



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Mohamed Khider University of Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages

MASTER THESIS

Letters and Foreign Languages
English Studies
Literature and Civilization

President Barack Obama's Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Syrian Civil War as a Case Study

Submitted and Defended by:

IKHENACHE Faten

Supervisor:

Dr. KERBOUA Salim

Board of Examiners:

Mrs Zeyneb BOUGOFA MAB University of Biskra Chairperson

Dr Salim KERBOUA MCA University of Biskra Supervisor

Mr Abdelnacer BENABDELREZAK MAB University of Biskra Examiner

Academic Year: 2019-2020

Declaration

I, Faten Ikhenache, declare that this thesis is the result of my investigation. Except for the quotes, no part of the dissertation was copied from any other source or written by someone else. The reference is made, whenever necessary, to the works of other researchers.

Dedication

To my honorable parents, Ikhenache Abdellatif and Allem Louiza. To the fountain of generosity and trust, to those who sacrificed their time to finish my study. The one who guided me to the path of faith and knowledge, and planted in me the seeds of security and psychological comfort, may God extend their life and bless them both. To my brother wail, and my sisters Malak, Rahma, and Jihan. To my dear aunt Nadia and her lovely daughter Kawther. To all the teachers who taught me from primary education to the present day.

Acknowledgments

To reach this moment would not have been without divine intervention. My success is not but through Allah. Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return. I praise Allah for having enabled me to accomplish this research. I am also enduringly thankful to my supervisor Dr. Kerboua Salim. This research could never have been accomplished without his expert academic guidance, advice, criticism, and suggestions. I would like also to thank Mr. Nabil Fezzai for his help. I also would like to thank the board of examiners, my great teachers: Mr Benabderezzak Abdenacer, Ms Bougofa Zineb, and Ms Cheriet Asma, who have accepted to read and evaluate my thesis. Also I would like to thank all my teachers at Mohamed Khidher University. To my Syrian friends Ala'a Elsheikh (Abu Oday), and Ahmed who were the motivations for which I studied the case of Syria. To all those who planted optimism in our path and provided us with assistance, facilities, ideas and information, have our thanks.

Abstract

The foreign policy of a country is an expression of its interests, as there is neither friendship nor permanent enmity, rather there is permanent interests. The United States has many interests in the Middle East that seeks to achieve and protect using all means, whether diplomatic, economic, and military. Through which it was able to impose its presence and hegemony in the region. The main goals of the United States' foreign policy in the Middle East focus on exploiting oil, protecting its strategic allies, countering terrorism, and spreading democracy and human rights. Nevertheless, during the Obama administration, the United States did not react quickly to support democratic change in North Africa and the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011. The Obama administration' reaction towards each country depend on the country's importance for the United States. His administration's foreign policy towards the counties that witnessed the Arab Spring was characterized by duplicity and contradictions. We took the Syrian conflict as a case study.

This study seeks to investigate the real motives and objectives of the Obama administration's foreign policy with regard to the civil war in Syria (2011-2016). It historically traces the first U.S. presence in the Middle East and its main interests and policies in the region. Also it examine President Obama's foreign policy conduct towards the countries that witnessed the Arab Spring, mainly the Syrian conflict. This research uses the Syrian conflict as a case study to contrast the United States' democracy agenda and the alleged principles with the real interests behind the mechanism of its implementation. This work utilized the historical research approach as well as descriptive and analytical methods to study the United States' history in the Middle East.

Key words: President Obama's foreign policy, Middle East, Arab Spring, U.S. interests.

المخلص

السياسة الخارجية لدولة ما هي تعبير عن مصالحها، فلا صداقة ولا عداوة دائمة، بل هناك مصالح دائمة. للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية مصالح عديدة في الشرق الأوسط تسعى لتحقيقها وحمايتها بشتى الوسائل سواء كانت دبلوماسية، اقتصادية أو عسكرية. تستطيع من خلالها فرض حضورها وهيمنتها في المنطقة. تركز الأهداف الرئيسية لسياسة الولايات المتحدة الخارجية في الشرق الأوسط على استغلال النفط وحماية حلفائها الاستراتيجيين ومكافحة الإرهاب ونشر الديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان. ومع ذلك ، خلال إدارة أوباما، لم تتفاعل الولايات المتحدة بسرعة لدعم التغيير الديمقراطي في شمال إفريقيا والشرق الأوسط منذ بداية الربيع العربي في عام 2011. يعتمد رد فعل إدارة أوباما تجاه كل دولة على أهمية الدولة بالنسبة ل الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. اتسمت السياسة الخارجية لإدارته تجاه البلدان التي شهدت الربيع العربي بالازدواجية. أخذنا الصراع السوري كحالة لدراسة..

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في الدوافع والأهداف الحقيقية لسياسة الخارجية لإدارة أوباما فيما يتعلق بالحرب الأهلية في سوريا (2011-2016). وتتبع تاريخياً الوجود الأمريكي الأول في الشرق الأوسط ومصالحها وسياساتها الرئيسية في المنطقة. كما تدرس سلوك السياسة الخارجية للرئيس أوباما تجاه الدول التي شهدت الربيع العربي ، وخاصة تجاه الصراع السوري. يستخدم هذا البحث الصراع السوري كدراسة حالة لمقارنة أجندة الديمقراطية الأمريكية والمبادئ المزعومة بالمصالح الحقيقية الكامنة وراء آلية تنفيذها. أستخدم في هذا الموضوع نهج البحث التاريخي بالإضافة إلى الأساليب الوصفية والتحليلية لدراسة الأحداث في تاريخ الولايات المتحدة في الشرق الأوسط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سياسة الرئيس أوباما الخارجية ، الشرق الأوسط ، الربيع العربي ، المصالح الأمريكية

List of Abbreviations

AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
AP	Arab Spring
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EPAA	European Adaptive Approach
FSA	Free Syria Army
JCPOA	Joint comprehensive Universal Plan of Action
JPA	Joint Plan of Action
IS	Islamic State
ISF	Iraqi security forces
ISI	Islamic State in Iraq
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISL	Islamic State in the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
LAF	Lebanese Christian armed forces
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MNF	Marines in a Multinational Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLA	National Liberation Army
NNPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
OOD	Operation Odyssey Dawn
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation

PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
TAPLINE	Trans-Arabian Pipeline
YPG	Kurdish people's Protection Units
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
U.S.A	United States of America
USSR	Union Soviet Socialist Republic
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTC	World Trade Center
WWI	World War one
WWII	World War Two
9/11	The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001

List of Figures

Figure 1: History of Energy Consumption in the United States (1776-2012).....	6
Figure 2: Countries Bombed During Obama’s Presidency 2009-2016.....	20
Figure 3 : Static Map of Control in Syria.....	42

Table of content

Declaration	II
Dedication.....	III
Acknowledgments	IV
Abstract	V
المخلص	VI
List of Abbreviations.....	VII
List of Figures	IX
Table of Contents	X
General Introduction	1

Chapter One

The United States Intervention in the Middle East: A Historical Overview

1.1 Introduction	5
The United States' Foreign Policy in the Middle East Before and During the Second World War	5
1.2 The United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East after the Second World War.....	7
1.2.1 The Arab-Israeli Conflicts and Israel's Invasion of Lebanon (1982)	8
1.2.2 Syria Coup D'état (1949)	10
1.2.3 Iran Coup D'état (1953)	11
1.2.4 The Iraq-Iran War (First Gulf War 1980)	12
1.2.5 The Iraq-Kuwait War (Second Gulf War 1990)	14
1.2.6 The United States' Invasion of Iraq (2003)	15

1.3 Conclusion.....	16
---------------------	----

Chapter Two

President Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy towards the Middle East and the Arab

Spring

2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 The Obama Administration’s Middle East Policy	18
2.2.1 The Palestine-Israel Peace Process	20
2.2.2 The War On Terror	22
2.2.3 Efforts to Prevent the Weapons of Mass Destruction’s Threat	24
2.3 President Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy Towards the Arab Spring and the Challenge of Democracy Promotion	26
2.3.1 The United States’ Diplomatic Response to the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt.....	27
2.3.2 The United States’ Diplomatic Response to the Arab Spring in Libya and Syria.....	28
2.4 Conclusion.....	31

Chapter Three

The U.S. Attitude Towards the Different Actors Involved in the Syrian Civil War

3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 The U.S. Attitude Towards the Internal Actors in the War of Syria	32
3.2.1 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the Syrian Government and the Opposition.....	33
3.2.2 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the Situation of the Kurds and the Islamic State in the Levant.....	37

3.3 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the External Powers Involved in the Syrian Civil War	39
3.3.1 The Obama Administration and Russia’s Involvement in Syria	39
3.3.2 The Obama Administration and Iran’s Involvement in Syria	43
3.4 Conclusion.....	45
General Conclusion.....	46
Works Cited	48

General Introduction

ملاحظة وجدت في مذكرة طفل صغير سوري: عندما تنتهي الحرب في بلدي, سننقل أبواب سوريا ونضع لافتة مكتوب عليها
(ممنوع الدخول), سنبكي فرحا لوحدنا كما عشنا أحراننا وحدنا.

A note found in a Syrian boy's diary: "When the war is over in my country, we will close Syria's doors and we will put a banner that says: (No Entry). We will shed tears of joy alone, just like how we suffered our grief alone."

The United States' foreign policy is known for its complexity and changes over history. Therefore, many critics considered understanding the United States' foreign policy as a hard task. Since the United States is a powerful nation and the most preeminent leader of the new world system, its foreign policy has great impacts on other countries, especially in the Middle East. Scholars and researchers, mainly in the fields of international history and politics, were interested in the conduct of the United States' foreign policy.

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, the United States was the uncontested and dominant power in the Middle East. It has played a major role in shaping the region policies. The Middle East's strategic location, its abundance of oil and gas, the support of the state of Israel and the recurrent crisis were the main reasons behind the United States interference in the region. The United States used all the means to save its national interests in the region and to keep the regional power dynamics of the Middle East relatively stable. Nevertheless, in late 2010, the Arab world witnessed a revolutionary wave of democratic uprisings. A set of protests swept the countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Starting from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and spreading all over the region. This democratic rebellions erupted against the autocratic long-term regimes that controlled these countries for decades. Some of these regimes were friendly regimes and strategic allies of the United States.

When President Obama took office in 2009, he announced during a speech in Cairo his intention to actively support democracy and freedom against dictators that are holding back the prosperity and progress in the majority of the Arab countries. Nevertheless, the Obama administration has chosen divergent responses towards these countries that witnessed the uprisings. For example, in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, at first, the Obama administration has not called for regime change despite the violence and crimes against the civilians, but later announced its support for the protesters' demands. In the Libyan case, beside the diplomatic support, there was a military intervention to support the governmental change in Libya.

The war in Syria started in 2011. To this date, it has been the longest war among the conflicts which erupted out of the Arab Spring. President Bashar El Assad has chosen to stay in power and preserve his regime. Many political and international relations observers view that he has adopted a brutal and oppressing behaviour towards the civilians. At the beginning of the demonstrations, the United States inaction led to the escalation of the crisis and the intervention of different external actors in the Syrian civil war. the Obama administration chosen to get involve indirectly in the Syrian conflict. Many U.S. political observers such as the commentator Nicholas D. Kristof criticized the Obama administration's policy for standing by and not intervening directly at the beginning of the war to put an end to Bashar's government before the situation worsened and turned into a Civil War.

