

Orientalist perspective on occident's reality of War in West Asia

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Abstract

West Asia is conflict ridden for long time. In the recent years the conflict between Palestine, Israel, USA, Iran and the entire gulf has loomed large resulted in elimination of top leaders, civilians, destruction of infrastructure, migration, Trade war, inflation and geo-political fiasco among others. The method of warfare led by the west has changed discourse on war technology, Artificial intelligence, and grand narratives. This study is analysis of orientalist perspective of the current war led by the west. The west has categorised themselves as civilised, ordered west against chaotic, deprived, conflict ridden East as orientalist E. Said, G.C Spivak, Ngugi, Homi K Bhabha have conceptualised. The contemporary conflict in East is not only civilizational but conquest for economic and geo-political power tussle among nations. The stakeholders of war has changed from traditional state driven to factored role of Non- state actors and super state entities also. Further, in the globalised and decolonised world, new methods of hegemony and conquest are being used for regime change in select eastern/peripheral nations and global south. This narrative war has to be changed to provide voices and inclusiveness to the eastern world who were historically rich in resources but were always on the target for the same. In the name of regime change, democracy, human rights west has exploited the east on various aspects. Finally, massive reforms in the global governance like UNSC, WTO, and IMF is need of the hour for stable ruled based world order. Further, conflict among nations can be resolved through multi-dimensional cooperation and de- hegemonies west through dialogue and inclusion of the eastern nations.

Methodology- qualitative and interpretive research approach, Comparative study, Discourse analysis.

Keyword

Orientalism, Geopolitics, Diplomacy, dependency theory, Liberalism, West Asia, Hegemony, Artificial intelligence and War, Sub- altern politics, Diaspora, Energy security, Global governance.

Introduction

The conflict in the eastern countries is not without the interest of the western countries in the globalised world. Historical contestations among the nations keep out bursting due to tectonic shift in foreign policy goals, clash of civilisations, Hegemony, Balance of Power, and Anarchical world view intermittently. On 7th October 2023, members of Hamas armed wing called the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and other Palestinian armed groups, accompanied by Palestinian civilians, numbering at least 1,000 persons,⁹ carried out a coordinated, complex attack on Israeli civilian communities, civilian locations and military bases in southern Israel, near the border with Gaza. This was the findings of the UN Human Rights Council fact finding commission¹ (2024) on the October 7th attack. Attackers entered Israel by land, sea and air in conjunction with the launch of a large-scale rocket and mortar attack towards cities, towns and villages and military bases in southern and central Israel.

EH Carr the realist theorist on International Politics vehemently criticised liberal ideals of 1920's and 1930's idealised by Woodrow Wilson the former president of United States of America—lamenting the "utopian" illusions that neglected the reality of balance of power and politics. He held the League of Nations failed because the idea of harmony of interests that was not existed. On October 2024. Israel's foreign minister has declared United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres “persona non grata” and barred him from entering the country when UN unequivocally on the context of Iran missile attacks.

The reason for the contestation among the nations in west Asia specifically Arabs, Palestine and Israel has historical context which includes civilizational conflict and religious linkages of the holiest sites are located in Jerusalem. The three religions Islam, Christianity and Judaism have their claims of holiest sites Al Aqsa Mosque, Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Temple mount. Further the developments in the west in the 16th and 17th century with the treaty of Westphalia October 24, 1648 which developed the notion of modern nation state and *sovereignty*. The last hundred years or so the world has witnessed two world wars and multiples wars among nations which is still continuing.

Britain colonised the area known as Palestine during World War I after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, who ruled that part of the West Asia during that time. Conflict between the Jewish and Arab population's deepened when the United Kingdom consented in principle to the establishment of a "national home" for Jewish people in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration (1917)². So one can conclude in this context that the causal factor for continuous conflict among Arabs and Jews are with the Balfour declaration and propagation of the Zionist movement for the

¹ Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7

October 2023 in Israel <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4051246?ln=en&v=pdf>.

² This was pertinent declaration for the establishment of the two nations on different identity.

Jewish land for Jews in Palestine. In this context the origin of the Arab-Israel war and Israeli occupation became perennial which further legitimised through voting by the United Nations in the year 1948. In the 1930's and 1940's the persecution of the Jews in Europe and settling of the Jews population from other countries gave rise to the population of the Jews in Palestine. Further, British withdrawal and UN recognition has provided identity to the two nations- Palestine and Israel.

