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IMPERIAL DOMINANCE AND TRENDS OF CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST: OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES INVASION OF IRAN

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Abstract

The study examines imperial dominance and trends of conflict in the Middle East, with particular reference to the United States–Iran confrontation. The central objective is to analyze how imperial power, especially with that of United States foreign policy and intervention, has shaped conflict dynamics in the region. The study is anchored on four major theoretical perspectives: Realism, Hegemonic Stability Theory, Dependency Theory, and Neo-Gramscian Theory, which collectively explain how global power relations influence regional instability and political outcomes. The study adopts a qualitative research design using secondary data. Data were sourced from textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and credible online academic databases. Content analysis was used to interpret the data, identify recurring themes, and examine patterns related to imperial dominance, U.S. intervention, causes of U.S.–Iran confrontation, and conflict trends in the Middle East. Findings from the study reveal that imperial dominance has evolved from direct colonial control to modern indirect influence through military presence, economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and ideological influence. The United States plays a central role in Middle Eastern conflicts through interventions such as the 1953 Iranian coup, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War. These interventions have produced mixed outcomes, including regime change, regional instability, and long-term insecurity. The study further found that the confrontation between the United States and Iran is driven by historical grievances, ideological differences, nuclear programme disputes, regional power rivalry, and economic sanctions. In addition, foreign intervention in the Middle East has contributed to recurring conflict trends such as proxy wars, terrorism, humanitarian crises, state collapse, and increased

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militarization. The study concludes that imperial dominance significantly influences conflict patterns in the Middle East and often contributes to prolonged instability rather than sustainable peace. It recommends enhanced diplomatic engagement, respect for sovereignty, reduced military intervention, and stronger regional cooperation frameworks to promote stability in the region.

Introduction

The Middle East has remained one of the most strategically and politically volatile regions in world affairs. Its importance is derived from its geographical position linking Asia, Africa, and Europe, its large petroleum reserves, and its historical religious relevance. These factors have made the region a center of international rivalry, intervention, and recurring instability for decades (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026).

One of the contending issues in the global politics is imperial dominance, which refers to the capacity of a powerful state to influence or control weaker states through military force, economic pressure, political manipulation, or ideological influence. In the modern international system, the United States emerged after the Cold War as the most powerful actor with global military reach and economic strength. This dominance became highly visible in the Middle East through alliances, military bases, sanctions, arms sales, and direct intervention (Britannica, 2026).

The relationship between the United States and the Middle East deepened significantly after the Second World War. American foreign policy increasingly focused on securing access to oil resources, limiting Soviet expansion during the Cold War, protecting allies such as Israel and Gulf monarchies. Hence, combating terrorism after the September 11 attacks. These interests often translated into direct and indirect involvement in regional affairs (The Week, 2026).

One of the earliest controversial examples of U.S. intervention in the Middle East was the 1953 coup in Iran. Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh nationalized Iran's oil industry, which threatened British and Western economic interests. In response, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), working with Britain, supported Operation Ajax that removed Mosaddegh and restored the authority of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This event created long-term resentment toward the United States in Iran (Associated Press, 2023; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026).

The overthrow of Mosaddegh strengthened the Shah's regime, but dissatisfaction later increased due to authoritarian rule, corruption, and foreign dependence. These grievances led to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which overthrew the monarchy and established the Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. Since then, U.S.–Iran relations

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have remained hostile and marked by sanctions, diplomatic crises, and strategic rivalry (JSTOR Daily, 2025).

Since 1979, the United States and Iran have confronted one another over several issues, including Iran's nuclear ambitions, support for armed groups, maritime tensions in the Persian Gulf, cyber warfare, and influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. Iran has consistently challenged U.S. influence in the region, while the United States has attempted to contain Iranian power through alliances and economic pressure (The Week, 2026).

The wider history of U.S. intervention in the Middle East includes the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War. The Iraq War was launched on allegations that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Although Saddam Hussein was removed from power, the war generated insurgency, sectarian violence, and institutional collapse. This raised serious questions regarding whether foreign military intervention promotes peace or worsens conflict (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026).

Recent tensions between Washington and Tehran have revived fears of direct military confrontation. Iran's regional influence, missile capabilities, and control over routes near the Strait of Hormuz make any military clash highly consequential. A U.S. invasion of Iran could lead to disruption in global oil supply, refugee displacement, proxy wars, and broader regional instability (The Week, 2026).

