

Research Paper

Dimensions of Diplomatic Coercion in Middle East

by

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Abstract

Coercive diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy has been employed since centuries. Strategic or diplomatic coercion essentially seeks to influence, compel or force a state to either adopt or to do away with a particular and specific behaviour. Since becoming sole superpower after Soviet disintegration, the US embarked on a mission to instil its own values into other nations and states. Middle East constitutes to be a strategic and politically influential region in the world politics. Much of the US interests converge in the region and for that the US has been employing methods of coercive diplomacy to achieve its long-term objectives relating to politics, economy and trade routes. Peace or conflict in the Middle East is linked to the security and stability of the region, the economies of the Arab countries and Iran. The dimensions of coercion in the Middle East needs to be analyzed in the context of security of the Islamic countries, the core issue of right to self-determination of the Palestinian people by bridging the gap between Shia and Sunni populations across the region through the promotion of peaceful co-existence among various Muslim sects. Already the US coercive diplomacy has turned into a full destructive war at the cost of the people. Pakistan as a fellow Muslim country, having cordial relations with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and diplomatic relations with Iran, may play its role to normalize hostilities within the Muslim countries.

Keywords: Coercive diplomacy, Middle East, economic sanctions, world war II, WMD, target states, US administration,

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1. Introduction

Since centuries, states, kingdoms and empires have been engaged in interactions and deliberations bilaterally and multilaterally for their interests. The process of negotiations, interaction and deliberations among political entities, such as states, is called diplomacy. This interaction aims to achieve pre-determined national interests. On the contrary, some powerful states try to subjugate the poor, vulnerable and dependent countries by using coercive tactics to achieve their desired goals. This process is called coercive diplomacy. The concept and practice of coercive diplomacy has gained prominence since the “cold war” (Crystal 2015).

The concept of coercive diplomacy is applied to assess interactions among states for their interests. States employ coercive diplomacy to alter a target state’s behaviour and course of action in a way that it benefits the powerful state. In some cases of diplomacy, powerful states engage themselves in employing threats to achieve their objectives. The main idea behind is to put diplomatic pressure by using threats to influence the strategic calculation of the target state to conform to certain norms and course of action. The concept of coercive diplomacy has been used for crisis management (Levy 2008)

Coercive diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy has been employed since centuries. Strategic or diplomatic coercion essentially seeks to influence, compel or force a state to either adopt or to do away with a particular and specific behavior. However, in order to do so, the methods employed are under serious scrutiny to identify their potency and impact, if any.

The tactics and methods employed under the pretext of coercion include: economic sanctions to influence internal political scenario of a state and to compel the target state to act in accordance with stronger state’s strategic or economic gains. Another tactic of strategic coercion involves an explicit threat of use of force against the target state to force it to amend its foreign policy accordingly (Perez 2015). Some argue that coercive diplomacy is a political tool which has an ability to resolve crises and avoid full scale war (Romeo 2016). Such diplomatic strategies are used by states when their objectives of interests are opposed by other states. This concept has gained prominence after the Second World War but essentially after the Cold War. The concept highlights strategies and options of non-military instruments employed to achieve objectives of foreign policy to extract a certain type of behavior from “target states” (Smith 2012).

2. Diplomacy and coercion in literature

There are multiple theoretical narratives on coercive diplomacy and power. For instance, the balance of power theory says when a state becomes stronger and comparatively more powerful, the likelihood of its actual use of force increases. This narrative is further strengthened by anarchical structure of international relations where states can use force to achieve their interests and foreign policy objectives. Also, the narrative involves the preponderance of power theory, which states that comparatively stronger states should employ threats of use of force than actual use of force (Hirose 2014)

Modern methods and strategies of coercion vary from state to state and from target to target. More recent methods include trade embargoes, the breaking of diplomatic relations, voting against target states’ interests at international forums and expulsion from such international forums (The Stanley Foundation 2006). The

second set of such coercive diplomacy includes the use of economic sanctions, arms embargoes, travel bans and financial sanctions (Smith 2012).

