Kurdish parties in northern Iraq to control PKK activities. The U.S. has played a crucial role in Turkey's policy, but Turkish society largely opposed the Iraq war. Sanctions on Iraq severely impacted the Turkish economy, with estimated losses of \$50-60 billion, leading to internal debates and calls for compensation. Turkey's foreign policy remains torn between maintaining the status quo for national security and adopting EU values for democratization and economic development.

Finally, the ninth chapter of Neil Quilliam and Maggie Kamel “Modernising Legitimacy: Saudi Strategies”, explores the strategies adopted by Saudi Arabia to maintain and modernize its political, social, and religious legitimacy, from Islamization to cooptation and coercion. The analysis focuses on the complex interaction between the Saudi state, society, and religious figures (ulema), highlighting how internal dynamics and external pressures have influenced Saudi governance. The role of Islam, rentierism, and patrimonialism in constructing the legitimacy of the Saudi regime is discussed, as well as the challenges posed by internal opposition and international perception. Saudi Arabia has faced numerous challenges to its legitimacy, from the Iranian revolution to the Gulf War, to the September 11, 2001 attacks and the war in Iraq. These crises have highlighted internal tensions and external pressures, forcing the regime to revise its legitimacy strategies.

7. RESULTS

The book provides a detailed overview of the complex political and strategic dynamics in the Middle East, highlighting U.S. influence and regional challenges. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that takes into account stability, freedom, democracy, human rights and economic development for the future of the region. In summary, the chapters of the paper are united by the goal of providing a detailed and critical overview of the complex political and strategic dynamics in the post-9/11 Middle East, with a focus on U.S. influence and regional and global challenges.

The September 11 terror attacks have been at the forefront of the international relations agenda, marking a pivotal turning point in global politics and security. This tragic event led to profound changes in U.S. foreign policy and security strategy, significantly impacting the international arena. In the aftermath, it has become essential to monitor and evaluate developments closely, as the repercussions of U.S. actions in the Middle East extend far beyond the region, affecting global stability and security. The immediate response to the attacks included the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, aimed at dismantling Al-Qaeda and removing the Taliban from power. This operation, known as Operation Enduring Freedom, set the stage for prolonged military engagement in the region. The U.S. also implemented the Patriot Act, expanding domestic surveillance capabilities and strengthening counter-terrorism measures.

In 2003, the U.S. invasion of Iraq under the pretext of eliminating weapons of mass destruction further reshaped the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape. The toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime led to a power vacuum, resulting in sectarian violence and the rise of insurgent groups, most notably the Islamic State (ISIS). The destabilization of Iraq had ripple effects throughout the region, influencing political dynamics in neighboring countries and contributing to the Syrian Civil War. The U.S. also initiated the War on Terror, a global campaign targeting terrorist organizations and their supporters. This involved increased military presence in various countries, enhanced intelligence cooperation with allies, and targeted drone strikes in countries like Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia. These actions, while aimed at countering terrorism, also sparked significant debate over their legality, ethical implications, and the impact on civilian populations. The U.S.'s new foreign policy and security strategy emphasized the importance of countering terrorism through both military and diplomatic means. This led to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the reorganization of intelligence agencies to improve coordination and information sharing. Additionally, alliances and partnerships with countries in the Middle East were strengthened, albeit sometimes controversially, as seen with

U.S. support for regimes with questionable human rights records in exchange for cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts.

The repercussions of these policies are felt globally. Increased security measures and surveillance have become a common feature in many countries, affecting civil liberties and privacy. The U.S.'s actions have also influenced global counter-terrorism policies, with many nations adopting similar approaches. Furthermore, the focus on the Middle East has shifted resources and attention from other regions, affecting global power dynamics. The rise of China and the resurgence of Russia as significant geopolitical players have been partly attributed to the U.S.'s preoccupation with the Middle East. Additionally, the global economy has been impacted by fluctuations in oil prices and instability in key energy-producing regions.

In summary, the September 11 terror attacks not only transformed U.S. foreign policy and security strategy but also had profound and far-reaching effects on international relations. The developments in the Middle East post-9/11 continue to influence global politics, necessitating constant evaluation and adaptation to address the evolving challenges in this critical region.