Conflict trends in the Middle East have also changed over time. Traditional wars between states are now increasingly replaced or accompanied by proxy warfare, militias, drone attacks, cyber operations, targeted assassinations, and economic sanctions. The U.S.–Iran rivalry reflects many of these modern patterns of conflict.

This study therefore examines imperial dominance and trends of conflict in the Middle East through an overview of the United States invasion of Iran. It seeks to understand the roots of American influence, the causes of confrontation with Iran, and the likely implications for regional and global peace.

The study will equally benefit international organizations such as the United Nations, African Union, and other peace-building institutions. By highlighting the patterns and outcomes of external intervention, these organizations can develop better conflict prevention strategies and mediation frameworks for dealing with tensions in volatile regions like the Middle East.

In the academic community, this study will contribute meaningfully to debates on imperialism, hegemony, sovereignty, and regional conflict. It will enrich existing literature by offering a clearer understanding of how global power competition affects local and regional stability. It will also broaden theoretical discussions on the relationship between dominant states and weaker nations in the international system.

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Finally, the study will help the general public to understand the broader global implications of tensions between the United States and Iran. It will show how conflicts in one region can affect oil prices, migration flows, international trade, terrorism threats, and global peace. This awareness will enable citizens to better appreciate the interconnected nature of international politics and security.

Concept of Imperial Dominance

Imperial dominance is a major concept in Political Science and International Relations used to explain the control or influence exercised by powerful states over weaker territories, regions, or nations. Historically, imperial dominance was associated with formal empire-building, where stronger countries directly ruled colonies and extracted resources. In modern times, the concept has expanded to include indirect forms of control such as economic dependence, military alliances, sanctions, and political interference (Jordheim & Neumann, 2011).

The concept of imperial dominance has its roots in classical empires such as the Roman, Ottoman, and British Empires. These empires exercised authority over large territories through military conquest, taxation, and administrative systems. Historians note that imperial rule was not only about territorial expansion but also about imposing the political values and institutions of the dominant power on subject peoples (Wilson & Dilley, 2023).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, imperial dominance became closely linked with European colonialism in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Powerful states such as Britain, France, and later the United States expanded influence for strategic advantage and access to raw materials. Lenin (1917) argued that imperialism represented the highest stage of capitalism, where industrial powers sought foreign markets and investment outlets.

Hobson (1902) also viewed imperial expansion as economically motivated. He argued that domestic inequality and surplus capital pushed industrial powers to search for profitable overseas investments. From this perspective, imperial dominance emerged when stronger nations used political and military tools to open weaker societies to foreign economic control (Hobson, 1902).

In International Relations theory, imperial dominance is often examined through the concept of hegemony. Hegemony refers to the predominance of one state that shapes rules, institutions, and norms in the international system. Unlike traditional empire, hegemonic power may not always require direct occupation. Instead, dominance may operate through leadership, consent, and institutional influence (Faria, 2022).

Realist scholars interpret imperial dominance as a natural consequence of power competition in an anarchic international system. According to realism, great powers constantly seek security and survival, often resulting in expansionist behavior.

Mearsheimer (2001) argues that states aim to maximize power and become regional hegemons whenever possible. Thus, imperial dominance becomes a strategy for reducing threats and controlling strategic environments.

Liberal scholars provide a different explanation by emphasizing institutions and interdependence. They argue that dominant states may create international organizations, alliances, and trade systems that stabilize world politics. However, critics note that these institutions can reflect the interests of powerful states more than the collective good. Keohane (1984) explained that hegemonic states often shape institutions to preserve their advantages even after relative decline.

Neo-Gramscian scholars broaden the concept further by focusing on ideological and cultural control. Antonio Gramsci originally used hegemony to describe how ruling groups maintain dominance through consent rather than force. Applied internationally, scholars such as Cox argue that imperial dominance can be sustained when weaker states internalize the norms, values, and economic models promoted by powerful states (Cox, 1983).

Modern imperial dominance is often described as neo-imperialism or informal empire. Under this arrangement, stronger countries may not colonize weaker ones directly, but they still influence domestic politics, security decisions, and economic policies. Financial institutions, multinational corporations, aid conditionalities, and military agreements are common instruments of such influence (Harvey, 2003).