Furthermore, the year 1967 witnessed six days Arab war where Israeli occupation trajectory started which resulted in continuous territorial capture, persecution and pushing the Palestinian population out of their land. Since the foundation of Jewish home land the region has witnessed *Nakba* (ethnic cleansing, dispossession of land of the Arab Palestinians during 1947 and after) and several *Intifada's* which witnessed resistance from the Palestinians intermittently. The fresh contestations that started October 7, 2023 took the nature of full-blown war among nations which includes Iran, Israel, USA and gulf countries, European countries among others when on February 28, 2026, the Supreme leader of Iran was assassinated. US-Israel bombed Tehran using cluster bombs to eliminate top leadership of Iran as reported by CNN and Reuters. Further, Tehran launched fresh retaliatory attacks as it confirmed the death of decades-long supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

Orientalist perspective

How the east looks the western involvement in the Middle East conflict? Further, in the recent developments in Russia-Ukraine war, Venezuela crisis, conflicts in South Asia like Afghanistan-Pakistan, India-Pakistan, Democratic upheavals in Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. It is pertinent to understand that the aspirations of the west has certain deviation from the east. Major post-colonial theorists like Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak (1988) in *Can the subaltern speak?* Views west led war as destructive mechanism often masked by "civilizing mission". In the colonial period the colonist power propagated the idea that the west is coming to east to civilise and develop.

Furthermore there are pertinent questions on the quest for the war in the East. What are the interests of the western countries? What are the goals of the countries of the east? What is the role of non- state actors? Wallerstein, I. (1974) in *the modern world-system* analysed the flourishing of U.S. hegemony and its steady, irreversible decline, as well as the structural crisis of the world-system in the form of its capitalist world economy. In this context conquest of war is conquest for energy, market and business. Even the deprivation of global south has global policy problems influenced by global north.

Further, Said, E. W. (1978) in *Orientalism* criticized the American war on Asia—particularly in west Asia—as an hegemonic project rooted in "Orientalism" where biased, western representations of Arabs and Muslims which justified military intervention and colonial goals. He claimed this pushed for a "clash of ignorance" rather than civilizations, where the U.S. reflected its violence and dominance as "liberation" and "democracy" in the west Asian countries. Orientalism can be understood as a system through which the West constructs

knowledge and representations of the East, producing a binary distinction between the “Occident” and the “Orient” (Said, 1978).

In the past decades from Iraq to Afghanistan countries have witnessed war, upheaval led by western countries in the name of war conspiracy, democracy and ruled based world order. South Asia is dependent on the West like Technology, military hard ware, Automobile, Digital devices and services. Rafael deal, is one of the example of India and France military acquisition which raised questions Japan and South East Asian countries are dependent on the West Asia for more than 90 percentage of crude oil imports. The disruption at the Strait of Hormuz has surged prices of crude oil and petroleum products. Even Japan as per Reuters report has released fifty days or more oil reserves. Further, Japan on security has been dependent on USA historically due to its constitutional law. Japan wants stable West Asia for perennial energy security.

Further, in the recent years China has been assertive in the region through its Belt and road scheme in the West Asia, Asia and Africa. Further, China's economic foot print is rising in Africa, gulf and Asia. China's foreign policy is on liberalism idea of trade deal, infrastructure development in developing nations and military dominance in the regions is applying trade restrictions policies on different countries putting high tariff on imports. In fact, Trump administration has put up to 145 percentage of tariff on certain goods. The global economic turmoil starting with tariff war, oil supply crisis, COVID 19 recovery, Russia Ukraine war, democratic upheaval in some countries of Asia and Africa has raised a serious concern for the future of global governance and sustainability issues. Spencer, R. (2013) in The ‘War on Terror’ and the Backlash against Orientalism stated that many scholars criticised Said's idea of orientalism. Pragmatically western hegemony has been sustained though the mode of production changed. Tech giants of the USA and west like Tesla, Amazon, Google, Meta, Nvidia controls the imagination of the world through business, people to people connection and influence voters. Pager attack by Israel in Lebanon killing key military and civilian leaders, cluster bombing in Tehran which killed Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei and Remote controlled precision attack by Iran has changed the warfare method. Traditional warfare methods of border conflict and control have shifted to artificial intelligence guided missile and drones.

