



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Echahid Hamma Lakhdar University, El-Oued

Faculty of Arts and Languages

Department of English Language



# Neocolonialism in Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy: Military and Political Aspects

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a Master  
Degree in Literature and Civilization

**Submitted By:**

Imane KADI  
Hadjra HADDIG  
Zineb NOUAR

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Mouna FETHIZA TEDJANI

## Board of Examiners

**President: Mr. Kouider YUCEF**

University, El-Oued

**Supervisor: Dr. Mouna FETHIZA TEDJANI**

University, El-Oued

**Examiner: Mr. Ouahid ATIK ZID**

University, El-Oued

**Academic Year 2019-2020**

**Dedication**

We dedicate this dissertation to our parents, brothers, sisters, teachers and friends

Without whom it was almost impossible for us to complete

Our work.

**Acknowledgements**

First and Foremost, all praise to Allah who gave us much strength and patience to complete this work.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our Supervisor Dr. Mouna FETHIZA TEDJANI for her constant guidance and encouragement. Furthermore, we are grateful to all the teachers of the department of Arts and English Language at El-Oued University.

We would like to thank all our close friends and family. You have all encouraged and believed in us.

### Abstract

Though the United States was not one of the traditional colonial powers in the Middle East, its foreign policies in the region are often dubbed "neocolonial" as they are perceived to give the U.S. the power to interfere and dictate local policies to protect its vital interests in the region. This research paper seeks to investigate how the Obama administration's initial plan for change in the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was obstructed by the interwoven neocolonial interests that governed Middle Eastern-U.S. relations for ages. The dissertation explains the concept of neocolonialism and the historical development of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as a neocolonial one. This study adopts a historical research method and is based on primary and secondary data. An extensive literature review was conducted and the information and data collected are analysed from a theoretical perspective. The analysis mainly concentrates on the U.S. foreign policy towards Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Arab Spring, and the rise of the Islamic State. As per the study, neocolonialism in Obama's Middle East foreign policy takes more covert forms militarily and politically such as the increase in drone strikes, massive arms sales, political double standards in the Arab Spring, and containing Iran through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action terms.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, Change, the Middle East, Neocolonialism, Obama ,U.S. foreign policy.

**List of Figures**

<b>Figure 1.1. :</b> Major Bases Used by U.S. Forces in the Middle East	26
<b>Figure 3.1. :</b> U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, 2008-2015	67
<b>Figure 3.2. :</b> Arms Deliveries to the Middle East: Value, by supplier, 1959-2016	76

**List of Tables**

<b>Table 1.1.</b> : U.S. Presidential Doctrines in the Middle East During the Cold War	18
<b>Table 1.2.</b> : American Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Crises, Interest, and Ideas	19
<b>Table 3.1.</b> : Characterisation of U.S.' Double Standards in the Arab Spring	81

**List of Abbreviations**

**AIPAC:** American Israeli Public Affairs Committee

**AQAP:** Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

**ARMACO:** Arabian American Oil Company

**ASEAN:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations

**AUMF:** Authorization of the Use of Military Force

**BICI:** Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry

**CIA:** Central Intelligence Agency

**EU:** European Union

**EIA:** Energy Information Administration

**FJP:** Freedom and Justice Party

**GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council

**IAEA:** International Atomic Energy Agency

**IHL:** International Humanitarian Law

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**ISAF:** International Security Assistance Force

**ISIS:** Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

**JPOA:** Joint Plan of Action

## **List of Abbreviations**

---

**JCPA:** Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

**LSG:** Loss of Strength Gradient

**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization

**NSS:** National Security Strategy

**OPEC:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

**SCAF:** Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

**SOFA:** Status of Forces Agreement

**TPP:** Trans-Pacific Partnership

**UAE:** United Arab Emirates

**UAVs:** Unmanned Aircrafts Vehicles

**UN:** United Nations

**UNSC:** United Nations Security Council

**U.S.:** United States

**USSR:** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

**WWI: World War One**

**WWII:** World War Two

**WNC:** Washington Naval Conferences

**WTO:** World Trade Organization

# **Table of Contents**

**Table of Contents**

Dedication ..... II

Acknowledgements.....III

Abstract .....IV

List of Figures..... V

List of Tables..... VI

List of Abbreviations ..... VII

Table of Contents..... X

General Introduction ..... 1

Chapter One: American Neocolonialism ..... 7

Introduction.....8

1.1 Neocolonialism .....8

    1.1.1 The Concept of Neocolonialism ..... 8

    1.1.2 Political and Military Mechanisms of Neocolonialism..... 11

1.2 U.S. Increased Interventionism in the Middle East..... 14

    1.2.1 The U.S. Foreign Policy with the Middle East Before and After World War I 14

    1.2.2 U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East During and After WWII..... 16

    1.2.3 Post Cold War American Foreign Policy in the Middle East ..... 20

1.3 U.S. Strategic Interests in the Middle East .....21

    1.3.1 The U.S. Need for Middle Eastern Oil..... 22

    1.3.2 Supporting Israel..... 24

    1.3.3 Maintaining American Military Bases in the Middle East ..... 25

    1.3.4 Protecting Client-States ..... 27

    1.3.5 Fighting Terrorism and Reducing Weapon Proliferation ..... 29

Conclusion .....30

Chapter two: Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy..... 32

Introduction.....33

2.1. Initial Framework for Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy .....33

2.2. A Different Approach to Bush's Foreign Policy .....35

    2.2.1. A Diversion from Democracy to Security ..... 36

## Table of contents

---

2.2.2.	Multilateralism.....	36
2.2.3.	Smart power.....	37
2.2.4.	A Pivot to Asia.....	38
2.3.	Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy in Action.....	39
2.3.1.	Afghanistan and Pakistan .....	39
2.3.2.	The Iran Deal .....	42
2.3.3.	Withdrawal from Iraq.....	45
2.3.4.	The Palestinian-Israeli conflict .....	46
2.3.5.	The Arab Spring.....	48
2.3.5.1.	Tunisia.....	49
2.3.5.2.	Egypt.....	50
2.3.5.3.	Yemen .....	53
2.3.5.4.	Bahrain.....	56
2.3.5.5.	Libya .....	58
2.3.5.6.	Syria .....	61
	Conclusion .....	62
	Chapter Three: Neocolonialism in Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy .....	64
	Introduction.....	65
3.1.	Military Neocolonialism.....	66
3.1.1.	The Role of Drones in Replacing Direct Military Intervention.....	66
3.1.1.1.	The Rationale for Increased Use of Drones .....	67
3.1.1.2.	Controversies over the Use of Drones .....	70
3.1.1.2.1.	Violation of Sovereignty .....	70
3.1.1.2.2.	Lack of Transparency .....	71
3.1.1.2.3.	Lax International Laws .....	72
3.1.1.2.4.	A Moral Hazard .....	73
3.1.2.	Increased Weapon Sales .....	74
3.1.2.1.	The Rationale for Increasing Arm Transfer to the Middle East.....	75
3.1.2.2.	Major Controversies Over Increased Arm Sales to the Middle East.....	77
3.2.	Political Neocolonialism.....	79
3.2.1.	Double Standards in the Arab Spring.....	79

## Table of contents

---

3.2.1.1. Bahrain.....	81
3.2.1.2. Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen.....	82
3.2.1.3. Libya and Syria.....	84
3.2.2. U.S. Unfair Brokering in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict .....	86
3.2.3. Containing a Rogue State with the Iran deal .....	90
Conclusion .....	93
General Conclusion.....	94
References .....	98
المخلص 107	

# **General Introduction**

# Introduction

---

## 1. Background of the Study

The concept of neo-colonialism saw extensive use right after the process of decolonization in which many countries in the Third World gained their independence following World War II, after a long struggle with their colonizers. Despite getting independence, national leaders, opposition groups, scholars and academics argue that colonialism did not end in these countries. Instead, they claimed that former colonial powers and other developed countries such as the United States of America maintain a more subtle form of control over less developed countries through neocolonialism. The latter is generally used to refer to the involvement of former colonial powers and foreign business companies in the exploitation of the resources of the post-colonial people through indirect means. By the 1950s, direct colonial rule had largely evolved to indirect control through neocolonialism. Through neocolonialism, indigenous rulers are installed and maintained (even against the will of the people) as "brokers" whose function is to facilitate and enforce the transfer of natural resources in return for "brokerage fees" in the form of foreign aid and other forms of payoffs. And though neocolonialism mainly aims at economic domination, it can take an extreme form through direct physical military intervention. However, unlike the colonial era, occupation of territory had to have a "morally justified" cause such as "fighting terrorism" or "promoting democracy".

The inevitability of the U.S. rise as a neocolonial superpower is the result of two world wars that weakened the traditional European influence and increased the U.S. hegemonic position worldwide. The U.S. global domination was reinforced by its active participation in influential international institutions that allowed the U.S. to have more leverage over the rest of the world. And while some justify the U.S. interventions were driven by an idealist ideology that aims to create a democratic worldwide environment and improve human rights implementation, some

## Introduction

---

would argue that the U.S. has used its idealism as a façade to disguise its hegemonic and neocolonial ambitions. The United States as a neocolonial power in the Middle East debuted in the Cold War as the region's substantial resources and strategic location had to be kept out of communists' reach. When the threat of communism vanished by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States was forced to look for a new pretext to continue its intervention in the area. Soon, promoting democracy, free trade, and later fighting terrorism became the U.S. moral justification for its constant meddling in Middle Eastern states affairs.

The main motive behind this research is the fact that we have some inclination toward American foreign policy in the Middle East region, especially the process through which U.S. control is practiced by means of foreign policy. Also, we were motivated to study the challenges that the Obama administration faced to bring change and peace to the region as the latter gave grand promises to the Arab and Muslim world but ultimately failed to deliver.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Barak Obama's election as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. in December 2008 created a high degree of optimism for a new beginning for the Americans and the world. In his inaugural address in January 2009, Obama promised that he would regain America's lost image and credibility in the international community, and was perceived as the end of the policies of neoconservatives, under which former President George W. Bush entangled America in a series of seemingly endless "War on Terrorism". The Middle East as the battleground of Bush's foreign policy naturally captured the spotlight in Obama's stated transformational foreign policy. The new president promised to withdraw American troops from Iraq, firmly deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and reduce or eliminate nuclear threats in cooperation with old friends and former foes. More importantly, he called upon the Muslim world to join "a new way forward, based on

## Introduction

---

mutual interest and mutual respect", and he sounded committed to his words. However, over the years, American foreign policy in the Middle East proved difficult to change and soon events in the Middle East, such as the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS, crippled Obama's efforts for change.

### 3. Research Questions

The main questions the dissertation undertakes are:

- a) To what extent does Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East reflect neocolonialism?
- b) To what extent does Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East reflect a more continuation than real change from his predecessor?
- c) What mechanisms of neocolonialism did the Obama administration use to maintain U.S. core interests in the region?

### 4. Research Methodology

To answer these questions this study follows the historical research method since it identifies the chronological chain of events and analyses all pieces of evidence to draw conclusions from past events.

The use of this methodology requires a systematic collection and an objective evaluation of data gathered from different research materials such as books, journals, magazines, internet articles, and other relevant documents before starting the writing process.

### 5. Aims of the Study

- a) Explaining the concept of neocolonialism and its mechanisms.
- b) Discussing the military and the political aspects of neocolonialism in Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East.

## Introduction

---

- c) Demonstrating how Obama's foreign policy did not reflect any real change from his predecessors' policies in the Middle East.

### **6. Significance of the study**

The research is an attempt to examine neocolonial aspects of the foreign policy of the Obama administration in the Middle East despite the promises he made in his inaugural speech about fixing the U.S. image and relationship with the Muslim world. The research also deals with a subject that did not get much attention from scholars and researchers.

This study is significant because it sheds light on the development of the U.S. foreign policy from isolationism to interventionism to neocolonialism throughout history. In addition, it demonstrates the U.S. relationship with the Middle East and highlights the different strategic interests of the U.S. in the region. Moreover, and more importantly, it investigates the main strategic neocolonial goals of Obama's foreign policy in the area.

### **7. Structure of the Dissertation**

The following study would be expanded over three chapters. The first chapter, which is divided into four sections, is mainly devoted to explaining the concept of neocolonialism and traces back America's emergence as a neocolonial power. The first section defines the concept of neocolonialism, its manifestations, and the mechanisms through which it operates. The second section deals with the historical development of the U.S. relationship with the Middle East and provides an insight into America's increased intervention in the area. The third section describes the most strategic interests for the U.S. in the Middle East and explains the importance of maintaining these interests untouched.

The second chapter deals with Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East and it is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the legacies left behind from the Bush

## Introduction

---

administration which were considered difficult challenges that the Obama administration needed to address, such as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The second section introduces Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East. It investigates its characteristics and the main differences from its predecessor's. Then, it provides a description of President's Obama foreign policies in action with regards to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Iran Deal, and most importantly the Arab Spring.

The third chapter is a critical evaluation of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East during Obama's presidency. The focus of the chapter will be on investigation of neocolonial aspects to his policies and mechanisms and tactics his administration utilized to maintain and safeguard U.S. interests in the region.

# **Chapter One: American Neocolonialism**

### Introduction

Between 1945 to 1960, around 36 African and Asian states gained independence from their European rulers (Milestones). The middle of the twentieth century witnessed the end of colonialism as a legitimate system to dominate other territories and their peoples. Currently, sending military troops to territories of other countries with the intent of colonization is outlawed. However, the exploitation of these nations did not end with colonialism as they disposed of huge reserves of all kinds of raw materials, favourable natural and geographical conditions, all of which are vital triggers of Western imperialism. Instead of colonialism as the main instrument of domination, a more subtle and indirect strategy was implemented that came to be known as neocolonialism. This chapter provides an explanation of the term neo-colonialism and its political and military mechanisms, then it moves to explore the historical development of the American foreign policy in the Middle East to see how the concept is applicable to the U.S.

### 1.1 Neocolonialism

In order to thoroughly introduce the concept of neocolonialism, a review of the concept's evolution and its most important understandings is necessary. It is also crucial to investigate the mechanisms through which neocolonialism operates.

#### 1.1.1 The Concept of Neocolonialism

The term neocolonialism is generally used to refer to a group of practices that serve in the perpetuation of colonial-era exploitation in a given country despite achieving formal independence through indirect influence and without the use of direct physical control. In his

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

*Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, Jean Paul Sartre, a leading figure in the francophone anti-colonial activist circles, is considered the first to use the term in his writings. Sartre was an advocate of France's disengagement with its former colonies and granting them total emancipation from the inflicting influence of French policies on those colonies, particularly in Algeria (Sartre, 1964/2001). Others see its origins in Leninism that described it as a new form of domination applied after the colonial period in independent states. Lenin argues in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1999), that capitalism had created a substantial growth in capital which cannot be invested at home due to shortage of labour. Colonies, on the other hand, are abundant in labour but short on capital. The capitalist nations begin to see supporting the economy of those colonies as a way to secure the stability of their own economies' growth. In this understanding, the western capitalist economies fully rely on the resources and the manpower of their colonies, reason why they need to preserve their dependence throughout independence (Haag, 2011, p.9& Loomba, 2005). Nevertheless, the concept of neocolonialism was given its first contemporary definition with the Third All African People Conference which was a movement of political groups from countries in Africa under colonial rule which held conferences in the late 1950's and early 1960's over the issue of colonialism and post-colonialism. With their "1961 Resolution on Neocolonialism", the term neocolonialism got its official definition as:

[T]he survival of the colonial system, in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military, or technical means, is the greatest threat to African countries that have newly won their independence or those approaching this status. (as cited in Falola, 2001, p.111)

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

The Cairo Conference also listed the "manifestations of neocolonialism" as:

1. **Puppet governments** led by corrupt military or civil leaders who manipulate the government to the benefit of the metropolis.
2. **Regrouping of African states** prior and after achieving formal independence in the form of federations or communities that serve as a link between the ex-colonies and their once colonizers (such as the case of the Commonwealth).
3. **Balkanisation of African territories** that deliberately set artificial divisions between African nations.
4. **Economic dependency** on foreign powers despite the recognition of national sovereignty through capital investments, loans, monetary aids or technical expertise that force the newly fragile independent states into unequal concessions, and by that hindering their potentials for development.
5. **The existence of foreign military bases in independent states** either before independence or as a condition for independence (as cited in Ghosh, 2020, pp.198-199 & Falola, 2001, p.112).

Furthermore, the conference tackled the agents of neocolonialism as:

- a) Colonial embassies that serve as centres of espionage and pressure points on the African states governments either directly or through civil or military technicians.
- b) Foreign and UN technical assistants that deliberately sabotage the development of African states.

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

- c) Military personnel in the armed forces and the police who serve colonial interests directly or through local officers.
- d) The religious representatives from colonial countries and philanthropic organizations.
- e) Media propaganda controlled by imperial and colonial countries through radio, press and literature to undermine the sovereignty and well-being of African states (as cited in Falola, 2001, p.112-113).

The term got more international attention in 1965, with the publication of *Neocolonialism : The Last Stage of Imperialism*, an influential work that documents and denounces the existence of neocolonialism in formerly colonized countries. In this book, Kwame Nkrumah considers neocolonialism as "imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage" (Nkrumah, 1965, p.ix) as it represents the pinnacle of imperialistic ambitions in its most disguised form. Nkrumah further argues that "the essence of neocolonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic and thus its political policy is directed from outside"(p. ix). However, Nkrumah has also pointed out that neocolonialism is not practised exclusively by former colonial powers and it does not have to be a state. The term "neo-colony" does not only apply to the territories that were once colonized ,but also to any country that is under the influence of neocolonialism and he has provided the United States and Vietnam as an example.

### 1.1.2 Political and Military Mechanisms of Neocolonialism

"Faced with militant peoples of the ex-colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, imperialism simply switches tactics" (Nkrumah, 1965, p.239). In neocolonialism, direct tactics of exploitation of the colonial era are replaced by subtler methods that are not clearly identifiable. These methods vary in application but they all work to ensure the

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

existence of some kind of dependence on foreign powers. Domination of the less developed that was achieved through "naked colonialism" in the colonial era, is now accomplished through "humanitarian" foreign aid and preaching for freedom and democracy. There are several mechanisms for neocolonialism, but for the purpose of our study, only political and military ones are tackled.

Various new forms of political and military domination have taken place instead of the traditional ways of colonialism, and sometimes, it is difficult to make a clear cut between the two mechanisms. Such mechanisms include nurturing the old economic and political ties (for instance, the relationships formed within the British Commonwealth and the French Community), closed currency (a currency not freely available outside its country of origin), preferential trading systems, military alliances and political-military pacts. It may also include other forms as the economic, political and, military, labour union delegations, joined military training programmes, military grants and bribes to the local ruling classes in the form of financial aid. But without a single doubt, supporting puppet governments was and is the most effective political method of neocolonialism. By supporting puppet governments and securing desired military or civilian coups in such states, neocolonial powers were given the adequate opportunities to assert their power and influence over the policies of these states (Ghosh, 2013, p.193). These coups coupled with political assassinations mainly targeted local influential rulers and nationalist elites who had strong anti-imperialistic drives, soon to be replaced by some figures who are more pro-west and that are willing to compromise with neocolonial powers in managing the newly independent states. A variety of ideological and cultural methods are used to ensure the success of this intervention, including slander campaigns (Nkrumah, 1965, pp.245-246). The 1953 CIA

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

organized coup in Iran to dispose of the popular nationalist leader Mohammed Mossadegh is model for a neocolonial power eliminating a threatening regime.