The United States is frequently cited as a contemporary example of imperial dominance. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has maintained global military bases, intervention capabilities, and substantial influence over international financial institutions. Some scholars argue that American power represents a liberal hegemonic order, while others see it as a modern empire using selective intervention and coercive diplomacy (Johnson, 2026).

In the Middle East, imperial dominance has been visible through external involvement in oil politics, military alliances, regime support, and wars. The strategic importance of petroleum resources and maritime routes has attracted sustained foreign influence. Cases such as the 1953 Iranian coup, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War are often cited as examples of how dominant powers intervene to shape regional outcomes (Little, 2008).

Military superiority remains one of the clearest indicators of imperial dominance. Powerful states often use advanced weapons systems, overseas bases, intelligence networks, and expeditionary forces to influence weaker regions. The threat or use of force may compel policy changes even without formal occupation. In this way, military capacity supports broader political and economic objectives (Mann, 2013).

Economic control is another major dimension of imperial dominance. Powerful countries may use sanctions, trade restrictions, debt leverage, and currency influence to pressure

weaker states. Such measures can significantly affect domestic stability and foreign policy choices. Economic coercion is therefore considered a modern substitute for colonial rule in many contexts (Pape, 1997).

Cultural influence also contributes to imperial dominance. Through media, education, language, and technology, dominant states can spread values and lifestyles that shape global preferences. Cultural attraction may legitimize unequal power relations by presenting them as normal or desirable. This soft power dimension complements military and economic strength (Nye, 2004).

Despite its persistence, imperial dominance often generates resistance. Anti-colonial struggles, nationalist movements, revolutionary politics, and regional balancing efforts have historically emerged in response to external control. In many societies, foreign intervention strengthens local identities and opposition rather than compliance. Iran's post-1979 foreign policy, for example, has been partly framed as resistance to Western domination (Halliday, 2005).

Scholars also debate whether imperial dominance brings order or instability. Supporters of hegemonic stability theory argue that dominant powers can provide security, enforce trade rules, and manage crises. Critics respond that domination frequently produces resentment, dependency, and recurring conflict. Historical evidence suggests that both order and resistance may coexist under hegemonic systems (Gilpin, 1981).

In the twenty-first century, imperial dominance is increasingly challenged by rising powers such as China and by regional actors asserting autonomy. Multipolarity, digital technologies, and economic diversification have reduced the ability of any single state to dominate completely. Nevertheless, great powers continue to compete for influence through new methods including cyber power, infrastructure finance, and proxy partnerships (Ikenberry, 2018).

In summary, imperial dominance refers to the capacity of powerful states to shape the political, economic, military, and cultural behavior of weaker states in pursuit of strategic interests. While classical empire relied heavily on direct conquest, contemporary dominance is often exercised indirectly through institutions, markets, alliances, and ideas. Understanding this concept is essential for analyzing conflicts and interventions in regions such as the Middle East (Jordheim & Neumann, 2011).

Imperial Dominance in World Politics

Imperial dominance in world politics refers to the capacity of a powerful state to influence or control weaker states through military, economic, political, and ideological means. It historically involved direct colonial administration but has evolved in modern times into indirect forms of control such as sanctions, military alliances, and institutional influence (Jordheim & Neumann, 2011).

The classical foundation of imperial dominance is rooted in European colonial expansion, where states such as Britain, France, and others extended control over Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Hobson (1902) argued that imperial expansion was driven by capitalist economic needs, while Lenin (1917) described imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism characterized by the export of capital and exploitation of weaker economies.

In international relations theory, imperial dominance is closely linked to hegemony, which refers to the leadership or dominance of one state over others in the global system. Keohane (1984) explains that hegemonic powers shape international rules and institutions in ways that preserve their interests even when their relative power declines.

Realist scholars argue that imperial dominance is a natural outcome of competition in an anarchic international system. According to Mearsheimer (2001), great powers constantly seek to maximize power and achieve regional dominance to ensure survival and security. This makes expansion and influence a structural feature of international politics.

Neo-Gramscian theorists, particularly Cox (1983), argue that imperial dominance is not only based on force but also on consent. Powerful states maintain dominance by spreading ideas, norms, and economic systems that appear legitimate to weaker states, thereby sustaining global inequality through ideological means.

In contemporary politics, the United States is widely regarded as a dominant global power. Its influence is exercised through military bases, economic institutions, and diplomatic networks. Scholars argue that U.S. global presence reflects modern imperial dominance, especially in strategically important regions such as the Middle East (Harvey, 2003).