Despite such harsh methods at the disposal of the stronger states, the success of such coercion is not guaranteed. Alexander George (1994), a prominent authority on the subject of international relations and especially coercive diplomacy, suggests that the desired results from such coercion are hard to achieve. For such tactics to succeed George mentions eight basic fundamentals of coercive diplomacy. The objective to be achieved must be transparent; coercing state firmly accepts the demands. There exists a support on the domestic and international side for the coercer, coercing state must have strong authority, terms of settlement must be crystal clear, the coercer state must establish urgency of the demand, the target states must be apprised of the escalation of the matter; and imbalance in the coercer's motivations meaning that the target must not be resisting the objective fiercely (Markwica 2018) .

Coercive diplomacy includes economic sanctions as a significant factor to induce a state to change its course of action. However, not only states engage in imposing such actions on the target states. International institutions such as the United Nations also engage in placing economic sanctions on target states to induce a positive change in their calculus. The 1990s is sometime referred to as the sanctions' decade due to the United Nations imposition of economic sanctions on various countries. The institution believes that instead of military action or violent confrontations, economic sanctions present a far better option to engage the target state and to force them to change course. The actions of UN were then followed by individual states in further isolating the target states (Centre for Security Studies 2010). It is worthy to note here that such economic actions are solely based to achieve political ends. Economic sanctions are essentially discriminatory restrictions imposed on target states on the import or export of goods, technology, capital, or services against a country or a group of countries. The coercer could be a state, region or international institute to achieve a political goal.

Sanctions continue to play a central role in contemporary politics as well. The debate on the sanctions highlights imperfect record it has had in changing state behaviors. But, simultaneously, it is argued that such actions are the best possible replacement for armed conflicts to achieve political ends (Jaeger 2015). With time, the sanctions have become smarter which target specific financial transactions, business activities and individuals where the economy of the target state lies to better affect the economic situation of the state to elicit a favorable response. But it also argued that even after economic sanctions coercer might go to war which would result in first destroying the economy and then human life (Smeets 2018).

There is an increasing trend in cooperation for sanctions' application among states, regional and global institutions. This cooperation has increased primarily due to the similarities in the reasons for sanctions. Consider the example of Syrian civil war where the regime employed violent measures to tackle anti-government protestors. As a result of the violence, five different international entities slammed sanctions on Syria including League of Arab States, European Union, the United States, Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Islamic Development Bank (Borzyskowski and Portela 2016).

3. Diplomatic coercion in the Middle East

Since the World War II, the United States has had a fundamental role in the Middle East which rests on building and then defending a liberal international order. The role of the US military in the region has been

significant and has sustained itself over the decades. Being easily sucked into regional wars of the Middle East, the US has increasingly been getting embroiled in newer wars in the regions. President Obama said:

“Since the World War II, some of our most costly mistakes came not from our restraint, but from our willingness to rush into military adventures.”

Since becoming sole superpower after Soviet disintegration, the US embarked on a mission to instill its own values onto other nations and states. For that purpose, the US had to infuse the values by force in some cases.

George and Simons (1994) defines coercive diplomacy as the dynamic persuasion which is based on a threat of penalty that is credible enough to make the rival conform to the given demands. It is constructed on an ‘extortion strategy’ that hunts for dissuading the target state from following an infringement already commenced. If further elaborated, the latter is told either to stop what he is up to or to disengage with what has already been done (Levy 2008).

Middle East constitutes to be a strategic and politically influential region in the world politics. Much of the US interests converge in the region and for that the US has been employing methods of coercive diplomacy to achieve its long-term objectives relating to politics, economy, and trade routes.

