Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Oran 2 (Mohamed Ben Ahmed)

Faculty of Foreign Languages

Department of English

Doctorate School of English 2013

Magister Dissertation in American Civilisation

American Foreign Policy and the Middle East: Influence in Decline (2009-2014)

Supervised by:

Pr. Yacine Rachida

Presented by

Mr. Messeded Moustafa

Members of the Jury:

President: Pr. MOSTEFA Bouhadiba Zouleikha (University of Oran 2: Mohamed Ben Ahmed)

Supervisor: Pr. YACINE Rachida   (University of Oran 2: Mohamed Ben Ahmed)

Examiner: Pr. BAHOUS Abbes   (University of Mostaghanem)

Examiner: Dr. GHENIM Neema   (University of Oran 2: Mohamed Ben Ahmed)

Academic Year

2014-1015

<u>*Dedication:*</u>

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, my whole family, and to all my teachers ever since the beginning of my education.

Acknowledgments

Abstract

After the Cold War, the United States enjoyed a position of unparalleled strength and influence worldwide, but such influence has been in steady decline in the last decade in the Middle East. Such decline has become particularly evident in the Obama years. Iraq and Syria stand out as two clear examples, though there are others, in which the United States has experienced serious limitations and constraints on the exercise of its power to influence events. Such decline in influence did not begin overnight, but was an outcome of a variety of internal and external factors. The foreign policy of Bush the son, specially his war in Iraq, did much to undermine U.S. credibility and raised doubts about the real intentions of its policy in the region. After this war, the United States entered a phase of economic recession and suffered from a host of other domestic problems that forced President Obama to devote his administration's agenda to sort out such problems while they put limits on the resources he needed to act freely and boldly to preserve and advance his country's role abroad. The adoption of assertive foreign policy agendas by some rivals of the U.S. like Russia, China, and Iran was both a reason and a consequence of America's declining influence in the region. While the United States has failed to turn the tide of events into its advantage, those powers have succeeded to shore up old allies and to strengthen their economic, political, and diplomatic ties with some key states and leaders in the region.

Résumé

 Après la guerre froide, les États-Unis ont connu une position d'influence sans précédent dans le monde entier. Mais cette influence a été en baisse constante dans la dernière décennie au Moyen-Orient. Cette baisse est devenue particulièrement évident dans la période présidentiel de Barack Obama. Irak et la Syrie se démarquent comme deux exemples clairs. Cependant en existe d'autres, dont les États-Unis qui ont connu de sérieuses limitations et contraintes sur l'exercice de leur pouvoir d'influencer les changements dans la région. Cette baisse, cependant, n'a pas commencé du jour au lendemain, mais c'est le résultat de plusieurs facteurs internes et externes. La politique étrangère de Bush fils, spécialement sa guerre en Irak, a fait beaucoup pour saper la crédibilité des États-Unis et surélever les doutes sur les intentions réelles de sa politique dans la région. Après cette guerre, les États-Unis ont entrés dans une phase de récession économique et ont souffert de problèmes internes qui ont forcé le président Obama à consacrer son temps pour les régler. Ces problèmes ont également mis des limites sur les ressources dont il avait besoin pour agir librement pour préserver et promouvoir le rôle de son pays à l'étranger. La baisse de l'influence américaine dans la région était à la fois un motif et une conséquence de l'adoption des politiques étrangers affirmés par certains de ses rivaux comme la Russie, la Chine et l'Iran. Alors que les États-Unis ont échoué à inverser le cours des événements dans leur avantage, ces pouvoirs ont réussi à consolider d'anciens alliés et a renforcer leurs liens économiques, politiques et diplomatiques avec certains États et les principaux dirigeants de la région.

ملخص:

بعد بلوغ النفوذ الأمريكي الذروة في الشرق الأوسط و العالم ككل مباشرة عقب نهاية الحرب البادرة ,يشهد هذا النفوذ تراجعا مستمرا خلال العقد الأخير.

هذا التراجع في النفوذ ظهر جليا في العراق و سوريا خلال حكم الرئيس أوباما أين واجهت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية صعوبات جمة في محاولاتها للتأثير على الأحداث في المنطقة. هذا التراجع في النفوذ ليس وليد الساعة و لكنه نتيجة لمجموعة من الأسباب الداخلية و الخارجية .

السياسية الخارجية للرئيس الأسبق جورج بوش الإبن , خاصة حربه على العراق , ساهمت إلى حد كبير في فقدان الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لمصداقيتها كما أثارت شكوكا حول نوايا سياساتها تجاه المنطقة .

بعد هذه الحرب, دخلت الولايات المتحدة مرحلة ركود اقتصادي و مشاكل داخلية فرضت على الرئيس الجديد إعطاء الأولوية الكاملة لحل هذه المشاكل كما فرضت قيودا على المقدرات اللازمة للإدارة الجديدة للعب دور مؤثر على الساحة العالمية.

إضافة إلى هذا , فقد سطرت بعض الدول المنافسة للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كروسيا , الصين و إيران سياسات خارجية حازمة كانت سبب و نتيجة لتراجع النفوذ الأمريكي في الشرق الأوسط. ففي الوقت الذي فشلت الولايات المتحدة في تغيير مسار الأحداث في المنطقة لصالحها , نجحت هذه الدول في تثبيت حلفائها و في بناء علاقات إقتصادية, سياسية و دبلوماسية متينة مع عدة قادة كبار و دول محورية في المنطقة .

List of Abbreviations:

CASCO: California Arabian Standard Oil Company

CFR: Council on Foreign Relations

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

COR: Iraqi Council of Representatives

CRS: Congressional Research Service

CSBA: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

CSIS: Center for Strategic and International Studies

FSA: Free Syrian Army

FY: Fiscal Year

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GNP: Gross National Product

IPC: Iraqi Petroleum Company

ISCI: Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq

ISF: Iraqi Security Forces

ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

JEC: Joint Economic Committee

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSA: National Security Council

PNAC: Project for the New American Century

PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization

PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

SOCAL: Standard Oil Company of California

SOCONY: Standard Oil Company of New York

TPC: Turkish Petroleum Company

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNSCOP: United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

US: United States

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WINEP: Washington Institute for Near East Policy

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

WW1: World War One

WW2: World War Two

List of Tables and Figures:

Tables:

Figures:

Table of Contents:

Dedication

Acknowledgments

Abstract in Arabic

Abstract in French

List of Abbreviations

List of Tables and Figures General

General Introduction

After devoting the 19th century to nation-building and the formation of a robust economy and a strong military, following the principle of non-entanglement in foreign quarrels, American policy makers turned to overseas expansion by the turn of the new century. In such foreign adventure, the United States got involved in an array of regional and global conflicts that paved the way to its position as an unparalleled world power. The Middle East, the region formerly known as the Near East and which includes Turkey, Iran, and the Arab World from the western boundary of Egypt to the eastern boundary of Iraq[1], figured prominently in the foreign policy agenda of U.S. policy makers ever since the presidency of Harry Truman.

Before the First World War, American presence in the Middle East was dominated by missionary and educational activities, but after the war, with the discovery of huge resources of oil in the region, American companies began competing with their European counterparts for oil concessions. After the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, the region became a hub of superpower competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. In this context, the subsequent U.S. administrations devoted considerable amounts of financial aid, military support, and diplomatic work to contain Soviet influence and to increase that of America. By the end of the Cold War, the United States arrived at a unipolar and hegemonic position in the wider region and also around the world.

Such hegemonic and dominant position presented U.S. policy makers with ample opportunities of global leadership, but also with hard and costly commitments. A decade after the end of the Cold War, and with the infamous 9/11 events, President Bush embarked on a range of global interventions of hollow nature and large scale. With the Iraq war of 2003, President Bush committed his country to a lengthy and costly adventure that would deal a shattering blow to its economy and to its moral standing around the world. In consequence, U.S. influence in Iraq and the whole region began to wane. Hi successor, who came in a hard time of an ailing economy and

---

[1] John A. DeNovo, <u>American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939</u>, (the United States: the University of Minnesota Press, 1963)

an exhausted military, promised a new beginning with the Muslim world to replace force with diplomacy and to restore some of his country's prestige in the region and around the world.

President Obama's rhetoric was hardly met with actions, and the resources he has had in hand could hardly match the commitments of his foreign policy agenda. As a host of domestic priorities consumed much of the new president's time and energy, bolstering his country's role abroad remained by a far a marginal priority. To this could be added an American public opposed to foreign engagement and a Middle Eastern public increasingly skeptical and resistant to American presence in their region. The social upheavals that were yet to sweep the region in early 2011 further deteriorated America's influence in many Arab countries, namely Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, and compounded the challenges that the new president was set to confront.

The issue of America's declining power and influence in the Middle East should not be viewed in isolation, but rather, in a wider international and historic context. Ever since the end of the Vietnam War, historians and foreign policy critics began contemplating America's ability to maintain a posture of hegemony. In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, published in 1988, the historian Paul Kennedy reflects on the possibilities of American declining power in light of the fate that previous world powers went through. The premise of Kennedy's stance is the idea of "*imperial overstretch*". The idea dictates that "*the sum total of the United States' global interests and obligations is nowadays far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously*"[2]

The president of the Council on Foreign Relations and the former senior official in the administrations of Bush the father and Bush the son Richard Haass, argues that the United States is now "overreached" abroad and "underperformed" at home. In his book *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, he explains that America's domestic problems like old infrastructure, huge deficit and debt, and low economic growth would directly threaten "*America's ability to project power and exert influence overseas,*" and therefore, "*the ability of the United States to act and lead in the world is diminishing.*"[3]

---

[2] Paul Kennedy, <u>The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers</u>, (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1988) 515.
[3] Richard Haass, <u>Foreign Policy Begins at Home</u>, (New York: Basic Books, 2013), p.3.

The journalist and foreign policy commentator Farid Zakariya argues that America is now challenged not only by limited resources at home, but also by what he calls "*the rise of rest.*" In his book *the Post-American World*, Zakaria argues that "*over the past few decades, countries all over the world have been experiencing rates of economic growth that were once unthinkable*". In this context, American power is challenged not only by other nations but also by non-state actors. "*The 'rest' that is rising,*" suggests the author "*includes many non-state actors. Groups and individuals have been empowered, and hierarchy, centralization, and control are being undermined*"[4]

When President Obama came to office, his strategy towards Iraq and the wider region was not met with adequate actions on the ground and therefore was not successfully implemented. When social upheavals swept the region in late 2010 and early 2011, Obama's administration saw some opportunity to restore some of the credibility his country lost through its war in Iraq. However, the tide of events did not seem to go in line with U.S. preferences and America's attempts to influence events to turn them in its advantage bore few, if any, desirable outcomes. In Egypt, for example, the United States lost a long-lasting ally and the subsequent presidents of the country did little to comfort it about its interests in the region.

In Iraq, after a lengthy and costly war, the United States was equally unable to influence the internal politics of the country or ensure its stability and partnership. As America's influence in Iraq was diminishing, that of Iran was increasing in the political, economic, and security sector. Syria presented another case of America's limited ability to influence events. After Obama's declaration that President Assad must go, the Syrian president continued in power thanks to the help of his allies namely Russia, China, and Iran. Those allies vetoed three Security Council resolutions in ten months that aim to condemn and to sanction the Syrian regime. After making the use of chemical weapons in Syria a "red line," Obama's administration backed off later from its decision to launch airstrikes on some Syrian military targets.

---

[4] Fareed Zakaria, <u>The Post-American World</u>, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008) 2-3-4.

Such hesitance of the President Obama to back words with deeds further undermined its credibility and power in the eyes of its allies and adversaries alike. Its rivals became emboldened to assume more prominent and assertive roles not only in the Middle East, but also around the world. Its regional allies, moreover, became more skeptical of the U.S. ability to live up to its words and commitments and more independent from the United States in their policy decisions. As disorder in the region continues, other non-state actors, especially military ones, became more adamant to pursue their own policy agenda with little or no regard to the preferences and the interests of outside powers, especially the United States.

In light of such circumstances and events, some hard and controversial questions have presented themselves with unprecedented urgency. Some of these questions may include: why has the United States become limited and constrained in the exercise of its influence and power in the Middle East? What is the link between America's past polices in the region, its domestic situation, in terms of resources and public opinion, and the present inability of the U.S. to exercise influence? And finally, why U.S. rivals have assumed a more prominent role in the region and why U.S allies have become more independent in their policy decisions?

This study aims to show some of the symptoms of the decline of American influence in the region, Iraq and Syria as two cases in point, and to investigate the reasons or causes behind such decline. In doing so, I refer to Paul Kennedy and Richard Haass' stance of the relationship between resources at home and commitments abroad, and to Farid Zakaria's notion of the rise of the rest. In is worth noting, however, that there is no clear line between the symptoms of decline and the reasons behind them. Despite the cause and effect relationship between the two, both of them stand to represent signs and indications of America's declining influence in the region. For the sake of coherence and clarity, I have divided the study into three chapters.

In the first chapter, we trace the progress of America's influence in the Middle East during the 20th century. Before the First World War, America's presence in the region was limited to missionary, educational, and some economic activities. After the war, with the discovery of oil in the region and as U.S. foreign policy took a global dimension, U.S. policy makers began vying with the Europeans for oil concessions. With the Cold War, the United States entered a phase of

superpower competition with the Soviet Union and the Middle East became a hotbed of such contest. In the context, U.S. officials devised a number of doctrines that aimed to contain Soviet influence and increase that of their country. After the end of the Cold War, the United States became the sole superpower not only in the Middle East but also on the global stage.

After the Iraq war-- which was widely seen not only as an unnecessary war, but also as a strategic blunder--, America's influence in the region began to decline. Such decline took a full-fledged shape in the Obama years. The second chapter aims to show some indications of such decline. Iraq is the first case in point. After all the time and money that U.S. policy makers devoted to transform such country, Iraq did not come to be considered as an ally or a partner to the United States. In contrast, the American policy makers failed even to broker a power sharing agreement among the various Iraqi factions or to leave a residual troop with legal immunities. Iran, however, could manage to increase its political leverage and its economic and security presence in Iraq, usually in contrast to U.S. preferences.

In Syria, as violence escalated, the U.S. has remained incapable of achieving its policy objectives, while its rivals, Russia, China, and Iran could sustain their ally in power and were able to grow a posture of power and influence in the region. America's objection to intervene militarily, even after the use of chemical weapons which it made "a red line," further undermined its credibility in the eyes of its allies and emboldened its adversaries to act more assertively on many foreign policy issues. In consequence, U.S. regional allies signaled tense relations and became more inclined to act more independently of U.S. preferences and policy priorities.

The third chapter presents some reasons behind America's limited ability to exert influence in the wider Middle East. The Bush legacy, especially the war in Iraq, undermined U.S. credibility and raised doubts about its genuine intentions of its policies in the region. In consequence, Middle Eastern public grew more opposed to all forms of America's involvement in the region. With the economic crisis that Obama inherited, his administration became preoccupied to sort out domestic problems and has had little in hand to advance its role in foreign affairs. Likewise, American public opinion not only opposed their countries engagement abroad, but also developed a sense that their country is less influential and less respected on the world stage.

The adoption of some U.S. rivals like Russia, China, and Iran more assertive foreign policies further limited the U.S. to act more freely on many foreign policy issues. As Obama's administration looked to increase its presence in the Asia pacific region to counterweight China, the latter made more economic inroads in the Middle East. Russia, moreover, succeeded in shoring up its ally in Syria, strengthened relations with Egypt, and acted boldly in Ukraine. Iran, too, seized the chaos in the region to increase its presence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. Even with its nuclear talks with the West, Iran is set to enhance its sway in the region regardless of the outcomes of such talks.

1.1 Introduction

The influence of the United States in the Middle East during the 20th century went hand in hand with its growing influence worldwide. Before the First World War, American presence in the region was limited to missionary and educational activities with the exception of some commercial exchange with the Ottoman Empire. Such limited presence was dictated by America's preoccupation with its influence in the Americas and the long-established influence of the European powers in the Middle East.

By the end First World War, and as the region grew more vital owing to its energy resources, American oil companies began competing with their European counterparts to attain concessions in the region. Such efforts were strongly backed by the State Department and American diplomats abroad. As the Second World War broke out, the region turned to be a front line of confrontations and a geopolitical asset for the allies.

As the second Great War gave way to the Cold War, European influence was severely diminishing, and was therefore being replaced by superpower competition. In consequence, American strategists and decision makers devised new doctrines and policies which sought to counter Soviet expansion and influence, and to protect American interests in the region. The implementation of such policies varied from the financial and military aid to Turkey and Israel, an increase in arms sale and military equipment to Saudi Arabia and Iran or the winning of new allies and partners like the case of Egypt.

By the end of the Cold War the Soviet Union relinquished most its hard-won influence and assets while the United States assumed a hegemonic and unipolar position not only in the Middle East but also around the globe. While this newly won position promised new hopes and opportunities for a new world order guided by American values and principles, it also brought with it new responsibilities and commitments for which the United States was hardly able to handle alone.

1. The First World War, the Interwar Years and the Second World War.

1.1. U.S-Middle East Relations before the First World War.

Before the First World War, the Middle East was hardly considered a region of economic or political interest for the United States. Such stance stemmed from America's adherence to a policy of non-entanglement in the European quarrels. This policy was equally true for the Middle East since it was regarded as a natural extension to European influence and domination. In the Monroe Doctrine, declared in 1823 and which remained the backbone of American foreign policy throughout the 19th century, President James Monroe asserted that the western hemisphere was America's proper sphere of influence and its territories were therefore not "*to be considered as subjects for future colonisation by any European powers.*" In contrast, in the wars of the European powers, and by extension the Middle East, the United States "*has never taken part nor does it comport with our policy to do so*"[5].

This isolation from the other part of the Atlantic did not mean a complete absence of formal diplomatic channels. The first American diplomatic relations in the region were initiated with Turkey through the treaty of May 1830. This treaty set the foundations for American missionary and philanthropic activities in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century and beyond.

The treaty with Turkey came as a consequence of the destruction of the Turkish fleet in the Mediterranean Sea in the Battle of Navarino in 1927. Turkey was in a weaker position so as to accept a treaty with the United States to repair and rebuild its ships and to further commercial exchange with the Americans. Though the treaty did not receive official and congressional support, it remained the only official tie that bound both relations.[6]

This separation between the two sides of the Atlantic was not dictated only by space and time, but also by the perceptions that peoples of the two regions held about each other. The United States

---

[5] James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message (Monroe Doctrine) (December 2, 1823), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/monroe/speeches/speech-3604
[6] George C. Herring, From Colony to Supper Power: U.S Foreign Relations since 1776, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). P 168

and the Middle East "*were 'worlds apart' in style of life and outlook*". This separation was also fed by "*the blurred images of the Arab World, Turkey and Persia held by most Americans*". Those images were also "*matched by the lack of information and by the misinformation prevalent in the Middle East about the United States*".[7]

During the 19th century and by the turn of the 20th century the American presence in the Middle East was limited to missionary and philanthropic work with the exception of some commercial exchange. Examples of such missionary activities included the 21 stations established in European Turkey and Anatolia by 1900 in which 162 missionaries assisted by 900 native helpers were active. These activities expanded "*from western Persia eastward, from the original station at Urumia (1835) to Tehran (1872), Tabriz (1873), and Hamadan (1880). The Western Persian Mission also established a station at Mosul in 1892.*"[8]

These missionary activities were meant not only to convert Muslims to Christianity but also to spread the evangelical thought, especially that of the Presbyterian Church, to other Christian sects in the region. This was evident in the large number of local Christians who were active with American missionaries. Congregationalists, represented by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions were the most active part of American missionaries in the region. By the end of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century, those missionaries were operating in many parts of the region.

> *Their work [Congregationalists] has been supplemented in Syria and Persia by the Presbyterians, in the Balkans by the Methodists, and in Egypt by the United Presbyterians; there are also less extensive American missions conducted by the Reformed Church among the Arabs, by Lutherans among the Kurds and by the Society of Friends in Palestine. The American Bible Society, which has been active in the Near East for a century, has distributed between four and five million volumes of the Scriptures in the several vernaculars.[9]*

---

[7] John A. DeNovo, op. cit. , P 6.
[8] Ibid. , P. 9.
[9] Edward Mead Earle, "American Mission in the Near East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Apr, 1929), pp. 398-417

Apart from missionary work, Americans did have an influential educational and cultural presence through schools and colleges in a variety of sectors. Educational services were provided either by missionary and religious school or as independent educational entities. Examples of such schools and colleges included the "*Robert College and the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) were organised in 1864, and the Home School for Girls, opened in Constantinople in 1872 paved the way for Constantinople Women's College.*"[10]

Those colleges provided Western and American-style education that must have had remarkable impact on Middle Eastern elite and on would-be leaders who became later very influential in the process of economic and political decision-making. American ideals of freedom, liberty and independence had an impact on the Armenians who were longing for statehood, "*American missions were an important factor in the political education of the Armenians according to the Western formulas.*" From this Western-style education Armenians "*learned anew to cherish their language and historical tradition; became acquainted with Western ideals of political, social, and economic progress.*"[11]

Despite the presence of American investments in the Ottoman Empire and an import-export exchange between the two nations, the rate of such commercial relations was very low in comparison with those between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. Tobacco, rice, leather, and oil were the main goods that the two sides were trading in. In the decade before WW1, rice was the main American import from turkey. In 1913 American imports of tobacco from Smyrna reached $2,387,814, while American Tobacco Company had 1750 employees in Kevalla, 1000 in Smyrna, 800 in Samsun and 250 in Ismid.[12]

Oil, moreover, was the main American export to turkey with kerosene as the main product. Before WW1, the Standard Oil Company of New York, known as SOCONY, was very active in creating a wide range of markets for its products in the region, notably in Egypt and the Levant. In

---

[10] Ibid. , p. 402.
[11] Ibid. , p. 403-404.
[12] John A. DeNovo, op. cit. , p. 39.

1898 the company established its branch in Egypt and in 1911 it completed its distributing agency in Constantinople.[13]

These commercial activities were further promoted and sustained by the establishment of the American Chamber of Commerce in 1911. The chamber extended its presence to parts of the Middle East and established branches in Smyrna, Beirut, Cairo and Salonika. The Chamber had about five hundred members in 1912."[14]

Limited commercial and political relations between the United States and the Middle East remained prevalent during the 19th century up to the First World War, with the exception of some initiatives undertaken by President William Howard Taft (1909-1913) and his Secretary of State Philander C. Knox. Foreign policy of President Taft was known for "*Dollar Diplomacy*" which was "*characterised as substituting dollars for bullets……an effort frankly directed to the increase of American trade.*"[15]

Although the Middle East remained on the fringe of American economic and commercial ambitions, the policy of dollar diplomacy would mark its presence in the region through an ambitious plan of railway project known as the Chester Project. The project was initiated by Admiral Colby M. Chester.[16] By the summer of 1909, the Chester Syndicate had applied for concessions that would cover the lines from Sivas in central Anatolia, Harput, Arghana, Diabekir, Mosul, and Kirkukto Sulaimaniya near the Persian border. The total length of the railroad was estimated to comprise at least 2000 kilometers with a total cost of at least $100 million.[17]

The Chester Syndicate was not the only company applying to get concessions to build railroads in the Ottoman Empire. The Anglo-American firm J. G. White and Company was also competing for the same enterprise. By autumn of 1909, however, the Chester associates were able to eliminate

---

[13] Ibid. , pp. 39-40.

[14] Hernert Maza, "Turkish-Arab Economic Relations with the United States," *World Affair*s, Vol. 141, No. 3 (Winter 1979), pp. 269-276.

[15] William Taft, "Fourth Annual Message, December 3, 2012,", Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/taft/speeches/speech-3786

[16] The project was named after Admiral Chester who was a commander in the U.S Navy before he retired in 1906. His son and his son in law C Arthur Moore would later work avidly to gain a concession to build a railroad in Turkey.

[17] John A. DeNovo, A Railroad for Turkey: the Chester Project, 1908-1913, *The Business History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3. (Autumn, 1959), pp. 300-329.

White Company from the competition. This led the Chester group to be well-organised and to launch the Ottoman-American Development Company by a New Jersey Charter. The company's first attempt (1909 -1911) to win the concession ultimately failed.[18]

This failure led the company to seek official support from the American embassy in Constantinople and directly from the State Department which in turn exercised some influence to gain the concession. Their efforts, however, remained futile. The failure of the Chester group was the result of some obstacles in the Turkish administration, but also of outside pressure from other rival powers, especially Germany. American officials eventually realised that "*German opposition had thrown obstacles in the path of the American concession-seekers.*"[19]

The causes behind the failure of the Chester Project in particular and America's overall economic and commercial penetration in the region in general can be summed up in the words of the American-Middle East relations specialist John DeNovo:

> *There was an interlude when enchantment with Dollar Diplomacy overcame the reluctance of Washington to become involved in Near East politics. The Chester project, however, was defeated by German imperialism, lack of popular support for business ambitions abroad, and vacillation by the promoters themselves. The time for effective alliance between the State Department and American businessmen was not yet at hand.[20]*

American presence in the Middle East during the 19th century and by the turn of the 20th century was limited to missionary, philanthropic, and educational work with the exception of some scarce economic investments. When American businessmen, usually with some support from the State Department, decided to take some initiatives to break this rule, they were often confronted with the overwhelming influence of the European powers in a region. The Middle East for the Europeans was like Latin America was for the Americans in terms of strategic and economic importance. The

---

[18] Ibid. , pp. 305-307.
[19] Ibid. . P. 312.
[20] Ibid. , P. 300.

Great War that was yet to come, however, would provide a rare opportunity for American policy-makers to make a presence in that contested region.

1.2.2 The Fall of the Ottoman Empire: Carving up the Spoils of War.

The Great War that swept the European continent and soon spread to other parts of the globe between 1914 and 1918 proved to be a decisive moment for U.S policymakers to abandon the old foreign policy orthodoxy of non-entanglement in the European quarrels and to embrace a more active role in world affairs. When the war broke out in Europe in 1914, President Wilson assumed complete neutrality towards the conflict. This position was dictated by the diverse and multiethnic nature of the American society that each part of it sided with one or the other side of the belligerents. This neutrality, however, was barely applicable for the economic sector since the U.S and Britain had developed strong economic and commercial ties that continued throughout the war. This condition led the Germans to act against American interests abroad and therefore triggered the U.S to get involved in the conflict on the side of the Allies in 1917.

Because of the involvement of Ottoman Empire in the war, the Middle East became one of the most active battlefields of the conflict. Before its involvement in the war and even after becoming part of the conflict against the central powers, including the Ottoman Empire, the United States maintained, to a large extent, normal relations with turkey. This abstention from directly confronting Turkey was meant to protect American interests, notably missionary and educational activities, and American citizens in the region.

The desire to protect American interests in the Middle East was not only Wilson's conviction, but also the outcome of some political pressure that some influential figures exercised on him. Cleveland H. Dodge, a close friend of President Wilson and an industrialist with an old missionary and education ties with the Middle East, was the best example. In December 1917, Dodge wrote to the president that "*war with Turkey would be a serious blow*" to American interests in the Middle

East and would, therefore, "*jeopardise many American lives besides stopping the work we are doing in saving the lives of thousands of natives*"[21]

The influence of Dodge on Wilson was not only to avoid direct confrontation with Turkey, but also to increase American relief works in the region. In 1918 The American Committee for Relief in the Near East, led by Dodge and his friend Barton, was able to receive "*support from the State Department, War Department, Navy Department, and the American Relief Administration*" in its effort to "*to get some one hundred missionaries of the American and the Presbyterian boards back into the Ottoman Empire*".[22]

Apart from his efforts to protect American interests in the Middle East during the war, President Wilson was also an active part in an issue that has continued to disturb the Middle East and the Arab world until the present day. The Balfour Declaration, a promise by the British Foreign Secretary during the war to provide a land for the Jews in Palestine, gained the assent and the support of American politicians both in Congress and the White House.

Wilson's position on the Balfour promise shifted dramatically from hesitance to approval. When asked by the British government in September 1917 about his view on the declaration, he replied that the time was not ripe to address the issue. A month later, on October 6, 1917, he was asked again and this time he agreed that the British should issue such a declaration.[23]

The President hesitance to embrace the Declaration was the outcome of three main factors. The first was his fear that the endorsement of such declaration would jeopardise American relations with Turkey. Moreover, the President wanted to get the formal support of the declaration from other Allied powers namely France and Russia. And finally, the first inquiry of the British government was unofficial, while the second request was accompanied with the official declaration that stated clearly the nature of the promise to the Jewish people.

---

[21] Cleveland H. Dodge quoted in Joseph L. Grabill, "Cleveland H. Dodge, Woodrow Wilson and the Near East", Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985), Vol. 48, No. 4 (WINTER 1970), pp. 249-264

[22] Ibid. , P. 257.

[23] Richard Ned Lebow, "Woodrow Wilson and the Belfour Declaration," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 501-523

It was not until ten months later, when turkey was all but defeated that Wilson finally made his support for the declaration public. Thus, political considerations independent of Wilson's own feelings toward Zionism were responsible in the first case for his noncommittal response and, in the second case, for his endorsement of the Belfour Declaration.[24]

By the end of the war, President Wilson framed the boldest program of his presidency that was to shift the United States from its continental view of dominance to a broad international perspective of American hegemony. The Fourteen Points Program delivered in a speech to a joint session of Congress in January 1918, introduced Wilson's post-war peace plan which addressed the future state of Turkey and also introduced the notion of self-determination that would affect many nations under colonial rule in the Middle East.

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the U.S President asserted that the Turkish portion of that Empire "*should be assured a secure sovereignty*", but the other parts of the Empire, notably those of the Middle East, "*should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.*" The President also stressed the notion of self-determination and the end of colonial rule through "*a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims.*"[25]

This statement of the leader of the most powerful victor of the Great War raised hopes of complete independence among many peoples across the Middle East. These hopes would nonetheless face the opposition of America's allies, namely France and Britain, who had carved out sweeping influence in the region and who had already decided, in the secret dealing of the Sykes Picot agreement, how to divide the region into spheres of influence.

For this reason, Wilson sought a middle position "*between the old–style imperialism of the secret treaties and Lenin's call for an end to empire.*" Consequently, the president "*did not use the word*

---

[24] Ibid. , p. 523.
[25] Woodrow Wilson, Wilson's "Fourteen Points" (January 8, 1918), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/wilson/speeches/wilsons-fourteen-points

self-determination, but he did insist that in dealing with colonial claims the 'interests' of colonial peoples should be taken into account."[26]

This conflict of interests between the United States and its allies on the issue of self-determination and on putting an end to imperialism would be craftily manipulated by the colonial powers. The British government worked to consolidate its presence in the region "*in such a way that we shall have become as far as possible both indispensible to, and acceptable by, the local community*" and commercial influence "*offered the best means of attaining the new objective.*"[27]

In consequence, instead of relying on the old form of direct control of foreign lands and foreign peoples, the imperial powers of France and Britain turned to a new form of dominance; that is to impose guardianship through mandates under the cover of the League of Nations; a system that "*proved little more than annexation in disguise.*"[28] This form of dominance was also justified by the notion that "*only mature peoples on the upper rungs of the racial hierarchy deserved the chance to decide their own future.*"[29]

This policy of domination over foreign peoples through the pretext of political immaturity was also promoted by western intellectuals of the time. The American oriontalist Morris Jastrow strongly supported the European and American influence over the Middle East and the division of the region into "*number of states according to geographical and ethnic boundaries*" since the creation of a united entity would be impossible until, "*when under western influences more advance political ideas make their way through the East, a federation of the nationalities of Asia Minor may be possible.*"[30]

The Great War, with the defeat of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, left the Allied powers with no serious rival to oversee the division of the lands of the vanquished. France and Britain, with the consent of the United States, divided up the Middle East into areas of influence and

---

[26] George C. Herring, op. cit. , p.412.
[27] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914-1922, (U.K: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) P. 160.
[28] George C. Herring, op. cit. , p. 421.
[29] Michael H. Hunt, The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance, (United States: the University of North Carolina Press, 2007) p. 65.
[30] Morris Jastrow, "the Turks and the Future of the Near East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 84, International Reconstruction (Jul., 1919), pp. 30-40

domination under the guise of the mandate system and under the auspices of the League of Nations. Though the United Sates continued to play a minor role in this vital region, the consent that Wilson had granted to France and Britain to assert their influence on the region would lead those powers to tolerate American economic and educational penetration in the region in the years and decades to come.

1.2.3. The Interwar Years: The Scramble for Middle East Oil.

Apart from the peace and territorial issues that dominated the negotiations between the belligerents by the end of the war, a new and pivotal dimension would take a considerable part of the diplomatic dealings between the allied powers; that was the concern of oil investment in the Middle Est. Oil, as a new and vital source of energy, proved to be a decisive factor in turning the balance of power in the last conflict. The Middle East would prove a strategic source of this asset during the war and even beyond.

Because of its growing industry and vibrant economy, the United States was no less concerned with finding new oil resources abroad despite the huge amount produced at home. This concern was driven by the fear of the depletion of oil resources coupled with a rapid rise of consumption which had increased by 90 % between 1911 and 1918 and was due to grow more the war. In these conditions, the director of the United States Geological Survey George Otis Smith advised that the government should "*give moral support to every effort of American business to expand its circle of activity in oil production throughout the world*".[31]

The Anglo-French influence in the Middle East would, however, make it difficult for American companies to compete for oil exploration and investment. Examples of some discriminatory actions against American companies could be found in the rejection of the British authorities to allow the American company SOCONY to resume oil exploration in Palestine after the war. A more serious dispute between the British and the American government occurred in August of 1919 when the same company sent two geologists to Baghdad look for oil possibilities in

---

[31] Ibid. , p. 194.

Mesopotamia, British authorities refused to give them permission, while British Geologists had been working there for months.[32]

The situation would prove harder with the formal British and French monopoly established on the region through the San Remo agreement of April 1920. The agreement openly excluded the Americans from Iraqi oil. The U.S Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby reacted that America is committed to the principle *"that opportunity to explore and develop the petroleum resources of the world wherever found should without discrimination be freely extended."*[33]

The failure of the United States to be a member of the League of Nations, because of the rejection of Congress, further eroded the U.S claim to defend its investments in the region since, as its rivals used to claim, the French and the British were undertaking the entire burden of political governance of the region and therefore they alone deserved to exploit its natural resources.