Therefore, This research tries to answer the following questions: What were the motives and objectives behind the Obama administration's indirect involvement in the Syrian civil war? and what measures did President Obama take in that indirect involvement?. To answer these questions, a number of sub-questions needs to be answered: What are the main tenets of the United States foreign policy in the Middle East? What were the principles of the new U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East under the presidency of Barack Obama ? and how his

administration dealt with the events of the Arab Spring? Does the Obama administration have interests in toppling the Syrian regime? If not, for what reason?

The approaches that are used in this research to study the U.S. foreign policy are the historical, descriptive, analytical approaches. The historical approach depend on the objective evaluation and the study of events and facts within the historical frame of the research theme. This method will help to obtain an accurate account of the United States' foreign policy towards the Middle East in the past in order to get a clearer sight to its policy of the present. Furthermore, this approach seeks to engage with the contemporary and historical dynamics that explain U.S policy towards the Middle East. The description will help to provide an accurate rendering of the events that happened. The analysis of the events in the Middle East and of President Obama' foreign policy agenda towards the Syrian civil war, and his strategy in the Arab world will shed light on both the motives and objectives of the U.S. foreign policy towards the region.

The aim of the present research is to shed light on the foreign policy motives and objectives of the Obama administration with regard to the civil war in Syria (2011- 2016), and examining his foreign policy conduct towards that much complex conflict. The research also aims at understanding the principles of the United States' foreign policy towards the Middle East in general and Obama's foreign policy in particular by engaging with the contemporary and historical dynamics that explain U.S policy towards the Middle East. Also examines the divergences between what is declared as principles of US foreign policy and the mechanism of its implementation. The importance of studying President Obama's foreign policy towards the Syrian civil war is to help understanding how U.S. foreign policy makers view and deal with the Arab world.

The study relies on primary sources for information which include first person account: interviews, press conferences and speeches by U.S. presidents, mainly by President Obama. Also announcements made by U.S. officials as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. The Primary sources include, also, a graphic that shows the history of energy consumption in the United States. As well as a static map of control in Syria and a map of the countries bombed during Obama's presidency. Secondary sources include mostly scholarly books; reviews; reference books; dissertations; magazine and journal articles; annual reports.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter focuses on the historical overview of the United States interference in the Middle East's affairs before and after the Second World War. the chapter also serves to show the strategic importance of the Middle East and its containment of most of the world's energy resources that makes it a keystone in the United States' geopolitics. The second chapter explains the Obama administration's new strategy in dealing with the Middle East conflicts, especially his administration's policy towards the Arab Spring that spread in the Arab world. The third chapter deals with the response of the Obama administration to the civil war in Syria. Also it focuses on understanding the motives and the objective behind the Obama administration's indirect intervention in the Syrian civil war. As well as explains how the Obama administration dealt with the different external parties that are involved in the war. Finally, the three chapters together would help to offer answers to the questions of the research and a justification for the approaches and methods that are used in the current study.

Chapter One

The United States' Intervention in the Middle East: A Historical Overview

1.1 Introduction

The study of the United States Foreign Policy towards the Middle East starting from the second world war exposes the strategic, political, and economic objectives that led the United States to act in such manner towards the Middle East issues. Before the First World War (WWI), the United States had minimum interests in the Middle East's oil or any political issue or decision in the region. During the Cold War, the United States started to recognize the region's significance. Therefore, it started to involve deeply in the Middle East's affairs in order to prevent the influence of the Soviet Union from spreading out the region. Moreover, to protect and support the newly established state of Israel. As well as to create a strong economic and diplomatic relations with the countries of the Middle East. Furthermore, to launch its war against the Islamic movements and terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda that may affect the security and interests of the United States and those of its allies in the region.

1.2 The United States' Foreign Policy in the Middle East Before and During the Second World War

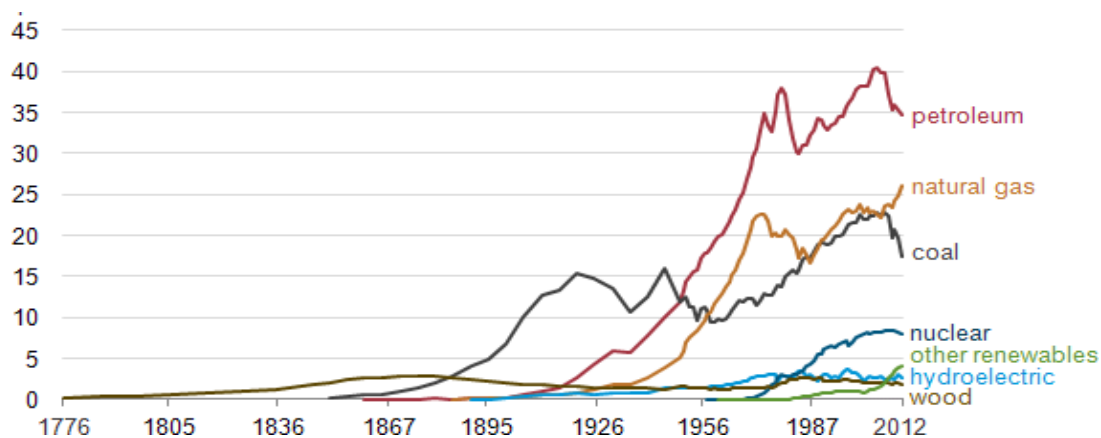
Before the Second World War (WWII), the United States' involvement in world affairs, namely the Middle East, was limited in comparison with the European powers. The latter, such as Britain and France, managed to colonize almost all of the countries of the Middle East after defeating the Ottoman Empire (Fawcett 40). To Lebow, the United States' objective was to evade competing with British interests in the Middle East. Therefore, the United States enjoyed a favorable image compared to other European countries in the Middle East since it seemed for them it has no colonial interest in the region. He also views that the United States' positive image was consolidated by President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points that supported the right of self-determination, liberation, and freedom. Nevertheless,

the United States took part in some designs represented in President Woodrow Wilson's support for the Balfour Declaration that was stated by the British government in 1917. That declaration aimed at facilitating the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The latter shows the contradiction in the United States' foreign policy. On the one hand, the United States is the supporter of freedom and democracy. On the other hand, it supported the establishment of Israel as an independent state at the expense of the Palestinians (501).

There were some connections made between the United States and the Middle East. An example of this collaboration is the Red Line Agreement on 31 July 1928. "The working agreement was signed setting up the first international consortium to exploit oil resources in the Middle East" (Demirmen par 5-9). According to Beauchamp, that agreement restricted the supply of petroleum and ensured that the major companies especially the American ones can control oil prices on the world market. The United States' oil companies become highly interested in prospecting and exploiting the Middle East resources, especially in Saudi Arabia. In 1933, Saudi Arabia under the Wahhabis monarch gave oil concessions to the Americans in return for U.S. military protection (par 1).

During the second world war, the United States consumed the oil stocks at an enormous rate as it is shown in the following graphic:

Figure 1: History of Energy Consumption in the United States (1776-2012)



Source: Dym, Warren, July 08, 2013.

Note: the consumption rate of petroleum and gas in the United States increased starting from 1940, as result of the industrialization. Therefore, the United States' need for a source of oil and gas was urgent to pursuit energy security.

The need for oil to sustain production and to supply American fighting troops abroad and to satisfy the need of its allies was urgent. The doubts spread that the reserves of the United States might not be adequate for future. Furthermore, the resources controlled by the British companies were not distributed equally. Therefore, in 1944, the Anglo-American oil Agreement was signed between the British and the United States governments who were concerned with taking control of foreign oil. That agreement divided the oil of the Middle Eastern countries and enabled equal access to the world's oil reserves. The aim was to get supremacy over the local companies (Stoff 59; Feist 1174-1175). Both agreements reflected the United States' intention to control the energy resources of Middle Eastern countries, mainly oil, and to avert the emergence of new powerful competitor that might threaten its interests and security.

1.3 The United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East after the Second World War

After the Second World War, the United States, like the European colonial powers before it, becomes incapable of resisting engaging in the region's political conflicts. After the War, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two main global compotators. The United States' allies had been weakened by the end of the war. Furthermore, they become enable to contain the Soviet ambitions in the region. Therefore, Washington followed a new strategy planned to contain the Soviet Union geopolitical expansion and to deprive it from getting access to vital oil resources in the region. This strategy, known as the Truman Doctrine, basically aimed at defeating the Soviet Union by limiting its influence. This strategy for the Middle East meant that the United States would fill in the void left by the two old colonial powers, France and Britain (Mccullough 547-548).

Due to strategic reasons the United States could no longer ignore the region. To Shuster, the United States was driven by the desire to maintain the Middle East's vast oil reserves in hands friendly to the United States, a wish to deter a potential competitor such as the Soviet Union. The United States shifted its attention towards the Middle East seeing it as the main strategically important area in the world. He also asserts that the United States became directly involved in the Middle East affairs to foster its position as the first power in the Middle East and the world by restricting the influence of the Soviet Union and containing the rise of new power. It also aimed at securing its strategic access to oil in the Gulf region and protecting the security of its allies. Therefore, the United States began an open diplomatic and military intervention in the Middle East (the U.S. role grows par 1-5). What is noticeable is that the alleged principles and claims of freedom, democracy, and humanitarian aims in the United States' foreign policy were different from what was measured on the ground. The preservation of the interests and security of the United States and those of its allies.

1.3.1 The Arab-Israeli Conflicts and Israel's Invasion of Lebanon (1982)

One of the crucial causes that led to the United States intervention in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflicts. The United States was committed to support and protect Israel. The United States' close relationship with Israel was one of the main aspects of the United States' foreign policy. The United States' support for Zionism started in 1948. U.S foreign service officer Evan Wilson argues that:

It is no exaggeration to say that our relations with the entire Arab world have never recovered from the events of 1947-1948 when we sided with the Jews against the Arabs and advocated a solution in Palestine which went contrary to self-determination as far as the majority population of the country was concerned (qtd in El Mansour par 12).

During Harry Truman presidency, the United States was the first to recognize Israel as an Independent state (Al-Sarhan 462). That situation increased the tension between the Jewish and the Arab states, causing a series of wars.

In the Suez War in 1956, France, Britain, and Israel led a military attack on Egypt, after Gamal Abdel Nasser's design to nationalize the Suez canal. Al-Sarhan argues that in order to avoid any Soviet intervention, the United States' President Eisenhower intervened to solve the conflict by sponsoring a UN decision disapproving the attack. The decision aimed at containing the Soviet expansion and improving Foreign relations with Egypt. The conflict was the starting point for the United States to emerge as uncontested Western power in the Middle East (462).

On July 15, 1958, a civil war erupted in Lebanon after a surprised coup d'état in Baghdad that resulted in the assassination of a pro-American leader. Wilson views that the coup created a fear of the complete elimination of the United States' influence in the Middle East. Consequently, President Eisenhower ordered for the first time the American troops to land in Beirut in order to protect Lebanon's Christian-led government from being deposed (18-19). Furthermore, during its two wars against Arab states in 1967 and 1973, Israel received from the United States military equipment and defensive weapons to defeat the Arab states. The two Wars had a great impact on the political and physical landscape of the Middle East. The latter transformed Israel as a major regional power. Israel has expanded its territorial boundaries and affirmed its military supremacy in the region (Yossef 5; Dette and Roell 7-8). Bani Salameh asserts that the United States sponsored agreements and treaties between Egypt and Israel that led to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of March 26, 1979, in order to maintain Israel's security (3-4).