Generally, the US policies do not change with the change of government, but in case of Middle East, President Trump’s policy exhibits a marked change from that of President Barak Obama. Thompson (2018) believes that the Trump administration policy for Middle East is to strengthen Israel and weaken Iran so that the balance of power could be in the hands of Israel amid destruction in Syria. Contrary to the Trump administration’s policy, Obama administration took concrete steps to do a damage control by using soft power and give political solution a space in the Middle East crisis. Obama administration had cut the presence of the US troops in Iraq, put a halt to new military interventions and sought the role of allies in the regional security. Obama used both carrot and stick (engagement and sanctions) in case of Iran pushing Tehran to freeze its nuclear programme. Similarly, Obama tried to give chance to peace between Israel and Palestinians by giving importance to the demands of Palestinians, i.e. stopping Israeli settlements on the Palestinians lands. Obama had been having some strained and coldness in relations with the Saudi Arabia and wanted to engage Iran more but Thompson (2018) says now President Trump is moving contrary to Obama’s policy and trying to broker a compromise among Israel, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) against Iran and Syria.

Some of the examples of various dimensions of diplomatic coercion from across the region are given below:

3.1. Iran

The US, under the Trump administration, is gearing up its coercion and pressure tactics against Iran and seeking support from regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and UAE. Year 2015 happened to be a landmark in the Middle East’s history when Iran agreed to reduce its nuclear programme and allowed international inspection while entering a deal with P5+1 (US, UK, Germany, China, France, and Russia). The deal was done under the Obama administration. Iran also agreed not to continue its research and development moving towards making a nuclear bomb. In return, Iran was given relief in terms of lifting of economic sanctions imposed since long time. The economic sanctions imposed by the UN, US and EU cost Iran

around US\$160 billion on account of oil revenue since 2012 till 2016. The deal made Iran to access its frozen assets worth US\$100 billion by various countries.

The lifting of sanctions opened oil supply market for Iran, but this concession could not continue when in May 2018, President Donald Trump withdrew from the deal with Iran and re-imposed sanctions in November 2018 on Tehran and the countries that trade with Iran. This has resulted in an economic crisis situation in the target country. This is a glair example of coercions of the US against Iran. Since the European Union (EU) this time did not join the US in the imposition of sanctions, so France, UK and Germany have developed a different payment mechanism through international companies trading with Iran without facing the US penalties. Currently, Iran is facing sanctions only from the US. and not from the UN or EU, but there is a looming threat that if Iran violates any aspect of the deal, then it has to face sanctions from the UN as well. Iran is answerable to a Joint Dispute Resolution Commission which in case of failure will refer the case to the UN Security Council. Moreover, the role of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is also important.

In the meanwhile, the US with its unilateral withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal has started pushing Iran to bow before the American demands or otherwise face economic sanctions. This time, the US has not only imposed sanctions again Iran but also against those countries which are involved in trade with Iran.

3.2. Egypt

The United States has assumed a cautious and very so often uncertain policy in reaction to the boisterous events in Egypt. This bearing is due to the complex nature of Egypt's continuing political shift and the fluctuating nature of regional power in the Middle East. The present US posture on Egypt is not maintainable in the long-term; it characterizes a temporary "hold pattern" in a strategic approach. Since 2011, this stance has fundamentally been entombed in the identical path of venerable US policy toward Egypt since the 1980s. Since the coup of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, the US policy has been trapped in self-inflicted suspended simulation, the decelerating of normal policy procedures without a comprehensive estrangement in ties. The decisions to momentarily delay some arrangements of military aid have only anticipated making decisions about the wide-ranging relationship (Hanna & Katulis 2013).

