

## THE GEOSTRATEGIC CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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### Abstract

In the context of regional studies, the Middle East can be considered a distinct region in global politics because of its geographical and economic characteristics, as well as the nature of local actors and influential international forces. There have been several levels of conflict between major powers and superpowers, and the region has seen several levels of power that have shifted from military power to soft power to smart power. The purpose of this research paper is to extract the strategic roles of the superpowers the United States and Russia in the Middle East, and to shed light on the sources of power and manifestations of the conflict between the United States and Russia in the region.

**Keywords:** Geostrategy; Middle East; conflict; power; war

### 1- INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Second World War, international relations have known two super powers: the United States and the former Soviet Union. This conflict proliferated to many regions of the world, and in many cases it almost became a direct war between them, especially in the Middle East. The conflict now between the United States and Russia in the Middle East has become apparent in several issues in the region. We should first define the concept of *geostrategic* and clarify the content of similar terms: *political geography* and *geopolitics*. Professor Stephane Rosier from the French University of Renne believes that political geography is the state's awareness of the physical and geological structure of the state, and how it can be a source of state power. This is the first stage, as we move to a higher level of geopolitics when it begins to move the places and manifestations of power in the interests of achieving their local and regional interests.<sup>1</sup> Thus, geostrategic can be considered as the exploitation of the elements of the power of the state in controlling and influencing the affairs of remote regions.

### 2- OBJECTIVE

This paper aims at clarifying the input and output of the conflict between the United States and Russia in the Middle East, which allows us to measure the level and nature of conflict and finally to identify the regional and international repercussions resulting from it.

### **3- METHOD AND DISCUSSION**

The comparison was chosen as a tool to reach the results of this research by comparing the sources of power in both the United States and Russia. The diversity of these sources gives these two superpowers different forms of power and makes their goals different in the Middle East.

A/ Russia:

1-Geographical location and economic and human components: history tells us that Russia has been resistant to any external colonization. Russia covers more than 17 million km<sup>2</sup>, and overlooks the Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and three seas (Caspian, Black and Baltic)<sup>2</sup>. It is bordered to the south by the Ural Mountains and the Himalayas with a population of over 148 million inhabitants. Economically Russia has many energy resources such as gas, coal, oil, gold, diamonds, iron and phosphates.<sup>3</sup>

2- Military doctrine and the role of personal factors: The great strength of the current Russian power is attributed to the nature of its military doctrine based on two aspects, the first of which is concerned with studying war and its nature, how to prepare it, how to build the armed forces, and the second is the military aspect which is concerned with technical matters.<sup>4</sup> From Ivan IV to Stalin, a good reputation has been developed for Russian strategy, especially in Vladimir Putin era, which is deeply impressed by Alexandre DOUGUINE thought of restoring the Russian imperial role in Europe and the world.

3- The regional allies: The former socialist ideology and the geographical neighborhood formed a wonderful network of allies who share confidence with Moscow, which intends to defend them, and not to lose any of its allies as what happened with Iraq. It increases the strength of its relations, especially Syria and Iran.

B/ United States:

1- political Geography: The surface area of the United States is more than 9 million km<sup>2</sup>, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific has a border with the Arctic and the Union of Great Lakes, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico and there are several rivers, including Mississippi, Missouri and Colorado. It possess many natural and mineral resources such as oil and gas Copper, gold and uranium, with a population of more than 318 million inhabitants according to 2014 estimates. Local production is more than \$ 16 trillion, on average, through the production of iron and steel, automobiles, aircraft, electronics, arms deals and a range of agricultural commodities.<sup>5</sup>

2- Military and technological factors: The United States invests in various types of technology in modernizing its military and military systems. This is the basis of its military doctrine and its strategic logic is based on the superiority of the air force and its use in global domination.<sup>6</sup> Military spending exceeds \$ 400 billion, and the new military revolution and the Nicholas-Gold Water Act have contributed to the development of the United States army.