Blanchard (1996) has used Stephen Shalom definition of the term neocolonialism to give a different perspective. Instead of unilateral exploitation of the neo-colonies, he claimed that neocolonialism is an alliance between the leading elites of the two countries to maintain a state of domination over the rest of the population where the indigenous elites get to keep their prominent positions in these countries by supporting pro-Western agendas. Neocolonialism is also reinforced by the concept of a client-state which refers to a "country which depends on another country for such things as defence and trade" (Colin Dictionary of Politics and Government). Although a large portion of the third world has achieved legal independence, it suffers from political instability and a constant threat from a hostile environment to revert to a colonial status. To survive, the client-states countries must either adopt a policy of non-alignment or seek the protection of a powerful friend. During the Cold War, the USSR and the U.S. utilized this need to secure favourable relationships with the Third World countries by providing sophisticated weapons, parts, and military training (Weatherby et al, 1987). Neocolonial powers also used this opportunity to establish several military bases in these countries, augmenting their influence to the surrounding areas and displaying a willingness to use direct military intervention whenever the interests of the Western countries or the client-states are threatened.

For Nkrumah, it is an extreme case of neocolonialism when an imperial country garrisons the territory of a neocolonial state and controls its government. Direct military intervention is considered the last resort for neocolonial powers to keep their control over a certain territory and is not opted for until other political and economic mechanisms fail to bear desirable results. Cases of military interventions are usually carried out to contain uprisings and

## **Chapter One: American Neocolonialism**

---

protect the current regime, defending citizens of the neocolonial countries against those local ones in the neo-colonies, or protecting corporations that belong to them (Haag,2011).In the last two decades, military intervention was justified as a counterterrorism measure and means to achieve global security .

### **1.2 U.S. Increased Interventionism in the Middle East**

The Middle East did not hold any significant strategic value to the United States until the end of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War that made the Middle East a stage on which the U.S. and the U.S.S.R would compete for leverage. The Middle East proved a valuable asset in America's fight of communism but the region's substantial resources and its strategic location represented appealing incentives for more intervention in the area even after communism ceased to pose a threat.

#### **1.2.1 The U.S. Foreign Policy with the Middle East Before and After World War I**

Prior to World War I, the United States had no official foreign policy towards the Middle East, and relied on British proxy and political agents to achieve its limited interests in the region. American involvement in the region was bound to engagement to educational, missionary, philanthropist and commercial activities which represented private groups' interests and did not involve official political or military policies. In this context, it is important to point out that the United States established most of the prestigious educational institutions in the area such as Robert College (1863), Istanbul's Women College (1871), American University of Beirut (1866), and the American University in Cairo (1919) that would influence much of the nature of leadership in the Middle East (Silverburg et al, 2016). The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I placed the entire area of the Middle East under European control with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which resulted in the reconfiguration of the world's centres of political powers to Britain and France. Britain controlled Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Transjordan;

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

while North African states, Lebanon and Syria were under the French mandate. In contrast, the U.S. -due to strong isolationist sentiment- returned to its former position of limited involvement in the area, and showed contentment to British and French dominant roles that were considered accountable for protecting the political and security interests of the West in the Middle East (Al Sarhan, 2017).

Although the U.S. was not intimately involved in the post-war situation in the Middle East, President Woodrow Wilson attended the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 and his articulation of his concept of self-determination for the colonized people gained the U.S. political principles a popularity among the Arabs who were aspiring to self governance and independence. When attempts to create an Anglo-French group in Syria and Palestine failed, President Wilson requested the appointment of a commission, the goal of which was to determine the attitudes of the people in the concerned areas towards the settlement of their territories. The King-Cane commission of 1919 report expressed the Arab people's desire for independence and autonomy from any imperial domination and preference for an American mandate. However, the commission's recommendations were unpopular with France and Britain as they threatened their vital interest in the region; and as a result, both countries withdrew from the commission. In addition, an American mandate in the area was a major contradiction to America's most celebrated non-interventionist policy and risked European hostility towards the U.S. As a result, the U.S. government dismissed the report's recommendations and concluded that Britain should have Mesopotamia and Syria would be a French mandate, in order to safeguard friendly relations with Britain and France (Gerges, 2012).

The United States also supported the Belfour Declaration that was included in the British mandate over Palestine at this period. In 1917, President Wilson endorsed a letter sent to

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

Lord Lionel Rothschild, a British Zionist leader, from the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine. In 1922, a joint resolution of Congress voted unopposed for the Mandate of Palestine which gave the Jewish people the right to settle in Palestine anywhere from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. On September 21, 1922, President Warren G. Harding signed the resolution to confirm Jewish claims in Palestine (Hertz, 2008).

Despite the United States reluctance to engage in the political affairs of the Middle East, it actively sought to benefit from the region's economic development at the time, by applying the "open door" principle and immersing itself in profitable commercial dealings. The oil industry, in particular, was of great importance to the American government and private investors equally. The government even helped the oil companies to get access and concessions to the region's oil (Silverburg et al, 2016).). In this context, the American oil companies negotiated a number of concessions in Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain (Al Sarhan, 2017).

Overall, up to the World War I, the U.S. refrained from intervening in the Middle East so as not compete with the British domination and monopoly of oil exploitation there. Moreover, The United States who, unlike Britain and France, appeared to have no imperial designs in the region, enjoyed a good image among the Arabs who preferred an American mandate over a French or British one (El Mansour, 2004).

### **1.2.2 U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East During and After WWII**

During the Second World War, the Middle East witnessed a substantial increase in America's involvement in the region that included physical presence and the formation of strategic political and security policy. Troops were deployed to the area, American bases, supply depots, transportation and communication links were established, and economic and technical

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

assistance were provided. Moreover, the Middle East played a major role as a link to supply the Soviet Union with war material through the Persian Gulf-Iran route (Silverburg et al, 2016).). Due to World War II, America came to re-evaluate the strategic potentials of the region, especially its gigantic oil reserves, and its strategic location south of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the U.S. contemplated the Suez Canal's value as a passage to the Far East and the location of the British military bases that could be used to launch counter attacks against the Soviets. After the Second World War, the United States along with European nations came to be increasingly dependent on Middle Eastern oil to meet the economic boom in the U.S. and for revitalizing European economy. The United States also realized that securing and controlling access to these resources represented a source of power through which it could attain world leadership. As a result, the U.S. sought to develop security arrangements with some countries in the region (Halabi, 2009).

After WWII, the United States took a more active role in the Middle East and American interventions in the region became more common. The main objective of the American foreign policy during the post-war period of 1946-1958, was to safeguard the area against Soviet influence. Inspired by George Kennan –then charge d'affaires in Moscow- rhetoric, the United States government adopted a long-term, patient, and vigilant "policy of containment" to block the spread of communism. In the Middle East, the containment policy took the form of technical and financial aid programs, pacts, alliances, treaties, threats and warnings. Initially, the policy was done with the cooperation of Britain and France, however; as the U.S. came to replace traditional colonial powers in the region, containing communist influence was left to the Americans (Samaan, 1972). The containment policy was implemented in a series of presidential doctrines that further established the United States' interventionist trend in the area and allowed for a

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

patron-client relationship to be created between the U.S. and states in the Middle East (see table 1.1.).

**Table 1.1.**

*U.S. Presidential Doctrines in the Middle East During the Cold War*

Presidential Doctrines	Date	Aims
<b>The Truman doctrine</b>	1947	To defend Turkey and Greece against Soviet aggression by providing them with immediate economic and military aid, especially after Britain had decided to quit the two countries.
<b>The Eisenhower Doctrine</b>	1957	To provide economic aid to the Middle East countries resisting communist aggression.
<b>The Nixon Doctrine</b>	1969	To combat the Soviet Union through developing regional alliance to act as proxies in the Cold War.
<b>The Carter Doctrine</b>	1980	To counter the Soviet Union aggressions in the Persian Gulf by deploying military forces to the area.

*Note :* Adapted from Dodge, U.S. Foreign Policy(2018), pp. 179-180.

With the exception of President John F. Kennedy , American presidents regarded the Middle East as a battlefield in the Cold War. American officials rated every event, crisis, and country in the region by its relevance and importance to the struggle against the Soviets, and by its ability to ensure America's access to the Middle Eastern petroleum (see table 1.2.).

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

**Table 1.2.**

*American Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Crises, Interest, and Ideas*

Phases and Crises	US interests in the region	Ideas/ Problem-Solving theories
I. 1945-73 Arab-Israeli war, 1948 Iranian crisis ,1951-53 Suez crisis, 1956 Lebanon crisis, 1958 June war, 1967 War of attrition ,1969-70	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free access to oil resources and supporting the oil majors.</li> <li>2. Supporting and protecting Israel.</li> <li>3. Blocking Soviet penetration.</li> <li>4. Protecting traditional pro-western regimes.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realism, containment policy, and the domino theory.</li> <li>2. Orientalism.</li> <li>3. Limiting arm export to the area in order to prevent arm race.</li> <li>4. Keeping the U.S. aloof of the Arab-Israeli peace process.</li> </ol>
II. 1974-7 <b>The Oil Embargo, 1973-74</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supporting and protecting Israel.</li> <li>2. Blocking Soviet penetration.</li> <li>3. Steady supply of oil at a reasonable price.</li> <li>4. Recycling petrodollars into the U.S. market.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gradually promoting peace between Israel and its major Arab foes.</li> <li>2. Orientalism.</li> <li>3. Increasing arms sales to the region as a means of recycling petrodollars.</li> <li>4. Increasing the dependence of the Arab oil exporting countries on U.S. protection and arms sales.</li> <li>5. Realism ,containment policy, and the domino theory.</li> </ol>
III. 1979-2001 <b>The Iranian Islamic Revolution</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blocking the expansion of the Iranian from without by Iran as well as from within by local Islamist movements.</li> <li>2. Supporting and protecting Israel.</li> <li>3. Blocking Soviet Penetration.</li> <li>4. Steady supply of oil at a reasonable price.</li> <li>5. Recycling petrodollars into the U.S. market.</li> <li>6. Ensuring stability of the region.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Neo-Orientalism.</li> <li>2. Promoting free market-oriented economies.</li> <li>3. Comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.</li> <li>4. Containment of rogue states.</li> </ol>
IV. 2001-2003 <b>The terrorist attacks of 11 September ,2001</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stripping Iraq of its nuclear weapon.</li> <li>2. Security inside the U.S. against any terror attack.</li> <li>3. Steady supply of oil at reasonable price.</li> <li>4. Fighting global terrorism.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting democratization process in the Arab world through military intervention and diplomatic pressure.</li> <li>2. Isolating rogue states.</li> <li>3. Freezing peace, negotiations with regimes that harbor terror.</li> </ol>
V. 2003-present (2009) <b>The civil war in Iraq</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieving stability within Iraq and establishing a strong pro-American federal regime in Baghdad.</li> <li>2. Blocking Iran from developing its nuclear capability.</li> <li>3. Steady supply of oil at a reasonable price.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reducing U.S. dependence on oil in general and Middle Eastern oil in particular.</li> <li>2. Rapprochement with Iran ?Or else using force against Iran?</li> </ol>

*Note* : Adapted from Halabi, U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change (2009, pp.2-3)

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

In this regard, the United States feared that radical changes (brought by communist and secular nationalist movements) in the government of Middle Eastern States would cause instability and thus hinder the achievement of its interest there. Therefore, American foreign policy aimed at preserving the status quo by allying itself with autocrats who served as tools to penetrate their countries, while claiming to be the leader of the democratic free world (Gerges, 2012). In addition, during the Cold War, the United States recognized Israel as a valuable strategic ally in the region that could further America's interests in the Middle East.

### 1.2.3 Post Cold War American Foreign Policy in the Middle East

By the end of the Cold War and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, the United States became a unipolar superpower. With communism threat illuminated, the importance of regional stability was raised and with that other interests were emphasized to achieve this regional stability, primarily by securing Israel and the free flow of oil at reasonable prices. These objectives remained the most important national interests of the U.S. in the region from 1989 to 2001 (Modigs, 2003). Though the U.S. foreign policy of the post-Cold War era was dominated by the ideology of a 'new world order' that advocated for democracy, human rights, and open markets, Gerges (2012) claims the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has not witnessed any significant change in its objectives and strategies in the area(see Table 1). The main goal of American foreign policy was to preserve the stability of pro-Western regimes and illuminate any threat to their survival, even if that meant America's complicity in the repression of freedom of speech and the perpetuation of deplorable living conditions of the Middle Eastern people.

On the economic level, the U.S. became the top trading partner with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This step did not only result in a trade surplus for the U.S.

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

and reduced its trade deficit in the mid-1990s, but also private investments by U.S. companies increased significantly as corporate leaders realized the GCC region potentials as a hub for trade, services, and investment with a strategic location of a crossroad between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Although oil was the primary interest of the U.S., arm sales began to take a prominent role in America's trading with the Middle East. After the end of the Cold War, America became the biggest arm exporter to the Middle East (77 percent of total U.S. Arms export to developing countries during the mid-1990s) and arms sale have become number one U.S. source of export to the region, constituting almost one-third of all U.S. exports to the Middle East. As a result, arms sales to the Middle East became a crucial interest for private individuals as well as companies and U.S. politicians (Modigs, 2003).

### 1.3 U.S. Strategic Interests in the Middle East

A thorough examination of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East reveals a set of consistent objectives and priorities that reflect typical neocolonial intentions that work to reinforce America's hegemonic role in the region to facilitate the exploitation of area's resources. Halabi (2009) pointed out that even though the United States had a clear understanding of its interests in the region by the 1970s, it lacked a comprehensive distinction between means and ends as both came to mean the same thing. For instance, in order to secure steady supply of oil, the U.S. has to control oil resources in the region.

Bennis (1996) claimed that Washington's goals in the Middle East include securing access to the region's oil, supporting and defending Israel, creating a stable market economy that is open to the U.S. and its allies investment, illuminating military and political conflicts that threaten the stability of the region. Al Sarhan (2017) elaborates further that the United States

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

interests in the region lies in maintaining its military bases in the region, protecting client-states and friendly regimes and recently resisting Islamic movements and terrorist groups.

### 1.3.1 The U.S. Need for Middle Eastern Oil

The main interest of the United States in the Middle East is to secure access to the region's abundant oil. The Second Industrial Revolution introduced cheap readily available oil as a strong substitute for water and coal, and soon petroleum industries and oil consumption grew rapidly and largely throughout Europe and North America. Oil became an essential military requirement during World War I to fuel ships, airplanes, submarines, and the lubrication of rifles. However, as a result of the intensive use of oil during the war, Western countries faced a severe shortage of this substance and recognized the need to secure access to its sources. This need was met when Western oil companies gained mutual concessions in the Middle East. The United States, in particular, foresaw the economic disadvantages that would result from an oil shortage and worked diligently to stop that from happening by negotiating shared concessions with several Middle Eastern countries such as Bahrain in 1929, Kuwait in 1934, and Saudi Arabia in 1947. After the Second World War, and in order to find alternative sources of oil abroad to meet the U.S. increasing demands, American oil companies such as the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), Texaco, Standard Oil of California (SoCal), and Mobil were created. These companies managed to achieve massive profits that stimulated post-war American economy which instigated American companies to pursue more concessions in the region. It is also noteworthy that the Middle Eastern oil is known to flow freely of its own pressure, reducing the cost of production, and providing cheaper prices to the global market, and thus, gaining a more favourable attention from the world (as cited in Al Sarhan (2017)). Soon, the U.S. government identified the American oil companies as instruments of American foreign policy and control of

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

oil laid the foundation for the U.S. to pursue wider economic and strategic engagement in the region.

Initially U.S. interest in Middle Eastern oil was motivated by a fear, that if the British and the French would control oil development in the region and attempt to flood the global market with its relatively less expensive crude in the world, America's oil producers in the Southwest and elsewhere would receive a grave blow. The U.S. also feared that access to future Persian Gulf oil supplies would be monopolized by the Europeans. Furthermore, American oil reserves were exhausted while providing fuel to weaponry in the two world wars and nobody was certain how long they would last. After a failed attempt to secure oil fields in Russia and North Africa by Nazi Germany, the U.S. recognized the need to control new oil fields while at the same time, blocking America's enemies from acquiring this leverage (Gardner, 2010). Halabi (2009) also pointed out that if the U.S. is to fight another world war, oil in the Middle East would be the winning card. The U.S. interest in the region's oil potentials was highlighted even more with the Oil Embargo of 1973 which resulted in catastrophic losses worldwide and emphasized the power of oil as a political weapon.

Today, the United States consumes 25% of the world's oil, but only possesses 3% of the world's oil reserves. American dependency on foreign crude oil, especially Middle Eastern oil, came to be regarded as a threat to the United States economic and national security. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the U.S. 2019 imports of oil reached 9-10 million barrel per day and although most of American imported oil come from its hemispheric neighbours, Canada and Mexico with whom the U.S. has a long-standing and relatively stable relationships and oil imports from OPEC and the Persian Gulf countries is still low compared to other producers (accounts for an average 22.90% of all U.S crude oil imports

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

since 1993), U.S. demand for Middle Eastern oil is expected to increase. Paul Sullivan, Professor of Economics at the National Defence University explains that many of America's friendly oil suppliers will peak a lot sooner than their Middle Eastern counterparts. Oil reserves found in the Persian Gulf represent 60 % of all known conventional oil reserves and are estimated to be the last area to peak in the world, reinforcing the region's oil importance for the U.S. (Momayezi & Rosenberg, 2011).

Even though the U.S. is currently not that dependent on Middle Eastern oil, especially with its growing domestic shale production, it is still susceptible to oil price shocks. The status of oil as a globally traded commodity means that supply shortage can create price shocks for everyone, potentially harming the global economy, including the economies of the U.S. and its allies (Ashford, 2018).

### 1.3.2 Supporting Israel

Today, the United States gives Israel robust economic, military, and diplomatic support and regards it as a key player in achieving the stability of the region and the advancement of American interests there. After the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the United States committed itself to its protection because of previous international commitments, such as the Belfour Declaration of 1917 and the UN resolution 181 of 1947. At that time, many American officials warned that supporting Israel would engender hostilities to the U.S. and disrupt access to Arab oil. Nevertheless, the United States and Israel did have a common interest on intelligence matters as Israel had experience in fighting against Soviet weaponry and tactics; something the U.S. wanted badly in its fight with the Soviets. The June-War of 1967 was a major turning point in the relationship between the U.S. and Israel which proved its strength as a military power and a

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

potential reliable regional ally. American aid to Israel increased from \$35 million in 1970 to \$545 million in 1971 and has been stable if not increased since.

During the Cold war, Israel's value for the Americans was its role in providing intelligence on Soviet equipment and block the Soviet Union' access to the Suez Canal (Waxer, 2013). It also served the U.S. national interests by preventing the success of radical nationalist movements and kept Arab states in check (Modigs, 2003). After the defeat of the Soviets, Israel continued to be a major component in projecting U.S. military and economic interest in the region. With the support of the United States (approximately \$121 billion in foreign aid since 1948), Israel has developed one of the most advanced military defence networks, and military cooperation between the U.S. and Israel increased significantly. In addition, the United States regards Israel as an active actor in the fight against terrorism and other forms of extremism in the region and through the role of a "peace broker" in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States enjoyed a position of unprecedented influence and prestige in the Middle East as the only country capable of bringing Israel to the negotiation table.