Further, Prolonged warfare and hostility in West Asia have severely challenged regional public health. Fighting damages essential medical infrastructure, laboratories, healthcare and sanitation facilities, and pharmaceutical supply chains. Simultaneously, housing destruction and forced displacement increased the risk of communicable diseases while obstructing emergency, maternal, and child care. Over time, affected health systems become unable to sustain basic routine health services, including routine immunizations, chronic disease care, and mental health care support. As a result, the casualties of war expand beyond combat injuries to encompass malnutrition, widespread psychological distress, infectious disease outbreaks, and preventable

fatalities—impacts that fall most heavily on children, women, the elderly, and displaced or refugee populations.

COVID-19 increased these pre-existing vulnerabilities. Conflict-afflicted nations struggled to conduct disease surveillance, mapping, testing, physical distancing, and vaccination campaigns due to destructed infrastructure and displaced communities living in densely populated localities. Furthermore, movement restrictions and trade blockades disrupted food and medical supply lines. The convergence of military conflict and the global pandemic created a double jeopardy: warfare degraded the infrastructure required to manage an epidemic, while the outbreak overwhelmed already fragile healthcare framework. Finally, these circumstances highlight that public health in West Asia depends primarily on peace, humanitarian safeguards, stable health institutions, and global cooperation.

War is now a booming business. Economic Times (2025) analysed war and business matrix. Global defence budgets have witnessed incremental trajectory. This fuels military-industrial growth. Private companies offer services to military establishments. The arms industry flourish from conflict. Countries buy more weapons for deterrence. New technologies like hypersonic missiles, drones are emerging. This makes a large section of the global population poorer. The world spends a lot to control world inequality lab reports rising inequality in the world. The West is front runner for the wars from South America, Africa and Asia. In the colonial period they colonised for raw materials and market now new form of capital and cyber ecosystem and institutions hegemonized the global south. The historical world order was based on enlightenment project for grand narratives set up by the west but post-modern thinker like Jean Lyotard discoursed on micro narration which was indicated towards the aspirations of the nations which were ignored. Further, War is one aspect of control but bio politics as Michel Foucault argues that state controls the population through various measures.

India's non-aligned dilemma on West and West Asia

Historically India followed the policy of non-alignment since the cold war period when the countries of the world were polarising on the lines of ideological divide on western capitalism and soviet socialism, newly independent countries after war were sceptical towards the western led development due to its inherent nature of monopolising social, political and economic life. Dadabhai Nouruji in his book Poverty and un-British rule in India has outlined the reason for destruction of handicraft and agrarian economy. So post-colonial debates was centred around the dependency of the east on west. Andre Gunder Frank has discussed this in dependency theory where the development of the east are due to the deliberated policies of the west.

Non alignment policy was to focus on self -reliance and economic development³. Today India is partner with multilateral engagement at the global level. Panchsheel doctrine (1955) was one such diplomacy with china for peaceful coexistence. Non-interference in the internal affairs of States is the cardinal foreign policy of India. Even during the current west Asian crisis India is not aligning with any particular country. India has key interest in the development of Chabahar port, diaspora, oil and energy supply, trade with Iran. Crude oil, inorganic/organic chemicals, fertilisers, plastic products, glass and glassware, natural or cultivated pearls, precious or semiprecious stones, leather, and other items are among the major commodities that Iran export to India. Iran also export agricultural products like Almonds, pistachios, dates, and saffron among others. Further, Indian Prime Minister visited Israel which created fissure in the relation of Iran and India. In the beginning when Supreme leader was killed during cluster bombing in February end India was bit hesitant to condemn which later was recovered soon through foreign ministry condemnation. Historically Iran is friend of India not with the perspective of energy security only but also cultural exchange, funding, agricultural products.

India's three important diplomacy goals lies in energy security, security of the diaspora and maintaining neutral diplomacy with the west and the east. Around 10 million Indian diaspora lives in the gulf countries. These includes white and blue collar employees. As per World migration report (2026) India, however, continued to be well above the rest, receiving more than USD 137 billion as remittances, and remained the only country to surpass USD 100 billion. One point to be noted that one third of the remittances in India comes from GCC countries where UAE and Saudi Arabia have sizeable amount. This is testament of the complex nature of Indian diaspora and remittances, so disruption in any global locality will in one way or other dent India's economy.