As noted earlier, starting from the establishment of the Israel Government, Israel is viewed as a close ally of the United States and its safeguard against Soviet communism and Arab

nationalism in the Middle East. Therefore, since the cold war, Israel had received massive support from the United States such as financial aids, diplomatic backing to gain international recognition, and military assistance to protect the security of its territory (Al Sarhan 462). The Israeli government received full support from the United States during its invasion of Lebanon in 1982, against the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and in 2006 against Hezbollah. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon during its civil war that started in 1975. Israel's invasion was directed against the growing role of Syria and the PLO in Lebanon (Ryan 26-27). The United States' President Ronald Reagan agreed to send Marines in a Multinational Forces (MNF), a military peacekeeping, in the sense that it will protect the Palestinian civilians during the evacuation of PLO. Kelly asserts that despite their massacres against the civilians in Sabra and Shatila, the United States backed Israel and the Lebanese Christian armed forces (LAF) with materials and military support. Consequently, the MNF became a target especially the American troops (91-94). In 1983, the newly formed "Hezbollah" that was backed by Iran had committed two deadly attacks. Their operatives bombed a U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, followed by the devastation of the U.S. embassy by car bomb and westerns were taken as hostages, six of whom were Americans. The latter led to the withdrawal of the U.S. Marines from Lebanon. The American hostages' crisis increased the animosity between Iran and the United States (Levitt 2-3).

1.3.2 Syria Coup D'état (1949)

On March 30, 1949, a coup d'état was undertaken by Husni Za'im, chief of Staff, against the democratically elected President Quwatli in Syria. Little asserts that the coup was supported by Washington because President Quwatli threatened the United States' interests. President Quwatli blocked passage of a U.S. sponsored pipeline from the oil fields of Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean crossing the Syrian land. As well as he refused to sign a peace agreement with Israel and tolerated the existence of a strong communist party in Syria's

political scene. Therefore, Za'im received the support and help from the CIA to set up the plan for the coup. After Za'im took power, he gave the United States many important privileges regarding its interests in the Middle East. Za'im agreed to a truce with Israel and to end the conflicts. He also accepted the Trans-Arabian pipeline (TAPLINE). Furthermore, he banned the communist party and arrested its members. The United States wanted to protect its interests and planned to create pro-American regimes in the Middle East by supporting coups in the region (12-13).

1.3.3 Iran Coup D'état (1953)

In 1953 the nationalist Mohammed Mosaddegh became the Prime Minister of Iran. He opposed any foreign intervention in Iran, especially the British involvement in Iran. He chose to nationalize the Iranian oil industry which was controlled by the British through its Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). As a consequence, Britain provoked a world boycott of Iranian oil. That sanction caused a decline in Iran's economy (Risen 2). After the British and U.S. representatives failed to reach a compromise, Britain planned for military intervention. Risen asserts that the plan was dissuaded by the United States in the sense that it would attract the Soviet antagonisms. Therefore, in 1953 the UK, with the help of the United States orchestrated a coup d'état (Operation Ajax) to overthrow the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh and supported the monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1). The pro-American leader, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, made a compromise with the United States to ensure the long term of stability in the oil prices of the international oil market. Ervand Abrahamian, the Middle East historian, describes the coup d'état as a clash between nationalism and imperialism in the Third World. He states that the main focus of the coup was Iran's oil, for both the Americans and the British. Abrahamian asserts that

If Mossaddegh had succeeded in nationalizing the British oil industry in Iran, that would have set an example and was seen at that time by the Americans as a threat to

U.S. oil interests throughout the world, because other countries would do the same...

He wanted real nationalization, both in theory and practice (Abrahamian par 11).

Mossadegh wanted to restore the total control over Iran's oil and refused any solution that allowed a degree of foreign control. Operation Ajax was the first covert action for the United States to depose a leader of a foreign government during peacetime. The United States policy was based on the notion that Iran was a stable, reliable ally. However, in 1979, the United States' backed Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown after months of marches and strikes against his rule. Moreover, a hostages' crisis erupted after 52 U.S. personnel were taken as hostages. After Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took power, the United States President Carter started asking for the release of the hostages (Stravato 1-6; Peel 4-8). Furthermore, he addressed Khomeini asking him to: "...recognise the compelling humanitarian reasons, firmly based in international law, for doing so" (qtd in Peel 8). As well as he asked for talks, yet all too little affect. The latter escalated tensions between the United States and Iran. As a consequence, the United States placed an embargo for the first time on the importation of Iranian oil (Clawson 1).

1.3.4 The Iraq-Iran War (First Gulf War 1980)

On September 22, 1980, the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded Iran. Al-Lihaibi asserts that the main reasons behind Saddam's invasion of Iran was to gain territory, protect his oil interest, and to control the waterway between both countries. According to Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini was threatening his regime by supporting the majority suppressed Shiite in Iraq (3-4). In May 1982, Saddam lost most of his territorial gains and was pushed back to borders by the Iranian forces. As a consequence, in June 1982, Saddam proclaimed a unilateral cease-fire but Iran refused and invaded Iraq. In 1984, both countries attacked and destroyed a third-country's oil tankers in the middle east. Indeed, Iran started attacking the Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian oil tankers. However, the United States and the former Soviet

Union got involved to protect the countries' tankers. After eight years of war, Iran accepted UN resolution 598 for a cease-fire on July 20, 1988 (Hardy par 1-20). Shuster asserts that at the beginning of the war, the United States declared its neutrality. But that did not stop it from aiding Iraq. Besides President Reagan's humanitarian aid, he used the CIA to provide Iraq with highly classified intelligence to detect the weakness of the Iranian forces. He also argues that the United States gave Iraq hundreds of million dollars of economic aid in order to allow Iraq to spend on importing weapons. Additionally, Iraq was supported by Kuwait, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to obtain advanced weapons and expertise on a larger scale than Iran. Before the Iraq-Iran war, the United States had no relations with Iraq due to the country's anti-Israel stance during the 1967 war. Shuster viewed that the Khomeini's Islamic revolution in Iran and the American hostages crisis in 1980, strained the relations between the United States and Iran. Therefore, the United States support of Iraq was largely to prevent an Iranian victory (U.S. links to Saddam par 4-5). The United States considers Iran the source of exporting Hezbollah modal of terrorism and Anti-Americanism ideology in the region. That is seen threatening the security and interests of the United States in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the United States has shown duplicity by arming both sides in order to guarantee first which side will dominate the vital oil region. Despite the embargo against selling arms to Iran. In 1985, President Reagan saw that Iran' need for weapons as opportunity to re-open diplomatic relations with Iran. Therefore, he approved to make a secret deal with the Iran government. That aimed at selling arms to Iran in return for its help in releasing the seven American hostages who were captured by Hezbollah and to improve their relations with Lebanon. In 1986, America's secret arms deal came to light as the Iran-contra scandal, in response the United States averted Iran and throw its total support behind Iraq (Hersh 1; Iran-Contra Affair par 1-2).

1.3.5 The Iraq-Kuwait War (Second Gulf War 1990)

By the end of the Iraq-Iran war on August 20, 1988, Iraq was in the middle of a large debt after it borrowed from different countries to finance the war. Its debt with Kuwait was estimated at \$14 billion. Iraq's economy was in a crisis that crippled the economic situation of the country. Consequently, Saddam Hussein asked from the Emir of Kuwait Jaber Al-Ahmed to cancel the Iraqi debt. Saddam also asked Kuwait to reduce its share of oil production so as to raise oil prices in the market to benefit Iraq's economy. The Emir neither cancelled the debt nor reduced its oil production. However, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates agreed with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to somehow decrease in oil production. Nevertheless, on August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Kuwait starting what was to be known as the second Gulf War after a meeting with then-US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, who told him that the US has "no opinion" on Arab-Arab disputes (Pariona par 1-6). The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was believed to provide Iraq with extra financial resources of 20% of the global oil supply for the economic reconstruction (Karsh and Rauts 18). The National Security Council (NSC) instantly ordered the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait but the demand was ignored. That prompted the UNSC to legislate on August 6, 1990, an international trade ban with Iraq. Furthermore, the CIA warned President George H.W. Bush that Saudi Arabia, the source of the world's largest exported oil, was threatened (Estes 1). On January 16, 1991, the United States led an international coalition unleashing Operation Desert Storm against the Iraqi troops in Kuwait. Estes asserts that the United States' intentions were not only to defend Kuwait but also was to eliminate one of the strongest armies in the Middle East that may threaten the oil-exporting countries, namely Saudi Arabia which may lead to another international oil crisis (2-7). The outcomes of the Gulf War are important to understanding subsequent of the United States military and foreign policies more generally. The War was a

turning point in the international politics of the Middle East and a confirmation of the fact that the United States and other major economic powers would not allow a single regional leader to control, directly or indirectly, the oil of the Persian Gulf.

1.3.6 The United States' Invasion of Iraq (2003)

The United States' multiple interventions in the world's conflicts especially in the conflicts of many countries in the Middle East might have led to the emergence of the so-called Anti-Americanism. The United States was exposed to many terrorist attacks mentioning the 9/11 attack. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, that targeted World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City and caused extensive death and destruction. The United States' President George W. Bush accused Al-Qaeda for the attack and the Taliban for being a shelter of terrorism in Afghanistan. Moreover, he also accused other countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria of sponsoring and aiding terrorists who were threatening the United States, its allies, their interests, and the region's stability (Al-Sarhan 468). President Bush declared that "... Syria and Iran continue to harbour and assist terrorists...The United States lists both countries as state sponsors of terrorism because of their support for Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad" (qtd Al-Sarhan 468). President Bush inaugurated a pro-active policy shift in U.S. Middle East policy that highly focused on fighting what he viewed as terror. His administration termed such a fight as "the global war on terrorism". The Bush administration declared that it also wanted to promote Democracy so as to fight extremism (Dalacoura 64; Al-Sarhan 468).

On October 7, 2001, the United States supported by Britain and other countries, started its combat mission "Operation Enduring Freedom" by invading Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime. That regime was believed to harbour Osama bin La-den, Al-Qaeda leader, whom they accused of the 9/11 terrorist attack (Al-Sarhan 469). Later in 2003, the United States' President claimed that Saddam Hussein had - or was trying to- make weapons of mass

destruction (WMD), mainly nuclear ones. President Bush also accused Saddam of supporting terrorist groups including Al-Qaeda and he stressed the violation of human rights in Iraq (Hinnebusch 11). On March 20, 2003, the United States along with a coalition of forces mainly from Britain invaded Iraq to overthrow Saddam's regime (Manyok 3). Hinnebusch asserts that the quick and decisive victory against Iraq was a mean to send a message to the Arab World especially to recalcitrant regimes such as Syria and Iran that the United States' influence and hegemony were still present in the Middle East. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and Iraq contain the largest oil supplies in the world. He also views that the installation of permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, allowed the United States to develop a stronghold in the Persian Gulf to protect its interest (9). To Travis, President Bush's deal with the former Al-Qaeda allies in Iraq to bribe them to stop fighting the U.S. troops in the country made the investments in Iraq's oil more stable, This greatly boosted estimates of future oil supplies. As a result, oil prices plummeted, reaching less than \$ 40 a barrel as President Obama took office (103).