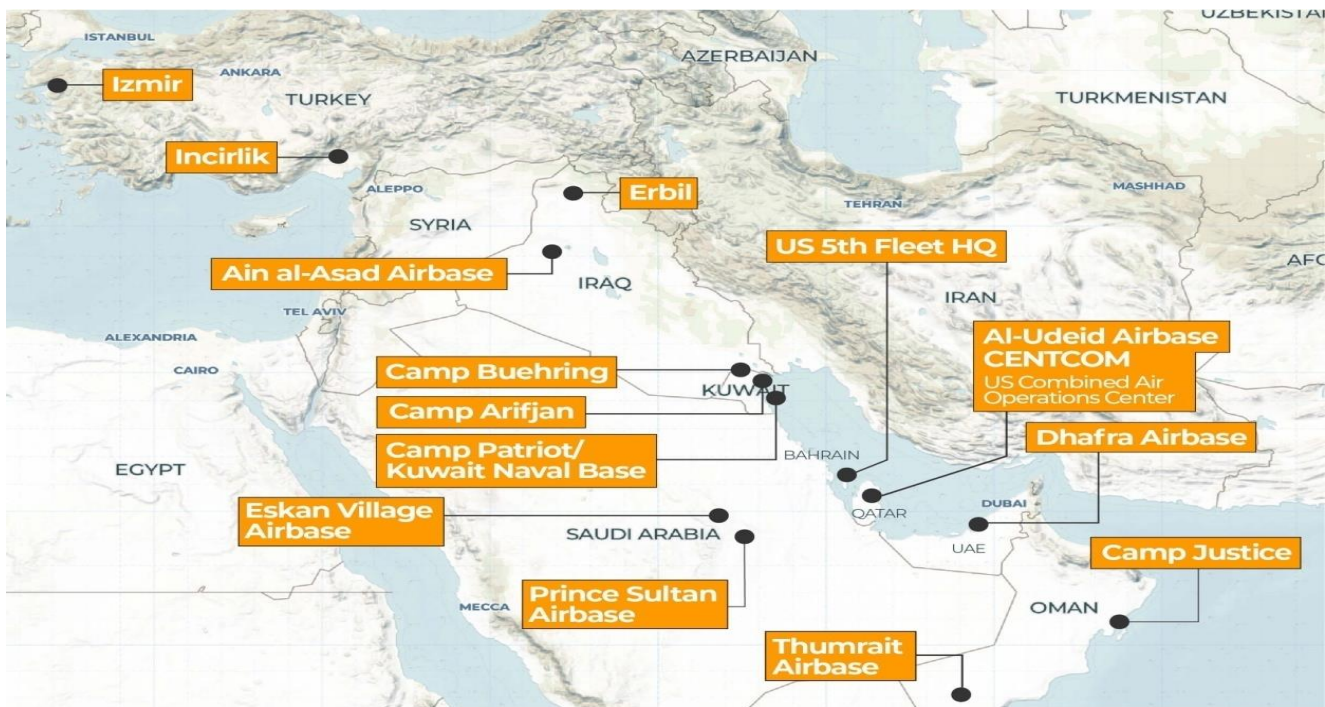
### **1.3.3 Maintaining American Military Bases in the Middle East**

Among the vital interests of the United States in the region is to maintain a strong military presence especially within oil-rich countries and close to America's potential national security threats. According to the U.S. Department of Defence, the four countries that currently present the greatest potential threat to the U.S. are Iran, Russia, China and North Korea, and the Middle East region is strategically located close to those countries. The Annual Department of Defence 2018 Base Structure Report states that the American military has some 514 sites outside of its borders and a substantial number of them are located in the Middle East (see figure 1.1).

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

The United States has military bases in Bahrain Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (Wallin, 2018).

Since 1980, with the announcement of President Jimmy Carter that the United States would defend its interests in the region from outside intervention by any means necessary, including military action, the United States maintained a permanent and significant military presence in the Middle East. American military presence in the region is considered a 'common bargain' with Middle Eastern governments in the form of security cooperation and military assistance in exchange for access rights to military bases in the region. U.S. military activities in the region range from counterterrorism operations, military-to-military training programmes, long term troops' deployment, to weapon sales to allied governments (Zenko, 2018).



**Figure 1.1.** : Major Bases Used by U.S. Forces in the Middle East. Al Jazeera, Mapbox. Last updated : Jan 13,2020

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

But America's need for overseas military presence and bases may be fairly linked to the Loss of Strength Gradient (LSG) principle. In his 1962 "Conflict and Defence", the American economist Kenneth E. Boulding explains that geographical distance influences the amount of a country's military power that could be invested in any part of the world. He adds that, in military operations, the further the attack target from its home country, the weaker military strength becomes. Long distance mobilization costs a substantial amount of funding and time. In addition, it tires soldiers and weakens their morale. The creation of overseas military bases was a neat solution to counter the effect of LSG. These overseas bases reduce the effective distance, and therefore, it becomes easier to bring more power to the fight.

Beyond flattening out the loss of strength gradient, the United States need for heavy overseas military presence can be traced to the concept of 'power projection'. According to the U.S. Department of Defence, power projection is "the ability of a nation to apply all or some of its elements of national power –political, economic, informational, or military- to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple disperse locations to respond to crises, to contribute to deterrence, and to enhance regional stability". In other word, power projection is essentially how fast a country can respond to a fight anywhere in the world, if a fight should rise. Thus, American power projection in the Middle East and elsewhere establishes America's ability to respond to whatever potential threat in a timely manner. Overseas bases are a significant part of America's overall projection mission, and many would argue their existence empowers the United States superpower status.

### 1.3.4 Protecting Client-States

The United States relationship with most of the Middle Eastern states could be identified as a patron-client one. In essence, the patron-client relationship is a mechanism for

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

exchanging resources in order to preserve order and stability in their environment. It also involves a reciprocal flow of benefits that binds both 'patron' and 'client' together (Bercovitch, 1991). After the demise of traditional powers in the region (namely the Ottomans, British, and French), most newly independent states in the Middle East faced severe economic and security issues. This rendered the area dependent on foreign assistance that the U.S. and the USSR were more than willing to provide (Al Sarhan, 2017).

During the Cold War, both the U.S. and the USSR competed to attain leverage in the Middle East. America was interested in getting access to the oil resources in the Gulf while the Soviet Union –an oil producing country- had an interest in controlling its flow to the Western camp. Massive arm sales and the financial resources they produced were another economic incentive that encouraged more involvement in the region (Bercovitch, 1991). Since the 1940s, the United States has committed itself to providing all sorts of foreign aid to a number of Middle Eastern states, especially military and economic ones in order to maintain its national security and strategic interests there. U.S. foreign policymakers have consistently believed that their political, economic, and security interests require order and stability and a patron-client relationship with the Middle East achieved just that (Sylvan & Majeski, 2003). In some cases, these states acted as "proxies" for the U.S. and cooperated with America's ambitious agendas. By providing aid to these states, the U.S. was able to penetrate their political systems and influence their foreign policy decisions under the guise of 'protective assistance'.

All in all, the patron-client relationship with Middle Eastern countries helped the U.S. maintain its security interests in the region as well its allies. It enabled the U.S. to get access to energy resources, military bases and prevent any disturbance to the flow of oil. Moreover, this relationship provided an opportunity for establishing more military bases and installations that

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

would enhance America's military domination in the Middle East (Wood, 2015). The unbalance of benefit transfer in America's relationship with its client-states in the Middle East and elsewhere can be regarded neocolonial as it empowers the pressure the U.S. could bring on its clients and ultimately directing their domestic and foreign decisions.

### 1.3.5 Fighting Terrorism and Reducing Weapon Proliferation

Instability in the Middle East is a major threat to the achievement of U.S. national interests in the region. Occasionally, instability and regional conflicts are a result of terrorism, rogue states and increased armament, especially nuclear one. Since the attacks of 9/11, countering terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world became a consistent part of the American foreign policy and represents a major pretext for its ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Terrorism is a term commonly used to refer to acts of violence that targets civilians in the pursuit of ideological or political aims. In 2004, the United Nations Security Council defined terrorism as

criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. (qtd. in Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d. , p.6)

Beyond the stated moral objectives of the war on terror that include protecting human rights, promoting democracy, and fostering the prosperity of the population, the United States also recognizes that terrorist acts or hostile states in the region pose a threat to a key vital U.S. interest in the Gulf region. Despite conservation and alternative energy initiatives, up to 70%

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

increase in world energy consumption from 2003 to 2030 is estimated by the Energy Information Administration (EIA). The United States and its industrialized allies rely on unimpeded flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. Terrorism or rogue states could threaten Persian Gulf oil flow by disrupting domestic stability, land-based infrastructure, and maritime assets. Instability in a major oil-producing country would hinder the U.S. access to a large amount of its Middle Eastern oil imports. Moreover, the oil industry infrastructure in the region is land-based, consisting of processing plants, oil refineries, and pipelines. This type of infrastructure is extremely vulnerable for attacks that would impact substantially the production capacity. In addition, around two-fifths of all globally-traded oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz every day and states like Iran or terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, giving their geographical proximity, could control the flow of oil or even stop it, inflicting severe economic blows to the U.S. and its allies (Bowman, 2012).

### Conclusion

The United States presence in the Middle East was initially for educational and missionary purposes. However, as oil continued to be discovered in the area in substantial quantities, America quickly recognized the value of oil as a traded commodity and anticipated the disadvantage of its shortage. The Second World War and its aftermath pushed the United States to re-evaluate the region's strategic value after traditional colonial powers were out of the picture.

American neocolonialism in the Middle East began with the onset of the Cold War and the American foreign policy in this period was dominated by policies that aimed to contain the influence of communism. After WWII, the U.S. standard cause for intervention in a region was to save the people from the dangers of communism. Nevertheless, when communism's threat vanished with the fall of the Soviet Union and when the subject people became politically alert and dissatisfied to have their economy and government directed by a foreign power, America had

## Chapter One: American Neocolonialism

---

to change its goals and slogans to fit the new reality. Under the New World Order, the United States sought to establish a world environment that is compatible with American policies. Soon promoting democracy and free trade was the new slogan for America's neocolonialism in the Middle East and elsewhere. Since direct intervention would only create dissatisfied and hostile subjects, American domination over the region had to embrace more subtle neocolonial tactics that would ensure the exploitation of the area without much resistance. Through economic agreements, weapon sales, military training, and other forms of diplomatic relationships, the U.S. was able to maintain its control over the region ever since.

# **Chapter two: Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy**

### Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and America's subsequent Global War on Terror have provided the U.S. with more legal justification to intervene militarily in the Middle East as the U.S. occupied Afghanistan in 2001. Nevertheless, the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003 inflicted great harm on America's global leadership because the war was perceived to lack authentic solid grounds and America's unilateral actions caused a rift in its relations with other world leaders and Middle Eastern states who became more concerned with America's imperialist ambitions. This chapter sheds light on Obama attempt to a change in U.S. foreign policy to restore America's moral leadership and reputation and his commitment to avoiding his predecessor's mistakes by emphasizing the importance of diplomacy and smart power.

### 2.1. Initial Framework for Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

Barack Hussein Obama assumed office as the forty-fourth president of the United States on January 20, 2009. Under his leadership, the new administration has initiated various policies aimed at rebuilding the U.S. economy, investment in energy, healthcare, and education, besides dealing with a host of foreign policy challenges, particularly in the Middle East. Instability and turmoil in the Middle East became common traits of the region since the Cold War and the U.S. increased intervention there. American presidents have occasionally faced challenges and threats to advance their national interests in the region and had to adapt their strategies to deal with recurring crises. These challenges include war, blocking the access to oil, change of regimes, terrorism, and nuclear weapons proliferation. However, the Obama administration was so

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

unfortunate to face them all at once (Ross & Jeffrey, 2013). When President Obama took office in January 2009, he inherited two ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a continuous threat of terrorism, an increasingly threatening Iranian nuclear program, a complicated Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and anti-Americanism rise among the population of the Middle East.

The Obama administration was fully aware of its predecessor's damage to America's prestige and interests in the Middle East region and sought to alter the United States' negative perception amongst Muslims. In his Cairo speech in June 2009, President Obama called for a new beginning for the United States and the Muslim world, one that is based on mutual interest and mutual respect and called for a partnership with the Middle Eastern states to deal with the region's recurring issues. He has also recognized the fault of previous administrations that visited the region with the purpose of speaking but not listening and how this fault has harmed America's image to an unsustainable status. Moreover, he indicated that Muslims would no longer be viewed through the prism of terrorism and denounced the Bush administration for basing its relationship with Muslims entirely on fighting terrorism and winning an ideological war. Obama was cautious not to use the words "terrorism" or "the war on terror" and spoke of "extremism" as a part of each society. In addition, he called for addressing the causes of extremism rather than treating them as inherent characteristics of Islam (Gerges, 2012).

Obama made an important departure from the previous administration rhetoric. A major point of departure from the Bush administration was the new discourse of engagement and coexistence between the Muslims in the East and the Christians in the West. Obama even offered to engage with Iran which is a long-standing, hard-liner

## **Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy**

---

adversary in the region. In addition, the Obama administration distinguished itself by linking the establishment of a Palestinian state to America's strategic interests and described it as one that would be "in Israel's interest, Palestine interest, America's interest, and the world's interest." He also stated that "Israel must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's" (Gerges, 2012, p100) and made it very clear that the United States would not accept the legitimacy of the continued Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. On a gesture to mend the damage inflicted by the Bush administration, Obama's administration prohibited the use of torture and ordered the closure of the prison at the Guantanamo Bay. Moreover, he promised to respect the sovereignty of states and the rule of law when working in partnership with the Muslim communities. At the same time, he asserted America's core national interests in the region, including the security of energy resources and the stability of traditional allies (Gerges,2012).

### **2.2. A Different Approach to Bush's Foreign Policy**

In his inaugural address in 2009, Barak Obama promised to seek a different and transformational foreign policy that would lead the U.S. to a new beginning with foreign affairs (Nuruzzaman, 2015). Unlike Bush, Obama adopted an approach of engagement with foreign countries and focused on topics that are supposed to integrate them in managing the global issues. He also emphasized the importance of the rational use of force (military power) and supported global security. In doing so, the Obama administration is argued to have undermined the U.S. leadership as the latter took a "back seat" in supervising global concerns (Vercruyssen, 2013).

### **2.2.1. A Diversion from Democracy to Security**

Focusing on national and international security rather than emphasizing the promotion of democracy marked a priority in Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East. The Obama administration worked to establish stability and disarmament through international regulations and diplomacy (Nuruzzaman, 2015). The denial of a safe haven for terrorist groups, rogue states, and the possibility to regroup and attack the United States became the main objective of the foreign policy of the Obama administration which demonstrated the diversion from democracy to security. From Obama's prospective, the argument behind this diversion from democracy to security lies in the fact that the American political system has several shortcomings, what does not make it in a position to have the right to establish democracies abroad (Vercruyssen, 2013).

### **2.2.2. Multilateralism**

The Unilateral actions carried out by Bush and other administrations before him have fueled much anti-Americanism all around the world. Therefore, Obama demonstrated the necessity to cooperate rather than forgo any form of multilateralism. Obama's vision for multilateralism is about America's creation of conditions for other nations to step up. Thus, he supported the strengthening of multinational institutions and respecting their decisions, even if they did not match American interests (Vercruyssen, 2013). Rebuilding alliances and engaging with the rest of the world became one of Obama's foreign policy objectives as he believed that to maintain peace and global security, the U.S. needs to put aside its own interests and protect shared interests instead of sovereign ones. These shared interests included minimizing the effect of climate change, combating terrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, and the prosperity of the global economy. The National Security Strategy released in May 2010 endorsed this trend of

multilateralism through acknowledging the need to increasingly engage with Russia, China, and India to deal with global problems (Nuruzzamam, 2015).

### 2.2.3. Smart power

The most noticeable change in the American NSS is the use of smart power instead of hard power, which indicates Obama's preference for diplomacy over brute force. The former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton referred to the concept of smart power strategy at her Senate confirmation hearing, where she defined it as a combination of political, economic, diplomatic, and other available tools to deal with emerging developments related to American foreign policy. In his 2009 Cairo speech, Obama said:"We also know that military power alone is not going to solve the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan"( "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo", 2009). Thus, the U.S. administration intends to shift from exclusive reliance on military option to a combination of military and non-military options tackle problems important to America and its interests. In short, smart power can be defined as the ability to combine "hard" and "soft" power into a winning strategy. The failure of Bush's administration to achieve American foreign policy objectives through the use of force encouraged Obama to follow a "smart power" approach in which diplomacy was the main instrument of advancing negotiations, but without the exclusion of military intervention that was considered the last resort. The idea of following smart power approach was initially originated in Bush's second term by the Defense Secretary Robert Gates after the failure to eliminate Al Qaeda and promote democracy and stability in Iraq and Afghanistan (Nuruzzaman , 2015). Obama's administration adopted this trend from its predecessor and maintained the

importance of diplomacy and international institutions, undermining the use of military force.

### **2.2.4. A Pivot to Asia**

The economic crisis of 2008 shed light on the importance of the Chinese economy and the Asian region to the global growth and subsequently the American economy. The Obama administration sought to promote trade, investment, and technology transfer across Asia which formed the economic dimension of Obama's pivot to Asia. The latter aimed at shifting the geographic focus of American foreign policy from the Middle East to Asia. This pivot took the form of intensive engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), negotiating a free trade agreement with South Korea, and the promotion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as an investment and trade platform that conforms to the World Trade Organization Plus' standards that incorporate labour rights, intellectual property, and environmental protection (Kitchen, 2014).

The TPP is considered a geopolitical project to support U.S. leadership in Asia after decades of American foreign policy that were dominated by the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The administration also believed that the United States should focus its economic, diplomatic, and military resources to rebalance America's world politics. Furthermore, in its efforts to redefine American leadership, the Obama administration sought to turn its regional allies in Asia into reliable security providers. In addition, China's assertiveness and its growing military and economic power challenged the traditional tools of military alliances and force presence of the United States leadership in Asia. The Obama administration designed the TPP as a way to China's economic

domination of the region by "rewriting the rules" of investment and trade (Twinning, Kundanani & Sparding, 2016).

### **2.3. Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy in Action**

In his Cairo speech, President Obama indicated his intention to repair the perceived damage in the U.S.-Muslim relations inflicted by the Bush administration. He promised to pursue a relation based on mutual respect and interest with the Middle East and to deal with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict fairly. However, Obama's efforts towards change for the Middle East faced several challenges that affected greatly the implementation of most of his Cairo speech promises.

#### **2.3.1. Afghanistan and Pakistan**

The Bush administration decision to prioritize the war in Iraq over stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan was considered a key factor in worsening the security situation in the country. As Afghanistan became a second priority, funding, reconstruction, resources, and experienced leaders, including generals and diplomats were all diverted to Iraq. The U.S. did not provide sufficient troops nor resources to quell Al Qaeda and ultimately handed the responsibility of maintaining security in Afghanistan to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in October 2006 ("East Asian Strategic Review", 2010). The U.S. preoccupation with Iraq gave the Taliban an opening to reemerge and they seized it. From 2004 to 2009, the Taliban's activity in the country increased significantly. The Taliban set ambushes, took hostages, laid roadside bombs, and even killed U.S. soldiers and road construction crews, controlling a substantial and significant part of the country. By 2008, Afghanistan was in a state of full-blown insurgency (Vox, 2018, 2:45).

