THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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This thesis aims to provide an analysis of the United States foreign policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 21st century. In doing so, a leadership styles perspective under Foreign Policy Analysis is adopted to categorize different approaches of three United States presidents: George Walker Bush (2001-2009), Barack Hussein Obama (2009-2017), and Donald John Trump (2017-2021). Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have been influential actors in the Middle East and hereby, the foreign policy of the United States towards both actors has been significant. Through a study concerning the developments of the 21st century, this study tries to reflect how the United States foreign policy has changed according to the United States Presidents in charge.

Keywords: United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Leadership Styles

ÖZ

21. YÜZYILDA AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİ'NİN SUUDİ ARABİSTAN VE İRAN DIŞ POLİTİKASI

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Bu tez, 21. yüzyılda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Suudi Arabistan Krallığı ve İran İslam Cumhuriyeti dış politikasının bir analizini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Analiz sürecinde Dış Politika Analizi altında liderlik stilleri aracılığıyla üç başkan döneminin farklı yaklaşımları incelenmektedir: George Walker Bush (2001-2009), Barack Hussein Obama (2009-2017) ve Donald John Trump (2017-2021). Hem Suudi Arabistan hem de İran Orta Doğu'da etkili aktörlerdir; bu yüzden, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bu iki aktöre karşı dış politika tutumları önemlidir. Bu çalışma, 21. yüzyıl gelişmeleri aracılığıyla Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin dış politikasının görevdeki başkanlara bağlı olarak nasıl değiştiğini yansıtmaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Suudi Arabistan, İran, Liderlik Stilleri

To my loving family and friends

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States and Saudi Arabia have been strategic partners since the Second World War and even though the relationship had its own challenges, the relations remained strong to this day. The Saudi Kingdom is essential for the interests of the United States. They are trade partners and Saudi Arabia has always tried to maintain the support of the United States, both regionally and internationally.

On the other hand, the case for the United States and Iran has been quite different than the one between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Although Iran used to serve as a strategic partner for the United States, the relationship broke off with the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Iran, as one of the two pillars of the United States foreign policy along Saudi Arabia, shifted its position with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the relations have been witnessing a turmoil ever since.

Throughout this thesis, the United States foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran will be evaluated from a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) perspective. In doing so, eight leadership styles suggested by the study of Hermann et al.[1] is going to be used and three presidential periods are going to be covered: George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama, and Donald John Trump.

[1] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001).

1.1. Scope and Objective

This thesis concentrates on the foreign policy of the United States towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century in terms of regional security. In doing so, the aim of this study is to examine the political developments that took place between 2000 and 2020, through a leadership styles perspective. This is a study with comparisons and contrasts between three presidential periods: George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama, and Donald John Trump. It is possible to reflect that what distinguishes this thesis is the emphasis on the leadership styles under the category of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Throughout this study, mostly secondary resources were used such as books, journal and newspaper articles related to the topic. The resources play a great role in determining whether the United States foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran can be explained through the leadership styles model. The resources used here are also helpful as a basis to evaluate regional and international developments from the perspective of facts.

1.2. Research Question and Argument

The research question of this thesis is how the United States foreign policy has changed towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century in terms of regional security of the Middle East. It is important to note that the research question focuses both on Saudi Arabia and Iran in order to provide an approach comparing and contrasting the foreign policy of the United States. This thesis argues that the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran has been shaped according to the President in power. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran perceive themselves as the leaders of Islam based on their own claims and due to certain historical processes and act accordingly. Therefore, they are important actors with the capacity to influence the Middle Eastern politics, the population of which are predominantly Muslim.

This thesis provides an example of a pure, descriptive, qualitative research as it is focused on improving the understanding of a particular phenomenon – the nature of the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century –, delineating the characteristic of this phenomenon through qualitative methods. Throughout the thesis, first and secondary resources are used.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, includes Scope and Objective, Research Question and Argument, Literature Review, and Theoretical Framework. In the Literature Review part, the existing literature is concentrated upon and in the Theoretical Framework part, the leadership styles under the subcategory of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) of International Relations are discussed.

The second chapter, Historical Background, is divided into three subsections: The Main Parameters of the U.S. Foreign Policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran, The U.S. Foreign Policy towards Saudi Arabia in the 20th Century and the U.S. Foreign Policy towards Iran in the 20th Century. It could be reflected that the 20th century is taken into consideration as the diplomatic relations between the United States and both Saudi Arabia and Iran stem back to the 20th century and the third chapter provides a historical background for this study.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters are the main chapters of this thesis. They all concentrate on the United States foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century. The chapters are divided according to the presidential periods of the United States as George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama, and Donald John Trump. Under each chapter, first, the foreign policy approaches of Presidents are covered. Then, the key developments affecting the foreign policy of the U.S. towards the Middle East are evaluated. Last but not least, the foreign

policy of the U.S. towards Saudi Arabia and Iran through the leadership styles is examined.

The sixth chapter is the last chapter of this thesis. It includes the concluding remarks and fundamental highlights regarding the United States foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran. In this chapter, it is argued that the primary aim of the United States foreign policy has always been to preserve their national security approach. It is also significant that the Middle East is the home for the majority of the Muslim world as 93% of all Muslims throughout the world live in the region. Hereby, the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran is significant in the Middle East as both actors have their own claims over Islam.

1.4. Literature Review

In this part I will review the literature on the United States Foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran. There have been many studies reflecting not only the historical background of the bilateral relations between the actors, but also the factors affecting the regional security aspect of the developments regarding Middle East. There will be certain categories under which relevant topics will be reflected. It would be appropriate to categorize the studies under six topics: Studies that focus on: a) The Foreign Policy of the United States, b) The Bilateral Relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, c) The Bilateral Relations between the U.S. and Iran, d) The U.S. Foreign Policy Towards both Saudi Arabia and Iran, e) Regional Security of the Middle East, and finally, f) Foreign Policy Analysis.

First, there are several publications examining the foreign policy of the United States. For example, the article "After Conservatism" written by Francis Fukuyama, the foreign policy of George W. Bush after the Iraq War has been evaluated. Fukuyama highlights how realists failed in the sense that it did not go

as expected in terms of "democracy and human rights".[2] Furthermore, he explores the neoconservative approach and speaks of the challenges neoconservatism has faced. While emphasizing the past processes regarding the theoretical changes, he infers that the post-Cold War era has fed the rise of neoconservatism. According to Fukuyama, three years after the Iraq War, it is possible to claim that the U.S. foreign policy had to "reconceptualize" in terms of militarization and legitimacy.[3] He states that new ideas are necessary as neoconservatism has been "associated with concepts like coercive regime change, unilateralism and American hegemony".[4]

Similar to Fukuyama, in the chapter "Tactical Multilateralism: U.S. Foreign Policy and Crisis Management in the Middle East" by Bruce D. Jones, the rise of U.S. unilateral behavior of the U.S. is taken into account regarding the post-9/11 period. Comparing and contrasting Clinton and Bush administrations, Jones concentrates on multilateralism as a tactical concept. In other words, he examines the significance of multilateralism although the Bush period could mainly be categorized under unilateralism. He comes up with the claim that multilateral solutions create a part of tactical framework of the U.S. foreign policy as unilateralism has been an approach more concentrated on after the global war on terror had begun. The author talks about Bush's rhetoric and foreign policy and claims that the Bush administration perceived multilateral means "as a tool for managing the central challenges of international security".[5]

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[2] Francis Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism”. *New York Times.* February 19, 2006.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Bruce D. Jones, "Tactical Multilateralism: US Foreign Policy and Crisis Management in the Middle East," in The Wars on Terrorism and Iraq: Human Rights, Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy, ed. Thomas G. Weiss, Margaret E. Crahan, John Goering. (New York: Routledge, 2004): 226.

Melvyn P. Leffler analyzes the foreign policy of Bush in his article "Bush's Foreign Policy" and states that he has not been revolutionary. Leffler is another author focusing on unilateralism. The author claims that Bush has not come up with a new foreign policy approach for the U.S. and infers that unilateralism was not new.[6] Furthermore, Leffler emphasizes that the foreign policies of Bush are not radically different from his predecessors while highlighting that September 11 attacks have shifted the direction of the U.S. foreign policy. According to the author, Bush's rhetoric has resulted in the increasing anti-American sentiments all around the world and Bush.

Moreover, the article "President Bush's Road Map to Middle East Peace: A Promise Unfulfilled", Lincoln Chafee evaluated the foreign policy of George W. Bush by concentrating particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian relations after the September 11 attacks. Different from Fukuyama and Jones, the author focuses on key developments rather than theoretical framework. He highlights the regional components of the U.S. foreign policy and analyzes the relations of the U.S. with the regional actors in the Middle East. Towards the long-lasting Israeli-Palestinian relations, Chafee claims that the failed attempts of peace were meant to be unsuccessful due to the plans not being followed.

In his article, Thomas Juneau provides a general framework on the foreign policy approach of President Barack Obama regarding the Middle East. He analyzes the successes and failures of Obama's foreign policy in the region.[7] Juneau states that Obama has been less involved in the Middle East compared to his predecessor, Bush; however, he reflects that the critics have hold him responsible "for the emergence of IS in 2014" due to the U.S. withdrawal from

[6] Melvyn P. Leffler, "Bush's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 11 (2004): 22.

[7] Thomas Juneau, "The Obama Administration, Defensive Realism, and American Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *Comparative Strategy* 39, no. 4 (2020): 385.

Iraq.[8] He evaluates the moves taken by the Obama administration in Syria and Libya. Juneau also highlights the relations with four other actors: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel.[9] All in all, he concludes that Obama's "foreign policy was somewhat prudent and restrained, especially in comparison with his immediate predecessor, but it also featured much continuity with the past".[10]

Furthermore, in the article "The Sources of the Middle East's Crises and American Grand Strategy", Masoud Kazamzadeh highlights that there have been many debates regarding the American grand strategy since the September 11 attacks.[11] He reflects that there have been four crises in the Middle East: First, "the sectarian struggles between Sunnis and Shiites"; second, "the rise of ultra-right-wing extremist militant fundamentalists"; third, "the ethno-nationalist demands for a state of one's own by Kurds and Palestinians"; fourth, "the pro-democracy movements".[12] He mainly concentrates on Iran and states that the U.S. foreign policy has evolved around the crises in the region since 1979.[13] According to the author, the U.S. has tried to bring balance to the region and Obama's policies in the Middle East have distanced the U.S. from its regional allies.[14] Similar to Juneau, Kazamzadeh evaluates the successes and failures of the Obama period, and concludes that the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East

[8] Ibid, 388.

[9] Ibid, 390-393.

[10] Ibid, 397.

[11] Masoud Kazemzadeh, "The Sources of the Middle East's Crises and American Grand Strategy," *Comparative Strategy* 37, no. 1 (2018): 56.

[12] Ibid, 57-58.

[13] Ibid, 60.

[14] Ibid, 63.

is composed of failures in general. The author thinks that Obama's foreign policy approach has worsened the crises in the region even though Obama considers himself successful.[15]

Another work regarding the U.S. foreign policy is the article, "What Makes America Great? Donald Trump, National Identity, and U.S. Foreign Policy" by Hilde Eliassen Restad. The author emphasizes the U.S. foreign policy under Trump administration through the lens of "America First" platform. Restad reflects the aspect of nationalism shaping Trump's foreign policy and states that Trump has acted in line with populist nationalism.[16] After assessing the types of nationalism throughout the history of U.S., she focuses on Trump and ethnic nationalism. She highlights that Trump characterizes his foreign policy "based on nationalism and against globalization".[17] The author also reflects that Trump's version of nationalism "stands opposed to liberalism and 'globalism'".[18] In short, the author infers that from the perspective of continuity vs. change, it is not possible to fit Trump's actions under one certain category.

Regarding the foreign policy of President Donald Trump, Dana H. Allin analyzes the first impeachment process the President has gone through in the article “Impeachment, Trump and US Foreign Policy”. Different from Restad, Allin focuses on cases rather than the U.S. foreign policy in general. Restad concentrates on the roots of Trump’s foreign policy whereas Allin focuses on the developments leading up to the impeachment process of President Trump. He highlights the foreign policy moves in the Middle East and claims that the

[15] Ibid, 67-68.

[16] Hilde Eliassen Restad, "What Makes America Great? Donald Trump, National Identity, and US Foreign Policy," *Global Affairs* 6, no. 1. (2020): 2.

[17] Ibid, 8.

[18] Ibid, 9.

impeachment process might affect Trump's re-election campaign. He states that the assassination of Major-General Qasem Soleimani "was a climactic stage in a crisis the US president had set in motion by abrogating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action".[19]

Second, there are certain works, which concentrate on the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. For instance, in her book, "Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia", Irvine Anderson analyzes the dynamics of foreign policy from the perspective of oil concentrating on Saudi Arabia between the years 1933 and 1950. She provides a detailed study on discovery of oil as well as the beginnings of the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that oil has been a factor, which has started the strategic partnership between the two actors. Anderson emphasizes the fact that the U.S. had been in need of oil in 1920s due to limited supply; however, the discovery of oil in the Saudi Kingdom turned out to be a positive development in this direction.[20] Anderson highlights that the oil was discovered in March 1938 in Saudi Arabia,[21] and soon it was realized that the value of oil was going to be greater than recognized before. However, the Kingdom's financial crisis in 1941 resulted in the need of a partner. Anderson highlights that because of the outbreak of the Second World War, the revenue coming from the annual pilgrimage dropped down[22] and the solution undebatedly lied within the financial aid provided by the U.S. to Saudi Arabia.[23] Anderson then carries out a detailed

[19] Dana H. Allin, "Impeachment, Trump and US Foreign Policy," *Survival* 62, no. 1 (2020): 226.

[20] Irvine H. Anderson, Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 14.

[21] Ibid, 28.

[22] Ibid, 29.

[23] Ibid, 30.

analysis in terms of finance and diplomacy concerning the newly flourished bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Also, in his article "The Dilemma for Saudi Foreign Policy" by Sir Alan Munro, the author examines the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia starting with the Twin Pillars Policy. Different than Anderson, he focuses on the political side of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Anderson's piece covers the period from 1933-1950 whereas Munro carries out an analysis starting from 1970s until the September 11 attacks. He emphasizes the key developments as well as the challenges witnessed by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and claims that the end of Cold War has brought a change for the bilateral relations. However, "the conservative message of Islamic revival" in domestic politics has been influential in the Kingdom, and even led to the grounds of terrorism.[24] Munro also reflects that there have been factors resulting in the deterioration of the relationship such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq, and September 11 attacks. The author states that a new mistrust has arisen in the U.S. towards the Saudi Kingdom after 9/11. Not only the public view, but also the trade relations were affected by the new mistrust.[25] As Munro infers, Saudi Arabia had to face change and reform since it realizes that the "religious ingredient"[26] together with the "social insulation of the Kingdom"[27] have been the causes leading Saudi Arabia towards a Western alignment.

Edward Wastnidge is another author evaluating the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. In his article "Calling Out Saudi Misadventure: The

[24] Sir Alan Munro. "The Dilemma for Saudi Foreign Policy," *The RUSI Journal* 147, no. 5 (2002): 46, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840208446815.

[25] Ibid, 48.

[26] Ibid, 50.

[27] Ibid, 50.

Trump Presidency and a Plea for European Diplomatic Nous in an Ever-Turbulent Middle East", Wastnidge analyzes the foreign policy of the United States towards Saudi Arabia. Stating that the Kingdom is a "key power in the Middle East and wider Muslim world"[28], the author draws attention to the "leadership ambitions"[29] of Saudi Arabia. He assesses the domestic politics of the Kingdom regarding the Middle East and speaks of the regional developments, which challenged Saudi Arabia as well as the rest of the region. According to Wastnidge, President Trump was determined to build a stronger relationship with Saudi Arabia compared to President Obama and reflects that the bilateral relationship has cooled down under the Obama administration. Furthermore, he infers that the dependency between two states has been reduced during the period of Obama and claims that the Trump administration proved that it is going to be different due to the first developments the bilateral relationship has faced throughout the early times of Trump's presidency.

Moreover, the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia is evaluated in the book "Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia" by Rachel Bronson. In her book, she evaluates the historical background of Saudi Arabia starting with the discovery of oil as she states that "The story of America's relationship with Saudi Arabia begins with oil".[30] She states that the role oil played in the bilateral relationship became larger with the regional and international developments, such as the Second World War, similar to Irvine Anderson. According to the author, the turmoil the region has faced in the 20th century has affected the strategic relationship and compares the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia with the other actors in the

[28] Edward Wastnidge. "Calling Out Saudi Misadventure: The Trump Presidency and a Plea for European Diplomatic Nous in an Ever-Turbulent Middle East". *Global Affairs*. Vol. 3. No. 2. 166.

[29] Ibid, 166.

[30] Rachel Bronson. Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 15.

Middle East.[31] Moreover, Bronson considers religion as an important factor affecting the relationship.[32] She also takes the security dimension into account. Although the relationship has been tested many times, it remained strategic for both parties. The author concentrates on the presidents and changing policies. She carefully elaborates the developments of the 20th century before she moves on to September 11 attacks and beyond. In conclusion, Bronson emphasizes that it is possible for the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to continue even though they might not be easy at all, and they would move forward with the efforts of both sides[33].

Third, there are studies on the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Iran. The book "All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror" by Stephen Kinzer concentrates on the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran. It is possible to state that the piece focuses on 1953 coup in Iran and the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran. The author provides a detailed analysis on the coup and how the relations have been affected afterward. From the beginning, Kinzer states that the anti-Americanism in Iran has not emerged after 1979, instead, it had been triggered in 1953 before the Islamic Revolution broke out in 1979.[34] According to the author, by 1953, the relationship between the two actors was quite new and the U.S. was not "demonized" unlike Britain.[35] In order to evaluate the relationship between the U.S. and Iran, Kinzer highlights that the background of Iran is significant. Hereby, he analyzes the history of Iran

[31] Ibid, 22.

[32] Ibid, 26.

[33] Ibid, 261-262.

[34] Stephen Kinzer, All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2008): x.

[35] Ibid, 2.

starting with the early times. He states that even though "Many countries in the Middle East are artificial creations", Iran has a long-standing, rich culture in the region, going as back as four thousand years.[36] Taking from the ancient times, he speaks of the historical developments of Iran and focuses on Qajar dynasty, later concentrating on the period of Reza Shah.[37] Kinzer also draws attention to the fact that the anti-Britain and anti-Russian feelings in the 20th century have been linked to Iranian struggle for sovereignty.[38] Hereby, it was no surprise that Iran and the U.S. got closer and the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran has become crucial for the balance in the Middle East. However, the 1953 coup resulted in the flourishment of anti-American feelings in Iran.

In her article "A Historical Overview of Sanctions on Iran and Iran's Nuclear Program", Mahdieh Aghazadeh evaluates the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran after the 1979 Revolution in terms of sanctions. The sanctions date back to the Iranian Revolution and categorized the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Iran. The author states the emergence of the sanctions has been related to the Hostage Crisis and during the Reagan administration, "the trade embargo was tightened".[39] It is important to note that the article highlight the perception of the U.S., through which Iran has always been the regional catalyst supporting terrorism. In order to save the U.S. interests in the region, the oil supply as well as the oil prices have been important for the Presidents. In the Clinton period, the sanctions were further initiated in 1995.[40] As George W. Bush reflected as Iran

[36] Ibid, 18.

[37] Ibid, 42.

[38] Ibid, 85.

[39] Mahdieh Aghazadeh, "A Historical Overview of Sanctions on Iran and Iran's Nuclear Program," *Journal of Academic Studies* 14, no. 56. (2013): 140.

[40] Ibid, 141.

being one of the major enemies of the U.S., following the 9/11 attacks, the bilateral relations went on deteriorating.[41] Regarding the nuclear program of Iran, it is possible to infer that not only the regional actors but also the U.S. has been concerned about a military nuclear capability. The author analyzes that the economic sanctions have been one of the possible options to deal with Iran and the best fit appears as the sanctions from the perspective of the U.S.[42] She further speaks of the classification of the sanctions and concludes with the claim that the sanctions are the result of "Iran's new orientation and behavior".[43]

Another study on the foreign policy of U.S. under the administration of Barack Obama towards Iran is "Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy" by Trita Parsi. He provides a detailed analysis concerning the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran, starting from the turning point of 1979 Revolution. According to Parsi, the relationship became worse after the Revolution with the impact of 1991 Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.[44] Parsi acknowledges that there were sour moments before 1979, like Kinzer does; yet different than Kinzer, he concentrates on what the Islamic Revolution of 1979 has changed. After providing historical developments, Parsi focuses on the foreign policy approach of Obama and mainly speaks of the Iran Nuclear Deal and reflects that the deal was a "win-win".[45] The author states that the deal was valuable for the supreme leader of Iran and the U.S. president equally and it "was celebrated throughout the world as a historic triumph of

[41] Ibid, 142.

[42] Ibid, 146.

[43] Ibid, 155.

[44] Trita Parsi. Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017): 10.

[45] Ibid, 267.

reason and dialogue over militancy and warmongering".[46] Although the long-lasting strategic partner of the U.S., Israel, was not satisfied with the deal and the tensions have been escalating, Obama did not give in and went along with the process.[47] Obama believed that for the regional stability of the Middle East, it was important to give "Iran a seat at the table".[48] In short, the author evaluates the foreign policy of Obama towards Iran as a success of diplomacy although he emphasizes the fact that it has damaged the relations of the U.S. with Israel as well as Saudi Arabia.

An analysis reflecting the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran during the administrations of both Obama and Trump is "The US Policy of Containing Iran - From Obama to Trump 2009-2018" by Ayman Saleh Albarasneh and Dania Koleilat Khatib. The article concentrates on the foreign policy of Obama and Trump towards Iran and takes into account the foreign policy approaches of their predecessors. According to the authors, Obama focused on "smart power" and trusted in diplomacy when dealing with Iran, whereas Trump was looking for "a better deal" as he put the emphasis on applying maximum pressure.[49] Throughout the historical background, the authors highlight the effects of the 1953 coup and reflect how the dynamics have altered after the 1979 Revolution.[50] Similar to Kinzer, 1953 is considered as a significant point in the relations and like Parsi, 1979 is the major breaking point taken in this analysis. It is important to note that the article emphasizes the claim that the foreign policy

[46] Ibid, 271.

[47] Ibid, 301.

[48] Ibid, 303.

[49] Ayman Saleh Albarasneh and Dania Koleilat Khatib, "The US Policy of Containing Iran - From Obama to Trump 2009-2018," *Global Affairs* 5. no. 4-5 (2019): 2.

[50] Ibid, 4.

approach of President Obama could be perceived as a continuation of his predecessor; however, he chose to consider the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Iran as a relationship, which could be shaped according to diplomatic measures.[51] Particularly regarding the Iran Nuclear Deal, Obama has shifted away from the war rhetoric as the authors underlined. The authors focus on Obama's use of diplomacy, the same way Parsi does. Compared to Obama, Trump chose to deal with the Islamic Republic through "tough policy"; first, he announced the withdrawal from the JCPOA and second, he re-imposed the sanctions.[52] In short, according to the article, it is possible to state that Obama tried to create an approach based on diplomacy whereas Trump was not satisfied with the baby steps taken by Iran, and he expected a large-scale change from Iran.

Another scholar focusing on the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran is Gülriz Şen. In her article "Ruhani Döneminde İran-ABD İlişkileri", Şen speaks of the moderation and caution Rouhani advocated when he was elected President in 2013 in Iran.[53] She highlights the processes of nuclear talks between the U.S. and Iran and emphasizes that the talks led to cooperation between the two actors although they were only about nuclear capacity of Iran.[54] With the lifting of sanctions, Iran benefited from the positive economic environment. Şen reflects that before Trump took over presidency, the relations started to turn sour due to the U.S. expectations from Iran; however, the deterioration of the bilateral relations was realized with Trump's election.[55] Similar to Albarasneh and

[51] Ibid, 6-7.

[52] Ibid, 11-12.

[53] Gülriz Şen, "Ruhani Döneminde İran-ABD İlişkileri," *İran Araştırmaları Merkezi*, (2017): 5.

[54] Ibid, 11.

[55] Ibid, 15.

Khatib, Şen compares and contrasts how the relations were changed in the terms of Obama and Trump.

Fourth, there is literature covering the U.S. foreign policy comparatively with Saudi Arabia and Iran at the same time. For example, an article which sheds light on the historical background of the relations of the U.S. with Saudi Arabia and Iran is "Pillars, Petroleum and Power: The United States in the Gulf" by Stephen Brannon. The author explains how the withdrawal of Britain from the Middle East led to the involvement of the U.S. in the region as there was a "power vacuum" to fill.[56] Later, with the Nixon Doctrine, the U.S. has tried to come up with a balanced foreign policy approach in the Middle East with the help of Henry Kissinger.[57] According to the Nixon Doctrine, Iran and Saudi Arabia were going to be the strategic partners of the U.S. in the region. The foreign policy objective of the U.S. was simple: To provide stability in terms of regional security in the Middle East. Furthermore, the Soviet threat had a binding effect.[58] The author highlights that Israel did not welcome the Twin Pillars Policy stemming from the Nixon Doctrine due to the conflict of interests.[59] Brannon claims that the agreement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was based on military security and oil trade, whereas Iran was looking for support against the communist threat.[60] However, the plans did not go as expected and the policy succeeded only for a short term as the 1979 Revolution broke out. The author

[56] Stephen Brannon, "Pillars, Petroleum and Power: The United States in the Gulf," *The Arab Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (1994): 4. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27933629.

[57] Ibid, 4.

[58] Ibid, 5.

[59] Ibid, 5.

[60] Ibid, 5-6.

criticizes that the Twin Pillars Policy resulted in instability in the region and U.S. failed to reach its foreign policy objectives in the Middle East.

The article "Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Age of Trump" by Hassan Ahmadian focuses on the relationship of the U.S. with both regional actors and considers the comparatively recent developments. The author states that Iran and Saudi Arabia have been rivals since the 1979 Islamic Revolution[61] as it is also highlighted by Brannon and the regional policies have been characterized according to this rivalry.[62] The sectarian differences have long been an unresolved conflict in the Middle East and Ahmadian claims that the Arab Spring has made Iran and Saudi Arabia conflict explicitly.[63] From the perspective of the U.S. foreign policy, the author emphasizes that the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia changed after the discovery of oil whereas the relationship between the U.S. and Iran flourished after "an American contribution to Iran's liberation.[64] Ahmadian infers that the OPEC Crisis and 9/11 have been two developments which caused disturbances for the bilateral relations of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia[65] and the relationship between the U.S. and Iran has been "characterized by mistrust, contradiction and animosity".[66] Ahmadian emphasizes the September 11 attacks as it has impacted the U.S. relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran. In terms of foreign policy, he emphasizes that the Middle East Policy of Barack Obama has been an exception

[61] Hassan Ahmadian, "Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Age of Trump," *Survival* 60, no. 2 (2018): 133.

[62] Ibid, 134.

[63] Ibid, 135.

[64] Ibid, 137-138.

[65] Ibid, 137.

[66] Ibid, 139.

compared to his predecessors regarding both Saudi Arabia and Iran.[67] However, he mainly highlights the foreign policy of Trump towards Saudi Arabia and Iran. He underlines the fact that Trump was "not interested in preserving the status quo"[68] and as he moved closer to the Kingdom, he got further away from Iran, ignoring Obama's achievements.

Fifth, it is important to include the studies concentrating on the regional security aspect of the Middle East. Two authors, who presented works on regional security are Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver with the theory of regional security complex. The term security complex was coined by Buzan in 1983 as “a group of states whose primary concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another”.[69] Later, Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver have developed the term into “regional security complex” and defined it as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”.[70] Buzan himself states that the definition they made aimed at meta-theoretical questions.[71] It is possible to state that the analysis the authors made about the regional security complex has been significant in the sense that it provided an appropriate level of unit of analysis. From the perspective of regional security of the Middle East, Buzan and Wæver highlight that the 1979 Revolution has

[67] Ibid, 140.

[68] Ibid, 141.

[69] Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations (London: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), 106.

[70] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 201.

[71] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

altered the regional balances since “both states claimed leadership of competing Islamic universalisms”.[72]

Barry Buzan later goes on analyzing the theory of regional security complex regarding the Middle East. Hereby, Buzan applies the formerly coined theory of regional security complex to the region. In his article “Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World”, Buzan reflects that security complexes approach individuals and the international system as a whole.[73] Moreover, he emphasizes that regional security is crucial in the sense that it affects “how and whether stronger outside powers penetrate into the region”.[74] In other words, he draws attention to the claim of the theory that regional security is not limited within the region; yet, it is impacted by the international system. Therefore, a holistic approach is significant in terms of analysis.

Furthermore, Pınar Bilgin has provided an analysis of the regional security in terms of the Middle East in her book “Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective”. She reflects how the U.S. involvement in the region has changed and how the regional security of the Middle East was affected by that while constructing a detailed examination of the region. Also, the author states that the regional structure of the Middle East is not only impacted by the internal actors but also by the external actors, including the United States.[75] Hereby, she

[72] Ibid, 192.

[73] Barry Buzan, "Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World," in Theories of New Regionalism, ed. Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 141.

[74] Ibid, 142.

[75] Pınar Bilgin, Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective (New York: Routledge, 2019), 117.

infers that the practices of the United States in the Middle East have shaped and were shaped by the Middle Eastern security discourse.[76]

Sixth, last but not least, there are scholarly pieces on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as a subfield of International Relations. For example, "Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases" edited by Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne reflects several theoretical and historical perspectives for FPA.[77] In the Introduction chapter, the authors state that

> There are two ways in which foreign policy is of continuing relevance to the study of world politics. The first relates to the agenda of world politics in the twenty-first century and the renewal of interest in foreign policy per se. The second relates more closely to the academic dialogue between the literatures on foreign policy and international relations (IR).[78]

Furthermore, the author of the first chapter, Valerie M. Hudson, refers to the origins of FPA and claims that the FPA studies are "dated back to the late 1950s and 1960s".[79] Her classification of the generations of FPA highlights how the FPA studies have changed over time.

The sixth chapter "Actors, Structures, and Foreign Policy Analysis" by Walter Carlsnaes examines the important actors making foreign policy decisions.[80] He

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[76] Ibid, 199.

[77] Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne, Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

[78] Ibid, 2.

[79] Ibid, 13.

[80] Walter Carlsnaes, "Actors, Structures and Foreign Policy Analysis," in Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 114.

highlights the "obvious candidates"[81] as well as the actors in the background. Carlsnaes provides approaches from an actor-based perspective and refers to the existing studies and concludes that "In the real world we find a number of actors, both domestic and international, who are closely involved in the formulation of foreign policy."[82]

In short, the book "Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases" edited by Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield and Tim Dunne is a comprehensive study reflecting the roots and the properties of the FPA studies, which has been extremely useful when preparing the theoretical basis of my research.

The chapter "What Is Foreign Policy Analysis?" by Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin emphasizes that "FPA focuses on the continuous interaction between actors and their environment".[83] Adopting a broad definition, the authors focus on the levels of analysis put forward by Kenneth Waltz.[84] The authors infer that the FPA studies are agent-centered and concentrates on decision-making processes from the perspective of actors.

Another literary piece is "Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory" by Valerie M. Hudson and Benjamin S. Day. Similar to the study edited by Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, this one highlights the evolution of foreign policy analysis. [85] The book provides a clear definition of FPA as a subfield of

[81] Ibid, 116.

[82] Ibid, 127.

[83] Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin, "What Is Foreign Policy Analysis?" in Foreign Policy Analysis (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1.

[84] Ibid, 8.

[85] Valerie M. Hudson and Benjamin S. Day, Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory (Maryland and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020): 3-5.

IR. There are references to several methods of FPA, such as operational code and leadership trait analysis. Similar to Morin and Paquin, different levels of analysis have been covered throughout the book and one of the areas that was evaluated is psychology of world leaders in foreign policy decision-making. Moreover, this piece emphasizes the eight leadership styles from the study of Hermann et al. and gives detailed information about how general characteristics of a leader might be "combined into" eight possible leadership styles. The eight leadership styles are significant as they form the core of the theoretical part of this study.

The contribution of Christopher Hill with his study "Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century" is significant. He acknowledges that there are many actors included in the foreign policy decision-making as Carlsnaes does in his chapter;[86] yet he elaborates the dimensions of foreign policy in a more detailed way. Hill underlines that "All states, including those unrecognized, and indeed some purely transnational actors, have a foreign policy in some form."[87]

Regarding the leadership studies, the chapter "Do Leaders Shape Foreign Policy" by Marijke Breuning is noteworthy. The author starts by answering the question of why it is important to study leaders and exemplifies the necessity by providing the scenario of a war.[88] She puts the focus on the personality of a leader and uses the instances of King Leopold II of Belgium, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein briefly.[89] Breuning states that it is important to "read between the lines of the public persona to find hints of the individual

[86] Christopher Hill, Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 49.

[87] Ibid, 295.

[88] Marijke Breuning, "Do Leaders Shape Foreign Policy?" in Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 27.

[89] Ibid, 33-36.

behind the image"[90] in order to understand how a leader acts. She speaks of three methods to study leaders: Operational code, leadership trait analysis and presidential character. Operational code and leadership trait analysis are evaluated similar to the study of Hudson and Day.

Under the category of FPA, the study that is at the heart of the theoretical framework must be introduced: "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals" by Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw. Hermann et al. focus on leadership styles and explain why they are important to understand predominant leaders in terms of foreign policy decision-making.[91] Through answering three fundamental questions – which will be covered in the following part of Theoretical Framework – the authors formulate an analysis dividing the leaders under eight styles: Expansionistic, evangelistic, incremental, charismatic, directive, consultative, reactive, and accommodative.[92] These styles will be elaborated in the next part as well. With this distinctive research, Hermann et al. provide a framework through which leaders can be analyzed regarding their foreign policy moves. Leadership styles were later included within different works, such as "Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory" by Valerie M. Hudson and Benjamin S. Day or "Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making" by Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen.[93]

[90] Ibid, 38.

[91] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001), 84.

[92] Ibid, 95-99.

[93] Valerie M. Hudson and Benjamin S. Day, Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory (Maryland and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020); Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr., Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

In conclusion, it is possible to categorize the studies under six categories as studies that focus on: a) The Foreign Policy of the United States, b) The Bilateral Relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, c) The Bilateral Relations between the U.S. and Iran, d) The U.S. Foreign Policy Towards both Saudi Arabia and Iran, e) Regional Security of the Middle East, and f) Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). There are many works related to the analysis of the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century from the perspective of global security.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

International Relations as a distinct discipline has emerged after the First World War with foundation of the first department of International Relations at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth as the Department of International Politics, in the United Kingdom. However, the discipline became prominent after the end of the Second World War within American social sciences. The behavioralist method of the American social scientists has turned International Relations (IR) into a scientific discipline through the end of 1950s.

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a "subfield of International Relations that seeks to explain foreign policy, or, alternatively, foreign policy behaviour, with reference to the theoretical ground of human decision makers, acting singly or in groups".[94] In order to understand what foreign policy analysis deals with, it is important to have a look at the phrase "foreign policy". Although there is no consensus on how a policy is defines, Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin chose to adopt the following definition of foreign policy: "a set of actions or rules governing the actions of an independent political authority deployed in the

[94] Valerie M. Hudson, "The History and Evolution of Foreign Policy Analysis," in Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

international environment".[95] Regarding this definition, it is important to note that there is an obvious reference to sovereign states.

Steve Smith reflects that the history of the development of FPA could be categorized under three main phases: An initial period, an explosion of FPA in the U.S., and the period since.[96] The first period covers from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the second period covers from the late 1960s to early 1970s and the last period is witnessed since the early 1970s.[97]

However, in a more recent study, Hudson adopts a different way of categorization. She states that there have been three waves of FPA: First from 1954 to 1993, second between 1974 and 1993 and the third and last still ongoing since 1993.[98] According to Hudson, the first wave includes two generations of work concerning FPA and the second wave is a self-reflection of the area.[99] Last but not least, the third wave is experienced after the end of the Cold War.[100]

Regarding foreign policy, it is important to note that both actors and structures are present in the making. As Christopher Hill states:

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[95] Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin, "What Is Foreign Policy Analysis?" in Foreign Policy Analysis (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

[96] Steve Smith, "Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 16, no. 2 (1987): 345.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Valerie M. Hudson, "The History and Evolution of Foreign Policy Analysis," in Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17.

[99] Ibid, 17-18.

[100] Ibid, 30.

> Foreign policy- making is a complex process of interaction between many actors, differentially embedded in a wide range of different structures. Their interaction is a dynamic process, leading to the constant evolution of both actors and structures.[101]

Therefore, there are many domestic and international actors involved in the foreign policy processes as well as structures, which also have domestic and international aspects. Here, the question arises as asked too by Walter Carlsnaes: "Who are the most important actors making foreign policy decisions?".[102] In terms of decision-makers, "The obvious candidates are heads of state, heads of government, foreign ministers or secretaries of state, politburos, parliaments, parliamentary committees, political parties, and so forth".[103]

Evaluating the approaches of foreign policy, one of the determinants is the level of analysis. Kenneth Waltz distinguished three levels of analysis in his book "Man, the State and War" as three images[104] – the first image is the individual level, the second image is the national level, and the third image is the international system. Morin and Paquin infer that FPA is related to the first two due to its nature, which adopts an actor-oriented perspective.[105]

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[101] Christopher Hill, Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 49.

[102] Walter Carlsnaes, "Actors, Structures and Foreign Policy Analysis," in Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 114.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Waltz states that he used the term "image" in order to reflect a more accurate approach regarding analysis. According to Waltz, a systemic approach is required to have a better understanding of international relations. (Kenneth N. Waltz, Preface to the 2001 Edition of Man the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), ix).

[105] Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin, "What Is Foreign Policy Analysis?" in Foreign Policy Analysis (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 8.

Throughout this thesis, the focus is going to be on the actor-based perspective and more specifically, on the concept of leadership. It is possible to claim many scholars have debated on how a leader might affect foreign policy since the developments of the 20th century. However, it could also be said that the roots of foreign policy analysis, including the significance of leaders, may even be traced back to the description of Thucydides of the Peloponnesian War.[106]

According to its lexical definition, a leader is "a person in control of a group, country, or situation".[107] Regarding this thesis, a leader is taken as a person who is responsible for making foreign policy decisions: "When a single individual has the power to make the choice concerning how a state is going to respond to a foreign policy problem, he or she becomes the decision unit and acts as a predominant leader".[108] There are both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess leadership styles within the context of foreign policy analysis. Also, a study might include both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools at the same time.

On the one hand, there are three fundamental methods of categorizing a leader in terms of quantitative analysis: Operational code, presidential character, and leadership trait analysis.[109] First, the operational code is a method to describe a leader's perceptions and evaluations of the world; so that assumptions can be

[106] Thomas Preston, "Leadership and Foreign Policy Analysis," in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies ed. Robert A. Denemark, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.255. Online version published on December 22, 2017, 1, accessed March 8, 2022.

[107] *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "leader (n.)," accessed March 15, 2022. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/leader.

[108] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 84.

[109] Marijke Breuning, "Do Leaders Shape Foreign Policy?" in Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 38-39, 44.

made regarding that leader. Second, the presidential character is a strategy to understand the personality of a leader based on two questions.[110] Third, the leadership trait analysis consists of a set of questions that try to shed light on the personal characteristics of a leader. All three methods have different data collection tools as they are statistical approaches of analyzing leaders.

There are also qualitative methods of assessing a leader such as case studies (single and/or multiple) and cross-sectional designs. In a case study, the researcher examines one or more particular case and in a cross-sectional design, qualitative interviews are mainly used to carry out a detailed analysis of a leader. There are advantages and disadvantages to both as examined by Alan Bryman in his article "Qualitative Research on Leadership: A Critical but Appreciate Review" – there are ways in which the qualitative methods are distinctive and there are ways they are not.[111]

This study aims to provide a qualitative analysis under the branch of FPA from the perspective of leaders as the decision-maker. Therefore, three presidential periods of the United States will be covered: George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama, and Donald John Trump. These three leaders – the U.S. presidents – are going to be analyzed according to their leadership styles stemming from the theoretical discussion provided by Hermann, Preston, Korany and Shaw.[112]

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[110] The presidential character asks the questions whether the leader is active or passive and whether the leader rates political life positively or negatively in terms of duty according to the explanations of Breuning as mentioned in Marijke Breuning, "Do Leaders Shape Foreign Policy?" in Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 39.

[111] Alan Bryman, "Qualitative Research on Leadership: A Critical but Appreciate Review," *The Leadership Quarterly* 15, no. 6 (2004): 764.

[112] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001).

It is important to note that the American presidency is significant in the sense that "the foreign policy machinery of the government is organized hierarchically, and one person is located at the top of the hierarchy who is accountable for any decisions that are made".[113] In terms of the U.S. presidency decision-making processes, the desk sign of President Harry S. Truman was symbolic, which had the saying "The buck stops here!" on one side. It was derived "from the slang expression 'pass the buck' which means passing the responsibility on to someone else".[114] The sign was a metaphor reflecting that the U.S. President has been the ultimate decision maker in the field of foreign policy although there have been other mechanisms involved within the processes.

There are many categories to evaluate leaders; yet this study is going to concentrate on the observation of Snyder: "One type is more goal driven; the other is more situationally responsive".[115] In other words, it is possible to infer that there are two types of leadership styles: Goal-oriented or context-oriented as Mintz and Karl DeRouen put into words, stemming from the same study.[116] To further elaborate, leaders who are goal-driven tend to adopt policy priorities; so, according to the given situations, they tend to create a framework within which they are able to evaluate the specific issue – or crisis – and act. Differently, there are leaders who are responsive (context-oriented), "who are more circumspect

[113] Ibid, 84.

[114] Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum. n.d. "'The Buck Stops Here' Desk Sign." Accessed March 15, 2022. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/trivia/buck-stops-here-sign.

[115] As cited in Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001).

[116] Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr., Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 115.

and adaptable according to the context of a current situation"[117] and they tend to value communication and dialogue in terms of approaching the problems.

Goal-driven leaders are motivated by the task they are up against, and they do not tend to alter their positions or ideologies.[118] The foreign policy teams include individuals, who share common perspectives in terms of the global affairs. Mintz and DeRouen also claim that the goal-driven leaders "are not very sensitive to the political context".[119] This is significant in the sense that sensitivity could be measured with a leader's likeliness to engage in armed conflict according to the authors.[120]

On the other hand, responsive leaders are more likely to prefer diplomacy over armed conflict due to their nature and sensitivity to the political context.[121] In other words, they are bound up mostly with the domestic developments and do not wish to spend their country's resources to initiate or take part in an armed conflict.[122] It is also reflected that the responsive leaders do not tend to take high risks without calculating the outcomes.[123]

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid, 116.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 87-88.

[123] Ibid, 88.

So, how do scholars decide the level or sensitivity of the leaders to the political context? Hermann et al. provide three key questions:

> 1) How do leaders react to political constraints in their environment – do they respect or challenge such constraints? 2) How open are leaders to incoming information – do they selectively use information or are they open to information directing their response? 3) What motivates leaders to take action – are they driven by an internal focus of attention or by response from salient constituents?[124]

It would be accurate to evaluate those three questions in a more-detailed way to build a framework for the upcoming analysis. First question opens the door to a highly debated issue regarding the constraints the decision-makers witness throughout the process of policy making. It is no secret that leaders respond to political constraints in different ways; and as Mintz and DeReoun state the leaders, who are considered to be goal-driven, "are more likely to challenge constraints, whereas those who are context oriented will work within the confines of constraints".[125] In other words, responsive leaders do not attach importance to concepts such as compromise, coalition, empathy, etc.

In terms of political constraints, Hermann et al. also claim that leaders, who are more sensitive to the context – i.e., responsive leaders – are open to bargaining and they tend to evaluate the events in a more empathetic way.[126] Different from responsive leaders, goal-driven leaders solve the problems quicker and they are heavily impacted by their beliefs and surroundings.[127] In short, the goal-driven

[124] Ibid, 89-90.

[125] Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr., Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 116.

[126] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 91.

[127] Ibid.

leaders are more likely to enjoy being in control whereas responsive leaders have higher tolerance when it comes to sharing of power.[128]

The second question evolves around the individual's openness to information concerning decision-making. Goal-driven leaders benefit from information that justifies their standpoints and they might overlook any piece of information or data given that it contradicts with their approaches towards a specific situation.[129] Furthermore, goal-driven leaders – different from responsive leaders – spend more time building their cases and lobbying others in order to achieve their objectives.[130] Responsive leaders are "cue-takers" as "they both define the problem and identify a position by checking what important others are advocating and doing".[131] Hereby, they favor a wide range of information when they come across a certain situation and from time to time, they seek political advice.[132] In other words, responsive leaders are more open to information compared to goal-driven leaders.

Regarding the categorization of leadership styles, the last question the scholars dealt with is related to the motivation of leaders for action. Leaders might be

> (...) either motivated by an internal focus – a particular problem or cause, an ideology, a specific set of interests – or by the desire for a certain kind of feedback from those in their environment – seeking acceptance, approval, power, support, status, or acclaim.[133]

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid, 92.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid, 93.

It is possible to claim that responsive leaders value interaction with others and motivated through feedback; contrarily, goal-driven leaders are motivated internally, and they deal with a cause or solving a problem.[134]

Moving along with their study, Hermann et al. define four ways to assess leadership styles of politicians: Crusaders, strategists, pragmatists, and opportunists. When a leader challenges constraints and is relatively closed to information, then he/she is a crusader. A crusader does not necessarily wait for the right time to take action, yet given that the political context is appropriate, a crusader might be "effective in mobilizing others to action".[135] The second leadership style is the opposite of a crusader – an opportunist. An opportunist respects constraints and is open to information. In terms of politics, an opportunist values bargaining and without a consensus, prefers inaction in order not to lose support not build opposition.[136] Another leadership style appears as strategist. A strategist wishes to go through the most effective road to reach his/her goals. In other words, "they walk a fine line between actions that move them towards their foals while avoiding mistakes, failures, and disasters".[137] Last but not least, the fourth style is pragmatist. A leader, who is a pragmatist aims progress "without stepping outside the bounds of one's position".[138] Regarding the time being right or not, a pragmatist would push his/her own position if the time is right; however, decision-making under pressure is also fine in the eyes of a pragmatist.

[134] Ibid, 94.

[135] Ibid, 96.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid, 97.

[138] Ibid.

The third question brings up a further differentiation in terms of leadership styles. It deals with how a leader will act concerning their motivation. To start with, a crusader whose focus is on a problem is expansionistic and a crusader whose focus is on a relationship is evangelistic. An expansionistic leader concentrates on his/her "span of control", valuing "sphere of influence", "hegemony", etc.[139] Whereas an evangelistic tries to influence others to converting "to their position or point of view".[140]

A strategic leader could be categorized as an incremental or a charismatic. An incremental leader is "interested in maintaining control over what they do in foreign policy", whereas a charismatic one is aware that the "perceptions of power and authority" are subjective and he/she aims to ensure "their image in the eyes of certain constituencies".[141]

Third, a pragmatic leader could either be directive or consultative. A leader under the category of directive leadership concentrates on his/her goals and important issues according to his/her perspective. On the other hand, a consultative leader focuses on any possible obstacle regarding an action. He/she wishes to operate within a network in terms of information to monitor supporters as well as opponents.[142]

Finally, an opportunist leader could be categorized as reactive or accommodative. A reactive leader is aware of the ways to respond to a specific problem; however, an accommodative leader values consensus and compromise. A reactive leader does not wish to lower the possibility of reelection, the focus is

[139] Ibid, 98.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid, 98-99.

[142] Ibid, 99.

on remaining in office. For an accommodative leader, others' opinions and beliefs are important in shaping the foreign policy framework.[143]

Table 1. Leadership Styles (Hermann et al.)

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Motivation	
		Problem Focus	Relationship Focus
Challenges constraints Becomes a crusader	Closed to information	Expansionistic *Focus is on expanding one's power and influence*	Evangelistic *Focus is on persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause*
Challenges constraints Is generally strategic	Open to information	Incremental *Focus is on maintaining one's maneuverability and flexibility while avoiding the obstacles that continually try to limit both*	Charismatic *Focus is on achieving one's agenda by engaging others in the process and persuading them to act*
Respects constraints Inclined towards pragmatism	Closed to information	Directive *Focus is on personally guiding policy along paths consistent with one's own views while still working within the norms and rules of one's current position*	Consultative *Focus is on monitoring that important others will support, or not actively oppose, what one wants to do in a particular situation*
Respects constraints Is usually opportunistic	Open to information	Reactive *Focus is on assessing what is possible in the current situation given the nature of the problem and considering what important constituencies will allow*	Accommodative *Focus is on reconciling differences and building consensus, empowering others and sharing accountability in the process*

[143] Ibid, 100.

This thesis aims to reflect the leadership styles and foreign policymaking practices of three predominant leaders in terms of U.S. foreign policy towards Middle East in the 21st century: George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama, and Donald John Trump. While doing so, key foreign policy events will be reflected along with the decisions made by the U.S. Presidents in charge.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, fundamental developments which shaped the 20th century of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran will be assessed. In doing so, how the U.S. foreign policy towards both actors was constituted and evolved will be reflected. The aim of this chapter is to reflect how the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia as well as the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran in the 20th century have impacted their upcoming relationships in the 21st century.

2.1. The Main Parameters of the U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Middle East

The United States has followed different trends of foreign policy in its history. There were periods of isolationism as well as internationalism. In order to understand the foreign policy approach of the U.S. in the 1900s, first, isolationism should be highlighted. As a recurrent theme of U.S. foreign policy, isolationism could be reflected as advocating "non-involvement in European and Asian conflicts and non-entanglement in international politics".[144]

However, the U.S. has gotten involved in the First World War as well as the Second World War. The world wars have resulted in a foreign policy approach connected to the Middle East.

> During the Second World War, the United States Government took a secondary role in the Middle East activities. The area was still dominated by Britain and the United States had in it neither political nor strategic interests until World

[144] United States Department of State. "American Isolationism in the 1930s," Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism.

> War II made American involvement inevitable as part of the Allies' grand strategy.[145]

The gap left after Britain's withdrawal from the Middle East was filled by the United States as the Middle East was an important region. Harry Truman stated in 1946 that

> Turning to the Near East and the Middle East, we find an area which presents grave problems. This area contains vast natural resources. It lies across the most convenient routes of land, air, and water communications. It is consequently an area of great economic and strategic importance, the nations of which are not strong enough individually or collectively to withstand powerful aggression.[146]

Therefore, it was not unexpected for the United States to take significant steps in the Middle East. Not only was the Middle East a strategic location for travel routes, but also the region was home to many natural resources. So, one of the main parameters of the foreign policy approach of the U.S. was to ensure security for those resources, namely oil.

Another parameter of the U.S. foreign policy in the region came to scene after the establishment of the state of Israel. After Israel was founded, the United States has not hesitated to provide support in terms of economy and military. The U.S. recognized Israel quite soon after the state was proclaimed.[147]

In the 20th century, an important reason for the U.S. involvement was countering the Soviet Union in the region. As two blocks of the bipolar world order, providing economic and military aid to regimes against the Soviet expansion was

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[145] Hamid Madadi, "United States Involvement in Middle East Policies," *Pakistan Horizon* 23, no. 3 (1970): 294. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41393034.

[146] Harry S. Truman, "Address in Chicago on Army Day," April 6, 1946. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/76/address-chicago-army-day.

[147] Hamid Madadi, "United States Involvement in Middle East Policies," *Pakistan Horizon* 23, no. 3 (1970): 294. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41393034.

a significant parameter characterizing the foreign policy approach of the U.S. in the Middle East.[148] Hereby, the U.S. kept remaining in the region.

All in all, the U.S. has had many reasons to continue its presence in the Middle East. The aforementioned parameters intensely impacted the U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East; therefore, they have to be taken into account when analyzing the 20th century developments in terms of the U.S. relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2.2. The Foreign Policy of the U.S. towards Saudi Arabia in the 20th Century

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia stems back to the 20th century; however, it is still quite a new one. To understand the dynamics of this mutual connection, it is essential to reflect the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia first.

The Saudi state has a tribal and traditional basis.[149] In the eighteenth century, the Saudi state was formed on the basis of Wahhabi ideology. The Ottoman Empire continued to have control over the Arabian Peninsula until the First World War.[150] The region witnessed the competition for control between Rashidis and Saudis until 1921, which led to the weakening of the Rashidi emirate.

During the First World War, Britain looked for local allies in the Middle East region, where Rashidis, Saudis and Hashemites were still rivals. As the search for partners continued, the rivalry was fueled. Not even the ending of the First

[148] Ibid.

[149] Melvin A. Conant and Fern Racine Gold, Access to Oil: The United States Relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), 38.

[150] Madawi Al-Rasheed, A History of Saudi Arabia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

World War could stop the battles throughout the region. Throughout consolidating his rule and leading settlement, Abdul Aziz Bin Saud succeeded in seizing a huge part of the peninsula.[151] Eventually, on September 22, 1932, he declared his realm as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (*al-mamlaka al- 'arabiyya al-sa'udiyya*).[152]

Considering the lifetime of the Saudi state between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, it appears that not only the state was used to being independent, but also that the state struggled a lot to find a balance with all the uprisings and ideological conflicts.

Most scholars infer that the key to the beginning of the bilateral relations is the "oil" in the region. After the foundation of the Kingdom, Saudi Arabia was not a decision-maker in the region for a while. However, there was a shift in the balance of power in the region related to the Second World War. Until the end of the Second World War, the main focus was on the consolidation of the state, and it was not possible to talk about diplomatic developments from the perspective of Saudi Arabia.

While Saudi Arabia was a newly found state, the breakout of the 1929 World Economic Crisis was still effective. The scenario was harsh in terms of the economy of Saudi Arabia due to global economic developments. It is important to note that the discovery of oil did not take place yet; therefore, the main source of income had been the cash flow of the religious pilgrimage, which is called *Hajj*, by Muslims. "Before oil became consistently profitable, the monarchy's

[151] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 232-233.

[152] Madawi Al-Rasheed, A History of Saudi Arabia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 94.

greatest source of revenue the pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, remained vulnerable."[153]

Therefore, it is possible to reflect that the economy was built upon the revenues of the pilgrimage. Moreover, the institutions of a permanent regime did not exist at the beginning within the borders of the state, including a national budget.[154] Tribal traditions were followed throughout the economy as well, which did not make the situation profitable for the Saudis. In short, there were no apparent sources of income other than *Hajj,* and there was no particular way to organize government spending.

On the other hand, the 1930s did not bring favorable conditions to the United States, too. The unemployment rate was high as they tried to overcome the negative outcomes of the 1929 World Economic Crisis or, as it is called, the Great Depression. Although the depression did not end for a while, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's efforts were leading the path to restore the economy. By the end of the 1930s, the Great Depression came to an end; yet, before then, the beginning of the economic cooperation was around 1933, when Saudis and Americans agreed upon the search of petroleum within the borders of the newly established Saudi state. As Irvine Anderson states, the agreement that was signed on May 29, 1933, remained unnoticed at first since the rest of the world did not believe in the existence of oil in the region.[155] Even though the United States had recognized the Saudi state earlier that year, there had not been any diplomatic relations yet.

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[153] Wayne H. Bowen, The History of Saudi Arabia (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2014), 101.

[154] Aydın Aydın, "Hereditary Oil Monarchies: Why Arab Spring Fails in GCC Arabian States?" *SDU Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Journal of Social Sciences* 30 (2013): 130.

[155] Irvine H. Anderson, Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 25.

All in all, the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia could be conceptualized through two main concepts in the 20th century: Oil and security.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not transform overnight, and before the political consolidation of the Saudi state, modernity and technology were not the first concepts that come to mind. However, Saudi Arabia began its process of transformation from a medieval state to a modern one in the 1930s, and this process accelerated with the discovery of oil.

"The Standard Oil Company of California won a sixty-year concession to explore eastern Saudi Arabia in 1933."[156] Hereby, the U.S. involvement in the region dates back to the search for oil. As a result, oil was discovered on March 3, 1938, in Saudi Arabia by Americans in Dammam. Later it was identified as one of the largest sources of petroleum in the world.[157] The discovery led to the beginning of the oil industry in Saudi Arabia, which is clearly a turning point in the history of the state.

It is important to note that the discovery is essential as the Kingdom used to rely on the income from pilgrimages to Mecca before. The decline of the income had been a problematic issue after the 1929 World Economic Crisis in the Saudi state, and in a way, the discovery of oil altered the economy of Saudi Arabia. After oil revenues reached a consistent level, they became the main source of wealth for the Kingdom. Moreover, the relationship with the United States has been consolidated through oil.

[156] "U.S.-Saudi Arabia Relations." Council on Foreign Relations (2018). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-saudi-arabia-relations.

[157] Rasoul Sorkhabi and Michael Quentin Morton, "The Emergence of the Arabian Oil Industry," *GEO ExPro*. (2019). https://www.geoexpro.com/articles/2008/06/the-emergence-of-the-arabian-oil-industry.

The Standard Oil Company of California and the Texas Oil Company established a partnership in the region in 1936, and together they founded the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) in 1944.[158] As the economic relations were strengthened, the cooperation spread onto other areas of commerce, and government contacts followed. The first American legation, which had been established in 1943, was later raised to Embassy status in 1949.[159] This marked the increase in diplomatic relations as well.

Regarding the Second World War, the United States first neglected Saudi Arabia, which left the Kingdom defenseless against any potential attacks. This led the Kingdom to search for an external power, which would prevent it from further threats as the aim was to keep the oil production going and maintain the pilgrims visiting Hajj. During this period, Britain was the first to help Saudi Arabia, regarding the economic challenges the Kingdom had been facing. Then, realizing the need to intervene with this relationship, which had its roots in the past, the United States decided to include Saudi Arabia in the Lend-Lease Program in 1943.[160][161]

February 14, 1945 is also an important date regarding the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman al Saud met in Egypt as the

[158] Irvine H. Anderson, Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), IX.

[159] Melvin A. Conant and Fern Racine Gold, Access to Oil: The United States Relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), 38.

[160] Irvine Anderson, "Lend-Lease for Saudi Arabia: A Comment on Alternative Conceptualizations," *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 4 (1979): 419.

[161] Lend-Lease Program enabled President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide aid to any country given that he thought that country was essential for the U.S. national security. On February 18, 1943, Roosevelt has stated that "the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States" and expanded the program to include the Kingdom. (U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Near East and Africa, Volume IV (Washington, D.C.: 1943); Irvine Anderson, "Lend-Lease for Saudi Arabia: A Comment on Alternative Conceptualizations," *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 4 (1979).

war was coming to an end.[162] In a way, this meeting marked the beginning of a "special" partnership even though there had been several disagreements over foreign policy matters. Oil was very important for the United States since it was clear that the war was fueled by oil, and coal or horsepower was no longer the main source of energy as it had been before. From the perspective of Roosevelt, the oil reserves were crucial for the energy need of the postwar world.

As oil was an important source of revenue for Saudi Arabia, it was on the agenda of the King as well. From the perspective of the economy, even though oil had been a turning point, the breakout of the Second World War delayed the processes of export.[163] Moreover, the number of persons making the annual pilgrimage declined abruptly, which caused the revenues to drop as well. The state was broke, and "only the United States had the resources to help the Saudi economy cope until oil production grew sufficiently to make the Kingdom solvent".[164]

Another issue on the King's mind was security. Therefore, concerning economy and security, the United States was an important partner. "The United States would ensure security for the Kingdom, and the Saudis would ensure access to their oil fields."[165] It was a two-way deal.

Of course, there also was tension in the bilateral relationship, mostly stemming from the support of Roosevelt for the Zionist movement on the lands of

[162] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 1.

[163] Monica Malik and Tim Niblock, The Political Economy of Saudi Arabia (London: Routledge, 2007), 55.

[164] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 4.

[165] Ibid.

Palestine. Even though Roosevelt tried hard to convince the King to support a Jewish homeland in the region, the King's heart was set against a Zionist state as he believed that space for Jews should be provided by the Axis countries. However, the trip and the meeting were partially successful despite the disagreements over Palestine. All in all, Riyadh declared war on Germany on March 1945.[166]

Moreover, Saudi Arabia has seen itself as the regional coordinator of the Middle East.[167] Therefore, it is important to infer that the emergence of a new actor in the already problematic region created certain tensions as it became the major complicating factor in United States-Saudi relations.[168] First of all, the new actor was neither Arab nor Muslim. Furthermore, the newly found Israeli state chose to locate on the lands of the Palestinians through settler colonialism.[169]

As the King and Roosevelt discussed before, the United States had been in favor of a Jewish state in the region although the Arabs, in general, were against it. Yet, the Zionist movement peaked with the support from Harry S. Truman, who succeeded Roosevelt. This was portrayed as a betrayal from the perspective of the Saudi state as the Arabs were majority in the area and they had been asking

[166] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 233.

[167] Joseph Kostiner, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: The Fluctuation of Regional Coordination," *British Journal of Middle Eastern* Studies 36, no. 3 (2009): 417.

[168] Melvin A. Conant and Fern Racine Gold, Access to Oil: The United States Relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), 40.
Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 25.

[169] David Lloyd, "Settler Colonialism and the State of Exception: The Example of Palestine/Israel," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2 no. 1 (2012): 62.

for full independence for a unified Palestine.[170] "The Saudis were deeply angered by Truman's decision, which they saw, right or wrong, as a repudiation of the FDR commitment to take no action harmful to the Arabs".[171]

Prince Faisal, who priorly had been the driving force behind the bilateral relations of Saudi Arabia and the United States, rooted for the dissolution of the diplomatic relations as a response to the declaration of the establishment of the state of Israel. Although a stronger opposition was expected from the King, he chose not to do so due to the income of the American oil company. Still, he "instructed all provincial governors to raise volunteers to fight in Palestine alongside the other Arab armies".[172] The support of United States for the Jewish immigration as well as the newly found Israeli nation has become an important threshold for the bilateral relations.

Furthermore, 1967 has been a year when the tension started to rise between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The memories of the defeat in 1948 and the Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956 had been important pieces of the political mindsets of the Arab states. In spite of the problematic relations in the region with the Israeli state, the June War of 1967 has marked both a material and psychological defeat for the belligerent Arab states in the region even though the war only lasted for six days.[173]

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[170] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 25.

[171] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 26.

[172] Ibid.

[173] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 339.

From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, the war was a turning point in terms of foreign policy and more specifically, in terms of the Kingdom's relationship with the United States. Even though Saudi Arabia did not take an active part in the events leading up to the war nor Saudi troops fought in the war, Saudis contributed to the efforts financially.[174] Following those developments, organized boycotts and oil embargoes[175] appeared against the "supporters" of Israel. This path resulted in the Kingdom "becoming the leader of the Islamic world in pressing for the Palestinian rights".[176] Before the war, Saudi Arabia saw secular revolutionary Arab nationalism of Egypt as a threat – however, this changed drastically after 1967.[177] After 1967, it is possible to infer that the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Egypt turned into a partnership against the common enemy – Israel. Saudi Arabia's disappointment with the U.S. response to the 1967 War led to the beginning of deterioration of the Saudi-U.S. relations.

On July 25, 1969, during a tour in Asia, President Nixon met with reporters in Guam. Although his remarks were mainly related to the U.S. ambitions in Asia, "this strategy was realized most clearly in the Persian Gulf." The Nixon Doctrine, stemming from the foreign policy of Nixon, was shaped into the Twin Pillars Policy, which "crowned Iran and Saudi Arabia as the defenders of U.S. interests."

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[174] Wayne H. Bowen, The History of Saudi Arabia (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2014), 111-112.

[175] Many scholars view the 1967 oil embargo is a failure (i.e., J.E. Hartshorn, Walter Laqueur, James A. Boorman, Fuad Itayim, Hartmur Brosche as cited in M.S. Daoudi and M.S. Dajani, "1967 Oil Embargo Revisited," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 2 (1984): 65-66.) However, the 1967 oil embargo is significant because it is a "retaliatory action taken against countries perceived to have intervened on Israel's side" and an expression of "devotion to the Arab cause" (M.S. Daoudi and M.S. Dajani, "1967 Oil Embargo Revisited," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 2 (1984): 68). It has "laid the groundwork for the 1973 embargo" (Ibid, 65).

[176] Bruce Riedel, "How the 1967 War Dramatically Re-Oriented Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy," *Brookings*, May 30, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/05/30/how-the-1967-war-dramatically-re-oriented-saudi-arabias-foreign-policy/.

[177] Ibid.

From the perspective of U.S. foreign policy, the Twin Pillars Policy was quite rational. After the end of the Second World War, the primary aim of the U.S. was to prevent the potential spread of Soviet Union as well as communism in the Middle East. Hereby, choosing the two strategic actors in the region was well-calculated: "Saudi Arabia's importance in this policy was due to its possession of the world's largest oil fields and its emerging influence in pan-Arab politics and councils" whereas "Iran was by far the more significant partner due to its much larger population, relatively more developed economy and more powerful armed forces."[178] In other words, Saudi Arabia's power in the region – as well as in the world – was primarily based on oil. Regarding the Nixon Doctrine and the Twin Pillars Policy, the bargain between the Kingdom and United States was the exchange of military equipment in return for a stable oil supply. Even though Saudi Arabia was a significant partner, Iran was prioritized due to its greater economic and military power. Up until 1979 Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia would be kept in the background.

Even before the outbreak of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had its ups and downs. However, the year 1973 marked the beginning of "a period of extreme turbulence"[179] for the United States and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis did not take an active role during the combat, yet they supported Egypt and Syria against Israel and the United States.

The oil prices were already increasing before the war due to excess demand; yet, with the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, oil producing states started to use oil as a foreign policy tool – it later came to be known as the "oil weapon". The close nature of the bilateral relations between the United States and Israel was a subject of tension by itself for the Arab world. Given that the Arab states wanted

[178] Tommy Gene Cates, "United States Persian Gulf Policy since 1968", *Air Command and Staff College Report* (1988): 6.

[179] Thomas Lippman, Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 155.

to reacquire the lands occupied by Israel in the 1967 War such as Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, another conflict was inevitable. In the light of this hostile background, the Arab coalition launched a surprise attacked against Israel on October 6, 1973.[180] It was on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, and afterwards the war also came to be known as the Yom Kippur War.[181]

It could be inferred that the war broke out as a result of the continuing the turbulent nature of the relations between the Arab world and Israel. However, from the perspective of the United States, Israel had to be supported – not only because of the close ties between the two states, but also because of the Soviet involvement in the war. As Pierri reflected, "The main American objective was '...to prevent the Soviet Union from getting a dominant position in the Middle East'" according to Henry Kissinger.[182] In response to that, "the United States initiated a massive airlift of supplies to Israel"[183] and the course of events has triggered the need for "oil weapon".

On October 17, 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) retaliated by imposing an embargo against the U.S. – which was later extended to target other countries that supported Israel such as the Netherlands, Portugal, and South Africa.[184] The conditions of the embargo were very heavy as

[180] "The 1973 Arab-Israeli War." U.S. Department of State, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/arab-israeli-war-1973.

[181] "The October Arab-Israeli War of 1973: What Happened?" *Al Jazeera*, October 8, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/10/8/the-october-arab-israeli-war-of-1973-what-happened.

[182] Bruno Pierri, "A Chess Game in the Middle East: Dr. Kissinger's Diplomacy against the USSR during the Yom Kippur War," *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* 76, no. 3 (2009): 360.

[183] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 51.

it “banned petroleum exports to the targeted nations and introduced cuts in oil production”[185] at the same time. During this period, the Kingdom suspended all oil shipment to the U.S. and an international crisis arose. Until the embargo was lifted in March 1974, the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia kept being tense and perhaps it could be inferred that the Kingdom was leveraged for the first time over the U.S. The U.S. foreign policy objective throughout the embargo focused on fixing the relationship and President Nixon along with Henry Kissinger tried to broker an agreement in order to let the crisis go.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 did not happen overnight on the contrary it had longstanding roots in the society. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was supported by the United States following the Nixon doctrine and the withdrawal of Britain from the Middle East. Iran was a significant partner for the U.S. as the objective of the U.S. foreign policy concentrated on filling the vacuum left from British powers. Some might also claim that even though the Twin Pillars Policy supposedly focused on Saudi Arabia and Iran, the strategic partner the U.S. valued was primarily Iran.

It is important to reflect that Shah had been criticized by Iranian intellectuals harshly even before the Revolution broke out. Intellectuals published a series of open letters in 1977 which reflected the injustice regarding the power accumulation of Shah.[186] However, the relations between the U.S. and Iran had strengthened after the 1953 Iranian coup d’état, and Pahlavi had positioned

[184] “Oil Embargo, 1973–1974.” U.S. Department of State, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo.

[185] Ibid.

[186] “In October 1977, a group of secular intellectuals, lawyers, and judges addressed an open letter to the shah asking the imperial regime to observe the constitution, free political prisoners, and respect political freedoms and human rights.” (Maziar Behrooz, “Iran after Revolution (1979-2009),” in The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History ed. Touraj Daryaee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 366.

himself with the U.S. while continuing to rule as an absolute monarch. The warmness of relations continued between President Jimmy Carter (James Earl Carter) and Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi after 1977.

1979 Revolution consists of a series of events which resulted in the exile of the Shah and his family in Egypt. Following his departure, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran from exile and founded the Islamic Republic of Iran. After that point, the relations between the U.S. and Iran never restored in the way they used to be. Until the Obama administration, the relations froze, and no dialogues were witnessed. The importance of the Revolution from the perspective of Saudi Arabia could be interpreted as the Kingdom becoming the prime partner of the U.S. in the region. Hereby, the 1979 Revolution turned out to be a game changer for the bilateral relations between the Saudi Kingdom and the U.S. Furthermore, the foreign policy of U.S. foreign policy quite changed because from that point on, there was an ongoing threat of Iran in the region and in the world in the eyes of the United States.

Moreover, 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was another turning point witnessed in the history of the Middle East after the Second World War. As the bipolar world order suggested at that point, being close to the Western bloc or the Eastern bloc was perhaps the main foreign policy move made by most of the states. Of course, the United States and the Soviet Union were the two poles of the world order and Afghanistan was another actor in the middle.

The Soviet Union chose to intervene in Afghanistan in order to provide support for the communist government of Afghanistan. The communist government kept conflicting with anti-communist Muslim guerillas during the Afghan War. The intervention coincided with the first and foremost of the foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union: Spreading communism.

From the perspective of the U.S., the intervention was unacceptable as the Soviet Union was "invading" a region, which is not included in the Eastern bloc. President Jimmy Carter perceived the invasion as a potential threat to the U.S. influence in the region of Persian Gulf. For Saudi Arabia the situation was more complex. Particularly "after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamist militants in November 1979"[187], the Kingdom was eager to reflect an image defending Islam. By supporting the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia would have repaired the domestic politics, and stood against its ideological rival, Iran. On top of all those, it was an important chance to consolidate the Kingdom's relations with the United States. As a result, both Saudi Arabia and the United States supported mujahedeen over the Soviet powers and the communist government in Afghanistan.

After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, oil has clearly become a political weapon for Saudi Arabia. Even though the Kingdom did not take part actively in the military operations, the continuous U.S. support for Israel has led Saudi Arabia evaluate the strategic partnership with the United States. No matter how strong the relations were, Israel has been changing the balance of the equation for both sides. Stemming from this perspective, Saudi Arabia first acquired a 25% participation interests in Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco)'s assets. Later, the Kingdom kept increasing its participation interests and by 1980, the nationalization process was complete.[188] As Yergin puts into words, "The oil

[187] Guido Steinberg and Nils Woermer, "Exploring Iran & Saudi Arabia's Interests in Afghanistan & Pakistan: Stakeholders or Spoilers-A Zero Sum Game," *CIDOB Policy Research Project Part 1* (2013): 11.

[188] Will Martin. "From an Unexplored Desert to a near $2 Trillion IPO: The 86-Year History of Saudi Aramco in Pictures." *Business Insider*, December 11, 2019, https://www.businessinsider.com/the-history-of-saudi-aramco-timeline-2017-11#during-its-early-years-aramco-was-not-in-the-hands-of-the-saudi-state-but-that-changed-when-in-1973-the-saudi-government-purchased-25-of-aramco-13.

producers had achieved their grand objective; they controlled their own oil".[189] Saudi Arabia now had leverage over oil against the United States.

Up until Operation Desert Shield, the emphasis on the bipolar world order and the tension between the two blocs have been reflected. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, has changed the global environment. Soviet powers withdrawing from their satellite states and the Eastern bloc concentrating on independence and democracy have resulted in the rise of the United States as a global superpower.

Saddam Hussein came to power officially on July 16, 1979, and began his service as the fifth president of Iraq. He was considered as a dictator and throughout his rule, the focus has always been on conflicts. Shortly after the 1979 Revolution of Iran, frictions arose between Iran and Iraq over the Shatt-al Arab waterway dispute. As a result, on September 22, 1980, Iraq invaded Iraq and the war ended in a stalemate after eight years.

Although the Iraq-Iran War ended, it led to rising tensions between Iraq and Kuwait. The economic burden of the war has left Iraq in a challenging position. Furthermore, Iraq under Saddam Hussein kept a hostile approach towards Israel. The foreign policy of the Saddam administration could easily be described as aggressive and reckless.

Not so long after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, on August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, which is an oil-rich country. The Kuwaitis fled to Saudi Arabia or surrendered, and the Saudi border was closed by the Republican Guard divisions.[190] As the situation kept becoming riskier for the Kingdom, it was

[189] Daniel Yergin, The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011): 652.

simply inevitable for the U.S. to get involved. Rapidly, on August 7, 1990, coalition forces began to move so Saudi Arabia. President George H.W. Bush was determined not to allow aggression of Iraq. The oil capacity of Kuwait was a reason enough to intervene; however, what more important was the situation the Saudi Kingdom was in. President George H. W. Bush stated that "The sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States" and although the U.S. was not looking for conflicts, the strategic partnership in terms of security was crucial.[191]

The United States did not remain silent against the Iraqi threat to the Saudi Kingdom and the rest followed. Bush received congressional support and after that, Operation Desert Storm came on January 17, 1991, following Operation Desert Shield. The success of the first military campaign continued and the international coalition managed to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. On March 3, 1991, an armistice was agreed to by the coalition leaders.[192]

In the aftermath of the Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, which later came to be known as the First Gulf War, the U.S. foreign policy focused on helping Kuwait return to the pre-war situation through humanitarian missions.[193]

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[190] Richard W. Stewart, War in the Persian Gulf: Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm: August 1990-March 1991 (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2010), 12.

[191] George H. W. Bush, "Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait – Operation Desert Shield," August 8, 1990. https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/georgehwbushkuwaitinvasion.htm

[192] Richard A. Lacquementt, Jr., "The Gulf War 30 Years Later: Successes, Failures, And Blind Spots," September 9, 2020. https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/the-gulf-war-30-years-later-successes-failures-and-blind-spots/.

[193] "Operation Desert Storm." *U.S. Army Center of Military History*, https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/desert-storm/index.html.

2.3. The U.S. Foreign Policy towards Iran in the 20th Century

The establishment of the diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran goes back to 1856.[194] However, the United States did not send an ambassador to Iran until 1944.[195] It is also possible to state that the relations remained friendly; yet, distant before the breakout of the Second World War. According to Mark Gasiorowski, the bilateral relationship was quite limited, which could be supported with the fact that Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was Iran's monarch, withdrew Iran's ambassador to Washington for almost a year.[196]

After the Second World War, Iran witnessed a crisis with the Soviet Union over the Iranian province of Azerbaijan.[197] "The Iranian government, with strong backing from the United States, lodged a complaint with the UN Security council, and in spring 1946 the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its forces from the Iranian territory."[198] Following that, the relationship was strengthened, and the U.S. guided the Shah administration throughout the 1953 coup d'état. However, The United States and Iran had been friendly until the breakout of the 1979 Revolution. There had been ups and downs regarding the relationship

[194] David. W. Lesch and Mark L. Haas, The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 52.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ibid.

[197] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 276.

[198] Ibid.

before, but the freezing of the diplomatic relations came in 1980[199] after the Hostage Crisis.

It is possible to state that there had been no active foreign policy of the United States towards Iran until the Second World War. During the Second World War, Iran had been invaded by Britain and the Soviet Union as Reza Shah Pahlavi was considered to be a German supporter. After the United States entered the war, the United States-Iran relations improved as the United States chose to send troops to Iran in terms of help.

The German threat vanished; however, the Soviet influence in the Iranian region continued as Soviets backed separatist movements within the northwestern part of the state. Iranian government sought help from the United States – as well as Britain – and demanded a Soviet withdrawal, which was supported by the United States all along.[200]

Perhaps, a major development in the 20th century Iran was the 1953 coup d'état, which was the result of a series of events. The beginning of the process was marked by the Abadan Crisis,[201] which lasted from 1951 to 1954. The Iranian parliament under the Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq nationalized the Iranian assets of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Following this period, the United Kingdom and the United States organized a coup d'état; however, the

[199] Jimmy Carter announced that the U.S. was breaking ties with Iran on April 7, 1980, along with other sanctions: "…the United States of America is breaking diplomatic relations with the Government of Iran". (Jimmy Carter, Sanctions Against Iran Remarks Announcing U.S. Actions, April 7, 1980, retrieved from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/sanctions-against-iran-remarks-announcing-us-actions.)

[200] Roham Alvandi, Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6, 26, 28.

[201] "The Abadan crisis was the initial phase of the protracted crisis in Anglo-Persian relations 1951-1954, precipitated by Persia's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in May 1951." (Sue Onslow, "'Battlelines for Suez': The Abadan Crisis of 1951 and the Formation of the Suez Group," *Contemporary British History* 17 no. 2 (2003): 1)

first attempt was unsuccessful. Still, a second attempt took place, which ousted the democratically elected Iranian government on August 19, 1953. Later Madeleine Albright, the former United States Secretary of State, claimed that,

> In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Massadegh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development.[202]

After the coup d'état, Shah Pahlavi rule was restored, and the relations of Iran and the United States continued. The period between 1953 and 1979 reflected modernization policies, which were strongly protested by the Islamic conservatives within the state, and the help of United States throughout the installment of Iran's nuclear program in 1957. During the 1960s and 1970s, the oil revenues kept increasing and the relationship remained warm and civil. Until then, the world witnessed a bilateral relationship, which, at first, was based on oil and later turned out to spread over culture and daily lives. There had been a great amount of influence of the United States over Iran until the 1979 Islamic Revolution; for example, the universities were shaped according to the American model.

In order to comment on the 1979 Revolution, the background should be evaluated first from the perspective of the Nixon Doctrine. After the British withdrawal from the Middle East region, a power vacuum emerged; yet, the United States had been heavily concentrated on the Vietnam War. President Richard Nixon stated that the United States were seeking allies, who are expected to be regional leaders while cooperating with the United States. The so-called Nixon Doctrine resulted in the Twin-Pillar Policy, through which both Iran and Saudi Arabia would be involved in leadership responsibilities. A pro-

[202] Madeleine K. Albright, "American-Iranian Relations". Remarks before the American-Iranian Council. March 17, 2000, Washington, D.C. https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/2000/000317.html

Western policy was followed, pillars enjoyed the cooperation with the United States and Iraq was contained.[203]

1979 Islamic Revolution altered the dynamics of the region as the Iranian approach towards the U.S. drastically changed. The United States and Iran were quite new partners in the region as the relationship consolidated throughout the 1953 coup d'état. However, the future of the relations took a turn with the breakout of the Revolution. It is possible to claim that the Islamic Revolution was a major turning point in the history of not only the Middle East but also the world. Pahlavi Dynasty, which was supported by the United States, was overthrown and an Islamic republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was formed.[204] It was a surprising news for the whole world.

The establishment of the Islamic State of Iran, which adopted a new foreign policy trend around the basis of Islam, led to many confrontations in the Middle East. Contrary to the fact that the Pahlavi Dynasty had been supported by the United States, the new Islamic Republic took a stance against the United States. The Iranian society was Islamized, and Iran was isolated in its foreign relations.[205] "Iran's confrontational foreign policy left it with only one major ally in the Middle Est, and that was Syria."[206] Other actors in the region "felt

[203] Henner Fürtig, "Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf: The Interregional Order and U.S. Policy," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 4. (2007): 628.

[204] According to the results of the referendum, Iran became an Islamic Republic on April 1, 1979, and a new constitution was formulated as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was chosen as the supreme leader. Many scholars reflect the events of 1979 as one of the modern revolutions along with Big Three (France, Russia, and China) and Cuba.

[205] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton. A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 460.

[206] Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations," *Middle East Journal* 43, no. 2 (1989): 210.

threatened" that the Islamic Revolution might spread.[207] The revolution aimed to end the dependency of Iran on the United States from the perspective of the anti-U.S. government. In November 1979, The United States Embassy in Tehran was seized, and the hostages were held inside for 444 days.

Iran and Saudi Arabia, the former allies, turned into bitter rivals. The thought that the revolution might spread onto the region seemed like a great threat to Saudi Arabia, which later resulted in the support of Saudi Arabia towards Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. In short, the Islamic Revolution dissolved the regional partnership of Iran and Saudi Arabia and led to the failure of the Nixon Doctrine.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 caused a fundamental change in the dynamics of the Middle East. After the Revolution, the anti-U.S. feelings were triggered. One of the early and most significant events that reflected the anti-U.S. environment was the Hostage Crisis.

According to the official statement of the U.S. Department of State, "On November 4, 1979, Iranian students seized the embassy and detained more than 50 Americans, ranging from the Chargé d'Affaires to the most junior members of the staff, as hostages"[208] and for 444 days, they were held. Before the Hostage Crisis, the turmoil in Iran had not really changed the dynamics of the region even though it was undoubtedly a game changer for the U.S.-Iran relations. The breakout of the Hostage Crisis on November 4, 1979 has changed the political environment throughout the world. It was reported that 66 Americans were taken captive and 6 Americans managed to escape.[209] It is possible to reflect that the

[207] Ibid.

[208] "The Iranian Hostage Crisis." U.S. Department of State, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises.

[209] "The Hostages and the Casualties." Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/hostages_and_casualties.

Hostage Crisis was "the most profound crisis of the Carter presidency" and he chose to pursue a foreign policy concentrated on saving the captured Americans alive rather than responding in a hostile way. Even though his foreign policy proved to be fruitful, Carter has often been criticized for his foreign policy throughout the Hostage Crisis by the ones, who wanted the U.S. to respond in a violent way rather than peaceful diplomacy.

The captives were not released at the same time: 13 were released on November 19-20, 1979; 1 was released on July 11, 1980; and the remaining 52 were released on January 20, 1981.[210] A total of eight U.S. servicemen, who belonged to the Joint Special Operations Group, were killed in the Great Salt Desert near Tabas, Iran, on April 25, 1980.[211]

It is important to note that even though the bilateral relations began to deteriorate with the 1979 Revolution, the Hostage Crisis marked the lowest point. The United States and Iran severed diplomatic relations on April 7, 1980, and they have had no formal diplomatic relations ever since.[212]

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, both Iran and Iraq emerged as aggressive actors in the Middle East. Hereby, the breakout of the Iran-Iraq War could simply be put as the final straw in terms of the escalating tension in the region. Both actors put the blame on each other regarding the conflict; however, both had been violating the other's borders and air spaces before.

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[210] "The Hostage Crisis in Iran." Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/hostage_crisis_in_iran

[211] The Joint Special Operations Group consisted of volunteers, and they were killed during the aborted attempt to rescue American hostages.

[212] "U.S. Relations with Iran" (Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet). U.S. Department of State, December 7, 2020, https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-iran/.

Most scholars reflect that the actors were equally powerful due to the fact that both had their armed forces as ready as possible concerning a potential armed conflict. It could easily be stated that the source of the problem lied within the long-lasting boundary disputes, which have been occurring ever since the rule of the Ottoman Empire. However, the reason behind the conflict was beyond the boundary disputes. In order to understand the grounds of the conflict, the background as well as the Zeitgeist have to be underlined.

For centuries, Iran and Iraq have witnessed certain conflicts regarding the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Before the Iran-Iraq War, in 1975, Iraq had to give up on a large portion of Shatt al-Arab to stop Iran from intervening in the Kurdish revolt that posed a great threat towards the unity of Iraq.[213] Scholars emphasize that this has been a major cause for the breakout of the war. Moreover, the tension between the leaders has aggravated the problem – Saddam Hussein followed a domestic policy, through which he oppressed the Shia population in Iraq. After the 1979 Revolution, this has become unacceptable for the Islamic Republic of Iran, which categorized itself as the protector of Shia Muslims in the world. As the population of Iraq consisted of a majority of Shiites, Iraq perceived Iran as a huge threat. Also, "Khomeini repeatedly called for the overthrow of Hussein".[214] In other words, it should not be neglected that the sectarian tensions have added to the conflict.

It is important to note that the war came in a period where the U.S. chose to strengthen the ties with the Iraqi government. During the Reagan administration, the U.S. kept a balanced approach towards Iraq even though the U.S. managed to keep a balanced approach towards Iraq while maintaining its reservation with

[213] Will D. Swearingen, "Geopolitical Origins of the Iran-Iraq War," *Geographical Review* (1988): 408.

[214] Ibid.

regard to the Iraq's use of chemical weapons.[215] Throughout the war, the U.S. provided intelligence to Iraq and even intervened in the Persian Gulf to aid Iraq. Considering the condition of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran then, it could be stated that the U.S. did not want Iran to win the war at all. With the help of the Arab states, Iraq gained quite a military support. Still, there were no winners of the war. As Yazdani and Hussein put into words, neither the U.S. nor its Western allies "intended that Iraq or Iran should have an outright victory in the war because that could upset the regional power balance".[216]

All in all, the war came to an end under a ceasefire mediated by the United Nations in 1988. Iran did not lose the war statistically; yet it should be emphasized that the toll of the war hurt Iran more than it did to Iraq. After the war, Iranian economy was seriously damaged and Iran's plans of exporting the Islamic Revolution failed due to the long-lasting war.

Furthermore, Iran-Contra Affair could be seen as the other side of the coin regarding the Iran-Iraq War, which appeared later. It was the biggest scandal throughout Ronald Reagan's presidency and according to many scholars and politicians, it was a clear indication of how power could be abused by the executive branch.[217]

It is no surprise that the Islamic Republic of Iran proved to be a major concern regarding the U.S. foreign policy during the Reagan administration. The Hostage Crisis came to an end by the day of Reagan's inauguration; however, the strategic importance of Iran combined with the increasingly aggressive approach

[215] Enayatollah Yazdani and Rizwan Hussain, "United States' Policy towards Iran after the Islamic Revolution: An Iranian Perspective," *International Studies* 43, no. 3 (2006): 272. https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170604300302.

[216] Ibid, 273.

[217] Edwin Timbers, "Legal and Institutional Aspects of the Iran-Contra Affair," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1990): 34.

of Iranian foreign policy kept Iran as one of the most prominent issues on the foreign policy agenda of Reagan administration.

The scandal broke out when it became public that the Reagan administration secretly sold arms to Iran through Israel and channeled the funds to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. The scandal was multi-faceted: It was prohibited to realize arms sale to Iran, and it was illegal to fund the contras according to the Congress.[218] Although Reagan was determined not to negotiate with Iran – as they were the hostage-takers – he authorized arms sales to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages from Lebanon. However, it was illegal due to the arms sales embargo on Iran that had been placed by the Congress. In addition to that, providing aid to the Contras in Nicaragua, who are the anti-communists guerillas, through the money coming from the sales, Reagan misused his power as the President of the United States.

The United States and Iran share a history filled with sanctions starting from the 1980s. After the Islamic Revolution, which was followed by the Hostage Crisis, the relationship never went back to what it had been before. As Amuzegar reflects, "Since January 1984, Iran's economy has been under various US economic sanctions of increasing scope and intensity".[219] It could be stated that the sanctions were broadened since 1995.

On March 15, 1995, President Clinton announced the Executive Order 12957 on Prohibiting Certain Transactions with Respect to the Development of Iranian Petroleum Reserves, which aimed to take a hit on the energy sector of Iran.[220]

[218] Ibid, 31.

[219] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Economy and the US Sanctions," *The Middle East Journal* 51, no. 2 (1997): 185.

[220] "Iran Sanctions". Congressional Research Service. April 6, 2021, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf.

Furthermore, a second Executive Order followed: Executive Order 12959, which "superseded and broadened" the first one. Compared to the first one, this one was somewhat more effective, and it resulted in currency depreciation – formal devaluation of the rial[221] shook the Iranian economy. According to the Executive Order, "any transaction, including purchase, sale, transportation, swap, financing, or brokering transactions, by a United States person relating to goods or services of Iranian origin or owned or controlled by the Government of Iran" was prohibited. The toll for Iran was tremendous.

2.4. Overview

Throughout this chapter, the historical background of the relations was evaluated in order to reflect how they changed within the 21st century. Pivotal developments of the 20th century were chosen to provide a key to understanding the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the upcoming century. Without delving into the issue too deep, the aim was to show how there was no single U.S. foreign policy approach towards neither the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia nor the Islamic Republic of Iran. There have always been ups and downs; however, the region of the Middle East remained significant throughout the 20th century. After the U.S. filled the power vacuum in the region – following the withdrawal of the Great Britain – the foreign policy of the U.S. towards both Saudi Arabia and Iran has changed due to fundamental developments. All in all, the 20th century developments are important because they determined the events in the 21st century.

[221] Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Economy and the US Sanctions," *The Middle East Journal* 51, no. 2 (1997): 193.

CHAPTER 3

THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY UNDER PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

United States foreign policy has always been shaped with the tones of the Presidents. Over time, the foreign policy objectives have been set according to the global dynamics except for the periods of isolationism. The first and foremost goal has been preserving the national security of the United States. Yet, to understand how the 21st century foreign policy of the U.S. has changed, it is essential to evaluate the situation in the late 1990s domestically as well as internationally.

By the late 1990s, the U.S. witnessed an economic expansion called the economic boom, which was primarily based on technology innovation. The economic boom created many new job opportunities; however, the boom started to slow down towards the end of the 20th century. The so-called "tech bubble" was about the burst.

3.1. George Walker Bush

George Walker Bush was no stranger to the U.S. domestic politics before he was elected President, yet, he had little if no experience when it came to foreign policy. He took office on January 20, 2001, after the highly disputed 54th quadrennial presidential election, which took place on November 7, 2000. Bush was running against the Democrat candidate Al Gore as the Republican candidate. One of the narrowest margins was witnessed and Bush won even though he had lost the popular vote.

The majority of the first year of Bush's presidency reflected his compassionate neo-Conservatist side regarding the domestic realm: He worked with the Congress to create a huge tax cut and reform education through No Child Left Behind Act. He withdrew American support from international health programs that sanctioned abortion, sharply limited government-sponsored research on embryonic stem cells, opposed gay marriage. Regarding environmental standards, he introduced a new low by allowing petroleum quest in Alaska.

3.1.1. Foreign Policy Approach of George Walker Bush

The foreign policy of the U.S. under Bush could be considered in two parts: Before 9/11 and after. In terms of foreign policy, he was different from his predecessor, Bill Clinton concerning humanitarian interventionism. He wanted to pursue a U.S. foreign policy approach more restrained and less active in the world. Some might even claim that Clinton was overambitious in the eyes of George W. Bush. The President focused on great power relations such as Russia and China. Other than that, his foreign policy agenda was unclear until September 11 attacks.

September 11 attacks have been a turning point. 9/11 marked the beginning of a new U.S. foreign policy tradition towards the world, stemming from the concept of the global war on terrorism. Every move taken by the Bush administration has been justified on the grounds of fighting terrorism. It is even possible to reflect that the U.S. found itself in the need to transform the region; however, this approach brough broader changes in the Middle East.

The period following September 11 attacks could be analyzed within the framework of the so-called "Bush Doctrine". This phrase was first used by Charles Krauthammer to highlight the withdrawal of the United States from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. On December 13, 2001, Bush announced the intention of the U.S. to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, and it could be

considered that although no new negotiations took place regarding the nuclear plans, Russian Federation was not the immediate threat at that point in the eyes of George W. Bush. Later, the Bush Doctrine came to be known as the strategies of the U.S. to secure itself from the terrorist groups and every action taken in terms of foreign policy was later justified under this term.

In his book "Decision Points", George W. Bush infers that he has "developed a strategy to protect the country that came to be known as the Bush Doctrine"[222] after the September 11 attacks. According to his own words, there were four main points of the Bush Doctrine:

> First, make no distinction between the terrorists and the nations that harbor them—and hold both to account. Second, take the fight to the enemy overseas before they can attack us again here at home. Third, confront threats before they fully materialize. And fourth, advance liberty and hope as an alternative to the enemy's ideology of repression and fear.[223]

Scholars reflect that the main elements of the Bush Doctrine were emphasized in the "National Security Strategy of the United States", which was published on September 17, 2002, as Bush inferred that the goal of US foreign policy is to maintain peace and extend it to every continent. According to National Security Strategy, the basics of the foreign policy approach stemmed from American internationalism to create a safer and better world. At the end of the path to this idealized world image, the aims are "political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity".[224]

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[222] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 733.

[223] Ibid.

[224] "Overview of America's International Strategy," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 1.

The “National Security Strategy” is a significant resource to evaluate the foreign policy of the United States under Bush administration. In the “National Security Strategy”, the main foreign policy objective was stated as a large-scale war against terrorism at the global scale, and the enemy is clearly described as Bush reflected: “The United States If America is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism – premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents”.[225] According to the document, this war had many fronts, and regional partners were crucial in the sense that this fight could only be successful if it were to be carried out globally.

Bush outlined the priority of the U.S. by claiming that the source of terrorism has not only been Al Qaeda and Afghanistan, instead, there have been many sources feeding the global enemy from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.[226] It is important to note that he has also stated that the U.S. was planning to work with its allies and throughout the foreign policy agenda of the U.S., regional and global partners as well as the international organizations were appreciated.[227]

The second “National Security Strategy” document under Bush administration was released four years after the first one, on March 16, 2006, with the opening sentence “America is at war”. It is important as it signaled that the global war on terrorism was still going to be the key determinant for the U.S. foreign policy. Throughout the National Security Strategy, new objectives as well as the past ones were included. Inferring that “The peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq have

[225] “Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism and Work to Prevent Attacks against Us and Our Friends,” *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 5.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Ibid, 5-6.

replaced tyrannies with democracies.",[228] Bush highlighted a significant goal in terms of foreign policy: Ending tyranny.

Bush defined tyranny as "the combination of brutality, instability, corruption, and suffering, forged under the rule of despots and despotic systems".[229] He categorized certain states as tyrannies and emphasized that there is a need to support nations worldwide to "build effective democracies".[230] It is possible to claim that the Bush administration was determined to continue promoting democracies all over the globe and the foreign policy team was making it obvious through this document. According to the National Security Strategy, terrorists around the world have aimed to overthrow rising democracies and damage the stability in the Middle East;[231] therefore, the U.S. was committed to support the states in need.

All in all, the Bush Doctrine is crucial to evaluate the foreign policy of George W. Bush. After 9/11, he focused on NATO – as it is reflected in National Security Strategy, 9/11 was "also an attack on NATO".[232] Both the first and the second National Security Strategy documents are crucial in the sense that they are the major guides reflecting the objectives of foreign policy and the center has remained the same: Global war on terrorism. The allies of the U.S. have also been important in the global war on terrorism. Many allies of the U.S. provided

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[228] "Champion Aspirations for Human Dignity," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* March 2006. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/, 2.

[229] Ibid, 3.

[230] Ibid, 4.

[231] Ibid, 12.

[232] "Develop Agendas for Cooperative Action with the Other Main Centers of Global Power," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 25.

support to the Operation Enduring Freedom. Bush tried to establish strategic relations with Russia, China, and India,[233] and named its broader concerns and one of the main issues turned out to be Iran – along with North Korea – in terms of nuclear power. Still, it is possible to state that the foreign policy of the Bush administration was primarily concentrated upon the Middle East.

3.1.1.1. The U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East under George W. Bush

The foreign policy of George W. Bush towards the Middle East has been crucial as it has been the first region to focus on after the 9/11 attacks: "The Middle East was the center of a global ideological struggle"[234], and Bush started with Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the actions in Afghanistan were justified regarding the foreign policy objectives, and even Afghanistan was said to be "liberated" as the coalition forces were continuing to fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Other than Afghanistan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was reflected as a critical issue due to the importance of the region "to other global priorities of the United States".[235] In other words, it is possible to claim that the involvement of the U.S. in the Middle East was considered to continue throughout the Bush Doctrine as the emphasis was on that specific region. The document also clearly states that one of the leading foreign policy objectives of the U.S. was to "open societies and build the infrastructure of democracy in places";[236] hereby, it could be said

[233] Ibid, 26-28.

[234] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 432.

[235] "Work with Others to Defuse Regional Conflicts." *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 9.

[236] "Expand the Circle of Development by Opening Societies and Building

that one of the roles of the Bush Doctrine has been to promote and even "export" democracy abroad.

After Afghanistan, Bush turned to Iraq. Regarding the Iraq War, Bush later stated that "...after the nightmare of 9/11", he "had vowed to do what was necessary to protect the country".[237] Bush claimed that his first choice to deal with Iraq was to use diplomacy; however, the report provided by the administration of Saddam Hussein to the United Nations regarding the weapons of mass destruction has been a turning point.[238] According to President Bush, there was no doubt that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction – due to intelligence briefings – and "the battle plan was ready".[239]

The Iraq War has already been in the making according to the foreign policy team of George W. Bush. Bush perceived Saddam Hussein as an evil in the region feeding terrorism, and the regime in Iraq was to blame. Authoritarian regimes were the cause of terrorist activities and the solution lied within regime change – in other words, "democracy" was the way out. However, the military presence of the U.S. has not solved the problem of Iraq once and for all. The Iraq War resulted in a fragmented Iraq, insurgence in the region and loss of public support to the war.

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the Infrastructure of Democracy". *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 21.

[237] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 417.

[238] It is significant here to note that the weapons of mass destruction were not found. Bush addressed this in his book saying that he "knew the failure to find the WMD would transform public perception of the war" (George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 485).

[239] Ibid, 463.

Another issue regarding the U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East under Bush administration had been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As reflected in the "National Security Strategy", the conflict is crucial according to the Bush administration not only "because of the toll of human suffering", but also "because of America's close relationship with the state of Israel and key Arab states".[240] Bush has later stated that he "concluded that the fundamental problem was the lack of freedom in the Palestinian Territories"[241] and supported a two-state solution.

The foreign policy of Bush towards Bush could also be witnessed through the phrase coined in 2004: Greater Middle East. In short, the phrase referred to the policies of the U.S. to further freedom on the lands of the Middle East through "the expansion of political rights and political participation in the Muslim world is meant to combat the appeal of Islamist extremism".[242] Bush reflected that "...the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, and throughout the Greater Middle East, may live in safety and freedom".[243]

Bush later inferred that the priority of the U.S. had been stability in the Middle East during the Cold War; however, the turmoil in the region has not stopped in the 21st century. Hereby, during his presidency, Bush concluded that the agenda should rather be focused on "freedom" as "the stability" the U.S. "had been

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[240] "Work with Others to Defuse Regional Conflicts," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. September 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html, 9.

[241] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 745.

[242] Tamara Cofman Wittes, "The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation," *Brookings*, May 10, 2004, https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-new-u-s-proposal-for-a-greater-middle-east-initiative-an-evaluation/.

[243] Proclamation No. 7780, 3. C.F.R. vol. 69, no. 87. April 30, 2004. Printed on the Federal Register on May 5, 2004.

promoting was a mirage".[244] Therefore, looking at the steps taken in the Middle East, it is possible to claim that the foreign policy approach of Bush was clearly different than his predecessor. Although September 11 attacks were not foreseen, Bush has rapidly adapted to the environment and built a foreign policy to counter the "global war on terrorism". It has not been a surprise that the region was put in the spotlight after "nineteen terrorists born in the Middle East turned up on planes in the United States".[245]

The second National Security Strategy addressed the region of the Middle East as a section. Here, the Bush administration expressed that the suffering of the region stemmed from a freedom deficit, and the lack of freedom has fed many negative aspects: "... corruption, imbalanced or s stagnant economies, political resentments, regional conflicts, and religious extremism".[246] The U.S. stated that what was sought was independent states, strengthened relations with allies, countering "tyrannical regimes",[247] and bringing peace to "Israel and Palestinian territories".[248] Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the two-state solution was repeated once again in this second National Security Strategy document under Bush administration. Last but not least, Iraq was inferred to as a "new

[244] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 737.

[245] Ibid.

[246] "Develop Agendas for Cooperative Action with the Other Main Centers of Global Power," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* March 2006. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/, 38.

[247] The document does not only define tyranny and tyrannical regimes, but also exemplifies them. *"Tyrannical regimes such as Iran and Syria that oppress at home and sponsor terrorism abroad know that we will continue to stand with their people against their misrule."* ("Develop Agendas for Cooperative Action with the Other Main Centers of Global Power," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* March 2006. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/, 38.)

[248] "Develop Agendas for Cooperative Action with the Other Main Centers of Global Power," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* March 2006. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/, 38.

partner in the War on Terror"[249] while reflecting objectives and plans for the future.

In short, the foreign policy of George W. Bush towards Middle East has evolved around the concept of "global war on terrorism" throughout his two consecutive terms as the U.S. President. Stemming from his idea that the problem in the region has been the lack of democracy, Bush built a foreign policy approach in the region, which has been centered around the concept of democracy promotion. As a result, Bush did not manage to come up with any long-term solutions for the chronic problems in the region, and Middle East was still in turmoil when he left the office.

3.1.2. September 11 Attacks

The turning point regarding the foreign policy of the Bush administration is undoubtedly the September 11 attacks,[250] which are referred to as 9/11. Even though national security has always been the priority of the foreign policy of the U.S., the definition of national security altered after the terrorist attacks, which killed 2996 people.

Bush gave the first signals on how the foreign policy approach was going to be altered during his famous speech on the day of the attacks from the Oval Office as he said, "America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism".[251] The phrase "war against terrorism" – or sometimes referred to as

[249] Ibid.

[250] On September 11, 2001, four airplanes were hijacked and targeted at World Trade Center, Pentagon and Shanksville, and terrorist attacks took place.

[251] George W. Bush, "9/11 Address to the Nation". *American Rhetoric.* September 11, 2001, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothenation.htm

"war on terrorism" – has constructed the basics of the foreign policy objectives after 9/11 even though the term had been previously used during the Reagan administration. From that point onward, the foreign policy has revolved around security aspects, which has become the most prominent foreign policy objective.

The U.S. reacted to 9/11 immediately. On September 20, 2001, Bush targeted Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden[252] in his speech and inferred that the war on terror was going to start with Al-Qaeda – and continue "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated".[253] As Bush highlighted that every measure necessary was going to be taken against terror, he announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security. It is important here to note that the establishment of Homeland Security created an organic bond between domestic politics and foreign policy around the concept of security – a bond that might even be seen as limiting the international decision-making process given that there has already been a Department of State. Moreover, although the term "homeland" means native land, Homeland Security takes responsibility for different branches of security overseas as well. Therefore, it was made clear after 9/11 that the U.S. was going to fight terrorism not only in between its borders but also worldwide.

9/11 was unique in the sense that it was the largest terrorist attack on the U.S., even though it was not the first one. Russia was the first nation to call the U.S.,

[252] Osama bin Laden was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and he was a Saudi citizen until he was stripped of citizenship in 1994. After it was announced that Al Qaeda was responsible for 9/11, Osama bin Laden managed to remain in hiding for almost ten years. The Kingdom, in a way, ignored the actions of bin Laden until 1994 even though Al Qaeda was believed to be formed around the year 1988, which could further be inferred as that Saudi Arabia did not take measures right away. It could be noted that Osama bin Laden belonged to a wealthy family in the Kingdom, and he was against the U.S. presence in the region. Perhaps, it could be mentioned that what created a great division between bin Laden and the Kingdom was the Saudi dependency on U.S. military support.

[253] George W. Bush, "President Bush Addresses the Nation". *Washington Post.* September 20, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html.

and many states offered help immediately; 27 nations offered "overflight and landing rights" throughout military actions against Afghanistan.[254] James M. McCormick infers that the foreign policy of Bush in the post-9/11 era changed in 3 ways: First, the foreign policy approach turned into a universal approach from a narrow one; second, it moved to a greater multilateralism – without totally abandoning unilateralist options -; and third, the internal dynamics of some states (such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, North Korea) became an obvious concern for the U.S. administration.[255] Here, it is important to note that regional stability of the Middle East has become a more critical issue for the U.S. after 9/11 – even though the U.S. has been involved in the Middle East since the Second World War and filled the power gap in the region after Great Britain left, 9/11 showed that this presence in the region had started to threaten the security in between the borders of the U.S.

3.1.3. NATO Invasion of Afghanistan

One of the quickest decisions made by the U.S. after the 9/11 attacks has been demanding that the Taliban[256] deliver Osama bin Laden, yet the Taliban rejected it. In return, the U.S. started airstrikes Taliban forces on October 7, 2001, and "Operation Enduring Freedom" started. Furthermore, on November 13, NATO

[254] White House. 2001. "Operation Enduring Freedom Overview". https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2001/5194.htm

[255] James M. McCormick, American Foreign Policy and Process. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2009), 213.

[256] Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist movement based in Afghanistan. The roots of the Taliban lay within the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 as Islamic mujahideen fighters engaged in the war. The movement consolidated towards the end of the 1990s. Saudi Arabia recognized the Taliban at its peak – the Kingdom was the second state to recognize the Taliban government on May 26, 1997. (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Saudi Arabia: Information on whether the government officially recognizes the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and if so, the date recognition was extended; and whether the government of Saudi Arabia provides the Taliban government with any kind of support," March 1, 1998, SAU28966.E, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab2c60.html). However, after the September 11 attacks, Saudi Arabia explained its full support to the U.S. and cut its ties with the Taliban.

forces entered Kabul, backed by the U.S. army. Following the 9/11 attacks, the situation in Afghanistan turned into a war between the U.S. and its allies versus the Taliban government, and in a short period of time, the Taliban regime, which has been supported by Al-Qaeda – the number one enemy of the U.S. –, was overthrown.

The strategy during the invasion of Afghanistan is often referred to as "pre-emptive strike", not only because of the use of the right of self-defense under the 51st Article of the UN Charter but also because this strategy highlights the right to initiate military action without an actual threat if there is the potential of an upcoming one. Afghanistan showed that the U.S. abandoned the foreign policy approaches of containment policy as well as the deterrence policy,[257] and instead, the moves from that point onward were going to be classified under the approach of "preemption".

3.1.4. National Missile Defense

Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was a treaty on arms control between the two superpowers of the Cold War era: The United States and the Soviet Union. It was signed in 1972 and was effective until 2002. In terms of the ABM Treaty, 9/11 turned to be a game-changer as it completely changed the balances at the international stage. Even though the treaty kept on working for 30 years, the U.S. wanted to move forward with its future nuclear defense plans as it would lead to the expansion of its nuclear capacity. This nuclear capacity expansion was necessary for the eyes of the U.S. as it would be significant to respond to a potential threat.

On December 13, 2001, Bush announced that the U.S. intended to withdraw from the ABM Treaty as the U.S. and Russia failed to find a middle way to

[257] Bush himself stated that the national defense strategy of the U.S. relied on deterrence and containment, which are known as the Cold War doctrines, on June 1, 2002, as he also mentioned that "new thinking" is required given that there are "new threats".

negotiate the future of the nuclear plans of the U.S. Eventually, the announcement marked the 6-months' notice before the actual withdrawal. This soured the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Russia as Putin states that the withdrawal decision was a mistake; however, he added that there was no upcoming threat to Russian Federation regarding this decision. All in all, the withdrawal became effective on June 13, 2002.[258]

3.1.5. Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Before George W. Bush was elected, he was against the U.S. foreign policy of nation-building[259]; yet 9/11 has been a turning point regarding the foreign policy of the U.S. towards the Middle East in general and towards Israel and Palestine in particular. The period of Bush witnessed two plans to bring a solution to the conflict; the first one was the one proposed by Bush as a "two-state formula," and the second one was the Road Map of the Quartet, supported by the U.S. administration.

In theory, Bush endorsed a free Palestinian state for the first time in U.S. history in a speech he made on November 10, 2001. The foreign policy team of Bush also advocated that the only way that the two states can reach peaceful coexistence was through the spread of democracy because the obstacles to peace and democracy promotion in the region were autocratic Arab regimes, as Mohamad reflects.[260] However, it is possible to infer that Bush has never taken

[258] L. F. Rusten, "US Withdrawal from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty," *National Defense University, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction* (2010): 12.

[259] As a concept, nation-building is a tool of U.S. foreign policy, which aims regime change. "Nation building has become a core function of the US through its support of multilateral institutions." (Ruth Wedgwood, "Nation Building and American Foreign Policy," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1994): 47).

[260] Husam Mohamad, "President George W. Bush's Legacy on the Israeli-Palestinian 'Peace Process'," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 22, no. 1 (2015): 83-84. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490281.

an active role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict compared to his rhetoric. After the unsuccessful efforts of the Clinton administration, Bush embraced a hands-off position, although the relationship between Bush and the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon could be described as "warm". According to neoconservatives, Israel was also at war against terrorism regarding the continuous conflicts with Palestine, which made it harder for Bush to remain neutral. Furthermore, the Evangelical Christians have been influential in the fate of the Israeli-Palestinian issue since over 60% of Evangelical Christian believe in "the idea that Christ will return only when Jews occupy Palestine".[261] As the pressure on Bush grew and the Second Intifada[262] continued, Bush took a pro-Israeli stance and started reflecting that democracy promotion would be the solution for Palestine along with the other states in the Middle East. He called for regime change in Palestine in June 2002 through the Rose Garden speech as the regime change was seen as a precondition to renew the peace talks and restart the peace process. It could be said that the foreign policy of Bush towards the Israeli-Palestinian issue has changed because of the domestic pressure he had faced. Neo-Conservatists have been clear on the belief that regime change is necessary for Palestine, as well as in Iraq. Moreover, the Congress, as well as commentators, encouraged Bush to take a pro-Israeli stance together with the pro-Israel lobby groups. Yet, it would be undermining to claim that the domestic pressure is the sole reason behind the change of foreign policy – it is also important to note here that Bush, himself, was attracted to a theological worldview,[263] according to which the democracy promotion stemmed from the

[261] Kevin R. den Dulk and Mark J. Rozell, "George W. Bush, Religion, and Foreign Policy: Personal, Global, and Domestic Contexts," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 9 no. 4 (2011): 71-82.

[262] The word "intifada" is derived from the meaning to be "shaken off." It is the "name given to the Palestinian protest movement that began in 1987 against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip." The Second Intifada began in September 2000. (William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 579.)

[263] M. P. Choudhury, "The Sacred and the Secular: Influence of Religion on George W. Bush's Foreign Policy," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 19 no. 2. (2015): 175.

belief that the U.S. was God's instrument to spread freedom all over the world. All in all, in his first term, Bush had a change of heart and put the blame on Yasser Arafat and chose to isolate him together with his administrative team.

With the outbreak of the Iraq War, the foreign policy objective of the U.S. that Iraq and Palestine come as a package became intense. He continued emphasizing that democratic reform was the only solution for the Palestinians as the U.S. elections approached. This way, Bush secured the Jewish voters, and the second term of his presidency has begun. Although Bush was optimistic regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the upcoming elections in Palestine in 2006, Hamas won the majority of seats in free and fair elections. Furthermore, Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, stated that he was willing to establish diplomatic relations with Hamas, which was never regarded as a terrorist organization by Russia. The tension kept growing in the region.

Religion has been one of the determinants for US foreign policy due to Bush's view that the power of the U.S. is God-given, and it's the duty of the U.S. to spread democracy and freedom all over the world. Even though the U.S. is a secular state, the role of religion is crucial in domestic politics as well and perceiving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the point of faith, makes it impossible for the U.S. to stay neutral. Therefore, change of foreign policy throughout the 8-year presidency of George W. Bush has not been a surprise.

3.1.6. Iraq War

The most controversial issue regarding the foreign policy of George W. Bush was the Iraq War. Even though the military interventions began in the late-2001, it was not until March 19, 2003, that Bush declared war on Iraq. The idea of war did not appear overnight; on the contrary, Iraq had never been off the table since

the First Gulf War in 1991.[264] The rationale behind the invasion of Iraq in 2003 underlies within the issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The totalitarian regimes in the region of the Middle East were seen as the root causes of the problem of terror which spread all over the world; hereby, according to the idealist militaristic views of the U.S., it was wise to intervene in the domestic politics of the region through force. As the events lead up to the invasion, the emphasis was on the claim that Iraq was developing WMD under the rule of Saddam Hussein, which was a clear threat not only for the region but also for the whole world.

The invasion of Iraq fueled up the Neoconservatism debate in the U.S. as Neo-conservatists (Neocons) supported it. The term, Neoconservatism, was coined in the 1970s and it could be said that it has certain elements related to political realism and liberalism as well. Regarding the Bush administration, the term "Neoconservatism" turned out to be the rationale behind the Bush Doctrine, as well as behind the Iraq War. Here it is important to highlight that the idea of American supremacy is the key to understand Neoconservatism as Kristol and Kagan inferred.[265] Along with Bush, certain members of his team should be evaluated within the framework of Neoconservatism such as Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice. According to the administrative team, the solution for the problems and possible threats against US underlay in democracy promotion through the reflection of the dominance of US military power. To change the world and Middle East in particular, use of military force was perceived inevitable. Francis Fukuyama

[264] At the end of the First Gulf War an armistice was signed on April 11, 1991; yet the war has not been over.

[265] William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75 no. 4 (1996): 19-20.

states that Bush was not a Neo-conservatist during his first term but became one "by the beginning of his second term"[266] as the Iraq War continued.

Concerning the First Gulf War, Colin Powell said that "it would not contribute to the stability we want in the Middle East to have Iraq fragmented into separate Sunni, Shia and Kurd political entities"[267] as a reaction to the short-lived war. Even though what the U.S. foreign policy had aimed before the Iraq War was clearly stability in the region, the situation turned out to be the exact opposite. It is possible to state a connection between the "Axis of Evil" speech of Bush and the Iraq War even though there is almost a 14-month gap between the speech and the war. With the speech Bush gave on January 29th, 2002, Iraq was defined as one of the enemies of the U.S. alongside with Iran and North Korea. According to Bush's words, "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world".[268] This speech could be seen as a roadmap of US in the Middle East region towards Iraq and Iran, as global war on terrorism (GWoT) has been at the center of the U.S. foreign policy after 9/11 attacks. Hereby, the Iraq War seemed inevitable due to the claims of the U.S. that Iraq was producing WMDs, and Saddam Hussein was sponsoring terrorist groups.

According to the foreign policy makers in the U.S., Middle East terrorism was the product of authoritarian systems in the region and democracy promotion was the cure for anti-American terrorism. Yet, the invasion of Iraq resulted in inevitable unintended consequences. Even though Bush declared that the primary combat operations ended on May 1, 2003, insurgency in Iraq began and kept on

[266] Francis Fukuyama, America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 46.

[267] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, My American Journey (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996): 898.

[268] George W. Bush, State of the Union Address. Speech. January 29, 2002.

expanding. The region remained chaotic and stay of the U.S. troops extended. An interim government was established in 2004 and national elections were held in 2005 to secure a permanent government. The sectarian tension was reflected in the results as Sunnis boycotted the election, Shia population won the majority. Civil war in Iraq erupted along with the transition of the government.

The downfall of the Saddam Hussein regime began with the announcement of war on Iraq, yet he was found on December 13, 2003. After trials, he was executed on December 30, 2006. Although the rationale for the war was the WMDs, those WMDs were never found. As Fukuyama reflects, "Iraq has now replaced Afghanistan as a magnet, a training ground and an operational base for jihadist terrorists, with plenty of American targets to shoot at".[269] As Sunni and Shia Muslims clashed violently, and they both attacked American forces in the region. A fragmented Iraq turned out to be a "greater evil than the persistence of Saddam Hussein"[270] as Kristol and Kaplan pointed out. At the same time, the foreign policy team of Bush started to dissolve with the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld served as the Secretary of Defense under the administration of Bush, and he undertook a significant role regarding the invasion of Afghanistan as well as the invasion of Iraq. The publication of photographs proving a series of human rights violations and war crimes in the Abu Ghraib prison led to the resignation as Rumsfeld was blamed for continuing violence and problems in the region. Furthermore, by the end of 2006, more Americans had died in Iraq than in the attack of 9/11, and the invasion kept on losing public support in domestic politics as well.

Starting on January 4, 2007, the Democratic Party gained majority in the 103rd United States Congress, and it was not a secret that the Democrats were rooting

[269] Francis Fukuyama, "After Neoconservatism". *New York Times.* February 19, 2006.

[270] Lawrence F. Kaplan and William Kristol, "The War Over Iraq: Saddam's Tyranny and America's Mission" (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), 186.

for a withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Iraq. They even passed a bill for a total withdrawal; however, Bush vetoed the bill on May 1, 2007, which was only the second veto of his presidency.[271] Public resentment grew as after four years of declaring that "mission" was "accomplished", Bush claimed that withdrawal would be equal to failure.

3.1.7. The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush towards Saudi Arabia

After official relations were established between Saudi Arabia and the U.S., U.S. was the main actor to provide security for the kingdom due to Britain's withdrawal from the region although the complete withdrawal did not take place until 1971. In terms of regional security, the Nixon Doctrine is significant in the sense that Saudi Arabia and Iran became the twin pillars of the U.S. foreign policy in the region. According to the Nixon Doctrine – or Twin Pillar Policy – Saudi Arabia and Iran were determined as the most important allies in the Middle East, it could even be said that they were the sole protectors of the regional security, which was backed by the United States. As Britain withdrew from the region, Saudi Arabia was drawn to the U.S. in the bipolar world order and 1979 Revolution has not only been a turning point for Iran but also for the kingdom. Until the 21st century, the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia witnessed many ups and downs; yet the problematic nature of the relations continued in the 21st century as well.

3.1.7.1. 9/11, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Iraq War

Ever since the Second World War, the bilateral relations between US and Saudi Arabia have been strategically important to both sides. Although there had been challenges before, 9/11 has been a defining moment for the strategic partnership. It was problematic enough that most of the hijackers came from Saudi Arabia as

[271] Richard Cowan and Caren Bohan. "Bush Vetoes War Spending Bill". *Reuters*. May 1, 2007.

well as the leader of the terrorist organization as this eventually led to public discomfort in US towards the kingdom.

After 9/11, the positive ambient, which occurred after the election of George W. Bush and led a belief that the bilateral relations would keep improving,[272] perished. The fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers were coming from Saudi Arabia appeared within a day. Even though the Saudi government was not directly involved in the terrorist attacks, the perception that it carried an indirect responsibility due to the government's approach towards human rights as well as its complicated relationship with Islamic extremism with Wahhabi roots and the monetary support of Palestinian sources was exposed. In addition to all these, the public opinion towards the U.S. in Saudi Arabia was negative as the involvement of US in Saudi Arabia and in the region of the Middle East has not been favored by many civilians.

The U.S. foreign policy objective has been clear after the September 11 attacks: Global war on terrorism. It is important here to state that Saudi Arabia is one of the countries that recognized Taliban at the post-Soviet period and supported it. As a result, the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia began to change after the terrorist attacks even though Saudi Arabia backed up the fight of US against terror. Perhaps, the Islamic regime in the Saudi Arabia was a problem in the eyes of US for the first time, stemming from the claim that the kingdom was a "significant source and transit country"[273] for terrorists even though there has

[272] Tim Niblock, Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival (New York: Routledge, 2004), 127.

[273] Maurice R. Greenberg, William F. Wechsler, and Lee S. Wolosky, Terrorist Financing: Report of an Independent Task Force. Council on Foreign Relations (2002): 30.

been “no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded the organization”.[274]

It would be undermining to state that the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia has always been centered around trade and oil even though both states consider each other as strategic partners. The kingdom has played an active role in the regional stability of the Middle East. Throughout the Cold War era, foreign policy makers have embraced more Realist perspectives towards the region in general and Saudi Arabia has not hesitated to use oil as a foreign policy weapon, mainly in the 1970s. Furthermore, the bilateral relations have never been in a complete harmony; but, still, 9/11 has been a game changer in various ways.

“Crown Prince Abdallah supported Bush’s decision to invade Afghanistan and topple the Taliban government”.[275] The kingdom expressed its full support after 9/11 and its relationship with Taliban was already sour since Taliban refused to hand Osama bin Laden in 1998 to Saudi Arabia. However, the anger in US grew against Saudi Arabia. It is important here to reflect that the internal dynamics of the bilateral relations were never shared transparently with the public, not in the U.S., nor in the kingdom. As media kept on putting the blame on Saudis, and particularly on the Wahhabi faith, for Al-Qaeda, the tension increased.

Even though Saudi Arabia sided with the U.S. after the September 11 attacks, the criticisms against the kingdom in the U.S. public and media kept on growing. Saudi royals were blamed along with bin Laden, and many claimed that the root cause of the attacks was the Wahhabi ideology and extremism that came with it.

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[274] U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, “9/11 Commission Report: The Official Report of the 9/11 Commission and Related Publications,” by Thomas H. Kean and Lee Hamilton, Washington, D.C. (2004) https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf.

[275] Bruce Riedel, Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 135.

As the anti-Saudi sentiment extended throughout the U.S. public, in return, anti-Americanism in the Middle East was fueled, particularly in the kingdom. Saudi Arabia took some steps to alter the perception towards the kingdom and internal reforms were triggered. The kingdom tried to show the world that it was ready to trigger change internally as not only a United Nations human rights investigator but also a Human Rights Watch delegation has visited Saudi Arabia to monitor the judicial system and women's rights.[276] Up until the May 2003 bombings,[277] which were immediately linked to Al Qaeda, it could be said that Saudi Arabia had not adopted serious measures; however, after facing the fact that Saudis were, too, targeted by the terrorist actions, Saudi Arabia started to have a more involved position against the terrorist organization.

At the same time, the regional stability was at danger due to the violence stemming from the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Even though George W. Bush was the first president to bring forward the idea of a Palestinian state, after the 9/11 attacks and the "axis of evil" speech, the U.S. started to perceive Palestine as a part of the problem in the Middle East alongside Iraq. Saudi Arabia tried to intervene through a peace agreement, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declined. The visit of Crown Prince Abdallah to Bush on April 25, 2002, proved to be on a knife-edge as Bush made it clear that he would not take a part in stopping Sharon's siege. However, the decision of the Israeli cabinet to free Arafat came few days later, reflecting that an agreement was made between Abdallah and Bush at the time.

Although Saudi Arabia has not hesitated to use oil as a weapon against the Western world in terms of foreign policy after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the

[276] "Saudis Open Door to Rights Group". *BBC.* January 27, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2697387.stm

[277] On May 12, 2003, compounds in Riyadh were attacked by suicide bombers. 35 people were killed and more than 200 were wounded. ("Bombings and Arrests in Saudi Arabia," *CNN*, November 9, 2003, retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/11/08/saudi.chronology.reut/).

1991 Gulf War reversed the bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Palestine. After Yasser Arafat openly supported Iraq against Kuwait, the relations turned sour. Operation Desert Shield was carried out to protect Saudi Arabia from Iraqi aggression, and at that time "some policymakers thought at the time that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was but a prelude to an attack on Saudi Arabia";[278] therefore, Palestine's open support towards Iraq damaged the friendly relations. Despite the ups and downs that characterized the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Palestine, the kingdom suggested a free Palestinian state with the pre-1967 borders, which created tension between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

The escalation between the violence between Israel and Palestine did not end and in June 2002 when Bush gave the famous Rose Garden speech. As Bush called the Palestinians to elect new leaders based on democracy, the kingdom has found itself in a problematic situation once again. The kingdom was against the continuous violence in the region, and "they had no particular affection for Arafat".[279] However, Saudi Arabia, as a kingdom, was naturally not a supporter of democracy. Hereby, the relations started to deteriorate due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The outbreak of the Iraq War in 2003 fueled negative responses from the kingdom towards the United States; however, the foreign policy of the U.S. had already been centered around the global war on terrorism, and Iraq was seen as one of the major enemies. After 9/11, Saudi Arabia supported the global war on terrorism and NATO invasion of Afghanistan, showing the U.S. that the kingdom was still a trustworthy ally. Saudi Arabia and Iraq were not friends before the war, and the kingdom was already disturbed by the aggressive and

[278] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 480.

[279] Ibid.

assertive foreign policy of Saddam Hussein; however, Saudi Arabia opposed the plan to invade Iraq and reflected that it was an "unnecessary attack on an Arab nation".[280] The kingdom has not taken place in the "Coalition of the Willing"[281] and remained concerned throughout the war as this invasion has forced Saudi Arabia to keep the focus on its northern – its longest international – border.

Even though Saudi Arabia had cooperated before with the U.S. to provide regional security,[282] Saudi officials have expressed their concerns explicitly about the war. Under Saddam, Iraq was a Sunni Arab state; but the population consisted of Shiites and Kurds as well as Sunnis. Hereby, the U.S. foreign policy and the invasion resulted in sectarian politics in Iraq, which kept Saudi Arabia at an alarming position to protect stability within the kingdom's borders and in the region. As the minorities were strengthened, Saudi Arabia had to increase its military spending.

3.1.8. The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush towards Iran

Iran has been one of the non-Arab actors in the Middle East with its controversial background. Even though the United States and Iran had not established ambassadorial relations until 1944, the relations were quite warm.[283] After the Second World War, Iran was one of the actors of the Twin Pillar Policy of the U.S. alongside Saudi Arabia – both states were expected to provide

[280] Wayne H. Bowen, The History of Saudi Arabia (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2014), 127.

[281] The United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Australia.

[282] US responded to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in military terms in 1991 and Saudi Arabia "issued a formal invitation to the United States to send troops to defend the kingdom" (Cleveland and Bunton, 480) as well.

[283] Diplomatic relations were established in 1983, but the first U.S. ambassador to Iran was Leland B. Morris, who was assigned in 1944. ("Policy and History," U.S. Virtual Embassy Iran, retrieved from https://ir.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/).

regional stability and security in the bipolar world order. However, the 1979 Revolution and the toppling of Shah, as well as the regime change in Iran, have altered the balances in a way that the U.S. and Iran have had no formal relations since 1980. As a result of this the 21st century has proved to be challenging for both US and Iran.

3.1.8.1. Axis of Evil, Karine-A, Iraq War and Executive Order 13382

The first year of George W. Bush's presidency was characterized by the September 11 attacks as well as the changing foreign policy approach of the U.S. After Clinton, it might have been possible for Bush to continue relations in a stable way if 9/11 had not taken place. It is important to mention that the September 11 attacks have constituted the basis of the foreign policy of the U.S. towards every actor in the world, and Iran was no different.

Even though a distant actor, Iran was one of the first to condemn the attacks and express condolences. During an interview, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami made it clear to the CNN Reporter Christiane Amanpour that Iran would support the U.S. in the battle against terrorism.[284]

It is possible to reflect that the NATO invasion of Afghanistan and fighting Taliban have been significant in terms of cooperation between the two actors. The decision to fight terrorism after 9/11 has been the major element of US foreign policy, and Afghanistan was a common interest for Iran and the U.S.; at this moment, cooperation made sense. Bush embraced a friendly approach towards Iran, and the two actors were strategic partners during the NATO invasion of Afghanistan and considering that they shared a common interest over the Taliban, it made sense. Throughout the Bonn Agreement, the relations

[284] "Iranian President Condemns September 11 Attacks". *CNN*. November 12, 2001. http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/meast/11/12/khatami.interview.cnna/

remained stable, and it was seen as a continuation of the relatively positive relations that had been established during Clinton's presidency with Khatami.

Initial reactions to 9/11 and Afghanistan did not last long as the "Axis of Evil" speech turned the relations sour. One of the major events that is seen as a constant destabilizing factor for the regional security in the Middle East has been the Israeli-Palestinian relations. George W. Bush targeted Iran, alongside Iraq and North Korea, as actors feeding terrorist activities, and this caused outrage both in the Iranian government and the public. It is possible to infer that Iran abandoned the idea to continue peaceful relations with the United States after that speech. This label of "evil" has been a result of the Karine-A Affair, throughout which Iran had tried to supply weapons to Palestine during the Second Intifada, yet later, got caught to Israel. Even though Bush was the first US president to speak of a free Palestinian state, it did not take long for Bush to give open support to Israel, mostly due to the domestic influence. Moreover, the Karine-A Affair came as the final straw, and the foreign policy of George W. bush changed in a direction that Palestine became one of the enemies of regional stability. The very nature of the Islamic Revolution was quite different than Yasser Arafat's ideal of a secular state, but the relations further deteriorated after Arafat had announced his support towards Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War.[285] According to Israel, the main destabilizer was Iran in the Middle East; it was "the main source of international terrorism".[286] As a matter of course, the tension increased between Iran and the U.S., as the Bush administration reflected its clear support towards Israel after Karine-A. Bush himself later wrote that "by the

[285] Gawdat Bahgat, "Iran, the United States, and the War on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (2003): 98.

[286] Ibid, 98.

spring of 2002," he "had concluded that peace would not be possible with Arafat in power".[287]

The breakout of the Iraq War has changed the region completely. The Islamic Republic of Iran was never a friend of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and as could be seen from the Iran-Iraq War, the background of the relations was not exactly peaceful. Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 has reflected a vision that Iran could be the pan-Islamic force as revolutionary Iran's ideology has been exporting the Islamic Revolution. Under Saddam Hussein, Baathist Iraq was a Sunni state, consisting of Shiites and Kurds whereas the Islamic Republic of Iran had a majority of Shiites. The war was supposed to bring stability to the region. Although the Bush administration believed that democracy over an autocratic regime was the solution for the security in the region – and in the world – it did not go exactly as planned. As Powell put into words later, a fragmented Iraq did not turn out as the solution for the regional security – contrary to what the U.S. achieved, the war strengthened Iran.

Sectarian conflicts are natural elements of the regional security in the Middle East, and sectarianism has characterized Iraq after the war as well as before. Baathist Iraq under Saddam used to be an example of Arab nationalism, yet the U.S. involvement in the region resulted in stronger Shia Islamist groups in terms of opposition.[288] As the Shiites gained power in Iraq, Iran started supporting those,[289] creating a larger area of influence for itself. All in all, it has been disturbing for the U.S. to see the growing relations between Iraq and Iran, which had been isolated since the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

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[287] George W. Bush, "Decision Points". Crown Publishers. 2010. EPUB ed. Chapter 13.

[288] H. H. Al-Qarawee, Iraq's Sectarian Crisis: A legacy of Exclusion. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014): 4.

[289] Paul McGeough, "Tensions Grow Between Iraqi Shiites and US," *The Age*, March 16, 2004. https://www.theage.com.au/national/tensions-grow-between-iraqi-shiites-and-us-20040316-gdxi2r.html.

After giving up on the idea to build peaceful relations with the U.S., Iran moved forward with its uranium enrichment politics. The nuclear program was essential for Iran. Even though EU3 (France, Germany, and England) offered certain propositions in return, Iran quit the program on August 1, 2005 – President Ahmadinejad claimed that the talks were of a "nuclear apartheid".[290] As a result, Iran was chosen as the demon at the international stage, and Iran has not hesitated to take on the enemy role against the U.S. once again in the 21st century.

Another step taken by the Bush administration was Executive Order 13382 on June 28, 2005, with the aim of "freezing the assets of proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their supporters and isolating them financially".[291] In other words, sanctions were imposed on Iran to keep the Islamic Republic away from its nuclear studies; however, Iran did not give in. According to the executive order, there were three sanctions programs, and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were the main targets. Iranian companies and individuals were subject to the order – Military, nuclear, construction, engineering, technology, petroleum firms as well as banks and individuals suffered as "supporters of WMDs" from the results of the executive order.[292] U.S. foreign policy towards Iran became more proactive, and sanctions were imposed against the Islamic Republic of Iran. After 2005, systematic imposition of sanctions characterized the nature of US foreign policy towards Iran, and the actors have not adopted friendly encounters since then. Nevertheless, Iran did not change its foreign policy discourse during the presidency of George W. Bush.

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[290] Philipe Douste Blazy, Joshka Fischer, Javier Solana and Jack Straw, "Iran's Nuclear Policy Requires a Collective Response," *Wall Street Journal,* Sep. 22, 2005. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/articles/86360.pdf

[291] Executive Order No. 13,382, 3 C.F.R. (2005). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2006-title3-vol1/pdf/CFR-2006-title3-vol1-eo13382.pdf

[292] "Sanctions 8: Timeline of Sanctions". *The Iran Primer.* March 3, 2021. https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2021/mar/03/sanctions-8-timeline-sanctions

3.1.9. The Leadership Style of George W. Bush

George W. Bush falls within the category of crusaders. A crusader is a goal-driven leader and tends to perceive the environment according to his/her beliefs and attitudes. Usually, a crusader advocates for a position and is proactive. Hermann highlights that "if the political context facilitates what such leaders want to do, they can be effective in mobilizing others to action".[293] However, even if the political context does not have a facilitating position, a crusader knows how to find a way to take action. Furthermore, a crusader can be very persuasive in providing a rationale for what he/she has been doing in order to gain credibility and legitimacy.

Apart from being a crusader, Bush is also an expansionist. Expansionists are the crusaders, "who have cause of problem to solve" and hereby "are likely to focus on expanding their span of control over resources and/or geographical space".[294] Also, expansionists name their goals and do not tolerate the people who do not perceive the same matter in the same way. They have urgent concerns, and they are stick to what they believe is "right and just".[295]

The foreign policy constructed after September 11 attacks provide a clear example of the crusader-expansionist characteristic of George W. Bush's leadership style. Even though he had little foreign policy experience, the September 11 attacks have given Bush "a problem to solve". Bush addressed the U.S. nation in a historic speech and stated the aim of the U.S.: "Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." He thanked Congress as well as international actors. He then later concentrated

[293] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 96.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid.

on terror: “Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there.”[296] The global war on terror has been the solution Bush adopted and throughout this framework, he focused on expanding his span of control. This was witnessed through other key foreign policy developments.

An urgent concern for Bush administration was to battle Al Qaeda for Bush. Hereby, the NATO invasion of Afghanistan took place. It was quick, reflecting that as a crusader, Bush was able to increase his control over NATO allies of the U.S. Perhaps, it could be linked to the preemptive strategy as Bush acted beforehand any other development occurred. As Bush believed this was a right move, he went along with the invasion.

Moreover, the “Axis of Evil” speech reflects the leadership style of George W. Bush. Regarding the global war on terrorism, the speech was symbolic because it once again emphasized the main objective of U.S. foreign policy under Bush: Countering terrorism. Labeling North Korea, Iraq and Iran as the “terrorist allies”, “which constitute an axis of evil”, Bush underlined that the U.S. was going to “do what is necessary to ensure” national security.[297] He was crusading for a cause, and he was relatively closed to information – since he pointed at the regimes as terror sponsor with little evidence – just as a crusader leader.

[296] George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” September 20, 2001, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.

[297] George W. Bush, “President Delivers State of the Union Address,” January 29, 2002, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.

Table 2. Leadership Styles of Hermann et al. applied to President Bush

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Motivation
		Problem Focus
Challenges constraints	Closed to information	Expansionistic *Focus is on expanding one's power and influence*
Although Bush had little foreign policy experience, he took big steps after September 11 attacks. Moving along with Iraq War without diplomatic support was one of the major developments that characterized Bush's foreign policy.	Axis of Evil speech constructed a basis for foreign policy and "evil" actors were determined. Particularly after the Karine-A Affair, Bush adopted a more pro-Israeli approach due to his global war on terrorism.	The September 11 attacks have provided Bush a cause for expanding his power and influence in terms of foreign policy. NATO invasion of Afghanistan has expanded Bush's power and influence over the NATO allies of the U.S.

Later with the Karine-A Affair, Bush justified his claims against Iran and showed that the U.S. foreign policy towards Israeli-Palestinian conflict was right and just. In a way, he made sure of the sponsorship of Iran towards terrorist activities: "In January 2002, the Israeli navy intercepted a ship called the Karine A in the Red Sea. Abord was an arsenal of deadly weapons."[298] After 9/11 and other developments, Bush was determined that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be solved through democracy promotion and regime change in Palestine:

[298] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 740.

"I had concluded that peace would not be possible with Arafat in power."[299] In the famous Rose Garden speech, Bush stated that "True reform will require entirely new political and economic institutions, based on democracy, market economics and action against terrorism".[300] As an expansionist crusader, now Bush had the grounds to influence others and expand his control while rooting for his way of ending the conflict.

Perhaps, the Iraq War is the development, through which the crusader-expansionistic characteristics of George W. Bush could be witnessed. After the NATO invasion of Afghanistan, Bush wanted to intervene in Iraq as "...after the nightmare of 9/11" he "had vowed to do what was necessary to protect the country".[301] Even though he stated that his first choice was to "move forward on the diplomatic track", Bush and his team decided to move on with the battleplan of Iraq without waiting for the diplomatic necessities.[302] In other words, he did not wait for the right time to take action – in line with what a crusader often does – as he knew that he was "effective in mobilizing others to action".[303] Bush got the support he had wanted and the Iraq War began.

All in all, the leadership style of George W. Bush falls under the category of an expansionist crusader in general. His actions are parallel to a crusader, who wanted to enhance his power and influence others to back his actions.

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[299] Ibid.

[300] George W. Bush, "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership," June 24, 2002, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.

[301] George Walker Bush, Decision Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), eBook, 417.

[302] Ibid, 441.

[303] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 96.

CHAPTER 4

THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY UNDER PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

4.1. Barack Hussein Obama Jr.

On February 10, 2007, Barack Hussein Obama Jr. announced his candidacy for President in a somewhat symbolic place, where the historic "House Divided" Speech by Abraham Lincoln was delivered: In front of the Old State Capitol Building in Springfield, Illinois.[304] Obama centered his campaign around the key term "change" and used it within numerous slogans throughout his campaign.

56th quadrennial presidential election was held on November 4, 2008. George W. Bush had already served two terms and was ineligible due to the term limits. At the same time, due to the costly wars in the Middle East and the economic instability, public opinion was rooting for the image of the Bush administration to vanish. Obama opposed the Iraq War, so he centered his campaign around the foreign policy objective regarding the Iraq War and the concepts of energy independence, healthcare, and economic stability.

Obama got the 52.93% of the popular vote, and although he was not the first African-American to run in a presidential election, he became the first African-American U.S. President. According to many, the election result was not a surprise: The economic instability, which was initially caused by the American housing bubble, led to a shift, and Democrats were advantaged over the Republicans.

[304] "Senator Obama's Announcement," *New York Times*, January 10, 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/02/10/us/politics/11obama-text.html.

4.1.1. Foreign Policy Approach of Barack Hussein Obama

Obama's foreign policy approach evolved around the inheritance of a seriously damaged state of democracy promotion. The aftermath of the Bush-era resulted in a shattered public opinion towards the Middle East as people had long before started to question the necessity of intervention in a problematic region. The primary concerns were the 2008 economic crisis and healthcare; yet, on a global scale, the aim was to end wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with the sour legacy of the Bush-era.

Before Obama was elected as the U.S. President, he gave a speech on July 15, 2008, and listed five foreign policy goals:

> Ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding our alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century.[305]

He was determined to adopt a passive role regarding the Middle East and North Africa region; yet his stance towards nuclear weapons and terrorism was similar to the stance of Bush. In terms of energy security, Obama wished to pursue policies to ensure that the U.S. would be self-sufficient in terms of energy production. Last but not least, he reflected his belief in multilateral cooperation even before he was elected as the U.S. President.

Throughout his inaugural speech, Obama hinted certain agendas regarding his foreign policy approach. He addressed Iraq and Afghanistan: "We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan".[306] Iraq and Afghanistan were reflected as his priorities right from

[305] "Obama's Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan". *New York Times.* July 15, 2008. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/us/politics/15text-obama.html.

[306] Barack Obama. 2009. "Inaugural Address". Transcript of speech delivered at the West Front of the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. January 20, 2009.

the start and he was determined to "seek a new way forward"[307] concerning the Muslim world.

Regarding the foreign policy team of Barack Obama, two names have been significant: Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden. Obama later stated that he wanted Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state because he admired her intelligence, preparation and work ethics besides her patriotism and commitment.[308] Furthermore, talking about choosing Joe Biden to be his Vice President, Obama claims that his foreign policy experience was a determinant when the U.S. was "embroiled in two wars".[309] President Obama's foreign policy approach came to be known as the Obama Doctrine; yet, it is still debated whether there was an Obama Doctrine or not.[310]

In May 2010, the first National Security Strategy document was released under the Obama administration, shedding light on the foreign policy approach of the U.S. President. Obama, too, made a reference to the September 11 attacks, claiming that "In the years since" the U.S. has "launched a war against al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, decided to fight a war in Iraq and confronted a sweeping economic crisis".[311] Hereby, Obama inferred that the main objective was

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https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-Barack-obamas-inaugural-address.

[307] Ibid.

[308] Barack Obama, A Promised Land. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2020), Chapter 10.

[309] Ibid, Chapter 8.

[310] In the April 2016 issue of *Atlantic*, Jeffrey Goldberg published an article called "The Obama Doctrine". Throughout the article, key foreign policy approaches of Obama administration were evaluated. It should be noted that "the Obama Doctrine" has not referred to a specific foreign policy framework; instead, scholars and journalists used the term to reflect different aspects of the foreign policy-making of the President Obama.

[311] "Overview of America's International Strategy," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010.

"renewing American leadership"[312] in order to effectively concentrate on national interests in the 21st century. He highlighted that the renewal would be designed within the borders of the U.S., and it would be shaped abroad.[313]

It is important to note that the focus was on a so-called transition in the Middle East during the first years of Obama's presidency: "... the U.S. is focused on implementing a responsible transition as we end war in Iraq, succeeding in Afghanistan, and defeating al-Qa'ida and its terrorist affiliates...".[314] In other words, the foreign policy approach of the U.S. has not moved further away from the threat of terrorism under Obama, as well, due to the inherited crises. Furthermore, Obama, too, emphasized that the major threat against the U.S. national security to be the weapons of mass destruction,[315] signaling that he was going to build a framework of foreign policy not much different than his predecessor.

Obama categorized four enduring national interests as security, prosperity, values, and international order in the first National Security Strategy document.[316] He highlighted the importance of collective action and the fight

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https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, 1.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid, 2.

[314] "Strategic Approach," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, 7.

[315] Ibid, 8.

[316] "Advancing Our Interests," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010.

with terrorism still dominated the security aspect of the foreign policy approach. Throughout his first term as the U.S. President, he concentrated on domestic issues such as economy and health and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples".[317] Obama repeatedly stated that he believed in diplomacy and multilateral cooperation, and he had been "determined to shift a certain mindset", which "saw threats around every corner, took a perverse pride in acting unilaterally, and considered military action as an almost routine means of addressing foreign policy challenges".[318]

During the first term of Obama, the focus was rather on the Middle East and domestic politics. Throughout this period, Osama bin Laden was killed, the end of the Iraq War was announced, NATO forces were joined to help Libyan rebels, and a new conflict occurred on the lands of Syria – namely, ISIS – as a result of the civil war. Hereby, Obama was busy dealing with the crises in the Middle East while trying to repair the economy and provide better healthcare to the U.S. citizens.

Obama was reelected for a second term as the U.S. President on November 6, 2012. His second term has witnessed different approaches regarding foreign policy. For instance, on March 20, 2014, Barack and Michelle Obama traveled to Havana, Cuba as the President and First Lady. He was determined to introduce a new course of bilateral relations. Moreover, he concentrated on Asia-Pacific relations. Although the relations with East Asia have begun in his first term and the foundations were laid before, the second term of Obama's presidency has

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https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, 17.

[317] "The Nobel Peace Prize for 2009." Press Release, NobelPrize.org. October 9, 2009. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2009/press-release/.

[318] Barack Obama, A Promised Land. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2020), Chapter 19.

been more focused on the region. Obama announced his intention to participate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership in November 2009, seeking "to boost U.S. economic growth";[319] and the trade deal was signed on February 4, 2016.[320]

The second National Security Strategy document was published in February 2015, reflecting the foreign policy changes and continuations of Obama administration. President Obama highlighted the importance of non-state actors and addressed the power struggle in the Middle East, claiming that the struggle stemmed in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War as well as the Arab Spring.[321] In addition to that, the threat of terrorism remained to be a significant factor shaping the U.S. foreign policy.[322]

Compared to other presidents, Obama was thought to be pragmatic rather than a fan of a particular ideology within his ideology; it is possible to find pieces related to realism, liberalism, and multilateralism. Both National Security Strategy documents reflect that although Obama adopted the slogan "Change", in terms of foreign policy, not much has changed under his presidency. Terrorism continued to be a major threat, and the U.S. remained involved in the Middle East. Apart from those, Obama shifted the focus of the U.S. towards

[319] "Overview of TFP: Increasing American Exports, Supporting American Jobs." Office of the United States Trade Representative. https://ustr.gov/tpp/overview-of-the-TPP.

[320] "Trans-Pacific Partnership Ministers' Statement". Office of the United States Trade Representative. https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2016/February/TPP-Ministers-Statement.

[321] "Introduction," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. February 2015. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf, 6.

[321] Ibid, 8.

[322] "Security," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. February 2015. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf, 9.

Asia-Pacific and took steps to advance economic developments. Still, the main objectives of the U.S. foreign policy remained the same.

4.1.1.1. The U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East under Barack Obama

Even before he was elected, Obama had signaled that he was going to pursue a different foreign policy strategy in the Middle East. It would be wrong to claim that terrorism was no longer on the agenda of the U.S. foreign policy, the region of the Middle East remained significant. However, Obama was determined to build a foreign policy approach towards the Middle East in terms of diplomacy rather than conflict.

Terrorism remained as a key subject regarding the U.S. foreign policy. As Obama stated, "Terrorism is one of the many threats that are more consequential in a global age. The gravest danger to the American people and global security continues to come from weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons".[323] Hereby, the focus was going to be similar to George W. Bush; yet the method was different due to Obama's perspective of foreign policy as well as of the Middle East.

It is no surprise that Obama inferred that "The United States has important interests in the greater Middle East".[324] The region has been crucial for the U.S., particularly since the end of the Second World War as the U.S. has filled the gap left from the Great Britain in the Middle East. There have been longstanding trade relations as well as foreign policy interests.

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[323] "Strategic Approach," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, 8.

[324] "Advancing Our Interests," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, 24.

As mentioned earlier, Obama wanted to provide a different approach towards the Middle East. He planned visits to the region and delivered two powerful speeches: One in Ankara, Turkey and the other in Cairo, Egypt. In the speech he gave in Turkey, he made sure that the was rooting for a two-state solution and peace talks regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Later, in Cairo, the speech – which later came to be known as "the Muslim speech" – emphasized that it was important for the U.S. citizens and the Muslim world to develop a common understanding. Obama reflected that

> (...) surveys showed that Muslims around the world believed the United States was hostile towards their religion, and that our Middle East policy was based noy on an interest in improving people's lives but rather on maintaining oil supplies, killing terrorist, and protecting Israel.[325]

Another focus point of Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East was the war in Iraq and it constituted a major part in the foreign policy framework. In line with the public opinion in the U.S. at that time, Obama agreed to abide by the dates set regarding the completion of withdrawal from Iraq. As he stated earlier on the Iraq War, Obama was opposed to "a dumb war".[326] From the beginning of the Iraq War, Obama has thought that "Saddam Hussein posed no imminent threat to the United States or its neighbors" and perceived the war as a distraction keeping the U.S. from fighting effectively with the Al-Qaeda.[327]

Obama repeatedly stated that the foreign policy mistake of the U.S. in the previous terms was "taking military action without first testing diplomatic options, observing diplomatic niceties in the interest of maintaining the status quo precisely when action was called for".[328] Hereby, in the Middle East, Obama

[325] Barack Obama, A Promised Land. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2020), Chapter 15.

[326] Ibid, Chapter 3.

[327] Ibid.

[328] Ibid, Chapter 5.

has always preferred diplomatic means over military intervention; yet this preference has resulted in certain unintended consequences.

2010s marked a turbulent Middle East as protests all over the region broke out, reflecting significant changes in some countries. The first comment Obama made was focused around the U.S. support to "democracy" as he stated that "The United States of America stands with the people of Tunisia and supports the democratic aspirations of all people".[329] The uprisings spread from one country to another and brought regime change in some states. Recalling back, Obama has reflected the period was quite problematic. He even said that "If at the end of 2010, anyone had asked me where the next major Middle East crisis would most likely occur, I could have offered them a rich menu of possibilities."[330] The protests were later came to be known as the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring has led to many changes in the Middle East and altered the U.S. foreign policy. Perhaps the civil war that broke out in Syria following the uprisings has been one of the greatest troubles the U.S. had to face in the region. As Obama infers, the options of the U.S. were "painfully limited"[331], "Syria was a longtime adversary of the United States, historically allied with Russia and Iran, as well as a supporter of Hezbollah".[332] Hereby, the U.S. foreign policy towards Syria at that time was quite strangled.

Following the uprisings, the rise of the Islamic State could be counted as one of the major problems in the Middle East. It is important to note that "at its height,

[329] Ibid, Chapter 25.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

[332] Ibid.

the Islamic State held about a third of Syria and 40 percent of Iraq".[333] Many even accused Obama of letting the Islamic State grow throughout the whole region as a result of the withdrawal from Iraq. Soon after the Islamic State – also known as ISIS, ISIL or Daesh – gained power, it started spreading. An offensive was launched in June 2014 – covering the regions of Mosul and Tikrit – and as a result, the U.S. got involved once again in the region with airstrikes. Yet, it would not be wrong to claim that ISIS did not lose power until 2017 and kept on being a key problem during the presidency of Barack Obama.

Moreover, the breaking out of the Yemeni Civil War has been significant. After the protests all over the Arab world, it was no surprise that the uprising has escalated in Yemen as well. The domestic politics in Yemen have already been complicated; however, the approach of the U.S. towards Yemen has been criticized ever since the civil war began. Obama did not remain neutral for too long and decided to support the Saudi-led airstrikes. The involvement of the U.S. did not bring the civil war to an end – contrarily, the situation in Yemen turned worse. Civilian casualties and crimes against humanity constituted the nature of the Saudi-led intervention.[334]

A key development shaping the U.S. foreign policy under the presidency of Barack Obama could be counted as the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), which was first introduced in 2009. The act was passed in 2016, and Obama issued a veto; however, he was overridden. Although it could be stated that the passing of the act was relatively an issue of domestic politics, it was significant in the sense that it had a direct implication on the foreign policy

[333] "Timeline: The Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State," Wilson Center, October 28, 2019, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state.

[334] The Obama administration was intensely criticized for the actions that have been taken in Yemen. On November 11, 2018, 30 senior officials of the Obama administration issued an open statement and called the Trump administration to put an "end to U.S. support for the war in Yemen, now home to the world's most humanitarian catastrophe". (Berschinki et. al, "Open Statement on Yemen," November 11, 2018, https://www.justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/yemen-statement-former-obama-officials-november-11-2018.pdf).

objectives. Obama did not wish to deteriorate the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, Iran has been an essential actor in the Middle East. Different from his predecessor, Obama thought that diplomacy was a better way to contain Iran. When asked if he would meet with Fidel Castro, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Kim Jong Il along with a couple of other actors, Obama said yes "without hesitation".[335] He stated that he "would meet with any world leader"[336] given that it would be beneficial to the U.S. interests. Throughout his presidency, Obama prioritized preventing Iran from advancing its nuclear program. It is possible to claim that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a product of Obama's foreign policy perspective.

It is important to infer that the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq has led to the strengthening of Iran in the region and the Saudis and Israelis drew attention to the possibility of the expansion of a Shiite crescent in the region. Hereby, the U.S. had to carefully approach Iran. In doing so, Obama has been one of the actors defending the JCPOA – the agreement was going to include Iran in the global network and lift many sanctions. Obama was determined to try different methods regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran and one of the distinct characteristics of his foreign policy framework could be reflected as the including of Iran in the international relations. It was not easy, yet it was definitely a big step promoting diplomacy over conflict.

All in all, the two terms of Obama's presidency have witnessed a lot of conflicts in the region. The foreign policy objectives of Obama were not much different from his predecessor, Bush, as they both prioritized the U.S. interests in the region. However, Obama adopted a completely different approach from Bush

[335] Barack Obama, A Promised Land. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2020), Chapter 5.

[336] Ibid.

and tried to put forward diplomacy rather than military intervention. In short, Obama had to deal with a number of issues throughout his terms in his own way.

4.1.2. Memorandum on Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Gaza

Shortly after Obama was elected, Memorandum on Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Gaza was published. The document was significant because it allowed an expenditure for Palestinian refugees.[337] This was the first step taken by President Obama concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not new, and the relations were so strained that a solution was not expected overnight. Where Obama stood regarding the conflict was rather vague, particularly at the beginning. It would be unreasonable to state that Obama was pro-Palestinian even though he tried to act as a bridge between Israel and Palestine. Offering a two-state solution and organizing high-level diplomatic meetings twice in his first term did not prove to be fruitful. The dynamics between the U.S. and Israel during the presidency of Obama were still considered very controversial; because no matter how unbreakable the bond between the two states is, the relations between Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were quite strained.

Obama rooted for a new beginning between the U.S. and the Muslim world as a different foreign policy objective than before. His policy of a new beginning regarding the Middle East fed the turbulent nature of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Israel under the administrations of Obama and Netanyahu. When Obama visited Turkey in 2006, he gave a speech in the Turkish parliament

[337] With the memorandum, Obama approved an amount of $20.3 billion to be transferred from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to help Palestinian refugees and conflict victims in Gaza related to humanitarian needs. (Barack Obama, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to Gaza," January 27, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/the-press-office/unexpected-urgent-refugee-and-migration-needs-related-gaza).

in Ankara inferring that a two-state solution and peace talks were to be encouraged:

> In the Middle East, we share the goal of a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. Let me be clear: The United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.[338]

Following his visit to Turkey, Obama visited Cairo, Egypt, and his speech there marked his stance towards the Middle East. He was conscious that change was not expected overnight, but still, "America is not – and never will be – at war with Islam."[339] The Cairo speech is crucial in the sense that Obama emphasized his foreign policy agenda would involve mainly the security of the U.S. as well as potential solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without taking sides. Even though he inferred that he could sympathize with the longing for peace and security of the Palestinian people, he clearly stated that "the bond" between the U.S. and Israel "is unbreakable."[340] From the foreign policy perspective, it could easily be highlighted that it is no surprise that the U.S. and Israel share common goals regarding the Middle East in terms of security. So, the tense nature of the relations between the U.S. President and the Israeli Prime Minister could not harm the lasting partnership of the two states. Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Obama became the 6th U.S. President who could not create a solution.

4.1.3. War in Iraq

Iraq War has been a dividing issue for the U.S. public opinion. 9/11 has awakened pro-war sentiment along with the U.S. public, yet the polls reflected

[338] Barack H. Obama. "The President's Speech in Cairo: A New Beginning," June 4, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/presidents-speech-cairo-a-new-beginning.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

that the number of citizens favoring war was not distinctly higher compared to the number of the ones who were not. Although the public support in Operation Iraqi Freedom was relatively high and, in a way, increased the approval towards George W. Bush, it started decreasing as the war kept going on due to political and economic reasons. One of the factors Obama shaped his presidential campaign around was the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as he opposed the wars and mainly spoke about ending the war in Iraq. That has been one of the reasons why people voted for Obama – as "change" was the key term of his slogans, the most significant change he pointed at was the wars in the Middle East.

When Obama came to office, the Iraq War had been continuing. Most of the public opinion at that point wanted the Iraq War to end as soon as possible. As Obama repeatedly stated, getting out of Iraq "carefully" was one of the leading foreign policy objectives. To do so, he agreed to complete withdrawal according to the time frame set during the Bush era. Not to abandon "Iraq" in its path to democracy, he reflected that the U.S. would not financially aid Iraq but guide the state to establish a stable government. According to the agreement, the last of the U.S. troops left Iraq on December 18, 2011.[341] The military presence of the U.S. in Iraq covered a timespan of almost nine years, marking a historic part in U.S. foreign policy.

4.1.4. Syrian Civil War

The 2010s marked the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and altered regional security dynamics as people revolted against the authoritarian regimes. According to many scholars, what the people wished for was a combination of more democratic means and a more stable economy. The uprisings are often referred to as the "Arab Spring,". Nevertheless, some scholars emphasize that the characteristics of the uprisings reflected "winter" rather than

[341] "Timeline: Invasion, Surge, Withdrawal; U.S. Forces in Iraq," *Reuters*, December 18, 2011, www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-usa-pullout-idUSTRE7BH08E20111218.

"spring." Symbolically, the events were sparked when Mohammed Bouazizi, a street vendor, set himself on fire after being harassed by the municipal officials in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. He was the catalyzing force of the protests that spread to other states, which have longstanding roots stemming from the dissatisfaction of the local people in the MENA region.

The reflection of the Arab uprisings in Syria resulted in a civil war, which has been going on ever since. Before the events turned into a violent civil war, there were peaceful protests caused by unemployment, corruption, and demand for political freedom in Syria. However, as the government, led by Bashar al-Assad, chose to react in violent means and the uprising intensified, resulting in a full-scale multi-sided civil war. Over time, many groups joined the war, foreign powers took sides, and jihadist extremism gained a new global actor – the Islamic State (IS).

Stating that the U.S. had been carefully following the situation in Syria, Obama pointed to a possibility of intervention. Even though there had been no authorized military operations against Syria, in 2012, Obama clearly "warned" the Assad regime and the other actors involved about the use of chemical weapons, saying that that is a "red line"[342] for the United States. It is important to note that Obama did not favor intervention regarding the balance of power and interests in Syria because the Syrian state, extremist groups, opposition groups, and foreign powers were all in the equation. Due to a cost-benefit analysis, Obama chose not to get involved in a large-scale military intervention even though he gave a warning. This move has since been criticized. According to some politicians and scholars, the red line warning was a mistake. With the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and no clear response from the U.S., the region became more vulnerable. The emergence of the Islamic State is often

[342] James Ball. "Obama Issues Syria A 'Red Line' Warning on Chemical Weapons," *Washington Post*, August 10, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-issues-syria-red-line-warning-on-chemical-weapons/2012/08/20/ba5d26ec-eaf7-11e1-b811-09036bcb182b_story.html.

said to be facilitated due to the non-intervention foreign policy of the U.S. in Syria.

4.1.5. 2014 Northern Iraq Offensive

After the complete withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq, Nouri Al-Maliki became the post-war Prime Minister as his government succeeded the Transnational Government.[343] Transnational Government was a temporary government formed in Iraq after the Coalition Provisional Authority (Iraqi Interim Government) and it was under the influence of the U.S.[344] However, a post-war Iraq was still quite far from a political environment without any turmoil because there were divisions among the society. The Al Maliki government was Shia-dominated, and resentment around Sunnis and Kurds kept increasing with time. As anti-Sunni violence increased in Iraq, some scholars[345] claimed that the continuous fragmentation throughout the state led to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). The Northern Iraq Offensive broke out in June 2014.

President Obama did not speak of any possibility of intervention when the offensive first started, yet the speedy escalation of the attacks changed his stance towards Iraq. He announced that the U.S. was going to draw down its embassy in Baghdad on June 15, and a day later, he stated that U.S. soldiers and Marines

[343] After the Iraq War, first an interim government was established. It was the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which "was a multinational organization with a significant minority of personnel from countries represented in the military coalition" in Iraq. Its authority was derived from the status of the U.S. and Great Britain related to the UN Security Council Resolution 1483. (James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Benjamin Runkle and Siddharth Mohandas, "Building the CPA" in *Occupying Iraq* (New York: Rand Corporation, 2009), 12. Later, the CPA was replaced with the Transnational Government.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Raymond Hinnebusch, "State De-Construction in Iraq and Syria," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 57, no. 4 (2016): 574; Damian Doyle and Tristan Dunning, "Recognizing Fragmented Authority: Towards a post-Westphalian Security Order in Iraq," *Small Wars and* Insurgencies 29, no. 3 (2018): 538; Denise Natali, "Syria's Spillover on Iraq: State Resilience," *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 1 (2017): 54-55.

could be deployed to Iraq. Obama acted this way to provide security for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad as well as the other U.S. personnel.

The offensive ended quickly as in a period less than a month; the Iraqi government had lost control over its Jordanian and Syrian borders. Even though Obama refrained from military intervention and led only military advisers to the region, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, met with the Prime Minister, Al Maliki, Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hoshyar Zebari, as well as Sunni and Shia leaders in Baghdad.[346] Kerry made it clear at that point that sending military advisers was not by any means a military intervention to the region.

It is essential to note the reason behind the refrainment of military action of U.S. President Barack Obama. Iraq inherited a fragmented societal structure after the longlisting war and intervention period in the 21st century, and the society became more and more divided as the three major groups (Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish) struggled for power. One of the most prominent examples is the parliament's choice not to consider declaring a state of emergency, although the security crisis in June 2014 terrorized Iraq and its borders. Because the Al Maliki government was Shia-dominated, many Sunni and Kurdish legislators reflected their dissatisfaction by boycotting the session to discuss announcing a state of emergency. It should be highlighted that a state of emergency meant that the powers of Nouri Al Maliki as the Prime Minister to be expanded.[347]

Sectarian differences have a longstanding history in the Middle East, and regarding the history of Iraq and Iran, those differences have even caused a

[346] Spencer Ackerman, Martin Chulov and Mark Tran, "John Kerry: US Troop Deployment to Iraq Is Not Intervention," *Guardian*, June 24, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/24/john-kerry-urges-kurdish-leaders-to-back-iraqi-government.

[347] "Iraq Between Maliki and the Islamic State," *POMEPS Briefings* 24, July 9, 2014, 13, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/POMEPS_BriefBooklet24_Iraq_Web.pdf.

bloody 8-year war.[348] The balances shifted when Iraq was invaded in 2003, and Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime was toppled. It is important here to emphasize the fact that a Shia-dominated government replaced the Sunni-dominated Baathist regime. Shia majority in Iraq had always been oppressed before the invasion, and even the transitional government in Iraq was Shia-dominated. Shia rule in Iraq changed the relations with Iran because the Shia majority in the Iraqi government meant that Iran would have a predominant role in Iraq's new political setup.

One of the other reasons why Obama refrained from military intervention stemmed from this political environment –the bilateral relations between U.S. and Iran have always been troubled since the Iranian Revolution. From the perspective of U.S. foreign policy, giving support to Iraq under Shia rule would be equal to giving support to Iran, with whom the U.S. has shared severe conflicts of interest over mostly security. Therefore, U.S. chose not to intervene in Iraq directly, yet, on August 8, 2014, Obama authorized airstrikes and humanitarian aid to civilians in the region. He explained that the authorized operations are necessary because ISIL is moving forward and in Erbil, there are American diplomats and civilians, and because the Iraqi government requested help for the civilians trapped in the mountain. Obama further inferred that ISIL targeted religious minorities, and even though "United States cannot and should not intervene every time there is a crisis in the world," the President chose to act in order to "prevent a potential act of genocide" on Iraqi minorities.[349]

[348] Kashif Mumtaz, "Shia Factor in Iran-Iraq Relations After Saddam," *Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (2005): 14.

[349] Barack Obama, "Statement by the President," August 7, 2014, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president.

4.1.6. Yemeni Civil War

Yemen is a country in Western Asia, which has been strategically important in the region, sharing borders with Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the northeast. The country had been running by President Ali Abdullah Saleh al-Ahmar since 1990, when the reflections of Arab Spring also spread to Yemen. Due to the uprisings, the President resigned and fled to Saudi Arabia, which signaled the possibility of change in 2011.

Perhaps the situation in Yemen was never thought to escalate much. After Saleh resigned, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi won the presidential election in 2012. Even though a new president was in the picture, the characteristics of the old regime kept on going, which brought public discomfort in Yemen. The Houthi movement boycotted the election – the Shiites in the north – and Sunni separatist movements in the south from the beginning. Because of the common view that the 2011 Revolution lost its meaning, the separatist movements gained power, and in 2014, the conflict reached its climax as the government increased the oil prices and Houthis revolted on August 18.

Houthis started attacking the capital, Sana'a, on September 19 and captured the critical sites quickly, resulting in the resignations of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah.[350] Conflicts went on, and by early 2015, Houthis had taken control of the northern part of the country, and the government had collapsed.[351]

[350] Roland Popp, "War in Yemen: Revolution and Saudi Intervention," *CSS Analyses in Security Policy* 175 (2015): 2.

[351] Noel Brehony, "Yemen and the Huthis: Genesis of the 2015 Crisis," *Asian Affairs* 46, no. 2 (2015): 241.

The conflict in Yemen turned into a humanitarian crisis. In February 2015, the U.S. Embassy was closed, and the personnel was evacuated.[352] What further changed the dynamics in Yemen was the Saudi Arabian-led intervention. March 26, 2015, marked the launch of a surprise attack on Yemen by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – Qatar, Morocco, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Egypt were officially included in the Coalition forces, as well as other Arab and African allies.[353] The Coalition intervened in the region to fight Houthi rebels, and the ulterior motive was to face Iran, which was believed to support Houthis in terms of military. After all, Iran and the Houthis had something crucial in common – Shiite identity.

President Obama authorized support to the Gulf Cooperation Council-led operations. The Coalition received logistical and intelligence support not only from the U.S. but also from the United Kingdom and France as well. Operation Decisive Storm began on March 26, 2015,[354] and the officials predicted the operation to last for a few weeks; however, that prediction turned out to be a miscalculation. On April 21, 2015, the operation ended, and Operation Restoring Hope started on April 22, 2015.[355]

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[352] Mohammed Ghobari, "United States Closes its Embassy in Conflict-Hit Yemen," *Reuters*, February 11, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-usa-idUSKBN0LE25720150211.

[353] "Saudi Arabia Launches Air Strikes in Yemen," *BBC*, March 26, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32061632.

[354] Stig Stenslie, "Decisive Storm: Saudi Arabia's Attack on the Houthis in Yemen," *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center* 1 (2015): 1.

[355] "Saudi-led Coalition Announces End to Yemen Operation," *Reuters*, April 21, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-saudi-idUSKBN0NC24T20150421.

4.1.7. JASTA

Two decades after what happened, September 11, 2011, keeps haunting the lives of many U.S. nationals. The ruthless attacks did not only result in casualties but also altered the public memory in the United States and shaped the future.

Throughout the U.S. public, there are different views on the perception of 9/11 and how the reactions should have taken place. Perhaps, September 11 attacks are the event that brought the Americans together most, and at the same time, it is the one that fragmented the society into numerous pieces. On the one hand, some claim that "foreign interventionism" was never an appropriate solution, inferring that the interventions in the Middle East did more harm than good. On the other hand, there are people who reflect that the endless war on terror should have come to an end with the death of Osama bin Laden[356]. No matter how polarized the views are, it is important to note that 9/11 has changed the dynamics of U.S. society and created a new "public memory."

The Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) was first introduced in December 2009, and the U.S. Senate passed it on May 17, 2016. It is crucial in the sense that JASTA made it possible for the families of September 11 victims to sue the government of Saudi Arabia for damages. Before JASTA, a U.S. citizen could sue a foreign state given that the United States Department of State designated that state as a sponsor of terrorism, and the ones to sue had to be harmed by the terrorism support of that state. JASTA meant that U.S. citizens were going to be able to sue the government of Saudi Arabia even though there was no obvious mention of Saudi Arabia by name throughout the bill.

The making of the bill resulted in tension between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. public wanted justice for the victims of 9/11; however, Saudi

[356] Anthony Dworkin. "Bin Laden's Death – The End of the Global War on Terror?" *European Council on Foreign Relations,* May 3, 2011, https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_bin_ladens_death_the_end_of_the_global_war_on_terror/.

Arabia did not only deny that the Kingdom played a role in the attacks but also objected to the bill.

President Obama did not favor the possibility that if the bill became law, the volatile relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia would become more strained. The bill passed the U.S. Senate without opposition in May; moreover, it passed the House of Representatives unanimously in September 2016. On September 23, 2016, Obama issued a veto regarding JASTA. Claiming that he has "deep sympathy for the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11", Obama inferred that JASTA would be allowing private litigants and courts to get involved in the matters of national security and foreign policy.[357] Although Obama could be considered as a rational actor with pragmatic decisions, the public response was somewhat disturbed. The legislative branch overturned Obama's veto – in the Senate, Senator Harry Reid was the only opposition astoundingly enough (97-1), and the House followed with a 348-77 vote.

The override came just as Obama was ending his second term as President. JASTA had widespread support, and ass Paliewicz and Hasian put into words, "How one felt about JASTA thus became a litmus test for assessing one's patriotism.".[358] Regarding the override, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said that "This is the single most embarrassing thing the United States Senate has done possibly since 1983".[359] In an interview with CNN on August

[357] Barack Obama. "Veto Message from the President – S. 2040". The White House Office of the Press Secretary. September 23, 2016, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/23/veto-message-president-s2040.

[358] Nicholas S. Paliewicz and Marouf Hasian, "The 9/11 Families, the Passage of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), and the Pursuit of <Justice> in the Saudi Legal Cases," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15 no. 3 (2018): 263. https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1494387.

[359] "Obama: Veto Override of 9/11 Bill 'a Mistake'." *Al Jazeera*, September 29, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/9/29/obama-congress-veto-override-of-9-11-bill-a.

29, 2016, Obama weighed in on the override of the bill and highlighted that it was a mistake, though he claimed that he understood the reason behind the override.[360] It is also important to note that it was the first and only override during Obama's eight years of presidency.

All in all, it is possible to infer that Obama vetoed the bill as a foreign policy move due to the possibility that the legislation would deteriorate the bilateral relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Since the relationship consists of continuous ups and downs, the veto might be seen as a careful step; yet the bill passed into law, and as of 2021, the legal process is still going on.

4.1.8. The Foreign Policy of Barack Obama towards Saudi Arabia

The strategic partnership of the United States and Saudi Arabia has a longstanding history, and the actors continued their alliance during Obama's presidency. The September 11 attacks created a strained position for both states. Although the Saudi Arabian government denied any involvement of the Kingdom concerning the terrorist attacks, the fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers were coming from Saudi Arabia meant for some that there was an indirect responsibility. Therefore, the public of both states had resentment towards each other.

When Barack Obama was elected President, there were complicated ideas about the future of the bilateral relationship. One of the promises made by Obama throughout his presidential campaign was to reduce dependency on foreign oil. Obama and Joe Biden led a plan called "New Energy for America"; the term was first used in 2004 and presented during the campaign.[361] Even though it was

[360] Jake Tapper, "Obama: Override of 9/11 Bill Veto a Mistake," *CNN*, September 29, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hz5peB31Ac4.

[361] Robert S. Giglio, "The Obama-Biden New Energy for America Plan: Existing Technologies Contribute to Energy Goals," *Strategic Planning for Energy and the Environment* 29, no. 4 (2010): 28.

never aimed to abandon the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz due to the national security objectives of the U.S., growing independence in terms of oil would create a more substantial bargaining power for Obama. Saudi Arabia, being the largest source of U.S. petroleum imports, felt threatened because of the developments regarding energy. In short, the Obama period witnessed inevitable ups and downs throughout the U.S.-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations.

4.1.8.1. Osama Bin Laden, Arab Spring, Syrian Civil War, Iran Talks, Oil Market Crash, and 9/11 Lawsuits Bill

During Obama's presidency, the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had its sour moments. The alliance continued, yet the two actors fell apart from time to time. In order to have a better understanding, the major discords have to be reflected.

On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in a raid led by U.S. Navy SEALs. President Barack Obama announced in a late-night broadcast that he was located and killed.[362] Almost ten years after the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, was captured and killed. Throughout the period in between, U.S. started the global war on terrorism, which resulted in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the instability in the Middle East in terms of regional security. Obama stated in his speech on the day bin Laden was killed that "Around the globe, we worked with our friends and allied to capture or kill scores of Al Qaeda terrorists, including several who were a part of 9/11 plot".[363] Even though Obama was against the war in Iraq, and this was one of his campaign promises, the global war on terrorism has been a

[362] "Obama Announces Death of Osama Bin Laden." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, May 30, 2012, https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/obama-announces-death-of-osama-bin-laden-video.

[363] Barack H. Obama, "Osama Bin Laden Dead". May 2, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead.

concern for national security. At this moment, fighting Al Qaeda and terror was still quite important for Obama as it had been for Bush. The capture of Osama bin Laden was crucial – the military action was approved by 9 out of 10 people in the United States, and 79% of the public reflected that they thought it was important that bin Laden was killed.[364] In other words, in the third year of his first term, the public support towards Obama was in a way linked to the death of Osama bin Laden.[365] It is important to note that Obama stated that one of the aims of his foreign policy would focus on killing Osama bin Laden and fighting Al Qaeda to provide national security. As a result of this, Obama's order of a military operation, which resulted in the demise of bin Laden, was significant in the sense that he followed up with his agenda.

The news that bin Laden was captured and killed spread around the globe quickly due to the era of technology. Saudi Arabia has been vocal about giving support to the United States in the global war on terrorism and provided specific reforms in different aspects of life in the Kingdom to reflect how committed they have been. Therefore, it would be accurate to state that the death of Osama bin Laden was welcomed by Saudi Arabia – according to the Saudi Press Agency,

> An official source has expressed the hope of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that the elimination of the Al-Qaeda leader will be a step towards supporting international efforts to combat terrorism and to dismantle its cells, as well as the elimination of the deviant thought that stands behind it, especially as the people of the Kingdom have been among the ones most targeted by this terrorist organization through its crimes, killing of innocent people, which is forbidden by Allah, the terrorizing of innocent people, and the destabilization of security and society.[366]

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[364] Megan Brenan, "A Look Back at Reaction to Bin Laden's Death," *Gallup*, August 13, 2021, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/348971/look-back-reaction-bin-laden-death.aspx.

[365] Obama did not receive the most credit for bin Laden's capture and killing; yet his approval rating increased by six percentage points after May 2, 2011. Moreover, he got support from independents and Republicans in the aftermath of the killing as well.

[366] "The Region Reacts to News of bin Laden's Death," *Middle East Policy Council*, https://mepc.org/commentary/region-reacts-news-bin-ladens-death.

Another development to be taken into consideration is the Iran talks that took place during Obama's presidency from the perspective of U.S.- Saudi bilateral relations. Iran talks refer to two years of negotiations that were carried out between Iran and six world actors including the U.S.[367] Even though the death of bin Laden did not produce a tense environment, the relationship between U.S. and Iran sure did. It is important to note that the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been built on mistrust since the 1979 Revolution. Despite the fact that once they were the twin pillars of U.S. foreign policy, the Islamic Revolution has altered the balance in the region.

One should have a closer look at the region in order to grasp the essence of the bilateral relationship fully. The Saudi Kingdom has its own claims over the Muslim community and infers that this right stems from the fact that the holy lands of Mecca and Medina are placed in between the Kingdom's territories. As the Kingdom highlights, "An appreciation Islamic history and culture is therefore essential for a genuine understanding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its Islamic heritage and its leading role in the Arab and Muslim worlds."[368]

Iran, on the other hand, has its own claims over Islam. After the 1979 Revolution, Islamic Republic of Iran aspired for a leading role of Islam. As General Yahya Rahim Safavi, who served as the chief commander of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, stated, the main goal of the Islamic Republic of Iran was "creating a multipolar world in which Iran plays a leadership role on behalf of Islam."[369] As a result, "The Iranian government's claim to speak for a putative

[367] Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Iran," July 14, 2015, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/14/statement-president-iran.

[368] "About Saudi Arabia: Islam," The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C., https://www.saudiembassy.net/islam.

[369] Amir Taheri, "The World's and Iran's Second Revolution," *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy* 28, no. 2 (2006): 102.

universal Islamic authority has been a clear challenge to the Saudi government which sees its legitimacy as tied to its role of protector of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina."[370]

Historically, the relationship between Iran and the Taliban was initially a hostile one. Yet according to the U.S. generals and NATO accusations, Iran has been providing supplies to the Taliban.[371] Although sectarian differences shaped the relationship of Iran and the Taliban before, the groups became intertwined over time as Shiites joined the Taliban for the first time in 2016.[372] All in all, it could be summarized as following: Saudis and Taliban got further away from each other, whereas Iran and Taliban got closer in the first two decades of the 21st century.

The Iran talks changed the dynamics between the U.S. with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia felt insecure – even though the Kingdom has been trying hard to show the world that it had no connection to Islamic extremism and terror and realizing certain reforms, U.S. was still considering a renewed and stable relationship with Iran.

Iran talks were quite unexpected when Obama first started his term of presidency. Following the Iranian presidential election, which took place in June 2009, Obama expressed that he felt uncomfortable because of the violence reflected through mass media. Moreover, he expanded the sanctions, and up until Obama's second term, the relations were quite conflictual, which made Saudi

[370] Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order (New York: Routledge, 2014): 4.

[371] Henry Meyer, "Iran Is Helping Taliban in Afghanistan, Petraeus Says," *Bloomberg*, February 14, 2009, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aru5H2YB1Tv8&refer=india.

[372] Paul Antonopoulos, "Shi'ite Hazara Gunmen Join the Taliban," *AMN News*, October 4, 2016, https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/shiite-hazara-gunmen-join-taliban/.

Arabia secure in the region in terms of U.S. support. However, as the second term of Obama as the U.S. President began and Hassan Rouhani came to power in Iran in 2013,[373] the relations began to improve – even a one-on-one meeting between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Secretary of State John Kerry was held on September 26, 2013.[374] As the talks and a possibility of a nuclear agreement surfaced, Saudi Arabia felt isolated and alone in terms of its partnership with the U.S. Saudi Arabia voiced concerns about the nuclear deal with Iran multiple times and expressed that the lifting of sanctions would have unintended negative consequences. All in all, the Iran talks were a down for the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

Another issue that has always been on Obama's agenda was oil dependency. As early as his presidential election, Obama has been vocal about a new energy policy – even though he followed the major policies of former U.S. presidents in terms of energy[375] – and the importance of reducing oil dependency. To do so, in March 2010, President Obama introduced a new energy security plan focusing on renewable energy and expansion of domestic offshore oil and gas exploration.[376] He explained the reason behind these decisions as to the need for energy in the U.S., claiming that not only renewable but also traditional sources of energy are necessary for the ongoing U.S. industries. Not long after came the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill – Obama chose strong words to refer to the

[373] Shirzad Bozorgmehr and Michael Martinez, "Hassan Rouhani is Iran's Next President After Appealing to Tradition, Reform," *CNN*, June 15, 2013, http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/15/world/meast/iran-elections/index.html.

[374] Barbara Slavin, "Us, Iran Officials Make Diplomatic History," *Al-Monitor*, September 26, 2013, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/09/us-iran-bilateral-talk-zarif-kerry.html.

[375] Omid Shokri Kalehsar, "US Energy Diplomacy Under the Obama Administration," in US Energy Diplomacy in the Caspian Sea Basin, 147-187. Springer, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66929-4_5.

[376] Dan Lothian, Suzanne Malveaux, Deirdre Walsh, Alan Silverleib, Lisa Desjardins and Erika Dimmler. "Obama Energy Plan Would Open Atlantic and Gulf Drilling." *CNN*, April 1, 2010, http://edition.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/03/31/obama.energy/index.html.

disaster, and he drew attention to the company's responsibility – BP Amoco. Towards the end of the year, Obama said that he took responsibility and "suspended planned exploration off the coast of Alaska, and canceled a pending lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico and a proposed lease sale off Virginia".[377] This was a setback for Obama's energy policy.

Perhaps, one of the significant challenges faced under the Obama administration has been the Arab Spring, followed by the Syrian Civil War. The first term of Obama was filled with challenges both domestically and internationally. After the uprisings broke out in the Middle East and North Africa region, Obama was criticized by some and supported by others. According to a group of critiques – not only scholars but also political figures –, his reaction towards the uprisings was quite "inconsistent." Obama called for Muammar Gaddafi to step down from power but did not defend the same in Syria. Furthermore, Obama chose to keep silent about the Saudi involvement in the uprisings in Bahrain in March 2011. He took into consideration oil security, fighting terrorism as well as Iran's rise in the region.

When the U.S. decided to let Mubarak go, it came as a surprise for the Saudi Kingdom and shook its trust in the American hegemony. However, the case of Bahrain was different – the protests in Bahrain were mainly the result of discontent among the Shiite community towards the Sunni leadership. In terms of geopolitics, Bahrain was located in a significant spot where the state neighbored Saudi Arabia and hosted a major U.S. military base. Obama has not been vocal about any support of armed intervention in Bahrain. It is important to note that a potential turmoil in Bahrain would not be ideal for U.S. foreign policy. Not only because of the U.S. military base in Bahrain but also because of the possibility of Iran getting involved, the U.S. tried to act carefully. If the protests continued and got more robust, the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and

[377] Jeff Mason, "Obama Takes Responsibility for Oil Spill," Reuters, May 27, 2010, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-oil-rig-obama-idUSTRE64O5JX20100527.

Iran would cause a bigger problem for the regional security interests of the United States in the Middle East.

Concerning the protests in Saudi Arabia, Obama once again kept silent. The government of Saudi Arabia chose to intervene violently and not to further cause a rift with its ally, and the U.S. commented little on the ongoing environment. In terms of reform processes in Saudi Arabia, the U.S. has always criticized their pace; however, public criticisms on the domestic politics, Obama refrained from getting too involved. These created the grounds for U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East to be called "inconsistent."

What complicated the bilateral relations further was the breakout of the Syrian Civil War. Before the civil war, Obama's Syria policy could be considered more peaceful as he made sure that he was going to follow different policies in the Middle East than his predecessor, Bush. Obama was into the concept of restoration of relations; however, the war has altered the balance in the region and changed the direction of U.S. foreign policy.

Assad regime chose to take a violent stance against the peaceful demonstrations, and Obama offered the solution of Assad stepping down – that was when the U.S.-Syria relations first broke off during the administration of Obama. The relations further got tenser due to the conflict on chemical weapons, yet what made it more complex and insolvable for the U.S. has been the involvement of regional and international actors after 2013, such as Russia, Iran, Hezbollah as well as the Islamic organizations. At first, Saudi Arabia and the United States fell apart regarding Syria as the Kingdom opposed ousting the Assad regime. After 2013, they both gave support to the Syrian opposition.

Regarding oil, 2011 has been a rough because of the breakout of the Arab Spring. As oil-producing nations joined the frenzy of uprisings, concern over a

new global oil crisis surfaced.[378] According to Obama, reducing the dependency of the U.S. on foreign oil "by exploiting domestic reserves, increasing fuel efficiency, and increasing renewable energies"[379] was the solution to all problems related to energy diplomacy. One of the steps taken on the path to energy interdependency was the "Shale Revolution" that took place during the Obama period. After the uncertainties regarding the energy supply and demand worldwide, the Shale Revolution proved to be fruitful for the U.S. – not only did the production meet the domestic consumption, but it also paved the way for the potential export projects. As these developments also meant that the U.S. became a rival for Saudi Arabia due to not depending on the Middle Eastern oil anymore, they altered the balances once again. Still, the relationship between the U.S. and the Saudi Kingdom remained moderate.

As of 2014, the Northern Iraq Offensive has been a foreign policy issue both for the United States and the Saudi Kingdom. Although the root causes of the Northern Iraq Offensive are debatable, at first, the foreign policy objectives of the actors were not similar. Of course, Obama did not want a fundamentalist Islamic organization such as ISIL to gain power. Nevertheless, he had to decide between supporting a Shia-led Iraq and indirectly supporting Iran as the Shia leader of the region and protecting the long-lasting partner, Saudi Arabia, of the United States. The Saudi Kingdom was alarmed due to the instability of the region. However, the situation was more complicated when it came to the relationship between the Kingdom and the U.S. – a lot of Saudi citizens joined ISIL, and there have been claims on the possibility that Saudi Arabia has been

[378] "Timeline: Oil Dependence and U.S. Foreign Policy." *Council on Foreign Relations*, https://www.cfr.org/timeline/oil-dependence-and-us-foreign-policy.

[379] Omid Shokri Kalehsar, "US Energy Diplomacy Under the Obama Administration. In: US Energy Diplomacy in the Caspian Sea Basin," *Springer, Cham*. (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66929-4_5.

sponsoring the militant group.[380] Eventually, the U.S. chose to intervene, whereas Saudi Arabia did not think foreign intervention was the best option. It is significant to note that the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia has been sour due to the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran at that point[381].

Another development regarding the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was the Yemeni Civil War. The civil war in Yemen could be reflected as an extension of the Arab Spring as it was the main event triggering the breakout of the discontent in the country. Obama authorized support to the Gulf Cooperation Council-led operations, and two actors, the U.S., and Saudi Arabia were on the same page. It should be noted that the U.S. foreign policy has been criticized regarding Yemen, and the war has been going on since 2014 – it could be said that Obama chose to act more carefully compared to his successor, Donald John Trump.

Last but not least, the 9/11 Lawsuits Bill must be mentioned. Up until this point, it has been repeated several times that the primary conflict regarding bilateral relations has been the September 11 attacks. Apart from the early reactions and the responses, the process following JASTA has been problematic. The drafting of the bill was alarming enough; however, after the bill was actualized, the relations turned sourer than ever. After the bill passed, a lawsuit was "filed in federal court on behalf of the families of 850 people who died and another 1,500

[380] It is important to note that most critiques pay attention to the fact that the roots of the Saudi Kingdom and the ISIL have been the same: Wahhabism.

[381] From 2013 onward, the improvement in the bilateral relations between the United States and Iran have caused a problem for Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. Regarding Iran's nuclear program, the P5 + 1 countries (the United Nations Security Council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – and Germany) and Iran have reached a deal on November 24, 2013, and it was the first formal agreement between the U.S. and Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, the improvement in the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran was not welcomed. The Kingdom and Iran have long been rivals in the region of Middle East as Saudi Arabia considering itself as the leader of Sunnis whereas Iran as the leader of Shiites. Hereby, the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia has been challenged by the changing regional balances.

who were injured in the September 11, 2001, terror attacks"[382]. According to the lawsuit, the families of 9/11 victims and survivors were seeking justice as they held Saudi Arabia accountable for the attacks. Even though Obama has stood against the bill and vetoed it – it was the first and only veto of Obama that was overridden by Congress – Congress passed the bill, and it further damaged the bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Kingdom. Denying any involvement in the terrorist acts as well as denying any financial support to the terrorist organizations, Saudi Arabia has repeatedly stated that the Kingdom was standing with the U.S. in the global war on terrorism. However, the U.S. public and certain officials did not believe so, and in the search for blame, Saudi Arabia faced a lawsuit regarding the claimed involvement of the Kingdom in the September 11 attacks. Obama regarded the bill's passing as a mistake and tried to maintain a balance in the complex relationship. Clearly, this was not the way Obama planned his foreign policy would be as he had tried to prevent a potential conflict. Saudis made it clear that this lawsuit is a black mark against the Kingdom, and as of 2021, the lawsuit is continuing.

4.1.9. The Foreign Policy of Barack Obama towards Iran

Obama was quite different from his predecessor, Bush; yet their perception of Iran was similar as both actors thought that Iran had to be contained due to its aggressive behavior. However, after a while, Obama chose to handle Iran differently. Bush targeted Iran as one of the enemies throughout the global war on terrorism – for his first time, Obama kept his distance with Iran as well. However, throughout his second term, Obama thought that it was a better idea to include Iran in diplomatic relations, and this resulted in the much-talked Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The seemingly improving bilateral relations between the United States and Iran has put Saudi Arabia in a position where it felt abandoned – Iran and Saudi Arabia have long been rivals in the

[382] Melanie Eversley. "Families of 9/11 Victims Suing Saudi Arabia for Role in Attacks." *USA Today*, March 20, 2017, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/03/20/families-911-victims-file-lawsuit-blaming-saudi-arabia/99421816/.

region, and a possibility of a strategic partnership between the U.S. and Iran would not be beneficial for the Saudi Kingdom.

4.1.9.1. 2009 Iranian Presidential Election, Nuclear Talks, Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, Rouhani's Visit, and JCPOA

On June 12, 2009, presidential elections were held in Iran, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was reelected by a 62% margin[383]. The allegations of fraud followed, and protests began in the streets of major cities, which gathered international attention. It is stated that those protests had been the most significant demonstrations the Islamic Republic of Iran has ever witnessed after the Revolution of 1979. Iranian government chose to suppress the protests using force, and the election had long-term results as well as unintended consequences.

Mir-Hossein Mousavi Khameneh was running against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and there were pro-reforms segments of the Iranian public, which had been vocal before regarding the election. After the election, both Ahmadinejad and Mousavi claimed victory – later, the allegations of fraud began. It must be mentioned that the allegations of fraud remain as allegations since there were no international observers throughout the election process, and Iran has always been criticized in terms of democracy. Major protests broke out in Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan – what further sparked the international criticism has been the way how the protests were handled.

Concerning the election and the protests, Obama only expressed his concern; however, he drew attention when he interviewed CNBC on June 16, 2009. Throughout the interview, Obama made it clear that the election outcome would not change the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran and emphasized that the U.S. has

[383] Casey L. Addis, "Iran's 2009 Presidential Elections," *Congressional Research Service* (2009): 2.

not been involved in the protests against the government.[384] He also highlighted that he perceives Iran as the "historically hostile" state, which caused problems in the region.[385]

Even though Obama chose not to intervene in the domestic politics of Iran, the nuclear talks have always been a part of his foreign policy agenda as the U.S. perceived a powerful state – in terms of nuclear – as a threat, inferring that it would cause problems in the balance of power of the Middle East. His first year of presidency included both sanctions and talks on a potential nuclear deal. Before the controversial elections in Iran, the P5 + 1 presented a proposal to Iran on June 14, 2008, and the nuclear talks kept on going. As Iran went on with the launch of its first satellite, regional and global actors reflected their concerns due to the possibility that there might be a growing ballistic missile potential in Iran. These concerns paved the way, and the P5 + 1 chose not to alienate Iran in terms of nuclear negotiations – if Iran was neglected at that point, it might have resulted in an increasing tension regionally as well as internationally. The U.S., under the Obama administration, too, decided to participate in the talks; however, the presidential elections have resulted in international response even though none of the actors intervened in the domestic environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Obama was still quite determined to follow through with the nuclear talks, and in terms of foreign policy, he reflected that containing Iran through diplomatic means was healthier not only for regional security but also for global security.

The hopes were high, but the process of nuclear talks witnessed certain ups and downs. The Obama administration was rather optimistic on a possibility to meet on common grounds even though no clear promise had been made. As a result,

[384] "Transcript: Obama on the Economy, Iran." *CNBC*, August 3, 2010, https://www.cnbc.com/2009/06/16/transcript-obama-on-the-economy-iran.html.

[385] Ibid.

Iran changed its mind, and the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act came along as the United States grew impatient with the broken promises made by Iran.

As of 2010, President Obama signed into law the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act to counter Iran's unwillingness to keep its promise – even though the Iranian side had never made it clear whether it was going to abide by the common decision – and the relations hit another tense point. Inferring that Iran had been carrying out nuclear activities and posing a threat to the national security of the U.S. as well as international security, the Obama administration decided to freeze the ongoing process of nuclear talks.[386] Furthermore, it was mentioned in the act that Iran had been violating human rights and keeping on with its uranium enrichment program, and it was a threat against Israel and the allies of the United States too.[387] In other words, the talks went down, and the U.S. realized that a moderate approach towards Iran was not the ultimate solution at that point; instead, the administration adopted a foreign policy approach, which aimed to contain Iran with further sanctions. Although Obama assumed that there was a way out of the endless hostility between the U.S. and Iran through diplomatic means, the efforts to include Iran in a nuclear deal failed.

It is no surprise that Iran has been carrying out the role of the leader of Shiites in the Middle East – and the whole world. With this, Iran with an unknown nuclear capacity, which is open for interpretation, would stand as a problem regarding the ideals of the Obama administration. Obama voted for diplomacy until the end, and he based his foreign policy towards Iran on the grounds of negotiation; however, 2010 marked a "down" in the bilateral relationship.

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[386] Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, 22 USC 8501 § 2 (2010). https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ195/PLAW-111publ195.pdf

[387] Ibid.

Perhaps it could be said that the presidential elections of 2013 have been a turning point for the bilateral relations of the U.S. and Iran. The elections were held on June 14, 2013, and with a landslide victory, Hassan Rouhani won.[388] Rouhani could be described as a moderate candidate[389] , and in terms of foreign policy, his tone was quite different from his predecessor. Rouhani's visit to the United States to attend the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly could be reflected as a step forward in the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran as well as a step forward for Iran at the international stage in general.

On September 24, 2013, Hassan Rouhani gave a speech at the UN General Assembly, and he mentioned several significant points throughout that famous speech. He talked about the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Non-Aligned Movement's foreign ministers' meeting as well as Iran's presidential elections and the sanctions. Rouhani highlighted that the elections held in June might reflect the possibility of change in Iran as he stated that they "represent a clear, living example of the wise choice of hope, rationality, and moderation by the great people of Iran".[390] Rouhani further mentioned the sanctions and inferred that the "unjust sanctions" are "inhumane" and "against peace" while they hurt the public rather than the administrations.[391] Other adjectives he used to describe the sanctions were "violent," "pure," "simple," and he emphasized the fact that they are not "smart.".[392] It is important to

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[388] "Hassan Rouhani Wins Iran Presidential Election." *BBC News*, June 15, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22916174.

[389] Clifton W. Sherrill, "Why Hassan Rouhani Won Iran's 2013 Presidential Election," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 2 (2014): 64.

[390] Hassan Rouhani. *Statement at the Sixty-eight Session of the United Nations General Assembly*. New York, the United States, September 24, 2013. https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/68/IR_en.pdf.

[391] Ibid.

evaluate how Rouhani approached the issue of sanctions because he drew attention to the claim that sanctions cause hostility and encourage aggression. The words chosen were quite important in the sense that the emphasis on sanctions was directed at the continuous process of diplomatic sanctions between the U.S. and Iran.

Another exciting development regarding Rouhani's trip was the open door left – before the visit, Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser at the White House, said that the U.S. is always open to diplomacy under certain circumstances even though there was not a scheduled meeting between Obama and Rouhani.[393] The meeting did not occur as Rouhani rejected the invitation, but the rejection did not mean Iran was unwilling to improve the relations; instead, it could be inferred that the relationship was too complicated to discuss over an unofficial meeting.[394]

After the visit, mainstream media sources concentrated on the peaceful approach and the potential for upcoming negotiations. Moreover, Rouhani stated that the trip was a success even though he was not only greeted by cheers but also by protests when he returned. Throughout the public, hopes were high, and the diplomatic process continued between the U.S. and Iran as the nuclear talks were on the table again. At that point, the image created by Iran focused on peace rather than conflict, and the U.S. foreign policy was shaped accordingly.

As the relations started to warm up, another step was taken: On November 24, 2013, the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) was signed between the P5 + 1 and Iran. It

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[392] Ibid.

[393] Paul Lewis and Ed Pilkington. "White House Indicates Obama Could Meet Iran President Rouhani at UN," *Guardian*, September 20, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/20/barack-obama-hassan-rouhani-iran-un.

[394] Jennifer Epstein, "Obama, Rouhani Won't Meet," *Politico,* September 24, 2013, https://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/obama-hassan-rouhani-meeting-097278.

was significant in the sense that it drew attention to a short-term freeze for Iran's nuclear program and limited economic sanctions on Iran as a response. The JPA was the first multilateral agreement including the parties of the U.S. and Iran since the 1979 Revolution. Negotiations continued, and the path was paved to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has been a milestone throughout the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran as well as Iran and the international society. It was a symbol reflecting that the U.S. foreign policymakers focused on diplomacy rather than war, and Iran adopted a more moderate view in terms of Iranian foreign policy. The JCPOA included many terms regarding the nuclear capacity of Iran, and in return, sanctions were to be lifted or suspended, which would cause a huge economic relief for the Iranian public. The agreement had a 15-years of expiration date; it was to end in 2030. From the perspective of the U.S., the JCPOA was a significant step, and a denuclearized Iran would lead to a "more hopeful world"[395] as diplomacy would be the primary tool when communicating with Iran.[396]

A denuclearized Iran would have brought stability to the region; however, some regional actors – particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia – did not respond well to the developments. As the Republicans have repeatedly expressed, the U.S. was hanging its allies out to dry. For Israel, it was in a way unacceptable due to the longstanding distrust, and a strengthening Iran in the region was not favorable at all. Although the Saudi Kingdom and the Israeli state tend to disagree on most of the common issues, the actors both agreed upon the idea that the JCPOA was risky and damaging for regional security. Despite getting criticisms from its

[395] Parisa Hafezi, Louis Charbonneau, John Irish, Arshad Mohammed, "Iran Deal Reached, Obama Hails Step towards 'More Helpful World'," Reuters, July 14, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-idUSKCN0PM0CE20150714.

[396] Zachary Laub, "The Middle East After the Iran Nuclear Deal," Council on Foreign Relations, September 3, 2015, https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/middle-east-after-iran-nuclear-deal.

long-term partners, the Obama administration chose to keep on going with the agreement, and the JCPOA was realized after all.

All in all, it is possible to reflect that Obama's foreign policy towards Iran could be evaluated under two categories: First, a period of tension and sanctions that were inherited from before, and second, a period of diplomacy, which led to the signing of the JCPOA. Furthermore, it is significant for the Obama administration that they chose to establish new diplomatic relations with Iran, although the reactions of their longstanding partners were quite adverse. Israel and Saudi Arabia both believed that Iran could not be trusted, and the nuclear deal would explode. Despite what they reflected, Obama went through with the process as a part of P5 + 1, and 2015 witnessed a pivotal point in the bilateral relations.

4.1.10. The Leadership Style of Barack Obama

Obama is an opportunistic leader according to the categorization of Hermann et al. He is a "cue-taker" as he could be considered more sensitive to the political context.[397] A cue-taker does not only "define the problem" but also "identify a position by checking what important others are advocating and doing".[398] Obama is an opportunist since he respects political constraints and is open to information from the political setting.[399]

An opportunist values knowledge about political context and President Obama has always acted upon evaluating the circumstances. He has elaborated the costs and benefits regarding the political challenges he faced. Moreover, as an

[397] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 92.

[398] Ibid.

[399] Ibid, 96.

opportunist, he focused on bargaining. As Hermann et al. put it, "Bargaining lies at the heart of the political game" for opportunists and they tend to prefer inaction to action "unless some kind of consensus can be built".[400]

As an opportunist, Obama is also an accommodative leader. "For leaders with an accommodative leadership style, consensus-building and finding some compromise are the most relevant political skills".[401] Furthermore, an accommodative leader cares about what others think; hereby, it is important for an accommodative leader not to lose support and face opposition.[402]

To start with, the 2009 Iranian presidential elections reflect how Obama preferred inaction to action. Although he shared his concerns about the ongoing political environment in Iran, he made sure that the U.S. kept out of the protests in Iran against the Iranian government.[403] Obama was aware of the importance of the nuclear talks with Iran, and he was determined to go through with the talks on the basis of diplomacy. Acknowledging that Iran was historically hostile,[404] Obama still chose to value communication.

Accommodative leaders do not always choose inaction, though. The capture and killing of Osama bin Laden show that Obama chose to act given that there was a consensus about the Al Qaeda leader. Although global war on terrorism emerged as a key concept throughout the George W. Bush administration, Obama has had

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[400] Ibid.

[401] Ibid, 99.

[402] Ibid, 96.

[403] "Transcript: Obama on the Economy, Iran." *CNBC*, August 3, 2010, https://www.cnbc.com/2009/06/16/transcript-obama-on-the-economy-iran.html.

[404] Ibid.

his fair share of global war on terrorism. On the day that bin Laden was killed, he addressed the U.S. nation: "And on nights like this one, we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to al Qaeda's terror: Justice has been done."[405]

The Arab Spring and the U.S. stance towards the uprisings could be one of the most criticized foreign policy approaches of Obama administration. Obama addressed the protests in his speeches and linked them to the right of self-determination in Middle East and North Africa.[406] He adopted a discourse supporting the revolts; yet he remained silent concerning Bahrain. These are examples of how he preferred inaction to action believing that it would cause opposition and lead to the decrease of support towards his presidency.

A similar scenario was witnessed during the Syrian Civil War. When the Assad regime proved to be violent, Obama encouraged Assad regime to step down. Even though he gave an ultimatum to Assad concerning the use of chemical weapons, later, Obama chose not to get involved in Syria. Some critics claimed that he was "naïve" and "a bluffer".[407] Obama was frustrated by this critique and said that this crisis "is the point of the inverted pyramid upon which all other theories rest."[408] He preferred inaction in order not to lead to a costly intervention, in line with an opportunist leader.

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[405] Barack Obama, "Osama bin Laden Dead," May 2, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead.

[406] Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa, May 19, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa

[407] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *Atlantic*, April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/.

[408] Ibid.

Obama's accommodative leadership can best be seen through his foreign policy moves including Iran. For example, there have been ups and downs on the road of nuclear talks; however, eventually, Obama succeeded in his aim to sit on a table with Iran and negotiate a deal. This proves his accommodative side: "Politics is the art of the possible in the current setting and time."[409] He has not hesitated to pause the talks due to human rights violations and uranium enrichment program in Iran; however, this also reflects how he values bargaining. Moreover, through the negotiations of JCPOA, he emphasized that compromise is crucial. Agreeing to lift sanctions in exchange for the clauses of the agreement that were controlling the nuclear capacity of Iran, Obama showed that an accommodative leader "strives to build a consensus that will be acceptable"[410] in the eyes of other actors as well.

Table 3. Leadership Styles of Hermann et al. applied to President Obama

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Motivation
		Problem Focus
Respects constraints	Open to information	Accommodative *Focus is on reconciling differences and building consensus, empowering others and sharing accountability in the process*

[409] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 96.

[410] Ibid, 100.

Table 3. (continued)

Obama chose inaction to action in terms of the revolts in the Middle East as he was aware of the political constraints. Also, he vetoed JASTA in order not to hurt the bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia.	Obama has always been open to information. He has been focused on bargaining and tried to resolve problems in terms of diplomacy. The Iranian Nuclear Deal is an example of his opportunistic leadership regarding him being open to information.	As an accommodative opportunist, Obama put emphasis on consensus and collective action. Obama shared his concerns about the 2009 Iranian presidential election, but the U.S. did not get involved in protests and valued communication.

Finally, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) – also known as the 9/11 Lawsuits Bill – has been a challenge for Obama's presidency. Obama vetoed the bill, and it was overridden by the Senate. Obama clearly stated that the override was a mistake and once again preferred inaction not to hurt the bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia. It was a well-calculated step and even though Obama was criticized in the domestic realm, he once again reflected that he respected political restraints.

In conclusion, Obama proves to be an accommodative opportunist with his openness to information, respect of political restraints and belief in consensus, compromise, and bargaining. During the two terms he served as the U.S. President, he often favored inaction to action after calculating the potential outcomes.

CHAPTER 5

THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY UNDER PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

5.1. Donald John Trump

The 58th quadrennial presidential election was held on November 8, 2016, in the United States. The Republican candidate was Donald John Trump, who is an American media personality and businessman. He was running against the Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State and wife of Bill Clinton, who is the second American President to have been impeached.[411] The 2016 presidential election turned out to be a controversial one since Trump won, although he lost the popular vote. Only five times in U.S. history have candidates lost the popular vote even though they won the presidency: John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888, George W. Bush in 2000, and Donald J. Trump in 2016.[412]

Throughout the presidential campaigns, the public did not favor Clinton nor Trump. Citizens had questions in their minds regarding the ethics and trustworthiness of Clinton, whereas Trump's expressions about race and immigration were violent. Furthermore, there were several allegations of sexual misconduct regarding Trump. Despite Clinton focusing her campaign on gender equality and social welfare, Trump managed to get severe financial support due

[411] The first President to have been impeached was Andrew Johnson in 1868. (Russell Riley, "The Clinton Impeachment and Its Fallout," The University of Virginia Miller Center, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/impeachment/clinton-impeachment-and-its-fallout.

[412] "Electoral College Fast Facts." *US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives,* https://history.house.gov/Institution/Electoral-College/Electoral-College/.

to being a media personality. However, it has to be emphasized that both candidates chose to communicate in terms of aggression and gave speeches that polarized the public.

It is essential to note the adverse environment throughout the United States before the election. During his presidential campaign, Trump called Clinton "the devil," "nasty woman,"[413] and "crooked Hillary."[414] The nicknames he chose sparked a reaction. On the other hand, in a speech she gave at a fundraiser in New York, Clinton referred to Trump's supporters as "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic."[415] She also said that half of the supporters of Trump belong in a "basket of deplorables.".[416] Many examples could be given – as a result, the tone of the election turned out to be somewhat divisive and harmful.

5.1.1. Foreign Policy Approach of Donald John Trump

Trump took office as the 45th President, and his election has changed the tone of foreign policy. His campaign slogan was "Make America Great Again," and the general framework of his foreign policy approach was shaped according to his unpredictability. Donald Trump's primary focus was national security, and he took severe measures to ensure a nationalist foreign policy. It is also important to note the rise of right-wing populism; hence many scholars commented on this

[413] Tessa Berenson, "Presidential Debate: Trump Calls Clinton 'Nasty Woman'," *Time*, October 19, 2016, https://time.com/4537960/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-nasty-woman-debate/.

[414] Amber Jamieson, "Trump Calls Clinton 'Crooked Hillary' – Should She Ignore It or Fight Back?" *Guardian*, May 25, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/may/25/donald-trump-crooked-hillary-clinton-nickname-ignore-fight.

[415] Katie Reilly, "Hillary Clinton Transcript: 'Basket of Deplorables' Comment," *Time*, September 10, 2016, https://time.com/4486502/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-transcript/.

[416] Ibid.

victory, saying it was "unexpected."[417] Hereby, it is essential to understand how it happened in terms of domestic politics of the U.S. as well as global affairs.

The debates over the rise of right-wing populism suit the election of Trump as the President of the U.S. Stemming from what he said and did, it was no doubt that Trump adopted an authoritarian view of domestic politics and foreign policy. He concentrated on social divisions and took a discriminative approach towards fragments of the U.S. society (such as immigrants and women).[418] With the hostile language he used, he appealed to his voters. According to the polls, most of Trump's voters could be categorized: White uneducated men aged 50 and above created a more considerable percentage of his voters.[419] Trump paved his path to victory through his polarizing approach and socially constructed prejudices.

All in all, it must be highlighted that Trump's taking of office has changed domestic politics and foreign policy of the U.S. at the same time. This 4-year period has witnessed tension in international relations, and Trump's decisions have identified the discourse of U.S. foreign policy until the 2020 presidential elections.

Trump's foreign policy approach was first reflected in his inaugural address after he got elected. He stated that the U.S. was going to "reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism", which he then had claimed that was going to be extinct completely

[417] Thomas Ferguson, Benjamin I. Page, Jacob Rothschild, Arturo Chang and Jie Chen, "The Roots of Right-Wing Populism: Donald Trump in 2016," *International Journal of Political Economy* 49, no.2 (2020): 102.

[418] Ritu Prasad, "How Trump Talks about Women – and Does It Matter?" *BBC*, November 29, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-50563106.

[419] Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam. "Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender and Education." *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/.

by the time Trump's period was over.[420] He repeatedly inferred that every step that was going to be taken would help "Make America Great Again".[421]

In the National Security Strategy document released in 2017, the foreign policy objective of the Trump administration was clearly stated. "A strong America is in the vital interests of not only the American people, but also those around the world who want to partner with the United Stated in pursuit of shared interest, values, and aspirations."[422] In other words, the main aim of the U.S. foreign policy under President Trump was built around the U.S. national interests, similar to his predecessors.

In his first week of the U.S. President, Trump has signed two significant executive orders: One to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the other to impose a travel ban – which later came to be known as the "Muslim Ban" – on nationals of Muslim-majority countries. Hereby, even the first week of President Trump was quite busy regarding the foreign policy events.

It could be said that Trump's withdrawal from the TPP reflected his disbelief in multilateralism. Later, Trump has revisited the North American Free Trade Agreement and decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. These actions all signaled that the foreign policy understanding of Donald Trump was built around unilateralism. It was no surprise that the President wanted to put the interests of the U.S. first; however, the idea of putting the U.S. national interests first was the reasoning behind every move President Trump had taken.

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[420] Donald J. Trump, "The Inaugural Address" (Speech, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2017), https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/.

[421] Ibid.

[422] "Introduction," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. December 2017. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf, 1.

Apart from Trump's focus on unilateralism, the U.S. relations with Russia and North Koreas have been significant throughout this term. This period witnessed warmer relations with Russia due to the partnership between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. President Trump has praised Putin more than once during his presidency and inferred that the bilateral relations could be fruitful: "We look forward to a lot of very positive things happening for Russia".[423] Furthermore, the foreign policy towards North Korea witnessed certain ups and downs. Tensions have risen due to Trump's discourse regarding the region of Asia; yet in 2018, Trump met with Kim Jong-un and the leaders released a joint statement in terms of peaceful relations.[424]

In 2018, Trump has started a trade war against China and "the dispute has seen the U.S. and China impose tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of one another's goods." According to the Trump administration, China was one of the actors that had been challenging the U.S. with its less free and less fair economy.[425] Furthermore, China – alongside with Russia – had to be taken into account as it was "developing advanced weapons and capabilities".[426] Therefore, the tensions increased throughout Trump's term.

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[423] Patrick Wintour, "'It's an Honour to Be with You' – Trump and Putin Meet at G20 in Hamburg," Guardian, July 7, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/donald-trump-and-putin-exchange-handshake-at-g20-summit-in-hamburg.

[424] "Trump Kim Summit: US and North Korean Leaders Hold Historic Talks", BBC, June 12, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44435035.

[425] "Introduction," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. December 2017. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf, 2.

[426] "Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. December 2017. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf, 8.

Last but not least, the U.S. foreign policy towards Middle East under Trump administration has been significant. Many key events shaped this period. The bond between the U.S. and Israel as well as the strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia have been essential determinants. Moreover, Trump labeling Iran as a major enemy and threat, and building a foreign policy approach in line with it is important. Different from his predecessor, Trump chose to carry out relations with Iran from a hostile perspective – in other words, he favored conflict over cooperation.

5.1.1.1. The U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East under Donald Trump

The U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump has witnessed both changes and continuities. Throughout his term, the region has already been in turmoil; however, new crises also appeared. It would not be wrong to state that the Trump administration inherited ongoing crises in the Middle East.

As soon as Trump came to power, he signed an executive order – referred to as the Travel Ban or the Muslim Ban – reflecting his perspective of the Muslim world. Citizens of certain countries were prevented from travelling to the U.S. on the grounds of terrorism. This move was highly criticized and caused problems in domestic politics as well as foreign policy. It was a foreshadowing of how Trump was going to approach the Muslim countries.

The U.S. relations with Syria have been long strangled before Trump became the President. On April 6, 2017, the U.S. "launched a missile strike against Syria for the first time since the civil war began".[427] It was in a way a retaliation strike regarding the chemical weapons of the Assad regime. Russia claimed that the

[427] Nadia Khomami and Jamie Grierson, "US Military Strikes on Syria: What We Know So Far," Guardian, April 7, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/07/us-airstrikes-on-syria-donald-trump-what-we-know-so-far.

strike was not successful and "President Bashar al-Assad's office said the strike was 'foolish and irresponsible'".[428]

Perhaps, the bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia have been one of the key points that has to be emphasized. It is no surprise that Saudi Arabia has been a strategic partner to the U.S., mostly in terms of trade although the relations have seen ups and downs. President Trump was determined to continue the relations smoothly and he valued the close relations between the Kingdom and the U.S. He even planned his first trip abroad to the Saudi Kingdom, showing that there is an unbreakable bond between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The bond was later proven to be strong as Trump chose to defend the Saudi Kingdom regarding the assassination of the Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. Following his death, the U.S. politicians were divided into two as one group wanted to impose sanctions on Saudi Arabia whereas the other did not.

Throughout his presidency, Trump chose to stand by the Saudi government and not to hurt the bilateral relations even though some steps taken by the Trump administration led to the rising tensions. One area of tension was the announcement of the President that the U.S. was going to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Then, it gathered many different reactions. Another area of tension could be reflected as the 2018 Report on Religious Freedom; however, it was not unexpected that the Saudi Kingdom was going to be included within the report. Last but not least, the Pensacola shooting has escalated the tension between two actors; still, Trump chose not to deteriorate the bilateral relations.

Towards the end of the first year of Trump's presidency, the National Security Strategy document was released. In the document, it was stated that the U.S. wanted a Middle East "that is not a safe haven or breeding ground for jihadist terrorist, not dominated by any power hostile to the United States, and that

[428] Ibid.

contributes to a stable global energy market".[429] It is also important that in this document, Iran was repeatedly considered as the leading sponsor of terrorism[430] and it was reflected that the U.S. under President Trump was going to "work with partners to deny the Iranian regime all paths to a nuclear weapon and neutralize Iranian malign influence".[431]

In line with the priority actions included within the National Security Strategy document, Trump did not wish to pursue peaceful relations with Iran; instead, he targeted the Islamic Republic as a major threat. According to the document, the Middle East has been a region where the United States had emerging opportunities; and, hereby, it was quite important for the Trump administration to cooperate with partners.

After the first year, Trump has announced that the U.S. was going to revisit – and later withdraw from – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump has already been vocal about how the JCPOA had been beneficial for Iran more than other parties involved in the agreement.[432] Therefore, the decision was not a surprise, yet it was a clear shift from the foreign policy approach of his predecessor. The tensions between the U.S. and Iran kept on going. The killing of Qasem Soleimani was another breaking point regarding the already troubled dialogue between the actors. Some even claimed that the U.S. and Iran were

[429] "The Strategy in a Regional Context," *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. December 2017. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf, 48.

[430] Ibid, 26, 49.

[431] Ibid, 49.

[432] Mark Landler, "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned," New York Times, May 8, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html.

standing on the brink of war; still, Trump's period ended, and the relations took a different direction with his successor.

All in all, it is possible to claim that the U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump has witnessed good and bad times. Trump was clear about which states to side with and which to counter; therefore, his foreign policy was shaped according to his worldview. Particularly, the region of the Middle East was a center of attention throughout his term of four years regarding the U.S. interests as well as the inherited peaks and valleys.

5.1.2. Travel Ban

Trump took office on January 20, 2017, and the first foreign policy move he made came soon enough – only a week later, he signed Executive Order 13769, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States."[433] This act was entirely in line with what he had reflected during the campaign process in terms of discrimination because, according to the Trump administration, the visa process was crucial. Referring to the September 11 attacks and the visa-issuance process before 9/11, the executive order included the information that if the visa-issuance process goes more carefully, the entrance of the terrorists can be prevented. In other words, the rationalization of this foreign policy move was simply fighting terrorism.

According to the Executive Order, citizens from seven countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen – were banned from traveling to the U.S. for 90 days. As the "travel ban" focused on the countries, who had Muslim majorities, some called it the "Muslim ban." This foreign policy move further polarized the U.S. society and sparked a reaction from the international actors. Domestically, there were two different approaches regarding the Executive

[433] Executive Order No. 13769, 3 C.F.R., January 27, 2017, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/02/01/2017-02281/protecting-the-nation-from-foreign-terrorist-entry-into-the-united-states.

Order. On the one hand, a group of people claimed that this step was necessary due to correcting the flaws of the immigration system, which might turn out quite problematic. On the other hand, another group of people reflected that Trump misused his power even from the beginning "by signing an Executive Order rooted in religious bias, discrimination, and xenophobia."[434]

Foreign states also reacted to the Travel Ban, not only the ones on the list but also the others. In general, the ones on the list inferred that they had been insulted by this executive order. For instance, Iran even stated that it was going to take measures as well, straining the bilateral relations once again.[435] Moreover, European states also commented on the issue and expressed their opinion on how this decision has gone wrong and reflected discrimination towards a particular fragment of the society – the Muslims.[436]

After facing backlash from society, the federal judges, and the international community, President Trump signed another version of the Executive Order (No. 13780) and excluded Iraq from the previously banned countries along with the people who had green cards and existing visas.[437] However, the reaction kept on going and resulted in a proclamation called "Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats." The

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[434] Omi Hodwitz and Hailee Tracy, "President Trump's Travel Ban: Inciting or Deterring Terrorism?" *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 12 no. 4 (2020): 296. https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2019.1701525.

[435] Azadeh Ansari et al. "World Leaders React to Trump's Travel Ban." *CNN*, Cable News Network, January 31, 2017, https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/30/politics/trump-travel-ban-world-reaction/index.html.

[436] Ibid.

[437] Executive Order No. 13780, 3 C.F.R., March 6, 2017, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/03/09/2017-04837/protecting-the-nation-from-foreign-terrorist-entry-into-the-united-states.

document banned the travelers coming from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, with the newest additions of North Korea and Venezuela.[438] As a result, the society remained fragmented over the Executive Order, and global leaders continued expressing their reactions towards the worsening situation.

5.1.3. The 2017 US-Saudi Arms Deal

Trump's first trip abroad was strategic and symbolic: On May 20, 2017, the U.S. President arrived in Riyadh for the 2017 Riyadh Summit. He met King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud[439] , and this meeting marked a critical point in terms of the essential partnership going on ever since the Second World War. After making a controversial start with the Muslim world, Trump delivered a speech during the Riyadh summit, also known as Arab-Islamic-American Summit. Throughout the speech, he referred to King Abdulaziz and Franklin Roosevelt as they founded the long-lasting partnership and drew attention to "friendship" and "hope" while stating that one of the aims of the U.S. foreign policy is to ensure peace and security in the Middle East.[440]

Another significant detail about the speech was announcing an upcoming agreement with the Saudi Kingdom over arms and military technology. He said that Saudi Arabia would make a defense purchase of an amount of $110 billion.[441] After the President's announcement, the news of the deal broke out in

[438] Proclamation No. 9645, 3 C.F.R., September 24, 2017, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/09/27/2017-20899/enhancing-vetting-capabilities-and-processes-for-detecting-attempted-entry-into-the-united-states-by.

[439] King Salman was known for policy moves such as the Saudi intervention in Yemen, Saudi Vision 2030 and a decree allowing Saudi women to drive in 2017.

[440] Donald John Trump. "Transcript of Trump's Speech in Saudi Arabia." *CNN*, May 21, 2017, https://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/21/politics/trump-saudi-speech-transcript/index.html.

[441] Ibid.

the most extensive media outlets worldwide. This development has to be considered from several perspectives.

First, the amount of the deal was quite significant – according to Trump, the total amount of spending would be $350 billion in 10 years. It was substantial in the sense that it meant a lot for this strategic partnership. Furthermore, Trump was determined not to try to keep the peace between the United States and Iran, and for that, he was investing in the bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Saudi Kingdom. Still, the arms deal was not favorable by a different actor than Iran: Israel. Perhaps, it is possible to claim that the U.S. and Israel are inseparable actors in many ways, even though they have their fair share of conflicts – and the arms deal with the Kingdom caused a temporary tension. Israel did not wish to lose its comparative superiority in terms of military power as Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz stated that "...Israel's qualitative military edge should be maintained."[442] Later, a senior U.S. official said that the deal was going to be mutually beneficial for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia without hurting Israel.[443] At the end of the day, they were still looking out for each other's best interests at heart.

It is important here to note that during the Obama administration the relations were tense regarding the falling oil sales and the oil market crash as well as the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Hereby, a fresh start and a new deal would have been a turning point in the bilateral relations.

[442] Barbara Opall-Rome, "US Mega-Deal to Saudi Arabia Spurs Concern in Israel," *Defense News*, May 21, 2017, https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2017/05/21/us-mega-deal-to-saudi-arabia-spurs-concern-in-israel/.

[443] "US Nears $100bn Arms Deal for Saudi Arabia in Time for Trump's Visit," *Guardian*, May 13, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/12/us-saudi-arabia-arms-deal-donald-trump-visit.

However, it turned out later that the sales were not guaranteed[444] – if realized, it was supposed to be "the largest single arms sale in the United States history."[445]

International arms sales have always been a major part of the U.S. foreign policy, particularly starting with the Cold War. After the cooling down of the relations throughout Obama's presidency, an arms deal was a significant step as it would reflect that the relations were getting better once again. Even though it was a step forward in the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the move gained negative reaction as well. As there was an ongoing civil war in Yemen and Saudi Arabia is leading the international intervention, some scholars and politicians inferred that the news of the arms deal is an implication of support if not a statement.

5.1.4. Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi

Jamal Khashoggi was born in Medina with Turkish descendants and even though he belonged to a high-profile Saudi family, he was at odds with the Saudi government due to his opinions. As a Saudi Arabian journalist, he used to write political pieces and criticize Saudi Arabia in many respects. According to Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi Kingdom had to find a via media between secularism and Islam.[446] He openly reflected his views on Saudi foreign policy and even though he used to be an advisor to the government before, he went into self-imposed exile in 2017 after his relationship with the Saudi Kingdom turned sour. After

[444] Bruce Riedel, "The $110 Billion Arms Deal to Saudi Arabia Is Fake News," *Brookings*, June 13, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/06/05/the-110-billion-arms-deal-to-saudi-arabia-is-fake-news/.

[445] A. Trevor Thrall, "Is Trump's Saudi Arms Deal the Worst Arms Deal Ever?" *Cato Institute*, May 25, 2017, https://www.cato.org/commentary/trumps-saudi-arms-deal-worst-arms-deal-ever.

[446] Peter Bergen, "Jamal Khashoggi Was a Journalist, not a Jihadist," *CNN*, October 22, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/22/opinions/khashoggi-was-journalist-not-jihadist-bergen/index.html.

Khashoggi's relationship with Saudi Arabi went down, his criticisms regarding the policies of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman became harsher.

On October 2, 2018, Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul for a personal business and he never walked out. His fiancé, Hatice Cengiz, waited for him outside the consulate for hours and "for more than two weeks, Saudi Arabia consistently denied any knowledge of Khashoggi's fate".[447] While Saudi officials have been denying any involvement, Turkish authorities were trying to approach the matter carefully; yet they stated that the closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage of October 2 had been vanished. However, a few weeks later, Saudi authorities had no choice but to acknowledge the murder. Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Adel al-Jubeir stated that the Crown Prince was not involved, and the murder was the result of Saudi government officials acting outside their authority as well as responsibilities.[448]

Even though the U.S. intelligence agencies point out to the finding that Jamal Khashoggi's killing was premeditated and realized according to the orders from the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President Trump kept on reflecting that the lack of evidence – or as he called, the lack of a "smoking gun" – characterized his responses. The investigation kept on going and Trump repeatedly expressed that the U.S. administration was going to hold the people, who are accountable for the killing, when all the evidence is out and accurate. Yet, he never mentioned freezing the diplomatic ties with the Kingdom. The strategic partnership was important for Trump and the U.S. administration chose to impose sanctions rather than suspend the bilateral relations.

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[447] "Jamal Khashoggi: All You Need to Know about Saudi Journalist's Death," *BBC News*, February 24, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45812399.

[448] Anne Gearan, Karen DeYoung and Karoun Demirjian, "White House Declines to Submit Report to Congress on Khashoggi Killing," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/white-house-declines-to-submit-report-to-congress-on-khashoggi-killing/2019/02/08/fdab7f96-2bd4-11e9-984d-9b8fba003e81_story.html.

On January 3, 2019, the Saudi trial opened "with the attorney general demanding the death penalty for five of the charged men" and on December 23, 2019, a total of 8 people out of eleven were found guilty.[449] According to the verdict, the killing of Khashoggi was not premeditated.[450]

5.1.5. Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal

Regarding the tense nature of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Iran, the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was quite significant. The Iran Nuclear Deal, as it is called in public, was a step taken towards initiating some diplomatic relations. However, the deal was signed as Obama's presidency was coming to an end and not everyone in the U.S. was feeling enthusiasm about engaging in formal relations with Iran.

As mentioned earlier, President Donald Trump's vision for Middle East was a lot different from his predecessor's. As early as his presidential campaign, Trump signaled that he had never been a supporter of the JCPOA. His comments were somewhat sharp, he started blaming Iran for sponsoring terrorism and he clearly stated that his plan was to "renegotiate with Iran" following the presidential elections.[451] According to Donald Trump, the Iran Nuclear Deal was not empowering the U.S. foreign policy, instead, it was a deal, which provided clear advantage to Iran. In the sense that the deal was not preventing Iran from continuing nuclear activities – it was only delaying the building processes – many perceived the deal weak. Trump has always appealed to extreme

[449] "Jamal Khashoggi Murder: Timeline of Key Events," *Guardian*, December 23, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/23/jamal-khashoggi-timeline-of-key-events.

[450] Still, according to the most recent reports of the U.S. intelligence, the killing was approved by the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

[451] Jesse Byrnes. "Trump: 'I Will Renegotiate with Iran'," *The Hill*, September 9, 2015, https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/gop-primaries/253019-trump-i-will-renegotiate-with-iran.

nationalists and the fragments of the public, which rooted for American supremacy.[452]

After Trump was elected as President, he went on with his plan of renegotiating with Iran and he made it official that the U.S. was withdrawing from the nuclear deal in a speech he delivered on May 8, 2018.[453] According to President Trump, preserving the status quo in the Middle East was not an objective of the U.S. foreign policy. Stemming from the perspective that the deal was favorable in the eyes of Iranian foreign policy makers, Trump strongly opposed the context of the deal. For Iran, some sanctions would be lifted, and the result would be an improved Iranian economy – and according to Trump, it would mean losing the leverage over Iran in terms of economic pressure.

Trump's decision of withdrawing from the Iran Nuclear Deal found support from its two strategic partners in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia and Israel. Perhaps, this was one of the few topics which Saudi Arabia and Israel could agree upon. In terms of domestic politics, the Republican Party stood with Trump. However, the Democratic Party criticized the decision as well as foreign actors.[454] All in all, the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under the administration of President Trump even though the deal was considered as a tremendous success in terms of re-establishing diplomatic relations with Iran.

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[452] His presidential election campaign slogan reflected this clearly: "Make America Great Again".

[453] Mark Lander. "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned," *New York Times*. May 8, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html

[454] "Donald Trump Withdraws Us from Iran Nuclear Deal: How the World Reacted." *Deutsche Welle*. May 9, 2018. https://www.dw.com/en/donald-trump-withdraws-us-from-iran-nuclear-deal-how-the-world-reacted/a-43708940.

5.1.6. Jerusalem

Jerusalem has always held a significant place in the debates regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; however, it would be inadequate to claim that the significance of Jerusalem became a matter first in the 20th century. Jerusalem is home to sites holy to the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianism, and Islam. For centuries, wars took place in order to conquer Jerusalem and the region has witnessed clashes over the possession of the holy land.

It is not quite a surprise that the United States has always had a steady relationship with Israel ever since the state was established in 1948. Even though the support provided to Israel by the U.S. foreign policy makers is well-known, it is also a fact that the U.S. presidents have always approached the matter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict carefully. The main objective of the U.S. could be summarized as maintaining the unity of Israel without being completely hostile with the Arab world.

The first step taken by Trump regarding the unresolved matter was recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6, 2017.[455] Even though it is debatable whether this move was rationally calculated or not, in terms of domestic politics, it was quite in line with the policies of Trump administration. Before recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he responded claiming that he was "committed to the two-state solution if the parties want one"[456] when asked about the conflict. It should be noted that President Donald Trump has characterized a new foreign policy towards Israel. His recognition of Jerusalem gathered many responses.

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[455] "Trump's Jerusalem Move," *Strategic Comments* 24, no.1, (2018): viii, DOI: 10.1080/13567888.2018.1436802.

[456] Steve Holland and Maayan Lubell, "Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital, Reversing Longtime U.S. Policy," *Reuters*, December 6, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-idUSKBN1E01PS.

This foreign policy action also required that the U.S. Embassy to be moved to Jerusalem, which has been in line with the Israeli approach – according to Israel, Jerusalem is the indivisible capital where all the embassies should be based[457] - however, Trump has also ordered a delay to this move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and many claimed that "it could take around three to four years to build one".[458] Still, on May 14, 2018, the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem was opened, and the timing was significant as it coincided with the 70th Gregorian anniversary of Israel.[459]

All in all, although Trump has expressed that this decision was not solely about supporting Israel at the international stage, it is beyond dispute that the recognition has brought the U.S. and Israel even closer. Despite the fact that Netanyahu and Obama have not got along well, from the perspective of Netanyahu, President Trump is an ally, which Israel could rely more on in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The proposed peace plan by the Trump administration strongly favored Israel, promising Jerusalem as a unified capital for the Jewish state.[460] Netanyahu even referred to the peace plan as "Trump's deal of the century".[461]

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[457] Ibid.

[458] Steve Holland and Maayan Lubell, "Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital, Reversing Longtime U.S. Policy," *Reuters*, December 6, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-idUSKBN1E01PS.

[459] Stephen Farrell, "Why is the U.S. Moving its Embassy to Jerusalem?" *Reuters*, May 7, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-israel-diplomacy-jerusalem-explai-idUSKBN1I811N

[460] Jeremy Bowen, "Trump's Middle East Peace Plan: 'Deal of the Century' is Huge Gamble," *BBC*, January 29, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51263815.

[461] Ibid.

5.1.7. 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is an advisory body to the U.S. Congress, which releases annual reports on religious freedom through categorizing countries into two groups: Country of Particular Concern (CPC) and Special Watch List Country. A country is considered as a CPC given that there are violations of religious freedom.[462]

As authoritarian practices spread around the world, religious freedom conditions have been evaluated as deteriorating.[463] Saudi Arabia was regarded as a CPC on the 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom. Although this was not the first time the Kingdom was categorized as a CPC, the 2018 report was harsher compared to the ones before.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a state based upon Islamic teachings and traditions. "The constitution is the Quran and Sunna"[464] and the legal system is built upon the Sharia Law. Hereby, it is possible to claim that freedom of religion has never been a part of the foundations of Saudi Arabia as well as its constitution. The rules are quite strict in the Kingdom, people are not allowed to criticize the King or the Crown Prince, and they are not allowed to take part in non-Islamic practices.

It is important to note that Saudi Arabia has been a CPC since 2004 given the fact that the state has "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of

[462] "Frequently Asked Questions," *USCIRF*. November 17, 2021. https://www.uscirf.gov/about-uscirf/frequently-asked-questions.

[463] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *USCIRF Annual Report 2018.* April 25, 2018. 1.

[464] Ibid. 83.

religious freedom"[465]. Although the Kingdom has served a strategic partner of the U.S. for decades, Saudi Arabia has faced a harsh report in 2018 due to discrimination towards the Shiite minority within the state borders. Despite the fact that the report criticized Saudi Arabia, Trump "has granted the Sunni-ruled kingdom an exemption from sanctions normally placed on countries with bad records on religious freedom".[466] The exceptional approach towards Saudi Arabia gathered attention due to the complicated nature of the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and the Kingdom.

After Saudi Arabia was once again categorized as a CPC, the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, was asked about Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom, as a trustworthy ally of the U.S., has forbidden practices other than Islam in serious measures.[467] Responding to the question about the religious freedom in Saudi Arabia, Pompeo acted carefully not to hurt the Saudi allies. Furthermore, the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, also expressed that he was "hopeful" regarding the positive changes in Saudi Arabia. However, every spokesperson in this matter chose to single out Iran,[468] reflecting that Iran has historically been an enemy of the U.S. and a CPC for sponsoring terrorism.

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[465] Ibid.

[466] Tracy Wilkinson, "State Department Report on Religious Freedom Slams Saudi Arabia, China for Human Rights Abuses," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 2018, https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-fg-us-world-religious-freedom-20180529-story.html.

[467] It is even illegal to own a Bible within the borders of the Saudi Kingdom although the person holding it is a Christian. Basically, Saudi Arabia ignores any religion or belief system other than Islam.

[468] Laura Koran and Jamie Crawford, "Pompeo Vows Us Will 'Not Stand by as Spectators' on Abuses of Religious Freedom," *CNN*. May 29, 2018. https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/29/politics/us-religious-freedom-pompeo/index.html.

5.1.8. Impeachment Inquiries

"The president, vice president, and all civil officers of the United States are subject to impeachment"[469] in the United States. It is a practice which brings charges against the aforementioned officers – it is important to note that the criminal behavior requiring impeachment process are high crimes and misdemeanors. Originated in England, the impeachment process takes place rather rarely in the United States; and it is a crucial part of the "checks and balances" system in the U.S. government.[470]

In the U.S. history, three U.S. presidents have been impeached: Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump. None were convicted and removed from office; and different from his predecessors, Trump was impeached twice, once in 2019 and once in 2021. The impeachment process consists of two steps: First, the House of Representatives formally accuses the President of misbehavior and second, the Senate holds a trial considering the removal from office.[471]

The first impeachment of Donald Trump came after an unknown whistleblower – anonymous intelligence officer – claimed that Trump has been abusing power through blocking a military aid to Ukraine. According to the anonymous source, Trump was pressuring the Ukraine president – newly elected at that time – to investigate Hunter Biden[472] as a precondition for the military aid. Through this

[469] "About Impeachment," The United States Senate. https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/impeachment.htm.

[470] Ibid.

[471] Tara Law, "What to Know About the U.S. Presidents Who've Been Impeached," *Time*. March 27, 2019. https://time.com/5552679/impeached-presidents/

[472] Hunter Biden is the son of Joe Biden, who has been running for president against Trump at that time.

investigation, Trump would have held a significant leverage over Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate, inferring that Biden was plotting to benefit his son. Trump was impeached; however, he was acquitted.

The 2020 United States presidential election and the events following have resulted in the second impeachment of Trump. On November 3, 2020, the 59th quadrennial presidential election was held, and it was significant in the sense that the election witnessed an "exceptionally high"[473] voter turnout rate. Trump became the 11th president who failed to win reelection. After the election, Trump has been involved in a variety of unsuccessful attempts to overturn the election results; however, he failed every single time.

Among the unsuccessful attempts, the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol has been the most unforgettable one – and perhaps, it is going to be that way for a longer while. After false statements and failed attempts to overturn the election, on January 6, 2021, Trump called on his supporters and encouraged them to vandalize the Capitol.[474] The date was significant in the sense that happened on the day that Congress was counting election votes and the results were being formalized. Throughout his speech, Trump restated his false statements and triggered the "March to Save America" movement to turn into a violent attack.

One week before his term expired, on January 13, 2021, Donald Trump was impeached for the second time concerning his role in the January 6 attack. According to the Congress Report, Trump triggered his supporters to:

[473] William H. Frey, "Turnout in 2020 Election Spiked Among Both Democratic and Republican Voting Groups, New Census Data Shows," Brookings. May 5, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/research/turnout-in-2020-spiked-among-both-democratic-and-republican-voting-groups-new-census-data-shows/

[474] "Impeaching Donald John Trump, President of the United States, for High Crimes and Misdemeanors," H.R. 24. 117th Congress 1st Session. 2021.

> (...) interfere with the Joint Session's solemn constitutional duty to certify the results of the 2020 Presidential election, unlawfully breached and vandalized the Capitol, injured and killed law enforcement personnel, menaced Members of Congress, the Vice President, and Congressional personnel, and engaged in other violent, deadly, destructive, and seditious acts.[475]

Although he was impeached for a second time, Trump acquitted again, becoming the first president not only to be impeached but also to be acquitted twice. Moreover, he said that the "historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun."[476] All in all, during the Trump administration, the society became deeply polarized and the 2020 presidential election proved to be the final straw.

5.1.9. Pensacola Shooting

On December 6, 2019, a terrorist attack took place at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida. The shooter killed 3 people and left 8 wounded; and was killed by a sheriff's deputy who quickly arrived at the crime scene.[477] Later, the shooter was identified as Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, who is an aviation student from Saudi Arabia. The U.S. officials went on and started investigating the incident.

Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani turned out to be a member of the Saudi military – Saudi Air Force Second Lieutenant -, who was training at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola. According to the FBI and the Saudi Arabian government analysis, the shooter had been radicalized as early as 2015, before he even arrived in the United States. The FBI summarized the incident as a terrorist attack stemming

[475] Ibid.

[476] Jonathan Easley, "Trump on Acquittal: MAGA 'Has Only Just Begun'," *The Hill*. February 13, 2021. https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/538766-trump-on-acquittal-maga-has-just-begun/.

[477] Rashaan Ayesh, Orion Rummler and Ursula Perano, "Pensacola Naval Air Shooting: What We Know So Far," *Axios*. January 13, 2020. https://www.axios.com/mass-shooting-pensacola-naval-air-station-6fa66943-c91f-406e-b561-565e9ca28199.html.

from the jihadist ideology. According to the detailed reports, Alshamrani had been in touch with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and carried out this attack so to honor them.

Regarding the incident, Saudi nationals were detained and questioned. President Trump shared a phone call with the Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, which he posted about on Twitter. During the call, the King has expressed that the attacker "does not represent the Saudi people"[478] and Saudi Arabia was ready to cooperate with the U.S. on this very specific matter. Furthermore, William Barr, the United States Attorney General, claimed that the matter was a terrorist attack and Saudi Arabia was helping the U.S. in many ways throughout the investigation.[479]

The terrorist attack has not changed the dynamics of the bilateral relations of the United States and Saudi Arabia immediately; however, together with the other developments, it is possible to claim that tension increased at that time. According to the investigators, 17 Saudi trainees at the Naval Air Station had social media contents in jihadist or anti-American terms and 21 Saudi military pupils were expelled.[480]

[478] Colin Clarke, "The Pensacola Terrorist Attack: The Enduring Influence of al-Qaida and its Affiliates," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Volume 13, Issue 3. March 2020. 16. https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CTC-SENTINEL-032020.pdf.

[479] Ibid.

[480] "Shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola Called 'Act of Terrorism'," *FBI News*. January 13, 2020. https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/naval-air-station-pensacola-shooting-called-act-of-terrorism-011320.

5.1.10. Killing of Qasem Soleimani

On January 3, 2020, the United States killed Qasem Soleimani by an airstrike ordered by President Donald Trump.[481] Soleimani was a significant figure in the Iranian military, he was a Major-General who was the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force Commander.[482] He was even called "a 'living martyr of the revolution'"[483] by the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Ever since Donald Trump was elected President, and even before that, he continuously expressed that he was against any dialogue with Iran. The first step he took in this direction was to withdraw from the JCPOA. There have been debates over the advantages and disadvantages of the JCPOA and since Trump has repeatedly expressed that he was going to withdraw, it was no surprise. However, the killing of Qasem Soleimani was a surprise.

It has to be mentioned that the killing of Soleimani is an aggressive step taken by Trump in terms of his continuous conflict with Iran. According to President Trump, Iran was an actor, who had to be taken into account carefully and it was not possible to negotiate with Iran, simply because Iran was the enemy of the United States. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia had been clashing with Iran before Qasem Soleimani was killed. Oil facilities were attacked in the Kingdom and the security of Gulf was constantly threatened by Iran.[484] In order to protect two

[481] Nectar Gan, "Who was Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian commander killed by a US airstrike?" *CNN*. January 3, 2020. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/03/asia/soleimani-profile-intl-hnk/index.html

[482] "The Soleimani Killing's Regional Implications," *Strategic Comments* 26, no. 2 (2020): i-iii, https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2020.1744849.

[483] Nectar Gan, "Who was Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian commander killed by a US airstrike?" *CNN*. January 3, 2020. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/03/asia/soleimani-profile-intl-hnk/index.html

regional partners, Israel and Saudi Arabia, Trump decided to take the measures into his hands.

Ordering the killing of Qasem Soleimani was quite a risky step for the Trump administration. Even though it remains only a claim, the U.S. officials thought that Soleimani had provided "Iraqi insurgents with specially made bombs that could penetrate armor, a deadly weapon against American forces"[485] throughout the Iraq War. Hereby, the Americans have long targeted Soleimani and held him responsible for "killing hundreds and wounding thousands of American soldiers".[486] Trump has stated that Soleimani was "the number-one terrorist anywhere in the world".[487] In the eyes of the foreign policy of Donald Trump, this killing should be reflected as a long-awaited act of vendetta.

Even though killing an influential Iranian leader was in line with the foreign policy approach of President Trump, perhaps, it would be accurate to reflect that the timing has been significant. Trump was on the brink of his first impeachment process, he was losing domestic support and a power move could have brought some popularity towards him within the United States.

Iran responded to the strike on Soleimani by firing "armed ballistic missiles at the Iraqi Ayn al Asad airbase,"[488] which included members of the U.S. armed

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[484] Dana H. Allin, Impeachment, Trump and US Foreign Policy, *Survival* 62, no. 1 (2020): 226. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2020.1715089.

[485] Nectar Gan, "Who was Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian commander killed by a US airstrike?" *CNN*. January 3, 2020. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/03/asia/soleimani-profile-intl-hnk/index.html

[486] "The Soleimani Killing's Regional Implications," *Strategic Comments* 26, no. 2 (2020): i-iii, https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2020.1744849.

[487] "Qasem Soleimani: US Strike on Iran General Was Unlawful, UN Expert Says," *BBC*, July 9, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53345885.

[488] Ibid.

forces. There were casualties but no deaths; and the Foreign Ministry of Iran stated that the missile attack has been considered under the act of self-defense. Yet, Khamanei and IRGC commanders warned the U.S. that there might be more retaliations to come.[489]

5.1.11. Coronavirus Outbreak

The whole world has been challenged since the first announcement was made by the World Health Organization (WHO), stating that there was a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, stemming from a virus outbreak in China.[490] The announcement soon turned into the declaration of a pandemic on March 11, 2020.[491]

In the United States, the first coronavirus case appeared in Snohomish County, Washington D.C. on January 21, 2020.[492] President Trump underestimated the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak at first, calling it a "hoax" or comparing it with the flu. He made many false claims, and this has been a game changer for his domestic politics as well as foreign policy.

[489] Ibid.

[490] Michael Nedelman, "World Health Organization Declares Coronavirus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern," *CNN*. Health. January 30, 2020. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/30/health/coronavirus-who-public-health-emergency-international-concern-declaration/index.html.

[491] Ibid.

[492] Amanda Graham, Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Murat Haner, and Melissa M. Sloan, "Faith in Trump, Moral Foundations, and Social Distancing Defiance During the Coronavirus Pandemic," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 6 (2020): 1.

According to President Trump, the coronavirus would weaken in spring due to warmer weather[493] and economic shutdown would result in more deaths than COVID-19.[494] Moving towards the election day, he reflected that the media was overblowing fears about the virus[495]; however, the cases and hospitalizations have already been rising in the United States.

The coronavirus outbreak has played a significant role in the failure of reelection of Trump. President Trump often chose to downplay the coronavirus outbreak even though he was hospitalized due to COVID-19. Net approval rate of President Trump kept decreasing along with the way he handled the pandemic;[496] still, the polls that were carried out throughout the United States failed to come up with an accurate prediction how the turnout would be.

The 59th quadrennial presidential election took place on November 3, 2020. The Democratic candidate was the former vice president Joe Biden whereas Trump was running for a second term. The election was held in the shadow of the global pandemic conditions and postal voting played a significant role. It has become common in the United States throughout the 2016 and 2018 elections; however, Trump centered his campaign around filing lawsuits in order to prevent the use

[493] Seth Borenstein and Hannah Fingerhut, "AP-NORC/USAFacts poll: US trust in COVID-19 Information Down," *AP News.* October 20, 2020.

[494] Ryan Pickrell, "Trump Says There Will Be 'Suicides by The Thousands' If the US Coronavirus Shutdown Continues," *Business Insider.* March 24, 2020.

[495] Christian Paz, "All the President's Lies About the Coronavirus," *Atlantic.* November 2, 2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/trumps-lies-about-coronavirus/608647/.

[496] Philip Bump, "New Polling Shows How the Pandemic is Hobbling Trump's Reelection Chances," *Washington Post*, October 28, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/10/28/new-polling-shows-how-pandemic-is-hobbling-trumps-reelection-chances/.

of ballot drop boxes.[497] Still, Joe Biden managed to win the election and became the 46th President of the United States. According to a Pew Research Center poll, 46% of the voters said that they voted by absentee or mail-in ballot.[498]

As a result, on November 3, 2020, Trump lost the race and failed to secure a second term at the office. It is possible to claim that coronavirus outbreak has been an important factor leading up to this result; not only because it shook the voter's confidence and dropped down the approval rate of Trump, but also because it created a break in terms of foreign policy. A global pandemic breaking out in 2020 has changed the foreign policy agendas of all the states in the world. Majority of the leaders chose to focus on domestic politics due to the rapid changes in economy and health sectors; and most of the last year of Trump's presidency witnessed policies regarding the coronavirus outbreak.

5.1.12. The Foreign Policy of Donald Trump towards the Saudi Arabia

The period of the Trump administration has been a period when the ties between the United States and Saudi Arabia were somewhat close. It is not a surprise that the Saudi Kings and the U.S. Presidents have always worked on a strategic bilateral relationship and the U.S. has always been the main partner of the Saudi Kingdom. Particularly in terms of security, the Saudis have depended on the United States.

President Trump pursued a different foreign policy approach towards Saudi Arabia compared to Barack Obama. Obama has always tried to maintain a balance in the region even though he sometimes failed to do so. Yet, Trump was

[497] Sam Levine, "Trump Campaign Fails to Show Evidence of Vote-by-Mail Fraud, Filing Reveals," *Guardian.* August 21, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/21/trump-campaign-voter-fraud-pennsylvania.

[498] "The Voting Experience in 2020," *Pew Research Center*. November 20, 2020. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/11/20/the-voting-experience-in-2020/

never "interested in preserving the status quo."[499] What might be considered as Obama's one of the greatest accomplishments, the signing of the Iran Nuclear Deal, appeared to Trump as a waste of time and resources. He was fixed onto the idea that Iran has been and always will be an evil actor, with whom the United States cannot be partners with at the international stage.

As Trump concentrated his foreign policy over the objective to counter Iran, he managed to establish closer connection with the Saudi Kingdom. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been long-existing rivals in the Middle East, and claiming that Iran is a major enemy, Trump got closer with the Saudis. Trump's first international visit throughout his term was to Saudi Arabia, which was symbolic in several ways. To start with, it reflected the warm nature of relations Trump was trying to emphasize. Second, during this trip, he announced a bilateral agreement with Saudi Arabia, which was tremendous in terms of worth. Even from the beginning, Trump let the whole world know, at the time, that he was going to be a reliable partner for the Saudi Kingdom. Moreover, he supported a blockade against Qatar in order to protect Saudi Arabia's interests in the region.[500] He did not hold back any foreign policy moves when it came to Saudi Arabia.

The bilateral relationship was challenged during the Trump administration as well. The killing of Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey by the Saudi officials as well as the Pensacola Shooting at the Naval Air Station in Florida have brought crisis for the partners. However, Trump has always decided to continue siding with the Saudi Kingdom and maintained a stability in the relationship. Still, many U.S.

[499] Hassan Ahmadian, "Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Age of Trump," *Survival* 60, no. 2 (2018): 141. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1448579.

[500] Patrick Wintour, "Donald Trump Tweets Support for Blockade Imposed on Qatar," Guardian, June 6, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/06/qatar-panic-buying-as-shoppers-stockpile-food-due-to-saudi-blockade.

citizens and politicians criticized President Trump for not raising his voice against the behaviors of Saudi Arabia.[501]

All in all, it would not be wrong to infer that, no matter what happened, President Trump's foreign policy focused on preserving the close relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Even though he expressed several times that he was not pleased with the developments concerning Saudi Arabia, he never spoke of breaking off the alliance between the U.S. and the Saudi Kingdom. Instead, he noted the significance of the long-lasting partnership between the two actors. In the light of the regional and international developments that occurred during this period, it is possible to claim that Trump stayed close to Saudi Arabia regardless of the public reaction or international responses.

5.1.12.1. Trump's First Trip Abroad, Cutting Ties with Qatar, Recognition of Jerusalem, and Khashoggi Killing

The tradition of strategic partnership between the U.S. administration and Saudi Arabia continued throughout the period of Trump. Although Donald Trump has been critical of the Kingdom before he got elected, this has completely changed after he became the U.S. President. His earlier comments as well as his presidential election campaign were based on anti-Islamic sentiments. On his Facebook page Trump posted a message claiming that "Saudi Arabia wants 'women as slaves and to kill gays'".[502] Moreover during a presidential debate, he stated that "Saudis were 'people that push gays off buildings' and 'kill women

[501] David E. Sanger, "For Trump, Instinct After Florida Killing is Simple: Protect Saudis," *New York Times.* December 7, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/07/us/politics/trump-pensacola-saudi-arabia.html.

[502] Adam Taylor, "Trump Once Denounced Saudi Arabia as Extremist. Now He's Heading There to Promote Moderate Islam," *Washington Post*. May 19, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/05/19/trump-once-denounced-saudi-arabia-as-extremist-now-hes-heading-there-to-promote-moderate-islam/

and treat women horribly'"[503] and it is also known that he has mentioned a number of times that there has been a connection between the Saudi government and September 11 attacks.[504] He expressed that "It's going to be very profound, having to do with Saudi Arabia's role and Saudi Arabia's role on the World Trade Center and the attack".[505]

Trump pursued a new approach called "America First" – according to this policy, nationalism and non-interventionism were the key elements. He expressed that he was going to fight radical Islam and act accordingly to the U.S. interests in the world. Only one week after he was inaugurated, he announced the Travel Ban, which gathered lots of responses. According to the ban, he prevented nationals of seven countries with Muslim-majority populations. It is possible to suggest that the Travel Ban was aimed at blocking Muslims from entering the United States; however, the countries on the list were not allies of the Saudi Kingdom. Hereby, the Travel Ban did not harm the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in the end.

President Trump proved he was going to support the Kingdom when he took his first international trip to Riyadh. The aim of this trip was to establish warmer relations. This trip was symbolic and significant as Trump announced a tremendous arms deal with Saudi Arabia.[506] The arms deal has gathered different

[503] Ibid.

[504] Ibid.

[505] Mark Hensch, "Trump: Redacted 9/11 Pages Have 'very profound' Info on Saudi Arabia," *The Hill.* April 19, 2016. https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/276772-trump-9-11-pages-have-very-profound-info-on-saudi-arabia

[506] Javier E. David, "US-Saudi Arabia Seal Weapons Deal Worth Nearly $110 Billion Immediately, $350 Billion Over 10 Years," *CNBC*, May 20, 2017, https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/20/us-saudi-arabia-seal-weapons-deal-worth-nearly-110-billion-as-trump-begins-visit.html.

responses[507] but for sure, from the perspective of Donald Trump, the monetary agreement meant that he was going to maintain the strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Even though he has adopted a negative approach towards the Saudi Kingdom before, one reason that changed his stance might be the threat of Iran in the Middle East. In terms of security, Iran has been an unpredictable actor. It is reasonable that President Trump chose to secure a strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia while countering Iran instead of fighting two evils at the same time. Otherwise, the United States would have had a hard time backing Israel while conflicting with the Sunni leader, Saudi Arabia, and Shia leader, Iran, in the region.

Regarding the foreign policy of the Trump administration towards Saudi Arabia, another key development in the region has been the Qatar Crisis. The roots of the crisis stemmed back to the Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani's foreign policy approach. He significantly altered the foreign policy of Qatar and continued enhancing the soft power of the state. The diversions became deeper when the region was shocked with the events that are later called as Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia has supported "stability over change" as well as the United Arab Emirates whereas Qatar has supported change.[508] Hereby, while the Saudi Kingdom wanted to preserve the regimes in the Middle East, Qatar sided up with the revolutionary forces.

The close ties with Saudi Arabia were reflected upon other developments, such as the Qatar Crisis. There has already been a divergence between Saudi Arabia

[507] Karoun Demirjian and Anne Gearan, "Senate Opposition to Saudi Arms Deal Growing," *Washington Post*, June 12, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/senate-opposition-to-saudi-arms-deal-growing/2017/06/12/1f77cbee-4fd0-11e7-be25-3a519335381c_story.html.

[508] Ibrahim Fraihat, "Superpower and Small-State Mediation in the Qatar Gulf Crisis," *The International Spectator* 55, no. 2 (2020): 80. https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2020.1741268.

and Qatar when the rift deepened by the removal of Mohamed Morsi, who was the first democratically elected President of Egypt and backed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia has been considering the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization; however, in the eyes of the Qatari administration, the Muslim Brotherhood was supported "where it won elections".[509] This caused an increase in the tension between the Saudi Kingdom and Qatar and resulted in the withdrawal of the Saudi ambassador from Qatar in 2014. The following crisis in 2017 is seen as an extension of the prior ones.[510]

Throughout the crisis, President Trump has been vague in terms of his support. Even though he established a deeper connection with Saudi Arabia, Trump was not in favor for military action towards Qatar. He supported the blockade by the Quartet on Qatar first as he tweeted about it. On June 6, 2017, Trump claimed that the leaders of the Arab world pointed at Qatar for funding extremism and the blockade might have been "the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism"[511] through a series of tweets on Twitter. However, Trump's tweets did not stand for the U.S. foreign policy in general. Even though the foreign policy tone is set according to the President in the U.S., Trump has had few incidents when he recklessly tweeted and then stepped back about certain events.

The tension between the Quartet[512] and Qatar has shaped the Middle East in terms of regional security. It is possible to claim that the Trump administration

[509] Ibid.

[510] Ibid.

[511] Donald Trump, [@realDonald Trump]. "During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology. Leaders pointed to Qatar – look!". *Twitter.* June 6, 2017.

[512] The Quartet consists of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt.

has been confused about how to act regarding the crisis.[513] On the one hand, the U.S. was not comfortable with the alliance between Qatar and Iran, since Iran seized the opportunity to improve relations with Qatar. On the other hand, a military conflict in the region between the Quartet and Qatar would not be ideal for the U.S. as well.

Trump chose to handle the actors in the region one by one whereas Obama used to keep his distance with the regional organizations. For example, Obama managed to keep the relations of the U.S. with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) strong as a bloc and according to some regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, tried to keep a distance concerning bilateral relations. Hereby, Trump supporting the Quartet, especially Saudi Arabia regarding the Qatar Crisis has been an important step between the U.S. and the Kingdom in the new presidential era.

However, through the end of his term, Trump changed his view on Qatar. On July 9, 2019, Emir Tamim bin Hamal Al-Thani visited Washington. During the visit, Trump and the Emir negotiated a military deal and purchase of Boeing planes.[514] The visit could easily be perceived as the beginning of normalizing the bilateral relations. Later in the late 2020, Kushner and his team went to Qatar to resolve the dispute in the region. Even though Trump was a leader with little respect to international or regional organizations, he encouraged the Quartet to re-establish the diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Perhaps, one of the boldest moves taken by the Trump administration has been the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Even though President

[513] Marc Lynch, "Three Big Lessons of the Qatar Crisis," Project on Middle East Political Science: The Qatar Crisis. *POMEPS Briefings*. (2017): 15.

[514] Tracey Shelton, "US And Qatar Ink Deals For 'Tremendous Amounts' Of Military Weapons and Boeing Planes," *ABC News*. July 10, 2019. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-10/qatar-donald-trump-military-and-commercial-deals/11294500.

Trump had to postpone the moving of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem – as there was no U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem physically – the move was still significant and upsetting in the eyes of Arab allies. Trump's predecessor, Obama, has not gotten along well with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu; however, the bond between the U.S. and Israel remained strong. Trump was eager to establish warm relations with Netanyahu and he put his full support on Israel's existence in the region.

On September 19, 2017, President Trump delivered a speech at the United Nations General Assembly. The speech has been important since it reflected many aspects of the foreign policy rhetoric of Trump. To start with, he announced a tremendous spending on military and defense, claiming that the U.S. military would be stronger than ever.[515] Furthermore, he made certain remarks on "terrorists" and "extremists" while outlining the enemies of the U.S. as North Korea, Iran, and terrorist organizations.[516] It is important in the sense that while inferring that Iran has been a destabilizing force for the security in the Middle East, Trump mentioned that Iran had been funding Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations, which eventually attack "their peaceful Arab and Israeli" neighbors.[517]

The speech was significant even though it was not the first time Trump placed Iran as an enemy of the U.S.; however, the speech made it official for the whole world that Trump was going to protect the Arab partners of the U.S. while fighting Iran in the region. According to his remarks, he was going to move with a foreign policy approach, which is aimed at blocking terrorists and extremist

[515] "Full Text: Trump's 2017 U.N. Speech Transcript," *Politico*. September 19, 2017. https://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/19/trump-un-speech-2017-full-text-transcript-242879.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid.

and stopping radical Islamic terrorism. As Trump openly stated once again that Iran was the enemy in the region, it is possible to evaluate that the interests of the Saudi Kingdom were going to be prioritized along with Israel.

The recognition of Jerusalem complicated the partnership with Saudi Arabia. In a letter dated December 7, 2017, from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations to the President of the Security Council, a statement by the Royal Court of Saudi Arabia was released.[518] The statement made it clear that the decision of Trump has disappointed the Kingdom. According to the letter, the Saudi government held the opinion that the decision made by Trump would "further complicate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict" and hoped that U.S. would "reverse its position".[519]

It is not a surprise that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been a fragile topic in the region and in the world. The region has witnessed many armed clashes and the conflict was tried to be solved in terms of diplomacy and failed many times. Saudi Arabia has always taken the side of Palestine even though there were times when the Kingdom was not involved in the armed conflicts. This has caused trouble for the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in the 20th and 21st centuries. It is important to note that this move made by Trump was unique in the sense that none of his predecessors has taken such a step, even though there has always been a special relationship between the U.S. and Israel.

Saudi Arabia and Israel do not have any official diplomatic relations and the relationship between them has always been tense due to the Israeli-Palestinian

[518] "Letter dated 7 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council". United Nations Security Council. December 8, 2017. https://www.un.org/unispal/document/letters-from-saudi-arabia-to-the-president-of-the-security-council-regarding-us-recognition-of-jerusalem-as-capital-of-israel/.

[519] Ibid.

conflict. The Saudis have never been in line with this decision and even the Saudi Ambassador to the UN, Abdallah al-Mouallimi claimed that "Jerusalem is and will always be Palestine's historic and eternal capital".[520] It is possible to claim that the recognition of Jerusalem has come as a shock for the Saudi Kingdom in a period when the relations with the U.S. were quite strong. As a result, Trump moved the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem after delaying it for a few months.

It is important to note the foreign policy team of Trump concerning the Jerusalem move. Jared Kushner and David Friedman have been significant actors in terms of Trump's foreign policy towards Israel. Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, was his adviser on Israel whereas Friedman, Trump's former lawyer, was the U.S. ambassador to Israel at that time. The foreign policy towards Israel has been shaped by this trio, which shared ulterior motives as well. For example, Kushner was involved in Israel in terms of business and Friedman was a contributor to Israeli settlement constructions in the West Bank.[521]

President Trump adopted a different foreign policy approach when it came to Israel. Before his presidency, the existing approach aimed at not taking actions that might interfere with the regional negotiations.[522] Yet, Trump went on with it. Perhaps, the flourishing stability between Saudi Arabia and Israel led Trump to calculate this as a power move against Iran. What Trump has consistently concentrated on has been his policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran. Although the Saudi Kingdom has not been overwhelmed with joy regarding the decision to

[520] "Any Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital is Void," *Asharq Al-Awsat*. January 26, 2018. https://english.aawsat.com//home/article/1155461/saudi-any-recognition-jerusalem-israel%e2%80%99s-capital-void.

[521] "Trump's Jerusalem Move," *Strategic Comments* 24, no.1, (2018): viii, https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2018.1436802.

[522] Ibid.

move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the newly restored relationship under the Trump administration was too important to risk.

Trump's decision about Jerusalem was not an act that could be realized overnight, which has been significant. According to Israel, President Trump took a crucial step towards Israel as this move has been different from his predecessor, Obama. Trump claimed that Obama has been the "the worst thing to ever happen to Israel"[523] and compared to Obama period, the relations between Israel and the United States have been warmer. However, the moving of the embassy being a long-lasting move takes Palestine into account as well. There has been claims that there might be armed conflicts regarding Trump's decision in the Middle East and some feared another Intifada. Hereby, a slow change rather than a rapid one might have altered the balances more carefully in the region.

In line with his foreign policy approach, Trump readdressed the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2017. Later, he announced that the U.S. was going to withdraw from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018. It was no surprise – Trump has been vocal about his intention to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Deal, and he even put the abandonment of the deal as a center piece of his 2016 presidential election campaign. Hereby, it was an expected move as he kept on telling how Iran has been an enemy.

Regarding the withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA, The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C. released a statement, welcoming the action. In the statement, it was clearly reflected that the withdrawal was supported as well as the upcoming sanctions at the time.[524] Moreover, the

[523] "US–Israel relations under Trump," *Strategic Comments* 23, no. 2 (2017): viii. https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2017.1316066.

[524] "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Statement on the United States Withdrawal From the JCPOA". The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C. May 8, 2018.

Kingdom inferred that the Iranian regime was not an actor the Middle East could trust by saying that Iran "took advantage of the economic benefits afforded by the lifting of sanctions"[525] and kept on destabilizing the region even though the terms of the deal were clear. The statement was crucial in the sense that it left no doubt concerning the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and showed how strong the strategic partnership was under the administration of Donald Trump. According to the document, the Kingdom clearly stated that it was ready to work with the international community to achieve peace in the region.

In terms of international organizations and agreements, the withdrawal reflected the little trust Trump put on those and damaged the collective action to provide global security. As the sanctions were reinstated, the following trade deals were also canceled. The announcement of the withdrawal gathered different responses among regional and international actors.[526]

Iran has taken several steps following the U.S. decision of withdrawal that reflected its hostile stance towards the U.S. in terms of the regional security. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran targeted Kurdish bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing and wounding people.[527] Moreover, on June 20, 2019, Iran shot down a

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https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/kingdom-saudi-arabias-statement-united-states-withdrawal-jcpoa

[525] Ibid.

[526] "Iran Nuclear Deal Not Dead Despite Trump Move, France Says," *BBC*, May 9, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44049532.

[527] Maysam Behravesh, "Iran More Assertive Regionally After Trump Withdrawal From JCPOA," *Atlantic Council.* September 24, 2018. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/iran-more-assertive-regionally-after-trump-withdrawal-from-jcpoa/.

U.S. surveillance drone over the Strait of Hormuz.[528] According to Iran, the drone had violated the Iranian airspace whereas the U.S. rejected this claim. President Trump responded by ordering a retaliatory strike; however, it never took place. Shortly after he ordered the strike, he aborted the upcoming military operation and changed his tone from a negative one to a neutral one. Following the incident, Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke about the Middle East. It could be interpreted that Saudi Arabia has been a partner the U.S. could count on against Iran, as Iran has been the common enemy, particularly after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Under the administration of President Trump, the relations with Saudi Arabia were challenged due to the close nature of the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. For example, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) is important. Trump has not been a strong believer in the international organizations as it was stated before; the announcement has gathered different responses. The withdrawal was based on the claim of the U.S. that UNHCR has been "biased".[529]

It is possible to reflect that there have been several discussions about the structure of the UNHCR. For instance, Saudi Arabia has been a member; yet it is not a secret that the Kingdom has been a violator of human rights as well. The U.S. reaction was a result of the stance of UNHCR towards Israel, and it was unacceptable in the eyes of the Trump administration. Hereby, the U.S. chose to withdraw from the organization. This has been a minor rift between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, as Saudi Arabia was not directly blamed for the so-called biased nature of the UNHCR. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has never pretended not to be

[528] Jeff Mason and Susan Heavey, "Trump Says He Aborted Retaliatory Strike to Spare Iranian Lives," *Reuters.* June 20, 2019. *https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-iran-usa-idUSKCN1TL07P.*

[529] Louis Charbonneau, "US Ambassador Nikki Haley's Disappointing UN Rights Legacy," *Human Rights Watch.* October 10, 2018. https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/10/us-ambassador-nikki-haleys-disappointing-un-rights-legacy.

violating the human rights even though there have been improvements in the domestic realm.

Another major development adding to the debate on the violation of human rights was the killing of the journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. Even though Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi citizen, he has conflicted with the Kingdom as he criticized the domestic politics as well as the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia.[530] He was harshly against the policies of Crown Prince Mohammed, and throughout his articles, he did not hesitate to reflect his opinions about the Kingdom. Khashoggi opposed the Yemeni War and the Saudi-led boycott of Qatar; and fled the country after Prince Mohammed was appointed heir to the throne.[531] President Trump has called the Crown Prince to congratulate and the relationship between Trump and Prince Mohammed has always been somewhat strong. Trump repeatedly inferred that he approved of the policies provided by the Crown Prince.

When Jamal Khashoggi went missing, Saudi Arabia did not take the blame on and kept on reflecting that there has not been any kind of information pointing at the Kingdom regarding his disappearance. However, few weeks later it turned out to be that the journalist has been killed by the Saudi officials in the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul, Turkey.[532] The Saudi government expressed that they have not been involved and they were going to take the necessary measures to find out what exactly happened[533] – the remains of Jamal Khashoggi were never found.

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[530] Jamal Khashoggi, 2017, Interview by Reena Ninan, November 2017, https://www.cbsnews.com/video/khashoggi-criticized-saudi-crown-princes-impulsive-behavior-in-2017-cbsn-interview/.

[531] Prince Mohammed bin Salman was appointed Crown Prince on June 21, 2017.

[532] Jane Corbin, "The Secret Tapes of Jamal Khashoggi's Murder," *BBC*, September 30, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49826905.

[533] Grace Panetta, "MBS Says Jamal Khashoggi Would Not Be 'Among the Top 1,000 People' He Would Hypothetically Assassinate and He Would Have Hired More 'Professional' Hitmen',"

President Trump has stated that he has been following the news; but he made it clear that he did not believe there was a connection between the killing and the Crown Prince. Even though "the world public opinion, foreign intelligence agencies and many world leaders continued to express their doubts on the matter"[534] in terms of the involvement of the Crown Prince, Trump has opposed this view. According to President Trump, there was not enough evidence pointing at the Crown Prince. He chose not to implement severe measures as the relationship between Trump and the Crown Prince has been strong enough. Trump did not wish to take any step to damage it.

According to the intelligence report released by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence on February 11, 2021, Crown Prince's involvement was assessed.[535] The conclusion of the report reflected that the order was approved by Mohammed bin Salman regarding the decision-making process of Saudi Arabia. Trump stood by the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, even though the killing turned out to be more twisted than it first appeared. Saudis denied any involvement in the beginning; however, later, the Kingdom expressed the findings and reflected that the murder was premeditated. Although human rights violations of Saudi Arabia were not news, an incident of this scale was not expected. Trump was expected to provide a response; yet he chose not to put any kind of blame on Mohammed bin Salman and went on by imposing sanctions on 17 Saudi officials and spared the Crown Prince.[536]

Business Insider, March 3, 2022. https://www.businessinsider.com/mbs-says-khashoggi-is-not-in-the-top-1000-people-he-would-assassinate-2022-3.

[534] Jeroen Klomp, "Killing the Deal," *Defense and Peace Economics* (2020): 2. DOI: 10.1080/10242694.2020.1824363

[535] "Assessing the Saudi Government's Role in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi," Office of the Director of National Intelligence. February 11, 2021. https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Assessment-Saudi-Gov-Role-in-JK-Death-20210226v2.pdf

It is possible to state that a clear response was expected from President Trump; however, he kept on rejecting any finding holding the Crown Prince responsible. Mohammed bin Salman was widely believed to have ordered the brutal murder. Still, Trump reacted by saying that "… Iran is killing 36 people a day…" as he went on with the arms sell to Saudi Arabia in May 2019, bypassing the objections of the Congress.[537]

Even after the killing of Khashoggi, Trump continued his support towards Saudi Arabia. In September 2019, two key Saudi oil facilities were attacked and according to the Kingdom, Iran was responsible.[538] Iran denied any involvement and the UN reports were not able to confirm any Iranian involvement. However, Trump decided to count on the Kingdom's word and blamed Iran about the attacks although he avoided any potentiality of an armed conflict.

The attacks on the oil facilities affected the Saudi oil production in a negative way. Trump agreed to help the Saudis, yet he avoided stating that he made any type of commitment to protect the Kingdom.[539] It was expected in the sense that even though Trump has been a crucial ally of the Kingdom, he has avoided any type of armed conflict in the Gulf region throughout his term.

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[536] Jesus Rodriguez, "Trump Administration Sanctions Saudi Officials, But Not Crown Prince, Over Khashoggi," *Politico*. November 15, 2018. https://www.politico.com/story/2018/11/15/trump-administration-sanctions-saudi-khashoggi-992296.

[537] Bob Woodward, Rage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 445-446.

[538] "Saudi Oil Attacks: US Blames Iran for Drone Strikes on Two Sites," *BBC*, September 15, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49705197.

[539] Steve Holland and Rania El Gamal, "Trump Says He Does Not Want War After Attack on Saudi Oil Facilities," *Reuters.* September 16, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-aramco-idUSKBN1W10X8.

All in all, under the Trump administration, the Saudi Kingdom and the U.S. proved to continue their long-lasting strategic partnership. Trump has shared a close connection with the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. Even though this period has witnessed lots of conflicts in the region of the Middle East, the bond between Saudi Arabia and United States remained strong.

5.1.13. The Foreign Policy of Donald Trump towards Iran

The foreign policy of Donald Trump towards Iran has been completely different from the foreign policy of Barack Obama. Although Obama tried to maintain a relationship with Iran based on international agreements and organizations, Trump ignored every past achievement. From the perspective of President Trump, the aim was to establish close ties with Arab partners and emphasize Iran as the greatest common enemy. As early as his presidential election campaign, Trump reflected Iran as a hostile regional and international actor, which had to be countered. The close nature of the relationship between the Saudi Kingdom and the U.S. as well as the one between the U.S. and Israel has been strengthened.

As soon as Trump took office, he started with the Travel Ban. During his election campaign, he has made several statements in terms of Islamophobia and the "Muslim Ban" – as called by the critics[540] – reflected that he was going to keep his negative approach towards Muslim actors. Iran was included within the ban. Muslim-majority countries were angered by this sudden decision and the Iranian government responded in a harsh way. However, Trump did not step back although he later issued another Executive Order to limit the context. Iran has been included once again.

[540] Brady Dennis and Jerry Markon, "Amid Prostests and Confusion, Trump Defends Executive Order: 'This Is Not a Muslim Ban'," *Washington Post*. January 29, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/trump-gives-no-sign-of-backing-down-from-travel-ban/2017/01/29/4ffe900a-e620-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c_story.html.

President Trump has not been a fan of the JCPOA as he repeatedly stated that "The Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into."[541] First, he openly criticized the deal and later he announced that the U.S. was going to withdraw from it. The parties to the agreement were not happy with this decision, although it resulted in Trump getting close with Saudi Arabia and Israel. Both actors have expressed that they were against the Iran Nuclear Deal right from the start. Trump went along with his decision and the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA despite the criticisms.

As the JCPOA was no longer in effect, the sanctions were re-imposed. The sanctions did not only hurt the Iranian economy, but also, they had a negative impact on the people and companies, which were in trade relations with Iran. Trump even imposed sanctions on the Supreme Leader and foreign minister of Iran, and the sanctions list kept on expanding.

The killing of Qasem Soleimani by the U.S. through a drone strike has brought the tense relationship to a climax. He has been one of the most powerful figures in Iran after the Islamic Revolution and the tensions escalate between the U.S. and Iran. The U.S. justified the act as it prevented an upcoming series of attacks; however, Iran denied any claims.

In brief, the relations between the U.S. and Iran have been problematic under the Trump administration. Trump orchestrated a foreign policy approach towards Iran, which aimed to isolate and counter Iran in any and every way possible. Hereby, under President Trump, Iran has become more hostile – "the tanker attacks, the shooting down of an American drone, the Saudi oil strikes, rocket

[541] Donald Trump, "President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal," Fact Sheet, May 8, 2018, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-ending-united-states-participation-unacceptable-iran-deal/.

attacks on bases in Iraq by Iranian-backed militias"[542] – towards its neighbors and international actors and this period has witnessed many downs, rather than any ups.

5.1.13.1. The Executive Order 13769, Revisiting JCPOA, Intensified Sanctions, and Soleimani

Trump has been criticized as an Islamophobic even before the presidential election. He has stated many times that he was against the Muslim community entering the U.S. As soon as he took office, he proved the critiques right and announced practically a Travel Ban. He signed the Executive Order 13769 under the name of "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States". This was his first act against Iran – even though the act could be considered as a reaction to several Muslim countries. Trump has been often regarded as an Islamophobic[543] due to his expressions. Even before he was elected, he concentrated his presidential campaign on the "notion of 'Islamodiversion,' which is the act of blaming Muslims to divert the inevitability of bad economic and political policies".[544] This executive order was the first time he put his words into action.

The Executive Order 13769 had already been in the making as in Trump's 100-day action plan, one of the actions mentioned to restore security was to "suspend

[542] Mark Mazzetti, Ronen Bergman and Farnaz Fassihi, "How Months of Miscalculation Led the U.S. and Iran to the Brink of War," *New York Times*, February 13, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/us/politics/iran-trump-administration.html.

[543] Sabrina Siddiqui, "Trump's Anti-Muslim Retweets Prompt Backlash in Washington: 'The President is Racist'," *Guardian*, November 29, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/trumps-anti-muslim-retweets-prompt-backlash-in-washington-the-president-is-racist.

[544] As cited in Mohsin Hassan Khan, Farwa Qazalbash, Hamedi Mohd Adnan, Lalu Nurul Yaqin and Rashid Ali Khuhro, "Trump and Muslims: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Islamophobic Rhetoric in Donald Trump's Selected Tweets," *SAGE*, 11, no. 1 (2021): 3.

immigration from terror-prone regions"[545]. In other words, regarding the foreign policy of Trump, one of the major concerns was to counter Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa region due to his view that those regions have a history of terrorism. With this Executive Order, Trump blocked nationals of seven countries from travelling to the U.S., and all seven of the countries consisted of Muslim majorities. It received responses within the United States as well as responses from international actors.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran reacted to the Travel Ban in a harsh way through a series of tweets. On Twitter, Javad Zarif, stated that the ban "will be recorded in history as a great gift to extremists and their supporters" and "Collective discrimination aids terrorist recruitment by deepening fault-lines exploited by extremist demagogues to swell their ranks"[546]. Later, a full statement was released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the statement, the Executive Order was targeting and insulting Iranian people.[547] Furthermore, the statement reflected that this decision of the U.S. was "illegal, illogical and contrary to international law".[548]

After the Travel Ban, another issue regarding the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran has arisen as the JCPOA. President Trump has been against the JCPOA from the beginning. His policy of putting maximum pressure on Iran kept on going with the withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Many

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[545] Donald Trump, "Donald Trump's Contract with the American Voter," https://assets.donaldjtrump.com/_landings/contract/O-TRU-102316-Contractv02.pdf.

[546] Javad Zarif. [@JZarif]. "Collective discrimination aids terrorist recruitment by deepening fault-lines exploited by extremist demagogues to swell their ranks." *Twitter*. January 28, 2017. https://twitter.com/JZarif/status/825438527559172096.

[547] Javad Zarif. [@JZarif]. "Full statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the #MuslimBan." *Twitter,* January 28, 2017. https://twitter.com/JZarif/status/825439269569314817?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E825439269569314817%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Firanprimer.usip.org%2Fblog%2F2017%2Fjan%2F31%2Firan-us-2-travel-ban.

[548] Ibid.

scholars considered the JCPOA as a major success of the Obama presidency; yet Trump disagreed.[549] According to President Trump, the JCPOA was not benefiting any of the national interests of the U.S., rather, it was empowering Iran, which he considered as a source feeding terrorist action in the world.[550] He said that "It is clear to me that we cannot prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement"[551], while announcing the withdrawal.

There have been complicated reactions to the decision of withdrawal within the U.S., the Republican Party supported Trump's decision. Furthermore, the strategic partners of the U.S. in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, welcomed this decision.[552] From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, it was significant in the sense that a distanced relationship between the U.S. and Iran would benefit the Kingdom. Also, for Israel, it was important to feel support. Despite the close nature of the bilateral relations between the U.S. and Israel for decades, the relationship was not at its best during the period of President Obama. Trump, countering Iran, was a better fit for Israel and the stronger relationship between Netanyahu and Trump proved it.

Within the U.S., the Democratic Party criticized the decision. Internationally, there have been many responses. To start with, Iran was not happy with the decision as well as the European Union (EU). The EU released a joint statement,

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[549] Jeremy Diamond, "Fact-Checking Trump's Iran Speech," *CNN*, May 8, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/08/politics/fact-check-trump-iran/index.html.

[550] Ibid.

[551] Jennifer Williams, "Trump's Iran Nuclear Deal Speech Full Text," *Vox.* May 8, 2018. https://www.vox.com/world/2018/5/8/17332494/read-trump-iran-nuclear-deal-speech-full-text-announcement-transcript.

[552] "World Reacts to US Withdrawal from Iran Nuclear Deal," *Anadolu Agency.* May 9, 2018. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/world-reacts-to-us-withdrawal-from-iran-nuclear-deal/1140043#.

which reflected that the EU was "deeply" regretting the announcement.[553] Even though Iran has been committed to the Nuclear Deal according to the International Atomic Energy Agency reports, Trump claimed that Iran has been involved in acts against the JCPOA. All the U.S. claims were denied by the Islamic Republic of Iran. All in all, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA increased tensions between the U.S. and Iran. It signaled more changes were to be expected regarding the bilateral relations between the two actors.

After the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, the Trump administration decided to re-impose the sanctions, which had been lifted according to the agreement. The sanctions were quite harsh – it is even mentioned that those were the "toughest U.S. sanctions ever imposed on Iran".[554] The foreign policy objective was to pressure Iran at the maximum level possible and those intensified sanctions were later called as the "maximum pressure campaign".

It is important to note that the intensified sanctions were targeting significant sectors such as energy, shipping, and finance. Trump aimed to shake Iranian economy through the sanctions. He had already shifted the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran before he re-imposed the sanctions, and this clearly reflected a deviation in terms of foreign policy from his predecessor. The maximum pressure campaign was built upon the idea that Iran would give up and an anti-Iran project by the U.S. would be realized. A poorer Iran would result in new negotiations according to the U.S.; however, Iran managed to prevent its

[553] "Declaration By the High Representative on Behalf of The EU Following US President Trump's Announcement on The Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)," *Council of the EU*. Press Release. May 9, 2018. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/05/09/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-following-us-president-trump-s-announcement-on-the-iran-nuclear-deal-jcpoa/.

[554] "Re-Imposition of The Sanctions on Iran That Had Been Lifted or Waived Under The JCPOA," *U.S. Department of the Treasury*. November 4, 2018. https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/iran-sanctions/re-imposition-of-the-sanctions-on-iran-that-had-been-lifted-or-waived-under-the-jcpoa.

economy from collapsing. The U.S. under the administration of President Trump failed to achieve its regional and international goals concerning Iran.

The Islamic Republic was somewhat experienced when it came to the U.S. sanctions. Hereby, the government managed to survive the intensified sanctions gradually. The "secondary sanctions"[555] were new compared to the existing type of sanctions, which aimed to threaten the companies regarding their business connections to Iran. Still, Iran managed to complete the period of President Trump without giving in. Economic reforms and improvements in Iran came along.

The tension between the U.S. kept on escalating after the maximum pressure campaign. On June 20, 2019, Iran shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle of the U.S. over the Strait of Hormuz. This incident added to the already rising tension between the two actors. Donald Trump chose to react through a series of tweets, saying that "Iran made a very big mistake!".[556] Both parties claimed that the shooting down took place in different places over the Strait of Hormuz, and Trump initially decided to respond with a military air strike. In terms of the international community, how the events were turning up at that point was worrying as a hot conflict was expected.

Even though Trump was determined to counter the shooting down of the UAV, he aborted the mission and tweeted about it: "I am in no hurry…Sanctions are biting and more added last night".[557] On Twitter, he claimed that his planned

[555] Jason Bartlett and Megan Ophel, "Sanctions by the Numbers: U.S. Secondary Sanctions". *Center for a New American Strategy*. August 21, 2021. https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-u-s-secondary-sanctions.

[556] Donald Trump, [@realDonald Trump]. "Iran made a very big mistake!". *Twitter.* June 20, 2019.

[557] Donald Trump, [@realDonald Trump]. "…proportionate to shooting down an unmanned drone. I am in no hurry, our Military is rebuilt, new, and ready to go, by far the best in the world.

military retaliation was going to be an excessive response to the downing of an unmanned vehicle; yet later, he stated that he thought that Iran genuinely made a mistake by downing the UAV.

Following the U.S. foreign policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, on January 3, 2020, Iran's most powerful military commander, General Qasem Soleimani was killed by a U.S. air strike in Iraq.[558] The killing of Soleimani escalated a crisis between the U.S. and Iran, which have been already conflicting since the beginning of the period of Trump.

Soleimani was an influential leader in Iran and the killing of the general came as a shock to Iran. Three days of mourning were announced, and protests took place throughout the Islamic Republic. It is important to note that Soleimani was involved in wars in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen through which he helped Iran create a regional axis for Shiites.[559]

According to President Trump, his prominent duty was to put the interests of the U.S. first. Hereby, the killing of Qasem Soleimani was justified within the framework of the U.S. foreign policy. From the perspective of the U.S. foreign policy, Iran has been an aggressive actor in the Middle East, which made Iran the main enemy in the region. Trump repeatedly inferred that Iran has been feeding

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Sanctions are biting and more added last night. Iran can NEVER have Nuclear Weapons, not against the USA, and not against the WORLD!". *Twitter.* June 21, 2019.

[558] Donald Trump, "President Trump Statement on Death of Iranian Commander," January 3, 2020, video, https://www.c-span.org/video/?467859-1/president-trump-speaks-air-strike-killed-iranian-commander.
Donald Trump. "Remarks by President Trump on the Killing of Qasem Soleimani". January 3, 2020. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-killing-qasem-soleimani/.

[559] "Qassim Suleimani, Master of Iran's Intrigue, Built a Shiite Axis," *New York Times*. January 13, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/obituaries/qassem-soleimani-dead.html.

the terrorists in the Middle East and it was a reason enough to counter the actor and limit its actions.

The Department of Defense published an immediate release on the killing of Soleimani. Besides reflecting that the major general was planning further attacks, it was also stated that "he had orchestrated attacks on coalition bases in Iraq",[560] resulting in the death and wounding of U.S. personnel. According to the release, the U.S. was going to "continue to take all necessary action to protect" American people as well as the U.S. interests in the world.[561]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the Iranian government responded to the killing by reflecting that Iran was going to seek revenge.[562] Iran has denied the claims about General Qasem Soleimani and stated that he was a significant leader, who has played important roles regarding the developments in Iran. The U.S. foreign policy move combined with Iran's statements led the people waiting for an armed conflict; yet it never took place.

Not long after Soleimani was killed, the coronavirus pandemic broke out, affecting the entire world. The pandemic has taken its toll on every state; and caused further tension between the U.S. and Iran. Iran has been one of the states, which was caught more unprepared to the pandemic compared to other actors and had to deal with high numbers of infected and an increasing death toll.

[560] Immediate Release. Statement by the Department of Defense. January 2, 2020. https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2049534/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/.

[561] Ibid.

[562] Ayatollah Khamenei, "Marty Soleimani is a Champion of the Iranian Nation and of the Islamic Ummah," December 16, 2020. https://english.khamenei.ir/news/8203/Martyr-Soleimani-is-a-champion-of-the-Iranian-nation-and-of-the.

Throughout the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, Iran has put the blame on U.S. for not lifting sanctions to help Iran access medical supplies.[563]

On the other hand, the U.S. denied the claims and expressed that the sanctions have not been blocking the trade of medicine or medical devices. Rather, the sanctions were concentrated over the possibility of weapons of mass destruction and hereby, the prevention of trade about the pieces that might lead to the construction of those or spread of international terrorism.[564]

All in all, the Trump period has witnessed escalating crises between the U.S. and Iran. President Trump was determined to treat Iran as the main enemy of the U.S. in the Middle East, and he has not hesitated to take excessive measures to counter the Islamic Republic. Starting with the Travel Ban as soon as he took office, Trump was against any step that might result in diplomatic relations with Iran. Hereby, he withdrew from the JCPOA, intensified the sanctions, ordered the killing of Soleimani, and kept on isolating Iran throughout the coronavirus outbreak. In short, President Trump made it a priority to oppose Iran regionally and internationally and took every necessary measure to strengthen his foreign policy objectives.

5.1.14. The Leadership Style of Donald Trump

President Trump could be evaluated under the category of an expansionistic crusader, like George W. Bush. The process of foreign policy decision-making of both leaders carries similar traits, which lead them to be grouped under the same leadership style. However, the period of Trump was unique in the sense

[563] "Coronavirus: Iran and the US Trade Blame Over Sanctions," *BBC News.* April 17, 2020. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52218656.

[564] Ibid.

that he perceived the U.S. presidency as a private corporation: "Under budget and ahead of schedule."[565]

Although Trump has repeatedly referred to the global war on terror – mostly during his presidential campaign, claiming that the U.S. was losing it[566] - yet his cause for crusade was simply his campaign slogan: Make America Great Again. Stemming from this cause and fed by his views on terror, Trump introduced a Travel Ban. The Travel Ban – or the Muslim Ban – reflected his insensitivity towards political context, reflecting his leadership style as a crusader. The ban also showed that Trump identified fully with his goals:

> Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.[567]

Expansionistic crusaders usually have a cause, and they wish to expand their control over resources and/or a geographical space,[568] and think that this would bring them future leverage. Regarding the foreign policy decision-making of Trump, his first visit abroad as well as his stance towards Qatar prove his expansionistic side. When Trump went to the Riyadh Summit, he was focused on expanding his power and influence over Saudi Arabia. Moreover, when he took a

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[565] Lisa Lerer and Jill Colvin, "Trump: I'll Run America Like My Business, Clinton: Let's Not," *Associated Press*, October 27, 2016, https://apnews.com/article/bdb17c3257bb461f8d8a5c59a4087f96.

[566] Jenna Johnson, "Donald Trump Promises to 'Bomb the Hell Out of ISIS' in New Radio Ad," *Washington Post*, November 18, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/18/donald-trump-promises-to-bomb-the-hell-out-of-isis-in-new-radio-ad/.

[567] Donald J. Trump, "Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration," December 7, 2015, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-donald-j-trump-statement-preventing-muslim-immigration.

[568] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 98.

stance against Qatar, he was keeping the relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under control in order to gain leverage as a crusader would.

Crusaders are closed to information, and they tend to challenge political constraints. Perhaps, the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi is significant. No matter how many pieces of information were provided, Trump rejected to acknowledge that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was involved in the killing, implicitly nor explicitly. He released a statement saying that whether the Crown Prince was had knowledge or not, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been a great ally and "the United States intends to remain a steadfast partner of Saudi Arabia to ensure the interests of our country, Israel and all other partners in the region."[569]

Another foreign policy move that symbolizes the expansionistic crusader style of Trump is the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA. When an expansionist crusader has a problem to solve – in this case, Iran is a major problem for Trump's foreign policy – he/she concentrates on increasing his/her power and does not wait for the right time to act. Even before Trump became the U.S. President, he has been vocal about Iran: "Iran is considered the world's leading sponsor of terror."[570] He created "a very persuasive rationale"[571] for the decision of withdrawal: "President Trump is terminating United States participation in the JCPOA, as it failed to protect America's national security interests."[572]

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[569] Donald J. Trump, "Statement from President Donald J. Trump on Standing with Saudi Arabia," November 20, 2018, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-standing-saudi-arabia/.

[570] Ibid.

[571] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 96.

[572] Donald J. Trump, "President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal," May 8, 2018, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-ending-united-states-participation-unacceptable-iran-deal/.

Therefore, he gave credibility and legitimacy to his action. With the withdrawal, the sanctions against Iran were once again on the table. As a crusader, Trump claimed that he knew "what is best for all concerned".[573]

Table 4. Leadership Styles of Hermann et al. applied to President Obama

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Motivation Problem Focus
Challenges constraints	Closed to information	Expansionistic *Focus is on expanding one's power and influence*
Trump moved the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem without considering the outcomes as he believed it was the right move. Moreover, he ordered the killing of Qasem Soleimani although the relations with Iran were already strained.	Trump refused to take information into account regarding the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Instead, he went along with what he thought was right.	Trump's first visit abroad was to Riyadh, and it was a move to expand his influence over Saudi Arabia. He took a stance against Qatar as the relationship with the Saudi Kingdom was more significant in terms of power.

Trump has also decided to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This decision was significant in the sense that if reflected his approach towards Israel. Even though the relations with Saudi Arabia was going to be impacted from this decision, Trump went along with it. This proves what Hermann et al.

[573] Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 98.

state about crusaders, they "do not wait to take action until the time is right".[574] Trump did not hesitate to risk the newly rebuilt relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia because Israel was a bigger priority on his agenda.

Through the end of Trump's term, Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani was killed by the U.S. In the eyes of Trump, Iran was already the main enemy. However, he perceived Iran as a challenge and believed that Soleimani was a threat to U.S. national security. According to the information provided to him, Trump was convinced that he had concrete evidence on Soleimani. Therefore, he justified this killing: "Soleimani was plotting imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel, but we caught him in the act and terminated him."[575]

All in all, Trump has the traits of an expansionistic crusader leader. He was goal-oriented, his foreign policy approach was built upon the slogan of "Make America Great Again". The number one enemy on his agenda was Iran and to counter Iran, he took certain steps such as the withdrawal from the JCPOA and the killing of Qasem Soleimani.

[574] Ibid, 96.

[575] Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump on the Killing of Qasem Soleimani," January 3, 2020, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-killing-qasem-soleimani/.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Up until this point, this study tried to analyze the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st century. In this concluding chapter, the arguments and conclusions of this thesis will be put forward. It is important to state that a brief review is necessary in order to reflect what this study has tried to achieve. The 21st century has arrived with its challenges for the United States and shaped the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in different ways. The first two chapters, Introduction as well as the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, aimed to serve as an outline.

To understand the U.S. foreign policy towards both actors and the region of the Middle East in general, it is crucial to provide a background analysis. Hereby, the third chapter, Historical Background, is concentrated upon the evolvement of the diplomatic relations of the U.S. with Saudi Arabia and Iran, covering the 20th century. From the perspective of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the 20th century is significant in the sense that the establishment of the Kingdom goes back to the end of the First World War. On the other hand, the Shah regime was consolidated in the 20th century although Iran has a longstanding history, making the 20th century significant in terms of the bilateral relations with the U.S. This chapter includes the developments witnessed in the 20th century from the perspective of Saudi Arabia and Iran, while assessing the impact of the U.S. foreign policy towards both actors.

The analysis of the developments within the 20th century are essential in the sense that there were many ups and downs, along with the two World Wars. However, the 21st century had more than its fair share of challenges. From the

perspective of the U.S. foreign policy, the 21st century began with the election of George W. Bush as the President, who had little if no foreign policy experience. The U.S. foreign policy direction under his leadership was considered as rather limited. However, the September 11 attacks have changed his foreign policy completely as he announced the global war on terrorism. After 9/11, the U.S. foreign policy could be associated with the U.S. involvement in the Middle East, as the lands were considered as the birthplace of many terrorist organizations, prominently Al Qaeda.

In terms of the regional security of the Middle East, the Bush period could be characterized with the NATO invasion of Afghanistan and the Iraq War in general. Bush concentrated his foreign policy moves around the concept of national security, which was directly related to the stability in the Middle East. Hereby, his foreign policy towards both Saudi Arabia and Iran witnessed escalating tensions during his first and second terms as the U.S. President. Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers during the September 11 attacks were from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which made the bilateral relations of the U.S. with Saudi Arabia more difficult than ever. At that point, it could be said that the foreign policy of the U.S. became hostile towards Saudi Arabia and even though the Saudi government repeatedly denied any involvement, the relations turned sour. Moreover, from the perspective of Bush, Iran was considered within "Axis of Evil", and the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran was focused on containing Iran and preventing any potential aggressive behavior of the Islamic Republic.

President Bush proved to be an expansionistic crusader when it comes to his leadership style. He constructed his foreign policy approach after he had identified the problem as terror. Following the identification of the specific problem, crusaders often find a solution. In the case of Bush, the NATO invasion of Afghanistan as well as the Iraq War are two of the major solutions he came up with. Although the NATO invasion of Afghanistan was a multilateral response, the Iraq War was different in the sense that Bush did not wait for the right time

to intervene – without waiting for a clear UN resolution, he went through with the military operation. He expanded his control over resources and did not hesitate to prefer action when he believed was right and just. September 11 attacks have provided Bush a legitimate ground to follow up with his foreign policy actions and he did not stop being a goal-driven leader until the end of his second term.

George W. Bush was succeeded by Barack Obama, who was perceived as a totally different decision-maker compared to Bush. However, the conditions, throughout which Obama took over, were problematic both in terms of domestic politics and foreign policy. Obama centered his presidential election campaign around the concept of "change"; yet when he became President, he had to deal with the economic burden of the 2008 economic crisis first. Moreover, he inherited a U.S., which was excessively involved in the Middle East. It could be stated that what Obama wanted to do in the first place – as he mentioned throughout his election campaign – had to change according to that time.

Many chose to categorize Obama as a pragmatist as there have always been debates on his ideological standpoint. His foreign policy had traits belonging to realism, liberalism, and multilateralism. Compared to his predecessor, Obama was determined to put faith in diplomacy rather than conflict; yet he had to deal with a damaged state of democracy promotion. His relations with the partners of the U.S. were different in nature but one could claim that at the end of the day, the U.S. foreign policy approach was still concentrated upon the national interests.

Obama's relations with Israel were shaped according to the dialogue between him and Netanyahu. Although the bilateral relations with Israel have always been – and perhaps, it is always going to be – strong; still, when it came to the relationship between Obama and Netanyahu, the situation was not like that. He tried to maintain a balanced relationship with Israel and did not assert a clear

side regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One could infer the U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia were, in a way, warm too. Compared to the Bush period and global war on terrorism, the relations were relatively better with certain sour moments.

Regarding the Middle East policy of the U.S., one could name one of the greatest challenges as the breakout of the Arab Spring. Obama, as a leader who had given several speeches on how his foreign policy was going to be towards Middle East, was often blamed to act inconsistently, particularly concerning the Arab Spring. When Obama chose to remain silent about the Saudi involvement in the uprisings in Bahrain, for the sake of the strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, he decided not to act. Furthermore, about the protests in Saudi Arabia, he kept silent once again. In terms of the relations with the Saudi Kingdom, Obama tried to react according to the U.S. national interests.

The breakout of the Syrian Civil War and the rise of ISIL have been other challenges witnessed throughout the Obama period. Both have become as regional developments and turned into global problems, which caused ups and downs between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. For instance, the U.S. and the Kingdom fell apart concerning the Syrian Civil War up until 2013. Moreover, the rise of ISIL has worried Saudi Arabia due to the instability in the Middle East; yet Obama hesitated to decide whether the U.S. should intervene in the region or not. Even though the Syrian Civil War and Northern Iraq Offensive have been certain developments, through which the U.S. support towards Saudi Arabia could be questioned; the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia concerning the Yemeni Civil War was the major development, in which it was possible to see Obama chose to back Saudi Arabia.

It is important to note that Obama's calculated veto of JASTA could be considered as his open support to the Saudi government. Despite the veto, the Congress passed the bill and the relations with the Saudis turned quite sour.

Obama regarded the passing of the bill as a mistake, yet he was not able to prevent the fragile relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia from getting hurt.

Compared to his predecessor, the foreign policy of Obama towards Iran was fundamentally different. After Bush placed Iran on the "Axis of Evil", the relations of Bush with Iran did not reflect a warm image. The first period of Obama, in a way, was similar to the Bush era. The 2009 presidential elections and the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the President have not made it easier for the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran to soften. However, the 2013 presidential elections and the election of Hassan Rouhani have been a turning point.

Hassan Rouhani could be considered as a moderate leader, and he even addressed the United Nations General Assembly in the U.S. It was significant in the sense that it reflected the possibility of the warming up of the relations between two actors. As a result, the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran has changed due to the relatively positive environment.

In terms of U.S. foreign policy, it would not be wrong to state that Obama favored diplomacy instead of conflict. After Rouhani became the Iranian President, Obama chose not to alienate Iran and decided to include Iran in the international community. This paved the way for the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The JCPOA was an enormous step – it was going to give opportunity to the international community to get to know about the nuclear capabilities of Iran and in return, the sanctions were going to be lifted. According to the foreign policy approach of Obama, it was a win-win.

Completely different from George W. Bush, Barack Obama's leadership style falls under the category of accommodative opportunist. Opportunists are the opposite of crusaders as they respect political constraints and are open to

information. Obama was a cue-taker and he usually preferred inaction to action as he wished to avoid losing support and building opposition. Starting with his term, he inherited the problems and the ongoing actions in the Middle East, which led him to take careful steps. He valued bargaining and compromise; hereby, the nuclear talks with Iran resulted in the signing of the JCPOA. In the eyes of Obama, diplomacy had to be the first solution regarding any crisis at the international stage. Refraining from getting involved in any military action is a reflection of Obama's accommodative opportunist style as such leaders try to build consensus upon existing issues before engaging in any hot conflict.

Obama was succeeded by Donald Trump, who has been considered as an unpredictable actor regarding his decision-making both in terms of domestic politics and foreign policy. Different than Bush and Obama, Trump has been famous with his aggressive rhetoric and unpredictable foreign policy actions. Even during his presidential election campaign, Trump was vocal about his intentions of putting the U.S. interests first at all costs.

President Trump was determined to maintain good relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hereby, the first step he took in this direction was to sign arms deal in 2017 during his first trip abroad as President, which happened to be to Riyadh too. The amount of the deal was great, and Trump repeatedly reflected that Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. were strategic partners. Since the beginning of his period of presidency, Trump stated that he was going to support Saudi Arabia. In terms of foreign policy, he made it sure that the U.S. interests would be preserved through the partnership with Saudi Arabia. This is essential in the sense that the relations were strengthened compared to the Obama period even though Obama tried to maintain a balance as well.

The foreign policy approach towards Saudi Arabia did not change throughout the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. He was a Saudi Arabian journalist, who was murdered inside the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul, Turkey. The assassination was

brutal and Khashoggi's body remains were never found. Saudi Arabia first denied any involvement, but later, the government started investigating the murder. The international community reacted to this assassination and many actors were united in the belief that the Crown Prince was somewhat involved in it.

As a long-lasting partner of Saudi Arabia, how the U.S. was going to react was important. Trump chose to side with the Kingdom from the beginning and kept on stating that he needed more evidence that the Saudi government was involved in the killing to impose sanctions or provide any change with the bilateral relations. Even after reports showing connections between the Saudi government and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi were released, Trump did not alter his rhetoric and stood by the Kingdom.

One might claim that Trump was determined to preserve the relations at a positive level with Saudi Arabia; however, the relationship also had its sour moments such as the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom, and the Pensacola Shooting. First, the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has damaged the bilateral relations as the Saudi Kingdom has always been rooting for the Palestinian side and the close relations between the U.S. and Israel have not made it any easier for Saudi Arabia. Jerusalem is a significant place for the monotheistic religions and as the leader of Sunni Islam, the Kingdom has always felt responsible to support Palestine. However, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is too complicated to find a solution overnight.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia was regarded as a Country of Particular Concern; yet the Trump administration tried to act carefully regarding the strategic partnership. It was not a surprise that the Saudi Kingdom was trying to catch up with the modern world as a state based upon Sharia Law and Islamic teachings. Many practices of Saudi Arabia have been criticized for a long while now and

Saudi Arabia has been included as a Country of Particular Concern in the Reports on International Religious Freedom since 2004. Therefore, it was not an unexpected move; still, the Trump administration has inferred repeatedly that the U.S. was hopeful towards the increasing freedom in the Saudi Kingdom.

Another obstacle in the bilateral relations was the Pensacola Shooting. On December 6, 2019, a terrorist attack took place in Pensacola, Florida and the shooter was identified as a member of the Saudi military. As Saudi Arabia has been – directly or indirectly – blamed for the terrorist activities in the Middle East and the world, Trump's reaction was significant. Although some speculated that this was going to bring tension to the bilateral relations, it did not. Necessary steps were taken in terms of the investigation; yet Trump did not react in a harsh way; instead, he shared a phone call with the King and posted about it on Twitter.

In short, the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia throughout the Trump administration could be considered moderate. President Trump has valued the strategic partnership between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and avoided any act or statement, that might have potentially damaged the relationship. In other words, he was careful regarding the U.S. foreign policy as he centered his approach around a warm environment shared with the Kingdom.

Contrary to the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, Trump has been hostile towards the Islamic Republic of Iran since the beginning of his presidential election campaign. According to his perception, Iran was an actor, which should be countered at all costs because of the hidden nuclear capabilities and its connection to terrorism. Trump repeatedly inferred that Iran has been cooperating with terrorist organizations against the well-being of the U.S., and it was significant to oppose Iran in order to fulfill national interests.

After Trump became the U.S. President, he signed an Executive Order, which is also called as the Travel Ban, targeting seven Muslim countries. Of course, Iran was included within the banned ones and the justification was simple: The lands, which are known to support or have had supported terrorist activities, were not friends nor partners of the United States. The decision gained much reaction and eventually Trump signed another Executive Order; yet his view towards Iran has not changed.

Furthermore, Trump has been vocal about the kind of relationship he wanted the U.S. and Iran to have. Different from his predecessor, President Trump claimed that Iran was not a rational actor to negotiate with, and Obama has been unsuccessful with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action because the deal did not and was not going to serve the U.S. interests. Instead, Trump stated that, the JCPOA – also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal – benefited Iran only and the wisest foreign policy move would be to withdraw from the agreement.

Trump has mentioned his intention to withdraw from the JCPOA several times and eventually, he went along with it. His foreign policy towards Iran has been criticized by many actors and some even inferred that the withdrawal would result in a more aggressive Iran in the Middle East and the world. Despite the fact that there has been no clear evidence that Iran has been violating the terms of the agreement, Trump withdrew from the JCPOA and announced that he was ready to counter Iran with his “maximum pressure campaign”.

According to President Trump, intensified sanctions were a logical way to pressure Iran and this way, a better negotiation could be carried out between the P5 + 1 and the Islamic Republic. Still, he was naïve in the sense that he ignored the fact that Iran had been dealing with sanctions for a long when Trump decided to intensify them. The U.S. government reimposed sanctions on Iran and many commented that those reimposed sanctions were harsher by nature, yet Iran managed to overcome them as well. Even though the economy of the Islamic

Republic has not been stable due to the sanctions, Iran did not give up and Trump has never been able to negotiate a better deal to replace JCPOA.

When the unmanned aerial vehicle of the U.S. was downed over the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, the initial reaction of Donald Trump was to counter Iran by engaging in a hot conflict. He tweeted about a retaliatory attack; however, he aborted the mission, inferring that the downing of the UAV might have been a mistake. Until Trump announced that he was not going to retaliate, the speculations of an upcoming war were spread. The U.S. foreign policy has been quite hostile towards Iran ever since Trump became the President, hereby, it would not be surprising that the escalated tensions would result in a hot conflict.

As a part of the maximum pressure campaign, the U.S. assassinated Qasem Soleimani, an influential major general of Iran, in Baghdad, Iraq. The assassination was ordered by President Trump and the rationale was explained as the prior attacks on the American personnel as well as the future ones. Trump expressed that Qasem Soleimani was planning on further attacks, which he could not have allowed; therefore, the only way was to kill him. Iran responded by claiming that it was going to seek revenge; but no measure was taken ever since. A short while after the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, the whole world began dealing with the coronavirus outbreak; and perhaps, the concern over health in the world resulted in a cooling off for the bilateral relations of the U.S. and Iran.

Last but not least, Trump is categorized as an expansionist crusader. Even though he falls into the same category with Bush, Trump had a unique way in foreign policy. He often criticized the foreign policy moves of his predecessors and tried to run the state as a business. His aim was to “Make America Great Again”, and he identified completely with his goals. He was closed to information and used to challenge political constraints as it is seen throughout the Khashoggi killing. In the Middle East, what he perceived as the main problem was the Islamic Republic of Iran; therefore, he adopted a hostile

approach towards Iran at the international stage. He withdrew from the JCPOA, repeatedly labeled Iran as a sponsor of terrorism, and ordered the killing of Soleimani. His rationale was simple: He was taking all these moves to protect the national security interests of the U.S. As he placed his actions on a credible and legitimate basis, he did not wait for the right time to act. This could also be seen through his decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He carried out the traits of an expansionistic crusader from the beginning of his term to the end.

In conclusion, the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran has been constructed according to the U.S. president in office. The rationale for the actions of the presidents is often reflected as the national self-interests of the U.S. Concerning the leadership styles, both Bush and Trump were examples of expansionistic crusaders whereas Obama was an accommodative opportunist. Their leadership styles have been significant in building their foreign policy approaches. The major aim of the U.S. in the Middle East has been to preserve its national security interests, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran have been important actors in the region with their claims over Islam. Although the bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been different by nature, the U.S. presidents have always included both actors throughout their foreign policy decision-making processes. All in all, the U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran has been shaped by the President in power.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı 21. yüzyılda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD)'nin Suudi Arabistan ve İran dış politikalarının nasıl değiştiğini incelemektedir. Dış politika analizini konu edinen bu çalışmada ABD başkanlarının hamleleri liderlik stilleri merceğinden değerlendirilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, bu tezin argümanı ABD'nin Suudi Arabistan ve İran dış politikalarının görevdeki başkanların liderlik stiline göre değiştiğidir. Çalışmada birincil ve ikincil kaynaklar kullanılmış, 2001-2021 yılları arasında görev yapan üç ABD başkanı analize konu edilmiştir: George Walker Bush, Barack Hussein Obama ve Donald John Trump.

Üç başkanın dönemlerini ve politikalarını incelemeden önce, giriş bölümünü müteakiben kısa bir literatür taraması ile bir teorik çerçeve sunulmaktadır. Literatür taramasında daha önce bu konuda yapılmış olan çalışmalar altı alt başlık şeklinde ele alınmaktadır: a) ABD Dış Politikası, b) ABD-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri, c) ABD-İran İlişkileri, d) ABD'nin Suudi Arabistan ve İran Dış Politikaları, e) Orta Doğu'nun Bölgesel Güvenliği ve f) Dış Politika Analizi.

Bu tezde tercih edilen teorik çerçeve, Dış Politika Analizi (DPA) altında Liderlik Stilleri perspektifini incelemektedir. Liderlik Stilleri, liderlerin dış politikada karar alma süreçlerini değerlendirirken üç alana odaklanmaktadır: Siyasi engellerle başa çıkma, bilgiye açık olma ve motivasyon. Bu nedenle üç soruya cevap aramaktadır:

1) Liderler çevrelerinde karşılaştıkları siyasi engellere nasıl tepki göstermektedir?
2) Liderler dış kaynaklardan edinilen bilgiye ne kadar açıktır?

3) Liderlerin motivasyonu içsel istek ve inançları mı yoksa dış politika aktörleri ile önemsedikleri grupların tepkileri mi?

İlk soruya istinaden bir lider, siyasi engellere saygı duymayı ya da meydan okumayı tercih edebilmektedir. İkinci soru liderlerin dışarıdan aldıkları bilgiyi nasıl kullandıklarını ölçmektedir. Üçüncü soru ise liderlerin kendilerini nasıl yönlendirdikleri ile ilgilenmektedir. Bu üç soruya cevap verildiği takdirde liderler sekiz liderlik stilinden biri altında değerlendirilebilmektedir: Yayılmacı-mücadeleci, ikna edici-mücadeleci, kademeli ilerleyen stratejik, karizmatik stratejik, yönlendirici pragmatist, danışma odaklı pragmatist, duyarlı fırsatçı ve uzlaşma odaklı fırsatçı.

Tezin ikinci bölümü ABD'nin Orta Doğu dış politikasının genel hatlarına değinerek 20. yüzyılda ABD'nin Suudi Arabistan ve İran ile ikili ilişkilerini irdelemektedir. 20. yüzyılın başlarında ABD, Orta Doğu'ya sınırlı şekilde müdahil olmuştur. İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Birleşik Krallık'ın bölgeden çekilmesi sonrası güç boşluğu ABD tarafından doldurulmuştur. Bunun sebepleri bölgenin doğal kaynaklar – özellikle petrol – bakımından zengin olması, stratejik rotalara merkez olması, bölgede İsrail Devleti'nin kurulması olarak sayılabilir. ABD başkanlarının da vurgu yaptığı üzere Orta Doğu, ABD'nin 1900lerde öne çıkan dış politika anlayışı için önemli bir bölgedir.

ABD ile Suudi Arabistan ilişkisi 20. yüzyılda temelleri atılmış bir ilişkidir. İlişkinin dinamiklerini anlamak için Suudi Arabistan Krallığı'nı anlamak gerekir. Suudi Arabistan'ın bağımsızlığı Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasına dayanmaktadır. ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkileri ise Suudi Arabistan topraklarında petrolün keşfedilmesi ile başlamıştır denilebilir. Her ne kadar Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası kurulmuş olsa da Suudi Arabistan Krallığı, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında petrolün keşfine dek bölgede karar verici bir aktör olmamıştır. Kuruluşundan kısa bir süre sonra 1929 Ekonomik Bunalımı'nın yaşanması Suudi Arabistan ekonomisini olumsuz etkilemiştir. Bu dönemde Suudi Arabistan'ın

ekonomik geliri büyük oranda Müslümanların Hac ziyaretinden gelen nakit akışına dayanmaktadır.

1930lu yıllar ABD için de çok parlak ekonomik koşullar ile anılmamaktadır. Büyük Bunalım sonrası işsizlik oranının artması ekonomide yeni hamleler gerektirmiştir. Bu dönemde Suudi Arabistan topraklarında petrol aranması kararlaştırılsa da bölgede petrol kaynaklarının var olmadığı düşüncesi daha ağır basmıştır. 1938 yılında Suudi Arabistan'da Amerikalılar tarafından petrol keşfedilmiştir. Ekonomik ilişkilerin hız kazanması ile diplomatik ilişkiler de güçlenmiştir.

İkinci Dünya Savaşı esnasında ABD, Suudi Arabistan'ı önce göz ardı etmişse de daha sonra güvenlik konusunda yardım sağlamıştır. Dış politika konusunda anlaşmazlıklar yaşansa da petrol ve güvenlik faktörleri üzerinden ikili ilişkiler devam etmiştir. Bu anlaşmazlıklardan en belirgini Filistin'deki Siyonist faaliyetlerin Başkan Roosevelt tarafından desteklenmesi olmuştur. Suudi Arabistan kendisini bölgede koordinatör olarak görmektedir; bu esnada yeni bir aktörün ortaya çıkması ilişkilerde gerginliğe yol açmıştır. Yeni kurulan İsrail Devleti ne Arap ne de Müslüman özelliklere sahiptir; bu da ikili ilişkileri yer yer askeri olarak karşı karşıya gelmek zorunda bırakmıştır. Suudi Arabistan ve ABD, Arap-İsrail Savaşları'nda farklı taraflarda yer almışlardır.

1969 yılında Nixon Doktrini ile ABD'nin Orta Doğu politikasının önemli bir ayağı haline gelen Suudi Arabistan, 1973 Arap-İsrail Savaşı sonrası petrolü bir silah olarak kullanabileceğini fark etmiştir. OPEC Krizi, dünyayı sarsan bir petrol krizi olmuştur.

1979 İran İslam Devrimi sonrasında ABD-İran ilişkilerinin kötülemesi ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerini güçlendirmiştir. 1979 yılında Afganistan'ın Sovyet işgali sonrası hem ABD hem Suudi Arabistan bölgedeki mücahitlere destek vermiştir. Bu sayede İran'a karşı bir politika amaçlanmıştır.

Saddam Hüseyin'in Irak'ta başkan olarak göreve gelmesi ve Irak-İran Savaşı bölgedeki durumu değiştiren durumlardan biri olmuştur. Irak'ın Kuveyt'i işgal etmesi sürecin Suudi Arabistan için de riskli olmasına yol açmıştır; bu nedenle ABD de savaşa dahil olmuş ve Çöl Kalkanı Harekâtı başlamıştır. Bu operasyonu müteakiben Çöl Fırtınası Harekâtı gelmiş ve Birinci Körfez Savaşı yaşanmıştır.

ABD-İran ilişkisi, ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkisinden farklıdır. Diplomatik ilişkilerin başlangıcı 1856 yılındadır; fakat 1944'e kadar ABD İran'a Büyükelçi göndermemiştir. İlişkiler İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na dek mesafeli ancak arkadaşça olarak tanımlanabilir. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda ABD savaşa girdikten sonra ilişkiler yoğunlaşmıştır.

İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında İran'ın Sovyetler Birliği ile yaşadığı kriz sonrası ABD'nin İran'a destek vermesi ikili ilişkileri kuvvetlendirmiştir. ABD, 1953 Ajax Operasyonu'nda İran'a rehberlik etmiştir. Operasyon sonrası Şah yönetimi onarılmıştır. Bu süreci modernleşme hareketleri takip etmiştir. ABD, 1953 sonrasında hem nükleer güç anlamında hem de modernleşme hareketleri çerçevesinde İran'a destek olmuştur. İran'da üniversiteler Amerikan modelini izleyerek şekillenmiştir.

İkili ilişkiler 1979 İran İslam Devrimi'ne dek barışçıl devam etmiştir. 1979 sonrası İran'ın ABD'ye yaklaşımı tamamen değişmiştir. İslam Devrimi İran-ABD ilişkisini değiştiren kırılma noktalarından biri olmuştur. İran İslam Cumhuriyeti kurulduktan sonra toplum İslamlaştırılmış, bölgedeki müttefiklerini – Suriye hariç – kaybetmiştir. Bölgedeki diğer aktörler kendilerini tehdit altında hissetmiş ve İslam Devrimi'nin yayılabileceği korkusunu yaşamışlardır. 1979 Kasım'ında ABD'nin Tahran Büyükelçiliği ele geçirilmiş ve yaşanan bu rehine krizi sonrası 1980 yılında diplomatik ilişkiler dondurulmuştur.

Bu gelişmeler eski müttefikler olan Suudi Arabistan ve İran'ı kutuplaştırmıştır. Irak-İran Savaşı sonrası ABD-İran ilişkileri daha gergin bir hal almıştır. Savaşın

istatistiki olarak bir kazananı ya da kaybedeni olduğunu söylemek mümkün değildir; ancak uzun süren bu savaş İran'ın İslam Devrimi'ni ihraç etme düşüncelerini suya düşürmüştür. İran-Kontra Skandalı ise Reagan döneminin en büyük skandalı olmuş, savaşın bir diğer yüzünü gözler önüne sermiştir. Rehine krizi sürecinde yaşananlar Başkan Reagan'ın gücünü yanlış kullandığı sonucunu işaret etmiştir.

1980ler itibariyle ABD-İran ilişkisi yaptırımlar ile tanımlanmıştır. İlişki hiç 1979 İslam Devrimi öncesine dönememiştir. 1995 yılında ağırlaştırılan yaptırımların İran üzerindeki etkisi çok büyük olmuştur. İran ekonomisi özellikle bu süreçten sonra sarsılmıştır.

Kısaca değerlendirildiği zaman 20. yüzyılda ABD-Suudi Arabistan ve ABD-İran ilişkileri inişler ile çıkışlara tanıklık etmiştir. ABD'nin Orta Doğu'daki güç boşluğunu doldurması ile bölgede daha aktif hale geldiği görülmüştür. Bu süreçte yaşanan kırılma noktaları ise ABD'nin 21. yüzyıldaki Suudi Arabistan ve İran dış politikalarını şekillendirmiştir.

Tezin üçüncü bölümünde ABD'nin Başkan George W. Bush yönetimindeki Suudi Arabistan ve İran dış politikaları incelenmektedir. Başkan Bush 2001 ile 2009 yılları arasında iki dönem başkanlık yapmıştır. ABD dış politikası, görevdeki başkanın tonuna göre şekillenmektedir. Başkan seçilmeden önce Bush, iç politika ile ilgilenmiş olmasına rağmen dış politika deneyimi sınırlıdır. Tartışmalı seçimler sonrası rakibi Al Gore'u yenen Bush'un başkanlığının ilk zamanları iç politikaya yönelik geçmiştir.

Bush dönemi ABD dış politikası iki bölümde incelenmelidir: 11 Eylül saldırıları öncesi ve sonrası. 11 Eylül saldırıları öncesinde Bush sakin bir dış politika yaklaşımı benimsemiş, Rusya ve Çin ile ilişkiler kurmaya odaklanmıştır. 11 Eylül saldırıları ise ABD dış politikası için büyük bir dönüm noktası olmuştur.

11 Eylül sonrası dış politika kararları Bush'un "küresel terörizme karşı savaş" anlayışı ile şekillenmiştir. Bu süreç beraberinde Orta Doğu müdahalelerini ve Bush Doktrini olarak anılan dış politika çerçevesini getirmiştir. Bush'un dış politika anlayışının temel hatları 2002 yılında yayınlanan "ABD'nin Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi" dokümanında bulunabilmektedir. ABD'nin 11 Eylül sonrası amacı, daha güvenli ve iyi bir dünya düzeni yaratmak haline gelmiştir.

2006 yılında ikincisi yayınlanan "ABD'nin Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi" dokümanında ABD'nin savaşta olduğu vurgusu dikkat çekmektedir. Afganistan ve Irak temel hedefler olarak yansıtılmıştır, zira bu aktörler demokrasiler yerine despot yönetimler tercih etmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla ABD'nin bölgede değişiklik yaratabilmesi için verimli demokrasiler inşa etmesi gerekmektedir. Terör, despot yönetimlerin olduğu bölgelerde beslenmektedir.

Başkan Bush'un Orta Doğu politikası göz önünde bulundurulduğu zaman Bush'un 11 Eylül saldırıları sonrası önceliğinin Orta Doğu olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. 11 Eylül 2001 tarihinde meydana gelen terörist saldırılarında 2996 kişi hayatını kaybetmiştir. Bush, dış politika yaklaşımını değiştireceğinin sinyallerini saldırılar sonrası yaptığı konuşmalarda vermiştir. El Kaide'nin üstlendiği saldırılara tepki vermekte gecikilmemiştir. Bu doğrultuda müdahale edilen ilk aktör Afganistan olmuştur. Oldukça hızlı bir karar sürecinden sonra ABD ve NATO müttefikleri Afganistan'ı işgal etmiş ve Taliban rejimini kısa bir süre içinde devirmiştir.

Bush'un dış politika gündemindeki bir diğer hamle Anti-Balistik Füze Antlaşması'ndan çekilmesi olmuştur. Rusya ile orta yol bulamayan ABD, 2002 yılında antlaşmadan çekilmiştir. Dönem koşulları değerlendirildiği zaman en büyük sorunun Rusya ile ikili ilişkiler olmadığı sonucuna varmak mümkündür.

Afganistan'dan sonra Bush İsrail-Filistin çatışmasına yönelmiştir. Göreve geldiği ilk zaman özgür bir Filistin devleti kurulmasını destekleyen Bush, 11 Eylül

saldırıları sonrasında çatışmaya karşı tutumunu değiştirmiştir. Rejim değişimi çağrısı yapan Bush, özellikle 2002 sonrası, İsrail'e daha yakın bir duruş sergilemiştir.

Bush dönemi ABD dış politikasının en tartışmalı konularından biri Irak Savaşı olmuştur. Askeri müdahale 2001 yılının sonlarına doğru başlamıştır; ancak resmi olarak savaşın ilanı 19 Mart 2003 tarihinde gerçekleşmiştir. ABD'nin savaş ilanı, Irak'ın kitle imha silahları bulundurduğu iddiası üzerine kurulmuştur. Irak Savaşı ABD'de yeni muhafazakârlar (neo-muhafazakârlar) tarafından desteklenmiştir. Bush ve dış politika ekibi, savaş hazırlığı konusunda kararlılıklarını göstermiş, terörizmin yükselişini Orta Doğu'daki totaliter rejimlerin güçlü oluşuna bağlamışlardır. Savaş ile Saddam Hüseyin rejiminin düşüşü başlamıştır.

Bush'un Suudi Arabistan dış politikasını şekillendiren temel olaylar 11 Eylül saldırıları, İsrail-Filistin çatışması ve Irak Savaşı'dır. Stratejik partnerlik olarak tanımlanabilecek ABD-Suudi Arabistan ikili ilişkileri 11 Eylül saldırıları ile sarsılmıştır. Teröristlerin 19'undan 15'inin Suudi Arabistan vatandaşı olması ilişkilerin gerilmesine sebep olmuştur. Suudi Arabistan Krallığı'nın temellerinin Selefilik ile atılmış olması terörist hareketlerle ile bağdaştırılmıştır. Suudi Arabistan Krallığı'nın Bush'un Afganistan işgaline açıkça destek vermesi de medyanın Suudi Arabistan'ı suçlamaya devam etmesine engel olamamıştır.

İsrail ile Filistin arasındaki çatışmanın yoğunlaşması da ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkisinin kötülemesine neden olmuştur. Bush'un demokrasi söylemine destek vermesi, yapıca "krallık" olan Suudi Arabistan'ın tepki göstermesine yol açmıştır. 11 Eylül saldırıları üzerine İsrail-Filistin meselesinin eklenmesi ikili ilişkileri gergin bir pozisyona sokmuştur.

Suudi Arabistan, Bush'un Irak Savaşı politikası konusunda görüş ayrılığı yaşamıştır. Irak ve Suudi Arabistan savaş öncesinde de barışçıl bir ilişkiye sahip değildir; yine de Suudi Arabistan Krallığı savaşı yersiz ve nedensiz bulmuştur.

Öncesinde küresel teröre karşı savaş ve Afganistan'ın işgali konularında ABD'ye destek veren Suudi Arabistan, Irak Savaşı'nda koalisyonda yer almamıştır.

Bush'un İran dış politikasını şekillendiren gelişmeler 11 Eylül saldırıları sonrasında Filistin'e yardım gönderen İran bandıralı bir geminin İsrail tarafından ele geçirilmesi, Şer Ekseni konuşması, Irak Savaşı ve 13382 numaralı kararname olarak özetlenebilir. İran'ın Afganistan'a karşı ABD ile iş birliği yapması önemli bir gelişmedir; ancak Şer Ekseni konuşmasında İran'ın terör destekleyen aktörlerden biri olduğu vurgusu ikili ilişkileri olumsuz etkilemiştir. Bu konuşmada düşman olarak ifade edilen İran'a karşı ABD'nin bu tutumu Karine-A gemisinin İsrail tarafından ele geçirilmesi yüzündendir.

Irak Savaşı, İran'ı Orta Doğu'da güçlendiren gelişmelerden biri olmuştur. Irak'ın parçalanması, bölgenin çok mezhepli doğası gereği bölgesel güvenlik adına olumsuz sonuçlara sebep olmuştur. Irak'ta Şii gruplar güç kazandıkça İran'ın etki alanı büyümüştür. Bu durum, ABD-İran ilişkilerini kötüleştirmiştir.

İran'ın nükleer programı ikili ilişkilerde gerginlik yaratan başka bir konu olmuştur. Bush'un 13382 numaralı kararnameyi yayınlaması ve İran'a ekonomik yaptırımlar uygulama kararı alması var olan gerginliği arttırmıştır. Kitle imha silahlarına karşı bir duruş sergilenen bu kararname askeri, nükleer, inşaat, mühendislik, teknoloji, petrol gibi pek çok alanı etkilemiştir.

Bütün bu gelişmeler değerlendirildiği zaman Bush'un liderlik stili yayılmacı-müdahaleci olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır; çünkü Bush siyasi engellere meydan okuyan, dışarıdan gelen bilgiye kapalı, motivasyonu gücünü arttırmak ve etki alanını genişletmek olan bir liderdir.

Tezde incelenen ikinci başkanlık dönemi Barack Obama dönemidir. Obama'ya Bush'tan ciddi anlamda hasarlı bir demokrasi teşviki politikası miras kalmıştır.

Obama başkan seçildiği zaman iç politikadaki sorunlar öncelik olmuştur. 2008 ekonomik krizi ve sağlık konularının yanı sıra Obama, Irak.ve Afganistan'da süregelen savaşları bitirmeyi amaçlamıştır.

11 Eylül saldırıları ABD dış politikasında önemli bir yer tutmaya devam etmiştir. Obama ulusal çıkarları güvenlik, refah, değerler ve uluslararası düzen olarak belirlemiştir. Müşterek eylem ve terörle mücadele konularına ağırlık veren Obama, diplomasiye ve çok taraflı iş birliğine duyduğu inancı sürekli dile getirmiştir. 2009-2017 yılları arasında iki dönem başkanlık yapan Obama'nın ikinci dönemi ilk dönemine kıyasla daha çalkantılı geçmiştir.

Obama dönemi ABD'nin Orta Doğu dış politikasını terörden bağımsız değerlendirmek mümkün değildir. Yine de Obama, selefinden farklı bir Orta Doğu politikası izlemek istemiş ve bu doğrultuda Ankara'da ve Kahire'de iki güçlü hitapta bulunmuştur. Başkan Obama'ya göre ABD dış politikasının hatası diplomatik yolları tüketmeden askeri yollar tercih etmektir.

ABD-İsrail ilişkileri çok sağlam zemine dayanmasına rağmen Obama döneminde ilişkiler daha mesafeli ilerlemiştir. Obama'nın İslam dünyasına göreceli olarak daha ılımlı yaklaşması gerilim sebebi olmuştur. Yine de İsrail-Filistin çatışması göz önünde bulundurulduğu zaman Obama'nın bir çare bulamadığı sonucuna ulaşmak mümkündür.

Irak Savaşı, ABD kamuoyunu ikiye bölen bir konu olmaya devam etmiştir. Obama, bölgeden çekilme kararı almış ve 18 Aralık 2011 itibariyle bölgedeki son askerler de Irak'ı terk etmiştir. ABD'nin Irak'ta neredeyse dokuz yıl süren askeri varlığı son bulmuştur.

2010lar Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika bölgesinde gerçekleşen ayaklanmalar ile anılmıştır. Obama, ayaklanmaları yakından takip etmiş; ancak müdahil olmamayı tercih etmiştir. Suriye İç Savaşı sonrasında da Obama süreci detaylıca

incelemiştir; hatta kimyasal silahlar söz konusu olunca Esad rejimini uyarmıştır. Yine de müdahaleyi tercih etmemiş ve yer yer bu tutumundan dolayı eleştirilmiştir.

Obama'nın Irak'tan çekildikten sonra bölgeyi boş bıraktığını ve Arap Baharı sonrası terörist aktivitelerin pekiştiğini öne süren bazı akademisyen ile politikacılara göre Obama, Irak ve Şam İslam Devleti (IŞİD)'in yayılmasına sebep olmuştur. Irak'ın çok mezhepli yapısı IŞİD'in hareket alanının genişlemesini sağlamıştır.

Arap Baharı'nın devamı niteliğinde değerlendirilebilen Yemen İç Savaşı'nın şiddetleneceği başta hiç düşünülmemiştir. Yemen'de durum kötüleştikçe bir insani kriz haline gelmiştir. ABD Büyükelçiliği kapatılmış ve çalışanlar tahliye edilmiştir. Akabinde Obama bölgede Körfez Arap Ülkeleri İşbirliği Konseyi'nin harekatlarına yetki vermiştir.

11 Eylül saldırıları ABD kamuoyunda üzerinden ne kadar zaman geçse de büyük yer kaplamaya devam etmektedir. Obama'nın veto ettiği "Terörizmin Sponsorlarına Karşı Adalet Yasa Tasarısı" bu anlamda önemlidir. Yine de Senato vetoyu geçersiz kılmış, tasarının yasalaşmasının önünü açmıştır. Her ne kadar Obama Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerini zedelemek istemese dahi süreç farklı ilerlemiştir.

Obama'nın Suudi Arabistan dış politikasını değerlendirirken birtakım olayları incelemek gerekir. 2011 yılında Usame bin Ladin'in yakalanıp öldürülmesi Obama'ya olan desteği arttırmıştır. Suudi Arabistan da açıklama yapmış ve bin Ladin'in devre dışı bırakılmasını terörle mücadele olarak nitelemiştir.

Suudi Arabistan ile ikili ilişkileri etkileyen bir diğer gelişme İran ile gerçekleştirilen nükleer görüşmelerdir. Suudi Arabistan, olası bir ABD-İran yakınlaşmasını kendisine tehdit olarak görmüştür. Bu görüş, bölgede İsrail

tarafından da paylaşılmıştır. Buna rağmen Obama, diplomatik zeminde İran ile görüşmeleri sürdürmekte kararlı olduğunu yansıtmıştır.

Arap Baharı sürecinde Obama, Suudi Arabistan'la ilişkisinin bozulmaması adına Suudi Arabistan'ın Bahreyn müdahalesine ses çıkarmamıştır. Obama'nın bu tutumu yer yer tutarsız olarak irdelenmiştir. Suudi Arabistan'daki protestolar söz konusu olduğunda Obama yine sessiz kalmayı tercih etmiştir. IŞİD'in ilerlemesine karşı izlenen politikalarda görüş ayrılığı söz konusu olmuştur: Obama müdahale etmeyi seçmiş, Suudi Arabistan ise yabancı müdahalenin en iyi olasılık olduğu düşüncesini paylaşmamıştır. Yemen söz konusu olduğunda ise iki aktör de harekata destek vermiştir.

ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkisinin önemli bir dinamiği olan petrol konusunda ABD'nin adım adım bağımsızlığını kazanma yolunda ilerlemesi ilişkileri etkilemiştir. ABD'nin kendisine rakip olacağı düşüncesine rağmen Suudi Arabistan ile ilişkiler göreceli olarak ılımlı kalmaya devam etmiştir.

Obama dönemi İran dış politikasında pek çok gelişme etkili olmuştur. 2009 İran başkanlık seçimlerinin şaibeli olduğu iddiasına rağmen Obama'nın tarafsız kalmayı tercih etmesi önemli bir tutumdur. Her ne kadar endişesini paylaşsa da Obama, ABD'nin İran'daki hükümet karşıtı politikalara dahil olmayacağını ifade etmiştir.

2013 seçimlerinde daha ılımlı bir lider olan Hasan Ruhani'nin başkan seçilmesi ilişkileri olumlu etkilemiştir. Belki de Obama'nın başkanlığı sürecinde ABD-İran ilişkilerini etkileyen en önemli süreç nükleer görüşmelerdir. ABD'nin İran'ın nükleer kapasitesine karşı uyguladığı yaptırımlar sonrasında diplomatik bir zeminde uzlaşmayı tercih etmiş olması dikkat çekmektedir. Çok taraflı bir antlaşma olan Kapsamlı Ortak Eylem Planı, ABD ve İran'ın karşılıklı çabası sonucunda imzalanmıştır.

Bütün gelişmeler incelendiği zaman Başkan Obama'nın liderlik stili uzlaşma odaklı fırsatçı olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Obama siyasi engellere saygı duyan, dışarıdan gelen bilgiye açık ve motivasyonu başkalarıyla mutabakat sağlama odaklı olan bir liderdir.

Bu çalışmada incelenen son dönem Başkan Donald John Trump'ın dönemidir. Trump, 2017-2021 yılları arasında bir dönem ABD başkanlığı yapmıştır. Trump, dış politikada temel amacını ABD'nin hayati çıkarlarını korumak olarak ifade etmiştir. Dış politika konusunda Trump, seleflerinden oldukça farklı bir tona sahiptir.

Trump göreve gelir gelmez dış politika hamlelerinin nasıl ilerleyeceği yönünde ipuçları sunmuştur. İmzaladığı iki kararname ile hem çok taraflı iş birliğine güvenmediğini, hem de terörizm ile İslam'ı bağdaştırdığını göstermiştir. Trump bu iki kararname sonrası sadece ABD kamuoyundan değil, uluslararası aktörlerden de tepki toplamıştır. Trump'ın kararname ile uyguladığı seyahat yasağı daha sonra güncellense de İslam dünyası için büyük bir sorun olmuştur.

Başkan Trump, dönemi boyunca tek taraflılığa odaklanmıştır. Rusya ve Kuzey Kore ile ılımlı ilişkiler kuran Trump, Çin'e karşı tutum sergilemiştir. Trump'ın gözünde Çin, ABD'nin ekonomisi önündeki en büyük engeldir.

Orta Doğu bölgesi dikkate alındığı zaman Trump'ın İslam'a olan tepkisinin bu bölgeye olan dış politikasını şekillendirdiğini söylemek mümkündür. Suriye ile ilişkiler Trump öncesinde de gergin olmasına rağmen, Trump'ın başkanlığı sonrasında daha da kötülemiştir. Esad rejiminin kimyasal silahlarına karşı aktif tepki veren Trump'a tepki Rusya'dan gelmiştir.

Trump'ın dış politika hamlelerinden biri Tel Aviv'deki ABD Büyükelçiliği'ni Kudüs'e taşımak olmuştur. Bu hamle ile Kudüs'ü resmen İsrail'in başkenti olarak tanıyan Trump, bölgedeki diğer aktörlerle arasını bozmaktan

kaçınmamıştır. Selefinden farklı olarak Trump, İsrail Başbakanı Netanyahu ile samimi ilişkiler kurmuştur.

Trump dönemi ABD dış politikasının Orta Doğu'daki stratejik partnerlerinden biri Suudi Arabistan olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Suudi Arabistan'ın önemi Trump'ın ilk yurt dışı seyahatini Riyad'a gerçekleştirmesinden anlamak mümkündür. Bu seyahat esnasında iş birliğini genişleteceklerini vurgulayan ABD ve Suudi Arabistan, büyük bir askeri antlaşma da imzalamışlardır. Trump için Suudi Arabistan Orta Doğu'da oldukça değerli bir aktördür.

Başkan Trump, Suudi Arabistan ile ilişkisini her daim dengede tutmaya çalışmıştır. Katar Krizi'nde Suudi Arabistan'ın tarafını tutması – her ne kadar daha sonra tavrını değiştirse de – bunu kanıtlar niteliktedir. Ayrıca Gazeteci Cemal Kaşıkçı, Suudi Arabistan'ın İstanbul'daki konsolosluğunda öldürüldüğü zaman da Trump soğukkanlılığını korumuştur. Başkan Trump, Suudi Arabistan'ı suçlayacak ifadelerden kaçınmayı tercih etmiştir. ABD istihbarat birimlerinin raporlarının Kaşıkçı'nın ölümünü Veliaht Prens Muhammed bin Salman'a bağlamasına rağmen Trump bu iddiaları da reddetmiştir. Pensacola, Florida'da gerçekleşen terörist saldırısı sonrası terör eyleminden sorumlu şahsın Suudi Arabistan'dan gelen bir öğrenci olması da Trump'ın Suudi Arabistan'a karşı benimsediği barışçıl tavrı değiştirmemiştir.

ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkisini olumsuz etkileyen bir gelişme ABD Büyükelçiliği'nin Kudüs'e taşınması olmuştur. Suudi Arabistan bir açıklama yayınlayarak bu hamlenin İsrail-Filistin çatışmasını daha da karmaşık hale getireceğini savunmuştur. Her ne kadar Suudi Arabistan ile ılımlı ilişkiler sürdürse de Trump'ın İsrail'e olan yakınlığı tartışmasızdır. Dolayısıyla İsrail'i önde tutan bir dış politika yaklaşımına sahip olması şaşırtıcı değildir.

Trump seçilmeden önce dahi İran'a karşı düşmanca bir tavır benimsemiştir. Seyahat yasağına dahil olan İran tepki gösterse de Trump geri adım atmamıştır.

Ayrıca Başkan Trump'ın gözünde İran ile imzalanan nükleer antlaşmalar ABD'nin ulusal çıkarlarını zedeler niteliktedir. Bu yüzden Trump'ın ABD'nin Kapsamlı Ortak Eylem Planı'ndan çekileceğini açıklaması beklenmedik bir dış politika hamlesi olmamıştır. Açıklamanın akabinde ağırlaştırılmış ekonomik yaptırımlar uygulayacağını ifade eden Trump ile İran arasındaki gerilim artmaya devam etmiştir.

Trump dönemi ABD-İran ilişkilerinin gerildiği bir başka süreç İran'ın Hürmüz Boğazı üzerinde ABD'ye ait bir insansız hava aracını düşürmesi olmuştur. Trump karşılık vermek adına neredeyse askeri hareket onaylamış; fakat son anda vazgeçmiştir. Askeri bir cevabın gerekli olmadığını ifade eden Trump, yaptırımlara güvendiğini ifade etmiştir.

ABD-İran ilişkileri bir kez daha ABD, İran'ın önde gelen komutanlarından Kasım Süleymani'yi öldürülmesi ile gerilmiştir. İran bu hamleyi beklemediği için şaşırmış, Trump ise planlanmış saldırıların önüne geçmek için böyle bir adım atıldığını yansıtmıştır. Gerilimin tırmanacağı öngörülse de askeri çatışma zemini yaşanmamıştır.

Trump dönemi gelişmeleri değerlendirildiği zaman, Trump'ın da Bush gibi yayılmacı-mücadeleci bir liderlik stili benimsediği görülmektedir. Tıpkı Bush gibi Trump da siyasi engellere meydan okuyan, dışarıdan gelen bilgiye kapalı, motivasyonu gücünü arttırmak ve etki alanını genişletmek olan bir liderdir.

Tezin son bölümü Sonuç bölümüdür. Bu bölümde başkanların liderlik stillerinin dış politikalarını şekillendirdiği argümanı tekrarlanmaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde başkanların liderlik stilleri vurgulanmakta ve siyasi gelişmelerin bölge güvenliğine etkisi tartışılmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez, ABD'nin 21. yüzyıldaki Suudi Arabistan ve İran dış politikalarının görevdeki başkanın liderlik stiline göre şekillendiğini

savunmaktadır. ABD'nin bölgedeki çıkarlarını korumak adına bu iki aktöre yönelik dış politika tutumu geliştirmesi kaçınılmazdır. Bölgede etkili olan bu iki aktör, ABD dış politikası için büyük önem arz etmektedir.

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