These limitations on American investment in the Middle East would lead the Department of State to work hand in hand with American companies to press hard for an open door policy in the region. The administration of Warren Harding (1921-1923), with the initiatives of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and Secretary of State Charles Hughes, expressed its willingness to support the American oil companies to attain concessions in the Middle East with the condition that these companies would work in unison.

In the first months of 1921, seven large companies succeeded in uniting for a collective work in Mesopotamia, and on November 3, 1921, W. C. Teagle (president of Jersey Standard) wrote to the State Department that *"the seven companies- Standard of New Jersey, Socony, Sinclair, Texas, Gulf, Mexican, and Atlantic- wished to explore prospective areas in Mesopotamia."* The State Department replied that it would notify the group with any opportunities of exploration as soon as the two governments, of the U.S and Great Britain, reconcile their differences.[34]

---

[32] John A. Denovo, op. cit. , PP 169. 173.
[33] U.S Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby quoted in Douglas Little, <u>American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945</u>, (the United States: the University of North Carolina Press, 2002), P 46.
[34] John A. Denovo. , op. cit. PP 186-187.

The coming years would undoubtedly prove hard both for American diplomacy and the group of oil companies to reach an agreement with the British. In these negotiations, the American group worked to have an equitable share in the Turkish Petroleum Company.[35] After long negotiations, the American group succeeded in gaining 23.27% of the interests in the Turkish Petroleum Company, a share similar to that of each of other major partners (Anglo-Persian, Royal-Dutch Shell, and the Compagnie Francaise de Petroles).[36]

In 1928 the American group, later became the Near East Development Corporation, and the Turkish Petroleum Company, which also changed its name in 1929 to the Iraqi Petroleum Company, agreed also on a historic monopoly over Middle Eastern oil. All members of the company "*bound themselves not to operate, except through the company, within an area bounded on the map by a red line. This area embraced virtually all of the old Turkish Empire.*"[37] This cooperation was meant to avoid bitter rivalry among the partners and also to dominate oil production and the oil market.

Other American oil companies, however, were also active to gain oil concessions both inside and outside the "*red line*" region. In 1929, Standard Oil of California, which was not a member in the Turkish Petroleum Company and therefore not committed to the "*red line*" agreement, was able to gain an oil concession in Bahrain with strong support from the State Department and long negotiations with the British who exercise complete control over oil exploration in this country.[38] In May 1933, the same company succeeded in signing an agreement with Saudi Arabia to begin oil exploration in area of 360.000 square miles for a period of sixty years in exchange for 175.000$.[39]

In the interwar years, American oil companies along with the American diplomacy were very active to expand oil investments in places that were outside of American influence. The Middle

---

[35] The company was established and owned by a group of large European companies. In 1914, the owners agreed on the portion each would have. The British group Anglo-Persia had 50% of its interests while the Deutsche Bank and Shell each had 25% of the interests.
[36] John A. Denovo, op. cit. , P. 197.
[37] Ibid. , PP. 198-199.
[38] Ibid. , P. 204.
[39] Daniel Yergin, op. cit. , p 291.

East was a promising region to boost oil production and therefore help meet the needs of the American growing industry.

By 1939, the Middle East became one of the most vital regions from American interests and therefore occupied a high priority in its foreign policy agenda. This region, along with many parts of the globe, would again be disrupted with yet another global conflict. This second conflict would prove another timely opportunity for the U.S to assert its hegemony not only on the region but also on around the world.

1.2.4. The Second World War: Building New Relations.

During the Second World War, the Middle East continued to be a vital and strategic region for the belligerents both for its geopolitical standing and its energy resources. In consequence, this region was a front line of some of the fiercest battles during the war, and was also a critical route of supply for the Allied Powers. In terms of energy, Middle Eastern oil was a strategic asset in the hands of the Allies which eventually contributed immensely to their eventual victory.

The strategic position of the Middle East made it impossible for the belligerent to keep it out of their territorial ambitions. As the region was an old sphere of influence of Britain, France and, to a limited extent the United States, the German armies soon began their offensive in the region after they had occupied large swaths of Europe. In 1942, Hitler's campaign in North Africa was also "*combined with covert Nazi subversion in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Iran, and efforts to woo neutral Turkey.*" Those German offensives were finally "*blunted by the Soviets at Stalingrad and by the British at El Alamein in North Africa.*"[40]

The victories of the Allies in the Middle East and North Africa were in equal measure the outcome of the large contributions of the U.S army in the region. The U.S and British invasion of Sicily, in Italy, and southern France were launched from the Middle East. Land-lease equipments, moreover, were supplied to Russia through Iran which was then occupied by the British, Russian and American troops. Unlike the First World War, those American troops in the Middle East were

---

[40] Rashid Khalidi, <u>Sowing Crisis: the Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East</u>, (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2009) P 43.

did not disappear after the end of the war. Such events marked "*a continuous U.S military presence in different locales in this region, a presence that is ongoing to this day*"[41]

Apart from the geographical and military importance of the Middle East to the Allied powers and to the United States during the war, oil and energy resources in the region were decisive factors that helped the Allies win the war. The Allied powers assumed a mutual responsibility of fueling each other's war machinery whenever and wherever the energy was needed. For example, American gas tanks were filled by the British in the United Kingdom and in the Middle East, while the United States was responsible to fill the gas tanks of the Allies in the Pacific and North Africa[42]

The vital role of oil during the war further highlighted its post-war importance for the Allied powers and in turn led to a fierce competition between Britain, Russia and the United States to dominate and exploit Middle Eastern oil. The heavy reliance of Britain on Persian oil during the war and the Soviet Union's growing influence in Iran urged U.S officials to think seriously about securing the lion's share of this source. This situation was also intensified by the expected rise of demands after the war by the American growing industry and large military.

In this context, Saudi Arabia figured prominently in the American post-war vision as a reliable source of oil exploration and production. What made this country particularly important for the U.S government was, besides its strategic position and its vast oil reserve, its full independence from any colonial rule throughout its history and also the absence of foreign military bases on its soil.[43] Moreover, even before the war broke out, two U.S companies were making remarkable progress in oil exploration in a time when other foreign companies were skeptical of the existence of such asset in this country and therefore remained reluctant to attain oil concessions.

For this end, the American government made repeated attempts to put American oil investments in Saudi Arabia, which were carried out by two private American companies, in the hands of the government. These attempts were initiated by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes in the name of the newly created government entity, the Petroleum Reserves Corporation.

---

[41] Ibid. , P.8.
[42] Daniel Yergin, op. cit. , p 381.
[43] Rashid Khalidi, op. cit. , P 13.

In August of 1943, Ickes succeeded in striking a deal with Socal and Texaco that allowed the government to own one-third of Casoc[44] for $40 million and would also have the right to buy 51% of Casoc's production in peacetime and 100% in wartime. The enormous pressure exercised by other big companies, who were afraid of federal control of oil industry, finally led Ickes to withdraw the plan while *"blaming Texaco and Socal for being too greedy and recalcitrant."*[45]

In this context, President Roosevelt's final days in his office were crowned with a historic meeting with the leader of a country that would prove to hold the richest oil reserve in the world. In his return from the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the U.S president held a meeting with King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia on the battleship USS *Quincy* in the Suez Cannel Zone in Egypt. Though the concerns of the two leaders were very different, the outcome of this meeting paved the way for further American involvement in the Region through the influential position of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting lasted for five hours of intense diplomatic negotiations. Roosevelt's prime concerns in the region were the issue of creating a land for the Jews in Palestine, the increase of American oil investments in the country, and the postwar settlement of the Middle East. On the other hand, Ibn Saud's concerns centered on bolstering American interests in the country in order to counterbalance the growing influence of America's traditional ally and rival in the region, Great Britain.[46]

The State Department's strategic planners were not thinking just of short-term gains with bolstering relations with Saudi Arabia through this meeting, but they were also worried about the possible expansion of their fiercest post-war rival, the USSR. The fact that Saudi Arabia did not come under direct European colonial control throughout its history and that it was not a sphere of influence of another world power made it a strategic ally for the post-war struggle with Communism.[47]

---

[44] Stands for California Arabian Standard Oil Company. This company was a branch created by Socal and Texaco in 1933 to attain oil concessions in Saudi Arabia.
[45] Daniel Yergin, op. cit. , pp. 398-399.
[46] Ibid. , p. 404.
[47] Rashid Khalidi, op. cit. , p 13.

Though both leaders agreed upon most of the issues concerning the Middle East and its post-war settlement, the Saudi King was very resistant to the idea of creating a land for the Jews in Palestine. The King confirmed this position to the American President in April 1945 to which Roosevelt responded with a letter asserting his position during their meeting that "*the United States would consult with both Arabs and Jews before acting in Palestine [and that] it would never act against the interests of the Arabs*"[48]

During the war, the Middle East was a stage for the conflict and a strategic asset for the post-war struggle between the West and Communist camp. It offered a strategic route of supply of ammunitions to the allies and a source of oil to its war machinery. This position of the region led eventually to a fierce competition between the allies to dominate its resources and thus spurred American policymaker to build strategic ties with the dominant force in the region, Saudi Arabia.

1.3. The Cold War

The end of the Second World War did mark the end of a long and a costly conflict between the powers of the Axis and the Allies, but it did also set the stage for yet another confrontation between two distinct camps within the Allies: The West, led by the United States, and the Communist camp, led by the Soviet Union. The Middle East, with its strategic assets, would prove a hot place of confrontation between both sides and to which the United States would commit itself for a far deeper involvement. Through this involvement, the subsequent U.S. administrations succeeded not only in securing their interests in the region, but also in marginalising the role of the Soviet Union.

1.3.1. Truman, Eisenhower, and the Policy of Containment in the Middle East

After the Second World War, American growing involvement in the Middle East sprang from a combination of economic and political considerations. By the end of the war, the region was a hub of western investments in oil industry while its promising reserve presented a strong hope for the

---

[48] Ibid. , P. 14.

U.S as a future source of energy for its vibrant economy and growing industry. In consequence, any Soviet expansion, which was believed to be driven by historic calculations, would pose a real threat to the national security of the United States. The expanding commitments of the United States in the region came at the time of a continuous economic and political decline of Britain in the Middle East and in many regions under its control.

The first case of confrontation between the USSR and the United States and its allies in the region took place in Iran just after the end of the war. Apart from the Soviet clandestine movements in Northern Iran to spur the separation of Azerbaijan from the central Iranian government, Soviet troops were still occupying the country along with the British forces after the end of the war. While the British troops withdrew by the end of 1945, the Soviets showed no sign to seek this path. This led eventually to the Iranian-Soviet crisis of 1946 and to the Anglo-American pressure on the USSR in the U.N which forced the Soviets to pull out their troops from the country.[49]

The diplomatic crisis that arose between the Soviet Union and Turkey in 1946 would prove a more serious case of collision between the two camps. The crisis came as a result of the Soviet's demands on Turkey to revise the Monteux Convention which administered the Dardanelles and the Bosporus straits. Moscow's proposals aimed at creating bases along the straits and establishing a joint administration of the straits. The United States strongly rejected the proposals and reacted in an increase of its naval presence in the Mediterranean with a fleet of eight warships, including the legendary battleship *Missouri* and the newly launched aircraft carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. This move led the United States to establish a new Mediterranean command of twelve warships, which in turn gave it naval supremacy in the region.[50]

Apart from this military move to assert its presence in the region, the Truman administration devised a more ambitious plan to counter Soviet expansion. In his speech to a joint session of Congress on 12 March 1947, President Truman appealed for Congress to financially help the governments of Greece and Turkey and therefore assist them to resist Soviet expansion. "Turkey now needs our support," declared Truman and explained that "*since the war, Turkey has sought*

[49] Rashid Khalidi, op. cit. , pp. 51-52.
[50] George C. Herring, Op. Cit. , pp. 609-610.

additional financial assistance from Great Britain and the United States for the purpose of effecting that modernisation necessary for the maintenance of its national integrity. That integrity is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East."

Truman's speech, which became known as the Truman Doctrine, initiated the foundation of the policy of containment of Cold War. This policy aimed at preventing the Soviet Union from expanding in the territories of its Eastern and Southern borders. Moreover, the doctrine strongly linked the security of Turkey to that of the Middle East and the security of that region to that of the United States. "*If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority*" declared the president "*the effect upon its neighbour, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder may well spread throughout the Middle East.*"

For the sake of saving Greece, Turkey and therefore the Middle East, the President requested $400 million of financial aid to the governments of the two countries and the transmission of civilian and military personnel "*to assist in the tasks of reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and material assistance.*" The President also recommended "*that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of selected Greek and Turkish Personnel.*"[51]

Apart from the pivotal role played by the Truman administration to pull Turkey into the western orbit from the beginning of the Cold War, the President's decisions on the issue of creating a land for the Jews in Palestine remained to affect U.S-Middle Eastern relations for the decades to come. Unlike President Wilson who showed reluctance to agree on the Balfour Declaration or President Roosevelt who promised his Saudi counterpart to consult with both the Jews and the Arabs before taking any decision concerning the Palestinians, President Truman wholly embraced the U.N partition plan of 1947 and later recognised the state of Israel in 1948.

Historians, however, differ about the impulse behind Truman's support for the Jews in Palestine despite the reservations expressed by his State Department officials. While some believe that Truman's decisions were based mainly on human considerations, others argue that the

---

[51]Harry Truman, "Truman Doctrine: March 12, 1947",Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/truman/speeches/speech-3343. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp

influence of the Jewish electorate was the main drive. Others, moreover, claim that the U.S competition with the Soviet Union to win new allies and partners in the Middle East played a vital role to affect the President's decision.

Because of its failed efforts to maintain stability in Palestine, the British government requested that the U.N should undertake its responsibility to bring a solution to the problem. The U.N on its part created the UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) in May 1947 to prepare a report for the General Assembly. In the committee's meeting of 25 November 1947 to vote for the proposal of the partition, "*Truman remained in the background, on the grounds that the U.N must be allowed to proceed without extraneous pressures.*" In the few days before the U.N General Assembly voted on the resolution, Zionist lobbies made decisive pressure on the White House to change its course.[52]

State Department officials along with the Zionist participants "*have testified to the decisive intervention of the Truman White House during the last 48 hours before the decisive vote on 29 November.*"[53] In addition to the Zionist pressure on the White House and Truman's approval, some of the President advisors, namely Clark Clifford and David Niles "*began meeting with U.N delegations of other nations and putting massive pressure on them to vote for partition.*"[54] The U.S support of the plan helped its passage in the U.N but in turn created a sense of bitterness among the Arabs toward the United States.

Truman's support for the Jews did not end with the approval of the partition plan, but it extended to a more historic recognition of the state of Israel in May 1948. On this occasion, the president again acted against the advice of his State Department officials. This issue on Palestine, as the previous one, gave rise to a heated debate between White House officials and the State Department led by George Marshal.

---

[52]Michael J. Cohen, "Truman and Palestine, 1945-1948: Revisionism, Politics and Diplomacy", Oxford University Press, *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Feb., 1982), pp. 1-22

[53] Ibid. , p.11.
[54] Salim Yaqub , "The United States and the Middle East:1914 to 9/11, part1", (United States: The Teaching Company, 2003) p.18.

Moreover, arguments have continued to contrast on the drive behind Truman support for the Jews. While the White House school has argued that he supported them "*out of genuine humanitarian concern*", the State Department School, concerned with maintaining good relations with the oil-producing Arab countries, believes that he did so "*because of his narrow political interest in the strategically-placed Jewish vote*"[55]

Apart from these two fundamental reasons to explain Truman's continuous support for the Jews in Palestine, contemporary scholars have looked at the issue from a more global viewpoint. The historian Michael J. Cohen arrived at a very inclusive conclusion that sum up Truman's policy toward Palestine arguing that the Zionist victories over the Palestinians and their filling of the political vacuum left by the British in Palestine was a strong drive which deserves attention.

> *He [Truman] was also undoubtedly relieved to discover, at last, a way out of the seemingly irresolvable problems of the British evacuation, UN tutelage, Trusteeship, and anarchy in Palestine which invited Soviet meddling, if not intervention. When the young State of Israel filled the power vacuum left by the end of the British Mandate, Truman, together with the entire Western Alliance, had grounds not only for admiration, but for profound gratitude.[56]*

Eisenhower's administration (1953-1961), like that of Truman, did much to expand its commitments in the Middle East and to advance its interests and influence. This was again done because of Britain's declining presence in the region and the fear that the vacuum left by this decline would be filled by the Soviet Union. What distinguished the administration Eisenhower from that of Truman, however, was the amount of energy and time devoted to exercise and expand American influence in that region.

When Britain finally decided to withdraw from the Suez, American policymakers were rushing to devise a security pact in the region that would help protect it from Soviet infiltration. The National Security Council drafted a proposal in its NSC-5428 report, which was later approved by the President, according to which "*the best regional defense strategy was based on 'the northern tier,' which would include Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq*." The proposal took

---

[55] Michael J. Cohen. , op. cit. p. 2.
[56] Ibid. , p. 19.

shape in February 1954 when Turkey and Iraq signed an anti-Communist pact to which Pakistan and Iran, encouraged by the American promise to provide them with financial assistance, joined several months later.[57] This agreement came to be known as the Baghdad Pact.

Because of Britain's membership and America's continuous diplomatic and financial support for the pact, Cairo and Damascus bluntly rejected it while Moscow was propagating that it represented "*a disguised from of imperialism which involves Middle Eastern countries in provocations against the Soviet Union.*" This Western-backed alliance provoked a growing rapprochement between Egypt and the Soviets and which culminated in a "*$86 million arms-for-cotton deal that Khrushchev and Nasser concluded with the help of Czech middlemen in September 1955.*"[58]

With the Suez crisis of 1956, the United States assumed far greater commitment in this troubled region. The crisis erupted after Nasser decided to nationalise the Suez Canal to fund his magnificent project to build the Aswan dam after the U.S declined its financial support under the pretext of Nasser's neutrality in the Cold War struggle. This move toward nationalisation alarmed Britain and spurred a tripartite Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt which in turn outraged Eisenhower's administration. The latter was afraid of mounting Arab nationalism, the possibility that the Soviets would exploit the tensions, and the distraction of the world's attention from the Soviet moves in Eastern Europe[59]

After growing pressures from their ally the United States and Khrushchev's threat to fire rockets on Paris and London, Britain and France stopped the offensive. The crisis marked the last gasp of British imperialism in the region thus leaving it for further superpower competition and dominance. At this event, Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were crafting a new strategy toward the Middle East that would help fill the vacuum left by the British, restore some of America's prestige, and prevent the Soviet Union from further penetration in the region.

On January, 5 1957 President Eisenhower, after his reelection in 1956, delivered a message to Congress in which he outlined his policy towards the Middle East to further the policy of

---

[57] Douglas Little. , op. cit. p. 129.
[58] Ibid. , p. 130.
[59] George C. Herring, op. cit. , PP .675-676.

Containment. This message came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine which, unlike the Truman Doctrine which had a global dimension, was directed solely to the Middle East.

The doctrine was primarily designed to deal with the possibility of Communist aggression. For this sake, the president sought the authorisation "*to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East,*" and "*to undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and cooperation.*" Moreover, such assistance included "*the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations*"[60]

This doctrine fully committed the United States to this region and its policies were put into test many times during the Eisenhower years. In the spring of 1957, the King of Jordan was facing mounting nationalist opposition to relinquish the throne. He appealed for U.S assistance which in turn sent economic aid and placed the Sixth Fleet in east of the Mediterranean. King Hussein continued in power thanks to the American help.

In the summer of 1958, the pro-Western president of Lebanon Camille Chamoun sought to stay in power and, in consequence, faced fierce opposition from the Muslim community. Driven by the concern that these tensions might be exploited by nationalist regimes in neighboring countries, the Eisenhower administration forced the president to step down and sent marine troops to help restore stability.[61]

The Eisenhower doctrine was not always successful to bring about stability and order. In response to Soviet financial help to Syria, the U.S dispatched again the Sixth Fleet in the region, worked to form a coalition against Syria and launched an unsuccessful covert operation to topple the regime. These efforts were backfired, intensified anti-American sentiment in the region and urged the Syrian government to form the United Arab Republic with its ally Egypt. [62]

The Truman and the Eisenhower doctrines were very complimentary programs that sought to advance American influence and interests and to counter Communist expansion in key regions

---

[60]Dwight D. Eisenhower, Eisenhower Doctrine (January 5, 1957), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/speeches/speech-3360
[61] George C. Herring, op. cit. , PP. 678-679.
[62] Ibid. , P. 678.

around the world. The Middle East figured prominently in the two programs, but was the pivotal concern of the Eisenhower administration. While Truman succeeded to bring Turkey to the Western camp, Eisenhower helped forge the Baghdad pact, filled the power vacuum left by Britain's retreat from the region, and worked to save pro-western regimes in Jordan and Lebanon.

1.3.2. The Nixon Doctrine and the Middle East: (1969-1979)

After two decades from its pronouncement, the policy of containment began to lose most of its lure under the Johnson presidency largely because of the cost and the setbacks of the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, the Middle East continued to be an asset for the American economy and its national security. Despite the importance of the region, the British continued their policy of retrenchment under the stress of an ailing economy. Americans, concerned with their growing interests in the region, began to devise a viable strategy to fill the vacuum left by their ally.

The Johnson administration devised what came to be known as the "*two pillars*" strategy. This policy "*called for Saudi Arabia and Iran to assume many of Britain's responsibilities for defending the region.*" The policy was implemented with a massive arms sale to these countries. In a meeting with the Saudi king Faisal in June 1966, President Johnson approved the sale of $100 million in nonlethal military. Concerning Iran, Johnson did also approve the sale of the Phantoms in August and "he also provided $200 million in revolving credit to finance Iranian arms purchases.[63]

While Johnson helped draft the "*two pillars*" policy, President Nixon transformed it into a doctrine that bore his name. Nixon shored up the reliance on Iran and Saudi Arabia as regional partners to promote American interests in the region by boosting their military capabilities. From 1969 to 1972 Saudi Arabia used its growing oil revenues to increase its defense spending from $700 million to $1.4 billion. The kingdom also exercised its influence to help convince "*six tiny sheikdoms in Southeast Arabia formerly controlled by the British to establish a pro-Western federation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).*"[64]

---

[63] Douglas Little, op. cit. , pp. 140-141.
[64] Ibid. , p. 144.

The cooperation between the two countries was not limited to oil industry and arms sale, but extended later to include economic and industrial partnership. This was done after bilateral negotiations that culminated in the agreement of June 8, 1974. The opening remarks of a joint statement on the Saudi-American cooperation treaty stressed that the two countries "*expressed their readiness to expand cooperation in the fields of economics, technology, and industry and in the supply of the Kingdom's requirements for defensive purposes.*"[65]

The other pillar of the Nixon Doctrine in the Middle East was Iran with its pro-Western leader. Since the Shah's return to power with American help in 1953, he strove hard to build a strong military by relying mostly on the soaring oil revenues. After Nixon became president, the U.S military aid to Iran "*broadened to include Phantom jets and sophisticated naval equipment,*" and Iran was being "*developed as the policemen of the area, posed to intervene in nationalist Iraq or anywhere in the Gulf where popular movements threaten the traditional Arab emirs.*"[66]

Iran's role as a regional policeman to serve and protect Western interests in the region was coupled with a reliance on its huge oil resources and growing market to sustain an expanding Western industry. Half of Iran's revenues came from oil income, and it devoted almost 10% of its GNP to the military sector. Moreover, thanks to its expanding wealth, the country remained to be the major importer of U.S goods in the Middle East, consuming about a third of U.S. exports to the region[67]

This strategic pillar to America's interests in the region would soon face a hard time of social upheaval that began in October 1977 and sought to topple the Shah regime and bring about change in Iran's leadership. This upheaval, which came to be known as the Islamic Revolution, was largely inspired by the exiled religious leader Khomeini and supported by leftist forces. In January 1979, the Shah was exiled and in April the country became an Islam republic with Khomeini as its Supreme Leader.

---

[65] Abbas Alnasrawi, "U.S Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Consistency of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Gulf War and the Iran-Contra Affair (Winter 1989), pp. 55-83
[66] "Nixon's Strategy in the Middle East," Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)Reports, No. 13 (Nov., 1972), pp. 3-8
[67] Ibid. , p.5.

This newly formed republic became one of the fiercest, if not the fiercest, adversaries to the United States in the region. The loss of Iran's service as an agent and a policeman in the region remained to affect America's interests until the present day. The historian and the international relations professor Avi Shlaim summarised the damage done to the American interests because of the loss of Iran:

> *With the collapse of the shah's regime, a decade of efforts to develop a viable Gulf strategy ended in spectacular failure. The main prop of the Nixon doctrine in the region had been demolished. America lost not only prestige, credibility and a close ally, but also its links with the Iranian military, its monitoring stations near the Soviet frontier, and one of its most lucrative export markets. Even more serious, the oil price increase from 13$ to 34$ a barrel had profound consequences for the world economy.[68]*

With the overthrow of one of the most loyal regimes in the region, went another enduring crisis in the history of American diplomacy. On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students seized the U.S embassy in Tehran and claimed its staff as hostages. The ensuing American diplomatic efforts were futile. The antagonism of the new Iranian government was triggered by the Shah's continuous repressive policies, America's interference in the Iranian affairs, and the revolutionary thoughts of Khomeini. The military operation to free the hostages not only failed, but it also added humiliation to the America's regional standing.

After laborious and intense diplomatic efforts, Secretary of State Warren Christopher was able to conclude a deal with the Iranians in Algiers. The deal, however, was not without undesirable costs. The United States "*promised noninterference and to release the Iranian assets that had been frozen when the crisis began.*" The crisis "*undermined the remaining pragmatists and moderates in Tehran and left the United States helpless in the face of a regime impervious to international entreaties or coercive pressures.*"[69]

---

[68] Avi Shlaim, <u>War and Peace in the Middle East</u>, (United States: Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books Inc, 1994). P. 68.
[69] Lawrance Freedman, <u>A Choice of Enemies: the United States Confronts the Middle East</u>, (United States: Public Affairs, 2008) p. 83.

Though the "*two pillars*" strategy or the Nixon doctrine proved some effectiveness at the beginning, it turned to be a debacle during the Carter presidency. As Iran continued to be a hindrance to American interests and allies in the region, the subsequent administrations would strive hard to weaken its power and to prevent its influence from spreading in neighboring states. While doing so, the same administrations worked hard to sustain old allies and to win new ones.

1.3.3. The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Peace Process: (1967-1979).

After the Suez Crisis and the ensuing American policies towards it, the conflict between Israel and the Arabs continued to consume much of American diplomacy in the Middle East and to affect the balance of power between the competing superpowers in the region. As the historian Vaughn P. Shannon argued, American foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict continued to be affected by three main influences. The geostrategic influence which "*focuses on geopolitics and material factors, such as oil, and the shifting of power in the international system,*" the domestic influence which stemmed from "*congressional-executive relations, interest groups, and electoral politics,*" and finally the "*perspective of the American presidents and their advisers*" and its effect on "*their balancing of domestic and strategic influences*". What marked the American stance towards the conflict in the period of 1967 to 1979, however, was the shift from the evenhanded approach to eventually taking sides in favour of the Israel.[70]

When John Kennedy came to office in January 20, 1961, he strove to strike a balance between Arab nationalists and conservatives on the one hand and between Israel and the Arabs on the other. While he continually assured Israel of its security, he pressed its leaders to make concessions to achieve a final peace with the Arabs. He tried to do this by permitting the sale of advanced antiaircraft arms. His efforts bore little fruit because of Israel's adamant position on the issue of refugees and the lack of enthusiasm among the Arabs towards Kennedy's efforts.[71]

Unlike Kennedy's "*balanced approach*" towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, President Lyndon Johnson repeatedly sided with Israel. This was evident in the rapid rise in American arms sale,

---

[70] Najib Chadbian, review of *Balancing Act: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, by Vaughn P. Shannon, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May, 2005), pp. 280-282, Cambridge University Press.

[71] Salim Yaqub, op. cit. , p. 29.

especially advanced aircrafts and tanks to the Israelis. Moreover, Israel's ongoing development of its nuclear capacities were hardly restrained by U.S. officials and in 1968 it succeeded to acquire its first nuclear bomb, a dramatic shift in the balance of power in favor of the Israelis.[72] In consequence, the United States helped strengthened its pivotal ally in the region while weakening its Arab nationalist and pro-Soviet adversaries.

The tensions between Israel and its leading Arab opponent, Egypt, intensified after the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Sinai under Egyptian pressure and Nasser's bold move to close the Tiran Strait in May 1967. The closure of the strait posed a serious threat to Israeli interests and spurred their threats to launch a war against Egypt. Meanwhile, the U.S president made efforts to organise an international flotilla to open the strait. When these efforts failed, Johnson's objection to the war was waning. In June 1967, Israel launched an air raid that destroyed the Egyptian ground force and fully occupied the Sinai Peninsula. As Jordon and Syrian joined the conflict on the side of Egypt, Israel extended its territorial occupation to include the West Bank and the Syrian Golan Heights.[73]

The defeat of Egypt and Syria, both a pro-Soviet states, meant a defeat to the Soviet interests in the region and an additional strength to the U.S ally, Israel. To avoid Soviet meddling in the conflict and to not anger pro-American Arab states, the U.S president did not show support for Israel publicly, but was rather pleased with its territorial advance privately. Moreover, the president did not press for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied lands and asserted that such move can be obtained only by a complete peace agreement. This stance stemmed from "*a pro-Israeli tone of public opinion, the views of Congress, the private lobbying of Johnson's many Jewish friends, and Nasser's unfounded accusations*".[74]

On November 22, 1967 UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 which called for a "*land-for- peace*" settlement i.e. Arab recognition of Israel' security in return for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied lands. The resolution was not executed because of its vague wording. It did not say what should be done first, the Arab recognition of Israel or its withdrawal. The phrase of

---

[72] Ibid. , pp. 32.
[73] Ibid. , pp. 35-36.
[74] Wiiliam B. Quandt, Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967, (United States: the Brookings Institution and University of California Press, 2005) p.45.

Israel's withdrawal from "*territories occupied in the recent conflict*" was put without the article "*the*" and thus left the door open for debate.[75]

Following this diplomatic stalemate, Egypt embarked on continuous and costly military initiatives to take back its occupied territories. The period of 1968 to 1970 witnessed what came to known as the War of Attrition in which the Egyptian military launched fierce air raids to push the Israeli forces back. This was done by an overt Soviet aid in military personnel as well as in ammunition. The American response was quite obvious, the supply of Israel with advanced and sophisticated military equipments. In this superpower competition in the region, the United States and its ally, Israel, remained to have the upper hand.

Meanwhile, the new Egyptian president Anwar al Sadat, inaugurated on October 15, 1970 after Nasser's death, came up with some peace initiatives under the auspices of the UN envoy and the U.S Secretary of State William Rogers. These initiatives were repeatedly turned down by Israel with a covert support from President Nixon and his National Security advisor Henry Kissinger. The hindrance to Sadat's peace initiatives was meant to put pressure on him to extract concessions from his country regarding its relationship with the Soviets. Kissinger efforts were coupled with Saudi's pressure on Sadat to make such concessions.[76]

This political stalemate would soon trigger another Arab-Israeli war that would be exploited by superpower rivalry and was successfully turned to America's advantage through Kissinger's efforts. On 6 October 1973, the Egyptian and the Syrian military launched a surprising attack on the Israeli force in Sinai and the Golan Heights. After a brief victory, Israel forces turned the tide to their favour thanks to America's heavy arms supply.

The conflict was about to escalate to a superpower nuclear confrontation when the Soviets warned that they would intervene unilaterally. This urged Americans to place their forces at the highest nuclear alert. Moscow declined its threat and Kissinger, after Israel made strategic gains

---

[75] Salim Yaqub, op. cit. , p. 36.
[76] Ibid. , p. 126.

and with an American promise of $2.2 billion in military aid, convinced their ally to stop the offensive on the 26 of October.[77]

These Israeli gains were again in America's advantage to press Egypt for further concessions to abandon its partnership with the Soviet camp. Kissinger's subsequent diplomatic efforts as a secretary of state of President Ford succeeded to arrive at a disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel and between Syria and Israel in 1974. Later in 1975, he managed to cement his efforts with another Israeli-Egyptian disengagement in Sinai. The most remarkable accomplishment of Kissinger for his country's influence in the region was "*delivering Egypt fully into the American camp and removing it definitely from the Soviet one. This was clearly the primary objective of Kissinger and the two presidents he served, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford*"[78]

The residue left by the 1973 war and the ensuing diplomatic efforts continued to occupy the White House for the coming years. Under the presidency of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), the U.S assumed a greater diplomatic role that culminated in the Camp David Accord of 17 September 1978 and followed by the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel on March 26, 1979. The essence of the accord called for Israel to "*withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a peace treaty and normalised diplomatic relations with Egypt*"[79]

Apart from the benefits that both Egypt and Israel were able to gain from the treaty, the peace settlement offered an array of advantages for the United States in the region. It first strengthened American relations with both Israel and Egypt and asserted the latter's position in the American camp. It also lessened the possibilities of Soviet intervention to exploit the tensions between the negotiating parties. And finally, it helped better the American image among the Arab public and therefore regain some of the lost credibility in the region.