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

As a candidate, Obama pledged to increase resources and reinforce the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and he kept his promise. As early as February 2009, President Obama stressed the conflict in Afghanistan and described it as the "right war" of necessity unlike the "wrong war" of choice in Iraq. Between 2009 and 2010, funding for Operation Enduring Freedom (a term used by the U.S. government for the war in Afghanistan) doubled (from \$52 billion to \$100 billion). In addition, General McCrystal who was appointed as the new commander in Afghanistan completed a review of Afghanistan's strategy and policy by summer 2009 and stressed the need for increasing the number of American military forces if there was a chance for success in stabilizing the country (McCormick, 2011). As a result, in December 2009, the Obama administration authorized a surge of 33,000 troops that was followed by further deployments, increasing the number of American troops in Afghanistan from 30,000 to 100,000 with a plan to withdraw the troops after 18 months(Tardelli,2012).The Obama administration argument for the surge was that for defeating Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. must seek to deny Al Qaeda a safe haven in both countries, cripple the Taliban's ability to overthrow the government ,and strengthen the capacity of the Afghan government, army, and police to take the lead("East Asian Strategic Review", 2010).

The Obama administration hoped that sending additional troops to Afghanistan would bring positive effects, similar to those in Iraq. The surge was supposed to be a short-term deployment that would seize control from the Taliban regime and provide suitable conditions for the transition of power to the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. The surge was also coupled with a substantial increase of special operations and drone strikes against Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders and commanders

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

(Tardelli, 2011). Yet, some American military sources and experts argue that sending more troops to Afghanistan would only address the symptoms of the conflict with the Taliban, leaving the roots of the problem untouched. Infested corruption in the Karzai government and its inability to control the regional warlords are among the primary issues to be addressed in Afghanistan ("East Asian Strategic Review", 2014). Poverty, increasing unemployment rates among the Afghan people, drug trade, and an illiteracy rate of 70% are also responsible for the social instability of the Afghan society and are a hotbed of the Taliban (Zhao, 2009). Emphasizing a military strategy in Afghanistan would not address any of these issues that keep crippling efforts to stabilize the country.

After the surge, the U.S. continued to plan for its stalled withdrawal from the country. On May 1, 2011, Al Qaeda leader and the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks was killed in a special operation by U.S. forces in Pakistan which fueled the long debate about continuing the war in Afghanistan. In June, 2011, and amidst an increasing Americans disapproval of the war and a pressure from lawmakers to reduce the size of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Obama outlined a plan to withdraw 33000 troops by the summer of 2012, including 10000 by the end of 2011. Obama also announced that the U.S. was pursuing preliminary peace talks with the Taliban leadership. The peace talks were reinforced when the Taliban managed to strike a deal to open an office in Qatar, in January 2012. Nevertheless, after two months of the deal, the Taliban backed away from the peace talks, claiming the U.S. failed to keep its promises concerning a prisoner swap. In February of that year, the U.S. declared its plan to conclude combat missions by mid-2013 and shift its role to security assistance to the Afghan army ("The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020").

On February 20, 2012, the tension between the U.S. and the Afghan government flared after allegation against an "incidental burning" of a copy of the Quran and the murder of at least sixteen Afghan villagers by U.S. soldiers. The Karazai government demanded that foreign troops to be confined to military bases which some argue helped to accelerate in transitioning control from NATO to the Afghans. By June 2013, NATO had handed over the security responsibility to the Afghan forces and shifted its focus to military training and special operations driven by counterterrorism. At the same day, the U.S. announced peace talks with the Taliban would be resumed in Doha, Qatar. However, Karazai suspended negotiations with the U.S. and claimed the Taliban's office in Qatar gave legitimacy to a rebel group. On May, 2014, Obama announced a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2016. He also declared that after the combat missions had concluded at the end of 2014, some 9800 U.S. troops would remain as part of training the Afghan forces and conducting counterterrorist operations on the remnant of Al Qaeda. Obama argued withdrawing troops from Afghanistan would free resources to consolidate counterterrorism efforts elsewhere (ibid).

### **2.3.2. The Iran Deal**

President Obama set a new constructive tone in American policies towards Iran by supporting engaging with dialogue with Iran without preconditions, contrary to his predecessor's insular and combative strategy (Jahanbegloo, 2009). However, in September 2009, President Obama revealed the existence of underground enrichment facility in Fordow, denouncing Iran's decision to build another nuclear facility without informing the IAEA. Under President Obama, the U.S. imposed one of the strictest

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

sanctions packages on Iran, including the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions and Accountability and Divestment Act which was an effort to isolate Iran economically and financially. The U.S. also discouraged foreign companies from doing business with Iran. In addition, unlike his predecessor, Obama succeeded in creating a consensus over the need to pressure Iran, and triggered the consolidation of multilateral response. International efforts to pressure Iran involved four rounds of UN resolutions that further sanctioned Iran (Macaluso, 2014).

The diplomatic efforts between the U.S. and Iran remained stalled until July 2012, when a secret meeting was held in Muscat, Oman, between a team from the White House and an Iranian team to negotiate on the nuclear issue. In June, 2013, Hassan Rouhani, a more moderate and pragmatic politician, and Iran's former nuclear negotiator succeeded President Ahmadinajad. In August, 2013, Rouhani called for the resumption of negotiations between the West and Iran over his country's nuclear program. After several rounds of negotiations, Iran and P5+1 Group( UN Security Council's five permanent members namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany) signed a tentative agreement in Geneva called the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) on November 23, 2013. The interim agreement enforced a suspension of portions of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relieving some of the economic sanctions imposed on Iran (Torbat, 2020). The IAEA also began intrusive and more frequent inspections as terms of the interim which was officially implemented on January 20, 2014. After the implementation of the interim agreement, relevant parties continued to work towards a long-term agreement over the following months (Sterio, 2016). On July 14, 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) was signed in Vienna and on July 20, 2015,

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

the UNSC unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the agreement. On October 11, 2015, the Iranian parliament indirectly approved the JCPA and on January 16, 2016, the agreement was officially implemented by Iran (Torbat, 2020).

Under the terms of the agreements, Iran is required to give up 97% of its enriched uranium, taking its stockpile from 10000 kilograms down to just 300 kilograms. Iran also maintains the ability to increase the stockpile rapidly. The deal also states that Iran can still produce a modest amount of uranium enriched at low levels, just 3,67%, which is an extremely low of enrichment compared to the 90% required to make a nuclear weapon. Furthermore, under the JCPA's terms, Iran has to give up 2/3 of its centrifuges (the machines used to enrich uranium), reducing them from some 19000 to about 5000. Iran is allowed to have a thousand more for research and development. Additionally, the deal devised for the monitoring and provision of the implementation of the agreement. Iran agreed to a comprehensive inspection and verification regime by the IAEA whom the agreement authorized to use various types of monitoring technology. Finally, the JCPA provides incentives for the Iranians as it relieves a substantial number of sanctions imposed on the country and which crippled the Iranian economy for decades (Sterio, 2016). The Obama administration and several Western allies saw the agreement as major victory for diplomacy between the U.S. and Iran. President Obama even stated that:

Under its terms, Iran is never allowed to build a nuclear weapon. And while Iran, like any party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is allowed to access peaceful nuclear energy, the agreement strictly defines the manner in which its

nuclear program can proceed, ensuring that all pathways to a bomb are cut off.  
(qtd. in "Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal", 2015)

### **2.3.3. Withdrawal from Iraq**

From the very beginning of his first term, President Obama made withdrawal from Iraq a priority in his administration's agenda for change. Obama bluntly opposed the decision to go to war with Iraq in 2002 and made ending the war a key electoral promise that won him the presidency in 2008. After assuming office Obama kept his promise by ordering all American troops, combatant and non-combatant, to leave Iraq by December 2011(Nuruzzaman, 2015).

In October 2011, Obama confirmed the withdrawal of the remaining 39000 U.S. troops in Iraq. In his argument, the President believed the war was triggered for no apparent legitimate reason which inflicted severe harm on America's moral image globally. In addition, Obama argued that redeployment of U.S. troops would help regain America's good reputation and appease the American public opinion that became dissatisfied with a war that drained the U.S. of its material and human resources. Furthermore, Obama believed military means cannot resolve the civil war in Iraq and argued that the drawdown of troops would force the Iraqi government to pursue political solution to bring stability back to Iraq. Moreover, with the vitality of the Iraqi government's democracy experiment in 2010 (with a turnout of 62% and an increased Sunni participation) (Tardelli, 2012) and the UN authorization for U.S. military action in Iraq expiring at the end of 2008, withdrawing troops was imperative. And most importantly, the withdrawal came as a part of Obama's plan for freeing resources to address security priorities elsewhere such Afghanistan and Iran (Zhao, 2009).

President Obama, like his predecessor, preferred to keep a minimal presence of U.S. troops in Iraq. However, he failed to secure an agreement with Baghdad due to Iraqi widespread public opposition and the limitation set by the Status of Forces Agreement's (SOFA) timetable for troops' withdrawal, which was signed with the Iraqi government in December 2008 and which required U.S. forces to leave Iraq by January 1, 2012 (Nuruzzaman, 2015). The U.S., however, would continue to exert decent influence through the largest embassy in Baghdad with over 17000 staff. The embassy and the State Department would continue to play a major role in channeling political influence and economic aid, and supervising training operations (Tardelli, 2012).

In late 2014, the United States resumed military operations in Iraq after the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a former Al Qaeda affiliate group that seized major cities in Iraq and threatened to spread chaos in the country. ISIS took advantage of the power vacuum created by the U.S. withdrawal and motivated by sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shiite masses in Iraq and Syria. In early 2014, ISIS seized Fallujah and Ramadi, and by June, it conquered Mosul. The Islamic State also destroyed four Iraqi army divisions, and managed to control 1/3 of Iraq's territory. And as genocidal violence was committed against Shiites, Christians, Yazidis, and Kurds, the U.S. was forced to resume military operations in Iraq (Miller, 2020).

### **2.3.4. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict**

Discussions between Palestinians and Israelis had already ended when the Obama administration assumed office due to an Israeli military assault against Gaza in late 2008 which resulted in the death of at least fourteen hundred people, around five thousand injured, and many homes, schools and other buildings destroyed. Consequently,

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

the chances of any direct talks between the two sides were very slim. The Obama administration diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict started from where Bush's had stopped, with a focus on the two-state solution. Following the Bush's administration steps of creating a two-state solution to solve the conflict, the Obama administration first strategy was to propose the use of proximity talks with the Israelis and the Palestinians which would eventually make direct talk possible. Under the proximity proposal, Obama appointed George Mitchell in January 2009 as his Mideast peace envoy who would meet with the two sides separately and find a way back to negotiation (McCormick, 2011).

Obama wanted to ensure the Palestinian leadership that the United States was a "fair broker" and that it could trust the Obama team to help secure an agreement, including a Palestinian state. He also tried to pressure the Israelis by demanding an acceptance of a future Palestinian state and a freeze on settlement building in the West Bank on May 2009 to give peace talks a chance(Migdal,2014). This initial attempt at resuming the negotiation process failed and Mitchell resigned in early May 2011. Many developments crippled the Obama administration's Mideast peace process. The elections that took place in Israel shortly after Obama took office resulted in a new right-wing government coming to power at the end of March 2009. Binyamin Netanyahu, whose party came second in the balloting, was the only candidate who could stitch together a majority coalition. However, the coalition he managed to assemble was dominated by prosettlement, antinegotiation nationalist and religious parties (McCormick, 2011).

The peace negotiation process was further complicated after his victory in the elections of January 2013 when he focused more on the Iranian issue and simultaneously increased settlement activities. In addition, the Arab pro-democracy uprisings that spread

through Tunisia, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen dropped the Palestinian-Israeli conflict down from Obama's foreign policy team priority list. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority's diplomatic attempt to win a UN recognition of a Palestinian state in 2011 , and the subsequent General Assembly's recognition of Palestine as a "non-member state" on November 2012, undermined the Obama Mideast peace efforts This new ruling allows Palestine to participate in debates in the UN and increase its chances of joining UN agencies and bodies like the international Criminal Court which struck a tremendous blow to Israel's claim over the Palestinian land (Nuruzzaman, 2015). Both the United States and Israel labelled this initiative as a "unilateral action" by the Palestinian Authority and claimed it violated existing bilateral Palestinian-Israeli agreements (Cotler, 2012).

To revive the peace process, Obama reaffirmed his commitment to resolving the conflict and reemphasized the two-state solution. Secretary of State John Kerry managed to persuade the Palestinians and the Israeli to restart the peace negotiation without attaching any preconditions. However, Kerry-mediated peace process finally collapsed by the end of April, 2014 as the Israelis never recognized the need to stop settlement expansions to support peace with the Palestinians. In addition, Hamas remained opposed to negotiations with the Israelis. In short, Obama's handling of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict marked a continuity of previous administrations stalled peace process.

### **2.3.5. The Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests and uprisings that took place in several Arab countries that included Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen,

Syria, and Libya in the beginning of 2011. The uprisings called for regime change and improving the standards of living in these countries. The protests began in Tunisia and spread to other Arab states where either the rulers were forced to give up their positions or major violence occurred against the protestors. The uprisings came as a surprise for the Obama administration which fell under a dilemma whether to help the actual regimes to move from dictatorship to democracy or abandon America's traditional allies and support the protestors' claims for a new and free democratic regime. Obama did not develop one policy for each country; instead, his response depended on the size of the country, its strategic importance in geopolitics of the Middle East region, and the regional rivalry between the Sunni countries of the Gulf states and the Shiites.

### **2.3.5.1. Tunisia**

Tunisia represents the beginning of the Arab Spring and it was an inspiration for the other Arab countries. Local protests spread across the country after the death of a street seller Mohammed Bouazizi and after mere ten days, President Zine Elabidine Ben Ali, who ruled the country since 1987 has gone. Protestors faced state oppression; however, few casualties and injuries were made compared to the other uprisings in Arab countries. Additionally, it was characterized by its effectiveness due to a large coverage by social media. The U.S. as well as the international community and the Tunisian government did not react immediately because the uprisings were not expected to sweep other Arab countries. Moreover, the U.S. had a good relationship with President Ben Ali who was considered as the model U.S. client (Zohny, 2017).

Nevertheless, the U.S. strategic interest in the country were not that much that would make the U.S. oppose this strong declaration for liberty by the Tunisian people.

Despite the Obama administration support for the Tunisian people, the U.S. government considered the Tunisian Revolution as an isolated incident which was not likely to spread to neighboring countries especially to Egypt and Libya which played an important role for the regional stability and countering terrorism. The U.S. supported and worked together with the center-right Elnnehda party that won a plurality of the seats of parliament by getting 37% of popular vote in October 2011 despite a fear of Islamic groups' extremism (Zohny, 2017).

### 2.3.5.2. Egypt

In comparison to Tunisia, Egypt represented a different case for the U.S. In attempt to understand protestors and not to upset the long-standing ally Mubarak, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton stated publicly in January 2011 that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the needs of the protestors. Clinton's statement angered the Egyptian protestors who demanded the removal of Mubarak from his position and pressed ahead with their protests despite the increased oppressive and violent actions of the Egyptian government security forces. Obama tried to work with Mubarak government to accommodate some of the protestors' demands without a change of the government. He also called for the respect for people's rights when the violence against them increased. Then, Obama ultimately called for the departure of Mubarak who indeed gave up his position by mid February 2011 (Zohny, 2017).

After Mubarak left, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), which is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, won the largest number of seats. U.S. policymakers had two options: either to recognize the Muslim Brotherhood as a legitimate political

power or to continue to alienate them due to complex and possible scenarios expected from regional Islamist groups such as Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah which –they claimed- were still devoted to militancy and terrorist tactics. Also, policy makers feared that groups like the Muslim Brotherhood would pursue policies that oppose the U.S. interests in the region, especially the Egyptian-Israeli peaceful relationship, or even change the state into a theocratic one like that of Iran (Sharp, 2011).

As the uprisings increased significantly in the country before Mubarak's resignation, the Obama administration declared the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's political dialogue. Moreover, the White House announced that all opposition parties including the Muslim Brotherhood should be represented in the post-Mubarak era. However, after the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections, the Brotherhood's Deputy Leader Dr. Rachad Bayoumi announced that his party would neither recognize Israel nor negotiate with the Israelis. Additionally, the party would take all legal actions in order to cancel the peace treaty with Israel which raised concerns amongst American policy makers and reinforced their negative stance to Islamist group's participation in governments. Nonetheless, the White House Secretary Jay Carney insisted not to judge the Muslim Brotherhood government which was beginning to shape (Pierce, 2013).

The Obama administration kept supporting the democratically elected government and engaged in dialogues with the latter to develop a good working relationship with Morsi's administration and foster democracy in the country, despite Morsi's inability to deal with certain issues. Despite the scathing criticism that

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

Morsi's government received, both nationally and internationally, the Obama administration continued to show support by providing \$1 billion in debt relief and backed a \$4.8 billion IMF loan to Egypt. Additionally, the Obama administration was slow to criticize the autocratic ruling style of Morsi and his failure to solve Egypt's economic problems- though Obama stressed the need for protecting minorities and engaging in dialogue with opposition parties without preconditions. The White House even praised President Morsi for brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza. In May 2013, a congressional attempt to stop military funding to Egypt had been overridden by President Obama, emphasizing that the U.S. relationship with Egypt was based on strategic cooperation which enabled the U.S. to respond to security threats and to stabilize regional conflicts. Even when anti-government protestors demanded Morsi's departure, Obama declared that it is not the U.S. job to choose Egypt's leaders (Arena, 2017).

However, in July 2013, Morsi was toppled by the Egyptian military and was replaced by the Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. The Obama administration refused to consider it as a military coup. With the increasing violence against the protestors, the American government declared that it would hold some of aided-funded military equipment until the Egyptian government shows some progress towards democratic governance through supporting civilian rule. Yet, a year and a half later, the Obama administration acquiesced to Egypt's strategic importance to the U.S. by reinstating economic aid, and releasing large scale military systems (Arena, 2017).

### 2.3.5.3. Yemen

The U.S. was not willing to allow a real change in relations with Yemen due to the presence of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the country. Clearly, the security interests were important to the U.S. than the advancement of the political freedom. Yet, the U.S. tried to appear neutral by disclosing the content of a phone call between Deputy National Security Advisor John Brennan and President Saleh urging the latter to resolve the crisis. In addition, the Obama administration publicly supported Hadi before and after election. The only thing that the Obama administration was willing to do is to insist on Saleh to sign the GCC-sponsored political agreement in order to allow for an organized transition of power which was in Saleh's own good provided that he had only two options : to relinquish power and gain immunity or refused to cede power and be killed. The agreement also stated that Vice-President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi would become an interim head of state for one year until proper elections are held. Moreover, the deal led to the establishment of the National Dialogue Conference and the reform of the army, though only Yemen's elite won access to the new interim government. Saleh initially chose the second option which risked his life but later changed courses and called for refuge in the U.S. after signing the GCC-sponsored political agreement. Though these uprisings indeed resulted in regime change, the revolution failed because the election was not democratic and many social issues were not addressed (Zohny, 2017).

Increasing U.S. drone strikes against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) triggered dissatisfaction with the new political process. The Huthi rebels, who were marginalized by the GCC accords, raided Sanaa in September 2014, and

then they advanced into Aden in March 2015. They also accused President Hadi and his government with corruption (Bensaid, 2018). Washington considered the success of Huthi insurgents -Shiite rebels with links to Iran with a history of rising up against the Sunni government-in forcing President Hadi's government to resign in 2014 as losing a flawed, yet valuable counterterrorism partner. Meanwhile, Riyadh considered the Huthis as a source of danger that would threaten Saudi Arabia and align with its regional long-standing enemy Iran . As a result, the Saudis along with the Emiratis showed interest in launching a military campaign to quell the rebels ("Ending the Yemen Quagmire", 2019).