3- Regional allies: The United States has a group of allies in the region imposed by historical and strategic data, such as Iraq, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Turkey and Israel.

In the Middle East, there are many units which produce geopolitical impact. In this case we find turkey, the state member in NATO organization, Israel, the traditional ally of United States. Also we find Egypt and the kingdom of Jordan which are related with Israel by diplomatic treaties. In the other part it is allied with Russia, Iran Islamic republic and Syria. We ought not to forget the role of oil reserves from the Caspian Sea.

We observed that the conflict between United States and Russia is limited to two imported and principal files which are: the crisis in Syria and Iranian nuclear program. The other files which can be an area of struggle between them is new strategic relations between turkey and Russia, and the crisis of Qatar and the future relation with GCC. Egypt we organized periodic meetings with Russia where there were several agreements to sell weapons:

1-The Syrian crisis: The Syrian revolution came within the framework of Domino Arab revolutions which surprised the Western governments in Tunisia, but it took the initiative in Yemen, Libya and Syria. The United States intervened in favor of the opposition in a clear desire to eliminate the Assad regime, which does not serve America's or Israel's interests by helping Hezbollah and Hamas. Russia is working to maintain the Tartous military base on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and does not want to lose its pro-regime as it did with Iraq, and we see that where there are Russian military bases, it will do military intervention to serve its interest as it is in Ukraine.

2- Iran's nuclear program: After the signing of the Iranian nuclear deal with the group 5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, plus Germany) and Iran. (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)<sup>7</sup>, this file has become in fact one of the most complex files that develop the conflict between Russia

and the United States. Iran relies on building its military model and its weapons systems on a group of states as China, North Korea and Russia, and all these states do not accept direct American policy. In addition to this, Russia had an important role in Iranian nuclear agreement, and also in the final realization. But with the arrival of the Trump administration, it decided to reconsider or cancel the agreement because it classifies it as one of non-interests to the American agreement and it must be renegotiated or rejected. The Iranian government has declared that the agreement is non-renegotiable because it has been achieved with the consent of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Iran is under one of the most complex inspection systems in the world, by the supervising of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and by recognition of the European Union, which rejects the United States position on ending the agreement and introducing new sanctions on Iran.

If war starts between the United States and Iran it will lead to deep changes in the geopolitical map of the Middle East and the global geostrategic map.

3- The struggle for energy resources in the Caspian Sea and the Gulf: since the declaration of Harry Truman 1947 about the importance of Gulf region and the possibility of intervention to secure the free population, the intent of United States seems clearly to intervene in region affairs. Also Secretary of State's John Foster Dulles made an important declaration: "the area between Gibraltar and Indian Ocean took vital importance in both economic and military affairs". This declaration confirmed that the intention of the United States is to be present in this region since a long time. The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq forces in 1990 gave the United States the opportunity to impose its hegemony in the region militarily by creating a set of military bases, paving the way for the expansion of NATO to the south. This region which is characterized by many marine roads, such as Suez Canal and Hormuz straits, which guaranteed the flow over 60% from world production of oil and gas. The war with Iran will also lead to the arrival of the United States in Caspian oil, something that Russia does not fully accept. If the United States succeed in the occupation of Iran it will be part of countries which control oil of the Caspian sea, and it will be near to the military bases of Russia on the shores of the Caspian sea

The following map shows the risk of United States access to the Caspian Sea on both Iran and Russia



The map source: <https://jamestown.org/program/littoral-states-close-signing-agreement-legal-status-caspian-sea/>

#### 4- CONCLUSION

The perception and the use of power between Russia and the United States is different in the inputs but it is similar in outputs because Russia defends its vital influence and geography proximity, while the United States makes many strategic attempts to occupy other regions, which offer it advanced power. This kind of conflict will change the nature of international order.

In fact the Syrian crisis returned the geostrategic conflict to the Middle East, after what happened in Ukraine and shores of the Black Sea. Because each state knows the strengths and weaknesses of each other, this kind of conflict it will not develop a direct war between them.

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