1.4 Conclusion

To Conclude, The United States did not involve deeply in the Middle East only after the Second World War. The United States' significant involvement in the Middle East affairs had three main objectives: having access to the oil of the middle east, guarantying Israel's regional dominance and maintain it as a strategical ally in the region by giving military, political and financial support, and restricting the influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The United States has overtly supported many oppressive regimes in the Middle East in order to pursue its interests in the region. The United States' interventions in the Middle East resulted in many wars and loss of life, especially in Iraq. The United States' interventions also led to the appearance of some kind of Anti-Americanism. The latter appeared that it has turned the United States to a target for terrorist attacks that manifested in the most memorable

terrorist attack of 9/11. Consequently, the United States followed a new strategy based on countering terrorism in the region. President Obama's foreign policy and his strategies in dealing with different conflicts and challenges especially the so-called Arab Spring in the Middle East was different in comparing the foreign policy of previous U.S. presidents.

Chapter Two

President Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East and the Arab Spring

2.1 Introduction

The United States Foreign policy from 2009 to 2016 was the foreign policy of President Obama administration. President Obama took office intending to reshape the United States' engagement in the Middle East. His administration has worked to find a solution to the conflicts in the Middle East that were left by his predecessor. His first concern was to make a Palestinian-Israeli peace process and to improve the distorted image of the United States in the Arab Muslim world. Furthermore, he set new parameters for the war on terror to be clearly defined. In addition to his efforts to prevent the weapons of mass destruction in the world. In 2011 a wave of democratic revolutions against the anti-democratic regimes swept North Africa and the Middle East. The latter had put the Obama administration in a challenge, securing its interest in the region or following the core principle of the United States' foreign policy, democracy promotion.

2.2 The Obama Administration's Middle East Policy

All of which began during the Bush administration was inherited by Barack Obama after his elections as president of the United States of America (USA). The Iraq War, the Afghanistan War, and various aspects of the War on Terror. On June 4, 2009, President Barack Obama delivered a speech at Cairo university in Egypt addressing the Muslim world. He proposed a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world in which he declared:

I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based

upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition (par1).

In his speech, President Obama outlined seven key elements that he said were the sources of tension between the United States and the Muslim world: warfare against violent extremism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear proliferation in Iran, the lack of democracy, religious freedom, women's rights in the region and the invasion of Iraq. Freedland asserts that President Obama aimed to rebuild the distorted image of the United States in the Muslim world. He views that President Obama wanted to break through the doubt and skepticism that accumulated over decades and to show that America is under truly new administration (par 1-12). In order to fix America's faltering foreign policy in the Middle East, strengthen its standing, and building its credibility in the region, President Obama shifted his foreign policy ideology from that of his predecessor and adopted a realist approach. He followed a soft power policy to deal with the conflicts in the region. He also adopted a more hands-off approach. For example in 2009, in the very first days of Iran's post-election protests, President Obama did not comment on the situation. After the violent crackdown on protesters, President Obama condemned the actions of the Iranian government. Nevertheless, he made a clear reference to respect Iran's sovereignty. The Obama administration officials at the time explained they were afraid that too much overt U.S. support for the protesters. The latter may lead the Iranian government to suspect that the United States wants a regime change. Consequently, Iran's leaders would be less likely to agree on restraining its nuclear program. In addition to the limited intervention in Lebanon's parliamentary polls that ended up with a pro-western parliamentary majority. Moreover, some issues took priority for the Obama administration, those that may endanger U.S.'s national security and interests (Bettiza and Phillips 12; Lake par 3- 4).

Since President Obama took office, he announced his intention to end U.S.-led wars in the world, especially in the Middle East and finish the war policies pursued by his predecessor. Nevertheless, during his 8- year presidency, President Obama has bombed eight countries, seven of which are predominantly Muslim countries:

Figure 2: Countries Bombed During Obama’s Presidency 2009-2016



Source: Reimann, Jakob, Jan 19, 2017.

Note: In 2009, President Obama received the Noble Prize not for a concrete action but rather for his commitment to peace. As well as for his ambitions and diplomacy-focused aspiration for resolving even the most difficult international conflicts. Nevertheless, President Obama launched airstrikes and in some cases led coalition in eight countries, trumping his predecessor George W. Bush by two.

2.2.1 The Palestine-Israel Peace Process

After taking office President Obama began his first term optimistically on all fronts. He started his Palestine-Israel peace process by holding a series of meetings with the

representatives of the two-states in order to find a final solution to end the long-lasting conflict. On May 18, 2009, President Obama held a meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. He discussed the need to stop the Jewish settlement growth under a 2003 Middle East peace 'road map' and the need for the creation of a Palestinian state (par 7-35). Furthermore, he held another meeting with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in which he tried to reaffirm some core principles that may move this process forward (par 1). During his speech on June 4, 2009, in Cairo, Obama declared:

The situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own[...] Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop (par 30-34).

He addressed both sides directly, calling on Palestinians to stop the violence and develop their own independent state and calling on Israel to respect Palestinian rights and to stop building settlements. According to Bettiza and Phillips, President Obama in his speech neither he appeared to press the matter and to demand clear and speedy actions nor he announced a new plan that would start the application of the peace process on the ground. The Muslim world's responses towards his speech were more positive especially in the host country and raised Palestinians' hopes towards the new administration. The United States' wishes for freezing the settlements were openly ignored by the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu in the days before and after the speech. Bettiza and Phillips also asserts that the relapse disallowed the administration from making further moves on Israel-Palestine policy during Obama's first term of office. As a consequence, the administration dropped its call for a settlement freeze (13). Despite the declarations against building settlements, in

February 2011, the US vetoed a National Security Council resolution that made Israel's settlements as being illegal. The latter made the Obama administration the first to block all National Security Council resolutions that were against Israel since 1967 (Singh 122). During his second term, Obama followed the same policy by delivering a speech in Al Quds in March 2013, calling the two-parties to revive peace talks for a "just peace." But after months of shuttle diplomacy and direct negotiations between both parties, it failed at the end in March 2014. To Norman, despite the Israeli airstrike on Gaza City in July 2014 that resulted in the death of more than 2,100 Palestinians, the United States continued to resupply the Israeli military with weapons. In September 2016, the longstanding military aid agreement was renewed at its highest level ever. Obama signed a \$38 billion military aid package, the largest to any country in history, to support the Israeli occupation over the next decade. As a result, the US's image as a biased broker that serves Israel's interests was ultimately reinforced (par 8-9).

2.2.2 The War On Terror

The United States found the alleged war against terrorism an opportunity to start a political and military campaign to establish military bases in the region, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Its objectives were to control oil reserves and to strengthen the United States' hegemony. Thus, President Obama asserted that terrorists were targeting not only the United States' security but also threatening the world's peace and security (par 20-22). Therefore, the war on terror has taken an important place in the United States's foreign policy.

During his speech in Cairo, President Obama wanted to redefine the parameters of the "War on Terror" or as he pointed out in his speech as "violent extremism." Instead of fighting a vague war against terrorism around the world, one that exhausted the United States's treasury, America would wage a clearly defined war against a "far-reaching network of violence and hatred." He meant "Al-Qaeda". Rather than fighting an open-ended war on

terrorism in the Middle East, the focus has shifted to a counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan. Furthermore, In his speech, President Obama addressed the issue of Iraq. He declared that he “ ordered the removal of our combat brigades ... we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically-elected government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities, ... and to remove all our troops from Iraq by 2012” (par 24-25). By 2010, Iraq's civil war was ended and Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was believed that it became irrelevant. On December 14, 2011, in a speech at Fort Bragg, President Obama confirmed that the United States' military will completely withdraw from Iraq, ending the eighth year campaign in the country (par 20). On the one hand, President Obama started the gradual withdrawal of the American troops from Iraq. On the other hand, it is asserted that he increased the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan which he considered as the central front in the war on terror (Obama confirms plan par 20). Furthermore, he commanded a mission was led by the CIA that allegedly resulted in the killing of Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and the organizer of the 9/11 attacks (Singh 67). Consequently, the U.S. withdrawal from the country left Iraq in departure. Mannina asserts that the Iraqi security forces (ISF) were unqualified to maintain the country's security and the Sunnis were left under the oppression and aggression of Iraq's Shia-dominated government during Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. The latter was supported by the Obama administration despite his use of contested methods to win Iraq's parliamentary elections over the Sunni political coalition (par 2). However, the United States' focus was to leave Iraq as soon as possible. Fitzgerald and Ryan believed that the Obama administration needed to put the Iraqi government in function to quicken the withdrawal of US troops. Subsequently, it damaged Iraq's democratic process and renewed the sectarian grievances, resulting in the Sunni insurgency against the government. They also asserts that the Obama administration's failure to set the conditions for a secure and democratic Iraq contributed to the reborn of terrorist organization under the name of the

Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), and by 2014, Iraq became the homeland for ISI. They captured the key cities in Iraq, advanced on Baghdad, and used stolen cash to build a well-funded and equipped terrorist army. Due to the increase of violence, human rights abuse, and terrorist attacks in the country, President Obama was forced to dispatch the U.S. troops to Iraq again where they remained to this day in order to preserve U.S. interests (26-29).

Iraq and Afghanistan appeared to be an epicenter of the spread of terrorist groups in the Levant (ISL) and the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), such as in Syria and Yemen. The latter has emerged as one of the more fertile locations for Al Qaeda activities due to its sectarian clashes. The Sleeper cells of terrorist groups in Yemen appeared to be responsible for previous as well as recent terrorist attacks against Western countries in the passing years, especially, Yemen's main allies, the United States and Saudi Arabia. Schanzer argues that the terrorist attacks were conducted by secret militants based and affiliates in the country that were linked to Al-Qaeda. As a consequence, in late 2009, the Yemen government had intensified operations against al-Qaeda along with the help of the United States. The United States conducted drones and missiles strikes against suspected targets. Yemen also shared intelligence with the United States who provided weapons to local proxy forces (517-523). As a response, Al-Qaeda controlled villages to build and prepare the army for counter-attacks. The clashes between the two sides, the Yemen government with the help of the United States against Al-Qaeda, started an open-ended war in Yemen (Siyech 13).

2.2.3 Efforts to Prevent the Weapons of Mass Distraction's Threat

Due to the spread of terrorist organizations in the Middle East, the United States was afraid that the weapons of mass distraction in what it viewed as fragile states may fall in the hands of some terrorist groups. The United States believed that the possession of these weapons represents a threat to the United States and its allies. As a consequence, more effort was made by the United States to prevent the possession of these kinds of weapons.

Moreover, President Obama declared his fears about these possibilities during his Speech in Prague. He adopted a diplomatic strategy to protect international security by pushing the countries which possess nuclear weapons towards disarmament and prevent the states that do not possess nuclear weapons yet to have access to them (par18). One of the Obama administration's concerns was to control what it viewed as Iran's ambitions to have nuclear weapons, even if it required the use of power to secure its interest in the Middle East and to guaranty the safety of its allies. After October 2009, through negotiations, the Obama administration worked to make a resolution concerning Iran's nuclear program. However, the United States viewed that it did not bring a positive result and it also believed that Iran continued to violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT) (Singh 62, 65-66).