Ultimately, a message from Riyadh was sent to Washington stating that Riyadh would welcome U.S. support but it would start the campaign which had been originally requested by President Hadi with the aim of restoring his internationally-recognized government into power.The U.S. government had concerns over the capabilities of the Saudi military forces that would affect badly the success of the campaign, despite the fact that it was well supplied with U.S. arms. However, despite all concerns, the U.S. was not able to refuse the Saudi's request because they believed that Hadi's request for the coalition intervention gave the intervention a legal justification that complied with international laws. In addition, Hadi was considered as an important ally who worked with the U.S. in its counterterrorism quest against the AQAP which was perceived as the biggest threat facing the U.S. at that time. Furthermore , the U.S. relations with its Gulf partners, especially with the Saudis, had to be considered. Obama did not want to ruin this relationship that lies at

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

the core of the U.S. strategy for protecting its security and energy interests in the Middle East("Obama Officials Incomplete Reckoning Failure in Yemen", 2018).

The war dragged on with limited military success for the Saudi-led coalition, but with a rising number of unnecessary and unlawful deaths and destruction. Meanwhile, the Obama administration was providing Saudi Arabia with an ongoing military support in addition to less official diplomatic cover, especially at the UN ("Obama Officials Incomplete Reckoning Failure in Yemen", 2018).Following the death of 140 people as a result of Saudi airstrikes, the Obama administration declared it was launching a review on the U.S. security assistance to Saudi Arabia, but at the same time, the U.S.-Saudi intelligence cooperation against AQAP would continue and the U.S. would keep providing support for the defense of Saudi Arabia's border with Yemen and continue refueling the Saudi aircrafts("Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention", 2017).

In October 2016, the Huthi-Saleh forces launched anti-ship missiles at U.S. Navy vessels on patrol off the coast of Yemen. A similar attack occurred in early October targeted a U.S. transport ship rented by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In response to these attacks, the Obama administration launched cruise missiles against Huthi-Saleh radar installations. These attacks were conducted in self-defense as claimed by the Obama administration and it stated that it did not want to deepen its direct involvement in the conflict ("Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention", 2017).

### 2.3.5.4. Bahrain

The uprising in Bahrain began on February 14, 2011, following the Arab Spring protests in Egypt three days earlier. The demonstrations expressed the grievance of the Shiite majority over the unfair distribution of power and economic opportunities and demanded a constitutional monarchy in which the government is formed by an elected representative parliament (Katzman, 2011). The case of Bahrain is a unique one because of its demographics and international relationships. 54% of the population are foreign nationals, and among the half-million local inhabitants, 64% are Shiites. In a conscious effort by Bahrain's Sunni monarchy to change the balance of the country's demographics, a naturalization of immigrants' policy was adopted. The immigrants came from Yemen, Egypt, Palestine, and particularly Syria. Immigrants were issued with passports and citizenship shortly after their arrival to the country, giving them legal rights to jump to the front queue for public sector jobs and proper housing, which enraged Bahraini Shiites (Andersen, 2012).

When the uprising turned violent, Obama did not opt for a military intervention or called for Al-Khalifa regime to step down. Instead, the U.S. has repeatedly pressed the Bahraini authorities to not use force against protestors and to free opposition leaders. The U.S. also asserted that the Bahraini government was trying to address several opposition concerns ("Bahrain: Unrest, Security, and U.S. Policy", 2019). In March 2011, Bahrain declared a state of emergency and demanded direct security assistance from the other GCC countries, contrary to U.S. advise. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia sent troops to Bahrain to quell the protests that threatened to spread to other Gulf monarchies and forcefully

suppressed the demonstrations and arrested dissidents. The state of emergency ended on June 1, 2011, and a "national dialogue" was initiated but ultimately failed due to continued arbitrary imprisonment of dissidents and disagreements with regard to political reform. After a report by a government appointed "Independent Commission of Inquiry"(BICI) on the unrest and the opposition demands, the Bahraini government asserted it has implemented many of the BICI recommendations, the implementation of which was overseen by a commission appointed in March 2011. Nonetheless, disagreement about major political reforms led to perpetuation of protests (Katzman, 2012).

The Obama administration continued its lenient stance on the unrest in Bahrain and maintained rather restrained when the situation escalated in the country. In fact, the strongest criticism to the Bahraini government came when Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, in April 2011, at the U.S. Islamic World Forum, called for Bahraini leaders to embrace the demands of the masses and stressed that security would not address their key concerns (Clinton, 2011). The Obama administration continued its engagement with Bahraini leaders without any sanctions imposed on any official. And even though the administration withheld or conditioned some arm sales to Bahrain, the U.S. military cooperation continued. In a speech to the UN General Assembly on September 21, 2011, President Obama expressed the U.S. satisfaction with the reform and the accountability Bahrain had shown and called for the government and the main opposition bloc –the Wifaq- to pursue meaningful dialogue. The U.S. continued to use diplomacy with Bahrain upon the July 17, 2016 dissolution of the Wifaq,

when Secretary of State Kerry called for Bahrain to return to dialogue and to work collectively to address the aspirations of the Bahraini people("Bahrain: Unrest, Security, and U.S. Policy", 2019).

### **2.3.5.5. Libya**

The U.S. along other countries including the Arab league condemned Qaddafi' supporters violent attacks on civilians and called for Qaddafi's departure. On February 26, 2011, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed to adopt Resolution 1970 placing targeted financial and travel sanctions on Qaddafi and certain individuals in his government, and imposing an arms prohibition on Libya. Nonetheless, the resolution did not legitimize the use of force. They also adopted Resolution 1973 on March 17, which called for an immediate cease-fire and dialogue. It also declared a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace, to take all the necessary measurement to enforce the arms embargo established by Resolution 1970 and authorized member states to take all the necessary measures to protect the civilians (Gertler, 2011).

The Libyan revolt put the Obama administration in a difficult situation. Though the administration sought to avoid entanglement with the use of military, a fear of a genocide, calls from the U.K, France, and the Arab League for international action forced the administration to support a military action to topple Libya's dictator (Celso, 2014). The United States commenced Operation Odyssey Dawn on May 19, 2011 as a contribution to the multilateral military effort of the NATO coalition and aimed at enforcing a no-fly zone and protecting civilians in Libya. The coalition forces along with the U.S. managed to control major Libyan

cities and to destroy a substantial part of the Libyan air defense network in a short period of time. In addition, the coalition launched several attacks on pro-Qaddafi forces that were perceived to pose a threat to the population (Gertler, 2011). On March 23, 2011, U.S. officials declared that operation Odyssey Dawn had succeeded in decimating the Libyan air force, rendering it defenseless against coalition strikes. In the same day, NATO declared the beginning of Operation Unified Protector which enforced an arm embargo on the country and control of the no-fly zone was handed over to NATO forces the next day. This gesture paved the way for NATO's ultimate takeover over military operations in Libya (Case & Siebens, 2012).

In his efforts to multilateralism, Obama actively sought to get France and Britain to take the lead despite their inferior military power, in what became known as the administration's "leading from behind". The administration continued to demonstrate a reluctance and caution in its military effort which confused the coalition forces about America's resolve(Celso,2014). From the beginning of the operations in Libya, the administration declared it intended to transfer command of the operation to a coalition entity, which materialized on March 30, 2011, when NATO became in charge of all aspects of the coalition military intervention (Gertler, 2011). After six months of war, the Obama administration began limiting its goals and participation in military operations in Libya and was on the defensive mode until rebels seized Tripoli and killed Qaddafi (Celso, 2014).

## Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy

---

After Qaddafi's death, a transitional government came to power and promised to relinquish power in favor of an elected government. In July 2012, those elections were held. Nonetheless, the new elected government had little power as a result of Qaddafi's hollowing out of state institutions and the constant presence of the militias that had more power and popular support. In the beginning, the Obama administration established good relations with the new Libyan government and worked with the latter to secure the remnant of Qaddafi's chemical weapons stockpiles that would still pose a threat to civilian lives. Additionally, the U.S. made several initiatives as an assistance to push forwards the political and economic development. However, such initiatives proved difficult to implement, mainly due to a resistance from the Libyans who refused foreign intervention. The Libyans even insisted on not having foreign peace keeping forces which made the country fall into chaos eventually. In September 2012, an attack on the American diplomatic facility in Benghazi led to the death of U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens, which discouraged any U.S. effort in the country (Jervis, 2017).

In a Fox News interview in April 2016, President Obama described Libya as his "worst mistake" in office, and in another with the Atlantic's Jeffery Goldberg, the president bluntly stated that the mission in Libya failed. In a similar manner to the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama lamented his administration's lack of consideration for the after-revolution period (Tierney , 2016).

### 2.3.5.6. Syria

In response to the atrocities committed by Assad, the Obama administration called for dictator to resign and imposed further sanctions on the regime in May 2011. At the same time, the U.S. showed a reluctance to use military action as a solution to the crisis. Yet, there were several initiatives by the U.S. to pass a resolution in the UN Security Council to take some action in Syria, but China and Russia vetoed each one of them (4 October, 2011, 4 February, 2012, and 19 July, 2012 respectively). In early 2012, President Obama ruled out a unilateral U.S. military campaign to assist the rebels and argued that this action would risk American military assistance reach Al Qaeda affiliates amongst the Islamic Syrian rebels (Patman, 2016). In August, 2012, President Obama warned that a "red line" should not be crossed by using chemical weapons against civilians. In early April, 2013, the Obama administration confirmed the Assad regime had conducted chemical and biological weapons attacks on Syrian rebels (Schulenburg, 2019), and by September, he declared his willingness to pursue an independent military action against the regime if the latter had refused to hand over control over its chemical and biological weapons stockpiles. The U.S. eventually backed down to allow for a Russian initiative that resulted in Assad's agreement to surrender his chemical weapons arsenal to international monitors, which began later in October 2013 (Patman, 2016).

The U.S. officially joined the war in Syria in late 2013, when the CIA training and arms reached Syrian rebels after Syria turned into a proxy war stage in which Russia supported the Assad regime and the U.S. opposed him. In summer 2014, ISIS seized large territories in Iraq and Syria and created a

caliphate there. That summer, the Pentagon launched a program to train Syrian rebels who were only willing to fight ISIS, not the Assad regime which demonstrates America's priority in the country. In a national address in September, Obama described ISIS as a terrorist organization and that the U.S. would seek its destruction. The U.S. began bombing ISIS that month (Vox, 2017). Loyal to its multilateralism, the Obama administration worked with regional and international actors in strong coalitions to organize airstrikes against ISIS, devise counterterrorism strategies, and supervise the humanitarian assistance to civilians harmed by the terrorist organization. Meanwhile, Russia sent military aircrafts to a long-held Russian base in the country and claimed its actions were an effort to bomb ISIS. These Russian aircrafts, however, ended up bombing anti-Assad rebels, including the ones backed by the U.S. The Obama administration opposed the Russian military action and refused to follow a similar course of action. Obama also emphasized that the U.S. was not going to make Syria a proxy war between Russia and the U.S.(Patman, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

Gerges (2013) has suggested that Obama failed to eradicate previous U.S. administrations' practices as his plans for change and reform were ultimately altered to conform to a certain pattern of previous administrations' foreign policies. In his first interview with Al-Arabiya, Obama declared that the U.S. is ready to start a new partnership with the Middle East based on mutual respect and interest. Obama shifted his approach from Bush's ideology about democracy and liberal deployment of military force in world's politics. He pursued an approach of

## **Chapter Two :Obama's Middle East Foreign Policy**

---

engagement that involved both allies and adversaries (such as Iran and to some extent the Muslim Brotherhood) in the region and sought a multilateral cooperation policy with them. Moreover, unlike the Bush administration, Obama made it a priority in his administration's agenda for change. However, American presidential policies in the Middle East are often restrained and directed by national interests and are aimed at securing them. Thus, when the Arab Spring uprisings erupted in 2011, followed by the rise of the Islamic State in 2014, Obama was forced to abandon much of his change goals in the Middle East to protect U.S. interests there.

**Chapter Three:  
Neocolonialism in Obama's  
Middle East Foreign Policy**

### Introduction

American hegemony across the Middle East has been historically best expressed by the U.S. capability to deploy military force to achieve its strategic goals whenever necessary, regardless of the preferences of local states or the aspirations of their populations. The increased militarism in the Middle East reinforced America's diplomatic and economic interest in the region as it gave the U.S. an instrument by which to violate the sovereignty of regional states and ensure they produce favourable policies to American core interests. Through foreign aid and arm sales which the U.S. transfer to the region in substantial amounts in voluntary transactions, America was able to influence the policies of the autocratic rulers of the region whom the U.S. regard as its reliable partners. When Obama took office in 2009, there was an assumption that the nature of America's foreign policy in the region would change. Nonetheless, though its initial rhetoric were of change and reform and a pledge to work in partnership with the Arab and Muslim world towards achieving mutual interests, Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East reflected a continuity of his predecessors policies of protecting U.S. core interests in the region and a continuous intervention in the politics of the Middle East in a neocolonial manner. This chapter investigates how Obama's Middle East foreign policy reflects a shift to more covert neocolonial methods , through intensive use of armed drones, increased weapon sales, double standards in democracy promotion, bias towards Israel , and smart power with Iran.

### 3.1. Military Neocolonialism

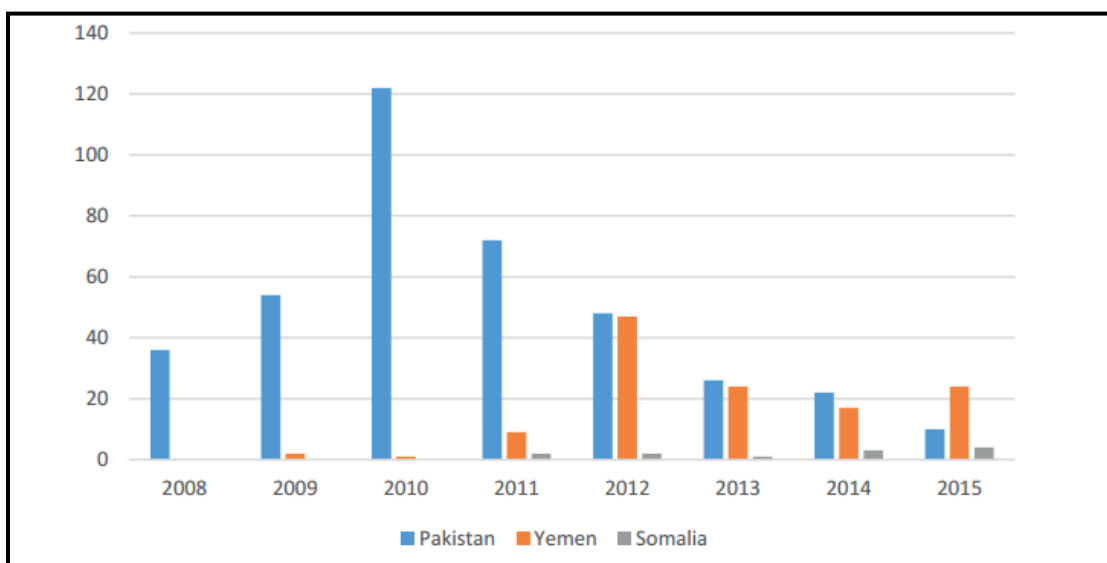
Under Obama's presidency, American use of military power for the achievement of national interests was redefined. Hegemony, which was the dominant feature of America's unilateral grand strategy in world politics, was no longer sustainable. American exceptionalism, world leadership, hegemony, and primacy had to be re-evaluated in a world where American economy faces austerity and the American and international public grew tired of continuous wars.

#### 3.1.1. The Role of Drones in Replacing Direct Military Intervention

Military engagement without the deployment of troops was Obama's neocolonial strategy in the Middle East. Under the Obama administration, there was a substantial increase in the number of drones' attacks in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen (see figure 3.1. ).The use of armed drones in the Obama administration derived its authority from the Authorization of the Use of Military Force (AUMF) which was passed by Congress a week after 9/11. The AUMF authorizes the president to use all necessary and appropriate force against nations, organizations, or persons "he" determines planned , authorized, committed, or aided the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or harboured such organizations or persons, to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the U.S. (Yambert,2016, p.160).

After the attacks of 9/11, the United States increased the use of unmanned aircrafts vehicles (UAVs) or drones to locate, target, and eliminate individuals who were regarded as terrorists or engaged with terrorist groups' activities overseas. And even

though the program was kept secret initially, the U.S. government acknowledged the use of drones in targeting and eliminating members of Al Qaeda in areas of conflict. Between 2005 and 2013, the use of drones by the U.S. has seen a skyrocketing increase rate of 1,200 percent. During his first year in office, Obama is said to have authorized more drone strikes than that of Bush's in his entire eight years in office (Keene, 2015). In 2010 alone, the American government authorized up to 118 drone strikes compared to the 44 strikes authorized by the Bush administration between 2004 and 2008 (Tardelli, 2011). By 2012, the U.S. owned 7,500 drones highlighting them as the future of warfare.



**Figure 3.1.** U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, 2008-2015. Reprinted from *No Boots on the Ground': Reflections on the US Drone Campaign through Virtuous War and STS Theories* by Peron& Dias (2018)

### 3.1.1.1. The Rationale for Increased Use of Drones

The use of drones had economic, political and social pressing incentives. For the Obama administration, the resort to use armed drones for "targeted killings" against specific Al Qaeda terrorists in selected nations is due to the availability of the weaponry

that did not risk the lives of American troops and the resistance of authorities in particular countries for American troops' incursion on their soil. Besides, given the deep intelligence the U.S. had collected over the last decade, interrogating terrorists is no longer an urgent matter (Culter, 2017). The Obama administration resort for the use of drones instead of deployment of soldiers was the result of external and internal pressures. On the one hand, the ongoing war in Afghanistan and Iraq were widely criticized by the American public and the international community. Furthermore, military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan was costly and burdened the U.S. national budget. On the other hand, several military commanders, intelligence officers, and local politicians warned against the dangers of a complete withdrawal from the region. To crown it all, the financial crisis in 2008 made authorizing military expenditure by the Congress more challenging. Many congressmen opposed and feared permanent American involvement in the region that would generate high costs and subsequent long-term campaigns (Peron & Dias, 2018). Drones were perceived as the proper solution.

The potential benefits of drones' applications in the military and non-military fields are numerous. Firstly, because the aircraft does not have to be build around a human, its size is not limited and can diversify according to military needs. Moreover, the need for support systems such as pressurized cabins ceases to exist without a pilot on board, further reducing the cost. Drones have also improved duration of flying that could be increased from mere hours to weeks (Keene, 2015). Drones are also an attractive option for a wide range of military and intelligence tasks including reconnaissance and intelligence, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and transportation (Abizaid &

Brooks, 2015). Advances in UAV technology are expected to provide improved situational awareness, coordination, transfer of surveillance data, and navigation. Furthermore, with their sophisticated sensors and extensive operational reach, they could be used for detecting chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons (Culter, 2017). Additionally, drones presence is less likely to be detected due to its low noise, allowing them to fly low to verify the nature of their targets and their relative fuel efficiency allow for better intelligence and targeting precision ("The Military Utility of Drones", 2010).

Nonetheless, the most significant advantage drones offer is the invulnerability that they give to their operators by physically removing the latter from the battlefield to a safe location thousands of miles away. This is particularly crucial given the American public aversion to casualties which put constraints on American political leaders and limited the U.S. exercise of its military strength. By reducing public concern and attention to the human and material cost of conflicts, political leaders could make the use of military force easier, when it is deemed justified. Politicians, military officials, and even media commentators have fairly displayed appositive attitude towards the use of drones and made lofty promises about what they can do, reinforcing public support for them (Walsh & Schulzke, 2018). In his speeches between 2010 and 2014, President Obama often emphasized the efficacy, precision and the low costs of drones. Most importantly, through the use drone warfare, the U.S. government was able to reduce the political risk of remaining militarily active in the concerned area while sustaining its military presence in various regions around the globe (Peron & Dias, 2018).