The Trump administration has backed down in its peculiar military support deadlock with Egypt. Amidst apprehensions over Egyptian collaboration with North Korea and Sisi's clampdown on civil society, the then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson immobilized \$195 million in military aid to Cairo. He accustomed the U.S. proclamation on meeting Egypt's three requirements: one of which is the wind-up of military and diplomatic collaboration with North Korea; secondly, make up your mind about the case of 43 staff of American and German democracy NGOs condemned in 2013 on fabricated charges; and lastly, the annulling or revising an exploitive law regulating the exertion of NGOs. On July 25, the Trump government relented, proclaiming that it was releasing the adjourned aid, despite the fact that Sisi's administration has not entirely met even one of the U.S. demands. The State Department vindicated the decision, saying, "reinforced security collaboration is imperative to U.S. national sanctuary" (Miller, 2018). The military aid by US was tied with Egypt following the dictates of the U.S. on three fundamental stages but Egypt did not comply with single one. Historically, states have been resisting such tactics and coercive measures where they think their own national security is at stake. But this does not render the major powers from playing their cards of carrot and stick.

The mutual thread is the certainty that Egypt is in the due course to safeguard the U.S. interests to rile by withholding military support and united with cynicism regarding the U.S. aptitude to burden Egypt. If Egypt is perilous to the United States and coercion is improbable to transform those Egyptian strategies with which Washington disagrees, the rational goes that the only reasonable policy is to make available to Egypt with absolute support. This means that any unorthodoxy from the \$1.3 billion in yearly military aid the United States has provided Egypt since 1987 necessitates a pointless and intolerable risk to the U.S. welfares. (Miller 2018)

Furthermore, decades of speculation in military transformation, judicial modification, and other top-down administration reform projects have generated disappointing consequences. Accurate relations with the regime and limited security collaboration might be essential, but the United States should swing the prominence of its diplomacy and the bulk of its aid to a venture in the Egyptian people. (Dunne 2014).

3.3. Libya

The historic indicators of coercive diplomacy, primarily in the form of sanctions, has pretentiously affected Libya's behaviour and attitude. In December 2003, it had to abandon its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programme and turned out to be a significant US ally in the war against terrorism. Crucially, this has ensued at the disbursement of democracy and the preferment of human rights in cooperation of both Republican and Democratic supervisions. Coercive diplomacy in the light of recent proceedings in the region, suggest that while US-Libyan relations have been completely formalized, Libya's already existing power structures and approaches to human rights have not notably changed as a result. The United States and international institutions have time and again tried to change the viewpoint of Libya but have met considerable resistance. The change of policy has been given priority over regime transformation. This brings along a confirmation of a long-standing cessation in the US foreign policy between the discursive pre-eminence conferred to democracy and human rights on the one hand, and a 'Realpolitik' schema driven by the security insinuations of policies executed on the other (Jentleson 2005).

The normalization between US and Libya that has occurred since 2003 has affected both security procedures and Libya's corporate environment. Scholars and commentators have linked this policy shift to the sanctions regime and blackmail strategy employed by the US. However, the same sanctions regime has not been able to shake or transform partisan status quo, which remained integral. This rehabilitation in bilateral ties has not entailed any increased democratization. This has also been true since the initiation of the Obama government. Despite the fact that the US remains officially stanch to the promotion of egalitarianism, an underlying continuousness with preceding administrations is apparent. Realpolitik considerations, mainly driven by safekeeping and commercial welfares, are the standard US approach to Libya. Libya's internal system has endured the reflective changes that the country has commenced on the international front. (Zoubir 2011). The analysts say though the United States through coercions which later on ended in aggression against Libya had brought about a regime change but it had literally destroyed the otherwise prosperous Libyan society under Qaddafi. Though the US and allies have achieved their motives in Libya, it rendered Libya bleeding and its economy collapsed. The coercion started destabilization in the country and diplomatic pressures paved the way for a full-fledged aggression against Libya.

3.4. Iraq

Coercion is an active process, just as the United States or another coercer attempts to shape Iraq's alternative adversary conduct, so as well does Iraq attempt to decrease the pressure levied on it. Adversaries characteristically attempt to counter-coerce the United States, imposing military, political, or tactical costs to vigor the United States to drop its coercions. Any duty of the US-Iraq skirmish must emphasize equally on the US dimensions to smear pressure and on Iraq's capacity to counterbalance or reverse it. Forcible success is frequently difficult to quantify (Byman & Waxman n.d.).