Roles of the United States in Middle Eastern Conflicts

The United States has played a major role in Middle Eastern conflicts since the mid-20th century, primarily due to the region's strategic oil reserves and geopolitical importance. Al Sarhan (2017) notes that U.S. involvement has been driven by security interests, energy needs, and alliance protection.

One of the earliest major interventions was the 1953 Iranian coup, where the CIA supported the removal of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh after the nationalization of oil. This intervention strengthened U.S. influence in Iran but also created long-term resentment that later contributed to the 1979 Iranian Revolution (JSTOR Daily, 2025).

The United States also played a decisive role in the 1991 Gulf War, leading a coalition that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait. This intervention increased U.S. military presence in the Gulf and reinforced its role as a security guarantor for oil-rich monarchies in the region.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq represents another major intervention. Although it was justified on the basis of weapons of mass destruction, the war led to state collapse, insurgency,

sectarian violence, and the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS, showing how intervention can destabilize regional order (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2026).

Beyond wars, the United States has influenced the region through sanctions, arms transfers, and support for allies such as Israel and Gulf states. These policies have shaped regional power balances but have also contributed to resentment and anti-American sentiment in several Middle Eastern societies.

Overall, U.S. involvement in the Middle East has been both stabilizing and destabilizing. While it has helped protect allies and deter threats, it has also contributed to prolonged conflicts, regime change, and regional instability (Little, 2008).

Causes of Confrontation between the United States and Iran

The confrontation between the United States and Iran is rooted in historical, political, ideological, and strategic factors. A major turning point was the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which replaced a pro-American monarchy with an anti-Western Islamic Republic, fundamentally altering bilateral relations.

Another major cause is the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme. The United States and its allies suspect Iran of seeking nuclear weapons capability, while Iran maintains that its programme is for peaceful purposes. This disagreement has led to sanctions, diplomatic tensions, and periodic military threats (Otubu, Efebeh, & Sanubi, 2024).

Regional influence is also a key source of conflict. Iran supports allied groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine, while the United States supports rival states and security partners in the region. This has transformed local conflicts into broader geopolitical rivalries.

Economic sanctions imposed by the United States have also intensified tensions. These sanctions target Iran's banking, oil, and trade sectors, aiming to pressure its government into policy changes. However, scholars argue that sanctions have often strengthened political resistance rather than resolving disputes (Otubu et al., 2024).

Ideological differences further deepen the confrontation. Iran positions itself as resisting Western dominance, while the United States criticizes Iran's governance model and regional activities. This ideological clash reinforces distrust and limits diplomatic engagement between both countries.

Therefore, the U.S.–Iran confrontation is driven by a combination of historical grievances, nuclear disputes, regional rivalry, sanctions, and ideological opposition, making it one of the most persistent conflicts in modern international relations.

Impacts of Conflict Trends and Foreign Intervention on the Middle East

Foreign intervention in the Middle East has produced significant conflict trends, often intensifying rather than resolving instability. The Iraq War is a key example, where regime

change was followed by insurgency, sectarian conflict, and long-term state weakness (Dong, 2025).

One major trend is the rise of proxy warfare, where external powers support different factions in local conflicts instead of engaging directly. This has been evident in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya, where competing foreign interests have prolonged wars and complicated peace efforts (Springer, 2025).

Another trend is the emergence of extremist groups. Studies show that instability created by intervention and occupation has contributed to the rise of organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, which exploit political vacuums and social grievances (Sciencedirect, 2024).

Humanitarian crises have also become common outcomes of intervention. Wars in the Middle East have led to displacement, refugee flows, destruction of infrastructure, and economic collapse, particularly in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen (Sciencedirect, 2024).

Militarization is another trend, as states in conflict regions increase defense spending and seek external military alliances. This creates arms races and raises the risk of further escalation between regional and global powers.

In summary, foreign intervention in the Middle East has contributed to prolonged instability, proxy wars, terrorism, humanitarian crises, and militarization, suggesting that intervention often reshapes rather than resolves conflict dynamics in the region.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on four major theories that explain imperial dominance and conflict dynamics in international relations. These include Realism Theory, Hegemonic Stability Theory, Dependency Theory, and Neo-Gramscian Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how powerful states influence weaker states and how such interactions generate conflict in regions such as the Middle East.