### **3.1.1.2. Controversies over the Use of Drones**

The Obama administration steadfastly insisted that the use of drones for targeted killings and counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations was a wise, legal, and effective decision and regularly publicized the results of the strikes that eliminated a substantial number of key terrorist leaders. However, many observers criticized the use of the drone program on grounds of violations to human rights and sovereignty of countries, lack of transparency and accountability, and the moral hazard of their use.

#### **3.1.1.2.1. Violation of Sovereignty**

During a speech at the National Defence University in May 2013, President Obama provided criteria by which drone attacks operate. The criteria include agreement of cooperation between the U.S. and the country in which the strikes would take place and limiting the use of drones to operations in which troops were not feasible. However, the U.S. maintained the capacity to use drone attacks without the consent of the host nation, if the latter was perceived to be incapable of or unwilling to operate against terrorists (Lofflman,2019). In other words, the U.S. held the belief that it had a legal justification for the use of force in foreign countries territories when these countries prove unable or unwilling to eradicate what the U.S. deemed imminent threat. Nonetheless, the U.S. definition of what constituted a threat lacked objectivity as it gave the U.S. the ability to manipulate the justification to serve its own agenda and disregard objections from U.S. allies and partners (Abizaid & Brooks, 2015).

Another issue drones provoke is their ability to violate the national sovereignty of countries in which strikes take place. From a legal prospective, if there is consent, there is no infringement on the sovereignty of the country, and publicly available literature suggests that several states in which the drone strikes took place -like Iraq-, have given their consent. However, the lack of explicit consent –like the case of Pakistan- made the U.S. jurisdiction a little questionable. The U.S. declared it was acting with the consent of Pakistan, while Pakistan publicly denied this. The U.S. believed the decision to give consent would be unpopular with the Pakistani people so the Pakistani government covertly supported the decision for political purposes. Whichever the case, without access to confidential materials, it would be difficult to determine whether consent was really given to all drone related operations. With the lack of an explicit consent, the U.S. government had to resort to other justifications to provide legal pretext for the use of drones in foreign lands. The U.S. resorted to Article 51 of the UN Charter which guarantees each state's "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, if an armed attack occurs" which ultimately gives the U.S. the authority to defend itself against terrorists and organizations or states that harbour them (Keene, 2015). However, there is a general consensus that the war on terror can no longer be used as a justification for self-defence, since no attack on American soil occurred since the attacks of 9/11.

### **3.1.1.2.2. Lack of Transparency**

On many occasions, the Obama administration claimed the use of drones minimized the number of civilian casualties on the ground; however, studies have shown that the administration's manipulations of civilian casualties' figures kept the numbers low. In May 2012, a senior Administration official anonymously told the New York

Times about the startling truth about the single digit civilian casualties that the Obama administration was advocating. The Times explained that the administration had redefined "militants" to include all males between the age of 18 and 80, unless intelligence posthumously proved them innocent. In effect, the Obama administration made it impossible for any males to be counted as civilians. Furthermore, an intelligence source leaked documents to the Interpreter in October 2015 that stated that even women and children might be included as "Enemy Killed in Action" unless they were subsequently proven innocent. And because most victims come from a disparately poor background, their families had no way to prove the innocence of their relatives or retrieve their remaining (Reprieve , 2016). Moreover , it is unclear how the U.S. would be able to gather such posthumous evidence as drone victims' bodies were frequently burned, dismembered, and mutilated beyond recognition. In addition, there is little evidence that the American authorities made any effort to visit the drone strikes sites or investigate the identity or the background of those killed or wounded ("Living Under Drones", 2012).

### **3.1.1.2.3. Lax International Laws**

International laws governing the use of drones have been lax, to say the least. Under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), wars are defined as armed conflicts between two or more states or highly contracting partners in the context of civil or internal wars. The definition, thus, excludes conflicts between states and substate entities, namely irregular forces, such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. The international law is, therefore, unequipped to deal with the 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare, where non-state actors and highly-advanced unmanned weaponry take centre stage. There is no central legislative body or controlling authority for international law and there is no obviously applicable

international court to determine the legality or otherwise of drone strikes, making their use free from accountability (Keene, 2015).

### **3.1.1.2.4. A Moral Hazard**

Several commentators argue that the normalization of the use of drones and the diminishing the accountability of those engaged in such actions represents a "slippery slope" that increases the temptation to use force while disregarding other means to resolve conflicts. Lowering the cost of war has the prospect of removing a crucial restraint on reckless and unnecessary conflicts, allowing leaders to start wars more easily and lowering the threshold of initiating them. Confidence in their efficiency and selectivity may result in an a moral hazard in which the American public and political leaders might become enthusiastic to their use, generating unnecessary wars of choice, destroying the infrastructure of countries and killing their people while delivering few strategic interests to the U.S.( Walsh & Schulzke, 2018).

In a nutshell, the light-footprint approach that allowed the U.S. to strike from a distance with the use of drone technology enabled the Obama administration to be tough at a little cost to Americans. The normalization of the use of drones sets the stage for a world in which highly sophisticated stealthy mobile weaponry, answerable only to the executive branch could attack from the sky at a minute's notice. At the same time, the complete physical and psychological damage that is being wrought upon thousands of people is eclipsed by a lack of comprehensive restrictions to govern their use (Shaw, 2013).

### 3.1.2. Increased Weapon Sales

Arms sales in the Middle East became a significant way for the U.S. and other external actors to influence Middle Eastern partners and political-military outcomes right after the Oil Embargo of 1973-1974. Despite their power inferiority to the U.S., the Gulf states were able to link political events in the region and the oil market. The embargo was meant to penalize the U.S. for its support for Israel during the Yom Kippur war by cutting its essential supply of oil, resulting in a subsequent stagflation (unemployment and inflation) that severely harmed the U.S. and some developed economies. In other words, in an unprecedented fashion, many oil-consuming nations in the West were at the mercy of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries and the volatile political situation in the Middle East in particular (Halabi, 2009). Furthermore, because of the Embargo, the oil exporting countries had accumulated an enormous amount of dollars that gave them a financial power that could be used against Western banks effectively. In this regard, Kissinger (1999) explained that the financial resources that these oil producing countries possess could be used as a "formidable political weapon" and could render the industrialized world vulnerable to political conflicts. Through massive withdrawal, oil producers had the capacity to threaten the banking system even in the normal course of doing business.

Therefore, the U.S. had contemplated several ways of ensuring a long-term steady supply of oil and stable oil prices from the Middle East. It also needed to find a way through which petrodollars would be recycled into Western markets while avoiding showing the oil monarchies as Western puppets in the eyes of their people or modernizing the Muslim societies through consumerist culture. Increasing arms sales to the Middle East was the most appealing option. On the one hand, they would recycle

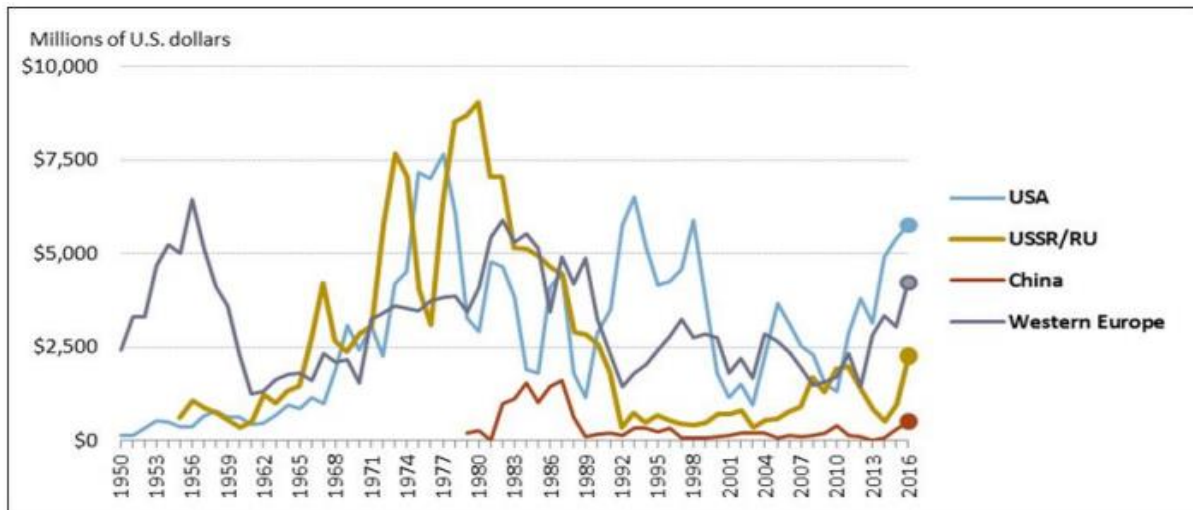
petrodollars, especially into the U.S. market. On the other hand, arms sales would increase the arms race between oil-producing states, crippling their ability to function as a cartel. Specifically, through the indiscriminate sale of weapons and the race it caused, the U.S. managed to create a sense of insecurity and mistrust among Middle Eastern states that prevented them from coordinating oil prices or allocating supply quotas among them. The U.S. was able to reinforce its leverage with the Gulf monarchies by increasing their dependence on U.S. protection facilities and supply of technologically sophisticated weaponry which -without American technical support- would be of very little use to the Gulf states, given their relatively small armies and lack of appropriate infrastructure (Halabi, 2009).

### **3.1.2.1. The Rationale for Increasing Arm Transfer to the Middle East**

Today, the U.S. considers arms sales as important tools of state power. The motives behind exporting arms are variable, including improving the security of allies and partners, containing the behaviour of rivals, and supporting government and domestic arms industry. Since Obama took office in 2009, arms sales increased by 43% and almost 40% of the major international arms transfer from 2009 to 2016 was from the U.S. American arms sales to the Middle East, in particular, provide significant economic and political incentives. First, the political factor was grounded in President Obama's promise to avoid getting into any new large scale deployment of soldiers like that of Iraq and Afghanistan. His alternative has been a tactic of drone warfare and arming and training allies. U.S. security cooperation with Middle Eastern states was an integral part of the Obama administration plan for relocating military resources from the region to the Indo-Pacific region where China and Russia have been on the rise. In other words, in order for

the U.S. to minimize its intervention in the region, its partners would have to do more and do it better to prevent power vacuum (Hartung, 2015; Saab, 2019).

On the economic level, the Obama administration has been responding to pressure from the weapon manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics who sought to increase export sales to counterbalance the levelling off of the Pentagon procurement spending. Political resistance to any attempt to cut the flow of weapons can be traced to the widespread weapon production facilities around the U.S. in different constituencies. Thus, elected officials have a strong incentive to keep those production lines in business which would produce millions of dollars in revenue each year (see figure 3.2. ). Furthermore, though the Pentagon is actively concerned with stopping wars, defence contractors benefit from increased weapon sales when the world is less stable (Hartung, 2015; Saab, 2019).



**Figure 3.2.** Arms Deliveries to the Middle East : Value, by supplier, 1959-2016. Reprinted from *Arms Sales in the Middle East : Trends and Analytical Perspectives for U.S. Policy*(2017)

### 3.1.2.2. Major Controversies Over Increased Arm Sales to the Middle East

Arms sales were a key component in Obama's approach to advancing U.S. foreign objectives in the region. Nonetheless, the Obama administration approval of more major weapon deals than any U.S. administration since WWII was criticized severely, based on their violations of human rights and support for undemocratic regimes that suppressed their populations, creating the conditions for political instability. Purchasing arms while the oil price is low has strained some nations' budget, resulting in less spending on infrastructure, education, and public services. In addition, the tension in the U.S. government has risen between a desire to support the rule of law and personal freedom in the Middle East and the security implications of potentially harming cooperation with partner governments (Thomas, 2017).

Additionally, the U.S. desires a less military involvement in the Middle East. Today, the Middle East is less strategically vital to the U.S. as the latter grew less dependent to the region's oil. There is no regional power that is able to threaten Israel's existence and pre-emptive efforts to prevent another 9/11 do not require massive deployment of American troops overseas. However, the U.S. is well-aware that it cannot leave the Middle East abruptly without risking further chaos, bloodshed, and refugee crisis. Moreover, the global price of oil is still heavily influenced by regional stability. Instead the U.S. is working to responsibly reduce its security burden and footprint in the region by relying more on their regional partners to address shared security threats. However, so far, the U.S. has approached this issue only through arms transfers which further increased Middle Eastern states dependency on U.S. protection. Indeed, U.S. high-tech weaponry are vital to U.S. partners to be able to shoot, move and communicate;

however, America's allies in the region lack the defence institutional capabilities that would enable them to become independent security providers. Providing them with weapons is useless while what they really need to do is strengthen their entire defence and security sectors. In other words, defence reform entails political reform which the Arab monarchies would not allow nor would the U.S. attempt to achieve (Saab, 2019).

Furthermore, arms transfers to the Middle East are perceived to have aggravated the already deteriorating security situation in the region. Arms transfers to Saudi Arabia impacted negatively the ongoing conflict in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition, which the U.S. provided with military equipment, including combat aircraft, bombs, assault weapons, cluster munitions and ammunition, has utilized these weapons to attack residential areas such as homes, refugee camps, markets, hospitals, schools, civilian businesses, and mosques, violating IHL and causing the death of civilians, including children. Bahrain and Egypt, in particular, have been the subject of criticism for violating human rights laws. The U.S. has been a long-time supplier of arms to the government of Bahrain and has authorized over 1\$ billion in military sales between 2000 and 2015. Bahrain experienced mass uprisings demanding democratic change in the country and the Bahraini authorities' response to the protests has been aggressive and U.S. arms sales to Bahrain increased the possibility of using these weapons to repress protestors. Egypt is another example of a human rights violator. When President al-Sisi gained power, the Obama administration declared the suspension of delivery of major defence articles until al-Sisi's government showed improvement towards the democratic and humanitarian situation of the country. However, his decision lasted about a year and a half before

resuming transactions, although the Egyptian government showed no prospect of improvement (Thomas, 2017).

### **3.2. Political Neocolonialism**

On the political front, Obama worked to strengthen and restore the legitimacy of the U.S. foreign policy in the region and improve America's relations with the Arab and Muslim world. His Cairo speech echoed promises of change and partnership based on mutual interests and respect. His sympathy towards the Palestinians and their struggle for a homeland raised hopes for reaching a fair agreement with the Israelis and his withdrawal from Iraq suggested an end to America's wars in the region. Nonetheless, the Obama administration's promises of change and reform proved challenging to American core interests in the Middle East region, that gradually took precedence over human rights protection or democracy promotion.

#### **3.2.1. Double Standards in the Arab Spring**

President Obama inherited a democracy promotion policy badly damaged from its Bush-era association with forcible regime change, the decline in America's reputation as a global symbol of democracy and human rights, and fears of a broader democratic recession in the world. Part of the problem with the U.S. policy in the Middle East is that democracy promotion has been ceaselessly "instrumentalized". The Bush administration "Freedom Agenda" was about finding effective ways to guarantee American interests. For instance, Bush used democracy promotion in Egypt as an instrument to anchor the country's alignment before Mubarak passed away. The purpose of the policy was not to weaken Mubarak grip on power or a regime change. Instead, the

policy aimed at strengthening the autocratic ruler by pushing him to embark on reform, absorbing popular anger. Because democracy promotion is instrumentalized, it is rendered inconsistent and ineffective. If the autocratic rulers in the Arab world know the U.S. would not back up its rhetoric about democracy with policy change enforcement, they are less likely to take U.S. warnings about human rights violations seriously (Hamid & Mandaville, 2013). Obama followed in his predecessor's footsteps and continued to instrumentalize democracy promotion.

After an initial pulling back from democracy promotion and a recalibration to less assertive message on the issue, the Obama administration has ended up engaging actively and sometimes strongly with democracy promotion in several countries around the Middle East after the Arab Spring uprisings. However, The Obama administration response towards the Arab Spring movements mirrored double standards through which U.S. security and energy interests in the region took precedence over American values. That made it easier for the Obama administration to push enemies on political reform while accommodating or limiting change with allies protecting U.S. interests (See Table 3). The oil-producing Gulf monarchies, in particular, witnessed no change in their political structure.

**Table 3.1.**

*Characterisation of U.S.' Double Standards in the Arab Spring*

Arab Spring Movement	U.S Reactions
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The U.S. preferred to maintain the status quo.</li> <li>○ The U.S. supported the regime and called for democratic reform from within until that support became untenable.</li> <li>○ The U.S. encouraged democratic transition after the removal of U.S. long-standing allies .</li> <li>○ It also avoided taking actions against undemocratic behaviours of the new regimes.</li> </ul>
Egypt	
Yemen	
Bahrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The U.S. was more accommodating and called for restraint.</li> <li>○ It also considered the uprisings as a government-opposition dialogue.</li> </ul>
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The U.S. demanded a regime change directly after the start of the uprising.</li> </ul>
Syria	

*Note :* Adapted from *US Intervention in the 'Arab Spring'* by Abukhalil (2012).

Throughout the Arab Spring pro-democracy movement, the Obama administration was given a golden opportunity for supporting democratic reform in the Middle East where autocratic regimes was perceived as the cause of instability. However, in terms of lofty presidential democracy rhetoric, the conflict between national security and democracy promotion interests and support for economic and political development, Obama's policies were consistent with a long-standing U.S. tradition of protecting U.S. interests regardless of its moral obligation of protecting the rights of the region's population.

**3.2.1.1. Bahrain**

In Bahrain, the U.S. called for restraint but did not oppose the Saudi-led military repression of the Bahraini protests. For the U.S., Bahrain holds a significant strategic value. The Fifth U.S. Navy is based in the country, and therefore, an American criticism of the regime would endanger one of U.S. strongest military assets in the region. Furthermore, the U.S. could not afford discord between itself and Saudi Arabia which showed concern regarding Iran gaining influence in Bahrain should the Al-Khalifa regime fall or give in to popular calls for political reforms, granting the Shiite majority influence in the country's political system. Moreover, Saudi Arabia plays a central role in the war against Al Qaeda, a significant factor in this being its great influence within Yemen, and it possesses the power to affect and regulate the oil market (Andersen, 2012).

### **3.2.1.2. Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen**

In Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, the U.S. followed the "traditional game plan". When some favoured dictators cannot hold to power any longer, the U.S. would support them till it become impossible to defend them. Then, the U.S. would send them off somewhere and try to restore the "old order" while displaying an encouragement for embracing democracy (Chomsky & Vltchek, 2013). In all three cases, the U.S. did not call for a regime change, but opted for democratic reform from within the autocratic government. Nonetheless, when it became obvious that these regimes could not maintain their grip on power, the U.S. immediately demanded they step down. In the transitional period after the toppling of the old regimes, the U.S. prioritized the achievement of its interests over overseeing democratic reform.

Egypt, support for the protests was limited relative to the covert American tolerance for military repression of the masses. Throughout the post-Arab Spring Egypt, the U.S. maintained a business-like relationship with Egypt, turning a blind eye to Egypt's lack of democracy in return of security cooperation. The Obama administration regularly criticized the Egyptian military and authoritarian regime, first by denouncing the SCAF-led government repressive actions against protestors and opposition leaders, then Morsi's authoritarian grip of power, followed by al-Sisi's violations for human rights. Nonetheless, there was little to suggest that this criticism would turn into actions. Here and again, the U.S. strategic interests took precedence over promoting human rights and democracy (Hamid & Mandaville, 2013).