The United States has followed numerous, often-competing purposes with respect to Iraq. First, the United States has exasperated to avert any Iraqi hostility by keeping Iraq frail and sustaining a durable regional existence. Second, it has pursued to reverse Iraq's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) curricula. Third, it has constrained to modify the Iraqi government. Fourth, undesirable objective has formed the US policy: thwarting instability amid its cronies that might result in from the US arrangements. These four purposes underline the US efforts to pressure Iraq since the Gulf War.

The United States, nevertheless, does not have an unrestricted hand in its Iraq strategy. Washington has long dreaded that the unexpected downfall of Saddam's regime would lead to confusion in Iraq and make available an inaugural for Iran to increase its impact. Washington seeks to retain its regional and transnational associates behind its strategies, and they frequently differ on the accurate way to antagonize Saddam. The United States also is hesitant about its vow to Iraq's Kurds and Shi'a. Even though Washington feels a philanthropical interest in their welfare, it does not want its local strategies tied to these groups to shift. Parallel ambivalence can be found in the US insolences in the direction of sanctions (Joshi 2006).

Over the course of the 1990s when the US had found itself to be the sole superpower and embarked on the mission of creating a world in its own image via coercive interventions, Iraq was subjected to the following:

- Saddam's acceptance of the preliminary United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq checks at the culmination of Desert Storm in 1991.
- The obligation of a protectorate upon Kurdish-populated zones of northern Iraq in 1991.
- The construction of a no-fly region over southern Iraq in 1992.
- Saddam's insubordination of both the no-fly region and UNSCOM from 1992-1993.
- The US reply to the 1994 Iraqi stockpile near Kuwait. Saddam's 1996 invasion into the protected district in northern Iraq
- The 1997-98 deadlocks with regard to UNSCOM inspections
- US assaults in retort to Iraq's rebelliousness of UNSCOM in December 1998

The US authorities are of the view that coercive intimidations have subsidized to the fruitful suppression of Iraq. Iraq's provincial influence, while improved from 1991, remains inadequate. A vigorous US regional existence, a swift outpouring capacity, and a readiness to custom incomplete force perhaps induced Saddam that regional hostility will not harvest outcomes. The coercive intimidations contributed to the repression by sustaining no-fly and no-drive zones and signifying regional harmony in the expression of Iraq's efforts to threaten its neighbours. Bringing to standstill Iraq's NBC curricula has proven far more problematic, but forcible terrorizations have accomplished some triumph. (Byman & Waxman n.d.). The post Saddam scenario exhibited that the US could not retrieve any weapons of mass destruction which used to be their

ploy to intimidate or coerce Saddam regime. The US coercive agenda in Iraq proved to be a strategic deception as there were no such Weapons of Mass Destruction, but the US through this propaganda achieved its targets.

3.5. Syria

The Obama administration had generally been disinclined to include itself in the ruthless Syrian civil war, at least blatantly. However, succeeding accusations that militaries faithful to President Bashaarul Assad employed chemical armaments in Ghouta, assassinating anywhere amid 300 and 1700 individuals, President Obama came under compression to perform on his red line. Restricted surgical assaults by the United States, which are being branded as acts of pre-emption, stand very probable. If the Syrian martial has by now installed chemical armaments, then pre-emption has been futile. The Western authorities have repetitively cautioned Assad that he would face thoughtful penalties should he custom chemical weapons counter to his own populace. (Gibson n.d.)

However, threats and even bombings after the reported use of chemical weapons could not bring Assad down or even dissuade him from carrying out such attacks or even having such bases. The whole western world criticized Syria after the reported use of chemical weapons, but Assad absorbed the pressure. The threats and sanctions regime of the West could not deter Assad and must have shaken western reputation as well (Mitton 2015).