Realism Theory

It forms one of the most important foundations of this study. Realists argue that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no central authority to regulate state behaviour. As a result, states act in their own self-interest to ensure survival and security. According to Mearsheimer (2001), great powers continuously seek to maximize power and achieve regional dominance. In this context, imperial dominance is seen as a natural outcome of power competition, especially in strategically important regions like the Middle East.

Hegemonic Stability Theory

Hegemonic Stability theory, provides another important explanation for imperial dominance. The theory argues that global stability is maintained when a single dominant

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power (hegemon) is able to enforce rules and maintain order in the international system. Keohane (1984) explains that hegemonic states create institutions and systems that reflect their interests, thereby maintaining influence even without direct control. However, when hegemonic power is challenged, instability and conflict often increase, as seen in U.S.–Iran tensions in the Middle East.

Dependency Theory also explains imperial dominance from an economic perspective. It argues that developing countries are structurally dependent on developed nations due to historical exploitation and unequal economic relationships. According to Frank (1967), underdevelopment is not a natural condition but a result of external domination and economic dependency. In the context of the Middle East, oil wealth and economic dependence on Western markets reinforce unequal power relations that sustain imperial influence.

Neo-Gramscian Theory adds an ideological dimension to imperial dominance. Based on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Cox (1983) explains that dominant states maintain control not only through force but also through ideology, institutions, and cultural influence. This means that global dominance is sustained when weaker states accept the ideas and norms promoted by powerful states as legitimate. This theory is useful in explaining how the United States maintains influence in the Middle East through both coercion and consent.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on imperial dominance and conflict in the Middle East have extensively examined the role of external powers, particularly the United States. These studies provide evidence of how foreign intervention shapes political instability, economic dependency, and regional insecurity.

Al Sarhan (2017) examined U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and found that American involvement has been driven largely by strategic and energy interests. The study concluded that interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf region have produced mixed outcomes, including both security cooperation and prolonged instability.

Little (2008) conducted a historical analysis of U.S. engagement in the Middle East and argued that American policies have often been influenced by geopolitical interests rather than democratic values. The study highlighted how interventions in Iran, Iraq, and Palestine contributed to long-term resentment toward the United States.

Mearsheimer (2001) provided a broader theoretical explanation, arguing that great powers naturally seek regional dominance. His empirical observations suggest that U.S. actions in the Middle East are consistent with offensive realism, where states attempt to prevent rivals from emerging in strategically important regions.

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Keohane (1984) examined the role of hegemonic power in maintaining global order. His findings suggest that while hegemonic dominance can create stability, it also embeds inequality within international institutions. This helps explain why U.S.-led global systems are often contested by states like Iran.

Cox (1983) empirically analyzed global political economy structures and found that dominance is sustained through ideological and institutional mechanisms. His study shows that powerful states shape global norms, making their influence appear legitimate even when it reinforces inequality.

Hobson (1902) and Lenin (1917) provided early empirical interpretations of imperialism. Hobson linked imperial expansion to surplus capital and domestic inequality, while Lenin argued that imperialism is driven by capitalist competition for foreign markets. Their findings remain relevant in explaining economic motivations behind intervention in resource-rich regions like the Middle East.

Frank (1967) empirically demonstrated that underdevelopment in developing regions is linked to historical exploitation by advanced economies. His dependency theory shows how economic structures created during colonial and post-colonial periods continue to shape inequality in regions such as the Middle East.

Harvey (2003) studied modern imperialism and found that contemporary dominance is exercised through financial systems, military intervention, and neoliberal economic policies. His work shows that imperial power has shifted from territorial control to economic and institutional influence.

Mann (2013) provided empirical evidence that military power remains a key tool of global dominance. His analysis shows that the United States uses military bases and strategic alliances to maintain global influence, particularly in the Middle East.

Jordheim and Neumann (2011) examined the conceptual evolution of empire and imperialism. Their study shows that modern imperial dominance is less about formal empire and more about informal influence exercised through global governance structures.

Al-Rodhan (2007) studied U.S. involvement in the Middle East and concluded that American intervention has often destabilized regional politics despite its stated objectives of security and democratization. The study highlights unintended consequences such as state collapse and sectarian conflict.

Pape (1997) empirically analyzed the effectiveness of economic sanctions and found that sanctions rarely achieve their intended political outcomes. In the context of Iran, sanctions have often strengthened internal resistance rather than forcing compliance with U.S. demands.