There are several cases in which the U.S. could have used its leverage to empower Egypt's reformist movement. In the wake of the spread of a viral video of an Egyptian woman being dragged and beaten in the street in protests that took place in December 2011, Hilary Clinton strongly criticized the situation in Egypt. However, she denounced what had happened without criticizing the military and she did not attach specific consequences to the events. A month later, the U.S. released a fairly positive report of communication between Obama and Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, the head of the SCAF and there was no sign of discord between the two parties (Pressman, 2013). The July 3 military coup is another example of a U.S. unwilling to use its leverage to pressure for democratic reform in Egypt. In the first days after the coup –though the U.S. refused to call it so- , the U.S. ignored the possibility of bringing both the Muslim Brotherhood and the army back to the political process. Once again, the U.S.

demonstrated a lack of willingness to outline a clear set of enforceable standards that would govern the army's future conduct. And though Washington could have used military aid as a bargain piece to quell the army, it chose not to (Hamid & Mandaville, 2013). In Yemen, after the ouster of Saleh, the Obama administration adopted a middling resolution whereby Saleh was replaced by his Vice President Hadi. The U.S. also did not criticize the deal that gave Saleh – a long time dictator – immunity and had Hadi elected in a sham one-candidate election. Because Yemen was and is a crucial element in American counterterrorism operations against Al Qaeda and the AQAP, toppling the regime was not a favourable move. Shifting the presidency to the long-time Vice President was a more appealing option (Pressman, 2013).

### **3.2.1.3. Libya and Syria**

As a response to the uprisings in Libya and Syria, the U.S. immediately called for Qaddafi and Assad to cede power, and ruled out the possibility for democratic reform from within the regime (though later, Obama reintroduced this option for Assad). The rationale for the Obama administration's desire for a regime change in these cases stems from the unstable relationship between the U.S. and these two countries. However, the type of intervention in Libya and Syria differed significantly due to the difference in their strategic importance. On the one hand, Libya held no concrete strategic value to the U.S. and Qaddafi's ouster would not have any serious implications. Prior to the uprisings, Qaddafi took significant steps to support terrorism and acquire non-conventional weapons to challenge Western opposition to his rule. In fact, as a result of the country's endorsement of terrorism, the U.S. halted relations with Libya and imposed sanctions on the Libyan government in 1986. The sanctions were lifted later in 2002 because Libya

had taken both legal and economic measures to bear the responsibility for its terrorist attacks and give up its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, U.S. oil imports from Libya were so miniature that they could be easily imported from elsewhere. Thus, the U.S. had no significant security ties with Libya and did not perceive Qaddafi as a pillar stable energy market. A change in the regime would not threaten U.S. vital interests in the region (Pressman 2013).

When considering the option of military intervention in Syria, the U.S. was not willing to deal with the risks and consequences of a sustained intervention. Despite President Obama's declaration in August 2011, that Assad must step aside, his administration calculus of interest, constraints and costs quickly rendered Syria and the Syrian people expendable. Syria has legitimate defences, such as chemical weapons, strong air-defence system, and a powerful military determined to do anything to stay in power. Also, the fact that both Russia, China and Iran supported Assad's regime discouraged the idea of an American intervention that could put the U.S. in a direct confrontation with any of these regional actors. Additionally, Syria represents a very complicated political situation for the U.S. It is bordered by Israel, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan and American intervention in the country ran the risk of aggravating the political situation the and subsequently harming the relative stability of Syria's neighbours. American officials believed the fall of the Assad regime would result in an increasingly sectarian and ethnic violence, as Sunnis would seek retaliation against their former Alawis oppressors, or as Kurds would revolt against Arabs (Kane, n.d.).

Chomsky and Vltchek (2013) argue that the U.S. and its allies would not allow functioning democracy to succeed in the region. Given the strong opposition to U.S. policies in the Middle East amongst the majority of the Arab world population, an actual U.S. support for democracy is highly unlikely. They further explain that " if you have a functioning democracy, then popular opinions would have some influence on policy. And it's pretty obvious that London, Paris, and Washington are not going to allow this to happen if they can help it"(pp.118-119).

### **3.2.2. U.S. Unfair Brokering in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict**

President Obama is credited for strongly articulating Palestinians' rights. In his Cairo speech in June 2009, Obama showed sympathy towards the Palestinian people struggle in their pursuit of a homeland. He also made promises to support "Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own. In a visit to the West Bank four years later, and front of an Israeli Jewish audience in Jerusalem, he reiterated his stance, denouncing their government's brutal treatment of Palestinians. "The Palestinian people's right to self-determination, their right to justice, must also be recognized," Obama insisted. The Palestinians' hope for a fair shake from the Obama administration was reinforced by its initial forceful insistence on Israel freezing settlement construction. These and other statement reflected changes in discourse but Obama's main criticism was falling short in devising any coherent strategy to translate such sentiments into policies that would effectuate those rights (Ruebner, 2016).

The Obama administration's approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was largely similar to past U.S. administrations. Twice, the U.S. arranged high-level

diplomatic negotiations with Palestine and Israel with the aim of an agreement on the two-state solution. However, in neither case did the negotiations prove successful. Like his predecessors, Obama was not willing to use U.S. leverage to compel Israel to make major concessions and the U.S., once again, displayed a bias in favour of its ally (Pressman, 2016). Soon, the Obama administration reverted to a more familiar trend of pro-Israel American policy.

On several occasions, Obama failed to deliver the promises he made for the Palestinian people. At the start of his presidency in 2009, Obama's approach was to get the government of Israel to commit to a freeze on settlements construction in the West Bank. However, his approach failed to bear results when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused. Ultimately, the U.S. and Israel settled on a nine-month partial freeze that lasted until late September 2010, after which Israel resumed construction work in East Jerusalem. Obama's inability to translate his rhetorical pledges into actions was most evident in his unwillingness to challenge the Israeli lobby and his refusal to consider sanctioning Israel for defying his policy goal of freezing settlements as a precondition for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to resume. As a result of Obama's emphatic and ambiguous demand for the Israeli to stop settlements in May 2009, the Israeli lobby reacted back in rage. AIPAC (American Israeli Public Affairs Committee) mobilized Congress where 76 senators and 328 representatives signed letters asking the president to stop his demand for a total settlement freeze. Feeling the pressure, Obama immediately appointed the typical Israeli-firster, Dennis Ross, as a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Central Region (the Middle East, the Persian Gulf,

Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia), with overall responsibility for the region. Ross worked to undermine and undercut Mitchell's efforts at the State Department to freeze Israeli settlement. In addition, in a July meeting with leaders of Jewish American organization, Obama shamefacedly apologized after being criticized for not being "even-handed" with the Israelis. Soon, it became clear that Obama's powerful speeches in support for Palestinian rights would remain inapplicable as long as Israel and its supporters in the U.S. continue to possess the power to quell the consequences for Israel's continued violation of those rights. The possibility of a sanction or even a warning was never an option for the Obama administration. In fact, the pro-Israeli lobby in the U.S. was and is so powerful that Israel could choose any course of action and gets its way. Interestingly, pressure from the Israeli lobby forced Obama to adopt an unbalanced incentives and punishments approach. The more Israel openly defied the U.S.' demands, the more incentives Obama tried to extend to Israel. For instance, in order to plead for Israel to extend its "fake" freezing of settlement building in 2010, the Obama administration offered twenty F-35 fighter jets and diplomatic protection at the UN. Israel, who knew these incentives could be obtained regardless of any commitment on its part, rejected the request (Ruebner, 2016).

Other example of the U.S.' biased mediation in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations are its protection of Israel's impunity for its violations of UN resolutions and international law , hampering Palestinian efforts to reinternationalize the issue, and providing Israel with unprecedented massive military aid . In the pinnacle of the Obama administration's efforts towards preventing any critical international action against Israel,

the U.S. exercised its first and only veto to prevent a Security Council resolution that would condemn Israeli settlements expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The U.S. argued the veto was necessary because the resolution risked "hardening the positions of both sides" and ran the risk of moving them further away from reaching an agreement("United States vetoes Security Council resolution on Israeli settlements", 2011)

The message was clear. The Obama administration could criticize its ally, Israel, but would not allow the UN to take any action against it. Furthermore, though the Obama administration advocated Palestinian rights in international forums, it quickly shifted gears when the Palestine Liberation Organization bid for statehood and full membership in the UN. The Obama administration made sure that Palestine would not become a full member state of the UN by trying to mobilize several countries to defeat the Palestinian initiative. Nonetheless, President Abbas submitted Palestine's application for UN membership in September 2011. The General Assembly voted 138-9 with 41 abstentions, granting Palestine permanent "non-member observer status" in November 2012, much to the dismay of the U.S. who denounced the initiative as a "unilateral". Finally, Israel's notorious abuse of U.S. weapons in Gaza to drop bombs and fire missiles on Palestinian civilians in residential areas and destroy their infrastructure only shows the degree of U.S. complicity in Israel's human rights violations. Under the Obama administration, annual military aid increased from \$2.55 billion to \$3.1 billion and Obama justified this increase by his responsibility to protect Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (a term that refers to a law during George W. Bush administration that requires U.S.

to assess any potential weapon sale to the Middle East that could allow for a country or a combination of countries to battle Israel evenly). In September 2016, the U.S. and Israel signed a new ten-year memorandum of understanding, replacing the expiring agreement from the Bush administration. Under the new deal, the U.S. will increase military aid to Israel to \$3.8 billion per year, including \$500 million annually allocated to missile defence system programs. The new deal also phased out a provision that which allows for Israel to spend 26.3% of its U.S. military aid on its weapon industry. Eliminating this provision will allow for Israeli weapon markets to continue researching and developing sophisticated weaponry that are field-tested on Palestinians under military occupations and then exported globally(Ruebner, 2016).

Although Obama has articulated Palestinian rights more strongly and eloquently than any of his predecessors, U.S. policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was largely drawn in favour of Israel. His unwillingness to take actions against Israel's defiant behaviour, covering for its war crimes in the international arena, and even U.S. massive military aid signalled that the change in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric would not be translated into actions. When Obama left office, the prospects of a two-state solution were very dim, if not extinguished.

### **3.2.3. Containing a Rogue State with the Iran deal**

For decades, the U.S. and its allies have worked hard to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons since a nuclear-armed Iran would directly threaten Israel, destabilize the region, and pose a security risk in the Middle East region. With nuclear weapons, Iran could pose a great threat to the U.S.' closest allies in the region. In

particular, Iran's leaders have repeatedly declared that Israel should be wiped out of the map. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and other conservative Gulf monarchies expressed deep concern with Iran's aggressive regional policy and feel strongly threatened by the prospects of Iran's possession of nuclear weapons. In addition, Iran's pursuit of nuclear arms has spurred an increase in arms sales by its neighbouring countries, and Iran's quest may spark a nuclear arm race in the Middle East that would further destabilize this already troubled region. The U.S. and the international community fear that instability in the region would harm the global economy's well-being. Though the U.S. has recently become a net exporter of oil, its economy is still largely dependent on the stability of international markets, which still require a steady supply of oil from the Middle East. Furthermore, a nuclear-armed Iran would further encourage Iran's aggressive foreign policy, including its engagement with Syria, its attacks against Israel through Hezbollah and Hamas and its sponsorship of rebels in Yemen. This emboldened nuclear-armed Iran- the U.S. fears- would likely be in confrontation with the international community. Finally and most importantly, the possibility that Iran would share its nuclear technology with extremist groups hostile to the U.S. and its allies was to be blocked at any cost ("The Iran Nuclear Threat: Why it Matters", n.d.).

To preclude Iran from advancing its military agenda, the U.S. has adopted a policy of a "carrot-and-stick" policy whereby the "carrots" are economic or other incentives and the "stick" refers to sanctions and other means of pressure. Over time, the policy has turned all to "sticks" (Amirahmadi & ShahidSaless, 2013). Obama attempted several options on the table to get Iran to negotiations as part of his foreign policy, but his

efforts were quite unproductive with Ahmadinajad's administration which contained the religious conservative military who domestically supported advocated disengagement with the U.S. In 2013, confronted with Rouhani, who is a liberal reformist and more open to negotiation, Obama reconceptualized the hard power military itinerary to a more forced diplomacy based on soft power, "punishment" and "containment"(Khalid, 2017).

With the harsh devastation experienced by the Iranian economy and the elections of more moderates to the Iranian government, the U.S. was able to reach an agreement to halt the Iranian nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief in through the JCPA in 2015. The JCPA constrained Iran's nuclear options for at least 10 to 15 years, through a combination of physical limits on fissile material production and verification provisions. JCPA proponents argue that it could ultimately undermine advocates of nuclear weapons inside Iran by reducing the threat of military conflict with the U.S. and increasing the benefits of economic integration, all of which would be jeopardized if Iran pursues nuclear weapons. Assuming that Iran's motivation has not fundamentally changed, the risk is less that Iran will suddenly dash for a bomb after fifteen years. In addition, Iran's declared nuclear facilities will still be vulnerable to military attacks (Samore, 2015).

Defending the agreement, Obama argued "this deal will make America and the world safer and more secure."Indeed, the deal has the potential to curb Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons for over a decade, which may result in global safety and peace in Middle East region. Bearing in mind the deal's potentials, the agreement may

constitute Obama's most significant foreign policy achievement and would be viewed as an integral part of his legacy.

### **Conclusion**

President Obama's Middle East foreign policy can be described as very cautious, contradictory, and sometimes confused. Facing economic and political pressures to minimize America's intervention in the region, Obama followed a post-American vision of hegemony. This vision was characterized by a decline in U.S. military commitments, shifting strategic leadership to other partners and regional actors, a narrow view of international interest, a reconsideration of America's world leadership limitations, and avoiding the lure of human rights considerations. Nevertheless, Obama's retrenchment from the Middle East never meant that the U.S. would abandon its strategic interests in the region. Instead, the Obama administration continued to devise ways through which the U.S. could maintain its control over the region. In doing so, the U.S. adopted more covert means to advance its interests in the region while maintaining a position of non-intervention. A combination of a use of drones' strikes, increased arm sales, mobilizing regional partners, double standards, and smart power, was the feature of Obama neocolonial strategy, through which the U.S. was able to be tough at a little cost.

# **General Conclusion**

## Conclusion

---

At the beginning of his presidency, Obama promised a change in America's U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. He talked about improving the relationship with the Arab and Muslim world and advocated for a partnership based on mutual respect and mutual interest. He also denounced his predecessor's liberal use of force and unilateral attitude towards addressing key issues within the region. Furthermore, he pledged to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq and stressed the importance of reaching an agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis to ensure stability in the region. However, as his administration struggled between advancing national security and democracy promotion interests, the former took precedence.

This dissertation aimed to investigate aspects of political and military neocolonialism in Obama's Middle East foreign policy that reflect a continuity of traditional U.S. practice in the region, by pursuing U.S. interests at the expense of the rights of the Arab and Muslim population there. It also highlighted the U.S. shift to subtler methods to maintain its dominance in the region. In doing so, this research paper started with an extensive explanation of the term "neocolonialism", and its political and military mechanisms. Then, it moved on to trace the historical development of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as a neocolonial one. In the second chapter, the study provided an insight into major U.S. foreign policy decisions during Obama's presidency regarding Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the Arab Spring movement and described some aspects of intended change. It also showed the Obama administration's initial framework for its Middle East foreign policy alternation as a result of regional events like the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIS, reiterating previous administration practices. The third chapter explored Obama's resort to more covert means

## Conclusion

---

of intervention in the region and his inability to translate his rhetoric of change in U.S.-Middle East relations because of political and military neocolonialism.

As austerity required budgets to be tighter and the American people grew disengaged and disillusioned with overseas wars, calling for commitments closer to home, the Obama administration had to explore new means of achieving strategic neocolonial objectives in conflicts abroad while minimizing the burden of American taxpayers, policy-makers and the military. A policy of "leading from behind" was adopted and it featured a combination of drones strikes, increased weapon sales, mobilizing regional partners, political double standards, and smart power.

On the military front, the use of armed drones helped reinforce Obama's policy of "no boots on the ground". The drone technology made it easier for the U.S. to achieve its military objectives without risking American lives or requiring a long military occupation. Additionally, the Obama administration's increased weapon transfer to Middle Eastern states was a calculative move by the U.S. to empower regional allies to share the security burden and adopt a more active role in policing the region, especially after the rise of ISIS. This move would prevent power vacuum when the U.S. turns its attention to the rising powers in the Asia-Pacific region, where U.S. hegemony is challenged strongly.

On the political front, the Obama administration mirrored previous U.S. administrations' pursuit for maintaining domination over the Middle East. Though the Arab Spring movements threatened to destabilize long-standing American allies in the region, the U.S. managed to secure its national interests through a policy of double standards. Security interests as seen through commitment to allies outweighed rights

## Conclusion

---

promotion. The U.S. frequently hesitated to support the pro-democracy movements and preferred to maintain the status-quo by pushing U.S. allies towards political reform to absorb popular anger. The U.S. also adopted a rather assertive democracy promotion with adversaries like Syria but was more accommodating with allies. For instance, the oil-rich Gulf monarchies have seen no change in their political structure.

Finally, the last aspect of Obama's neocolonial strategy in the region was his protection of America's most reliable partner in the Middle East, Israel. On multiple occasions, the Obama administration reiterated the former administration's commitment to support Israel and disregard Palestinians' right to a homeland. Obama also managed to remove an existential threat to Israel through the Iran Deal which curbed Iran's ability to possess weapons of mass destructions, and by that containing a long-standing rogue state in the region.

Further research is recommended to explore other aspects of neocolonialism in Obama's Middle East foreign policy such as the economic one. Moreover , further studies are needed to investigate the role that the media played in normalizing such covert neocolonialism during his presidency.

