

Can the USA Be Considered a Trustworthy Partner for Peace in the Middle East and Africa?

By Omar Khattaly · 17 July 2024

A nation that stands as the largest producer and exporter of weapons in the world is unlikely to prioritize global peace and stability. Since 2012, America's military engagements—particularly in the Middle East and parts of Asia—have cost U.S. taxpayers over $6.4 trillion. According to Brown University, these conflicts have resulted in more than 800,000 deaths across Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Syria, while displacing over 35 million civilians. Additionally, approximately 15,000 U.S. service members and contractors have lost their lives.

In the Middle East alone, the United States maintains a military footprint in nearly every Persian Gulf country, from major military bases to smaller U.S. military facilities, port areas, aviation facilities, and support compounds. The USA is operating seven bases in Oman, three in the UAE, eleven in Saudi Arabia, seven in Qatar, twelve in Bahrain, ten in Kuwait, and six in Iraq. The U.S. also maintains numerous bases across Africa, particularly in nations such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Djibouti, and Kenya.

In 2023, U.S. arms sales to foreign governments reached a record $238 billion, representing a 16% increase compared to 2022. With an annual defense budget approaching $1 trillion, the United States maintains the most significant military expenditure in the world, operating the most extensive global military force in human history with over 800 bases located in 80 countries.

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Over the past 20 years, China has invested more than $180 billion in infrastructure projects across Africa, including approximately $22 billion in 2023 alone. While the U.S. frequently provides destructive weaponry, China has focused its efforts on fostering sustainable economic growth.

To achieve lasting peace in the Middle East and Africa, the U.S. should prioritize diplomacy, economic investment, and sustainable development over military training and base construction. Furthermore, Washington must foster a more balanced diplomatic relationship between Israel, the Palestinians, and neighboring states.

True peace cannot be achieved as long as a massive foreign military presence dominates these regions; in fact, this entrenchment will likely lead to more casualties and conflict in the future. U.S. policymakers in Washington must critically reassess their current strategies and adopt entirely new foreign policies toward Libya, Syria, the Palestinian territories, and the rest of the region.

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