Despite the advantages that resulted from the peace treaty, some of its setbacks continued to disturb stability in the Middle East. While Sadat headed for Camp David with a determination to

---

[77] Douglas Little, op. cit. , p. 9.
[78] Rashid Khalidi, op. cit. , p. 133.
[79] Salim Yaqub , "The United States and the Middle East:1914 to 9/11, part2", (United States: The Teaching Company, 2003) p. 8.

regain all the territories occupied in the 1967, he finally submitted to the American pressure to negotiate a separate agreement by which he regained the Sinai Peninsula. Other lands, including the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza were left to further futile negotiations. In consequence, "*the primary casualty of this policy, as in the past, was the slim possibility of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East*"[80]

1.3.4. Ronald Reagan and the Iran-Iraq War

After the challenge of the Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis in Iran, the United States became compelled not only to accommodate to such new changes, but also to strive hard to prevent such changes from spreading elsewhere in the region. Iraq, a country with a Shiite majority population, was the likeliest to be a foothold for Iran's influence. Driven by this fear and other territorial ambitions, the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein launched a surprising attack on Iran on the night of September 22, 1980 with the aim "*to regain full control of the Shatt Al Arab, possibly some other oil-rich territory, while destabilising or even toppling Khomeini's regime*"[81]

While the war was escalating, Americans were still negotiating with their Iranian counterparts to release the hostages. Therefore, and despite the enormous threats posed by this war to American interests, the United States was hardly able to take sides. In fact, the war was believed to have played against Americans since it somehow distracted the Iranians from the negotiating process. Even when Ronald Reagan assumed presidency in January of 1981 and the hostage crisis was over, the U.S position remained one "*of neutrality, of a rather negative sort, with no significant relations, diplomatic or military, with either side.*"[82]

During this war, American foreign policy experts put a number of policy objectives that the President Reagan and his administration would strive to sustain. The most vital objective was to maintain the flow of oil to the global market in reasonable prices. The second concern was to ensure the security and stability of oil-producing countries in the Gulf that had long been friendly to the west and had resisted Soviet influence. And finally to work for an outcome of war that

---

[80] Rashid Khalidi, op. cit. , p.133
[81] Lawrence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 154.
[82] Ibid. , pp. 156-157.

would not facilitate Soviet intervention or expansion in the region and would in turn provide an opportunity for the U.S to build relations with both countries.[83]

Like the United States, the Soviet Union was equally concerned with how to exploit the conflict for its own advantage. From a historical perspective, Iran had had very modest relations with the Shah and even during the Islamic revolution, Moscow was not very sure of the path that the new regime in Tehran would take. After some attempts to build relations with the new regime, the Soviets were faced with undesirable responses. Leftist and Communist activists in Iran were repeatedly repressed and at times even jailed. Khomeini, moreover, openly opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In such situation, and with the already established relations, Iraq seemed the only possible side to court.[84]

With the Soviets attempting to win Iran on their side, Iraq was likewise making some overtures to naturalise relations with the United States. Saddam tried to do this with a "*classical Cold War tactic, threatening one superpower with defection to the opposing camp.*" Americans began tilting to Iraq when Moscow had abandoned their attempts to win Iran and began supplying Saddam with arms in 1982. In consequence, Iraq became the only side in the conflict that the two superpowers were trying to win in their Cold War rivalry.[85]

After Iraqi officials made it clear in the UN that they would like to resume diplomatic relations with the U.S, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz held a high level official meeting with President Reagan and his Secretary of State George Shultz at the White House. This resumption of relations was already preceded by a meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, Reagan's envoy to the Middle East, in December 1983 in his tour to some Arab capitals. Rumsfeld passed on a letter from the President Reagan to Saddam and they discussed some issues of mutual interests.[86]

The reasons behind America's choice to build relations with Iraq were threefold. Iran had already gone into a serious act of hostility against the United States. Moreover, while Iran was threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz to international trade, Iraq continued its considerable

---

[83] Michael Sterner, "the Iran-Iraq War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (fall, 1984), pp. 128-143.
[84] Ibid. , p. 136.
[85] Lawrence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 157.
[86] Ibid. , p. 147.

supply of oil to the global market. Finally, Khomeini's regime was widely considered as a threat to neighboring Arab countries whose stability was a key to protecting Western interests in the region and to which Iraq constituted a solid shield against Iran's expansion.[87]

As a sign of America's new approach with Iraq, the United States removed Iraq from its list of countries supporting terrorism in May 1982. While Iraq was removed, Iran was added.[88] The other indication of America's rapprochement with Iraq was its position towards Iraq's use of chemical weapons in early 1983. The act was largely ignored by the Unites States and its allies. The State Department made some condemnations that barely amounted to the seriousness of the act. In one of his visits to Iraq, Donald Rumsfeld explained to his Iraqi counterparts that, while America's condemnation of the use of such weapons arose from its opposition to the use of lethal and chemical weapons wherever they happen, he asserted America's interests in averting an Iranian victory and improving relations with Iraq.[89]

Economically, relations between the United States and Iraq continued to improve in the 1980s. By 1983, Iraq was receiving aid in the form of Credit Commodity Corporations guarantees for the purchase of agricultural products. By 1987 American aid reached $652 million which helped Iraq to "*divert funds it would otherwise have spent on foodstuffs to military appropriations.*" By the end of the same period, yearly trade exchange between the two countries totaled $3.7 billion including military equipment.[90]

Along with economic exchange went a more crucial cooperation between the two sides. By mid- 1982, the U.S was already providing Iraq with intelligence information about some flaws in its defense in the form of satellite photography. In 1984, Reagan approved a Limited Intelligence Sharing Program with Iraq that provided information about targets of the Iranian air force and troop positions. This intelligence helped Iraq repel many Iranian raids and prevail in some battles.[91]

---

[87] Ibid. , p. 159.
[88] Ibid. , p. 160.
[89] Ray Takeyh, "Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (summer 2010), pp. 365-383.
[90] Ibid. , p. 376.
[91] Lawrence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 165.

Iraq's relentless use of chemical weapons along with America's help in intelligence further undermined the Iranian forces and helped Iraq sustain its gains. By the spring of 1988, Iraq was able to completely evict Iran from its territories and to regain the strategically vital Faw Peninsula. Iranian forces were also badly affected by Iraq's new approach of attacking cities. Urban inhabitants therefore were alarmed and the Iranian government was confused as how to deliver the appropriate response.[92]

While Iraq was advancing on the ground, American warships in the Persian Gulf were making massive pressure on the Iranian forces. On 21 September 1987, an Iranian boat, *Al Fajr*, was hit by a U.S helicopter and was embarked the later day. Iran responded by hitting a tanker with a British flag and Iran's London office of arms supply was shut down in consequence. In such conflict, Iran was relying heavily on naval mines. In April 1988, the American warship USS *Samuel Robert* was damaged by a mine and American forces set the Iranian Sassan platform on fire.[93]

In such circumstances, Iran was intentionally put under heavy pressure in order to stop the war. American officials believed that such military pressure should be reinforced by international diplomatic one. Such aim was sought by drafting the UN 598 Resolution, "*which outlined an eight-stage plan to end hostilities*." The plan also asserted that any side rejecting the plan would be subject to UN sanctions. While Iraq accepted the resolution, Iran demanded further explanations.[94] Due to the enormous internal pressure and the military and financial strains on its economy, Iran was compelled to accept a cease-fire and to ratify the UN resolution.

While the Iran-Iraq war ended with no winner or loser, the United States seemed to have been the foremost benefactor form that long and stalemated conflict. In terms of policy objectives, the United States was able to prevent Iran from a clear triumph and to overcome its spread in neighboring pro-American Arab countries. It also gained some of its lost prestige and popularity among the Gulf states who, in such time of crisis, were able to achieve a long-lasting regional cooperation by founding the Gulf Cooperating Council in 1981. And finally, it succeeded to

---

[92] Ray Takeyh, op. cit. , p. 380.
[93] Lawrence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 206.
[94] Ray Takeyh, op. cit. , p. 380.

establish an effective relationship with a pivotal and a pro-Soviet regime in Iraq. However, this letter advantage would soon prove to be short-lived.[95]

1.4. The post-Cold War Years

As the end of the Cold War was looming, the United States was about to assume a hegemonic position in the Middle East and also around the world. In such position, U.S. policy makers became in a strong position to advance American interests and policies with no equal rival. In this context, the Palestinian issue and the relations with Iraq and Iran were to dominate most of the agenda of the American presidents in the decade after the end of the Cold War. While President Clinton was able to bridge some of the gap between the Palestinians and the Israelis, President Bush the son embarked on a conflict with Iraq that would determine, in many ways, the future of the American position in the wider region.

1.4.1. The Gulf War: Loosing Iraq.

Soon after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, tensions between Iraq and its other neighbor Kuwait began to disturb the region. While Kuwait was claiming the money it lent Iraq during the war, Saddam accused Kuwait of producing much oil and in turn driving the prices down. Kuwait was also accused of extracting large amounts of oil from its borders with Iraq. From a historical angle, the strains between the two states can be traced back to the beginning of the British rule when new borders were drawn in the region. Saddam continued to assert that Kuwait had been nothing but an Iraqi land.

The tensions were quick to assume a violent from when Iraq invaded Kuwait in early August 1990 and forced its rulers into exile. Western interests in the region were at stake and oil was the most important of them. With his invasion, Saddam held 20% of the world's oil reserve and Saudi Arabia, which alone held another 20%, was prone to his attacks. The United States and its

---

[95] Lawrence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 206-207.

allies were quick to react with economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure to halt Saddam's advance and drive him out of Iraq.

On August 8, 1990, the American President George Bush announced the grievousness of Saddam's act and explained his government's policy towards the invasion and the measures it took to stop it. In his speech, the president combined Wilson's idealism with Nixon's realism. He praised his country and its allies' success in the struggle for freedom in Europe and heralded the dawn of a new era, an ear that "*can be full of promise, an age of freedom, a time of peace for all peoples.*" As he stressed the ideal side o f America's mission, President Bush asserted that "*the stakes are high,*" and that his country "*imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence.*"[96]

Bush's administration set four principles for its policy. Firstly, the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Secondly, the return of the old Kuwaiti government to its place. And thirdly, the commitment of his country to the security of the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, and finally the protection of U.S. citizens. For the protection of Saudi Arabia from the advance of the Iraqi forces, the President ordered, after the Saudi King's request, the deployment of "*elements of the 82d Airborne Division as well as key units of the United States Air Force to take up defensive positions.*"[97]

The first step that the President Bush took to achieve his objectives was the employment of economic sanctions. "*Immediately after the Iraqi invasion,*" declared the president, "*I ordered an embargo of all trade with Iraq and, together with many other nations, announced sanctions that both freeze all Iraqi assets in this country and protect Kuwait's assets.*" Moreover, U.S. allies like France, the U.K, and Japan also imposed "*severe sanctions*" while the Soviet Union and China "*ended all arms sale to Iraq.*" These moves were backed by the United Nations Security Council approval of "*mandatory sanctions under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter*"[98]

---

[96] George W. Bush, Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait (August 8, 1990), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5529.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

With signs looming that sanctions were doing little to bring Saddam to heel, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell were advocating a military buildup in the Gulf with a deadline for Saddam to withdraw or face military force. The President approved the option and his Secretary of State James Baker began a tour of twelve nations, including the Soviet Union and China, to marshal support behind a Security Council resolution to impose a deadline on Saddam's withdrawal.[99]

While America's allies in Europe and Japan continued to support the Bush policy, the Soviets and China needed further explanation. "*The only way to produce a peaceful outcome*" explained Baker to the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "*was to convince Saddam that if he didn't withdraw peacefully, he would be forced out militarily.*" To the Chinese, who were little more skeptical, Baker put it, "*we don't hold it against our friends that they are not joining us, but we do ask that they not stand in the way.*"[100]

Along with international support to his decisions, Bush went on to secure further support at home through congressional authorisation. In an address to a joint session of Congress on September 11, 1990, Bush argued that this war is the first test to what he called the "*new world order*" and that, "*Had we not responded to this first provocation with clarity of purpose, if we do not continue to demonstrate our determination, it would be a signal to actual and potential despots around the world.*" [101]With placing America and the world in the same basket of stakes and interests, the President secured an approval of 250 to 183 in the House and 52 to 47 in the Senate.

With international and domestic support at hand, the United States was able to secure the necessary votes to get the Security Council to adopt Resolution 678 which put Iraq "*in flagrant contempt of the Security Council*" and authorised the U.N. member states to "*use all necessary means*" to force Iraq to abide by its decisions.[102] The resolution put the 15th of January as a

---

[99] H. W. Brands, "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Going to War (Mar., 2004), pp. 113-131.
[100] Ibid. , pp. 126-127.
[101] George W. Bush, Address Before a Joint Session of Congress (September 11, 1990), Miller Center, Virginia University, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3425
[102] H. W. Brands. Op. cit. , p. 127.

deadline for Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait or face the military might of a coalition of more than 30 countries with 28 countries deploying ground troops.

As Saddam remained defiant, coalition forces began Operation Desert Storm on January 16, 1990. The attack was launched by air on Iraqi military targets in both Iraq and Kuwait. Industrial sites and major infrastructure were also targeted to weaken the Iraqi economy. On February 23, as Iraqi forces remained in Kuwait, ground troops were mobilised to launch a ground war to which Iraqi forces showed little resistance.[103] On February 27, after 100 hours of conflict, the U.S President announced that "*Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met.*"[104]

Apart from achieving their war objectives, by the end of the war Americans could boast tremendous and unquestioned accomplishments in the Middle East and around the globe. The foremost achievement of Bush and his administration was its ability to marshal international and domestic support for its policy. At the international level, it won a unanimous approval of the U.N Security Council to impose sanctions on Iraq, the first case since 23 years, and later to adopt a binding resolution to use all necessary means to implement its policy. At the domestic level, President Bush rallied the majority in Congress, the media and the public behind his cause.

The other remarkable achievement of Bush's administration was to turn the Soviet Union from a position of competition with the United States in the region to a position of cooperation. Therefore, "*America became the dominant power, nearly reducing the Soviet Union to the level of an assistant.*"[105] Moreover, the American-led coalition victory helped hasten the end of the Cold War, ending the threat of a nuclear confrontation and thus leaving the United States as the sole superpower not only in the Middle East but also on the world's stage.

The victory did also left a big psychological impact on the American public. Before the war was launched, Americans were still skeptical of overseas interventions because of the bad experience left by the war in Vietnam. By the war's end, the public grew a strong sense of relief

---

[103] Salim Yaqub, "the United States and the Middle East: from 1914 to 9/11 part 2" op. cit. , p. 29.
[104] George W. Bush , Address on the End of the Gulf War (February 27, 1991), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5530
[105] Avi Shlaim, op. cit. , p. 105.

and confidence. The war also helped prove America's commitment to its allies' security and to show them that, as Dick Cheney put it, "*the United States meant business, that when we make commitments we keep them, that we have the capacity to send force to defend our interests to wherever they're threatened, and that we are prepared to do that.*"[106]

The war, however, was not without setbacks. Contrary to what U.S experts expected that a military defeat to Saddam would bring an end to his rule, the Iraqi leader remained in power and further consolidated his position among the Sunni community after crushing the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings.[107] Saddam also gained some popularity across the Arab world because of the missiles he launched on the Israeli capital. The pro-Soviet leader that America strove to court during the Iran-Iraq war and succeeded to do so by the end of it, proved to be one of the fiercest antagonists to U.S interests in the region and remained to be so in the decade to come.

Saddam's persistence in power and Iran's regional ambitions continued to intimidate American interests in the region. When he assumed power in January 1993, Bill Clinton and his administration adopted what was known as the policy of "*dual containment of Iran and Iraq*". Clinton's special assistant to Near East affairs Martin Indyk, the architect of this policy, argued that "*to preserve a balance of power in our favor in the wider Middle East region, we will have the means to counter both the Iraqi and Iranian regimes. We will not need to depend on one to counter the other.*"[108]

Concerning Iraq, Indyk explained that Clinton's administration was committed to ensure, through the enforcement of U.N sanctions and resolutions that as long as Saddam was in power he "*will not be in a position to threaten its neighbours or to suppress its people with impunity.*" As for Iran, the administration would continue to maintain "*counterterrorism sanctions and other measures enacted by previous administrations to encourage a change in Iranian behavior.*"[109]

---

[106] *Frontline,* "The Gulf War, Oral History: Richard Cheney," www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/cheney/2.html.
[107] Lawrence Friedman, op. cit. , p. 252.
[108] Martin Indyk, "The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East" The Washington Institute: Improving the Quality of U.S Middle East Policy, 1993, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-clinton-administrations-approach-to-the-middle-east
[109] Ibid.

While President Clinton was pursuing diplomatic efforts and economic sanctions to prevent Saddam from threatening American interests in the region, some statesmen in the Republican Party were urging for the use of force. In a letter to the president on January 26, 1998, some neoconservative members in PNAC[110] urged the President to adopt a new strategy of America's foreign policy. This strategy should aim at the removal of Saddam Hussein from power by implementing "*a full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts*." The letter upheld even U.S unilateral actions and warned that "*American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council*."[111]

Although President Clinton did not resort fully to force to remove Saddam from power, he continued to press hard with economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and an increase in American military might in the region to deter Saddam's threats to U.S interests and allies in the region. His Republican successor George Bush, on the other hand, adopted PNAC creed as the bible for his foreign policy and ultimately for his vision of the "*global war on terror*" and hi war on Iraq.

---

[110] Stands for the Project for the New American Century which is a think tank group with neoconservative agenda dedicated to preserve and expand America's world leadership through all means including the use of force.
[111] *Information Clearing House*, PNAC letters sent to President Bill Clinton, January 26, 1998, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5527.htm

1.4.2. The Oslo Accords: an Unfinished Business.

With the sense of triumph that accompanied the end of the Gulf War, the time seemed riper than ever to invigorate the peace process between the Arabs and the Israelis. In an address to a joint session of Congress on March 6, 1991, President Bush made the creation of new opportunities for peace in the Middle East as one of the four challenges that his administration would deal with. He asserted that "*A comprehensive peace must be grounded in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace.*" He also stressed that "*This principle must be elaborated to provide for Israel's security and recognition and at the same time for legitimate Palestinian political rights.*"[112]

At least four conditions were present to urge President Bush to think seriously of stimulating the peace talks. The United States enjoyed a position of hegemony in the region which made possible the cooperation of the Soviets in the process. The PLO[113] was short of funding from the Gulf states because of its embrace of Saddam's stance in the war, while Syria lost Soviet support. Such conditions put the two parties in a position to accept or at least submit to American influence. Moreover, the Palestinian *Intifada,* began in 1987, presented the Israelis with the dire effects of violent conflicts and persuades them to seek the diplomatic path[114]

The first step that Bush and Baker strove to secure was to bring all the parties to the negotiating table. In early June 1991, Bush sent a letter to the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, to the Kings of Jordan and Saudi Arabia and the presidents of Syria and Egypt stating his intentions of holding a peace conference. In-mid June, Syria replied positively while King Hussein and Mubarak expressed their approval after Baker's trip to the region.[115]

After Syria's acceptance, Shamir had no option but to agree to attend the conference. After some American pressure, the Israelis agreed to attend with tow preconditions. First, that they would make no commitments to withdraw from the occupied territories and that the Palestinians

---

[112]George W. Bush, Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the End of the Gulf War (March 6, 1991), Miller Center, University of Virginia, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3430
[113] The Palestinian Liberation Organization was established in 1964.
[114] Salim Yaqum, op. cit. , p. 28.
[115] William B. Quandt, op. cit. , p.308.

could not be an independent negotiating party, nor the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians. The Palestinians were then included as a part of the Jordanian delegation with the absence of the PLO.

To get rid of any obstacle to peace and as a sign of its good will, President Bush and his administration demanded that Israeli settlements in the occupied lands be frozen. With Shamir's obstinacy, Bush used the American loans to Israel as a means of pressure. On September 6, 1991, Bush asked Congress for four months delay before considering the Israeli call for loans. In April 1992, Congress passed a foreign loan bill without any loan to Israel. This was a serious blow to Shamir and his Likud party which lost the elections of June 1992 to the Labor party under Rabin's leadership.[116]

On October 30, 1991, all the negotiating parties convened in Madrid. The Conference was co-chaired by Bush and Gorbachev with the presence of U.N and European Community delegations. The first stage, in Madrid, was followed by another stage which "*consisted of bilateral negotiations between Israel and individual Arab parties. These bilateral talks were held under American auspices in Washington, starting in January 1992.*"[117]

Because of Shamir's hard-line stance in the peace talks, little progress was made in either part of the negotiations. When the Labor party came to power under Yitzhak Rabin leadership, the Israeli stance began to alter especially with the Arabs, while "*on the Palestinian issue the Israeli position displayed more continuity than change.*"[118] The change in Israeli leadership was also followed by a change in the American one. On November 3, 1992 Bush was defeated and the Democrat Bill Clinton came to office.

President Clinton made a profound shift in the American position toward the peace process from Bush's relative evenhandedness to a full support for Israel. When Clinton assumed power, his "*administration gave free rein to its pro-Israeli sympathies. The hallmark of its policy was not an active partnership in the peace talks but active partnership with Israel.*" This shift was

---

[116] Lawrence Freedman, op.cit. , pp. 269-270.
[117] Avi Shlaim, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process," in Louise Fawcett ed., *International Relations of the Middle East,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 241-61.
[118] Ibid. , p. 242.

manifested in Clinton's decision "*to grant Israel the 10$ billion loan guarantee that his predecessor had made conditional on corporation in the peace talks*."[119]

In his outline of the Clinton's administration approach to the Middle East, Clinton's special assistant for Near East affairs Martin Indyk asserted that the U.S approach to the negotiations "*will involve working with Israel, not against it*." Indyk explained that real peace with the Arabs would dictate Israel's withdrawal from some territories which would in turn involve "*tangible risks to its security." To help it minimise such risks the United States committed itself to maintain Israel's "qualitative military edge" and to "establish a partnership in the development and production of high technology goods.*"[120]

While negotiations in Washington were reaching an impasse, the Israelis and the Palestinians opened a secret channel of talks in Oslo in January 1993. The talks culminated in the Oslo accord which was signed on September 13, 1993 in Washington between Rabin and the PLO leader Yasser Arafat with the presence of the U.S President Bill Clinton. The accord was not a full-fledge agreement but rather a "*Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*" and "an agenda for negotiations, governed by a tight timetable." The agreement was also crowned by Rabin's recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.[121]

The Oslo agreement was cemented by what became known as Oslo II on September 28, 1995. Israeli Prime Minister received a torrent of criticism at home and was eventually assassinated on November 4, 1995. His party was also defeated in the elections of May 1996. His successor Binyamin Netanyahu did all that he could to freeze the accords. Massive American pressure succeeded in tow occasions to compel Netanyahu to give up territories for the Palestinians. The first one was the Hebron Protocol of 15 January 1995 and the second was Wye Plantation in Maryland on 23 October 1998 which was brokered by Bill Clinton. These agreements were again responsible for the end of Netanyahu's government.[122]

---

[119] Avi Shlaim, War and Peace, op. cit. , pp. 120-121.
[120] Martin Indyk.
[121] Avi Shlaim, "the Rise", op. cit. , pp. 245-246.
[122] Ibid. , p. 154.

The Israeli domestic opposition to trading land for peace with the Palestinians was often seen as a factor of the fall of the Oslo accords, but the lack of balance between the negotiating parties also played its part. In this sense, America's pressure on Israel was the cornerstone for the success of such settlement and therefore "*America's failure to exert sufficient pressure on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories was one of the factors that contributed to the breakdown of the Oslo peace process.*"[123]

America's hegemonic position in the Middle East and worldwide helped the Bush administration to gather all the negotiating parties to resume the peace talks and to muster remarkable support for its initiative. Bush's financial pressure on the Israelis played a part in the defeat of the Likud party and in its succession with the Labor which showed more readiness to make concessions. Clinton and his administration, however, were criticised for thier continuous support for Israel, but were also credited for their pressure on Netanyahu to withdraw from some of the occupied territories. More American pressure on Israel would have very probably led to more advancement in the peace process and therefore put an end to a bitter and long-lasting conflict.

1.4.3. 9/11 Attacks and the Road to War

Unlike President Clinton whose foreign policy was widely devoted to the Arab-Israeli peace process and "*humanitarian interventi*ons" in various crises, his successor George W Bush came with an ambitious foreign policy agenda devised to advance America's global leadership through diplomatic and even military means. Bush's foreign policy agenda was influenced by the thinking of some intellectuals and policymakers who came to hold key positions in his administration. Some of those people were members in the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) who urged Clinton to remove Saddam by force.

As a Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney developed a defense strategy that aimed to sustain America's hegemonic position by rejecting the notion of collective internationalism and advocating the case of "*world dominated by one superpower whose position can be perpetuated*

---

[123] Ibid. , p. 261

by constructive behavior and sufficient military might to deter any nation or group of nations from challenging American primacy."[124]

Along with Cheney's strategy, the think tank group PNAC advocated America's resolve "*to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests.*" Such resolve should rely mostly on "*a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges*" and "*a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad.*" From the historical experience of the 20th century, the group argued, "*it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire.*"[125]

The group argued, however, that such a transformation in pursuing a dominant defense force and a bold foreign policy was likely to be a long process with the absence of "*some catastrophic and catalysing event-like a new Pearl Harbor.*" Soon after this report, the United States received a shocking attack on the morning of September 11, 2011. Such event gave "*Washington a surfeit of purpose to go along with its preponderant power.*"[126]

In an address to Congress and the American people on September 20, Bush announced his "*global war on terror*" which "*begins with el Qaeda but does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.*" By giving his war a global dimension, Bush echoed the danger that his country faced in the WW1, WW2, and the Cold War by describing the group who attacked the U.S as "*the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century*" because they "*follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism.*"[127]

With a strong support from Congress, the American people and with a broad international coalition forces, the United States launched its war on Afghanistan and ousted the Taliban-led

---

[124] Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop a One-Superpower World," New York Times, March 8, 1992, http://work.colum.edu/~amiller/wolfowitz1992.htm

[125] *Information clearing house* "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Recourses for a New Century," A Report of the Project for the New American Century, September 2000, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf

[126] Richard Haass, "The Irony of American Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2013, pp. 57-67.

[127] President Bush Addresses the Nation, Sept. 20, 2001, *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html

government, which was believed to shelter al Qaeda and the architects of 9/11 attacks, and replaced it with an interim government led by Hamid Karazai. Though the war achieved its immediate objectives, the process of "*nation-building*" proved to be a daunting and a hardly achievable task. Moreover, Taliban militants regrouped again and launched an insurgency that bogged down U.S and coalition forces in a long and costly conflict.

Despite the sense of retaliation that the war on Afghanistan brought to the American people and policymakers, President Bush was very resolute to seize the moment to build his own doctrine in which the long-nurtured policies of the PNAC group and politicians like Dick Cheney would have strong command. Through what came to be called the Bush Doctrine, American foreign policy broke with two pillars of the last fifty years, namely the policy of containment and deterrence. In consequence, the doctrine introduced the ambitious policy of preemptive war.

The doctrine was officially articulated in the national security strategy of the United States on September 20, 2002. While the doctrine emphasised the 20th century divide between totalitarianism and freedom and the ultimate victory of freedom under American leadership, it stressed that the challenge in the new century is direr and more destructive as it is posed by international terrorism and rogue states. Such new actors are very likely to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction against the U.S and its allies.[128]

The strategy mentioned Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, which were later described by the president as the "*Axis of Evil*", as models of rogue states. It also asserted that, during the Gulf War, the United States "acquired irrefutable proof that Iraq's designs were not limited to the chemical weapons…but also extended to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and biological agents." As a policy to fight WMD, the Bush doctrine upheld what it called "*proactive counterproliferation efforts*" which necessitated the U.S to "*deter and defend against the threat before it is unleashed.*"[129]

---

[128] The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf
[129] Ibid. , p. 14.

Even before the release of this doctrine and immediately after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush and many of the neoconservatives in his circle were contemplating a war on Saddam Hussein. Bush asked one of his advisers to look for "*any shred*" of evidence that could provide any link of Saddam to the arracks. The U.S intelligence, on its part, was able to twist information to suit the White House officials' need for pretexts to launch a war on Iraq. As a senior British official put it "*intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.*"

Numerous officials in the administration of President Bush, many of them from the PNAC group, who were already determined to oust Saddam, began a campaign to rally support behind their cause. Among these officials were the adviser in the Defense Department Richard Perle, Cheney's chief of staff Libby, Undersecretary of Defense Feith and Undersecretary of State John Bolton. The views of such officials were strongly supported by Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and even by the president himself.

The reasons that the president and those officials were employing to wage a war on Iraq were diverse. Beside the apparent cause of oil, they believed that Saddam was providing support to international terrorism and was also developing WMD and even nuclear weapons. They also believed that the ousting of Saddam would bring a lasting peace to their key ally in the region, Israel. And finally, they argued that without Saddam, Iraq would develop into a thriving democracy and would eventually be a model for other nations in the region.[130]

With such bureaucratic power in the hands of the president along with a weak and divided opposition from the democrats, the president was able to easily secure a congressional approval for his war in October 2002. With republicans gaining majority in the Senate in the next elections, the debate was reduced from whether or not to wage a war to the way how this war should be launched.[131]

Contrary to the easy consent that was gained at home, the Bush administration found it harder to secure such consent on the international scale. Following his Secretary of State's advice to go to the U.N for a war resolution, the president and his diplomats made enormous pressure on some

---

[130] George Herring, op. cit. , p. 945.
[131] Ibid. , p. 949.

members of the Security Council, namely Mexico, Chile and some West African Nations to support the proposed resolution. The American efforts were eventually thwarted by the strong opposition of France, Germany and China. Only Britain, Spain and Bulgaria sided with America's plans.[132]

With a congressional approval, a divided American public and no U.N authorisation, the U.S military, backed with British and other coalition forces, began their assault on Iraq on March 23, 2003. In no more than three weeks, with a combination of airstrikes and ground troops operations, Iraq was invaded and Saddam was toppled. The easiness by which Iraq was defeated resemble in many ways that of Afghanistan. American troops were quick to assume the invasion as no more than cakewalk.

On May 1, President Bush landed on the warship USS *Lincoln* and delivered a speech, with a slogan "*mission accomplished*" behind him, announcing the end of major combat operations. "*Major combat operations in Iraq have ended,*" declared the president, "*In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.*" While the president praised the Operation Iraqi Freedom as one that was "*carried out with a combination of precision, speed and boldness the enemy did not expect and the world have never seen before,*" he also acknowledged that "*transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every ef*fort." [133]

When the President delivered his speech, coalition forces were already failing in preserving order and stability, for which they had made little preparation. In mid-May, the U.S installed an interim government led by the American diplomat Paul Bremer. This latter made a fateful decision when he blocked senior members of the Ba'ath Party from taking any official positions and dismantled the Iraq army and the security forces.[134]

Many of those dismissed forces, other Sunni tribes who held the fear of losing power along with other deprived and poor young men began an all-out popular insurgency for which

---

[132] Ibid.

[133] Bush makes historic speech aboard warship, Friday, May 2, 2003,
http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/

[134] Laurence Freedman, op. cit. , p. 436.

American forces had little training and experience. By early 2004, al Qaida announced the establishment of its base in Iraq under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The operations of this latter were not directed only against coalition forces, but also against Shiite majority who were cooperating with the Americans.[135]

In 2005, officials in Washington were talking about the Vietnamization of Iraq. The Democrat and the Vietnam veteran Chuck Hagel drew a parallel between Vietnam and Iraq referring to the "*more dead, more wounded, less electricity in Iraq, less oil being pumped in Iraq, more insurgency attacks, more insurgents coming across the border, more corruption in the government.*" In such failing situation, the American public started to give up support to the military operations while Henry Kissinger noted that "*Military success is difficult to sustain unless buttressed by domestic support.*"[136]

As the insurgency continued, the economic and security situation in Iraq deteriorated and American officials were barely successful in dealing with such crises. Far from becoming a democratic, stable and secure country, Iraq became a hotbed of bloodshed and sectarian conflicts, and one of the most corrupt countries around the world. With each election held in this country, the divide between its ethnic groups became direr. In such conditions, observers were contemplating the Iraq war of 1991 describing it as "*a war of necessity*" while dubbing Bush the son's adventure as "*a war of choice.*"[137]

---

[135] Ibid. , p. 437-438.
[136] Frank Rich, "the Vietnamization of Bush's Vacation," New York Times, August 28, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/28/opinion/28rich.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&
[137] Richard Haass, the president of the Council of Foreign Relation, wrote a whole book entitled "War of Necessity War of Choice" in which he compared the conditions and the factors surrounding the first and the second war on Iraq.

1.5. Conclusion

While American influence in the Middle East have contributed largely to the overall progress and the welfare of the American people thanks to the rich sources of energy and the growing market for the military industrial complex, such influence has never been without setbacks. As the region grew more unstable and less secure, American interests became less safe and hard to protect.

The legacy left by the previous administrations notably the unsolved Palestinian issue, the unstable Iraq along with a turbulent Syria has left the present administration with few options to choose from. Such challenges are also worsened by the growing animosity of the general public in the Middle East to the U.S. presence in their region and with an American public weary of their country's involvements in foreign lands.

2.1. Introduction

After Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003, "*regime change*" seemed easier than what U.S. policy makers thought, but the challenge of "*nation-building*" was far more problematic than they have ever considered. By the end of Bush's term in late 2008, his successor's foreign policy centered on the objective of troops withdrawal from Iraq under a shadowy economic and political situation. As U.S. troops were winding down, social upheavals were sweeping the wider region in early 2011 which further complicated a rather simplistic foreign policy calculus of President Obama and his administration.

Along with troops withdrawal, U.S. financial aid and diplomatic work in Iraq was also shrinking. With such diminished leverage, U.S. policy makers had little in hand to influence events and unfolding crises. The U.S. failed to broker a power sharing agreement among the Iraqi political factions after the 2010 elections and to strike a deal with the Iraqi government to leave residual troops with legal immunities. In contrast, Iran proved capable to unite Shiite political factions and succeeded later to consolidate its economic and securty footing both in the Shiite-dominated and Kurdish regions. As the Iraqi political situation was again unraveling in 2013 and 2014, the security situation further deteriorated and the U.S. president continued to assert that U.S. forces or politicians cannot do for Iraqis what they should do for themselves.

As U.S. influence on Iraq continued to diminish, the crisis unfolding in Syria presented a far more complicated challenge to an American foreign policy already in retreat. U.S. efforts at the level of the Security Council or through peace talks to bring a change to the Syrian political landscape was hampered not only by a divided and unwieldy Syrian opposition, but also by an assertive Russian and Chinese diplomacy that opposed any Western meddling in the Syrian affairs. Although Presidnet Obama rejected any military involvement in Syria, he asserted that any use of chemical weapons would be a game changer. When such weapons were used, the president not only sought authorisation from Congress to get out from a hard dilemma, but he later abandoned his decision to use force and resorted to what seemed to be a less costly diplomatic option.

As the security situation in Iraq worsened, the armed opposition in Syria became more radicalised, more resistant to outside meddling, and less responsive to U.S preferences. In this context, U.S. policy makers put on the shelves their long-sought objectives of "*nation-building*" in Iraq and "*regime change*" in Syria while they engaged in more urgent fight against more challenging and less coherent non-state armed groups. As the situation was getting more complex, the tools to deal with it became more limited and less effective.

2.2. Iraq: Troops Withdrawal, Sectarian Tensions and a Renewed Civil War.

After more than six years of policymaking, conflict, and the allocation of billions, Bush's war on I ended with a stunning failure to achieve its main objectives. By the end of Bush's second term in office, the rallying call of the American public and policy makers alike cantered on the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, a task that became the backbone of Barack Obama's foreign policy both as a presidential candidate and as the newly elected president in late 2008.