Despite Iran's insistence on the peacefulness of its nuclear program, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1929 in July 2010. It imposed further sanctions, reaching to oil sanctions in December 2011, that affected the economy of the country. As a reaction, in 2012, Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz. As a result, Obama insisted that he might use military intervention as an option to prevent Iran from affecting international security and the economic stability in the world (Singh 55-56, 58). Finally, by November 24, 2013, The 5+1 powers, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany set an agreement with Iran called the Joint Plan of Action (JPA). That agreement required Iran to stop enriching uranium above 5% as well as to suspend other nuclear activities, and to facilitate the UN's weapon inspections. In return, the implementation of sanctions against Iran would be reduced (Telatar 52). The deal was renewed and the commitment beneath the temporary accord remained in effect until October 18, 2015. It was then renewed to a long term deal. The obligations started to be implemented on January 16, 2015, by both sides under what is known as the Joint comprehensive Universal Plan of Action (JCPOA). That plan was to last through October 2025. The agreement was extended several times and extra

commitments were added (Davenport par 1). The Obama administration announced the deployment of a missile defense system, the European Adaptive Approach (EPAA). The latter was undertaken under the supervision of the NATO body. Telatar asserts that the design was in order to protect the United States and its European allies from any possible short and medium-range missile threat that might come from Iran. The United States under the Obama presidency remarked the first successful agreement with Iran concerning its nuclear operations which resulted in loosening economic pressure on Iran (52-53).

2.3 President Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Towards the Arab Spring and the Challenge of Democracy Promotion

In late 2010, unexpected wave of peaceful demonstrations swept the Arab world starting in North Africa moving towards the Middle East. This revolutionary wave started in Tunisia followed by Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and other countries in the region. People asked for increased political, economic, and social accountability in their society; they demanded the end of the dictatorial rule and asked for a new democratic regime. The political and social impact of these uprisings remains significant today. After violent crackdowns by their countries' security forces, some countries such as Tunisia and Egypt succeeded in achieving their endeavors. However, other countries such as Libya, Yemen, and Syria ended up in a civil war and ongoing conflict (Zohny 379). Regardless of its ambitious democratization goals, some of these protests came against autocratic and anti-democratic regimes whom Washington has long supported, such as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, because their presence served the American interest in the region (Blum 162). Therefore, it was difficult for the United States to manage the transition process for the countries that revolted against the pro-American regimes. Gerges viewed that the Obama administration feared that who will preside might or might not serve U.S.'s interest and guarantee the continuity of its hegemony in the region. The Obama administration's policy towards these pro-democratic movements against the autocratic

regimes was an ambivalent, hesitant and it was driven by the country's strategic importance in the geopolitics of the region (306).

2.3.1 The United States' Diplomatic Response to the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt

On December 17, 2010, a man set himself on fire to protest against government corruption which resulted in the spread of demonstrations around the country. The protest turned violent as a response to the use of force by the government. On January 14, 2011, Tunisian President Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and left office with transitional government taking over and preparing for democratic elections (McMillan 221). It is believed that the Obama administration had no great strategic interest in Tunisia. In addition to its good relation with President Ben Ali. Therefore, the Obama administration's response towards the uprising in Tunisia was slow, cautious and it had no willingness to make a strong declaration for liberty to support the Tunisian people (Zohny 379).

The uprising that started in Tunisia spread to Egypt. An Egyptian man committed suicide outside Egypt's Parliament building to protest against the government. On January 25, 2011, the Protesters used social media to announced a "Day of Revolution". The protests against President Mubarak and his government started in Egypt. A few days later it turned into violent clashes between security forces and protesters. It led to the death of a hundred people and more were injured. After 18 days, President Mubarak resigned on February 11, 2011, and the military took power in order to prepare for a democratic election (Travis 94-95). The Obama administration's response to the protests in Egypt came in late January. During his State of Union speech, President Obama mentioned Tunisia's " desire to be free" and the United States' support for the same, as well as "supports the democratic aspirations of all people" (par 82). Nevertheless, there was no mention of the Egyptian current situation and their desire for a democratic regime. Zohny asserts that Egypt has geopolitical importance for the United States.

On the one hand, for being situated in the heart of the Middle East bordering Israel, the United States backed ally. On the other hand, instability in the country would affect the transportation of oil and gas through the Suez canal or pipelines across Egypt. Moreover, President Mubarak was a longstanding ally for the United States. He played a great role in maintaining a stable peace treaty with Israel. Furthermore, he approved the transit of the U.S. military aircraft and naval ships through the Suez Canal and agreed for the U.S. over-flight right (380-381). President Obama addressed Mubarak many times publicly in order to respect the Egyptian's right to express their rights freely. In late January 2011, the Egyptian security forces increased repression against the protesters. Consequently, President Obama changed his position and dumped one of America's longest-surviving allies in the region and supported the protesters. President Obama asked Mubarak to leave the office and he guaranteed a smooth transition to prevent the spread of war and instability in the region. That might affect the neighbouring countries and cause economic crises across the region, or extending the economic plight in the United States and Europe (Pinto 113-114).

2.3.2 The United States' Diplomatic Response to the Arab Spring in Libya and Syria

Affected by revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, Libya became the next country swiped by the revolution. On February 15, 2011, protesters took to the streets in the eastern city of Benghazi demanding the end of the Col. Gadhafi's regime. The government used aircraft to crush the opposition early to prevent its expansion in the country. As a result, the demonstrations rapidly spread to other cities and the rebel gathered under the National Liberation Army (NLA) to fight against the government. The Obama administration's first step was to use diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions to push Colonel Gadhafi to leave office. The Obama administration was criticized for being tolerated with a dictatorial regime and for President Obama's hesitancy to respond to the violent in Libya. Pinto asserts that on the one hand, President Obama saw that a large-scale ground operation in Libya was a loss

for the United States' military resources. On the other hand, Libya's oil resources and its strategic location, with its long Mediterranean coast held a strategic interest for the Obama administration (116-117).

Sawani views that the United States' intervention in Libya would reflect President Obama's strategic vision of restoring world's confidence in the United States, especially in the Arab World (4). Therefore, to avoid bearing the consequences of the war in Libya, President Obama relied on the international agreement and multilateral action for military intervention. Moreover, he refused to lead the Libyan mission and he gave the UN and his European and Arab allies the charge in order to share the risks and costs of the mission with allies. He preferred "leading from behind" than Bush's model of leading alone in Iraq (Pinto 116-117). Col. Gadhafi continued his threat and violence against his own people and ignored the UN warning of military intervention. On March 17, 2011, the National Security Council approved the resolution 1973 for a no-fly zone in Libya along with the Obama administration's effort to guarantee support from the Arab league. A legal base for international military intervention was formed by the UN (Travis 101-116). On March 19, President Obama activated the air forces to launch Operation Odyssey Dawn (OOD) against the Libyan military targets (Blomdahl 1). On March 23, 2011, NATO imposed a naval blockade and started its military operation along with the U.S.'s airstrikes against the Libyan government forces. On October 20, 2011, the Gadhafi regime was toppled and the country was left in disarray, inter-tribal conflicts paved the way for Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and violent extremists in the country (Velasquez 50).

Many analysts say that Libya was targeted for a long time ago (classified under the axis of evil) due to the hard-line stances that C. Gaddafi used towards the West. Al-Mezoghi argues that Gaddafi's quest from the beginning to undermining the role of the West, especially the colonial countries in Africa made Gaddafi a target for the West. His demand

for permanent seat in the Security Council for the African continent. In addition, Gaddafi's quest for the unity of Africa and the formation of an economic and political bloc similar to the European Union. Furthermore, his call for Arab countries to use a unified currency, the purpose of which is to reject the dollar and the euro, which will affect the international economy. The latter brought him into direct contact with the great powers of the world (par 1-13).

In mid-March 2011, peaceful demonstrations started in Syria addressed the lack of human rights and freedom under the Syrian government, the crippling economy, and the low standard of living in the country. At the starting point, the Obama administration was hesitant and cautious to call for a regime change. Moreover, it is believed that the Obama administration was skeptical of the regime's ability to contain the protests or fall on its own under the pressure of protests and ongoing conflict without any U.S. intervention. However, none of the possibilities occurred. The situation in Syria started to get worse rapidly after the Libya operation's conclusion. The protesters in different cities were met with strong government tyranny and the army tanks swept several cities to suppress the protesters. The latter led to the unification of the different opposition forces under the Free Syria Army (FSA) that fight against the regime (Zohny 385 -386; Loi par 3).

The increased violence in the country pushed the people to run for their lives to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan causing a large refugee flows. The growing violence against the anti-regime protesters led President Obama to impose a variety of sanctions against the Syrian government. Aiming at pressing Assad to stop the violence and start the political reforms or the transition to a democratic system. Despite the international pressure on El-Assad and his promises to begin a national dialogue on reform, his government continued its brutal crackdown on protesters. After months of the Syrian government's violent crackdown on protesters, on August 18, 2011, a written statement was

released by President Obama calling for Assad to resign. The latter was echoed in a joint statement by Britain, France, and Germany. The Obama administration prevented any U.S investment in Syria and banned the importation of its oil. Furthermore, he imposed new sanctions planned to weaken Assad's capability to finance his military operations (Nicholas par 4-5). The Syrian conflict turned into a civil war and President Obama's directed rhetorical escalations and threats to the Syrian government continued. In August 20, 2012, President Obama was asked in a press conference about what could lead him to use military force in Syria. He answered "We have been very clear to the Assad regime that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation" (Obama, 00:00:30-00:00:55). President Obama made it clear that if the Syrian regime used chemical weapons, it would permit U.S. military action. Nevertheless, on August 21, 2013, Assad violated President Obama's "red line" and used chemical weapons against his people. President Obama did not follow through his threat and his reneged assertions have damaged the United States' reliability and strengthened the Syrian regime (Velasquez 50-51).

2.4 Conclusion

To Conclude, the Obama administration's foreign policy and diplomacy in the Middle East had been shifted away from his predecessor, a pragmatic realism consideration of U.S. aims. Nevertheless, he has shown in his foreign policy in the Middle East more continuity with the past than real change concerning the Palestine- Israel conflict, the war on terror. The only achievement was his deal with Iran to stop its nuclear program of WMD. In response to the events of the Arab Spring, the Obama administration has followed different policy approaches. In the case of Syria, not taking a definitive stance by the Obama administration led to the emergence and the intervention of several actors, which contributed to the complexity of the Syrian civil war.

Chapter Three

The U.S. Attitude Towards the Different Actors Involved in the Syrian Civil War

3.1 Introduction

The Syrian civil war is the long-lasting war among the wars that were launched in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) under what is known as Arab Spring (AP). It has been raging for more than six years and it has influenced the regional and international balances. The complexity and the continuity of the Syrian civil war came as a result of the intervention of different interest groups. These armed groups and superpowers were divided into supporters and opponents to the Syrian government. The parties involved in the Syrian civil war, the Assad government, and the opposition along with the intervention of Russia and Iran, as well as the formation of the Islamic State in the Levant led to inconsistencies in the United States foreign policy towards the Syrian civil war. After the end of his eight-year term, the foreign policy of the Obama administration faced criticism for the paradox that laid between its rhetoric and action, as well as for failing to stop the war in Syria. The Obama administration avoided direct intervention and followed different approaches to deal with each side in the Syrian civil war, according to what serves the U.S.'s interests and those of its allies.

3.2 The U.S. Attitude Towards the Internal Actors in the War of Syria

Hillary Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State, refers to the Syrian civil war once in her book *Hard Choices* as a 'wicked problem'. A problem involving complicated challenges that discompose the standard solutions and approaches (Sterling par 2-3). The Obama administration followed different strategies to deal with the Syrian government, the opposition, and the Islamic State in the Levant to achieve goals and serve common interests.