The US strategy toward Syria has been hampered by an impracticable mystery. Empirical investigation proposes that most civil wars are settled by military triumphs, not political reimbursements. Hitherto in the war between the government of Bashar al Assad, assisted by Iran and Russia, and splintered Islamist protestors, the United States does not want any side to conquer. This uncertainty, while comprehensible, has formed the poorest of all biospheres: Assad remains in supremacy; Iran and Russia are reassured; radicalism has thrived; half a million Syrians have been murdered; at least 12 million Syrians have been misplaced; and there is no end to this destruction in view.

Hitherto in lieu of a Syria imposing approach that fits on a plentiful label but lacks practicality, i.e. *“Overthrow Assad” or “Let Assad Conquest” — the US essential circumnavigate manifold purposes parallel, including the following:*

- Identify the geopolitical worth of Syria’s philanthropical misfortune
- Finish overpowering ISIS and thwart its coming back
- Counter and interpret Tehran’s disparaging regional strategies
- Defend and back America’s Kurdish cronies
- Bring about Turkish apprehensions in order to bound Turkish interference
- Coerce Russia to overthrow Assad (Sadjadpour & Hokayem 2018)

The United States in the same way must cope with defending its advantages in contrast to the Syria without the existence of US troops on the ground. The first thing to be done is to bring in confidence in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) leadership in Kobani on what it is the United States anticipates doing, the nitty-gritty of the upcoming effort to pull out forces, and how to accomplish the forthcoming efforts. Following this, the United States could aim to reach an understanding with Moscow with regard to the SDF’s existence to east of the Euphrates Tributary. Absent such an understanding, the government and Russia could merely

elect to attack points sideways the river, which would undermine the border of SDF-controlled terrain and allow for Syrian miscellanies in the desert to upsurge yet again. In the crux, there is only one way to accomplish all American goals in Syria and that is through collaboration with Russia. (Stein 2018)

3.6. Palestine

As discussed above, the Trump administration's policy on Palestine is contrary to that of Obama administration that started brokering peace between Palestinians and Israel, but the Trump administration is tilted towards Israel and is using all sorts of coercive tools to pressurize Palestinians.

Though almost all previous administrations in the US have been supporting Israel and harming the interests of those who are against Israel, Trump has been on the top to make Israel happy. In fact, the US Republicans think that supporting Israel itself is the support for Americanism. That is why, the Republicans take a harsher line as compared to the Democrats when it comes to Israel and Palestine. Obama wanted to broker peace between Israel and Palestinians, but Trump supports only Israel.

It has been decades now since Palestinian administration has been engaged in a peace process, in a quest to apply the international society's proposal for a Palestinian state onto the residents of Gaza and the West Bank. The United States, in the interim, has sought after to sustain the fiction that it is an authentic broker and an arbitrator. The Trump government has finally let fall that mask, revealing Washington's factual colors regarding its understanding and dealing of the issue of grave importance.

The latest and blatant aspirations of the US administration's new tactic came with the acknowledgement of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and repositioning of the US embassy there. It was not done as share of a negotiating progression and blindly follows the argument for Israeli concerns and hurt and forced agony on the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

The second effort to disrupt things was the government's decision to revoke American assistance to the Palestinians, heretofore, approved chiefly via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), an organization that disseminates Palestinians' refugee hood. The United States has over time continued to hold Israel near and dear in the region has provided all necessary diplomatic backing to Israel against its rivals. Israel continues to go ahead with illegal housing and violates all human rights fundamentals. This is all possible due to the US support of Israel.

The US administration deconstructed the fundamentals in Ramallah, when it then made distinct that a Palestinian government is not essentially the only upshot of the negotiating course and that other possibilities could occur, for example a coalition with Jordan. This representation of a different and altogether opposite framing of the issue is also an example of shifting the objective on coercive tactics. The concluding stroke emanated with the government's declaration that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Washington would be shutdown (Martin and Alkoussa 2018). In effect, the government's actions instituted a dramatic breakdown of the Palestinians' diplomatic spots from Oslo peace talks between Palestinians and Israel 26 years ago to the present-day. Stalemates with the US had been one of the Palestinians' chief accomplishments following Oslo accords, which are now almost dead.