2.2.1. Troops Withdrawal and the Decline in Commitments

After more than six years of policymaking, conflict, and the allocation of billions of dollars, Bush's war on Iraq ended with a stunning failure to achieve its main objectives. By the end Bush's second term in office, the rallying call of the American public and policy makers alike centered on the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, a task that became the backbone of Barack Obama's foreign policy both as a presidential candidate and as the newly elected president in late 2008.

In his speech in February 2009 on ending the war on Iraq "*responsibly*," President Obama praised the improvements made in Iraq's security and its army's capacity, but he also acknowledged many unresolved issues left by his predecessor. "*Violence will continue to be a part of life in Iraq*," he declared, "*Too many fundamental political questions about Iraq's future remain unresolved. Too many Iraqis are still displaced or destitute.*" Moreover, despite the

relative progress in the Iraq's politics and government, it was not yet to be considered as "*a full partner- politically and economically- in the region or with the international community.*"[138]

As a basis for his foreign policy towards Iraq, the President reviewed and announced his administration's strategy. This strategy was devised with the "*critical recognition that the long-term solution in Iraq must be political – not military. Because the most important decisions that have to be made about Iraq's future must now be made by Iraqis.*" The backbone of this strategy aimed to work for "*an Iraq that is stable, sovereign and self-reliant,*" and to "*promote an Iraqi government that is just, representative, and accountable, and provides neither support nor safe-haven to terrorists.*"[139]

Some critics, however, look at this strategy as another step to lessen America's commitments to Iraq by making troops withdrawal as its main concern while downgrading the pursuit of sustainable democracy. Even the U.S embassy in Iraq looked for a "normal" bilateral relationship with Iraq and not one that "*should be on the same footing as U.S relationships with most other countries in the region and not the 'special relationship' it has with certain states.*"[140]

Some indicators of Obama's diminishing commitments to promote a sustainable democracy in Iraq can be found in the decrease of U.S funding for democracy and governance to this country. As the Project on Middle East Democracy reported, the U.S funding for Iraq in this area in FY2011 was only 24% of the $729.3 million requests for Iraq with a sharp decrease from 66% in the F2010 request. In this aid, programmes for Civil Society was cut from $85.5 million to $32.5 million and Rule of Law and Human Rights from %73.5 million to %22.5 million.[141]

After just one year from his coming to office and his pessimistic remarks on the Iraqi political situation, the Obama administration was faced with a challenge of brokering the formation of a new Iraqi government following the 2010 elections. The White House worked to broker a power-

---

[138] The white House "Remarks of President Barack Obama: Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," Friday, February 27, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq
[139] Ibid.
[140] Charles W. Dunne, "Iraq: Policies, Politics and the Art of the Possible," *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East*. Ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 20011). PP 11-29.
[141] Ibid. , p.22.

sharing between Nouri el Maliki, Iyad Allawi, the leader of the Iraqia block, and President Djalal Talabani. The efforts to convince Mr. Talabani to give up the presidency and to replace him with Allawi ultimately failed. Even the attempt to form a new council on strategic policy in which Mr.Allawi would be in charge was hampered by Mr. Maliki and Mr. Allawi's dispute over what powers the new council should have.[142]

After this political deadlock, U.S. officials were again rebuffed by the Iraqi government regarding its request to leave a U.S residual force in Iraq with legal immunities from the Iraqi law. The SOFA agreement (Status of Forces Agreement), which was signed by the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki and the U.S President George Bush in 2008, stated that all U.S forces would leave Iraq by 31 December 2011. Despite Obama's pledge to withdraw all U.S troops from Iraq, he agreed to negotiate leaving residual troops for the sake of training the Iraqi forces and to manage any possible sectarian tensions and violence.

After long and laborious debate among White House officials on the size of the residual force, the President agreed on a number of 10.000, which was later reduced to 5.000, and in June 2011 he informed the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri el Maliki about the request. The U.S. president emphasised that any agreement should receive the consent of the Iraqi parliament. By October, Iraqi officials held three summits to discuss the request and by mid-October they "*informed the United States that while the parties (except the Sadrists) were willing to support a troop-stationing agreement in parliament, they were not willing to include judicial immunities*."[143]

After this Iraqi response, the Obama administration gave up its plan to leave a residual troop and began the process of complete withdrawal following the 31December deadline. The former U.S ambassador to Iraq James Jeffry (2010-2012) explained two main factors that account for America's failure to leave a basing troop. The first was the relatively stable political and

---

[142] Joao Silva, "In U.S Exit from Iraq, Failed Efforts and Challenges," *New York Times*, September 22, 2012, at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/middleeast/failed-efforts-of-americas-last-months-in-iraq.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[143] James F. Jeffrey, "The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East," The Washington Institute for Near East Studies, November, 2014, at https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote21_Jeffrey2.pdf

economic situation of Iraq and thus "*there was little perceived need or understanding for U.S military presence.*" The second factor was the change in the Iraqi political landscape.[144]

The Shiite Sadrits, a very anti-American political entity, boosted its presence in parliament in 2011 and held 40 seats, 13% of the legislature. Moreover, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), a relatively pro-American Shiite party, lost most of its power in 2010 elections. Other Shiite parties were also taking the ani-American stance, while the powerful predominantly Sunni block of Iraqia "*opted in contrast to 2008 to remain on the sidelines, vowing to go no further than Maliki did on accommodating the United States.*"[145]

Other observers believe that America's failure to get the consent of the Iraqi parliament was due to its inability to broker a power-sharing agreement among the various Iraqi political factions. Moreover, Iraqis' concerns about their sovereignty, and Iran's continuous pressure, pressed Iraqi politicians not to undertake the political decisions that were needed to secure a parliamentary approval.

As U.S troops continued to pull out in the course of 2010, diplomatic and civilian work was also diminishing. The embassy in Baghdad assumed the bulk of efforts to promote American interests in Iraq after the provincial reconstruction teams diminished sharply from 23 in 2009 to 16 in 2010, and in September 2011 they were completely closed. Such drawdown in civilian work caused the United States to lose "*critical situational awareness*" which left the U.S embassy in Baghdad in the dark about the development of events in other regions of the country. This situation was further complicated by the unstable security situation in several provinces which made the movement of embassy personnel more dangerous and challenging.[146]

The limitation on the movement of State Department officials was compounded with the rising number of kidnapping warnings in late 2011 which were believed to be initiated by Shiite militias linked to Iran and other el Qaida affiliates. This situation led the State Department to rely mostly on contractors to provide transportation, food, maintenance, and security to the embassy

---

[144] Ibid. , p.5.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Michael Eisenstadt, "Should I leave or Should I go," Foreign Affairs, September 30, 2010, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66755/michael-eisenstadt/should-i-stay-or-should-i-go

in Baghdad and the counselor outposts in Basra, Kirkuk and Erbil. Even such contractors remain continuous targets of Shiite and el Qaida militias.[147]

Despite the drawdown of US troops along with the sharp decrease in its country team and civil work, US aid to Iraq was also in sharp decline. In this context, "*US military and civil aid has been an important source of America's influence in Iraq, but has been declining in proportion to the reduction of US troops, and will continue to do so*." Such decrease in US aid was encouraged and adopted mainly by Congress. In April 2011 Obama's administration requested $5.05 billion of aid to Iraq, but was able to receive only $3.7 billion.[148]

As for the fiscal year of 2012, Iraq continued to receive less aid form the United States and when it received such aid, it was often appropriated to military or security issues. In its Defense Budget Analysis Report of 2012, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment reported that US funding for the Iraq war was the lowest since FY2005. Of the budget request of FY2012, only $10.6 billion was appropriated to Iraq compared to $107.3 billion to Afghanistan. "*Nearly all of the reduction in war funding from FY2011 to FY2012*," the report noted, "*is due to Iraq, where costs are projected to decline by 77 % in real terms as troop levels drop to less than 4.500 in the first quarter of FY2012 and to zero after December 31, 2011*."[149]

As US troops were winding down during 2010 and 2011, the State Department, represented by its embassy in Baghdad and the other consulates in Basra, Erbil and Kirkuk, assumed the mission of promoting and advancing US interests in an unstable and volatile county. Even such diplomatic presence was severely hindered by the unsettled security situation and the decline in its budget due to financial constraints on the US government. Such constraints also dictated the decrease in financial aid and funding for the Iraqi government. Such measures singled a sharp decline in US commitments to Iraq and therefore lessened its leverage and influence on its politics and on its government.

---

[147] Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, "Iraq after US Withdrawal: US Policy and Iraqi Search for Security and Stability," Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 3, 2012 at
http://csis.org/files/publication/120702_Iraq_After_US_Withdrawal.pdf
[148] Ibid. , p. 89.
[149] Ibid. , p. 91.

Experts have continued to assert that America's declining influence in Iraq would leave the door open for unpredictable scenarios. The most critical scenario would be the revival of sectarian tensions, conflicts, and even a civil war. In such conditions, Iran's influence would likely to increase and would therefore pave the way for more regional competition for power and influence in the country. In this regard, America's core objectives have continued to decrease from Bush's plan to bring about a democratic Iraq to Obama's goal to work for an Iraq "*that is stable, sovereign, and self-reliant*." In the few years to come, even Obama's humble objectives seemed to be a task beyond reach.

2.2.2. Iran's Expanding Influence in Iraq

One of the major obstacles to America's influence in Iraq has been the expansion of Iranian influence. Ever since the fall of the pro-American regime of the Shah in 1979, Iran has been working to project its influence in the region, usually against American interests, but was often deterred by its adversary regime of Saddam Hussein. With the US invasion of 2003 and the fall of Saddam, one of Iran's main objectives was already met. Subsequently, Iran's main objectives became to ensure that Iraq would neither be a threat nor a base for America's attacks on its soil. In doing so, Iran has striven hard to turn this strategic asset into a partner that would assist in fulfilling its agenda across the region.

Given the common religious and ideological ties between Iran and Iraq, Iran's principal political objective has been to unite Shiite political parities so they can translate their demographic and political weight into a working government. To do so, Iran encouraged its Iraqi political allies, notably the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the Sadrists, Badr Organisation and the Islamic Dawa party "*to participate in the post-2003 political process and to compete in every election on a single list*." Such efforts bore fruits in the elections of January 2005 and December of the same year when those parties, along with other Shiite groups, participated under the United Iraqi Alliance which "*was able to garner the majority of the vote in*

both elections, and subsequently played a major role in framing the Iraqi constitution, and in the governments that were formed following these elections."[150]

Such Shia-dominated governments were not following their Iranian allies' wishes blindly, but they adopted a balanced approach of serving Iranian interests only when theirs are also met. For instance, Iran was very opposed to the security agreement of 2008 between Iraq and the U.S. Iraq, however, did not entirely reject the agreement but it did make sure that its soil "*would not be used as a springboard or a corridor for attacks on Iran and established a timetable for a U.S. military withdrawal.*"[151] Such provision in the agreement showed the extent to which Iran could wield its influence on Iraqi politics.

In the parliamentary elections of March 2010 Iran was also successful, where America failed, to broker the formation of new a government, though it failed to unite the Shiite parties in one block. The Prime Minister Nouri al Malik formed the State of the Law Alliance (SLA) while other Shiite parties united under the Iraqi National Alliance, but no Shiite party was able to secure the majority of seats.

The secular and nationalist Iraqiya block, headed by Iyad Allawi and backed by the majority of Sunnis, won a plurality of seats, 91 out of 325. Iran strove hard to prevent Allawi from forming the government while it convened Shiite parities and convinced them to form the National Alliance in May 2010. In doing so, Tehran also succeeded to convince its allies, the Sadrists and ISCI, to support el Maliki for a second term and to form the new government.[152]

Along with its ties with the Iraqi Shiite parties, Iran has also cultivated friendly relations with many Iraqi Kurdish political parties and figures. Kurdish politicians in Iraq played a key role in forming the new government of 2010 and retained the presidency under the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Jalal Talabani. A visit by Talabani to Iran in 2011 "*was heralded by energy industry analyst John Daly as 'proof of the changing regional dynamics,' in which Iran was successfully subverting America's influence over Iraqi affairs.*" In 2012 the Iranian vice

---

[150] Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights, and Ahmed Ali, "Iran's Influence in Iraq," The Washington Institute, April 2011, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus111.pdf
[151] Ibid. , p. 3.
[152] Ibid. , p. 4.

president for international affairs also paid a visit to Iraqi Kurdistan with "*delegation of more than 100 Iranian companies as part of the Iranian-Kurdistan Region Economic Forum*."[153]

At the economic level, Iran-Iraq relations have also witnessed remarkable progress in recent years, often in Iran's advantage. Iraq is the second largest importer of Iran's goods apart from oil. In 2003, "*Iraq's non-oil imports from Iran totaled $184 million; by 2008 this figure was $7 billion and is expected to top $10 billion in 2012.*" In the sector of energy, Iraq imported $1 billion in 2009 from Iran with 40 % for electricity and 30 % for refined petroleum products. In Basra, the second largest city of Iraq, Iran planned to establish a free trade zone and to build oil pipelines between the city and Abadan.[154]

The progress made in economic relations between Iran and Iraq can be equally true between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan. In July 2013, Iraqi Kurdistan minister of housing held a meeting with the Iranian first vice president in Iran at a time when trade between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan was expected to surpass $4 billion in 2013, before it was only $100 million in 2000. Trade exchange between the two parts took also the form of smuggling oil from Iraqi Kurdistan to Iran, a way for Iran to bypass western economic sanctions because of its nuclear program.[155]

At the military and security level, Iran's influence in Iraq has also continued to increase. Pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq continued to receive military, training, and financial aid from Iran during the American occupation and after. With such militias, Iran sought to put pressure on US and British forces to leave Iraq and also to employ them for retaliation should the United States or Israel attack Iran.[156] After US withdrawal, these military proxies might have also been used to "*press the Iraqi Government to curtail its relationship with the United States and as a source of leverage over the government on other issues.*" [157]These groups are usually military wings for

[153] George Richards, "Across the Zagros: Iranian Influence in Iraqi Kurdistan," *Guardian*, 21 November 2013, at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/iran-influence-iraqi-kurdistan
[154] Mohsen Milani, "Meet me in Baghdad," *Foreign Affairs*, September 20, 2010, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66750/mohsen-m-milani/meet-me-in-baghdad
[155] George Richards.
[156] Kenneth Katzman, "Iran-Iraq Relations," August 13, 2010, Congressional Report Service, at https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22323.pdf
[157] Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights, and Ahmed Ali, op. cit. p. 8.

political parties or organisations such as Badr Organisation for ISCI or JMA (Jaish al Mahdi) for the Sadrists.[158]

The most active Iranian military force in Iraq is al Qods Force, a part of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard responsible for outside operations. The main role of this force is "*to identify Iraqi fighters to train, and to organise safe passage for Iranian weapons shipments and Iraqi militants between Iran and Iraq.*" The majority of Shiite militias in Iraq that were supported by Qods Force were affiliated with the political figure al Sadr and his party. They include Kataib Hizb Allah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Promised Day Brigades. Badr Organisation, the military wing of ISCI, moreover, became part of Qods Force after 2003 and many of its Iranian-trained personnel infiltrated into the state security organs, notably the Ministry of Interior intelligence structure and key Special Forces and Iraqi Army units. All such groups are usually referred to as Iran's special groups in Iraq.[159]

In the summer of 2014, with the advance of ISIS[160] in northern Iraq and the rising calls for the pro-Iranian Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki to step down, Iran sent to Iraq Qods personnel, ground attack aircrafts, and drones to protect Shiite communities and holy sites and also to organise Shiite militias to work hand in hand with the Iraqi Security Force (ISF). In order to back up its ally el Maliki and his government, Iran reportedly deployed seven Su-25 Frogfoot jets along with some similar aircrafts delivered directly from Russia.[161]

In December 2014, Iran's deputy foreign minister Ebrahim Rahimpour told reporters that Iran have only military advisors in Iraq but not ground troops. The Iranian official also confirmed Iran's airstrikes on ISIS militants in Iraq in defense of what he called Iran's interests and friends (the Iraqi government and the autonomous region of Kurdistan). Rahimpour stressed that the

---

[158] Ibid. , p. 5.
[159] Michael Knights, "The Evolution of Iran's Special Groups," CTC Sentinal, November 2010, Vol 3, Issue 11-12, at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolution-of-iran%E2%80%99s-special-groups-in-iraq
[160] Stands for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, a Sunni militant organization that has been operating in Iraq since 2006 and in Syria since the beginning of the Civil War. The group occupied large swaths of territory in northern Iraq in June 2014. The Organization is also known as ISIL (the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or IS (the Islamic State).
[161] Farzin Nadimi, "Iran's Expending Military Role In Iraq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 8, 2014 at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-expanding-military-role-in-iraq

attacks were at Iraq's request, but with no coordination with the United States. The new US ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones welcomed Iran's actions, though without coordination with his government, stressing that "*Iran is an important neighbour to Iraq, there has to be cooperation between Iran and Iraq.*"[162]

Iran's influence in Iraq and its attempts to exercise such influence have not been without limitations and setbacks. Iran's policy to unite Shiite parties and groups has not always been successful. Sometimes tensions arise between such groups, with some of them resorting to violence and intimidations. Iran's exportation of subsided goods with low prices to Iraq has also harmed the Iraqi industry and its competitiveness.[163] Such measures triggered anti-Iranian sentiment in some cases and worked for the political defeat of some pro-Iranian parties. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shiite communities was sometimes the outcome of Iran's interference and support for one Iraqi faction against the other.

Iran's expanding influence in Iraq since 2003 has been an outcome of both the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the withdrawal of its troops in 2011. Since 2003, Iran used its military proxies to attack and intimidate US troops and to pressure its political allies to press for American withdrawal. After such withdrawal in 2011, Iran intensified its interference in Iraq and used its proxies there to promote its interests and back its allies elsewhere in the region, notably in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.

2.2.3. Political Rifts and Sectarian Divides

In his strategy for Iraq in 2009, President Obama stressed the objective of working for an Iraq that is stable and self-reliant with a government that is just and accountable. With the multi-ethnic and sectarian nature of the Iraqi society along with regional competition for influence in the country, such objective seemed much harder to achieve. This challenge was further complicated by the continuous drawdown of US troops and civil personnel in 2010 and 2011

---

[162] Julian Borger, "Iran Air Strikes against ISIS Requested by Iraqi Government, Says Tehran," *Guardian*, December 6, 2014, at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/05/iran-conducts-air-strikes-against-isis-exremists-iraq

[163] Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights, and Ahmed Ali, op. cit., p.19.

which left President Obama and his administration with less leverage to influence the security situation and the political crises that were yet to hit an already fragile and an unstable nation.

The repeated political stalemates that affected Iraq ever since the first election of 2005 and which escalated after 2010 elections were largely attributed to the sectarian nature of the Iraqi society. But this was not the only reason. Since Prime Minister Nouri el Maliki came to power, he continued to treat political rivals from the Sunni and Kurdish communities with mistrust and therefore triggered their alienation. The former US ambassador to Iraq James Jeffry put much of the responsibility of the dysfunctional Iraqi political system on Nouri al Maliki. "*The core reason*," stressed the ambassador, "*was Maliki's inability to trust, to reach out to other groups and share power even with his Shia community…. He was never able to overcome his conspiratorial roots, understand other groups or appreciate the Western values America sought to implement in Iraq*"[164]

By the end 2011, as the remaining US troops were about to leave Iraq--and while Obama was praising the progress made in the Iraqi political system--el Maliki ordered the arrest of the Vice President Tarik al-Hashimi, a Sunni political leader in the Iraqiya bloc. He was accused by El Maliki of a terrorist attack and claimed that he was the target. After the Higher Judicial Council formally charged el Hashimi for the same reason, he fled to Erbil and then to Turkey. Other politicians from the Iraqiya bloc, like Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi and Deputy Prime Minister Saleh el-Mutalq, were also arrested but were later released.[165]

Maliki's efforts in December 2011 to remove el Mutlaq from office through a vote in parliament failed because the Kurds and the Iraqiya bloc withdrew their legislators. Such move made it impossible to reach the required 163 votes to adopt the decision. In this situation, the prime minister removed el Mutlaq with an executive decision which triggered the Iraqiya to withdraw its ministers from the cabinet. This stalemate was compounded with the subsequent

---

[164] James Jeffry, "How Maliki Broke Iraq," *Politico*, August 13, 2014, at
http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/how-maliki-broke-iraq-109996.html#.VKvClzSG8YE
[165] Michael Nights, "Iraq's political Crisis: Challenges for US policy," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 21, 2011, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iraqs-political-crisis-challenges-for-u.s.-policy

purge of some Sunni Arab professors from the academy which ignited a serious call for the formation of a federal region in provinces like Salah el Din and Diyala.[166]

Maliki's attempts to consolidate his power were also evident at the security level. His office exercised "*a de facto control over the Ministry of Defense, the military command structure, and the intelligence service during later 2011and early to mid-2012.*" Even the Iraqi Special Forces and the Counterinsurgency force became a tool in his hands to promote his interests. Positions and promotions in the Iraqi Security Forces became liable to nepotism and sectarianism. The failure to integrate the Sons of Iraq--a civil force in Sunni provinces that helped the U.S. and the Iraqi government to fight al Qaida in Iraq--further intensified the divide between Sunnis and Shiites and between the Kurds and the Iraqi government.[167]

This political rift led the Iraqiya bloc, some Kurdish parties, and the Sadrists to an attempt to unseat el Maliki through parliament in May 2012. This attempt failed thanks to the lack of the required votes and the influence of Iran and some Iraqi religious leaders who called for the support of el Maliki. In this context, US policy experts warned that the continuation el Maliki in power might drive him for further reliance on outside powers, notably Iran, and might stir up breakdowns in the political and security situation not only in Iraq but also in the wider region. In these repeated crises, US officials responded with a tactful approach and disengagement not to elicit the impression that America was siding with its Sunni allies in the region.[168]

Sectarian tensions burst again in early 2013 after el Maliki arrested ten bodyguards of the Sunni Finance Minister Rafi al Issawi in December 2012. This event ignited mass demonstrations in the Sunni provinces and raised the calls of unresolved demands and grievances. The demands included the release of prisoners who were arrested without clear charges, the formation of a more inclusive government and a halt to the arrest of Sunni leaders. The situation was further polarised when al Maliki urged his supporters to demonstrate in support for his government. The

---

[166] Ibid.
[167] Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, "Patterns of Violence in Iraq," October 24, 2012, Center for Strategic and International Studies, at http://csis.org/files/publication/121024_Iraq_Violence.pdf
[168] Michael Knights, "The Effort to Unseat Maliki," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 5, 2012, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-effort-to-unseat-maliki-lessons-for-u.s.-policy

crisis needed a neutral mediator as regional players were backing their Iraqi allies. The US, as the party most likely to assume such role, was hampered by its declining soft and hard power in Iraq.[169]

In April Iraqi Security Forces stormed a protest camp in Hawijah and killed forty civilians. The incident stirred up the Iarqiya bloc to pull out its members from parliament while other three Sunni ministers resigned. Some Sunni tribal leaders and demonstrators resorted to force and armed resistance. The U.S. in turn worked to pressure el Maliki to seek peaceful and diplomatic ways to ease the tensions. The prime minister responded with some political reforms which sought to give Sunni provinces some governing authorities and more share of revenues. The reforms also allowed some former members of the outlawed Baath party to hold positions of power.[170]

Such measures, however, were barely able to relieve the tensions as the demonstrators continued to attack government forces and as el Maliki clung to his policy of accusations and arrests against Sunni political leaders. By the end of 2013, the group known as ISIL or ISIS was already active in some Sunni provinces against the Iraqi Security Forces and Shiite militias. The group was also joined by some demonstrators, some defected soldiers from the ISF, and other members of the Sons of Iraq. As the sectarian violence and the political rift continued to escalate, regional powers also continued to back up their allies, while the US was faced with very limited choices and a continuous decline in its power to influence events and circumstances.

2.2.4. The ISIS Crisis: The Challenge of a Renewed Civil War.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops and the decline in its commitments toward Iraq was accompanied by a continuous rise in Iranian influence and sectarian tensions. This situation made the resurrection of another all-out civil war almost inevitable. Such war was already simmering in 2013 but it took a full shape in June 2014 when the Sunni militant group known as ISIL or ISIS

[169] Nazar Janabi, "Iraq's Sectarian Tensions Rise, as Maliki Clings to Power," February 14, 2013, *Fikra Forum*, at http://fikraforum.org/?p=3060

[170] Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights," Congressional Research Service (CRS), September 15, 2014, at https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf

controlled large swaths of territory in northwestern Iraq, notably the key city of Mosul. The expansion of this group, which was designated by the US as a foreign terrorist organisation, was the result of an abrupt collapse of the Iraqi Security Forces to which the United States had devoted more than eight years of training and billions of dollars of equipment.

Experts, however, have continued to debate the reasons behind the collapse of the Iraqi forces in Mosul and other key provinces. Most observers believe that the weakness of the Iraqi army lies in its partisan formation. When Maliki came to power, he started replacing Sunni commanders with others more loyal to him. Recruitment in the Iraqi army was also influenced by sectarian considerations and was ripe with corruption. Other critics believe that the military performance was largely determined by Iraqi politics, which was already deteriorating, rather than by training and equipment.[171] Moreover, the rapid fall of Mosul and other Sunni provinces can also be attributed to the alienation felt by the Sunni population toward the Iraqi government and its army.

Beside the failure of the U.S. government to establish a stable Iraq with an inclusive government, the rise of ISIS and the intensifying civil war posed very serious and imminent threats to US allies and interests in the wider region. The stability of some principal US allies in the region, notably Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait would also be endangered and therefore put the flow of oil to the international market under serious constraints. Iran, which has already established a foothold in the Shiite-majority Iraqi regions, would strive to protect its interests and advance its influence.[172]

In his remarks on the situation in Iraq in 19 June 2014, the US president recognised such challenges when he stressed that "*ISIL poses a threat to the Iraqi people, to the region and to US interests.*" The president made the protection of US personnel in the embassy in Iraq his foremost priority for which he sent 300 US troops. He also underscored the "increase in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets" and the cooperation with the Iraqi Security Forces.[173]

---

[171] Stephan Biddle, Max Boot and Meghan O'sullivan, chaired by Richard Haass, "What to do about Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations, June 18, 2014, at http://www.cfr.org/iraq/do-iraq/p33153

[172] Ibid.

[173] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq", 19 June 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/19/remarks-president-situation-iraq

Despite the urgency and the gravity of the situation, the US president ruled out any possibility of sending US ground troops to fight in Iraq explaining that "*We do not have the ability to simply solve this problem by sending in tens of thousands of troops and committing the kinds of blood and treasure that has already been expended in Iraq. Ultimately, this is something that is going to have to be solved by the Iraqis.*"[174]

In this context, President Obama made the political solution in Iraq the most effective way to solve the Iraqi problems. "*There is an urgent need for an inclusive political process*," declared the president, "*a more capable Iraqi security force, and counterterrorism efforts that deny groups like ISIL a safe haven.*"[175] US officials refused to back el Maliki for a third term despite his State of the Law's performance in the elections of April 2014. This stance was also shared by many Shiite parties, religious leaders in Iraq and Iran, and even by the Iranian government. All the concerning parties looked for a political figure with a broad-based acceptance among all the Iraqi political social factions.

In July 2014 the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR) selected the Kurdish figure Fouad Masoum as Iraq's new president who, following his constitutional responsibilities, asked Haydar al Abbadi to become a prime minister-designate and to form a new government. In 8 September, al Abbadi got the approval of the COR for his program and for all but two ministerial nominations. The approval of the new PM's program and ministers won a broad support from the American and even the Iranian government.[176]

As the new Iraqi government was formed, which Obama had made conditional for any further US help to Iraq, the US president announced his new strategy in 10 September which aimed "*to degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL.*" The president described four parts of his strategy which include a campaign of airstrikes, an increase of training and equipment to the Iraqi forces, cutting off the flow of financial support and foreign fighters to the group, and finally the provision of further humanitarian assistance. All such efforts, the president

---

[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] "The 'Islamic State:' Crisis and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, December 8, 2014, at http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf

emphasised, would be done with the help and support from a broad international coalition of allies and partners.[177]

In his strategy, the president excluded any scenario in which U.S. ground forces would be involved in combat missions. The American forces that he sent "*will not have a combat mission –- we will not get dragged into another ground war in Iraq. But they are needed to support Iraqi and Kurdish forces with training, intelligence and equipment.*" The President also emphasised that the United States could never be the ultimate player for solving the Iraqi crisis, "*American power can make a decisive difference, but we cannot do for Iraqis what they must do for themselves, nor can we take the place of Arab partners in securing their region.*"[178]

In his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Secretary of State John Kerry stressed that the US war against ISIL would never be like the Gulf War of 1991 or the Iraq War of 2003 because there would be no U.S. ground troops in this conflict. Such stance stemmed from the conviction that "*From the last decade we know that a sustainable strategy is not U.S. ground forces; it is enabling local forces to do what they have to do for themselves and for their country.*"[179]

In the few months following the US-led airstrikes on ISIS in Iraq, the Kurdish forces of *Peshmarga*, the ISF and other Shiite militias were able to secure some gains. In September, with the help of airstrikes, those forces helped secure the strategic Mosul Dam and broke the siege of the Shiite town of Amerli. In October, *Peshmarga* forces retained the town of Zumar and the border crossing to Syria in the town of Rabia. Most importantly, the airstrikes were effective in halting the advance of ISIS fighters to Erbil, the capital city of Iraqi Kurdistan.[180]

However, critics and observers have continued to criticise the US strategy and the coalition airstrikes as ineffective and futile. Most of those critics argue that the success of such airstrikes

---

[177] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Statement by the President on ISIL," September 10, 2014, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1
[178] Ibid.
[179] Testimony of John Kerry to SFRC, "Opening Remarks on the US Strategy to Defeat ISIL," September 17, 2014, at http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/09/231773.htm
[180] "The 'Islamic State' Crisis and U.S. Policy," op. cit. pp. 19-20.

requires effective and reliable ground forces. The U.S. has repeatedly ruled out the possibility of sending its own troops and other U.S. allies, whether international or in the region, have also adhered to the same stance. Even the ISF, on which the US has been relying, has proved badly-organised, indecisive and lacking in training. The fight of other Shiite militias on the side of the ISF, following some decrees of Shiite clerics, has also intensified the sectarian sense of such conflict.

Moreover, reports have cited that the Sunni component in Iraq have remained skeptical and reluctant to join the fight against ISIS. In late September 2014, the *New York Times* reported that along with the government struggle in the front line, there was "*the absence or resistance of many of the Sunni Muslim tribes that officials in Baghdad and Washington hope will play the decisive role in the course of the fight*." According to some Sunni tribal leaders, Sunni population remained marginalised and discriminated against by the Iraqi government and that the new prime minister, who the US has praised, have not lived up to the Sunni hopes.[181]

Other critics, however, look at the US strategy from a broad and historical perspective. The American foreign policy specialist Andrew J. Bacevich argues that "*Even if we win, we lose,*" because defeating ISIS "*would only commit the United States more deeply to a decades-old enterprise that has proved costly and counterproductive*." The Iraqi forces that the US trained, he argues, will not fight because the Iraqi government that was created does not govern. The most daunting task for the U.S., however, is not the so-called "*regime change*", in which the successive U.S. government have proven adept at, but it would rather be the process of "*nation-building*".[182]

---

[181] David D. Kirkpatrick and Omar al Jawoshy, "Weeks of US airstrikes Fail to Dislodge ISIS in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 22, 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/23/world/middleeast/isis-iraq-airstrikes.html?_r=0

[182] Andrew J. Bacevich, "Even if we defeat the Islamic State, we'll still lose the bigger war," Washington Post, October 3, 2014, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/even-if-we-defeat-the-islamic-state-well-still-lose-the-bigger-war

2.3. Syria: Political Deadlock, Military Stalemate and the Limits of American   Diplomacy

As the United States was pulling out its last troops from Iraq, protests and social upheavals were sweeping some Arab countries in early 2011. Such protests brought remarkable changes to the political landscape of some countries, but also posed new challenges to America's presence and influence in the region. In Egypt, for example, President Hussni Mubarak, a long-lasting ally to the US, was forced to step down while a new president was elected in 2011. Though the new president seemed willing to continue his country's cooperation with the US, his presidency proved to be short-lived. As General Abdelfatah Sisi took over in 2013, American US interests seemed threatened by the new regime's nationalist stance and its willingness to increase cooperation with powers deemed rivals to the U.S. in the region, namely Russia and China.   As the United States was pulling out its last troops from Iraq, protests and social upheavals were sweeping some Arab countries in early 2011. Such protests brought remarkable changes to the political landscape of some countries, but also posed new challenges to America's presence and influence in the region. In Egypt, for example, President Hussni Mubarak, a long-lasting ally to the US, was forced to step down while a new president was elected in 2011. Though the new president seemed willing to continue his country's cooperation with the US, his presidency proved to be short-lived. As General Abdelfatah Sisi took over in 2013, the US interests seemed threatened by the new regime's nationalist stance and its willingness to increase cooperation with powers deemed rivals to the U.S. in the region, namely Russia and China.

2.3.1. Political Stalemate and the Limits of American Diplomacy

Despite all the challenges that faced world leaders and diplomats in the crises that hit the region, the one in Syria proved to be the most costly, problematic, and regionally and globally divisive. The seriousness of such crisis led the former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to name it in her recent memoir as the "*wicked problem*". The term, as she explained, is used by experts to describe "*complex challenges that confound standard solutions and approaches.*

Wicked problems rarely have a right answer; in fact, part of what makes them wicked is that every option appears worse than the next."[183]

Syria has never been an ally to the US or a country with strategic interests. However, US policy makers remained concerned about the peace process between the Palestinians and the Syrians on the one hand and the Israelis on the other. As Obama came to office, one of his priorities in the Middle East was to invigorate peace talks between the two parts. For this end, his administration resumed diplomatic relations with Syria in early 2010. U.S. initiatives to improve relations with Syria and to advance peace talks were met with repeated constraints and failure. Another U.S. policy objective toward Syria has been to break the axis of alliance between Iran, Syria and Hizbollah in Lebanon. Syria was believed to be a critical supplier of arms to Hizbolah and other Palestinian movements of resistance, notably Hamas organisation.