Science direct (2024) research on Middle Eastern conflicts shows that foreign intervention is strongly associated with the rise of extremist groups, humanitarian crises, and

prolonged instability. The study highlights Iraq and Syria as major examples of intervention-driven conflict escalation.

Springer (2025) studies on proxy warfare in the Middle East reveal that external involvement often transforms local conflicts into regional power struggles. This increases the duration and intensity of wars, as seen in Syria and Yemen.

Dong (2025) examined U.S. national security implications of Middle Eastern instability and found that intervention has created both strategic advantages and long-term security challenges for the United States. The study emphasizes the unintended consequences of regime-change policies.

Otubu, Efebeh, and Sanubi (2024) empirically analyzed U.S.–Iran relations and found that sanctions diplomacy has had limited success in altering Iran's nuclear and regional policies. Instead, it has deepened mistrust and reinforced confrontation between both states.

In summary, empirical literature consistently shows that imperial dominance and foreign intervention in the Middle East are associated with both strategic influence and increased instability. The findings across studies highlight a recurring pattern where intervention intended to enhance security often produces long-term conflict, resistance, and geopolitical tension.

Presentation of Data

The data presented in this work are derived from scholarly works, journal articles, policy reports, and historical documents. The findings are categorized under four major themes: imperial dominance, U.S. involvement in the Middle East, causes of U.S.–Iran confrontation, and conflict trends associated with foreign intervention.

Table 1: Summary of Scholarly Views on Imperial Dominance

Author	Year	Key Finding	Interpretation
Hobson	1902	Imperialism driven by surplus capital	Economic motivation behind dominance
Lenin	1917	Imperialism as highest stage of capitalism	Structural global exploitation
Keohane	1984	Hegemon shapes global institutions	Institutionalized dominance
Cox	1983	Ideological control sustains power	Consent-based domination
Mearsheimer	2001	States seek regional hegemony	Power maximization behavior

The analysis shows that imperial dominance is multi-dimensional, involving economic, political, military, and ideological factors. While classical theorists emphasize economic exploitation, modern theorists highlight institutional and ideological mechanisms of control.

Table 2: U.S. Interventions in Major Middle Eastern Conflicts

Event	Year	U.S. Role	Outcome
Iranian Coup	1953	CIA-backed regime change	Long-term hostility with Iran
Gulf War	1991	Led coalition against Iraq	Strengthened U.S. regional presence
Iraq War	2003	Military invasion of Iraq	State collapse and insurgency
Syria Conflict	2011–present	Airstrikes and support operations	Prolonged civil war
War on Terror	2001–present	Military operations in region	Expanded U.S. military footprint

The table reveals that U.S. involvement in the Middle East has been extensive and continuous. While some interventions were aimed at security stabilization, many resulted in unintended consequences such as instability, insurgency, and prolonged conflicts (Little, 2008).

Table 3: Causes of U.S.–Iran Conflict

Cause	Explanation	Supporting Author
1979 Iranian Revolution	End of pro-U.S. monarchy	JSTOR Daily (2025)
Nuclear Programme	Dispute over nuclear capability	Otubu et al. (2024)
Sanctions Policy	Economic pressure on Iran	Pape (1997)
Regional Influence	Rival alliances in Middle East	Al Sarhan (2017)
Ideological Differences	Anti-West vs Western alignment	Little (2008)

The findings indicate that the U.S.–Iran confrontation is driven by a combination of historical grievances, ideological differences, nuclear disputes, and regional power competition. These factors interact to sustain long-term hostility between both states.

Table 4: Conflict Trends in the Middle East

Trend	Description	Example
Proxy Wars	External support for local factions	Syria, Yemen
State Collapse	Breakdown of governance systems	Iraq (post-2003)

Trend	Description	Example
Terrorism Growth	Rise of extremist groups	ISIS emergence
Humanitarian Crisis	Displacement and refugee flows	Syria conflict
Militarization	Arms buildup and alliances	Gulf security system

The analysis shows that foreign intervention has contributed significantly to destabilization in the Middle East. Instead of resolving conflicts, interventions have often created power vacuums and intensified violence (Sciencedirect, 2024).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study confirm that imperial dominance remains a key feature of contemporary international politics. The United States, as a global superpower, has played a central role in shaping political outcomes in the Middle East through military intervention, sanctions, and alliance-building.