## References

- Abiziad, G. J. P., & Brooks, R. (2015). *Recommendations and report of the Task Force on US drone policy*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). The United States of America: The Stimson Center
- Abukhalil, A. (2012). US intervention in the 'Arab Spring'. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/28/us-intervention-in-the-arab-spring/>
- Al Sarhan, A. S. (2017). United States foreign policy and the Middle East. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 7(4), 454-472. doi: 10.4236/ojps.2017.74036
- Amirahamadi, H., & Shahidsaless, S. (2013). Avoid repeating mistakes toward Iran. *The Washington Quarterly*. 36 (1), 145-162. doi: 10.1080/0163660X.2013.751655
- Andersen, L. E. (2012). Bahrain and the global balance of power after the Arab Spring. Danish Institute for International Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/122258/1/719673976.pdf>
- Arena, P. (2017). Changing foreign policy: the Obama Administration's decision to oust Mubarak. *Revisita Brasileira de Política Internacional*, vol 60 (1). Retrieved from [https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0034-73292017000100220](https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0034-73292017000100220)
- Ashford, E. (2018). Unbalanced: Rethinking America's commitment to the Middle East. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/articles/ashford-ssq-november-2018.pdf>
- Bahrain: Unrest, Security, and U.S. Policy.(2019). Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1169131/download>
- Bennis,P.(1996). U.S. strategic reach in the Middle East. Retrieved from [https://ips-dc.org/us\\_strategic\\_reach\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east/](https://ips-dc.org/us_strategic_reach_in_the_middle_east/)
- Bensaid, A. (2018, December 11). How Yemen's Arab Spring turned into a proxy war. Retrieved from <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/how-yemen-s-arab-spring-turned-into-a-proxy-war->
- Bercovitch, J. (1991). *Superpowers and client states in the Middle East: Analyzing relations and patterns of influence*. In Efrat, M., & Bercovitch, J. (Eds). *Superpowers and Client states in the Middle East: The imbalance of Influence* (1-9). London: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/superpowersclien00efra/page/n9/mode/2up>
- Blanchard, W. (1996). *Neocolonialism American style, 1960-2000*. Retrieved from

## List of references

---

<https://archive.org/details/neocolonialismam00blan/mode/2up?q=Neocolonialism+American+Style%2C+1960-2000>

- Bowman, B. L. (2012). *U.S. military presence in the Middle East is unnecessary and counterproductive*. Retrieved from [https://www.vashonsd.org/cms/lib8/WA01919522/Centricity/Domain/120/USMilitaryMidEastNO.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2mKWOz\\_3voz3qq\\_2LfHXok\\_uJCDbjXSHmNVEZ6x2o\\_9UFJdsxuTgXXzf0](https://www.vashonsd.org/cms/lib8/WA01919522/Centricity/Domain/120/USMilitaryMidEastNO.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2mKWOz_3voz3qq_2LfHXok_uJCDbjXSHmNVEZ6x2o_9UFJdsxuTgXXzf0)
- Case, B. , F& Siebens, J. (August 2012). The Libyan civil war: Context and consequences. THINK International and Human Security. Retrieved from <http://www.thinkihs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Siebens-Case-LibyaSReport-2012.pdf>
- Celso, A. (January 2013). *Obama and the Arab Spring: The strategic confusion of a realist-idealist*.doi: 10.4172/2332-0761.1000115
- Chomsky, N., & Vltchek, A. (2013). *On western terrorism: From Hiroshima to drone warfare*. London: Pluto Press.
- Clinton, H.R. (2011). Gala dinner celebrating the U.S.-Islamic world forum. Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/04/160642.htm>
- Cotler, I. (2012, November 29). *Unilateral Declaration/premature recognition of a Palestinian state*. Retrieved from <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/unilateral-declaration-premature-recognition-of-palestinian-state-26-jun->
- Culter, L. (2017). *President Obama's counterterrorism strategy in the war on terror: An assessment*. New York: Palegrave Macmilan. Retrieved from [https://books.google.dz/books?id=\\_E0sDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA4&dq=culter%202017%20DRONE%20INTERROGATING%20TERRORISTS%20IS%20NO%20LONGER%20AN%20URGENCY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUK](https://books.google.dz/books?id=_E0sDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA4&dq=culter%202017%20DRONE%20INTERROGATING%20TERRORISTS%20IS%20NO%20LONGER%20AN%20URGENCY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUK)
- Dodge, T. (2018). U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. In Cox, M., & Stokes, D. (Eds). *US foreign policy* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Pp.179-180. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from [https://books.google.dz/books?id=P1ZYDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+interventionism.pdf&hl=ar&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8n\\_XmovoAhU0RRUIHYHhBhoQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=P1ZYDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+interventionism.pdf&hl=ar&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8n_XmovoAhU0RRUIHYHhBhoQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- East Asian Strategic Review. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/e2010.html>
- East Asian Strategic Review. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/e2014.html>

## List of references

---

- El Mansour, M. (2004). *U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East since the 19th century*. Retrieved from <https://teachmideast.org/articles/u-s-foreign-policy-in-the-middle-east-since-the-19th-century/>
- Ending the Yemen Quagmire: Lessons for Washington from Four Years of War.(2019, 15 April). *Crisis Group* (Report No. 3). Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/003>
- Falola, T. (2001). *Nationalism and African intellectuals*. University of Rochester Press. The University of Rochester Press. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=zJ0H12tCCXUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Nationalism+and+African+intellectuals&hl=ar&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwir0f2U2IXoAhX4VBUIHefEAgYQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=Nationalism%20and%20African%20intellectuals&f=false>
- Gardner, T. (2010). *Diminishing resources: Oil*. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/diminishingresou0000gard/page/12/mode/2up?q=American+Orientalism%3A+The+United+States+and+the+Middle+East+since+1945>
- Gerges, F. A. (October 2012). *The Obama doctrine in the Middle East*. [ A joint publication from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, the Duke Islamic Studies Center, and ISLAMiCommentary] Retrieved from [https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2012\\_The-Obama-Doctrine-in-the-Middle-East.pdf](https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2012_The-Obama-Doctrine-in-the-Middle-East.pdf)
- Gertler, J. (2011, March 30). *Operation Odyssey Dawn (Libya): Background and issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service.
- Ghosh, P. (Ed). (2020). *International Relations*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.).Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=X7DrDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA198&dq=manifestation%20of%20neocolonialism%20in%20ghosh&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjupcPu5MrrAhWmz4UKHvc->
- Haag, D. ( June 2011). *Mechanism of Neocolonialism: Current French and British influence in Cameroon and Ghana*. Barcelona: Institut Català Internacional per la Pau.
- Halabi, Y. (2009). *US foreign policy in the Middle East*. Queen's University.Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/YakubHalabiUSForeignPolicyInTheMiddleEast/mode/2up?q=us+foreign+policy+in+the+middle+east>
- Hamid, S., & Mandaville, P. (September 2013). A coup too far: The case for ordering U.S. priorities in Egypt. Brookings Doha Center.
- Hartung, W. D. (2015, October 20). U.S. arms transfers to the Middle East: Promoting stability or fueling conflict?.[Web log post.]. Retrieved from <https://securityassistance.org/blog/us-arms-transfers-middle-east-promoting-stability-or-fueling-conflict>

## List of references

---

- Hertz, E.E. (2008, March 7). The US Congress in 1992. Retrieved from [http://www.mythsandfacts.org/article\\_view.asp?articleID=100](http://www.mythsandfacts.org/article_view.asp?articleID=100)
- Holmes, P. (2004). (Ed.). *Dictionary of politics and government*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Bloomsbury Publishing. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/ColinDictionaryOfPoliticsAndGovernment.pdf/page/n3/mode/2up>
- Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-terrorism. (n.d.). Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [Fact Sheet No. 32]. New York: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Jahanbegloo, R. (June 2009). The Obama Administration and Iran: Towards a constructive dialogue. (Working Paper No. 43). The Centre for International Governance Innovation.
- Jervis, D. (2017). Obama and the Middle East. Faculty of Political Science Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.
- Kane, S. (n.d.). The United States and the Arab Spring: Implications and the case studies of Libya and Syria. Paper presented at the Young Scholar Conference, Panel 3, Giza, Egypt.
- Katzman, K. (2012, April 13). Bahrain: Reform, security, and U.S. policy. Retrieved from [https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20110321\\_95-1013\\_6f0473e895ed048ee81a9dc3a23239d9c5457987.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3dtNKruRnSn9lo4wBHbin8OqY8DW49SqYMjnOBGgB2obKUeQWVgeCc3rw](https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20110321_95-1013_6f0473e895ed048ee81a9dc3a23239d9c5457987.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3dtNKruRnSn9lo4wBHbin8OqY8DW49SqYMjnOBGgB2obKUeQWVgeCc3rw)
- Keene, S. D. (December 2015). *Lethal and legal? The ethics of drone strikes*. U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute.
- Khalid, M. (2017). *Obama Administration's foreign policy towards Iran*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313034191\\_Obama\\_Administration's\\_Foreign\\_Policy\\_Towards\\_Iran](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313034191_Obama_Administration's_Foreign_Policy_Towards_Iran)
- Kissinger, H. (1999). *Years of renewal: The concluding volume of his classic memoirs*. New York: Touchstone Center. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=nsi5hj6hBcEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=KISSINGER%201999%20%20YEARS%20OF%20RENEWAL&hl=fr&sa=>
- Kitchen, N. (January 2014). Structural shifts and strategic change: From the war on terror to the pivot to Asia. In Bentley, M., & Holland, J. (Ed). *Obama's foreign policy: Ending the war on terror*. pp. 62-75. Routledge. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291938193\\_Structural\\_shifts\\_and\\_strategic\\_change\\_from\\_the\\_war\\_on\\_terror\\_to\\_the\\_pivot\\_to\\_Asia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291938193_Structural_shifts_and_strategic_change_from_the_war_on_terror_to_the_pivot_to_Asia)

## List of references

---

- Lenin, V. I. (1999). *Imperialism the highest stage of capitalism*. Resistance Books. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=RfKMOwRb1-kC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Imperialism+the+highest+stage+of+capitalism&hl=ar&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjJxs3Mp6PsAhVOhlwKHdT9AkIQ6wEwAHoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=Imperialism%20the%20highest%20stage%20of%20capitalism&f=false>
- Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in Pakistan.(September 2012). Retrieved from <https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Stanford-NYU-Living-Under-Drones.pdf>
- Loffman, G. (2019). The Obama doctrine and military intervention, *XXIV*(1), 59-82. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism\Postcolonialism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.
- Macaluso, A. (August 2014). *The Apparent success of Iran sanctions: Iran, Rouhani, and the Nuclear Deal*. (Working Paper No. 2). The Hague Institute for Global Justice.
- Maizland, L., & Laub, Z. (2014). *The Taliban in Afghanistan*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551>
- Major Bases Used by U.S. Forces in the Middle East.(last updated 2020). Al Jazeera, Mapbox. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/13/us-military-presence-in-the-middle-east-and-afghanistan/>
- McCormick, J. M. (2011). The Obama Presidency: A Foreign Policy of Change?. In Steven, S. (Ed). *Transforming America: Barack Obama in the White House*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011) pp. 235- 266. Retrieved from [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/pols\\_pubs/21](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/pols_pubs/21)
- Migdal, J. S. (2014). *Shifting sands: The United States in the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=oCeuAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA328&lpg=PA328&dq=obama+inability+to+let+go+of+the+middle+east>
- Miller, P. D. (2020). Withdrawal deadlines in war: Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Atlantic Council.
- Modigs, R. (2003). *United States foreign policy in the Middle East after the Cold War*. (Published Master thesis) Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.
- Momayezi, N., & Rosenburg, R. B. (August 2011). Oil, the Middle East and U.S. national security. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1(10).
- Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neocolonialism the last stage of imperialism*. USA: International Publisher.

## List of references

---

- Nuruzzaman, M. (January 10, 2015). *President Obama's Middle East policy, 2009-2013*. Insight Turkey, Vol 17(1). Retrieved from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2641100](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2641100)
- Obama officials' incomplete reckoning with failure on Yemen.(2018, November 19). Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/19/obama-officials-incomplete-reckoning-failure-yemen>
- Patman, R. G. (January 2016). The Obama doctrine and the Syrian crisis, 2011-2015. Retrieved <https://books.google.dz/books?id=KF0pySH-ozsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Anti-Americanism:+History,+Causes+and+Themes.+Vol.+2.+Historical+Perspectives&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwifsvj728frAhWGRxUIHdvzCecQ6AEwAHoECAUQAg#v=onepage&q=Anti-Americanism%3A%20History%2C%20Causes%20and%20Themes.%20Vol.%202.%20Historical%20Perspectives&f=false>
- Peron, A., & Dias, R. (2017). 'No boots on the ground': Reflections on the US drone campaign through virtuous war and STS theories, 40(1), 53-71. *ContextoInternacional*.
- Pierce, A. R. (2013, December 18). US "Partnership" with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its effect on civil society and human rights.doi: 10.1007/s12115-013-9740-3
- Pressman, J. (2013). Same old story? Obama and the Arab uprisings. In Lesch, D. W., & Haas, M. L (Eds) *The Arab Spring: change and resistance in the Middle East* . 223-227.Boulder: Westview Press. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/arabspringchange0000unse/page/227/mode/1up?q=double+standards>
- Pressman, J. (2016, July14). Obama and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/07/14/obama-and-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/>
- Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal.(2015, August 5).The White House President Obama. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-president-iran-nuclear-deal>
- Reprieve. (2016). The Obama Administration and its opaque transparency on civilians killed in drones strikes. Retrieved from <https://www.reprieve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Obama-Drones-transparency-FINAL.pdf>
- Ross, D. B., & Jeffrey, J. E. (March 2013). Obama II and the Middle East: Strategic objectives for U.S. policy. Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

## List of references

---

- Ruebner, J. (2016, November 1). Obama's legacy on Israel/Palestine. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 46(1), 50–64. Retrieved from <https://libraryguides.vu.edu.au/apa-referencing/7JournalArticles>
- Saab, B. (2020, September 20). Arms sales can't replace U.S. engagement in the Gulf. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/20/arms-sales-cant-replace-u-s-engagement-in-the-gulf/>
- Samaan, A. G. (1972). The policy of containment and the Middle East, 1946-1958. (Published Master Thesis) Portland State University. Retrieved from [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1966&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1966&context=open_access_etds)
- Samore, G. (Ed). (2015, August 3). The Iran Nuclear Deal: A definitive guide. Retrieved from <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/iran-nuclear-deal-definitive-guide>
- Sartre, P. (2001). *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. (A. Haddour, S. Brewer, & T. McWilliams, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1964)
- Schulenburg, R. (2019, September 5). Obama and 'learning' in foreign policy: Military intervention in Libya and Syria. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/09/05/obama-and-learning-in-foreign-policy-military-intervention-in-libya-and-syria/>
- Sharp, J. M. (2011). Egypt: The January 25 Revolution and implications for U.S. foreign policy .Congressional Research Service .
- Shaw, I. G. R. (2013). Predator Empire: The geopolitics of U.S. drone warfare. *vol 18*(3), 536-559. Scotland: University of Glasgow.
- Silverburg, S. R., & Reich, B. (2016). *United States foreign policy and the Middle East/North Africa: A biography of twentieth-century research*. Rutledge. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=3u8sCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA146&dq=the%20united%20states%20and%20the%20middle%20east%20by%20Howard%201974&hl=a7GRoqEXHY#v=>
- Sterio, M. (2016). "President Obama's legacy: The Iran Nuclear Agreement?". *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 48(1), 69-82. Case Western Reserve University.
- Sylvan, D., & Majeski, S. (2013). *An Agent-Based Model of the Acquisition of U.S. Client States*. Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva.
- Tardelli, L. (2012). The United States after unipolarity: Obama's interventions: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya. UK: London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo (2009 June). Retrieved from

## List of references

---

- The Iranian Nuclear Threat: Why it Matters. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-iranian-nuclear-threat-why-it-matters>
- The Military Utility of Drones. (2010 July). Retrieved from <https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/118844>
- The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020(n.d.) . Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>
- Thomas, C. (2017, October 11). Arms sales in the Middle East: Trends and analytical perspectives for U.S. policy. Congressional Research Service.
- Tierney, D. (2016, April 15). The legacy of Obama's 'worst mistake' there's a problem with the American way of war. Retrieved from [https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/04/obamas-worst-mistake-libya/478461/?fbclid=IwAR2u1gH1zrsdJYdsr\\_DDXsof-jxkab-gqUHPqBlps7H\\_WNvJnCRVrezucIU](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/04/obamas-worst-mistake-libya/478461/?fbclid=IwAR2u1gH1zrsdJYdsr_DDXsof-jxkab-gqUHPqBlps7H_WNvJnCRVrezucIU)
- Torbat, D, A. (2020). *Politics of oil and nuclear technology in Iran*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=brPRDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA253&dq=joint%20comprehensive%20plan%20of%20action%20BY%20TORBAT&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwIU0qq2w7brAhURExQKHSO5D>
- Twining, D., & Kundnani, H., & Sparding, P. (2016). Trans-Pacific Partnership: geopolitical implications for EU-US relations. Policy Department, Directorate-General for External Policies.
- United States Vetoes Security Council Resolution on Israeli Settlements. (2011, February 18). Retrieved from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/02/367082-united-states-vetoes-security-council-resolution-israeli-settlements>
- Vercruyssen, V. (2013). American foreign policy: The Bush and Obama doctrine. [A dissertation prepared for summer seminar] University of ANTWERP, Washington.
- Vox. (2017, April 07). Syria's war: Who is fighting and why [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFpanWNgfQY>
- Wallin, M. (June 2018). U.S. military bases and facilities in the Middle East [Fact Sheet]. American Security Project. American Security Project.
- Walsh, J. I., & Schulzke, M. (2018). *Drones and support for the use of force*. The United States of America: University of Michigan Press. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=cZ92DwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=drones+as+a+tool+for+us+military+intervention&hl>
- Waxer, K. N. (2013). Explaining the United States-Israel relationship. (Published Master thesis). Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

## List of references

---

- Weatherby, J., Long, D., Alexander, W., Walsh, J., Cruikshanks, R., Gooden, R. ... Culver, J. (1987). *The other world: Issues and politics in the Third World*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/otherworldissues00weat/page/n3/mode/2up?q=the+other+world+%3A+issues+and+politics+in+the+third+world>
- Wood, D. L. (Ed). (2015). 2015 Index of U.S. military strength: Assessing America's ability to provide for the common defense. The Heritage Foundation.
- Yambert, K. (Ed). (2016). *Security issues in the greater Middle East*. Praeger. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dz/books?id=kBoADAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=security+issues+in+the+greater+middle+east+by+karl+yambert&hl=>
- Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention.(2017). Congressional Research Service [Report 43960].
- Zenko, M. (October 2018). US military policy in the Middle East: An appraisal. Chatham House.
- Zhao, W. (2009). The new Middle East policy of the Obama Administration. *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 3(2), 12-24. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19370679.2009.12023127>
- Zohny, A. Y. (July 2017). american foreign policy and diplomacy during and after the Arab Spring, the challenge of democratization & the legacy of President Obama's Administration. *International Relations and Diplomacy, Vol 5 (7)*, 371-388. doi: 10.17265/2328-2134/2017.07.001

## المخلص

على الرغم من من أن الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لم تكن إحدى القوى الاستعمارية التقليدية في منطقة الشرق الأوسط إلا أن سياستها الأجنبية في المنطقة غالبا ما اكتست صفة الاستعمار الحديث. حيث منحت منطقة الشرق الأوسط الولايات المتحدة القوة للتدخل و إملاء سياسات محلية لحماية مصلحتها الحيوية في المنطقة. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى البحث في أسباب اخفاق المخطط الأول لإدارة أوباما نحو التغيير في سياسة أمريكا تجاه منطقة الشرق الأوسط, و ذلك بسبب المصلحة الاستعمارية الجديدة المتشابكة و التي تحكم علاقات الشرق الأوسط الأمريكية لدهور. تقدم هذه الدراسة شرحا لمفهوم الاستعمار الحديث و استعراضا للتطور التاريخي لسياسة الولايات المتحدة في الشرق الأوسط, من سياسة الانعزال الى التدخل العالمي الى الاستعمار الحديث. اعتمدنا في هذه الدراسة على المنهجية النوعية والتي تعتمد على معطيات أساسية و ثانوية. و لقد أجرينا مراجعة موسعة للدراسات السابقة, كما أن المعطيات و المعلومات التي ارتكز عليها البحث قد تم تحليلها نظريا. كما أولينا في بحثنا أهمية بارزة للسياسات الأجنبية الأمريكية تجاه أفغانستان, العراق, ايران, الصراع الفلسطيني الاسرائيلي, الربيع العربي, و بروز الدولة الإسلامية. أما فيما يتعلق بالنتائج انتهينا إليها من خلال هذه الدراسة حول مفهوم الاستعمار الحديث في السياسة الخارجية لأوباما في منطقة الشرق الأوسط, فتوصلنا إلى أنّ هذه السياسة أخذت المزيد من النماذج السرية عسكريا و سياسيا مثل غارات الطائرة بدون طيار, مبيعات الأسلحة العائلة, ازدواجية المواقف السياسية في الربيع العربي, و احتواء ايران من خلال شروط اتفاقية JCPA .

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** الربيع العربي ، التغيير، الشرق الأوسط، الاستعمار الجديد، اوباما ، السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية