



## THREATS TO U.S. CONTROL OF MIDDLE EASTERN OIL

**Aijaz Ahmad Wani**

Former Research Scholar at the Department of Political Science RDVV Jabalpur (MP)  
Mobile No: 7889643019

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### Abstract

Since the discovery of oil wealth in the region of Middle East it became the battle ground for great States to compete on. Particularly after the world war 2<sup>nd</sup> till this date the great states like Britain, France, Russia and China are early watching the chessboard to manipulate an opportunity in their favour. It is this competition over the oil of Middle East which has left the control of America both insecure and competitive.

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### INTRODUCTION

After the world war 2<sup>nd</sup> the state department recognised the oil wealth of Middle East as the greatest prize. It is this world view of material gain which influenced the US foreign policy in this oil rich area of world. It is now more than a half of century of American hegemony on the world. In the post-covid era the world is travelling through turbulent waters. Since the 2008 financial crisis the world economy was already in tatters over which the shock of Covid-19 has left the international order disturbed at many levels. The War in Ukraine and the possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan has increased the responsibility of the US based order to preserve its monopoly on the world. And Between all this the most important element which US need to take care of is its security of Middle Eastern Oil. There is the possibility that the recent Iran-Saudi negotiations might also disclose new challenges to the American control of oil of Middle East.

### Challenge of great States

At the rhetorical level, the threat from which the Middle East must be “defended” is generally pictured to be the Russia and China. While it is true that the US would not tolerate Russian and Chinese moves that threatened to provide the two countries with a significant role in Middle East oil production or distribution, this has rarely been a realistic concern—which is not to say that ideologists have not come to believe the fantasies they conjure up to serve other needs.<sup>1</sup>In fact, the countries has been hesitant to intrude on what is recognized to be American turf.

### Contextualising the American Tactics in operation:

The pattern was set early on in the Cold War, when the US organized its first major post-war counterinsurgency campaign, in Greece in 1947. Entering Greece after the Nazis had withdrawn, Britain had imposed the rule of royalist elements and former Nazi collaborators, suppressing the anti-Nazi resistance—in Athens, under Churchill’s order to British forces “to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in

progress.”<sup>2</sup> The repression and corruption of the British imposed regime revived the resistance. Severely weakened by the war, Britain was unable to cope with the problem and the U.S. took over the task of destroying the Communist-led peasant and worker-based nationalist movement that had fought the Nazis, while maintaining in power its own favourites, such as King Paul and Queen Fredericka, whose background was in the fascist youth movements, and Minister of the Interior Mavromichalis, described by US intelligence as a former Nazi collaborator and given responsibility for internal security. Some Senators found all of this difficult to reconcile with Truman Doctrine rhetoric supporting “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” under which the counter insurgency campaign was mounted. To them Senator Henry Cabot Lodge explained that “this fascist government through which we have to work is incidental.”<sup>3</sup>

The counterinsurgency effort was no small enterprise in the war that ensued, 160,000 Greeks were killed and 800,000 became refugees. The American Mission set itself the task of eliminating those to whom Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh referred as “subversive social forces,” rooted in the insidious “new growth of class-consciousness and proletarianism”—“an alien and subversive influence,” as American chargé Karl Rankin described them, to which “no leniency” should be shown until “the state has successfully reasserted its dominance” and the “bandit uprising has been quelled” (the Ambassador’s phrase, standard usage in US documents as in Soviet documents concerning Afghanistan). It was the American Mission and its fascist clients (and, of course, the wealthy and, later, American corporations, who were the real beneficiaries) who represented the “native” element in Greece, as distinct from the “alien” influence of Greek peasants and workers subverted by class-consciousness.

### **British Displeasure over American Savagery:**

The dedicated savagery with which the US Mission set about the task of liquidating the class enemy was a bit too much even for the British, who are not known for their gentlemanly decorum in such procedures; they were also not too happy about being displaced from yet another outpost of British influence and power. With the enthusiastic approval and direct participation of the US Mission, tens of thousands were exiled, tens of thousands more were sent to prison islands where many were tortured or executed (or if lucky, only “re-educated”), the unions were broken, and even mild anti-Communist socialists were suppressed, while the US shamelessly manipulated the electoral process to ensure that the right men won. The social and economic consequences were grim. A decade later, “between 1959 and 1963, almost a third of the Greek labour force emigrated in search of satisfactory employment.”<sup>4</sup> The fascist coup of 1967, again with apparent US backing, had its roots in the same events. A major motivation for this counterinsurgency campaign was concern over Middle East oil.