3.2.1 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the Syrian Government and the Opposition

Before President Obama took office, the U.S. relationship with Syria was characterized by tension and intensity, mainly during the Bush administration. His administration has been accusing Syria of sponsoring terrorism due to its relations with Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. It exposed to several economic sanctions since 2004. The sanctions and the United States' call for president al Assad to stop supporting the Lebanese resistance and to break its relations with Iran continued during the Obama presidency. The United States had no cooperative military ties or military trade with Syria (Marquis par1). Therefore, the fall of the Syrian regime might not harm U.S. interests. It is more of a humanitarian problem than as a direct threat to the United States security as long as fighting in Syria remains somewhat contained. Nevertheless, the war might cause unexpected changes that would affect its presence in the region and the security of its allies. On August 18, 2011, in his statement, President Obama said "for the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside"(par 3). It was President Obama's first explicit and direct call for Assad to resign, besides the declaration of his 'red line' doctrine and his threat of military intervention in the case that the regime used chemical weapons against the Syrian people (par35). At this point, a question can be asked: why did the Obama administration not act according to what was declared by President Obama and why could not succeed in achieving regime change in Syria?. The Obama administration dealt with each part of the different warring parties in Syria, the Syrian regime, the opposition, and ISL according to what it serves the U.S.'s interest and protects the security and the interests of its allies in the region.

The direct military intervention in Syria was seen by the American public and the political advisors as a new costly war for the United States after the devastating experience of two costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, the Obama administration has limited its

military action and has been seeking to promote democracy when it went along with its interest (Fitzgerald and Ryan 110). The Obama administration was attempting to balance competing interests. On the one hand, conducting a military intervention in Syria may create a fragile state in the region and it will turn to be a safe haven for terrorist groups. The latter will affect the stability of the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, the U.S strategic ally, and the world's largest oil exporter, as well as Israel's security (Singh 130-133). Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has opposed the Syrian government due to its cooperation with Iran, the competition for influence between the two powers. Saudi Arabia's fear of Iran's desire to impose its hegemony in the Middle East through its cooperation with the Assad regime being a Shiite, along with Hezbollah in Lebanon against the Sunni opposition in Syria to increase its involvement and influence in the region (Laidi 115-116). On the other hand, the position of the Israeli political, academic elites has started to be characterized by contrast towards the Syrian crisis. The developments in Syria are important and vital interest to Israel. The Syrian regime has strong ties with Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas that pose a threat to Israel's security. The Israeli defense minister, Ehud Barak, asserted that "the fall of this regime would constitute a mighty blow to the entire radical front, with Iran and Hezbollah at its centre" (Barak qtd The Israeli Position 8). Nevertheless, some Israeli military elites such as the Israeli General Yair Golan preferred the survival of the regime for fear of establishing a democratic system in the country that may enhance its capabilities to confront Israel's policies in the region (Bishara 619). The continuity of the Assad regime would guarantee for the U.S's closet ally, Israel, calm borders with Syria, as well as its occupation of Golan heights, a territory that is considered a vital element in Israel's economy and security. Therefore, Israel believed that any political change in Syria would affect its security, especially when Israel viewed it would be a threat if the Muslim Brotherhood took power and form a new broad anti-Zionist alliance (Abu Hilal 1-9). This vision was supported by many Israeli politicians

and writers, such as Anar Shilo, who wrote in Haaretz that “the security services are panicking over the possibility that the struggle for freedom may succeed and that the regime in Syria may fall.” He also added:

we can read between the lines that Israel is not enthusiastic about the fall of Assad. It supports Assad without anyone seeing. In secret, Israel prays to God that the murderous despotic regime remains. The despotic regime means calm in the Golan ... and Israel today prefers the status quo and the world of yesterday (qtd in The Israeli Position 5).

Thus, the Syrian civil war is seen by Israel as a challenge to the future of their security policy. The uncertainty that what follows Assad’s demise might be worst. The fall of the Assad Government would affect Israel's interests in the region, and thereby the interests of the United States.

Al-Najjar argues that the Obama administration followed in its foreign policy towards Syria the weakening and dismantling policy. The core aim behind that policy was to not fulfill the demands of the people, nor to promote democracy and human rights, nor to topple the Syrian government. But rather the Obama policy was to weaken the Syrian regime and to contribute to the prolongation of the conflict. Furthermore, it also aimed at exhausting the conflicting parties. There was no real American desire to end the conflict (198-199). To implement its policy, on the one hand, Krieg asserts that the Obama administration used the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as a surrogate in equipping and training Syrian rebel forces in their war against the Assad government since 2012 (107). Nevertheless, the countries that support the opposition were prevented from arming them with specific weapons that would defeat or overthrow the regime. On the other hand, the Obama administration was silent concerning the regional and international interference in Syria, such as Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia, and the flow of arms and fighters to support the Syrian

regime. Additionally, Borghard asserts that the Obama administration refused to impose a no-flight zone on Syria, and paved the way for the regime to bomb the opposition's areas. Furthermore, the Obama administration allowed the flow of light-calibre arms and prevented the arrival of specific anti-aircraft weapons to the opposition to guarantee the continuation of the conflict as long as possible (4-6). Besides, the Obama administration withdrew its threat of military intervention against the Syrian government as a response to its alleged use of chemical weapons in 2013 against the Syrian people. Instead, the Obama administration followed a political solution by conducting an agreement with Russia to dismantle the Syrian alleged chemical weapons (Lund 2). Moreover, in the sense that it was not a “practical alternative” for Syria, President Obama refused the establishment of a safe zone in northern Syria on the border with Turkey. That safe zone would have reduced the suffering of the Syrians. Additionally it would have been used as a shield for the Syrian opposition (Ensor par 3). The continuity of the conflict in a destructive way and as long as possible will weaken the Syrian social fabric, create sectarian and ethnic conflicts and lead to the destruction of the country's economy. In addition, it will destroy the central state and its army without being replaced by an effective central revolutionary force. Thus, it will allow the emergence of sectarian and ethnic militias and forces that control specific geographical areas under a weak central authority. Al-Najjar argues that by weakening and dismantling Syria, toppling the Assad government and the advent of a new regime in Syria will not affect the security and stability of Israel, as well as America's interests during any future arrangement in the region. The Obama administration was not concerned with direct intervention, but with managing the war in a manner that guarantees and preserves the overall paths that are in its interest and serves its policies, which is consistent with the Obama administration's democratic mentality that focuses on soft power (198).

3.2.2 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the Situation of the Kurds and the Islamic State in the Levant

The United States foreign policy towards Syria before the summer of 2014 is seen as a 'minimalist' one that relies on diplomacy and political means rather than military ones. After the summer of 2014, U.S foreign policy was more decisive and mainly military. The primary reason behind the change in the approach is the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (also referred to as IS, ISIS, and Daesh). In late 2013, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, a violent extremist group with its roots in Iraq, took advantage of the war in Syria to establish itself. ISIL exploited the Syrian civil war to control the unprotected territories to establish what its members viewed as a physical caliphate and build its army to fight its war (Welch and Bailey 4). ISIL started its war in Syria against the regime, the opposition forces, and Al-Nusra Front, a sub-organisation of Al Qaeda in the country. The latter escalated the crisis in Syria. In January 2014, in a rapid military advance in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq, ISIL started controlling large cities, Raqqa in Syria claiming it as the capital of its caliphate and Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. ISIL started its crimes against the civilians, and obliging them to join their organisation. Furthermore, the terrorist groups executed the American journalist James Wright Foley in Syria in August 2014 (Scharf 6; Ducléon 16). Alarmed by ISIL's growing territorial control and its commission of terrorist attacks, President Obama turned its attention away from the Syrian government and proclaimed the formation of a multinational coalition to defeat the radical Islamist groups, ISIL and Al-Nusra Front. Consequently, the prospect of intervention against the Assad government was reduced and the attention of the other countries moved from focusing on the Syrian regime to ISIS. In September 2014, the United States with the help of other Western and Arab countries started the counter-terrorism campaign. The coalition initiated airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq as well as in Syria. The Iraqi government authorized the use of airstrikes against ISIS in its

territory, but the Syrian government did not. Therefore, with the absence of a UN Security Council decision, Russia considered U.S. airstrikes on the Syrian territory a violation of both, the country's sovereignty and international law (Scharf 1). Besides, Turkey refused to send troops to fight IS, and to allow the use of the U.S. airbase on its soil in the fight against IS (Taddonio par 4). President Obama asserted:

we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are. That means I will not hesitate to take action against [IS] in Syria, as well as Iraq. This is a core principle of my presidency: if you threaten America, you will find no safe haven... I again call on Congress to give us additional authorities and resources to train and equip these fighters...we will not get dragged into another ground war. In the fight against [IS], we cannot rely on an Assad regime that terrorises its people; a regime that will never regain the legitimacy it has lost (qtd in Sopol par 6-7).

The United States followed another alternative to fight IS in Syria without putting U.S troops on the ground. The latter was achieved by cooperating with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Kurdish people's Protection Units (YPG), which is derived from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the fight against IS. President Obama did not send American troops on the ground to fight ISIS. Rather, he used the Syrian people to implement his plans and serve the interests of the United States and its allies. While he was contented with airstrikes, to increase the United States influence in the region without requiring direct intervention. Furthermore, to commit as few resources as possible in the fight. The PKK is classified as a terrorist organization and it is considered by Turkey as a threat to its national security. Therefore, training and arming the Kurds to be ground troops for the United States in its fight against IS was viewed by Turkey as a threat to its relations with the United States. Consequently, the United States placed the Turkish government in a conflict between national security priorities and geopolitical objectives (Cook par 4). The Obama

administration considered ISIS as a threat to the United State's national security as well as international security. Furthermore, ISIS was viewed as destabilizing the region further, something that undermined U.S. interests and threatened the Gulf countries and Israel. In that case, the Obama administration made a formal strategic shift prioritizing the fight against IS in Iraq and Syria over counter-regime objectives in Syria. The fear of becoming a target for another terrorist attack after 9/11, led the United States to use all available means to fight ISIL involving military intelligence, conducting airstrikes, and training Arab troops, including the Sunnis, Kurds, and Shiites (Scharf 3; Brüggemann 4-5).

3.3 The Attitude of the Obama Administration Towards the External Powers Involved in the Syrian Civil War

One of the reasons behind the survival of the Syrian government is the intervention of external parties that supported the Assad government. During the civil war, the Syrian government received political and military support from Russia as well as regional support from Iran and Hezbollah. Both parties supported the regime for different objectives, mainly protecting their interests in the region. The Obama administration dealt with the intervention of Russia and Iran in the Syrian war in a way that does not affect as well as preserve the United States' interests in the region (Hilway 19).