In certainty, the US administration has decided to impart Palestinians a message and pressure them into floundering some of their positions. For the Palestinians, the subjects under debate are of ultimate importance and they have chased them unwaveringly for years, for instance, going to the UN, reaching out

to the European Union and other forums to highlight Israeli atrocities. The US provides an umbrella of legitimacy to the unfair treatment of Palestinians by Israel and continues to exploit and pressurize the Palestinians politically (Allin and Simon 2018).

Donald Trump has a tough time converging on any topic for more than minutes. Furthermore, the Palestinians have significant sources of control of their own. The government will have a tough time following diplomatic intimidation when the Arab states call for it to affluence the Palestinians' misery, following the cancellation of aid by UNRWA, or when Israel faces mounting outbreaks from Gaza and perchance even the West Bank, as a consequence. The Palestinians may even practice a highly urban trick to thwart the US administration's moves merely pause for the storm to pass, in just the meantime of two years (Freilich 2018).

4. Conclusion

In the light of the above example of dimensions of diplomatic coercion in the Middle East, we find that the United States seems to be the chief coercer in the region while Israel too is a coercer backed by the chief. There is a difference in the use of coercive methods and tools in rest of the world and the Middle East. In rest of the world, economic sanctions are used as a key tool to push for the agenda of the West by using the power of individual countries and regional groups such as European Union, international bodies such as the United Nations and other tactics. In Middle East, the United States leads as a key coercer while in some cases such as Iraq and Libya, it has a backing from other Western countries, the UN and the EU, it has to face tough situation in case of the current situation in Palestinian territory, Syria and Iran where Russia is supporting anti US forces.

In Middle East, China has a clear policy which supports Palestinians' right to self-determination and calls for cessation of hostilities to avoid conflict and bloodletting. The US has used strategic deception as coercive tool in most of the countries in the Middle East. This is alarming that the Trump administration is trying to bolster Israel to push Iran towards the wall. This is really alarming that the Trump policy on Middle East gives strength to Israel and it tries to have close relations with Saudi Arabia and putting Iran under coercion. The Administration now wants to exploit the strained relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the Shia-Sunni divide in the Middle East. This divide may have a direct bearing on Pakistan as well. So, Pakistan has also to take care of all coercive tactics of the United States to be employed in the Middle East to what the policy says 'teach a lesson' to Iran.

Peace or conflict in the Middle East is linked to the security and stability of the region, the economies of the Arab countries and Iran. The war in Yemen and its implications for the region and especially Saudi Arabia cannot be ignored and if a new conflict between Iran and Israel or the United States gears up, then the situation in the region will be volatile and may have bearing on Pakistan and its people. The dimensions of coercion in the Middle East needs to be analyzed in the context of security of the Islamic countries, the core issue of right to self-determination of the Palestinian people by bridging the gap between Shia and Sunni populations across the region through the promotion of peaceful co-existence among various Muslim sects. Already the US coercive diplomacy that started from Iraq, Libya, Syria and is now going towards Iran has turned into a full destructive war at the cost of people. With the US-Israel coercion and later aggression rendered millions of people homeless and millions have lost their lives and livelihoods. The US-

led coercion leading to use of force literally made the Middle East a hell for millions of native Arabs, who are living in misery and are facing a grave humanitarian crisis.

Amid such a volatile situation, Pakistan as a fellow Muslim country, having cordial relations with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and diplomatic relations with Iran, may play its role to normalize hostilities within Muslims countries. Pakistan can ask China to play its role to speak at the global level for peace in the Middle East and for the rights of Palestinians as China already has a policy stance on the Middle East. Since the Trump Middle East policy has a focus on sharpening divide between Shia and Sunni populations of the region, Pakistan too has to preempt such a coercive policy of the United States in the interest of peace and stability in the country and the region.

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