Almost all the states in India get remittances from the gulf particularly economically deprived states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal , Uttar Pradesh have sizeable economic migration to the gulf countries. Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh were the early birds to migrate and settle in the gulf region. Disruption in gulf region due to attacks from Iran has pushed them to return back or the business sentiments pushed the investors to shift to other countries. Further, second aspect is energy security Oil, gas, fertilizers (DAP, Urea) supply disruption will cost not industrial loss but Agricultural output as well. Finally, India have to maintain balance in diplomacy as sizeable imports and high skilled job opportunities are based in the chip industry, Automobile and services. Third aspect is diplomatic neutrality and sustainable bilateral relations with west Asia and Europe.

³ Further, NonAlignment 2.0 is an attempt to identify the basic principles that should guide India's foreign and strategic policy over the next decade. Non-Alignment 2.0 is an attempt to identify the basic principles that should guide India's foreign and strategic policy over the next decade. <https://cprindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NonAlignment-2.pdf>.

China, Japan and East Asian countries perspective

During May, 2026 when US President Donal Trump visited China for bilateral engagement on multiple issues like trade, technology and diplomacy on west Asia. Further, Xi Xing ping stated China, US should be 'partners not rivals'. Xi on the realigning China-US relations stated that “common interests outweigh” their differences and expressed hope that the two countries can work together at a time of historic turbulence. Critical point to note here in US and China are competing on many fronts which includes trade, technology and diplomacy both countries putting tariffs more than 100% on various products including rare earth materials. China has condemned US bombing and killing of top leaders of Iran and central Asian countries during the ongoing crisis. ⁴

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stated Japan's position on the situation in Iran and stressed the need for early de-escalation. She said Japan opposes Iran's attacks on countries in the region and its effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Asian countries mostly dependent on gulf countries for their oil, gas and by products imports. Japan and south East Asian nations source 80-90% of oil imports passing through Strait of Hormuz. Blockade of the passage (Hormuz) has created supply shortage, inflation, partial lockdowns, distress migration, flights disruptions, and work from home measures among others in the world. So countries of the Far East want the stable west Asia for energy imports, services and product export, diplomatic interests among others. Balancing the diplomatic relation with the east without deteriorating their relations with the west is their key foreign policy agenda in the complex global world order.

South Korea's diplomacy towards west Asian conflict is based on stable region with perennial supply of energy and other imports. South Korea condemned the Hamas hostage of Israeli civilian case after 7th October 2023 attack. Further, South Korea condemned and showed concern to the continuous arms and air attack by the IDF in Gaza, Palestine. South Korea is votary of democracy, peace and rule based global order. In the interdependent world system major channels of supply should be secured for stable economic growth, Further, Japan and South Korea are mostly dependent on the west Asian oil and gas supply. Blockade of the Strait of Hormuz will disrupt more than 70-80% of South Korea's oil and gas supply. Trade among gulf and South Korea is high spanning diversified products. The increased connectivity among gulf countries and South Korean economy is represented by the free trade agreement in the year, 2022.

The security challenges of Israel and its neighbours in the region are quite serious, the same applies to South Korea and North Korea. Sharing in intelligence and defense has been promoted by this shared history of Israel and South Korea. There are myriad of geopolitical and trade conflict amongst the east Asian nations like Dokdo island dispute, South China Sea dispute, Senkaku island, Sakhalin question, EEZ and UNCLOS conformity issues.

⁴ Global policy base is shifting the east with the rise of China and India.

Further, China, Japan, South Korea among others want stable and peaceful Arab world due to various factors. One, these countries source highest percentage of energy from gulf region. Second, their diaspora stays in these countries for services and business. Third, gulf region which incorporates huge market like Riyadh, Dubai, Doha, Sharjah among others. In the recent decades East Asian countries have their new alignment in their relation with the gulf countries. Further, they have balance the relation with west as well for market, import of chip, agricultural product, technology and services. So stable gulf and rising USA and Europe is pertinent for future trade and diplomacy. Now, the east is not that inferior that was during World War II. Again, post-colonial debates were based on the bipolarity of superior west vs inferior east. The rise of China, Japan, South Korea in the last seventy five years has raised a debate that 20th century was west led development while 21st century would be east led development. Most of the manufacturing bases are shifting to Asian countries due to affordable labor, technology, innovation and resources to expand. Finally, East Asian countries are expecting stable west Asia with cordial relation with USA and Israel.