3.3.1 The Obama Administration and Russia's Involvement in Syria

Russia is considered an influential and active power in the Middle East. Its history with Syria dates back since 1947. As Hafez al-Assad took power in Syria, the ties between the two countries had deepened in political, economic, and military fields. The aim was to preserve Russia's role and strategic position in the Middle East after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the expansion of America's hegemony in the region. Syria is the most important area in Russia's calculations for military-industrial market considerations. The Syrian regime buys Russia's arms and ammunitions. Additionally, Syria provides a strategic

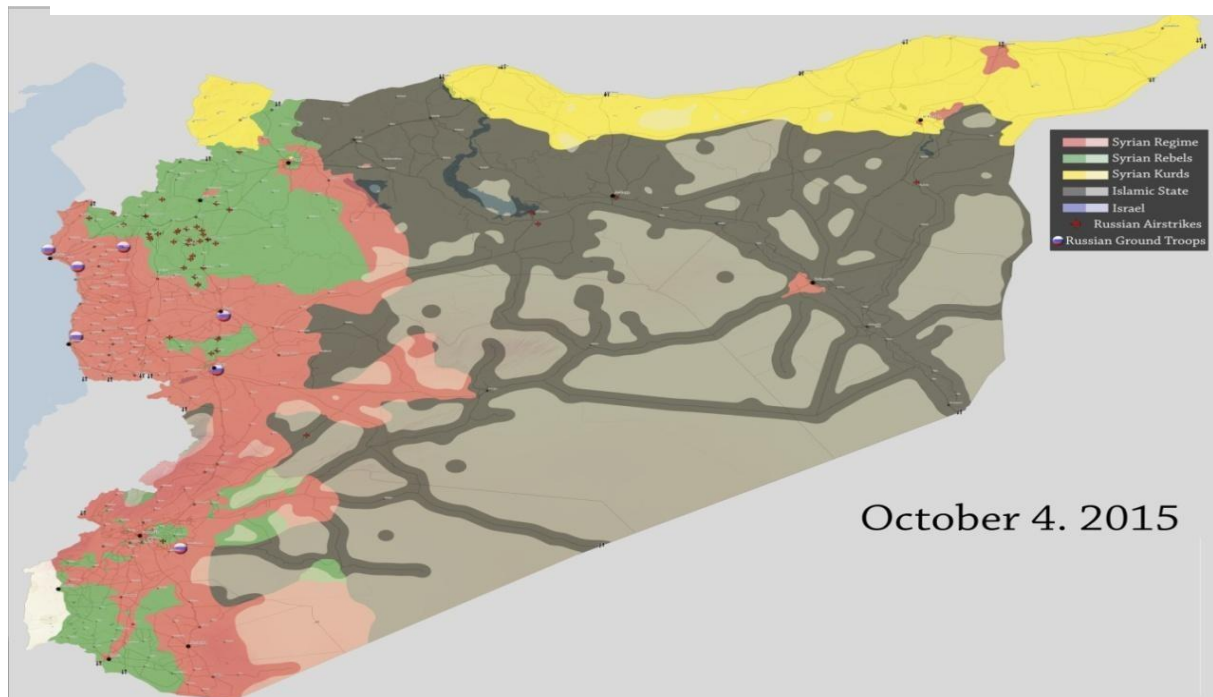
naval base for Russia. Moreover, it is the closest ally of Iran, which is located between the two richest oil regions in the world. Russia has sought to activate its role by developing its relationship with countries in the region, in particular its traditional allies. Furthermore, facing any attempt of interference in the internal affairs of its allies in the region to protect its interests (Lund, "From Cold War to Civil War" 4-18).

Syria has become at the centre of a proxy war between the great powers, mainly, Russia and the United States. Each side is trying to impose his presence in Syria to preserve his interests in the region and turn the scales in his favour (Strobel and Karouny par 7). From the beginning of the Syrian crisis from 2011 to 2013, besides its military aids, Russia has supported Bashar Al- Assad politically against any design from the United States, the United Nations, or the Arab league that may lead to a regime change to ensure its survival. Moreover, Russia has emphasized on diplomatic negotiations as the only solution to the conflict and vetoed any resolution that may affect the Syrian regime. On the one hand, Russia was considered by the United States as an obstacle facing its designs to press and isolate the Syrian regime (Laidi 122).

Despite the regime's violent crackdown on protestors and human rights abuses, Russia backed by China had vetoed any UN Security Council Resolution that may affect the Syrian regime. Two of these resolutions could have a strong impact on the Syrian regime had it not been for Russia's veto. Moreover, Russia opposed UN demands that could have led to military intervention or regime change in Syria (Rietveld 4). Furthermore, Russia insisted that Iran, another key ally of the government, should be involved in the peace talks. However, the United States and its allies rejected Russia's demand regarding Iran. Therefore, because of the limited pressure tools it possesses towards the Syrian regime, the United States considered sanction as the only available tool to pressure the Syrian regime. On the other hand, the United States took advantage of Russia's support for the Syrian regime to make a deal with

Russia concerning chemical weapons in Syria. Yacoubian asserts that Syria's alleged possession of chemical weapons rated to have been among the largest chemical weapons stockpiles in the world (20). The latter raised the concern of the Obama administration and the fear that these weapons might fall in the hands of Hezbollah (Fitzgerald and Ryan 126). On that matter, a former senior government official declared that "The number one issue by far was the CW. That's what threatened US national security interests" (qtd in Yocoubian 20). As a response to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against the civilians on August 21, 2013, President Obama was obliged to act according to his "Redline" doctrine. Consequently, the Obama administration announced plans to conduct a "limited military strike" in Syria (Rietveld 5-6). Yet, in a surprising policy reversal, Secretary of State John Kerry proposed a diplomatic solution based on surrendering all the chemical weapons stockpiles of the Syrian regime to avert a U.S. military strike. The latter led to the U.S.-Russian diplomatic agreement to destroy Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Nevertheless, in November 2016, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons asserted that both the Syrian government and ISIL had been using chemical weapons in the war. One of the reasons behind the Obama administration's shifted policy was to spare the United States from an open-ended military intervention in Syria that it has avoided since the war's inception. Consequently, President Obama's policy gave Assad an implicit green light for more crimes against humanity (Yocoubian 21-24).

Due to the expansion of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, the year 2014 complicated the entire Middle East geopolitical scene. ISIS started controlling large areas in Syria. In 2015, despite the airstrikes of the American-led campaigns, ISIS has nearly doubled the size of the territories it controls in Syria as demonstrated by the following map:

Figure 3 : Static Map of Control in Syria

Source: IUC Analysts, Oct 4, 2015.

Note: In 2014, the Jihadist group found a safe haven in Syria and began seizing control of territory in the country and changed its name to ISIS. In 2015, ISIS has controlled more than 50 percent of the Syrian territory that was previously controlled by the rebels, as well as the Syrian regime, and proclaimed the creation of its caliphate.

The fight against ISIL in Syria, which should have been tackled as a collective effort of the international community to defeat ISIL, started to focus on pursuing different national objectives. Therefore, the period from the second half of 2015 through the end of the Obama administration was marked by unexpected Russia's intervention in Syria, with Iran and Hezbollah (Kaufulu 55). When the Assad government seemed to be losing momentum in the civil war, Russia intervened to regain the regime's lost territories to the opposition as well as IS. On September 30, 2015, Russia became directly involved in the Syrian conflict by launching a bombing campaign targeting the Syrian rebel groups and ISIS. Furthermore,

Russia built a military base in the areas controlled by the Syrian government. In October 2015, President Obama said: “An attempt by Russia and Iran to prop up Assad and try to pacify the population is just going to get them stuck in a quagmire, and it won’t work.” He described the Russian intervention as an idiotic decision and reflected weakness, not strength (Badran par 28). President Obama also declared that the United States were not: “going to make Syria into a proxy war between the United States and Russia” (qtd in Patman 47). President Obama’s main priority was to avoid potential conflict with Russia over Syria. Nevertheless, since the start of the diplomatic process that was sponsored by the United Nation, President Obama did not reveal the military information about the locations of the Opposition forces and Al-Nusra front. The Obama administration aimed at protecting those who excelled in fighting Russia and weakening Iran and Hezbollah (Magnaire 1).

In its final year, the Obama administration sought to focus on decreasing violence and improving humanitarian access by following diplomatic negotiations with Russia. Through negotiation, the Obama administration, Russia, and Iran agreed on a cessation of hostilities and cease-fire. The latter, aimed at allowing the opposition to regain its strength after being nearly defeated by Russia and its allies in south Aleppo. However, within a few months, the negotiations failed as the regime and Russia violated the cease-fire by conducting a military campaign led to recapture parts held by the opposition. The latter, turned the conflict in the regime’s favour (Yacoubian 32-33; Magnaire 1).

3.3.2 The Obama Administration and Iran’s Involvement in Syria

Syria has been considered an important ally of Iran. It was the only Arab country that supported Iran explicitly during the Iran-Iraq war. Furthermore, being Iran’s land bridge to Hezbollah in Lebanon has helped in reinforcing the strategic relationship between Iran and Syria. As a consequence, since the civil war erupted in Syria in March 2011, Iran has been one of the key supporters of the Assad government. Iran aimed to preserve the Syrian regime

because the collapse of the Syrian regime could facilitate the rise of an alliance of Sunni groups that are anti-Shia, anti-Iran, and anti-Hezbollah. Therefore, Iran has maintained significant influence over the development of the conflict. In the early stages of the conflict, Iran limited its engagement to provide the regime with technical and financial support. Furthermore, between 2012 and 2013 Iran has facilitated the intervention of foreign Shia militias, starting with its closest ally, Hezbollah (Ansari and Tabrizi 3-5). The Obama administration did not object the Iranian interference, whether direct or indirect in Syria. Yacoubian views that, on the contrary, the Obama administration saw that it could drain Iran in the Syrian war. According to the Obama administration, Iran and Hezbollah's involvement in Syria would be costly and would drag both to quagmire (6-7).

President Obama's "red line" threat in 2013 was an opportunity to intervene in the Syrian war and alter history. However, the Obama administration reversed its policy and resorted to a diplomatic solution with Russia. Wall Street Journal reporter Jay Solomon reported that in 2013, Iran told President Obama that if he were to strike the Syrian regime after the latter's chemical-weapons attack, the Iranians would collapse the nuclear talks. The Obama administration did not want to let its decisions in Syria affect its negotiation with Iran. Therefore, rather than seeing his decision as a rhetorical stumble, President Obama reversed his policy to a more diplomatic solution (Badran Par 4). Moreover, he formalized a place for Iran at the table of Syria's negotiation, although the administration did not want Iran to participate in any international conference. Consequently, Syria became a part of the price for President Obama's deal with Iran (Logiurato par 1; Jervis 45).

In the second half of 2015, when Al-Assad appeared on the edge of defeat at the hands of the opposition as well as IS, Russia and Iran led a military intervention to support him. According to President Obama, the war against ISIS was seen as an opportunity to establish common ground with Iran. Additionally, the Obama administration was frightened that any

aggressive U.S. military action against the Syrian regime would cause an Iranian reprisal against the American troops in Iraq. The Obama administration wanted Syria to neither affect the denuclearization talks nor threaten the safety of the American troops in Iraq (Itani and Rosenblatt 7). Consequently, the Obama administration did not object Iran's military intervention in Syria. Since the arrival of the Iranian forces and militias mainly from Hezbollah to fight ISIS and the opposition. The Obama administration increased its assistance to the opposition that is fighting ISIS and the regime on the ground and reduced its use of airstrikes against ISIS targets. Magnaire argues that the United States' objective was to preserve the strength of the organization and its ability to continue the war for a longer period. Iran and its allies were left on the front lines against ISIS to be exhausted in the war(1).

3.4 Conclusion

To Conclude, the foreign policy of the Obama administration towards Syria was marked by dilemma and contradictions. Although the Obama administration showed its intention to depose the President Assad, little was done to reach that goal or even to facilitate his removal. Examples of "action" were taken by the Obama administration in the form of rhetoric and empty promises. President Obama consistently opposed putting American troops in Syria and start another war in the Middle East, yet he did authorize the use of military force against ISIS in Syria. The Obama administration prioritized the United States' interests. It sought to achieve its objectives in Syria by dealing with each party in the war according to what it serves the U.S interests and those of its allies. Moreover, according to the Obama administration, a fragile state with a weak military capability was better than an unexpected alternative that might affect the security of U.S. allies.