Given that all these security issues were at stake, the Obama administration was careful about its response to the demonstrations being held against President Assad in late March 2011. As the situation became more violent, with Assad forces reportedly using force to stop the protests, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described Assad in early July as "*not indispensible, and we have absolutely nothing invested in him remaining in power*." Such remarks came after pro-Assad supporters attacked the US embassy in Damascus and painted its wall with graffiti calling the U.S. ambassador Robert Ford "*dog*," while they raised the Syrian flag on the embassy's building.[184]

In August 2011, the U.S. president echoed his secretary of state's stance and urged the Syrian president to leave power so that political reform would be possible. "*We have constantly said that President Assad must lead a democratic transition or get out of the way*," the president insisted in his remarks, "*He has not led. For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside*." While saying so, Obama stressed that his country would never choose or impose the political future of Syria and that only the Syrians were qualified to do so. He also

---

[183] Hillary Rodham Clinton, <u>Hard Choices</u>, (Great Britain: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
[184] Andrew J. Tabler, "A See Change in Washington Policy toward Syria," CNN Global Public Square, July 12, 2011, at http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/12/a-sea-change/

noted that the U.S. would support "*an effort to bring about a Syria that is democratic, just, and inclusive for all Syrians.*"[185]

In order to pressure President Assad to make concessions or leave power, Obama's administration, along with some U.S. allies, announced a series of economic sanctions on the Syrian regime. These sanctions aimed to "deepen the financial isolation of the Assad regime and further disrupt its ability to finance a campaign of violence against the Syrian people." For this reason, the U.S. President signed an Executive Order which froze the assets of the Syrian Government and banned U.S. people from making any transactions that involve the Syrian Government. The Executive Order also banned the importation of Syrian oil or petroleum products and forbade U.S. persons from dealing in such business or investing their money in Syria.[186]

Critics have argued that--besides their ineffectiveness to stop President Assad from using force or making political concessions--the sanctions have harmed ordinary Syrian people that the U.S. government has tried to help. "*None of it is working*" argued Max Fisher, a former editor of the *Atlantic*, "*Not only is Assad's crackdown getting worse, not only is the regime as entrenched and well-armed as ever, but Bashar al-Assad is so untouched by the sanctions that he's still able to make easy online purchases from one of the best-known American consumer companies on Earth.*" To bypass such sanctions, the Syrian government dismantled the social safety net and stopped subsidising fuel and food stuff. The sanctions also made it difficult for people to make money transfer or use credit cards which further isolated the Syrians from the outside world. [187]

In such conditions, the Syrian people became more worried that their country would repeat the same scenario of Iraq under sanctions when black market thrived and regular businesses lost ground. "*Bashar Assad is one person,*" noted a small Syrian businessman to the *New York Times* reporter, "*but there are 23 million Syrians, all this pressure they put on Syria just makes the*

---

[185] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria," August 18, 2011, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/statement-president-obama-situation-syria
[186] Ibid.
[187] Max Fisher, "Sanctions Hurt Syrians, but They Can't even Keep Bashar al-Assad off iTunes," *the Atlantic*, March 15, 2012, at http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/sanctions-hurt-syrians-but-they-cant-even-keep-bashar-al-assad-off-itunes/254567/

regime stronger because it gives them power." The Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem denounced the sanctions and stressed that "*They will affect the citizens without any doubt, but our people are used to such pressures.*"[188]

As U.S. and European sanctions were doing little to persuade President Assad to make political concessions or step aside, the U.S. and its allies turned to diplomatic pressure through the U.N. Security Council. Their efforts, however, were met with far more complex challenges and constraints which were exercised by their traditional rivals in the region namely Russia, China and Iran. A total of three draft resolutions that aimed to condemn or sanction the Syrian regime were all met with the Russian and Chinese vetoes.

In October 2011, Russia and China vetoed a Security Council resolution drafted by France and backed by Britain, Germany and Portugal. It aimed, not to remove the Syrian President, but only to condemn his actions and hinted at possible sanctions. The Russian ambassador to the U.N. Vitaly Churkin said that he opposed any sanctions against Damascus while the Chinese ambassador declared his country's rejection of any interference in Syria's internal affairs. Susan Rice, the U.S ambassador to the U.N, said her country was "*outraged by the veto*" and added that "*The crisis in Syria will stay before the Security Council and we will not rest until this council rises to meet its responsibilities.*"[189]

In February 2012, the Arab League, backed by the U.S. and its European allies, presented a plan for the U.N. that called for Assad to quit and to hand his office to a deputy as a step for political transition. For the second time, Russia and China vetoed the draft resolution. Russia resisted the resolution on the ground that it was "*an improper and biased attempt at 'regime change' in Syria.*" Susan Rice responded that she was "*disgusted*" by the Russian-Chinese veto and noted that "*any further bloodshed that follows will be on their hands.*" The veto came after

---

[188] Neil Macfarquhar, "Syrians Say they are Feeling the Grip of Sanctions," *New York Times*, December 2, 2011, , at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/03/world/middleeast/syrians-say-they-are-feeling-grip-of-economic-sanctions.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

[189] Louis Charbonneau, "Russia, China veto U.N. resolution condemning Syria," *Reuters*, October 5, 2011, at http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/10/05/uk-syria-un-idUKTRE7937QT20111005

what was described as an unprecedented pressure exerted by the U.S. and its allies on Russia to allow the passage of this resolution.[190]

U.S. efforts were aborted again by Russia and Chine's votes of another resolution in July 2012. The resolution aimed to extend the mandate of a U.N observer mission in Syria and included possible sanctions against the Syrian authorities if violence continued. The Russian ambassador stressed again that his country would oppose any resolution "*that would open the path for the pressure of sanctions and further to external military involvement in Syrian domestic affairs*." The failure of three Western-backed resolutions in the U.N. in less than ten months shows how Russia and China's actions have become so concerted and effective in curbing Western intervention in Syria and in the wider region.[191]

As U.S and its allies' efforts at the Security Council continued to reach an impasse, the U.N appointed its special envoy Kofi Anan to Syria to supervise a diplomatic solution. In June 2012, the group known as Action Group--which includes the five permanent members at the Security Council and other four Arab countries--convened in Geneva to agree on a proposed plan by Kofi Anan to reach a peaceful settlement. As it was the case with Security Council resolutions, Russia and China remained strongly opposed to any document that would force President Assad to leave power or exclude him from the political process, a goal that the U.S. and its allies were striving to achieve.

The initial plan called for a transitional unity government that would exclude "*those whose continued presence and participation would undermine the credibility of the transition and jeopardise stability and reconciliation*." Such plan, as U.S Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, was planned with the help of U.S. diplomats and such a statement aimed at Assad's exclusion, though the U.S. preferred more direct language for Assad's departure. Even such indirect reference to Assad's departure was not accepted by the Russian diplomats. For the sake of

---

[190] Louis Charbonneau and Patrick Worsnip, "Russia, China veto U.N. draft backing Arab plan for Syria," *Reuters*, February 4, 2012, at http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/04/us-syria-idUSTRE80S08620120204
[191] Michelle Nichols, "Russia, China veto U.N. Security Council Resolution on Syria," *Reuters*, July 20, 2012, at http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/07/20/uk-syria-crisis-un-idUKBRE86I0UG20120720

reaching an agreement, the U.S. made further concessions and accepted Assad as a part of a transitional government through a "*mutual consent*" of the parties concerned.[192]

Before the Geneva agreement was signed, the U.S. made another failed diplomatic attempt to put the agreement under Chapter VII of the U.N. charter to sanction the regime in case of noncompliance. The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov "*was noncommittal on that, but he agreed to use Russian influence to support Kofi and his plan,*" as Clinton explained. After the agreement was signed, however, "*the Russian ultimately refused to back the Chapter VII resolution at the U.N or exert any real leverage on Assad.*" As the Syrian parties failed to form a unity government, the U.N-Arab envoy resigned in August and expressed his disappointment and regrets, to which U.S. Secretary of State replied, "*I can't imagine how we could've done any more than what we did. At least in Geneva we had a framework, but they [the Russians] were just immovable.*"[193]

With the absence of a clear political agreement between the Syrian regime and the opposition, the armed conflict escalated and the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate. As of late 2013, the U.N. reported that more than 9 million, 40 % of the population, left the country or were internally displaced. After Kofi Anan's resignation, the U.N appointed the Algerian experienced diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as a U.N-Arab special envoy to Syria. The diplomat on his part worked to convene the Syrian regime, the opposition, and other world powers for s second round of negotiations in Geneva which was proposed by the Americans and the Russians.[194]

In a meeting in Geneva in November 2013, U.S., Russian, and U.N senior diplomats failed to agree on a date for the second Geneva conference. The parties were unable to agree on the most basic issues including which countries would attend, who would represent the Syrian opposition, and the future role of President Assad in Syria's politics. The most challenging issue seemed to

---

[192] Hillary Clinton.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Nick Cumming-Bruce and Rick Gladstone, "Diplomats Fail to Agree on Details for Syria Peace Talks," *New York Times,* November 5, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0

be the deep divide in the Syrian opposition. "*They are divided*" declared the Algerian diplomat, "*that's not secret for anyone; they're facing all sorts of problems.*"[195]

With such divided political and military Syrian opposition, the United States became more crippled as to who it should support and how it would do so. The Middle East specialist Anthony Cordesman argues that "T*he United States has no good options in Syria. It has no allies capable and willing to join it in taking meaningful action to replace Assad, and no idea of what would replace Assad, or the ability to shape a post-Assad Syria.*" Even the unification of the opposition under a single leadership and purpose has become far more impossible because U.S. leverage on the opposition "*is still remarkably weak when it comes down to a given faction and leader's survival*" and, therefore, "*the worst politics and internal violence are as much the symptom as the disease.*"[196]

As the political situation remained deadlocked and the armed opposition becoming more extreme and even more anti-American, the U.S. diplomacy became more passive and even tolerant of President Assad's persistence in power. When the U.S. and its allies began their war against ISIS in Syria in August 2014, "*American officials assure Mr. Assad, through Iraqi intermediaries, that Syria's military is not their target.*" Moreover, the U.S. training and equipment for the Syrian opposition was designed "*mainly to fight the Islamic State, not the government.*" Such stance has been deemed by Assad's supporters and opponents as a proof of Washington's belief that "*if Mr. Assad is ousted, there will be nothing to check the spreading chaos and extremism.*"[197]

The widespread belief that America and its allies abandoned, or at least retreated from, their demand that Assad must leave power was further consolidated by the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's endorsement of two peace initiatives, one by Russia and the other by the U.N. Meanwhile, the U.S. also stopped its efforts to revive Geneva 2 peace talks. At a meeting with the

---

[195] Ibid

[196] Anthony H. Cordesman, "Syria, Geneva II, and the Era of 'Least Bad Options'," Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 22, 2014, at http://csis.org/publication/syria-geneva-ii-and-era-least-bad-options

[197] Anne Barnard and Somini Sengupta, "U.S. Signals Shift on How to End Syrian Civil War," *New York Times*, January 19, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/20/world/middleeast/us-support-for-syria-peace-plans-demonstrates-shift-in-priorities.html

new U.N. envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, Secretary Kerry noted that "*We hope that the Russian efforts could be helpful.*" Unlike in previous occasions when U.S. diplomats called openly for Assad's departure, this time Kerry called for "*President Assad [and] the Assad regime, to put their people first and to think about the consequences of their actions, which are attracting more and more terrorists to Syria.*"[198]

After more than three years of economic sanctions and intense diplomatic efforts, the U.S. remained incapable to halt the violence in Syria or bring a change to the Syrian political leadership. America's efforts were aborted by two main factors. The first was the diplomatic and financial support that Russia, China, and Iran continued to offer Assad and therefore helped him to reject any peace initiative that would undermine his authority or exclude him from future political settlements. The second was the lack of leverage that the U.S. has on the political opposition and on other armed groups on the ground.

2.3.2. Military Options, the "*red line*" Approach, and the Risk to U.S. Credibility

Despite the U.S. and its allies' futile diplomatic efforts to put an end to the conflict in Syria and the continuous escalation of violence, President Obama ruled out any military option or intervention however small or limited it might be. While some critics argue that the U.S. has no strategic interests at stake in Syria, others believe that Obama's stance was driven mainly by the dire outcomes of his predecessor's experience in Iraq and Afghanistan along with the need of his administration to focus on sorting out the domestic problems of an ailing economy and a disadvantaged American working class.

In two interviews he held with journalists in January 2013, the U.S president explained his position towards military intervention in Syria and tried to justify it. With the *New Republic*, the

---

[198] Michael R. Gordon and Anne Barnard, "Kerry Supports Syrian Peace Talks in Russia," *New York Times*, January 14, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/15/world/middleeast/kerry-backs-syrian-peace-talks-in-russia.html

president stated that he wrestled everyday with conflicts worldwide and where and when the United States could intervene in ways to protect its interests and advance its national security. "*And as I wrestle with those decisions*," he explained, "*I am more mindful probably than most of not only our incredible strengths and capabilities, but also our limitations.*"

With regard to Syria, the President explained that there are tough questions that have to be asked before such intervention could take place. Amongst those are questions like "*can we make a difference in that situation? Would a military intervention have an impact? How would it affect our ability to support troops who are still in Afghanistan? What would be the aftermath of our involvement on the ground*?" [199]

With the American CBS new channel, he was asked about the criticism from his opposition on "*an abdication of the United States on the world stage, sort of reluctance to become involved in another entanglemen*t." The president asserted that "*we do nobody a service when we leap before we look -- where we, you know, take on things without having thought through all the consequences of it.*" The president further clarified his point when he accepted that "*there are transitions and transformations taking place all around the world. We are not going to be able to control every aspect of every transition and transformation. Sometimes they're going to go sideways.*"[200]

In his late memoir, the former CIA director (2009-2011) and Secretary of Defense (2011-2013) Leon Panetta affirmed that Syria presented a strong case for intervention and that some in Congress were supportive of limited airstrikes following the Libyan Scenario. "*The problem with it was that Syria was not Libya,*" argued Panetta and explained that "*Assad was much more heavily armed, the country was far less accessible, and among the military's munitions were large storehouses of chemical weapons and modern air defense systems.*"[201]

---

[199] Franklin Foer and Chris Hughes, "Barack Obama is not Pleased," the *New Republic*, January 27, 2013, at http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112190/obama-interview-2013-sit-down-president

[200] Steve Kroft, "Interview with President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton," CBS News, January 27, 2013, at http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50139839n

[201] Leon Panetta with Jim Newton, Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace, (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), p. 376.

Commandeering only the stockpiles of chemical weapons, which was the major U.S. concern, was estimated to require "*more than seventy-five thousand soldiers, perhaps as many as ninety thousand, roughly what we had in all Afghanistan*." All the options presented to the National Security Council by the Ministry of Defense were turned down because there "*was no strong support among the president's top advisers for direct military action*."[202]

The U.S president was resistant not only to direct military action, but also to less direct forms of intervention like arming the rebels of the opposition. Such stance stemmed from a variety of convictions and experiences. At a press conference, just days after his reelection in November 2012, President Obama explained that there are extremist elements within the opposition and that "*one of the things that we have to be on guard about is that we're not indirectly putting arms in the hands of folks who would do Americans harm, or do Israelis harm, or otherwise engage in actions that are detrimental to our national security*."[203]

As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton later explained, the goal of the plan to arm the opposition was not mainly to defeat Assad militarily, but was meant to provide the U.S. with a partner on the ground "*that could do enough to convince Assad and his backers that a military victory was impossible*." The plan was not very practical, but was, as she put it, "*the least bad option among many even worse alternatives*." Clinton, despite her support for the plan, did share the president's worries about arming the rebels.[204]

Some critics, however, look at more specific aspects of such plan to arm the rebels. Even if the U.S. engaged in such plan, the prospects of the rebels achieving victory or even turning the balance to their favor would be very mild because, as the CIA intelligence analyst Kenneth Pollack argues, Assad is fighting a "*war of survival*" rather than a "*war of choice*." Moreover, the plan to arm rebels did not take into consideration the post-Assad political situation. "*Providing weapons and limited training to the rebels will simply improve their ability to kill. It*

---

[202] Ibid.

[203] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Remarks by the President in a News Conference," November 14, 2012, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/14/remarks-president-news-conference

[204] Hillary Clinton.

will not unite them, create a viable power-sharing arrangement among fractious ethnic and sectarian communities, or build strong government institutions."[205]

President Obama's exclusion of military options from his policy towards Syria was not without exceptions. One of the prime concerns of his administration was Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons. In a press conference in August 2012, the president was asked about the position his administration on a military action, especially to keep chemical weapons safe. He emphasised that the issue of chemical weapons does not concern only the United States but also its allies in the region, especially Israel. "*We have been very clear to Assad regime*," explained the president, "*but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilised. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.*"[206]

Although the "*red line*" scenario set by the president did not publicly make the use of chemical weapons a precondition for military action, observers believe that the president meant this correlation. While some in the Syrian opposition welcomed the president's statement as a commitment to the security of Syria, many others accused the president of giving a free rein to the Syrian regime to use all military means short of chemical weapons. Other American officials, however, criticised the president as making a costly and hard commitment that, if not lived up to, would pose a risk to America's credibility, domestically and around the world.

As the violence continued to escalate in Syria, exactly one year after the "*red line*" statement, Obama appeared again in August 2013 confirming the use of chemical weapons in the conflict and described the act as "*the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century.*" He also affirmed that "*the United States presented a powerful case that the Syrian government was responsible for this attack on its own people.*" The actions, as the president explained, poses a threat to the national security of the U.S. by "*making mockery*" of the prohibition of such

---

[205] Kenneth M. Pollack, " an Army to Defeat Assad," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014 Issue, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141848/kenneth-m-pollack/an-army-to-defeat-assad

[206] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," August 20, 2012, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps

weapons and also endangered U.S. partners and allies in the region like Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq.[207]

In consequence, the president announced his decision that "*the United States should take military action against Syrian regime targets.*" To avoid the perception that he was dragging the country into another costly war, he added that the action "*would not be an open-ended intervention,*" without boots on the ground, and "*would be designed to be limited in duration and scope.*" In a surprising move, and despite his power to declare war as a commander-in-chief, the president decided that he would seek authorisation from congress. The president explained that, with going to congress, the country would be stronger "*and our actions will be even more effective.*"[208]

Critics differ on why the president chose to go to congress. The apparent rationale behind this was not "*because congressional approval was the right thing to do,*" but because "*it was the only way out of the dilemma that he [the president] imposed on himself when he declared the use of chemical weapons to be a red line, without having thought through weather or how to go to war if the line was crossed.*" [209]Even before Congress was allowed to vote, the White House gave up its military option and turned to a less costly diplomatic alternative by which Assad regime would give up all its chemical capacity in return for America's refrain from a military retaliation.

Such diplomatic option, however, was not offered by the Syrian regime or its close ally Russia, but by the United States itself. In a press conference in London, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was asked "*if there was anything Assad could do to prevent military action.*" Kerry's reply was, "*Sure, he could turn over every bit of his chemical weapons to the international community in the next week–turn it over all of it without delay and allow a full and total accounting for that. But he isn't about to do it,*" doubted Kerry, "*and it can't be done.*"[210] The Russians were quick to grab such opportunity and they convinced their ally in Damascus to

---

[207] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Remarks by the President on Syria," August 31, 2013, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria
[208] Ibid.
[209] Richard K. Betts "Pick you Poison: America has Many Options in Syria, None are Good," *Foreign Affairs*, September 5, 2013, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139906/richard-k-betts/pick-your-poison
[210] John Kerry quoted in Hillary Clinton.

accept it. Such effort, as Hillary Clinton explained, was "*worth the risk since the President was facing a potentially damaging standoff with Congress.*"

As the world was waiting for "*America's resolve*" in Syria, the U.S. President appeared in 10 September to clarify his administration's position. The president explained his past policy in Syria and defended his choice not to intervene militarily. "*I have resisted calls for military action*," he declared, "*because we cannot resolve someone else's civil war through force, particularly after a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan.*" While many were expecting him to affirm his past decision to launch airstrikes on Syrian military targets, the president announced that he accepted a diplomatic alternative, especially after Russia's willingness to join such effort. The president also announced that he "*asked the leaders of Congress to postpone a vote to authorise the use of force while we pursue this diplomatic path.*"[211]

While some politicians and experts believe that the deal with Syria to give up its chemical weapons was a diplomatic success, many others argue that the president's abandonment of a military action dealt a shattering blow to America's credibility and prestige both at home and abroad. "*Foreign credibility as a concern*," commented Richard Betts, the director of the Institute of War and Peace Studies, "*assumes that other governments will not take American deterrent threats seriously if they see Washington back down from one.*"[212]

Leon Panetta also asserted that the move "*sent the wrong message to the world.*" He further explained that "*when the president as commander in chief draws a red line, it is critical that he act if the line is crossed. The power of the United States rests on its word, and clear signals are important both to deter adventurism and to reassure allies that we can be counted on.*"[213] U.S. allies in the Middle East also expressed disappointment and concern over Obama's move and signaled a troubled relation with their biggest ally.

In October 2013, the *New York Times* reported, on a visit by Secretary Kerry to the Middle East, that the U.S. "*has run into a buzz saw of criticism, not from traditional enemies but from*

---

[211] Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria," September 10, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria
[212] Richard K. Betts.
[213] Leon Panetta.

two of its strongest allies," namely Saudi Arabia and Israel. Former head of Saudi intelligence Turki el Faisal stated, in an Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference, that "*The current charade of international control over Bashar's chemical arsenal would be funny if it were not so blatantly perfidious, and designed not only to give Mr. Obama an opportunity to back down but also to help Assad to butcher his people.*"[214]

Robert M. Danin, a former State Department official on Middle East issues, explained that "*There is also widespread unease throughout the Middle East, shared by many U.S. allies that the United States' primary objectives when it comes to Iran, Egypt or Syria are to avoid serious confrontation.*"[215] In mid-December Turki el Faisal reiterated again his country's concerns, "*We've seen several red lines put forward by the president, which went along and became pinkish as time grew, and eventually ended up completely white. When that kind of assurance comes from a leader of a country like the United States, we expect him to stand by it. There is an issue of confidence.*"[216]

As Western diplomacy continued to be futile and the U.S. ruled out any military option to back the Syrian opposition, some policy analysts warned against what they called the "*radicalisation*" of the opposition. As Assad remained in power, secular and pro-American rebels lost ground, while other anti-American armed groups gained more control and influence. In this context, the Obama administration switched its Syria policy from working to ousting Assad to fighting other armed groups that it believed to pose more harm to U.S. interests and allies than Assad might do.

---

[214] Michael R. Gordon, "Criticism of United States' Mideast Policy Increasingly Comes from Allies," *New York Times,* October 23, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/24/world/middleeast/kerry-reassures-israel-on-iran-but-divisions-remain.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[215] Ibid.
[216] Steven Erlanger, "Saudi Prince Criticizes Obama Administration, Citing Indecision in Mideast," *New York Times*, December 15, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/16/world/middleeast/saudi-prince-accuses-obama-of-indecision-on-middle-east.html

2.3.3. Non-State Actors: New Challenges and New Policy Priorities.

After more than three years of conflict and civil war in Syria, the challenges to U.S. influence and standing did not end with Assad's persistence in power, but extended to include another more complex and volatile predicament. As the conflict grew more uneven and chaotic, armed groups and militias began to take more prominent role in both sides of fight. Such groups and militias did hardly have a single agenda or leadership, and their objectives seemed to clash with those pursued by outside powers, especially the United States. In this respect, American policy makers have sought not only to accommodate such actors, but also to make them a priority to contain and confront.

With non-state actors, the challenge for the U.S. is that it has fewer tools to influence them than it has with formal governments. The challenge is further compounded when the U.S. designate many of these groups as foreign terrorist organisations, therefore making it impossible to contact or deal with them.[217] The political dimension of such groups is what actually makes them problematic, argues Haim Malka, the deputy director of Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "*The experiences of the last several decades suggest that non-state armed groups cannot be eliminated. They can be contained, their capabilities can be degraded, but by their nature they continue to evolve.*"[218]

In Syria, non-state armed groups have been active both on the side of Syrian army and the opposition. For Assad, most of those groups represent Shiite militias from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, with Hezbollah as the most powerful player. The stated objectives of such groups have been to protect Shiite holy sites in Syria but, as the expert on Shiite militias Phillip Smyth argues, their underlying presence represents "*a highly organised and geostrategic effort by Iran to protect its ally in Damascus and project power within Syria, Iraq and across the Middle East.*" In

---

[217] Haim Malka, "the Challenge of Non-State Actors," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 12, 2014, at http://csis.org/publication/challenge-non-state-actors
[218] Ibid.

effect, the powerful aid of such groups for Assad led Smyth to conclude that "*in a wider political sense, the real victor of the Syrian war and in Iraq has been Iran*."[219]

With regard to the opposition, the director of the U.S. National Intelligence James Clapper estimated a number between 110000 and 115000 militants "*who are organised into more than 1500 groups of widely varying political leanings*." Among such groups, Islamist militias remain the most powerful component with some of them seeking, as the Congressional Research Service concluded, "*outcomes that are contrary in significant ways to stated U.S. preferences for Syria's political future*."[220]

The Free Syrian Army (FAS), a largely secular group of defectors from the Syrian Army with close links to the political opposition, expressed willingness to partner with and receive support from the United States. The lack of organisation among its ranks, however, has hindered such efforts. The same Congressional report concluded that "*as of September 2014, the term 'Free Syrian Army' does not correspond to an organised command and control structure with national reach and unified procurement, intelligence, logistics, or sustainment capabilities. Since 2011 uprising, there has been and continues to be no single military leader of the movement*."[221]

In an interview with the *New York Times* in August 2014, the U.S. president asserted that the option of arming rebels, notably the FSA, to defeat Assad has "*always been a fantasy,*" and "*was never in the cars*." He also downplayed the opposition as a group of "*former doctors, farmers, pharmacists, and so on*" who are fighting "*a well-armed state backed by Russia, backed by Iran, [and] a battle-hardened Hezbollah.*"[222] This mistrust was also shared by some FSA commanders who accused the U.S. of aiding the spread of "*terrorism*" with their rejection to arm "*moderate*"

---

[219] Phillip Smyth, "The Shiite Jihad in Syria and its Regional Effects," the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February, 2015, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus138_Smyth-2.pdf
[220] "Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response," Congressional Research Service (CRS), September 17, 2014, at http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf
[221] Ibid. , p.5.
[222] Thomas L. Friedman, "Obama on the World," *New York Times*, August 8, 2014, at
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/opinion/president-obama-thomas-l-friedman-iraq-and-world-affairs.html?_r=1

rebels. They also expressed resentment for U.S. distribution of aid to individual commanders rather than working with the leadership.[223]

The other pivotal non-state armed groups in the Syrian opposition were deemed by the U.S. as "*too Islamist, too sectarian, and too anti-democratic.*"[224] One of these groups is what came to be called the Islamic Front, a coalition of six groups that were unified in November 2013 and ran more than 40000 militant in their ranks. In its charter, the front rejects any kind of outside intervention to influence the political future of Syria. It also rejects the democratic and secular form of government pursued by the U.S. and refused even to attend the second Geneva conference following U.S. invitation.

The other two Islamist groups, which are designated by the U.S. as foreign terrorist organisations, are Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State, also Known as ISIS or ISIL. Jabhat al Nusra is seen by other Syrian opposition forces as more accommodating and cooperative. They even coordinated operations with each other and engaged in fights against the Islamic State.[225] U.S. officials, however, consider the Islamic State as the most dangerous organisation to U.S. interests and security inside and outside the Middle East. In August 2014, president Obama announced the formation of an international coalition to launch airstrikes against ISIS both in Syria and Iraq. The president also introduced his strategy that aims to "*degrade and ultimately destroy the Islamic State.*"

Despite his ability to muster support for his strategy to fight ISIS, the U.S. president has been confronted with a number of criticisms of his strategy. Unlike in Iraq where the U.S. coordinates with the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish *Peshmarga*, the U.S. has no clear partner in Syria. As the opposition remained disorganised, the president "*did not name a militia or organisation with which to partner because even after three and a half years of vetting rebel groups, the U.S.*

---

[223] Roy Gutman and Mousab al Hamadee, "Tense Relations between U.S. and anti-Assad Syrian Rebels," *McClatchy DC,* September 5, 2014 at http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/09/05/238270/tense-relations-between-us-and.html

[224] Joshua Landis, "Why Syria is the Gordian Knot of Obama's anti-ISIL Campaign," *Al Jazeera America*, Sept 15, 2014, at http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/15/why-syria-is-thegordianknotofobamasantiisilcampaign.html

[225] CRS, "Armed Conflict," op. cit. pp. 7-8.

has yet to identify a credible ally." Without such partner, the U.S. is risking not only to fail to defeat its adversaries, but also to work for their political advantage.[226]

As Obama made the fight of the Islamic State his policy priority, he not only abandoned his first objective to oust Assad or bring about a political solution to the conflict, but he also runs the risk of working for Assad's military and political advantage. "*Certainly in the short term*," argues the *New York Times'* editorial board, "*Mr. Assad stands to benefit most from America's military incursion…That may be the most dangerous and morally troubling consequence of President Obama's decision to cross the Syrian border to fight the Islamic State*." Although U.S. officials denied any coordination with Assad and his forces, the issue "*is a moot point if the attacks solidify Mr. Assad's grip on power, providing his forces time to focus resources and energies on attacking Western-backed rebel groups in contested areas*."[227]

In this context, U.S. interests not only clash with those of the U.S-backed Syrian opposition but also with those of other allies. Turkey declined to take part in the coalition unless the U.S. makes the ousting of Assad as one of its policy objectives and provides a no-fly zone in the Turkish-Syrian border. Since Iraq and Syria seemed to face the same adversary, they augmented their security cooperation and thus undermined the U.S. calls for Iraq to pressure Assad to step down. As Sunni communities in Iraq and Syria continue to think they are marginalised, U.S. adversaries "*could easily capitalise on the airstrikes to galvanise Sunni Muslims who harbor anti-American views*."[228]

As non-state armed groups have become the prime challenge for U.S. policy makers in Syria and the wider region, other deep-seated political problems, through which such actors have flourished and thrived, remain more challenging and still unresolved. While the U.S. failed to bring stability to Iraq with the presence of more than 100000 troops for more than eight year, the

---

[226] Joshua Landis.

[227] The Editorial Board, "Wrong Turn On Syria: Helping Assad," New York Times, September 23, 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/opinion/reluctantly-helping-assad.html?_r=0

[228] Ibid.

current airstrikes seemed to be "*envisaged as a Band-Aid solution to the region's problems. But the wounds*," argues the Syria analyst Joshua Landis, "*run deep and wide*."[229]

2.4. Conclusion

As Bush's policy towards Iraq failed to bring concrete change to the Iraqi political and security landscape, Obama's approach seemed to accommodate crises and changes rather than to confront them. He did so by asserting that American military force cannot bring change or resolve problems in a socially and politically complex region like the Middle East. When political and security crises unfolded in Iraq, he worked to force the parties concerned to make concessions and work for inclusiveness instead of resorting to intervention to solve other's problems.

Even in Syria, the President continued to resist calls for military actions out of the conviction that a decade of war in Iraq was hardly able to bring the mildest change. Such policy was guided not only by past experiences, but also by the recognition that today's world has become so complex that even a big nation like the United States with a strong economy and a robust military cannot bring change alone. As other regional and non-state actors have assumed greater role, U.S. policy makers become inclined to deal with crises with what they call "*strategic patience*" instead of rushing for conflicts and wars.

---

[229] Joshua Landis.

Chapter Three: The Causes of America's Declining Influence in the Middle East.

3.1. Introduction

America's declining influence in the Middle East did not begin when President Obama came to office, but was already underway during the Bush years. The legacy left by Bush's administration and the profound turmoil that swept the region in early 2011 did much to compound such decline. The reliance of the Bush administration on false intelligence, its ignorance about local realities in the Middle East, its disdain for human lives and the international law, and the dire costs of the Iraq war culminated in a sharp decline in America's moral standing in the Middle East and even in countries that were deemed allies to the United States. In such weakened position, the new president assumed a challenging mission to replace force by diplomacy, and to seek a new beginning with the Muslim world to regain some of America's positive image.

The financial burden caused by the Iraq war and the economic crisis that hit the United States in late 2007 forced the new president to give domestic issues, like economic recovery and the creation of new jobs, the foremost priority and to avoid costly engagements around the world. Such pressing issues at home were also the prime concern of the American public who became very opposed to their country's involvement in trouble spots worldwide, especially in the Middle East. Such opposition was also the outcome of "*a war fatigue*" form previous interventions and of the fear that even a marginal intervention would drag the country into another costly and a lengthy war.

Besides the strains put by domestic priorities on America's role abroad, the rise of other regional powers to prominence did play a part to curtail, and sometimes to replace, America's influence in the Middle East. When he came to office, President Obama embarked on an initiative to increase his country's presence in the Asia-Pacific region to counterbalance China's expanding influence. Meanwhile, China was also seeking an expanded role of its economy and diplomacy in the Middle East. Russia, moreover, has signaled an assertive comeback to the Middle East with its help to maintain an old ally in Syria, its common cause with Iran over many regional issues, and its expanding partnership with a like-minded leadership in Egypt. Iran's growing influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen has given it further leverage in its talks with the West over its controversial nuclear program and for its claim for leadership in an increasingly turbulent region.

3.2. The Bush Legacy and the Damage to the American Image.

The election of the Democrat Barack Obama came in large part as a response to his predecessor's foreign policy that was believed to be not only costly, but also harmful to the American image around the world. President Obama promised to break with such policy, which was heavily based on force and military might, and to pursue a more diplomatic and less confrontational approach even with America's traditional adversaries. However, the controversial legacy left by Bush along with the new crises that were yet to unfold in the region made Obama's task more challenging and problematic.

3.2.1. The Iraq War: A Costly and a Misguided War.

The election of the Democrat Barack Obama came in large part as a response to his predecessor's foreign policy that was believed to be not only costly, but also harmful to the American image around the world. President Obama promised to break with such policy, which was heavily based on force and military might, and to pursue a more diplomatic and less confrontational approach even with America's traditional adversaries. However, the controversial legacy left by Bush along with the new crises that were yet to unfold in the region made Obama's task more challenging and problematic.

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in August 2008, Obama stressed that he opposed the Iraq war even when he was a senator out of the belief that it would distract the nation from real threats and challenges. He criticised the Republican candidate John McCain as standing "*alone in his stubborn refusal to end a misguided war.*" Obama went beyond the Bush years when he argued that "*the Bush-McCain foreign policy has squandered the legacy that generations of Americans—Democrats and Republicans—have built,*" and that he was there "*to restore that legacy.*" As he asserted that he would never hesitate to defend his country, Obama explained that "*I will only send our troops into harm's way with a clear mission and a*

sacred commitment to give them the equipment they need in battle and the care and benefits they deserve when they come home."[230]

In his inaugural address, President Obama made his stance clear when he explained that force alone does not achieve victory, while he encouraged "*greater cooperation and understanding between nations.*" Referring to past American leaders who faced Fascism and Communism, the president stressed that "*they understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.*" Guided by such principles, the president affirmed that he would leave Iraq responsibly and would forge "*a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.*"[231]

The belief that Bush's wars in the Middle East were a misguided adventure which caused the U.S. to lose influence in that region was shared by many diplomats and foreign policy critics. In a lecture at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Lord Lothian explained how the west lost the Middle East. He argued that the fight of unnecessary wars was a fundamental reason and he cited Iraq as a good case in point. "*A prime example of an unnecessary fight,*" he explained, "*was the Iraq war; misconceived and disastrously followed up. It demonstrates a clear aspect of why we lost the Middle East.*" Lothian expanded on this point when he stated that the real reason behind this war was not weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but rather the aim of "*regime change.*"[232]

After achieving its initial aim of "*regime change*", the Bush administration continued its war without clear objectives and with very enormous cost. "*We called it 'staying until the job is done' without ever defining what the job was, and our involvement escalated,*" explained Lothian. He also drew a parallel between the Iraq war and the recent intervention in Libya when he stressed, "*And then we went further. We took to the air above Libya, overtly to protect innocent people but in reality yet again to effect regime change, now leaving a country in turmoil and anarchy.*" All

---

[230] Barack Obama, "Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention," *Miller Center*, August 28, 2008, at http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4427
[231] Barack Omaba, "Inaugural Address," Miller Center, January 20, 2009, at http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4453
[232] Lord Lothian, "How the West Lost the Middle East," *Global Strategy Forum*, October 1, 2013, at http://www.globalstrategyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/How-the-West-Lost-The-Middle-East-.pdf

such repeated interventions were carried out with the common "*underlying feeling that the value of Arab lives is not a major Western preoccupation.*"[233]

In his book *War of Necessity War of Choice*, Richard Haassa— a former member of the National Security Council in the administration of Bush the father and the director of the Policy Planning Staff in the administration of Bush the son— affirmed that he was against the Iraq war because it was a war of choice. However, the decision to go to war was already made and few in the administration were ready to listen. "*The fundamental decision to go to war against Saddam's Iraq*," he stated, "*had effectively been made by a president and an administration with virtually no systematic, rigorous, in-house debate.*" Haass' objection to going to war was driven by the belief that the U.S. had other "*viable options*" and that the war would be "*tougher than the advocates expected.*"[234]

In an interview with *U.S. News* on his book, Haass explained the difference between a war of necessity and a war of choice. A war of necessity "*is simply a war that is fought for vital interests when it is judged correctly that there are no viable policy alternatives other than the use of force. A war of choice is when the interests are less than vital and there are alternatives.*" Haass believed that the Iraq war was not only a war of choice, but was also a bad choice that was poorly implemented.[235] In another interview with *Foreign Affairs*, Haass argued that "*what was flawed was not only the intelligence but also the assumptions: that it was going to be quick and easy……If you assume away most of all the questions and difficulties, you can persuade yourself of just about anything. And that what happened here.*"[236]

Criticism of the Iraq war continued to come not only from officials in the previous administration but also from commanders on the battlefield. In 2007, a former commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez described the management of the war as "*incompetent*" and the outcome as "*a nightmare with no end in sight.*" The commander argued

---

[233] Ibid. , pp. 5-6.
[234] Richard N. Haass, <u>War of Necessity War of Choice</u>, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), pp. 4-5.
[235] Andrew Burt "Council on Foreign Relations' Richard Hass on Bush's Unjust Iraq Blunder," *U.S. News*, June 12, 2009, at
[236] Bernard Gwertzman and Richard Haass, "The Iraq Invasion Ten Years Later: A Wrong War," *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2013, at

that the administration had no clear strategy to win the war or fight extremism. "*After more than four years of fighting*," he explained, "America *continues its desperate struggle in Iraq without any concerted effort to devise a strategy that will achieve victory in that war-torn country or in the greater conflict against extremism.*"[237]

The people to blame in this blunder, according to Sanchez, were the national leaders who were lacking in "*strategic leadership*" along with civilian officials who were "*derelict in their duties*" and were accused of a "*lust for power.*" He also blamed top commanders, including him, for the lack of any post-invasion stabilisation plan when he stated that "*National leadership continues to believe that victory can be achieved by military power alone,*" and that "*Continued manipulations and adjustments to our military strategy will not achieve victory. The best we can do with this flawed approach is stave off defeat.*"

One of the direst blunders that the Bush legacy in Iraq has continued to be remembered for is the fabricated, some milder critics call it flawed, intelligence that was twisted and misused to suit the wishes of U.S. policymakers. The mistakes made by the previous administration concerning intelligence were threefold. The use of wrong intelligence to go to war, the exercise of such intelligence for political gains, and finally the marginalisation of credible intelligence assessments about post-invasion challenges. The former National Intelligence Officer Paul Pillar argues that "*what is most remarkable about prewar U.S. intelligence on Iraq is not that it got things wrong and thereby misled policymakers; it is that it played so a small role in one of the most important U.S. policy decisions in recent decades.*"[238]

Paul argues that the President Bush not only used policy to influence intelligence, but he also used intelligence to win public support for his decision to go to war. In this context, "*the administration selected pieces of raw intelligence to use in its public case for war, leaving the intelligence community to register varying degrees of private protest when such use started to go beyond what analysts deemed credible or reasonable.*" Apart from the twisted intelligence on the

---

[237] David S. Could, "Ex-Commander Says Iraq Effort is 'a Nightmare'," New York Times, October 13, 2007, at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/13/washington/13general.html?_r=0

[238] Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85 No. 2 (Mar-Apr., 2006), pp. 15-27.

issue of WMD, the administration also used such intelligence to build a false link between Saddam and the events of 9/11. The reason why the administration built such link was because it "*wanted to hitch the Iraq expedition to 'the war on terror' and the threat the American public feared most, thereby capitalising on the country's militant post-9/11 mood.*"[239]

While the administration embraced false intelligence to advocate its case for war, it also deliberately ignored and muted other intelligence assessments that warned against the dire ramifications of such war. Those assessments "*presented a picture of political culture that would not provide fertile ground for democracy and foretold a long, difficult, and turbulent transition.*"[240] Moreover, the CIA reports issued at that time "*predicted with startling accuracy what would unfold: the chaos, the sheer messiness of the aftermath. Many people in the administration chose to dismiss this analysis and predictions.*" Such actions, however, show "*how policymakers often rejected analyses that didn't conform to their preferences.*"[241]

Ignorance about local realities of the Middle East was an added mistake of the Bush administration in its decision to go to war. In several interviews with some senior official in the Bush administration, the national security editor of *Congressional Quarterly* Jeff Stein concluded that, when those officials were asked if they know the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite, most of them "*don't have a clue. That includes not just intelligence and law enforcement officials, but also members of Congress who have important roles overseeing our spy agencies. How can they do their jobs without knowing the basics?*"[242]

When the Republican Representative Terry Everett, who served for seven terms and who was vice chairman of the House Intelligence Subcommittee on Technical and Tactical Intelligence, was asked about the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite he replied, "*one's in one location, another's in another location. No, to be honest with you, I don't know. I thought it was differences in their religion, different families or something.*" Another Representative, Jo Ann

---

[239] Ibid. , p. 20.
[240] Ibid. , p. 18.
[241] Richard Haass, "the Iraq Invasion," op. cit.
[242] Jeff Stein, "Can you Tell a Sunni and from a Shiite," New York Times, October 17, 2006, at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/opinion/17stein.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Davis replied to the same question that "*It's a difference in their fundamental beliefs. The Sunnis are more radical than the Shiites. Or vice versa. But I think it's the Sunnis who're more radical than the Shiites.*"[243] Bringing to mind past U.S. wars abroad, notably those in Vietnam and Iraq, the common feature between them, as Richard Haass concluded, seemed to be "*the folly of overlooking local realities, be they political, cultural, or historic, and trying to impose our views on these societies and trying to remake these societies using large amounts of American military might.*"[244]

Apart from the blunders made by President Bush and his administration and the high death toll left by the Iraq war, the policy costs that ensued have continued not only to undermine U.S. influence in the region, but also to thwart the new president to restore such influence. Thomas Ricks, the *Washington Post*'s Senior Pentagon correspondent and the author of *Fiasco,* described U.S. policy implications in Iraq as a fruit of "*a poisoned tree.*" U.S. refusal to admit and amend its mistakes about WMD "*have intensified the reluctance of many other nations to participate in the pacification and rebuilding of Iraq.*" The false linkage of Iraq with the 9/11 attacks led U.S. troops to relate the war on Iraq with such events and therefore "*to treat Iraqis as despised terrorists rather than as the prize in the war.*"[245]

Moreover, as the Iraq war proved to be a debacle, U.S. credibility was almost lost while the prestige of the West also diminished. With the rising threat of a nuclear North Korea and Iran, few nations, if any, would be ready to back up the U.S. for any other war out of the belief that its credibility had already been put to test and proved to be unreliable. With announcing that the West was behind it through "*a phony coalition,*" the Bush administration "*committed the prestige of the West to a military adventure in the Middle East without having the resources of the West behind it.*" Therefore, U.S. incompetence to deal with the war's ramifications and the reluctance of the West to get involved in such process would possibly lead adversaries of the West to underestimate its strength and determination.[246]

---

[243] Ibid.
[244] Richard Haass, "the Iraq Invasion," op. cit.
[245] Thomas E. Ricks, <u>Fiasco: the American Military Adventure in Iraq</u>, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006). P.431.
[246] Ibid. , 332.

3.2.2 An Intensifying anti-Americanism in the Middle East

The gravity of the situation in Iraq led the U.S. Congress to form a group of former senior officials and experts to identify the flaws in U.S. policy there and to suggest some urgent solutions. The group, known as the Iraq Study Group, released its report in 2006 and painted a grim picture of the situation and admitted the limits of U.S. ability to win the war. One of the most daunting consequences of the failed policy was the damage to the U.S. standing and influence not only in the region but also around the world. The study concluded that "*Iraq is a major test, and strain on, U.S. military, diplomatic and financial capacities. Perceived failure there could diminish America's credibility and influence in a region that is the center of the Islamic world and vital to world energy supply.*"[247]

The group also stressed that the loss of influence in Iraq came at "*a time when pressing issues in North Korea, Iran and elsewhere demand our full attention and of strong U.S. leadership in international alliances.*" Moreover, the more the U.S. devoted resources to Iraq the more the chances of failure in Afghanistan increased. In this context, resentment to U.S. policies and presence became prevalent not only in Iraq but also in the region. The study referred to some polls which concluded that 79 % of Iraqis had a "*mostly negative*" view of U.S. influence in their country while 61 % approved the attacks on U.S-led forces. "*If Iraqis continue to perceive Americans as representing an occupying force,*" the study assumed, "*the United States could become its own worst enemy in a land it liberated from tyranny.*"[248]

The Pew Research Center carried out a number of polls about the state of the American image worldwide from 2002 to 2007. The interviews covered more than 110000 people in more than 50 countries and concluded that, since the Iraq invasion, favorability toward the U.S. diminished sharply even among countries perceived to be U.S. allies. In the Middle East and the Muslim world, anti-Americanism increased rapidly after the invasion of Iraq. In 2005, more than 60 % in Turkey and Jordon, tow old allies to the U.S. in the region, believed that the U.S. could be a

---

[247] James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, "The Iraq Study Group Report," (New York: Vintage Books, 2006) P.34.
[248] Ibid. , p. 35.

military threat to their countries, while 71 % in Pakistan and 80 % in Indonesia shared the same belief.[249]

While President Bush considered what he called the axis of evil (Iraq, Iran and North Korea) as a danger to world order and as his foremost enemies, publics around the world did not seem to share his views. On the contrary, a large majority of them consider the U.S. as a danger to world peace. While less than 20 % in Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan view Iran or North Korea as representing a danger to world peace, more than 55 % of those polled in the same countries considered the presence of the U.S. in Iraq as a source of danger to world peace. Such perception is prevalent not only in Muslim Counties, but also in Western and European ones. More than 40 % of those polled in Great Britain, France, and 56 % in Spain considered the U.S. in Iraq as a source of danger (see table1).[250]

---

[249] ''America's Image in the World,'' Pew Global Attitudes Project, March 14 2007, at
http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/
[250] Ibid.

Table 1: Dangers to World Peace.

```
Dangers to World Peace

                                          Israeli-
                          US in     North Palestinian
% saying        Iran      Iraq      Korea   conflict
'great danger'  %         %         %       %
U.S.            46        31        34      43

Great Britain   34        41        19      45
France          31        36        16      35
Germany         51        40        23      51
Spain           38        56        21      52

Russia          20        45        10      41

Indonesia       7         31        4       33
Egypt           14        56        14      68
Jordan          19        58        18      67
Turkey          16        60        6       42
Pakistan        4         28        8       22

Nigeria         15        25        11      27

Japan           29        29        46      40
India           8         15        6       13
China           22        31        11      27
```

Source: Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, at http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/

Causes of such anti-Americanism varied from country to country, but U.S. foreign policy seems to be the most driving force. Support for Israel, war on Iraq, and Bush's global "*war on terror*" are the most despised elements of such policy. While President Bush looked at the ouster of Saddam as a stabilising factor in the Middle East, more than 70 % of those interviewed in 2006 in Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt believed that ousting Saddam made the world a more dangerous place. Similarly, more than 60 % in Britain, Germany, Spain, and 75 % in France shared the same view.[251]

People have also remained suspicious about the genuine intentions of the previous administration behind its global "*war on terror.*" In 2004, polls were conducted in eight countries and pluralities in seven of those countries believed that the "*U.S.-led war on terrorism was not really a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.*" On the contrary, "*The true purpose of*

---

[251] Ibid.

the war on terrorism, according to these skeptics, is American control of Middle East oil and U.S. domination of the world" (see figure 2).[252]

Figure 1: What are America's Motives?
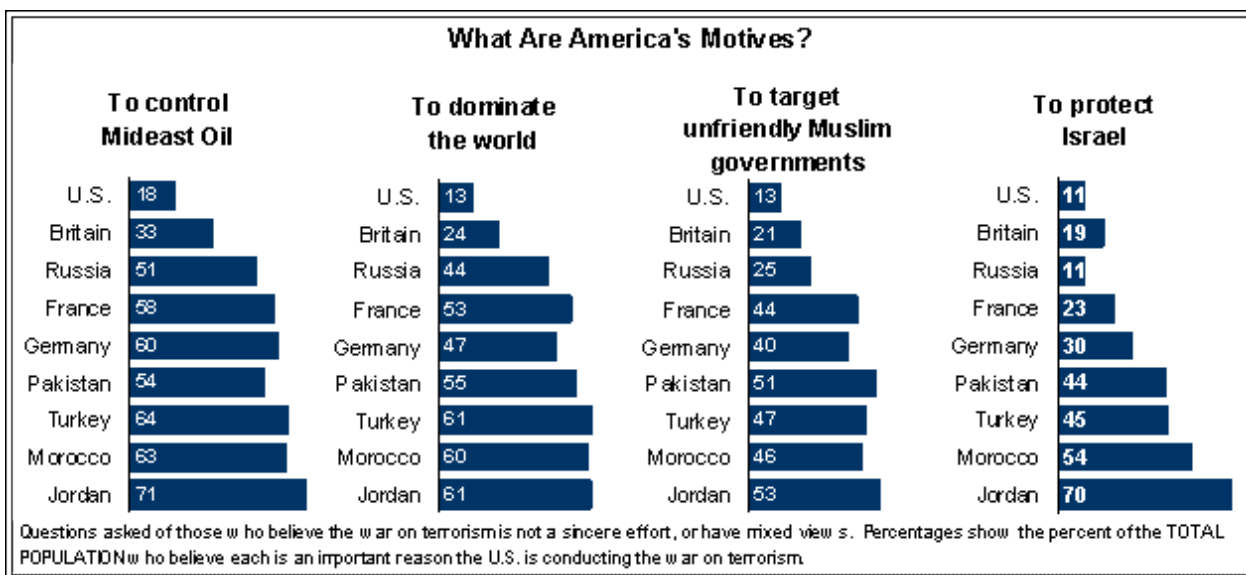
Source: Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, at http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/

As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama recognised the widespread anti-Americanism around the world and was ready to acknowledge that the policies of his predecessor did much to tarnish the U.S. image. He believed that "*by relying on hypermilitarism and shunning direct contacts with adversaries, the Bush administration had done considerable damage to America's vital national interests and its moral standing in the world*." The use of force against foes, Iraq as a good example, with little or no regard to international law "*reinforced the view that the United States believed it stood above international norms and practices*."[253]

In an attempt to fix the damage done to the U.S. image and as a symbolic sign of his administration's good will, President Obama announced in his speech in Cairo to the Muslim world that he came to "*seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the*

---

[252] Ibid.
[253] Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Obama Approach to the Middle East: the End of America's Moment," *International Affairs* 89: 2 (2013) 299–323.

world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition." Moreover, the president acknowledged that the war in Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in the U.S. and around the world and admitted that the trauma caused by 9/11 events led the United States to act sometimes contrary to its traditions and ideals. For this reason, he promised that his country "*will change course.*"[254]

Despite Obama's expressions of good will along with his avoidance of using force and his engagement in diplomatic talks even with old U.S. adversaries in the region, the image of the U.S. remained largely negative and even decreased from its fairly acceptable state in early 2009. In another series of polls in 2013 by the Pew Research Center, attitudes towards the United States were largely positive worldwide except in the Middle East. While more than 60 % of those polled in France, Spain, and 53 % in Germany expressed favorable reviews about the U.S, only 21 % in Turkey, 16 % in Egypt, and 14 % in Jordon expressed positive attitudes. Many people around the world believe that the United States acts out of self-interest and does not take the interests of their countries into consideration. In the Middle East, 83 % in Egypt, 76 % in Jordan, and 75 % in Turkey expressed such belief.[255]

The prevalent negative attitudes towards the United States does not concern only its policies and practices, but also its new president who was once celebrated as an icon of reform and change. Approval of Obama's international policies declined from 38 % to 17 % in Egypt, from 34 % to 20 % in Turkey, and from 27 % to 15 % in Jordan in the period from 2009 to 2013. Whilst 40 % in Lebanon and Jordan said the reelection of Obama in 2012 "*made no difference in how they feel about the U.S,*" a plurality of those surveyed in Egypt said "*they now have a more negative image of the U.S. because of Obama's re-election.*"[256]

The widely negative view held by the majority of people in the Middle East towards the United States shows the deep-seated animosity to U.S. policies which were cemented by the

---

[254] Barack Obama, "Adress at Cairo University," *Miller Center*, June 4, 2009, at
http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-5502
[255] "America's Global Image Remain more Positive than China's," Pew Research Center, July 18, 2013 at
http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/
[256] Ibid.

inability of the new president to live up to his words. The new administration seemed to be hampered not only by a controversial legacy left by the former administration, but also by an array of deeply entrenched interest groups and a seriously troubled and ailing economy. As Obama's good will towards the Muslim world seemed to have lost ground, "*what remains is a widespread conviction that the United States is weak financially, militarily, and politically crippled by a dysfunctional political system.*"[257]

3.3. Domestic Problems and a War-Weary American Public

Problems at home did much to convince President Obama to devote most of his time and energy to solve them, and to give his foreign policy agenda a much smaller emphasis. When he was elected president, the U.S. economy was under the worst financial crisis since that of 1929. Along with such crisis went an array of problems like a rising federal debt, poor healthcare and social security programs, and an educational system that lagged behind many ones in the developed world. To sort out such problems, the Obama administration not only liquidated a long and costly war in Iraq, but it also repeatedly avoided to get involved in other conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

3.3.1. The Economic Crisis: Priority of the Domestic over the Foreign

Problems at home did much to convince President Obama to devote most of his time and energy to solve them, and to give his foreign policy agenda a much smaller emphasis. When he was elected president, the U.S. economy was under the worst financial crisis since that of 1929. Along with such crisis went an array of problems like a rising federal debt, poor healthcare and social security programs, and an educational system that lagged behind many ones in the developed world. To sort out such problems, the Obama administration not only liquidated a long and costly war in Iraq, but it also repeatedly avoided to get involved in other conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

---

[257] Fawaz Gerges, op. cit. p. 305.

In an address to a joint session of Congress in February 2009, the president admitted that the state of the economy "*is a concern that rises above all others*," and that Americans "*don't need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day. It's the worry you wake up with and the source of sleepless nights*." While he asserted that the economy did not decline overnight and that a wide range of unresolved problems were behind it, the president made it clear that "*the only way this century will be another American century is if we confront at last the price of our dependence on oil and the high cost of health care, the schools that aren't preparing our children and the mountain of debt they stand to inherit. That is our responsibility*."[258]

As such domestic problems were to consume much of the agenda of the president, he was not ready to give much priority to the nation's role abroad. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recalled that the president told her in late 2008 that, because of the ongoing crisis, "*I'm not going to be able to do a lot to satisfy the built-up expectations for our role around the world. So you're going to have to get out there and, you know, really represent us while I deal with, you know, the economic catastrophe I inherited*." For doing so, the president wanted his secretary of state to establish a sense of engagement abroad and to seek a foreign policy that was to be less dominated by Iraq.[259]

One of the most daunting challenges that Obama inherited was the huge amount of federal debt and a trillion-dollar deficit. Such debt and deficit were largely the consequence of the former president's policies of wars and interventions. The poor performance of the economy and the large tax deductions he adopted at the beginning of his presidency led to a deficit in the U.S. budget of $158 billion (1.5 % of GDP) in 2002. With the war on Iraq and Afghanistan, such deficit rose to $413 billion (3.4 % of GDP) in 2004. The economic recession in late 2007 and the policies of tax reduction that were initiated to stimulate the economy further increased the deficit

---

[258] Barack Obama, "Address before a Joint Session of Congress," *Miller Center*, February 24, 2009, at http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4612

[259]" Interview with President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton," *CBS News Channel*

to $459 billion (3.1% of GDP) in 2008, $1,413 trillion (9.8 % of GDP) in 2009, and $1,294 trillion (8.8 % of GDP) in 2010.[260]

In its study in 2008, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (CSBA) concluded that "*since 2001, some $904 billion has been provided to cover the cost of U.S. military operations. This includes some $687 billion for Iraq, $184 for Afghanistan and $33 billion for various homeland security activities.*" In this context, the war on Iraq alone cost "*more than every past U.S. war but World War 2," while the war on Iraq and Afghanistan combined "exceeded the cost of the Vietnam War—the second most costly past U.S. war—by 50 %*"[261]

The reliance of the former administration on borrowing, rather than on higher taxes and spending cuts, to finance the war produced other economic costs. The $904 billion direct cost of wars would add another $600 billion in the form of interest payments to the accumulated dept, of which 40 % would go to foreigners who hold 40 % of the bonds of the U.S. Treasury. The reliance on borrowing also increased the burden left to future generations. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that "*the size of national debt will grow from the equivalent of 37 % of GDP today [2008] to some 230 % by 2050, while annual deficits will increase from 2.8 % of GDP today to 20 % over this time.*"[262]

Apart from the direct and indirect economic costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, experts highlight what they call the macroeconomic costs of such wars. At the forefront of these costs was the rapid rise in oil prices that accompanied the Iraq invasion. The war caused a decline in Iraqi oil production in about 1.3 million barrel a day in 2003 to 600000 barrel in 2007. As oil prices rose from $25 a barrel in 2003 to $100 in 2008, the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress (JEC) estimated that the rise in oil prices would cause a total decline in U.S. GDP of about $274 billion.[263]

---

[260] "Historical Tables: Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2015," at
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/hist.pdf
[261] Steven M. Kosiak, "Costs of the War in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other Military Operations Through 2008 and Beyond," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (CSBA), 2008, at
http://csbaonline.org/publications/2008/12/cost-of-iraq-afghanistan-wars/
[262] Ibid. , pp. 62-68.
[263] Ibid. , pp. 70-72.

Other macroeconomic costs include what experts call the "*crowding out of private investment*." As the rise in government spending leads to more deficit and more borrowing on the part of the government, creditors would prefer to lend their money to the government rather than to private investors as they see it safer and more secure. Stiglitz and Bilmes[264] estimated that the loss in private investment because of war-related spending would reduce U.S. economic output by at least $1.2 trillion. The JEC concluded that "*domestic borrowing to finance the war in Iraq will lead to some $875 billion in foregone foreign investment return through 2017.*"[265]

While Stiglitz and Bilmes estimated in 2008 that direct and indirect costs of the Iraq war would amount to $3 trillion, they published another article in 2011 arguing that "*today as the United States end combat in Iraq, it appears that our $3 trillion estimate (which accounted for both government expenses and the war's broader impact on the U.S. economy) was, if anything, too low.*" The authors claim that the war in Iraq not only triggered the increase in oil prices and increased the federal debt from $6.4 trillion in March 2003 to $10 trillion in 2008, but it contributed directly to the financial crisis of 2008.[266]

The authors argue that the global financial crisis was, at least in part, a consequence of the war in Iraq for a number of reasons. "*With more spending at home, and without the need for such low interest rates and such soft regulation to keep the economy going in its absence,*" assert the authors, "*the bubble would have been smaller, and the consequences of its breaking therefore less severe.*" The burden of the war, moreover, made the government less able to respond successfully to the crisis. As the debt crippled the government to stimulate the economy and employment, "*The result is that the recession will be longer, output lower, unemployment higher and deficits larger than they would have been absent the war.*"[267]

---

[264] Linda Bilmes is a former chief financial officer at the Commerce Department. Joseph Stiglitz was the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Bill Clinton and winner of Nobel Prize in economics in 2001. They are co-authors of *"The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict."*
[265] Steven M. Kosiak, op. cit. p. 75.
[266] Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, "The true cost of the Iraq war: $3 trillion and beyond," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2010, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/03/AR2010090302200.html
[267] Ibid.

As the situation of the economy continued to deteriorate, the American public became more concerned with their financial situation and more skeptical of the costs and benefits of interventions abroad. In 2006, the Iraq Study Group concluded that "*Many Americans are dissatisfied, not just with the situation in Iraq, but with the state of our political debate regarding Iraq.*" The group advised that U.S. political leaders "*must build a bipartisan approach to bring a responsible conclusion to what is now a lengthy and costly war*" and that they "*must be candid and forthright with the American people in order to win their support.*"[268]

The results of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in January 2009 showed that domestic concerns, especially the economy and jobs, came at the top of the American public priorities, while foreign policy remained by far a marginal concern. Almost seven in ten Americans (71 %) said that President Obama should concentrate on domestic policy while only eleven % said that foreign policy was a priority. The % age of the American people who saw the economy as the first priority rose from 65 % in 2007 to 75 % in 2008 and climbed to 85 % in 2009.[269]

When he came to office, President Obama was well-aware of the huge deficit in the U.S. budget, but also of what he called "*a deficit in trust*" because of the hidden costs of wars abroad. He declared that the budget he would present would for the first time "*include the costs of war in Iraq and Afghanistan" and that, after seven years of war, he will never again "hide its price.*"[270] One of the first steps the president took to save up money to cover the cost of his program to create jobs and stimulate the economy was the adoption of considerable cuts, especially in defense spending and other war-related costs.

The withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2009 and 2010 was a step to reduce the financial costs of such war and an attempt to reduce the deficit. In its analysis of the defense budget of 2012, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments found that Iraq was allocated only $10.6 billion of additional war funding compared to $107.3 billion for Afghanistan. That was a remarkable

---

[268] "Iraq Study Group Report," op. cit. p. 5.

[269] "Economy, Jobs Trump All Other Policy Priorities In 2009," Pew Research Center, January 22, 2009, at http://www.people-press.org/2009/01/22/economy-jobs-trump-all-other-policy-priorities-in-2009/

[270] "Address before a Joint Session of Congress."

decline by 27 % from the level of funding in FY 2011 which brought total annual war funding to the lowest level since FY 2005. Almost all of the reduction in war funding was related to Iraq as troops were due to withdraw completely by 31 December 2011.[271]

As U.S. troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2012, the reduction in the defense budget and war-related funding saw another phase of decline. In its analysis of the defense budget of FY 2014, the CSBA concluded that the defense budget reached its post-World War 2 peak in 2010 but it declined in 20 % through FY 2013. The decline in FY 2013 alone "*was 13 % due to the sequestration and the ongoing drawdown in Afghanistan. This was the largest single-year % age decline in the defense budget since the end of the Korean War.*"[272]

In February 2014 the Pentagon announced that it would shrink the U.S. Army to reach pre-World War Two level. Such attempt came to meet a planned reduction of a trillion dollar in defense spending over a decade. The 2014 budget that was announced in December 2014 made a cut of $31 billion, while another cut of $45 billion was planned in the defense budget of 2015. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hegel said that his department intended to shrink the U.S. Army to between 440000 to 450000 compared to a current number of 520000. A number of 450000 "*would be the Army's smallest size since 1940, before the United States entered World War Two, when it counted a troop strength of 267,767.*"[273]

Such reduction in the defense budget did not come without controversy between Congress and the White House which resulted in repeated delays in passing the defense budget by congress. In passing the defense appropriation bill of FY 2011, Congress made a delay of more than six months (193 days) which in turn resulted in another delay in the passing of the defense appropriation bill of FY 2012. Another delay of 177 days in enacting the defense budget of FY 2013 contributed also to another delay in FY 2014. During such delays, the Department of

[271] Todd Harrison, "Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), July 15, 2011 at http://csbaonline.org/publications/2011/07/analysis-of-the-fy2012-defense-budget/

[272] Todd Harrison, "Chaos and Uncertainty: The FY2014 Defense Budget and Beyond," CSBA, October 2013, at http://csbaonline.org/publications/2013/10/chaos-and-uncertainty-the-fy-14-defense-budget-and-beyond/

[273] "Budget Cuts to Slash U.S. Army to Smallest Since Before World War Two," CSBA, February 25, 2014, at http://csbaonline.org/2014/02/25/budget-cuts-to-slash-u-s-army-to-smallest-since-before-world-war-two/

Defense operated under a continuing resolution, which froze funding at prior year levels and excluded the start of new programs.[274]

In such a challenging economic and political situation at home, officials and foreign policy commentators have continued to argue for a less active U.S. role abroad and more emphasis on sorting out domestic problems. In his last book *Foreign Policy Begins at Home,* the president of the Council on Foreign Relations Richard Haass argues that the United States is "*overreached*" abroad and "*underperformed at home.*" He cited a wide range of domestic problems like "*a burgeoning deficit and debt, crumbling infrastructure, second-class schools, an outdated immigration system, and the prospect for a prolonged period of low economic growth.*"[275]

Haass argues that such problems "*directly threaten America's ability to project power and exert influence overseas, to compete in the global marketplace, to generate the resources needed to promote the full range of U.S. interests abroad, and to set an example that will influence the thinking and behavior of others.*" With such limited resources and influence, the United States must reconsider what it should and can achieve abroad and must also "*distinguish between the desirable and the vital as well as between the feasible and the impossible.*"[276] This growing sense of urgency to create a balance between the domestic and the foreign has become a prime concern not only of officials and foreign policy experts, but also of the American public at large.

3.3.2. The American Public: Opposition to Foreign Engagement and a Growing Sense of Decline

As Obama's recovery plans and reforms were underway, the American public remained highly opposed to their country's entanglement in foreign conflicts. As the crisis in Syria escalated into an all-out civil war in 2013 and the Sunni insurgency in Iraq burst again in early 2014, the American public opposed any other military intervention of their government in such

---

[274] Todd Harrison, "Chaos and Uncertainty," op. cit. p. 1.
[275] Richard Haass, Foreign Policy, op. cit. , p.3.
[276] Ibid. , p. 5.

conflicts. Such stance stemmed from either the war trauma left by the Iraq war, or from the belief that it was not in the national interest of the United States to get involved in such conflicts.

In a poll conducted by Quinnipiac University from 24 to 30 June 2014 and involved 1446 registered voters, 63 % of the respondents opposed "*the U.S. sending ground troops back into Iraq to help the Iraqi government defeat Islamic militants*." In the same poll, 56 % of those polled said that it was not in the national interest of the United States to get involved in the conflict in Iraq. In another poll conducted by *CBS New*s and the *Washington Post* from the 18th to the 22nd June 2014 and involved 1009 adults nationwide, 65 % of the respondents opposed the U.S. sending ground forces to fight the Sunni insurgent in Iraq.[277]

When President Obama took a decision in August 2013 to launch airstrikes on military targets in Syria in response to an alleged use of chemical weapons, most Americans expressed opposition to such airstrikes citing fears that it would drag the country into another long and costly war. According to a *New York Times/CBS News* poll, six in ten Americans opposed the airstrikes, while nearly 80 % said the Obama administration had not explained clearly its objectives in Syria. In the same poll, 56 % of people did not approve how the president handled the crisis in Syria while only 33 % expressed approval. [278]

Public reluctance to support the airstrikes, according to the *New York Times*, was an outcome of a "*fatigue from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan [which have] made people less open to intervening in the world's trouble spots and more preoccupied with economic travails at home*." People also cited a fear that a military action on Syria "*could enmesh the United States in another long engagement in the Middle East and would increase the terrorist threat to Americans*." Public opposition went beyond airstrikes to include the resistance of 74 % of those polled to arm the Syrian rebels, although 75 % of them thought President Assad used chemical weapons.[279]

---

[277] "Iraq," PollingReport.com, at http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm
[278] Mark Landler and Megan Thee-Brenan, "Survey Reveals Scant Backing for Syria Strike," *New York Times*, September 9, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/10/world/middleeast/poll-majority-of-americans-oppose-military-strike.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[279] Ibid.

Such trend of disengagement among the American public does not relate only to the crises in Iraq and Syria, but also to other conflicts and troubles worldwide. The same *CBS/Times* poll showed that 62 % said the United States should not take a leading role to solve foreign conflicts, while only 34 % said it should. This came in contrast to another poll conducted a month after U.S. troops invaded Iraq in 2003 which showed that 48 % supported a leading role of the U.S. while 43 % opposed. With regard to intervention in Syrian and in the world at large, many people drew parallels with the Iraq war. "*We're pretty good at destroying regimes, but we're not very good at setting up nations," commented a 69 old woman, "So this will be another Iraq.*"[280]

The Pew Research Center conducted a more thorough and comparative study on the issue of public support for U.S. involvement abroad. The survey lasted from 30 October to 6 November 2013 and involved more than 2000 adults. The poll came after the U.S. declined to launch airstrikes on Syria and showed that 51 % said the United States "*does too much to solve world problems*," 17 % said "*it does little*," and 28 % said "*it does the right amount*." Opposition to foreign engagement goes beyond that as 52 % of the respondents said the United States "*should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own*." Such response represented "*the most lopsided balance in favor of the U.S. 'minding its own business' in the nearly 50-year history of the measure*"[281] (see figure 2).

---

[280] Ibid.
[281] "Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips (America's Place in the World 2013)," Pew Research Center, December 3, 2013, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/

Figure 2: Majority Says U.S. Should 'Mind its own Business Internationally.'

Majority Says U.S. Should 'Mind Its Own Business Internationally'

% agreeing that the U.S. should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own'

Source: America's Place in the World 2013. General public: PEW2d (Omnibus). 1964-1991 data from Gallup.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Research Center, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/

In contrast to such opposition to military and diplomatic engagement, many Americans approved greater economic involvement of their country in the world. More than two thirds of Americans saw more benefits than risks in such involvement. 66 %s of respondents said greater involvement in the global economy "*is good because it opens up new markets and opportunities for growth,*" while only 25 % said "*it is a bad thing for the country because it exposes the U.S. to*

risk and uncertainty." Such support for "*closer trade and business ties with other nations stands at its highest point in more than a decade.*"[282]

To investigate the reasons behind such sense of disengagement among the American public, the Pew Research Center conducted a companion survey from 7 October to 11 November which involved 1838 members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).[283] When asked about why the public has become less supportive of global engagement, 42 % of the members cited the "*war fatigue*," especially the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, while 28 % mentioned the bad state of the economy or the costs involved in such wars. Moreover, 19 % cited the ineffectiveness of recent interventions while other members spoke about other reasons such as the lack of strong leadership (see table 2).[284]

---

[282]Ibid.

[283] The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher. For more visit www.cfr.org

[284] Ibid.

Table 2: Why has the Public Turned Inward? Many CFR Members Cite 'War Fatigue.'

Why Has the Public Turned Inward?
Many CFR Members Cite 'War Fatigue'

What is the main reason Americans have become less supportive of the U.S. taking an active role in world affairs?	CFR Members %
War fatigue; Involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq	42
U.S. economy; Cost of involvement	28
Recent efforts have been ineffective	19
U.S. lacks political leadership	17
People don't understand the importance [of U.S. taking an active role]	8
Americans concerned about domestic priorities	7

Source: America's Place in the World November 2013. CFR members: Q15-16. Based on the 92% of CFR members who say the public has become less supportive. Open-ended question, multiple responses accepted.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Research Center, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/

In the last decade, the American public has become not only disengaged from world affairs but has also developed a sense that their country is less respected and that its power is in decline. A total of 53 % of those surveyed said the U.S. is less powerful than a decade ago and a total of 70 % said the U.S. is less respected than a decade ago. On the question of whether the U.S. is less powerful, there seem to be a partisan difference with 75 % of Republicans, 33 % of Democrats, and 55 %of independents said the U.S is less powerful. Partisan gap is less apparent on the question of whether the U.S. is less respected internationally. 80 % of Republicans, 56 % of Democrats, and 74 % of independents said the U.S. is less respected than a decade ago.
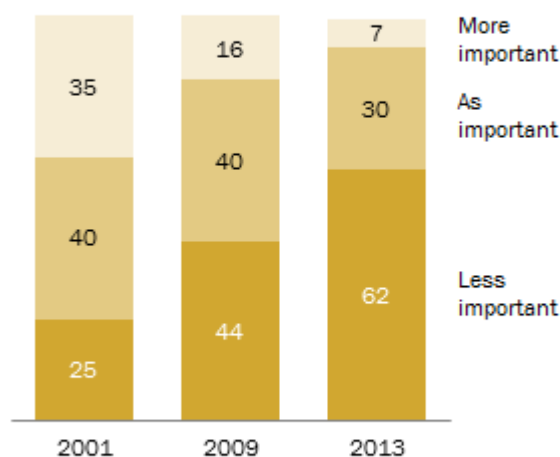
Such sense of decline in U.S. power is also prevalent among many CFR members. In the same survey, 62 % of the surveyed members said the U.S. "*plays a less powerful and important role than it did a decade ago.*" Just four years before this survey, 44 % of the members said the U.S.

played a less important role worldwide compared to 25 % expressed the same view in 2001, just before the 9/11 attacks[285] (see figure 3).

Figure 3: CFR Members, Like the Public, Say U.S. Global Power has Declined.

Source: Pew Research Center, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/section-6-views-of-council-on-foreign-relations-members/

With a host of economic and political challenges at home, President Obama has found it difficult to devote much time and energy for his country's foreign policy not only because such challenges needed to be urgently addressed, but also because, with limited resources, he has had little at hand to deter his foes or woo his friends. As the Obama administration became preoccupied with putting the American house in order, other global and regional powers assumed greater and more assertive foreign policy agenda in the Middle East and also around the world.

---

[285] "Section 6: Views of Council on Foreign Relations Members," Pew Research Center, December 3, 2013, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/section-6-views-of-council-on-foreign-relations-members/

3.4. Regional Powers on the Rise: China, Russia, and Iran.

President Obama has been inclined not only to break with his predecessor's militaristic and unilateral approach and to give domestic priorities more energy and time, but also to recognise the complexity of the world's scene in which many regional powers have assumed a more prominent role. When asked about the essence of his foreign policy, the president explained that his policy was guided with "*an American leadership that recognises the rise of countries like China, India and Brazil. It's a U.S. leadership that recognises our limits in terms of resources and capacities.*"[286]

In this context of a more complex world and limited resources, experts have advised that the President Obama should create a balance not only between the domestic and the foreign, but also to wisely distribute American power abroad to cover more focal regions. In his book *Foreign Policy Begins at Home,* Richard Haass argues that, because American foreign policy has been consumed and overreached in the past two decades with "*remaking larger parts of the greater Middle East…there is a strong case to be made that U.S. attention and efforts should be better distributed around the world, with greater focus on the increasingly critical Asia-Pacific region and the Western Hemisphere, and somewhat less on the Middle East.*"[287]

3.4.1. Obama's "*Pivot to Asia*" and China's Growing Presence in the Middle East.

When he came to office, President Obama adopted what he called a "pivot to Asia" to counterweight China's growing presence in the Asia-Pacific region and to comfort key allies. In a long article in *Foreign Policy* Magazine published in October 2011, the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued that this century would be "America's Pacific century," as the U.S. would diminish its presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and give more importance to the Asia-Pacific region in which the U.S. would sustain its leadership and promote its national interests.[288]

---

[286] Barack Obama quoted in Fawaz Gerges "the Obama Approach," op. cit. p.301.
[287] Richard Haass, "Foreign Policy," op. cit. pp. 5-6.
[288] Hillary R. Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/

After devoting ten years of time and immense resources to the theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan, "*In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values,*" explained Secretary Clinton. So it was of vital importance for America's statecraft in the next decade to be locked "*in a substantially increased investment — diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise — in the Asia-Pacific region.*" In this context, strengthening the alliance with partners like Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand would be very vital to enhance America's leverage and "*regional leadership at a time of evolving security challenges.*"[289]

In this strategy of pivot to Asia, China figures prominently as a key regional player and as a challenge to tame and confront. "*Today,*" argues the U.S. Secretary, "*China represents one of the most challenging and consequential bilateral relationships the United States has ever had to manage. This calls for careful, steady, dynamic stewardship, an approach to China on our part that is grounded in reality, focused on results, and true to our principles and interests.*"[290] But the term "*pivot,*" warned Richard Haass, "*implied too sharp a turn, both by suggesting too dramatic a pullback from the greater Middle East and by overlooking all that the United States has already done over the decades in East Asia.*"[291]

The maintenance of stability in the region should be the groundwork of the U.S. strategy. For doing so, the U.S. should be a reliable partner "in every sense and sphere, lest other countries in the region begin to accommodate their strong neighbors, or become more nationalist and aggressive themselves." Therefore, successful management of U.S.-Chinese relation would be both difficult and essential because "*there will be no more important challenge for U.S. diplomacy over the next generation than working to integrate China into regional and global arrangements,*" because "*China's help is needed to reunify Korea peacefully, prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons, and get Pakistan to change its ways.*"[292]

---

[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Richard Haass, "the Irony," op. cit. p. 64.
[292] Ibid. , p. 65.

In a trip to the Asia-Pacific region in late October 2011, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta assured U.S. allies as well as rivals that "*the United States is going to remain a presence in the Pacific for a long time. That means, just so you understand, that we are not anticipating any cutbacks in this region. If anything, we're going to strengthen our presence in the Pacific*." Such a statement came "*to shore up Asian alliances and send a clear signal that the United States opposes China's claims to island territories far beyond its shores*." In consequence, the Pentagon excluded the possibility of reducing the 85000 American troop or the 7, out of 11, aircraft carriers that are present in the region despite the financial constrains that were put on the defense budget.[293]

Tom Donilon, a former national security adviser (2010-2013), stated that even with uncertainty over its defense budget, the United States is set to expand the its naval presence in the Pacific to 60 % of the global fleet by 2020. The rebalance to Asia is not limited to the military aspect, but it also involves a great deal of trade and diplomacy. The United States is negotiating a strategic economic enterprise of the Trans-Pacific Partnership which aims to eliminate trade barriers and "*would connect a dozen Asia-Pacific economies in a massive trade and investment framework covering 40 % of global gross domestic product. It would directly provide the United States with some $78 billion in annual income*."[294]

As the United States has been pivoting to Asia in order to counterbalance a growing and an ambitious China, the latter has already been pivoting to the Middle East. The growing presence of China in the Middle East has been largely economic and cultural, but it has started to take a more political shape in recent years with the crisis in Syria and the diplomatic stalemate between the West and Iran on the latter's nuclear program. Nonetheless, the United States has remained the focal point of the military and security sphere in the region, a role that China has little will to embrace.

---

[293] Elizabeth Bumiller, "U.S. Pivots to Asia to Address Uneasy Allies," *Ney York Times*, October 24, 2011, at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/world/asia/united-states-pivots-eastward-to-reassure-allies-on-china.html?_r=0
[294] Tom Donilon, "Obama is on the Right Course with the Pivot to Asia," *Washington Post*, April 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obama-is-on-the-right-course-with-the-pivot-to-asia/2014/04/20/ed719108-c73c-11e3-9f37-7ce307c56815_story.html

China's growing demand for oil has made the Middle East a long-term source for such energy and a strategic trade partner. Saudi Arabia is the first supplier of China's imported oil by providing 20 % of its oil needs. Trade exchange between the two countries rose from \$25.4 billion in 2007 to \$64.32 billion in 2011 and was projected to reach \$73.4 billion in 2012.[295] Iran has also become a principal trading partner with China providing it with 14 % of its oil needs. Trade exchange between the two amounted to \$6.1 billion in 2004, rose to \$9.2 billion in 2005 and reached \$27 billion in 2008. In 2006, China replaced Japan as Iran's top trading partner.[296]

With such economic partnership, leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have sought stronger alliance with China usually to supplement, and sometimes to balance, U.S. power and influence in the region. Such interest in stronger relations with China "*stems from insecurity from U.S. intentions, especially with visible U.S. fatigue at the poster it has maintained in the Gulf for decades*." While the U.S. has called for more energy independence from the Middle East, China has asserted energy interdependence and strategic partnership, especially with the Middle East.

As for Iran, China has become "a strategic hedge against U.S. influence" and a reliable trading partner in a hard time of Western sanctions on the Iranian economy. For China, Iran represents a cheap and secure source of energy and an element of distraction for American Foreign Policy, especially from the Asia-Pacific region.[297] As the West has maintained tough economic sanctions on Iran because of its nuclear program, China has sometimes bypassed such sanctions, rejected any military action on Iran, and believed in the benefits of negotiations and diplomacy.

While the U.S. stance on the Syrian crisis proved reluctant and inconsistent, China's call for dialogue remained consistent "*regardless of the framework for such dialogue or the situation on the ground*." China has also repeatedly rejected sanctions or military actions on the Syrian regime through its veto of three Western-backed resolutions in the U.N. Security Council. Even with such pro-Assad stance, China was able to reach out to the Syrian opposition which remains a potential future leadership. Moreover, Gulf leaders, who has backed the Syrian opposition and

[295] Jon B. Alterman, "China's Balancing Act in the Gulf," CSIS, August 2013, at
https://csis.org/files/publication/130821_Alterman_ChinaGulf_Web.pdf
[296] Geoffrey Kemp, The East Moves West, (Washington D.C: Brooking Institution Press, 2010), p. 75.
[297] Jon B. Alterman, op. cit. p. 5.

called for Assad's departure, *"seem less frustrated by Chinese intransigence than by U.S. hesitation to back rhetorical opposition to the Assad regime with actions."*[298]

China has also backed its economic partnership with many countries in the Gulf with other forms of cultural and educational initiatives. In Egypt, for example, about 1500 college students study Chinese every year and 1000 Egyptians take up Chinese courses in the Chinese Cultural Center and the Egypt-China Friendship Association. Ain Shams University has the largest Chinese department in Africa and enrolls 500 undergraduate students annually. Moreover, about 300 professionals receive training in China as part of the Forum for Chinese-African Corporation. In Saudi Arabia, Chinese companies award a wide range of scholarships to Saudi students to study in China and the Chinese government offer further training for many students and professionals.[299]

China has also offered other forms of financial aid to some poor Middle Eastern countries like Yemen. In the past forty years, China sent more than 2000 medical personnel to Yemen, while 163 members were serving there in 2009. This medical aid was culminated in a memorandum of understanding with the Yemeni government in 2007.[300] Such educational exchange and financial aid has bolstered a positive image of China among the Arab public. This popularity has also been cemented with a long-lasting Chinese policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of nations and its unwillingness to dictate the form of governance of other peoples. Such position stands in stark contrast to America's unpopular intervention to influence the form of governance in many Middle Eastern countries.

In a survey conducted by Professor Shibley Telhami in 2010 in some Arab countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordon, Lebanon and the UAE), China came the second after France as the most preferable country to be a world superpower in a world where there is only one superpower. When people were asked to name two countries they thought posed the biggest threat to them,

---

[298] Ibid.

[299] Jon B. Alterman, "China's Soft Power in the Middle East," CSIS, Mars 10, 2009, at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090310_chinesesoftpower__chap5.pdf

[300] Ibid. , p. 72.

more than 88 % mentioned Israel, 77 % mentioned the United States, while only 3 % named China.[301]

Despite China's growing economic, cultural, and diplomatic presence in the Middle East, the United States has remained the senior player in the military and security arena. At present, China remains unwilling, and largely incapable, to project its military power on a global scale as the U.S does, especially when the United States proves adept at such task. Whether in the Asia-Pacific region or in the Middle East, China continues to be a strong rival and a strategic concern for American policymakers in the decades to come.

3.4.2. Russia: an Assertive Comeback to the Middle East Scene.

While China's interests in the Middle East have been largely economic, Russia's interests extend to include other military and geopolitical facets. After the fall of the Soviet Union and Russia's apparent retreat from the Middle East, the election of Vladimir Putin in 2000 and America's setbacks in Iraq after 2003 gave Russia ample opportunities to adopt a more assertive role in the region. Such role has been manifested in a number of initiatives by the Russian president to strengthen ties with key Arab states and leaders. As U.S. influence in the Middle East continued to diminish after the upheavals that swept the region in early 2011, that of Russia saw remarkable and steady rise.

The war in Iraq was a shattering blow to the U.S economy and its global standing, but a great source of recovery for the Russian economy and an opportunity for Russian policymakers to present themselves as an alternative to a militaristic and a hegemonic United States. The perceived weakness of the U.S. through the Iraq war urged the Russians to act more boldly on some foreign policy issues, namely the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. In 2006, Russia's oil production amounted to 12.3 % of the global production and

---

[301] "Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, University of Maryland/Zogby International 2010, Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, June-July 2010, at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2010/8/05-arab-opinion-poll-telhami/0805_arabic_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf

the soaring oil prices after the Iraq war directly benefited the Russia economy which relied heavily on oil revenues.[302]

President Putin also embarked on a number of initiatives to win the hearts and minds of the Arab public. After its bid in 2003 to join the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Russia was able to attain an observer status in this organisation. Regarding the Palestinian issue, Russia invited the Palestinian organisation of resistance Hamas in 2006, supported the Saudi peace initiative, criticised the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in 2006, and proposed to hold an Arab-Israeli peace conference in Moscow in 2008. Despite the symbolism of such initiatives, they represent a departure from a less diplomatic approach of the previous administration towards the region.[303]

The threat of regime change posed by the quick overthrow of the Iraqi president in 2003 gave Russia and Iran a shared source of concern and a reason for further cooperation and partnership. In the last decade and a half, Russia has become major arms supplier for Iran, especially in the air defense system and advanced technology. Russia has also played a crucial part in building and maintaining the nuclear capabilities of Iran. Even in the negotiation between the West and Tehran on its nuclear program, Russia continued to oppose any military option against Iran and urged for more talks and diplomacy [304]. More recently, Russia and Iran stood united against any intervention in the Syrian crisis and have continued to back the Syrian regime with money, arms, and diplomatic assistance.

Indeed, nowhere was the Russian resolve in the Middle East so evident like in the Syrian conflict. Russia's success has not only been in the persistence of its ally in power, but also in the strong message it sent to the West about the different view it has about the international system. In a letter to the American public published in the *New York Times* in September 2013, the Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected entirely the notion of unilateral actions of the West and explained that "*Under current international law, force is permitted only in self-defense or by the*

---

[302] Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, and Robert A. Guffey, <u>The Iraq Effect: The Middle East after the Iraq War,</u> (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010), p 64.
[303] Ibid. , p. 67.
[304] Ibid. , p. 70-71.

decision of the Security Council. Anything else is unacceptable under the United Nations Charter and would constitute an act of aggression."[305]

Putin also warned that "*it is alarming that military intervention in internal conflicts in foreign countries has become commonplace for the United States,*" while he doubted that such course would be in the national interest of the United States. "*Millions around the world,*" he explained, "*increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely on brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan 'you're either with us or against us*." In response to Obama's celebration of his country's "*exceptionalism*" in the U.N. General Assembly, Putin asserted that "*It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation.*"[306]

Putin's diplomatic and strategic successes in Syria are manifold. He helped keep his Syrian ally in power, prevented any Security Council Resolution that would condemn Assad's actions or open the door for a Western military intervention, strengthened his relations with China and Iran, and above all, struck a deal between the West and the Syrian regime to give up its Chemical weapons. In this context, America's "*proclivity to avoid engaging with that country [Syria] even as it spiraled into conflict,*" concluded Jon Alterman, the director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "*led to greater involvement by Turkey, Russia, Iran, and others in the region contrary to U.S. interests, leaving the United States in a weakened strategic position.*"[307]

In the survey conducted with more than 1800 members of the Council on Foreign Relations by the Pew Research Center in 2013, most members (72 %) said the U.S. reputation had been weakened by its policy toward Syria, while (74 %) said Russia's reputation had been strengthened (see table 3).The survey came after the U.S. backed off its decision to launch

---

[305] Vladimir V. Putin, "a Plea of Caution from Russia," *New York Times*, September 11, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?_r=0
[306] Ibid.
[307] Jon, Carolyn, Andrew, and Jeffry "The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus," CSIS, November 2013, p. 35, at http://csis.org/files/publication/131112_Brannen_TurkeyRussiaIranNexus_Web.pdf

airstrikes against Syrian military targets and accepted a diplomatic solution brokered by Russia.[308]

Table 3: Most CFR Members Say Syria Crisis Left U.S. Weaker, Russia Stronger.

Source: Pew Research Center, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/section-6-views-of-council-on-foreign-relations-members/

Egypt, unlike Syria, was hardly a partner to Russia during the presidency of Hosni Mubarak. After the ouster of the latter in early 2011, Russia tried to strengthen relations with the newly elected Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi. Such attempts, however, did not meet the two sides' expectations. After the ouster of President Morsi, relations between Egypt and its ally the United States entered a phase of stress and strain as President Obama became critical of what he saw as an undemocratic ouster of en elected president. In consequence, the Obama administration "*delayed weapons deliveries to Egypt, withheld military aid, and later halted the nascent bilateral strategic dialogue.*" As U.S.-Egyptian relations became strained, ties between Russia and Egypt began to improve.[309]

In February 2013, an Egyptian delegation visited Russia to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties. President Putin endorsed General Sisi's bid for presidency, a strongman who

---

[308] "Section 6: Views of Council on Foreign Relations Members,"
[309] Anna Borshchevskaya, "How to Judge Putin's Trip to Egypt," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 6, 2015, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-to-judge-putins-trip-to-egypt

promised a new era of partnership between the two leaders. In 2014, Russia signed a deal of arms sale with Egypt worth $3.5 billion. In a press conference in Moscow in January 2015, the Egyptian ambassador to Russia said that bilateral relations between the two countries were "*on the rise*" and stated that trade between the two reached $3billion in 2014. Other Russian sources estimated a higher figure of $4.6 billion. Of the 10 million Russian tourists in 2014, a total of 3 million visited Egypt.[310]

In the last visit by the Russian president to Egypt in February 2015, the two countries' leaders "*announced the creation of a free-trade zone between Egypt and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, a Russian industrial zone near the Suez Canal, and Russian aid in the construction of a nuclear power plant*." Although the deals between the two countries were largely economic, the two leaders seemed to send a shared message to the West and particularly to the United States. For the Egyptian president, the visit came at a time when his government "*is eager to showcase that it is not wholly beholden to Washington*." For Putin, the visit "*appears geared at putting the world on notice that Western sanctions related to Russia's actions in Ukraine have not curtailed Moscow's influence in the world*."[311]

In effect, America's hardship in the Middle East has been Russia's opportunity to make a comeback and a presence in the region similar to that of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. While the United States failed to maintain strong alliance with Egypt or to bring about change to Syria that would be in line with its preferences, Russia was able to shore up its alliance with Syria and Iran, and to launch promising partnership with a like-minded Egyptian leadership.

---

[310] Ibid.

[311] Reid Standish, "Putin's Kalashnikov Diplomacy Gets a Win in Egypt," *Foreign Policy*, February 10, 2015, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/10/putins-kalashnikov-diplomacy-gets-a-win-in-egypt-sisi-moscow-eurasian-union/

3.4.3. Iran: Influence by Proxies.

As some Arab countries descended into chaos, Iran has been working to expand its influence through proxies in what the former Saudi king once described as a "*Shiite crescent*" in the Middle East. By this "*crescent*" the King was referring to a Shiite-dominated Iraq, a staunch ally in Syria, and an emboldened Hezbollah in Lebanon. More recently, Iran cemented its presence in Yemen as the Houthi group, a Shiite organisation with strong ties with Tehran, forced the president to resign while it tightened its grip on the capital. In addition, the ongoing negotiations between the West and Iran on its nuclear program seem to give Tehran more power and sway over the region regardless of the outcomes of such negotiations.

In the last decade Iraq has become the centerpiece of Iran's influence in the region. Such influence has been particularly evident in a growing economic partnership, a Shiite-dominated Iraqi politics, and an array of strong Shiite militias. With the recent renewal of the Sunni insurgency, such militias and other troops from the Iranian Quds force have assumed a prominent role in the fight against the Sunni militants. "*More openly than ever before*," reported the *New York Times*, "*Iran's powerful influence in Iraq has been on display as the counteroffensive against Islamic State militants around Tikrit has unfolded in recent days*." Iranian leaders and American officials confirmed such role and even Iraqi officials were "*unapologetic about the role of the militias*."[312]

In Syria too, Iran's growing presence has been no secret. Iran was able to rescue the "reeling regime of Bashar al-Assad by sending in weapons, money and Iranian revolutionary guards, as well as by ordering their Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, to join the fight." Such rising power of Iran in Syria came at the expense of an American-backed and divided opposition and with an Obama administration "*ready to acquiesce to the new reality of Iranian domination of Syria*."[313] The persistence of Assad in power has often been seen as a victory to Iran and its allies, namely Russia and China, and a loss to the United States and its European and Gulf partners.

---

[312] Anne Barnard, "Iran Gains Influence in Iraq as Shiite Militias Fight ISIS," *New York Times*, March 5, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/iran-gains-influence-in-iraq-as-shiite-forces-fight-isis.html
[313] Charles Krauthammer, "Iran's Emerging Empire," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2015, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-irans-emerging-empire/2015/01/22/c3098336-a269-11e4-903f-9f2faf7cd9fe_story.html

Beyond its influence in the "*Shiite Crescent*," Iran made another strategic foothold in Yemen. In September 2014, the Iranain-backed Houthis overran the Yemeni capital and in January 2015 they seized the capital, the presidential palace, and forced the American-backed president to resign.[314] This move was considered as strategic because it gave Iran an entrance to the Red Sea. In addition to its control of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, "*Iran will be in a position to control the sea lanes surrounding the Arab world.*"[315] Such move, along with Iran's power in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, gives Iran more leverage in its negotiations with the West over its nuclear program.

Iran's moves in the region and its nuclear program are inextricably connected because both "are part of a broader Iranian strategy to project power, enhance its regional influence, and constrain the United States and its regional allies." As Obama gave the nuclear talks much emphasis and avoided to link Iran's moves in Syria to such talks, America's allies in the region began to "*view with alarm Washington's passivity in the region*," while "*American influence is everywhere diminished as friends and foes alike increasingly factor Washington out of policy decisions.*" Moreover, the collective power of America's allies "*is reduced as each pursues policies independently not just of the United States but, to a great extent, of one another.*"[316]

The ongoing talks between Iran and the P5+1group (the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany) seem to make Iran in a dominant position in the Middle East regardless of the outcomes of such talks. Iran with a nuclear weapon or with the capacity to have one, argues Richard Haass, "*would be more able and willing to shape the Middle East in its anti-American image.*" The transfer of such weapons to other groups hostile to the United States "*could motivate other countries in the vicinity to develop or acquire nuclear weapons, creating a situation of*

---

[314] Ibid.

[315] Herbert London, "Delaying a nuclear deal advances Iran's goal of hegemony with a Shiite crescent*," Washington Times*, December 2, 2014, at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/2/herbert-london-iran-deal-risks-shiite-crescent-war/

[316] Michael Singh, "U.S. Credibility on Iran at Stake in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, January 12, 2013, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/12/u-s-credibility-on-iran-at-stake-in-syria/

enormous instability and potential destructiveness.” The repeated statements by U.S. officials that it is “*unacceptable*” for Iran to be a nuclear power also put the U.S. credibility at stake.[317]

Even a deal between Iran and the West would have big repercussions, concluded the *Economist*. Such deal may put an end to a long-lasting enmity between the two and is bound “*to have an impact on almost every nation in the region and on almost all the conflicts within and between those nations*.” A possible rapprochement between Iran and the United States after a possible deal “*could see Shia Iran, with a population larger than any country in the Arab world save Egypt, re-emerging as a regional hegemon*.” Regional allies of the United States, especially Israel and Saudi Arabia, are also worried that “*an Iran no longer at loggerheads with America over the nuclear issue would be better placed to try and dominate the Gulf*.”[318]

Even the interim and limited deal that was concluded between Iran and the p5+1group in November 2013 provoked serious tensions between the United States and its regional allies. The deal allowed a limited decrease of sanctions on Iran in exchange for a limited freeze of its enriched uranium. In the World Policy Conference in December 2013, the former chief of the Saudi Intelligence expressed concern that talks between Iran and the United States were kept secret from U.S. allies, while he noted that Iran’s “*game of hegemony towards the Arab countries is not acceptable*.” A former Israeli ambassador to the United States also complained that, after President Obama backed off from attacking Syria, “*neither Israel nor Iran believed any longer that he might use military force against Iran*.”[319]

The former U.S. ambassador to Iraq James Jeffery commented that tensions between the United States and its allies does not lie in the nature of the accord between Iran and the West, “*but rather in the lack of trust that the Obama administration is willing and able to run a regional security system requiring potential use of force*.” With previous Obama polices concerning the region including the withdrawal from Iraq, a marginal role in the NATO

---

[317] Richard Haass, “The Irony,” op. cit. p. 62.

[318] “Shifting Sands: A deal between America and Iran would have big Repercussions,” *Economist*, November 30, 2013, at http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21590958-deal-between-america-and-iran-would-have-big-repercussions-shifting-sands

[319] Steven Erlanger, “Saudi Prince,”

campaign in Libya, and the decline to attack the Syrian regime, "*Middle Eastern allies, whose decision to partner with Washington is an existential one, are increasingly questioning whether America is serious about running an international security system from which it benefits and by which they literally survive.*"[320]

With Iran's growing leverage on two fronts—its growing influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen along with its advanced nuclear program—President Obama seems eager to reach a deal with Iran even if it is limited and less satisfactory. By this, his administration can avoid a military action that would compound the disarray and the chaos in the region or another round of sanctions to which other powers, namely Russia, China and Turkey, are not willing to comply. In this context, U.S. regional allies continue to grow worried as Iran continues to gain power, while the United States is caught in a hard dilemma to please the former and contain the latter.

3.5. Conclusion

Obama's approach to the Middle East, which has been marked by a limited role in the region and by a conversion from the reliance on force to diplomacy, was guided by a number of factors. The dire costs of the Bush legacy, especially the damage to the American image and to its moral standing, urged the new president to seek a less unilateral and a more diplomatic approach to promote the interests of his country in the region. In doing so, President Obama sought also to regain some confidence in U.S. foreign policy towards the region and to erase the long-nurtured image of his country as "*a self-interested empire.*"

Domestic problemes, notably the economic crisis and the huge debt and deficit, forced the president to make such issues the dominant part of his agenda and to seek a limited role abroad. In this context, the resources that the president had at home were far less than America's interests and commitments abroad. Putting the American house in order, therefore, became the prime concern not only of American policymakers, but also of the American public at large.

---

[320] James Jeffery, "Why some U.S. Allies Disapprove of the Iran Agreement," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 27, 2013, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/why-some-u.s.-allies-disapprove-of-the-iran-agreement

With such scarce resources and limited role of President Obama and his administration in foreign affairs, other regional powers and rivals of the United States assumed a bigger and a more assertive role either to compete with U.S. influence or to replace it in places where it began to wane. While China's expanding presence in the Middle East has been largely economic, Russia's return to the region has been marked with a multifaceted agenda of economic, diplomatic, and military considerations. Iran, moreover, has also been active to expand its influence in the region through proxies and to exert such influence in its aim to acquire nuclear capabilities. Though the objectives of China, Russia, and Iran seem to differ in many ways, their common cause continues to be the objection to what they see as Western unilateralism and imperialism.

General Conclusion

America's declining influence in the Middle East has manifested itself in a variety of ways and sprang to life for a variety of reasons. Iraq and Syria represent clear examples of such decline. In Iraq, Obama's administration was unable to broker a power sharing agreement among the various political factions, failed to leave residual troops with legal immunities, and could not retard the renewal of sectarian violence and conflict in the country. On the contrary, Iran was able to unite Shiite political factions, expanded its economic presence in the country, and became a key player in the security arena through the Shiite militias it trained and equipped.

While the United States has remained incapable of bringing a change to the political landscape of the country that would be in line with its preferences, Russia, China, and Iran succeeded in sustain a staunch ally. Moreover, America's credibility in the eyes of its allies and adversaries alike diminished after President Obama declined to act after the "*red line*" he set was crossed. As violence escalated, the pro-American opposition remained weak and divided and other non-state armed groups with agenda hostile to outside powers gained power and ground.

The reasons behind America's limited ability to influence events in the Middle East are manifold. The Bush legacy and its ramifications forced the new President to act cautiously as public opinion in the region became skeptical of America's interventionist approach. Domestic problems, especially the economic crisis, did much to tie the hands of the new administration to act boldly in foreign affairs. Such problems made the task of sorting them out more urgent than any foreign policy agenda and presented the President with few resources to serve the build-up of his country's role abroad. Adding to this was an American public that grew resistant to his country's engagement around the world due to a war fatigue after the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The rise of other regional powers to prominence and their adoption of more assertive foreign policy agendas was also a key factor to constrain U.S. role abroad. China's growing presence in the Asia Pacific region urged President Obama to rebalance his country's presence in the region

largely at the expense of its commitments in the Middle East. Meanwhile, China has also made a considerable economic foothold in the Gulf and Iran. Russia has also been active to sustain its ally in Syria and to strengthen ties with key Iran and Egypt. Iran, moreover, has also become a key player in what is known as "*the Shiite crescent*" and Yemen, and is prone to gain more power in the region through its negotiations with the West on its nuclear program.

With the continuation of the cheer violence and conflicts in the Middle East and as the international community, and particularly the U.N., remain unable to put an end to such conditions, questions and doubts have been raised about the reliability of the post-Cold War order. Richard Haass argues that in today's world there is a tension between the forces of order and disorder with the balance of power shifting to the latter with the Middle East as "*the chief cauldron of contemporary disorder.*" In this context, the post-Cold War order is now unraveling giving way to less wieldy world.[321]

Form an American and global perspective, there are three main factors that account for the unraveling of order around the world. The first factor is the diffusion of power across a wide range and a considerable number of actors. The second is that the American political and economic model has lost most of its lure and people began to lose faith in such model. Finally, U.S policy choices, especially in the Middle East, have made America's promises and threats less reliable and less credible.[322]

The Middle East has long been a center of gravity of the balance of power around the world and a yardstick by which the influence of world and regional powers can be rightly judged. America's growing influence around the world went hand in hand with its growing and influence in the Middle East. After the U.S. reached the zenith of its power after the end of the Cold War, such power began to diminish, especially in the Middle East, because of a host of domestic and international factors. Despite such diminished power and influence, the United States has remained a key and senior player, especially in the security arena, in the Middle East and around the world as well.

---

[321] Richard Haass, "The Unravelling: How to Respond to a Disordered World," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2014 issue, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142202/richard-n-haass/the-unraveling
[322] Ibid.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Eisenhower Doctrine, (January 5, 1957):

………Russia's rulers have long sought to dominate the Middle East. That was true of the Czars and it is true of the Bolsheviks. The reasons are not hard to find. They do not affect Russia's security, for no one plans to use the Middle East as a base for aggression against Russia. Never for a moment has the United States entertained such a thought.

The Soviet Union has nothing whatsoever to fear from the United States in the Middle East, or anywhere else in the world, so long as its rulers do not themselves first resort to aggression. That statement I make solemnly and emphatically.

Neither does Russia's desire to dominate the Middle East spring from its own economic interest in the area. Russia does not appreciably use or depend upon the Suez Canal. In 1955 Soviet traffic through the Canal represented only about three fourths of 1 percent of the total. The Soviets have no need for, and could provide no market for, the petroleum resources which constitute the principal natural wealth of the area. Indeed, the Soviet Union is a substantial exporter of petroleum products.

The reason for Russia's interest in the Middle East is solely that of power politics. Considering her announced purpose of Communizing the world, it is easy to understand her hope of dominating the Middle East.

Soviet control of the satellite nations of Eastern Europe has been forcibly maintained in spite of solemn promises of a contrary intent, made during World War II.
Stalin's death brought hope that this pattern would change. And we read the pledge of the Warsaw Treaty of 1955 that the Soviet Union would follow in satellite countries "the principles of mutual respect for their independence and sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs." But we have just seen the subjugation of Hungary by naked armed force.

In the aftermath of this Hungarian tragedy, world respect for and belief in Soviet promises have sunk to a new low. International Communism needs and seeks a recognizable success. Thus, we have these simple and indisputable facts:

1. The Middle East, which has always been coveted by Russia, would today be prized more than ever by International Communism.

2. The Soviet rulers continue to show that they do not scruple to use any means to gain their ends.
3. The free nations of the Mid East need, and for the most part want, added strength to assure their continued independence.

……….. Under all the circumstances I have laid before you, a greater responsibility now devolves upon the United States. We have shown, so that none can doubt, our dedication to the principle that force shall not be used internationally for any aggressive purpose and that the integrity and independence of the nations of the Middle East should be inviolate. Seldom in history has a nation's dedication to principle been tested as severely as ours during recent weeks.

There is general recognition in the Middle East, as elsewhere, that the United States does not seek either political or economic domination over any other people. Our desire is a world environment of freedom, not servitude. On the other hand many, if not all, of the nations of the Middle East are aware of the danger that stems from International Communism and welcome closer cooperation with the United States to realize for themselves the United Nations goals of independence, economic well-being and spiritual growth.

If the Middle East is to continue its geographic role of uniting rather than separating East and West; if its vast economic resources are to serve the well-being of the peoples there, as well as that of others; and if its cultures and religions and their shrines are to be preserved for the uplifting of the spirits of the peoples, then the United States must make more evident its willingness to support the independence of the freedom-loving nations of the area.

Under these circumstances I deem it necessary to seek the cooperation of the Congress. Only with that cooperation can we give the reassurance needed to deter aggression, to give courage and confidence to those who are dedicated to freedom and thus prevent a chain of events which would gravely endanger all of the free world.

There have been several Executive declarations made by the United States in relation to the Middle East. There is the Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950, followed by the Presidential assurance of October 31, 1950, to the King of Saudi Arabia. There is the Presidential declaration of April 9, 1956, that the United States will within constitutional means oppose any aggression in the area. There is our Declaration of November 29, 1956, that a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, or Turkey would be viewed by the United States with the utmost gravity.

Nevertheless, weaknesses in the present situation and the increased danger from International Communism, convince me that basic United States policy should now find expression in joint action by the Congress and the Executive. Furthermore, our joint resolve should be so couched as

to make it apparent that if need be our words will be backed by action.

It is nothing new for the President and the Congress to join to recognize that the national integrity of other free nations is directly related to our own security.
We have joined to create and support the security system of the United Nations. We have reinforced the collective security system of the United Nations by a series of collective defense arrangements. Today we have security treaties with 42 other nations which recognize that our peace and security are intertwined. We have joined to take decisive action in relation to Greece and Turkey and in relation to Taiwan.

Thus, the United States through the joint action of the President and the Congress, or, in the case of treaties, the Senate, has manifested in many endangered areas its purpose to support free and independent governments—and peace—against external menace, notably the menace of International Communism. Thereby we have helped to maintain peace and security during a period of great danger. It is now essential that the United States should manifest through joint action of the President and the Congress our determination to assist those nations of the Mid East area, which desire that assistance.
The action which I propose would have the following features.

It would, first of all, authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence.
It would, in the second place, authorize the Executive to undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid.
It would, in the third place, authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.

These measures would have to be consonant with the treaty obligations of the United States, including the Charter of the United Nations and with any action or recommendations of the United Nations. They would also, if armed attack occurs, be subject to the overriding authority of the United Nations Security Council in accordance with the Charter.
The present proposal would, in the fourth place, authorize the President to employ, for economic and defensive military purposes, sums available under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended, without regard to existing limitations.

The legislation now requested should not include the authorization or appropriation of funds because I believe that, under the conditions I suggest, presently appropriated funds will be adequate for the balance of the present fiscal year ending June 30. I shall, however, seek in subsequent legislation the authorization of $200,000,000 to be available during each of the fiscal years 1958 and 1959 for discretionary use in the area, in addition to the other mutual security programs for the area hereafter provided for by the Congress.

Source: see http://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/speeches/speech-3360

Appendix 2: The Bush Doctrine, September 2002.

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity.

People everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages.

Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. In a world that is safe, people will be able to make their own lives better. We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a

single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.

To defeat this threat we must make use of every tool in our arsenal—military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing. The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration. America will help nations that need our assistance in combating terror. And America will hold to account nations that are compromised by terror, including those who harbor terrorists—because the allies of terror are the enemies of civilization. The United States and countries cooperating with us must not allow the terrorists to develop new home bases. Together, we will
seek to deny them sanctuary at every turn.

The nature of the Cold War threat required the United States—with our allies and friends—to emphasize deterrence of the enemy's use of force, producing a grim strategy of mutual assured destruction.With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, our security environment has undergone profound transformation. Having moved from confrontation to cooperation as the hallmark of our relationship with Russia, the dividends are evident: an end to the balance of terror that divided us; an historic reduction in the nuclear arsenals on both sides; and cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism and missile defense that until recently were inconceivable.

But new deadly challenges have emerged from rogue states and terrorists. None of these contemporary
threats rival the sheer destructive power that was arrayed against us by the Soviet Union. However, the nature and motivations of these new adversaries, their determination to obtain destructive powers hitherto available only to the world's strongest states, and the greater likelihood that they will use weapons of mass destruction against us, make today's security environment more complex and dangerous. In the 1990s we witnessed the emergence of a small number of rogue states that, while different
in important ways, share a number of attributes. These states:

• brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers;
• display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party;
• are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes;
• sponsor terrorism around the globe; and

• reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands.

At the time of the Gulf War, we acquired irrefutable proof that Iraq's designs were not limited to the chemical weapons it had used against Iran and its own people, but also extended to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and biological agents. In the past decade North Korea has become the world's principal purveyor of ballistic missiles, and has tested increasingly capable missiles while developing its own WMD arsenal. Other rogue regimes seek nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons as well. These states' pursuit of, and global trade in, such weapons has become a looming threat to all nations. We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends. Our response must take full advantage of strengthened alliances, the establishment of new partnerships with former adversaries, innovation in the use of military forces, modern technologies, including the development of an effective missile defense system, and increased emphasis on intelligence collection and analysis.
Source: "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002," http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf

Appendix 3: Obama Speech at Cairo University (New Beginning, June 4, 2009).

……..I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap and share common principles, principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight. I know there's been a lot of publicity about this speech, but no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust. Nor can I answer in the time that I have this afternoon all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us: "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." That is what I will try to do today, to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

……..Let me also address the issue of Iraq. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: "I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power and teach us that the less we use our power, the greater it will be."

Today, America has a dual responsibility to help Iraq forge a better future and to leave Iraq to Iraqis. And I have made it clear to the Iraqi people that we pursue no bases and no claim on their territory or resources. Iraq's sovereignty is its own. And that's why I ordered the removal of our combat brigades by next August. That is why we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically elected Government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities by July and to remove all of our troops from Iraq by 2012. We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy, but we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron.

Source: see http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-5502

Appendix 4: Part of CBS interview with President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, January 28, 2013.

MR. KROFT: The biggest criticism of this team in the U.S. foreign policy from your political opposition has been what they say -- an abdication of the United States on the world stage, sort of a reluctance to become involved in another entanglement, an unwillingness or what seems -- appears to be an unwillingness to gauge big issues. Syria, for example.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Yeah, well --

MR. KROFT: I mean, that--

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, Moammar Gadhafi probably does not agree with that assessment, or at least if he was around, he wouldn't agree with that assessment. Obviously, you know, we helped to put together and lay the groundwork for liberating Libya. You know, when it comes to Egypt, I think, had it not been for the leadership we showed, you might have seen a different outcome there. But also understanding that we do nobody a service when we leap before we look -- where we, you know, take on things without having thought through all the consequences of it. And Syria's a classic example of where our involvement, we want to make sure that not only does it enhance U.S. security, but also that it is doing right by the people of Syria and neighbors like

Israel that are going to be profoundly affected by it. And so it's true sometimes that we don't just shoot from the hip.

SEC. CLINTON: We live not only in a dangerous, but an incredibly complicated world right now with many different forces at work, both state-based and non-state, technology, and communications. And, you know, I'm older than the president. I don't want to surprise anybody by saying that.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: But not by much.

SEC. CLINTON: But, you know, I remember, you know, some of the speeches of Eisenhower as a young girl, you know? You've got to be careful. You have to be thoughtful. You can't rush in, especially now, where it's more complex than it's been in decades. So yes, are there what we call wicked problems like Syria, which is the one you named? Absolutely. And we are on the side of American values. We're on the side of freedom. We're on the side of the aspirations of all people to have a better life, have the opportunities that we are fortunate to have here. But it's not always easy to perceive exactly what must be done in order to get to that outcome. So, you know, I certainly am grateful for the president's steady hand and hard questions and thoughtful analysis as to what we should and shouldn't do.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: You know, there are transitions and transformations taking place all around the world. We are not going to be able to control every aspect of every transition and transformation. Sometimes they're going to go sideways. Sometimes, you know, there'll be unintended consequences. And our job is to, number one, look after America's security and national interest. But, number two, find where are those opportunities where our intervention, our engagement can really make a difference? And to be opportunistic about that. And that's something that I think Hillary has done consistently. I think the team at the State Department's done consistently. And that's what I intend to continue to do over the next four years.

MR. KROFT: Thank you very much.

Source: see http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50139839n

Glossary

Middle East: The term has long been debated but became widely accepted as to replace the term Near East after the Second World War. The region covers Turkey, Iran, Egypt and the Arab states of Asia. After the Cold War, the term Greater Middle East has also been widely used to mean the wider region from Morocco in the west to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the East. For more on the origins and boundaries of both the term and the region see Roderic H. Davison, "Where is the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, 38 (July 1960), pp 665-675.

Hegemony: Is synonymous to primacy or leadership. In the world of international relations such position is exercised by a 'hegemon' which is a world power capable enough to play such role. Other states will therefore define their relationship with such hegemon either by acquiescing, opposing, or being indifferent to it. The United Kingdom is believed to have played such role in the nineteenth century and was later succeeded by the United States after the Second World War. In today's world, however, it is widely debated whether the U.S. is still playing such role, especially with the rise of some powers like Japan and the BRICS countries to prominence.

Unipolarity: A type of a system structure in which there is one 'pole' or a polar player in a predominant position as opposed to a bipolar system in which there are two polar players like in the Cold War, or a multipolar system in which there are three or more polar actors.

Actor: Any entity that plays an identifiable role in the world of international relations. Actors can be states, but can also be non-state like international organizations or armed groups.

Insurgency: Is an armed insurrection against an established government in a state. Such insurgency may develop into a civil war if it is forcefully resisted by the government.

Sequestration: Is the term for automatic, across-the-board spending cuts initiated by legislation. The Budget Control Act of 2011 enacted sequestration cuts that went into effect in 2013 and will continue through 2021 unless Congress passes new legislation to stop them.

Appropriation: Is a law that authorizes the expenditure of funds for a given purpose.

Deficit: Is a situation when government expenditures are greater than tax collections in a given year.

Federal Debt: Is the total of all past federal budget deficits, minus what the federal government has repaid**.**

Fiscal Year: The federal fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. Thus, fiscal year 2015 runs from Oct. 1, 2014, through Sept. 30, 2015.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): It's the total value of all final goods and services produced in an economy in a given year. "Final" means the value of goods and services purchased by the final consumer, as opposed to the value of raw materials purchased by a factory.

Crowding out of Private Investment: The situation occurs when the government borrows large sums of money that will trigger high interest rates and therefore discourages people from borrowing money for investment.

General Bibliography

1- Primary Sources:

➢ Bush , George H. W., "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the End of the Gulf War" *Miller Center*, March 6, 1991, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3430

➢ Bush , George H. W., "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress," *Miller Center*, September 11, 1990, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3425

➢ Bush , George H. W., "Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait", *Miller Center*, August 8, 1990 http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5529

➢ Bush , George H. W., "Address on the End of the Gulf War," *Miller Center*, February 27, 1991, http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5530

➢ Eisenhower, Dwight D., "Eisenhower Doctrine (January 5, 1957)," *Miller Center*, http://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/speeches/speech-3360

➢ Kerry, John, "Opening Remarks on the US Strategy to Defeat ISIL," U.S. Department of State, September 17, 2014, http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/09/231773.htm

➢ Monroe, James, "Seventh Annual Message (Monroe Doctrine)," *Miller Center*, December 2, 1823, http://millercenter.org/president/monroe/speeches/speech-3604

➢ Obama, Barack, "Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention," *Miller Center*, August 28, 2008, http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4427

➢ Obama, Barack , "Remarks by the President in a News Conference," November 14, 2012, Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/14/remarks-president-news-conference

➢ Obama, Barack , "Remarks by the President on Syria," Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, August 31, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria

➢ Obama, Barack , "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," August 20, 2012, Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps

➢ Obama, Barack, "Address at Cairo University," *Miller Center*, June 4, 2009, http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-5502

➢ Obama, Barack, "Address before a Joint Session of Congress," *Miller Center*, February 24, 2009, http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4612

➢ Obama, Barack, "Inaugural Address," *Miller Center*, January 20, 2009,
o http://millercenter.org/president/obama/speeches/speech-4453

➢ Obama, Barack, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria," Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, September 10, 2013,   http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria

➢ Obama, Barack, "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq", 19 June 2014, Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/19/remarks-president-situation-iraq

➢ Obama, Barack, "Remarks of President Barack Obama: Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," Office of the Press Secretary, the white House, February 27, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq

➢ Obama, Barack, "Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria," Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, August 18, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/statement-president-obama-situation-syria

➢ Obama, Barack, "Statement by the President on ISIL," Office of the Press Secretary, September 10, 2014, the White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1

➢ Taft, William, "Fourth Annual Message," *Miller Center*, December 3, 2012, http://millercenter.org/president/taft/speeches/speech-3786

➢ Truman, Harry, "Truman Doctrine", *Miller Center*, March 12, 1947, http://millercenter.org/president/truman/speeches/speech-3343.

➢ Bush, George, W., "President Bush Addresses the Nation," *Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 2001, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html

➢ Bush, George, W., "Bush makes historic speech aboard warship," *CNN*, Friday, May 2, 2003, http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/

➢ Woodrow Wilson, Wilson's "Fourteen Points" (January 8, 1918), *Miller Center*, http://millercenter.org/president/wilson/speeches/wilsons-fourteen-points

➢ "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002," http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf

2- Secondary Sources:

A- Books:

➢ Baker, James A. and. Hamilton, Lee H., *The Iraq Study Group Report*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2006)

➢ Clinton, Hillary, *Hard Choices*, (Great Britain: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

➢ DeNovo, John A., DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939*, (the United States: the University of Minnesota Press, 1963)

➢ Dunne, Charles W., *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East*. Ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 20011).

➢ Frederic, Dalia, Jessica, Jeffrey, and Robert, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East after the Iraq War*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010).

➢ Freedman, Lawrance, *A Choice of Enemies: the United States Confronts the Middle East*, (United States: Public Affairs, 2008).

- Haass, Richard, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

- Haass, Richard, *War of Necessity War of Choice*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

- Herring, George C., *From Colony to Supper Power: U.S Foreign Relations since 1776*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

- Hunt, Michael H., *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, (United States: the University of North Carolina Press, 2007) p. 65.

- Kemp, Geoffrey, *The East Moves West*, (Washington D.C: Brooking Institution Press, 2010).

- Kennedy, Paul, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1988)

- Khalidi, Rashid, *Sowing Crisis: the Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*, (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2009)

- Little, Douglas, *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945*, (the United States: the University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

- McGifferet, Carola, ed. *Chinese Soft Power and its Implications for the United States*, (Washington D.C: CSIS, 2009), pp. 71-73.

- Panetta, Leon with Newton, Jim, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2014).

- Quandt, Wiiliam B., *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, (United States: the Brookings Institution and University of California Press, 2005).

- Ricks, Thomas E., *Fiasco: the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).

- Shlaim, Avi, *War and Peace in the Middle East*, (United States: Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books Inc, 1994).

- Ulrichsen, Kristian C., *The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914-1922*, (U.K: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

- Yaqub, Salim , *The United States and the Middle East:1914 to 9/11, part1/2*, (United States: The Teaching Company, 2003).

- Zakaria, Fareed, *The Post-American World*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008)

B- Articles:

➢ Alnasrawi, Abbas, "U.S Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (Winter 1989), pp. 55-83.

➢ Alterman, Jon B., "China's Balancing Act in the Gulf," CSIS, August 2013, at https://csis.org/files/publication/130821_Alterman_ChinaGulf_Web.pdf

➢ Bacevich, Andrew J., "Even if we defeat the Islamic State, we'll still lose the bigger war," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2014, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/even-if-we-defeat-the-islamic-state-well-still-lose-the-bigger-war

➢ Barnard, Anne and Sengupta, Somini, "U.S. Signals Shift on How to End Syrian Civil War," *New York Times*, January 19, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/20/world/middleeast/us-support-for-syria-peace-plans-demonstrates-shift-in-priorities.html

➢ Barnard, Anne, "Iran Gains Influence in Iraq as Shiite Militias Fight ISIS," *New York Times*, March 5, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/iran-gains-influence-in-iraq-as-shiite-forces-fight-isis.html

➢ Betts, Richard K., "Pick you Poison: America has Many Options in Syria, None are Good," *Foreign Affairs*, September 5, 2013, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139906/richard-k-betts/pick-your-poison

➢ Borger, Julian, "Iran Air Strikes against ISIS Requested by Iraqi Government, Says Tehran," *Guardian*, December 6, 2014, at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/05/iran-conducts-air-strikes-against-isis-exremists-iraq

➢ Borshchevskaya, Anna, "How to Judge Putin's Trip to Egypt," WINEP, February 6, 2015, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-to-judge-putins-trip-to-egypt

➢ Bumiller, Elizabeth, "U.S. Pivots to Asia to Address Uneasy Allies," *New York Times*, October 24, 2011, at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/world/asia/united-states-pivots-eastward-to-reassure-allies-on-china.html?_r=0

➢ Chadbian, Najib, Review of *Balancing Act: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, by Vaughn P. Shannon, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May, 2005), pp. 280-282.

➢ Charbonneau, Louis, "Russia, China veto U.N. resolution condemning Syria," *Reuters*, October 5, 2011, at http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/10/05/uk-syria-un-idUKTRE7937QT20111005

➢

➢ Charbonneau, Louis, and Worsnip, Patrick, "Russia, China veto U.N. draft backing Arab Plan for Syria," *Reuters*, February 4, 2012, at http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/04/us-syria-idUSTRE80S08620120204

➢ Clinton, Hillary R., "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/

➢ Cordesman, Anthony H. and Khazai, Sam, "Patterns of Violence in Iraq," October 24, 2012, CSIS, at http://csis.org/files/publication/121024_Iraq_Violence.pdf

➢ Cordesman, Anthony H., "Syria, Geneva II, and the Era of 'Least Bad Options'," CSIS, January 22, 2014, at http://csis.org/publication/syria-geneva-ii-and-era-least-bad-options

➢ Cordesman, Anthony H., and Khazai, Sam, "Iraq after US Withdrawal: US Policy and Iraqi Search for Security and Stability," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), July 3, 2012 http://csis.org/files/publication/120702_Iraq_After_US_Withdrawal.pdf

➢ Could, David S., "Ex-Commander Says Iraq Effort is 'a Nightmare'," *New York Times*, October 13, 2007, at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/13/washington/13general.html?_r=0

➢ Cumming-Bruce, Nick and Gladstone, Rick, "Diplomats Fail to Agree on Details for Syria Peace Talks," *New York Times,* November 5, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/world/middleeast/syria.html

➢ DeNovo, John A., "A Railroad for Turkey: the Chester Project, 1908-1913," *The Business History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3. (Autumn, 1959), pp. 300-329.

➢ Donilon, Tom, "Obama is on the Right Course with the Pivot to Asia," *Washington Post*, April 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obama-is-on-the-right-course-with-the-pivot-to-asia/2014/04/20/ed719108-c73c-11e3-9f37-7ce307c56815_story.html

➢ Earle, Edward M., "American Mission in the Near East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Apr, 1929), pp. 398-417

➢ Eisenstadt, Michael, "Should I leave or Should I go," *Foreign Affairs*, September 30, 2010, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66755/michael-eisenstadt/should-i-stay-or-should-i-go

➢ Eisenstadt, Michael, Knights, Michael, and Ali, Ahmed, "Iran's Influence in Iraq," WINEP, April 2011, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus111.pdf

➢ Erlanger, Steven, "Saudi Prince Criticizes Obama Administration, Citing Indecision in Mideast," *New York Times*, December 15, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/16/world/middleeast/saudi-prince-accuses-obama-of-indecision-on-middle-east.html

➢ Fisher, Max, "Sanctions Hurt Syrians, but They Can't even Keep Bashar al-Assad off iTunes," *the Atlantic*, March 15, 2012, at http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/sanctions-hurt-syrians-but-they-cant-even-keep-bashar-al-assad-off-itunes/254567/

➢ Friedman, Thomas L., "Obama on the World," *New York Times*, August 8, 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/opinion/president-obama-thomas-l-friedman-iraq-and-world-affairs.html?_r=1

➢ Gordon, Michael R. and Barnard, Anne, "Kerry Supports Syrian Peace Talks in Russia," *New York Times*, January 14, 2015, at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/15/world/middleeast/kerry-backs-syrian-peace-talks-in-russia.html

➢ Gordon, Michael R., "Criticism of United States' Mideast Policy Increasingly Comes from Allies," *New York Times,* October 23, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/24/world/middleeast/kerry-reassures-israel-on-iran-but-divisions-remain.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

➢ Grabill, Joseph L., "Cleveland H. Dodge, Woodrow Wilson and the Near East", *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985), Vol. 48, No. 4 (WINTER 1970), pp. 249-264

➢ Gutman, Roy and al Hamadee, Mousab, "Tense Relations between U.S. and anti-Assad Syrian Rebels," *McClatchy DC,* September 5, 2014 at
➢ http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/09/05/238270/tense-relations-between-us-and.html

➢ H. W. Brands, "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Going to War (Mar., 2004), pp. 113-131

➢ Haass, Richard, "The Unravelling: How to Respond to a Disordered World," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2014 issue, at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142202/richard-n-haass/the-unraveling

➢ Haass, Richard, "The Irony of American Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2013, pp. 57-67.

➢ Indyk, Martin, "The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East" WINEP, 1993, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-clinton-administrations-approach-to-the-middle-east

➢ Janabi, Nazar, "Iraq's Sectarian Tensions Rise, as Maliki Clings to Power,", *Fikra Forum*, February 14, 2013 at http://fikraforum.org/?p=3060

➢ Jastrow, Morris, "the Turks and the Future of the Near East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 84, International Reconstruction (Jul., 1919), pp. 30-40

➢ Jeffery, James, "Why some U.S. Allies Disapprove of the Iran Agreement," WINEP, November 27, 2013, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/why-some-u.s.-allies-disapprove-of-the-iran-agreement

➢ Jeffrey, James F., "The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), November, 2014, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote21_Jeffrey2.pdf

➢ Jeffry, James, "How Maliki Broke Iraq," *Politico*, August 13, 2014, at http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/how-maliki-broke-iraq-109996.html#.VKvClzSG8YE

➢ Jon, Carolyn, Andrew, and Jeffry "The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus," CSIS, November 2013, p. 35, at http://csis.org/files/publication/131112_Brannen_TurkeyRussiaIranNexus_Web.pdf

➢ Kirkpatrick, David D. and al Jawoshy, Omar, "Weeks of US airstrikes Fail to Dislodge ISIS in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 22, 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/23/world/middleeast/isis-iraq-airstrikes.html?_r=0

➢ Knights, Michael, "The Effort to Unseat Maliki," WINEP, June 5, 2012, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-effort-to-unseat-maliki-lessons-for-u.s.-policy

➢ Knights, Michael, "The Evolution of Iran's Special Groups," *CTC Sentinal*, November 2010, Vol 3, Issue 11-12, at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolution-of-iran%E2%80%99s-special-groups-in-iraq

➢ Krauthammer, Charles, "Iran's Emerging Empire," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2015, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-irans-emerging-empire/2015/01/22/c3098336-a269-11e4-903f-9f2faf7cd9fe_story.html

➢ Landis, Joshua, "Why Syria is the Gordian Knot of Obama's anti-ISIL Campaign," *Al Jazeera America*, Sept 15, 2014, at http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/15/why-syria-is-thegordianknotofobamasantiisilcampaign.html

➢ Landler, Mark and Thee-Brenan, Megan, "Survey Reveals Scant Backing for Syria Strike," *New York Times*, September 9, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/10/world/middleeast/poll-majority-of-americans-oppose-military-strike.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

➢ Lebow, Richard N., "Woodrow Wilson and the Belfour Declaration," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 501-523

➢ London, Herbert, "Delaying a nuclear deal advances Iran's goal of hegemony with a Shiite crescent*," Washington Times*, December 2, 2014, at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/2/herbert-london-iran-deal-risks-shiite-crescent-war/

➢ Lothian, Lord, "How the West Lost the Middle East," *Global Strategy Forum*, October 1, 2013, at http://www.globalstrategyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/How-the-West-Lost-The-Middle-East-.pdf

➢ Macfarquhar, Neil, "Syrians Say they are Feeling the Grip of Sanctions," *New York Times*, December 2, 2011, , at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/03/world/middleeast/syrians-say-they-are-feeling-grip-of-economic-sanctions.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

➢ Malka, Haim, "the Challenge of Non-State Actors," CSIS, November 12, 2014, at http://csis.org/publication/challenge-non-state-actors

➢ Maza, Hernert, "Turkish-Arab Economic Relations with the United States," *World Affair*s, Vol. 141, No. 3 (Winter 1979), pp. 269-276.

➢ Michael J. Cohen, "Truman and Palestine, 1945-1948: Revisionism, Politics and Diplomacy", Oxford University Press, *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Feb., 1982), pp. 1-22

➢ Milani, Mohsen, "Meet me in Baghdad," *Foreign Affairs*, September 20, 2010, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66750/mohsen-m-milani/meet-me-in-baghdad

➢ Nadimi, Farzin, "Iran's Expending Military Role in Iraq," WINEP, September 8, 2014 at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-expanding-military-role-in-iraq

➢ Nichols, Michelle, "Russia, China veto U.N. Security Council Resolution on Syria," *Reuters*, July 20, 2012, at http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/07/20/uk-syria-crisis-un-idUKBRE86I0UG20120720

- Nights, Michael, "Iraq's political Crisis: Challenges for US policy," WINEP, December 21, 2011, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iraqs-political-crisis-challenges-for-u.s.-policy

- Pillar, Paul, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85 No. 2 (Mar-Apr., 2006), pp. 15-27.

- Pollack, Kenneth M., "an Army to Defeat Assad," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014 Issue, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141848/kenneth-m-pollack/an-army-to-defeat-assad

- Putin, Vladimir V., "a Plea of Caution from Russia," *New York Times*, September 11, 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?_r=0

- Rich, Frank, "the Vietnamization of Bush's Vacation," *New York Times*, August 28, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/28/opinion/28rich.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&

- Richards, George, "Across the Zagros: Iranian Influence in Iraqi Kurdistan," *Guardian*, 21 November 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/iran-influence-iraqi-kurdistan

- "Shifting Sands: A deal between America and Iran would have big Repercussions," *Economist*, November 30, 2013, at http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21590958-deal-between-america-and-iran-would-have-big-repercussions-shifting-sands

- Shlaim, Avi, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process," in Louise Fawcett ed., *International Relations of the Middle East,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 241-61.

- Silva, Joao, "In U.S Exit from Iraq, Failed Efforts and Challenges," *New York Times*, September 22, 2012, at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/middleeast/failed-efforts-of-americas-last-months-in-iraq.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

- Singh, Michael, "U.S. Credibility on Iran at Stake in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, January 12, 2013, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/12/u-s-credibility-on-iran-at-stake-in-syria/

- Smyth, Phillip, "The Shiite Jihad in Syria and its Regional Effects," WINEP, February, 2015, at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus138_Smyth-2.pdf

- Standish, Reid, "Putin's Kalashnikov Diplomacy Gets a Win in Egypt," *Foreign Policy*, February 10, 2015, at http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/10/putins-kalashnikov-diplomacy-gets-a-win-in-egypt-sisi-moscow-eurasian-union/

- Stein, Jeff "Can you Tell a Sunni and from a Shiite," *New York Times*, October 17, 2006, at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/opinion/17stein.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

- Sterner, Michael, "the Iran-Iraq War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (fall, 1984), pp. 128-143

- Stiglitz, Joseph E., and Bilmes, Linda J., "The true cost of the Iraq war: $3 trillion and beyond," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2010, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/03/AR2010090302200.html

- Tabler, Andrew J., "A See Change in Washington Policy toward Syria," CNN Global Public Square, July 12, 2011, at http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/12/a-sea-change/

- Takeyh, Ray, "Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (summer 2010), pp. 365-383.

- The Editorial Board, "Wrong Turn On Syria: Helping Assad," *New York Times*, September 23, 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/opinion/reluctantly-helping-assad.html?_r=0

- **Tyler, Patrick E., "**U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring no Rivals Develop a One-Superpower World," *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, http://work.colum.edu/~amiller/wolfowitz1992.htm

C- Dictionaries:

- Evans, Graham and Newnham, Jeffery, *the Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, (England: Penguin Books, 1998)

D- Webiography:

- "Section 6: Views of Council on Foreign Relations Members," Pew Research Center, December 3, 2013, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/section-6-views-of-council-on-foreign-relations-members/

- "America's Global Image Remain more Positive than China's," Pew Research Center, July 18, 2013 at http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/

➤ "Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, University of Maryland/Zogby International 2010, "Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response," CRS, September 17, 2014, at http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf

➤ "Budget Cuts to Slash U.S. Army to Smallest Since Before World War Two," CSBA, February 25, 2014, at http://csbaonline.org/2014/02/25/budget-cuts-to-slash-u-s-army-to-smallest-since-before-world-war-two/

➤ "Iraq," PollingReport.com, at http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm

➤ "Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips (America's Place in the World 2013)," Pew Research Center, December 3, 2013, at http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/

➤ "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Recourses for a New Century," A Report of the Project for the New American Century, September 2000, *Information clearing house,* http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf

➤ "The 'Islamic State' Crisis and U.S. Policy," CRS, December 8, 2014, at http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf

➤ "America's Image in the World," Pew Global Attitudes Project, March 14 2007, at http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/

➤ "Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, June-July 2010, at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2010/8/05-arab-opinion-poll-telhami/0805_arabic_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf

➤ Biddle, Stephan, Boot, Max and O'sullivan, Meghan, chaired by Haass, Richard, "What to do about Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), June 18, 2014, at http://www.cfr.org/iraq/do-iraq/p33153

➤ Burt, Andrew, "Council on Foreign Relations' Richard Hass on Bush's Unjust Iraq Blunder," *U.S. News*, June 12, 2009, at http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2009/06/12/the-council-on-foreign-relations-richard-haass-on-bushs-unjust-iraq-war-blunder

➤ Economy, Jobs Trump All Other Policy Priorities In 2009," Pew Research Center, January 22, 2009, at http://www.people-press.org/2009/01/22/economy-jobs-trump-all-other-policy-priorities-in-2009/

- Foer, Franklin and Hughes, Chris, "Barack Obama is not Pleased," the *New Republic*, January 27, 2013, at http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112190/obama-interview-2013-sit-down-president

- *Frontline,* "The Gulf War, Oral History: Richard Cheney," www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/cheney/2.html.

- Gwertzman , Bernard and Haass, Richard, "The Iraq Invasion Ten Years Later: A Wrong War," *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2013, at http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-invasion-ten-years-later-wrong-war/p30204

- "Historical Tables: Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2015," at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2015/assets/hist.pdf

- Katzman, Kenneth, "Iran-Iraq Relations," August 13, 2010, Congressional Report Service (CRS), https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22323.pdf

- Katzman, Kenneth, "Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights," CRS, September 15, 2014, at https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf

- Kroft, Steve, "Interview with President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton," *CBS News*, January 27, 2013, at http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50139839n

- PNAC letters sent to President Bill Clinton, January 26, 1998, *Information clearing house,* http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5527.htm

- Kosiak, Steven M., "Costs of the War in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other Military Operations Through 2008 and Beyond," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (CSBA), 2008, at http://csbaonline.org/publications/2008/12/cost-of-iraq-afghanistan-wars/

- Harrison, Todd, "Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), July 15, 2011 at http://csbaonline.org/publications/2011/07/analysis-of-the-fy2012-defense-budget/

- Harrison, Todd, "Chaos and Uncertainty: The FY2014 Defense Budget and Beyond," CSBA, October 2013, at http://csbaonline.org/publications/2013/10/chaos-and-uncertainty-the-fy-14-defense-budget-and-beyond/

- http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/crowdingouteffect.asp

- https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/glossary/