U N policy on international security and way forward

Global instability creates ecosystem of weak investment, withdrawal of capital investments from share market, migration issues, and rise of unemployment. In the 21st century regional organizations played key role on policy negotiations which has raised questions on the active role of United Nations and its allied organisations like World Bank, IMF, WHO, UNSC, UNICEF among others. Participation of the global South compared with global north is lacking. More inclusion of countries of the east is need of the hour. On various fronts post war period the global governance focused was more on poverty reduction, war reconstruction later good governance, democracy in 1990's. Major issues lies in the inclusion of eastern peripheral nations to come on board of institutions like UNSC, IMF, World Bank and UNFCCC⁵.

West led development has also questioned the very notion of war with respect to the regime changes historically, Colonial experiences of the east are testament of this. In the contemporary world the challenges are multi-dimensional like Trade war, terrorism, Global warming, migration, refugee crisis, War, Human rights violations. “Collective security” has created new front of confrontation among the nations. So looking into this perspective robust global governance with representation will generate an ecosystem of trust among the nations.

Furthermore mixing of energy can be more judicious and sustainable. Shifting energy mix of solar, nuclear, wind and other potential oil reserves should be explored. Venezuela and USA have potential oil reserve. Further, more while hard power diplomacy is sneaking in due to continuous conflict, soft power diplomacy would push for long term bilateral or multilateral relations in the globalised world.

⁵ Reforms in the UNSC is becoming pertinent to solve global problems as the global problem has shifted from traditional security aspect to non-traditional security paradigm like cyber war, AI and drone war among others.

In the recent past conflict of Israel and Palestine is perennial in nature. Long term solution for the same should be devised on the line of two nation theory as UN has also time and again reiterated.

Tarak Barkawi, and Ketih Stanski (eds) in *Orientalism and War* (2013) states that there are misrepresentation that sits at the core of historical and contemporary Orientalism's concerns the East as a site of disorder and the West as that which put order to disorder. War entails a cycle of the unmaking and remaking of truths of all kinds. Specifically, war has an uncanny capacity to overturn received wisdom of all kinds. Wars and military operations rarely turn out as expected. The case study of Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria where outcome were undemocratic, centralised and violation of human rights became norms. Finally Dependency myth, historical subjugation of East by the west.

Non state actors' played key role in the current conflict among nations. Non state actors are those groups who have certain ideological conformity or conflict with the state. In the west Asian crisis their role is paramount. Non state actors like Hamas (Palestine), historically there are non- state actors who later formed government through struggle or mobilisation. Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, leading to a brief power-sharing agreement. Houthis in Yemen backed by Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon are the key non state actor backed by Iranian state. They not only provide diplomatic support but also provide military and other warfare support the aligning nation. So containing these armed groups through long term mediation looking into the aspirations of the east is crucial for stable west Asia. In this complex global village as discussed earlier stability is important for global peace and development.

In conclusion, the peripheral and global south have come through bilateral or multilateral engagement to stabilize the economic disruption, geo political tensions and migration crisis. Reforms in the UNSC is need of the hours like increasing permanent membership of the countries of the east and global south. Reforms in global trade governance, climate policy with egocentrism perspective, nuclear disarmament, mixing of energy security, abiding statues of global governance like UNCLOS, NPT, CTBT among others. UN Charter article 2 entails the cooperation and sovereignty philosophy for world peace. Further, modern nation states are mired into complex contemporary global challenges which have to be solved through modern policy measures, stable policy with global cooperation and mutual trust with liberal perspective. Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan understood imperialism and colonialism as outdated chapters in history. While he acknowledged the destructive legacies of Western domination would continue for the conquest of economic and political power and cautioned nations of the west of "destructive competition". Finally politics and conflict among nations should be solved on the philosophy of cooperation, dialogue and mutual co-existence rather than dominance.

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