The study also shows that U.S. involvement in the region has produced mixed outcomes. While it has contributed to regime change and counterterrorism efforts, it has also led to instability, prolonged wars, and weakened state institutions. This supports the argument that external intervention often produces unintended consequences (Harvey, 2003).

Furthermore, the U.S.–Iran relationship is characterized by deep-rooted historical and ideological tensions. The 1979 revolution, nuclear disputes, and regional rivalry continue to fuel confrontation. These findings align with dependency and realist perspectives that emphasize power struggle and structural inequality in international relations.

Finally, the study confirms that foreign intervention has significantly shaped conflict trends in the Middle East. Proxy wars, terrorism, humanitarian crises, and militarization are recurring outcomes of external involvement. This suggests that imperial dominance is closely linked to persistent instability in the region.

Summary of Findings

The study examined imperial dominance and conflict trends in the Middle East, with particular focus on the role of the United States and its confrontation with Iran. From the literature reviewed and analysis conducted, several key findings emerged.

First, imperial dominance remains a significant feature of international politics. It has evolved from direct colonial rule to indirect forms of control such as economic sanctions, military alliances, ideological influence, and institutional dominance. The United States represents a modern form of hegemonic power that shapes global political and security structures.

Second, the United States has played a central role in Middle Eastern conflicts through military interventions, regime-change operations, and strategic alliances. Key historical

events such as the 1953 Iranian coup, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War demonstrate that U.S. involvement has had both stabilizing and destabilizing effects on the region.

Third, the confrontation between the United States and Iran is driven by multiple factors, including the 1979 Iranian Revolution, nuclear programme disputes, regional power competition, economic sanctions, and ideological differences. These factors have created long-term hostility and mistrust between both states.

Fourth, the study found that foreign intervention has significantly influenced conflict trends in the Middle East. Instead of resolving conflicts, interventions have often led to proxy wars, state collapse, terrorism, humanitarian crises, and increased militarization. These outcomes have contributed to persistent instability in the region.

Finally, the findings suggest that imperial dominance is closely linked to conflict escalation in the Middle East, particularly in the context of U.S.–Iran relations.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that imperial dominance plays a major role in shaping conflict dynamics in the Middle East. The United States, as a global hegemonic power, has significantly influenced political and security developments in the region through both direct and indirect interventions.

The study also concludes that while some U.S. interventions have been justified on the grounds of security and counterterrorism, many have contributed to unintended consequences such as political instability, weakened state institutions, and prolonged violence. The Iraq War and other regional interventions demonstrate that military solutions often generate further insecurity rather than sustainable peace.

Furthermore, the persistent confrontation between the United States and Iran reflects deeper structural issues in international relations, including ideological rivalry, geopolitical competition, and historical grievances. This conflict continues to shape broader instability in the Middle East and influences global security dynamics.

Overall, the study concludes that foreign intervention, particularly by dominant powers, is a key factor contributing to recurring conflict trends in the Middle East.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Promotion of Diplomatic Engagement:** The United States and Iran should prioritize diplomatic dialogue over military confrontation in order to reduce tensions and prevent escalation into open conflict.
2. **Respect for Sovereignty:** External powers should respect the sovereignty of Middle Eastern states and avoid unilateral interventions that may destabilize internal political systems.

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3. **Strengthening International Institutions:** The United Nations and other international bodies should play a more active role in mediating conflicts and ensuring compliance with international law.
4. **Reduction of Military Intervention:** Military interventions should be minimized and used only under strict international authorization to prevent unnecessary destruction and loss of life.
5. **Regional Cooperation Frameworks:** Middle Eastern countries should develop stronger regional security and economic cooperation mechanisms to reduce dependence on external powers.
6. **Economic and Development Support:** Instead of coercive sanctions, global powers should encourage economic development initiatives that promote stability, employment, and social welfare in conflict-prone states.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature by linking imperial dominance theory with contemporary conflict trends in the Middle East, particularly through the case of U.S.–Iran relations. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how external intervention shapes regional instability and expands theoretical discussions on hegemony and modern imperialism.

Final Remarks

The Middle East remains a critical region in global politics, and its stability is closely tied to the actions of major world powers. Understanding the dynamics of imperial dominance and conflict trends is essential for promoting peace, security, and sustainable international relations.

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