### **Apprehensions about the loosing control of oil in Middle East:**

In his March 12, 1947 speech announcing the Truman Doctrine, the President observed that “It is necessary only to glance at a map” to see that if Greece should fall to the rebels

“confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.” A February 1948 CIA study warned that in the event of a rebel victory, the US would face “the possible loss of the petroleum resources of the Middle East (comprising 40 per cent of world reserves).”<sup>5</sup> Russian threats were fabricated to justify US intervention, but without factual basis; Stalin was trying to rein in the Greek guerrillas, knowing that the US would not tolerate the loss of this Middle East outpost, as Greece was regarded, and not at all pleased at the prospect of a possible Balkan Communist confederation under Titoist influence. Again, it does not follow from the fact that the threat was fabricated that it was not believed in some planning circles; in public as in personal life, it is easy to come to believe what it is convenient to believe. The exaggeration of the Russian threat should be understood as an early example of the functioning of the Cold War system by which each superpower exploits the threat of the great enemy (its “Great Satan,” to borrow Ayatollah Khomeini’s term) to mobilize support for actions it intends to undertake in its own domains.

The success of the Greek counterinsurgency campaign, both at the military and ideological level, left its stamp on future US policymaking. Since that time there has been recurrent talk about Russia’s attempts to gain control of Middle East oil, the Soviet drive to the Gulf, etc. But no serious case has been made that the USSR would risk nuclear war for that would be the likely consequence—by pursuing any such objective. A more realistic threat to US dominance of the region has been posed by Europe. In the 1940s, the US succeeded in displacing France, and to a large extent Britain, in part by design, in part simply as a reflection of the power balance.<sup>6</sup> One consequence of the CIA-backed coup that restored the Shah in Iran in 1953 was to transfer 40% of Iranian oil from British to American hands, a fact that led the New York Times editors to express concern that some misguided British circles might believe that “American ‘imperialism’...has once again elbowed Britain from a historic stronghold.” At the same time, the editors exulted that “underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism.”<sup>7</sup> The costs of the object lesson were indeed heavy, as events were to show, and are still being paid; and many others have been compelled to learn the same lesson since.

### **Battle with Europe:**

Concern over European involvement in the region persisted. The US strongly opposed the attempt by Britain and France to reassert their influence in the area with the 1956 Suez invasion (in conjunction with Israel); the US was instrumental in expelling all three powers from Egyptian territory, though Soviet threats may also have played their part. Henry Kissinger, in his 1973 “Year of Europe” address, warned of the dangers of a Europe-dominated trading bloc including the Middle East and North Africa from which the US might be excluded. Later, he confided in a private meeting that one basic element in his post-1973 diplomacy was “to ensure that the Europeans and Japanese did not get involved in the diplomacy” concerning the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent US opposition to the “Euro-Arab dialogue” stems from the same concerns. Today, competition among the state

capitalist societies (including now some lesser powers such as South Korea) for a share in the wealth generated by oil production is a matter of growing significance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Since the world war 2<sup>nd</sup> the US been eagerly increasing and expand its allies and client base in the Middle East by removing the monarchs and dictators who were settled in European camp. Most importantly the Britain and France were two bitter contestants along the Soviet Union which was a formidable and fundamental challenge to the American Capitalist world order across the globe. With the passage of time and change in circumstances many of these challenge got either vulnerable albeit with the change of actors (presently China) which are dealing with America as the Sick man of 21<sup>st</sup> century. One the one side while America is striving to preserve its global rules based order the region of Middle East, on the other side it is also struggling with the crisis at home. Any challengeable political crises at the domestic front will decrease the appeal in United States global leadership which in turn will pose a potential challenge to the American interests abroad. In this backdrop the Middle East is already simmering with crisis since the Arab Spring and any revolutionary change in the region could alter the power equation against the America. Now it remains to be seen that whether America will be successful in the current international situation which will logically define the fate of American control over the oil of Middle East.

## **REFERENCES**

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3. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, pp. 119, 88.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 1, 149, 154, 296; see the same source for an extensive review and documentation.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 80, 232.
6. For discussion, see TNCW, chapters 2, 11, and references cited there.
7. *New York Times*, August 6, 1954; see TNCW, p. 99, for further quotes and comment.
8. Cited in TNCW, p. 457, from MERIP Reports, May 1981; also, *J. of Palestine Studies*, Spring 1981. The source is a memorandum obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.