General Conclusion

This study concludes that since the end of the Second World War, the United States sought to gain and maintain a superpower position in the Middle East. The United States' main aims were to maintain its access to the most important world energy resources, support its close ally Israel, and prevent the rise of other powers or influences that could negatively affect its interests in the region. The history of the United States' foreign policy towards the Middle East proved to be marked by contradictions and characterized by duplicity. On the one hand, The United States claims freedom and democracy to Middle East countries. On the other hand, it advances its interests and protects and supports Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. Furthermore, the United States has a long history of supporting friendly dictatorial regimes who are reliable on matters of security and economics in the Middle East. Therefore, the United States favours autocratic regimes upon at the expense of democratic groups if the latter are seen as threatening in any ways the United States' interests and objectives. The United States' military intervention in the Arab world has created fragile states, caused enormous loss of life, and turned many countries in the Middle East a safe haven for terrorist groups, especially in Iraq.

The double standard in the values and principles of the United States and the mechanism of its implication was clearly appeared in President Obama's foreign policy towards the events of the Arab Spring. His administration's policy has shown contradictions in dealing with the countries that were affected by the wave of the Arab Spring, especially towards the countries ruled by dictatorial regimes friendly to the United States. As well as, the conflict between interests and values in US policy in the Middle East. The Syrian case was the most complicated war between the wars that were launching in the Middle East and North Africa under the so-called the Arab Spring. The Obama administration's hesitant reaction towards the violent crackdown on protesters in Syria led to the escalation of the crisis and the intervention

of different actors in the Syrian civil war. The Obama administration has consistently said Al-Assad has lost his legitimacy. However, no action has been taken against him in this regard and the United States only influence and intervention in Syria has been fixated on either the fight against ISS or the conflict regarding the use of chemical weapons. Despite the denouncement of the Assad regime at numerous points in time throughout the Syrian conflict, the Obama administration has maintained an unwavering position against intervention on the side of opposition. Although the United States' vital national interests were never at stake because of the Syrian war, the Obama administration has indirectly shaped the course of the Syrian war in a way that serves the U.S. interests and ambitions towards the countries involved in the Syrian civil war, mainly Russia and Iran. Syria would never matter as much to the United States as it did to Russia and Iran. Both countries committed extensive resources and intervened directly to support the Syrian regime. In contrary, the United States was not willing to do as much to unseat the regime. Moreover, the United States fears of catastrophic success, the fall of the Assad regime that might brings Islamist extremists to power. Therefore, President Obama did not intervene directly against the Assad government. Of course, at this point, it is impossible to predict what will emerge from the Syrian crisis. A new Sunni-led state or Multiple new states? Even changing the map of the Middle East is a possibility. What is certain is that any change will have an impact on Syria's neighbours, therefore the international community.

Works Cited

- Abrahamian, Ervand, and Kinzer, Stephen. Interviewed by Goodman, Amy. "50 Years After the CIA's First Overthrow of a Democratically Elected Foreign Government We Take a Look at the 1953 US Backed Coup in Iran." *Independent Global News*, Aug 25, 2003. www.democracynow.org/2003/8/25/50_years_after_the_cias_first#transcript.
- Abu Hilal, Firas. "The Israeli position on the Syrian uprising." *Arab center for Research and Policy Study, Doha Institute*, April 2011. www.dohainstitute.org/ar/lists/ACRPSPDFDocumentLibrary/document_46CE4158.pdf
- Al-Lihaibi, Maedh A. *An Analysis Of The Iran-Iraq War: Military Strategy And Political Objectives*. A Defence Analytical Study Submitted To The Faculty of Air War College In Fulfilment Of The Curriculum Requirement, Air University United States Air Force Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, May 1989. apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a217255.pdf
- Al-Mzoghi, Milad Omar. "What are the real unpublished reasons for the invasion of Libya and the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi? Here are some surprises." *Raia Lyoum*, Dec 3, 2017. www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%87%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%BA/
- Al-Najjar, Hisham. *Syria ... and the major transformations: the nation's problems ... and the future of the Arabs*. E. Book, 2016. Print.
- Al-Sarhan, Atallah S. "United States Foreign Policy and the Middle East." *Research Gate*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2017, pp. 454-472. DOI: 10.4236/ojps.2017.74036. www.researchgate.net/publication/319609688_United_States_Foreign_Policy_and_the_Middle_East
- Bani Salameh, Mohammed T. "The Camp David Accords: Lessons and Facts." *ResearchGate*,

Vol. 10 No. 1, 2012, pp203-239.

www.researchgate.net/publication/323987602_The_Camp_David_AccordsLessons_and_Facts

Badran, Tony. "Obama's Syria Policy Striptease." *Tablet Magazine- Foundation for Defence of Democracies*, Sep 22, 2016. www.fdd.org/analysis/2016/09/22/obamas-syria-policy-striptease/

Beauchamp, Zack. "Beyond oil: the US-Saudi alliance, explained." *Vox Journal*. Web. Jan 6, 2016. www.vox.com/2016/1/6/10719728/us-saudi-arabia-allies

Bettiza, Gregorio, and Phillips, Christopher. *Obama nation?: US foreign policy one year on: Obama's Middle East policy: Time to Decide*. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2010. Kitchen, Nicholas, ed. [eprints.lse.ac.uk/43581/1/Obama%20nation_Obama%E2%80%99s%20Middle%20East%20policy\(lsero\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43581/1/Obama%20nation_Obama%E2%80%99s%20Middle%20East%20policy(lsero).pdf)

Bishara, Azmi. *Syria: The Painful Path Towards Freedom - An Attempt in Current History*. E-Book, 2013. Print.

Blomdahl, Mikael. "Interacting Interests: Explaining President Obama's Libyan Decision." *European Association for American Studies*, July 19, 2018. DOI: 10.4000/ejas.13224. journals.openedition.org/ejas/13224

Borghard, Erica D. "Arms and Influence in Syria, The Pitfalls of Greater U.S. Involvement." *Cato.org*, No. 734, August 7, 2013. www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa734_web_1.pdf

Brüggemann, Ulf. "Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State: Objectives, Threat, Countermeasures." *Federal Academy for Security Policy*, No. 9, 2016. www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_09.pdf

Blum, William. *America's Deadliest Export: Democracy – the Truth about US Foreign Policy and Everything Else*. London: Zed Books, 2013. Print

- Clawson, Patrick. "U.S. Sanctions." *United States Institute of Peace*, October 11, 2010. Web. Aug 2015. iranprimer.usip.org/resource/us-sanctions
- Cook, Steven A. "There's Always a Next Time to Betray the Kurds." *Foreign Policy*, Oct 11, 2019. foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/11/kurds-betrayal-syria-erdogan-turkey-trump/
- Dalacoura, Katerina. "US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Theoretical Perspective and Policy Recommendations." *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, Vol. 2, No. 3, July 2010, pp. 57-76. dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/209565
- Davenport, Kelsey. "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance." *Arms Control Association*, May 2018. www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/JCPOA-at-a-glance
- Demirmen, Ferruh. "Oil in Iraq: The Byzantine Beginnings; Part II: The Reign of a Monopoly." *Global Policy Forum*. Web. April 26, 2003. www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/185/40550.html
- Ditté, Pascal, and Roell, Peter. *Past oil price shocks: Political background and economic impact Evidence from three cases*. Research Paper. n.d. www.files.ethz.ch/isn/20499/rev%20Oil_Price_ShocksI.pdf
- Ducléon, Erwin Guilhem. *How Did Obama's Foreign Policy Encourage the Rise of ISIS ?*. Leiden University, July 21, 2017. Thesis, Master International Relations. openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/52569/Dissertation%20-%20Model-Erwin%20II.pdf?sequence=1
- Dym, Warren. "The American Revolution: Energy History since 1776." *American Security Project ASP*, Jul 08, 2013. Map. www.americansecurityproject.org/the-american-revolution-energy-history-since-1776/
- El Mansour, Mohamed. "U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East since the 19th Century." *Teach Mideast*, 2004. teachmideast.org/articles/u-s-foreign-policy-in-the-middle-east-since-the-19th-century/

Ensor, Josie. "Barack Obama rules out 'safe zones' inside Syria." *The Telegraph*, May 2, 2016.

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/02/us-appeals-to-russia-to-agree-to-rebel-safe-zones-inside-aleppo/

Estes, Kenneth W. "Iraq Between Two Occupations The Second Gulf War (1990–1991)."

International Relations and Security Network, ISN, 2006. www.files.ethz.ch/isn/1 Fawcett,

Louise L., editor. *International Relations of the Middle East*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Print.

Feist, Herbert. "The Anglo-American Oil Agreement." Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library,

Vol. 55, pp. 1174-1190. n.d.

digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4446&context=yjlj

Fitzgerald, Davis, and Ryan, David. *Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of*

Intervention. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Doi: 10.1057/9781137428561. Print.

Freedland, Jonathan. "Barack Obama in Cairo: the speech no other president could make." *The Guardian*,

Jun 4, 2009. www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-speech-islam-west.

Gerges, Fawaz A. "The Obama approach to the Middle East: the end of America's moment?."

Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 89,

No. 2, March 2013, pp. 299-323. Doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12019.

onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1468-2346.12019

Hardy, Roger. "The Iran-Iraq war: 25 years on." *BBC News*. Web. Sep 22, 2005.

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4260420.stm

Hersh, Seymour M. "U.S. Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War Against Iran." *The New York Times*,

Sec. 1, P. 1, Jan 26, 1992. [www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-](http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html)

[in-its-war-against-iran.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html).

Hilway, Rosa Mazza. "Regime Change, Deferred: Regarding United States' Foreign Policy in Syria."

Political Analysis, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2019.

scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1048&context=pa

Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The American Invasion of Iraq. Causes and Consequences." ResearchGate, Spring 2007.

www.researchgate.net/publication/45665921_The_American_invasion_of_Iraq_Causes_and_Consequences.

"Iran-Contra Affair." History, August 10, 2017. Web. January 17, 2020. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.

www.history.com/topics/1980s/iran-contra-affair

"Israeli Position toward the Events in Syria." Arab center for Research and Policy Study, Doha Institute, Feb 2012. www.dohainstitute.org/en/lists/ACRPS-

PDFDocumentLibrary/The_Israeli_Position_toward_the_Events_in_Syria.pdf

Itani, Faysal and Rosenblatt, Nate. "US Policy in Syria:A Seven-Year Reckoning." Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center For The Middle East, SEP 10, 2018. www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-

reports/issue-brief/us-policy-in-syria-a-seven-year-reckoning/6882/casestudy_iraq_trilogy_02.pdf

IUCAnalysts. "static map of control in Syria, with Russian airstrikes and ground troops." Twitter

Web Client, Oct 4, 2015. Map. justicenow.de/2017-01-19/false-hope-broken-promises-obamas-belligerent-legacy/

Jervis, David. "Barack Obama, Syria, and the Exertion of American Military Power."

International Relations Department Faculty of Political Science UMCS, 2017, pp. 41–61.

journals.umcs.pl/teka/article/download/7845/5603

Karsh, Efraim and Rautsi, Inari. "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait." *Journal of Survival*,

Vol. 33, 1991, No. 1, pp. 18-30. Web. Mar 3, 2008.

www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00396339108442571#

Kaufulu, Moses Mphatso. *Rethinking Civil Wars: An Overview of Literature and the Syrian*

Conflict Towards a Structural Definition of Civil War. The University of Southern

Mississippi The Aquila Digital Community, Dec 8, 2017. A Thesis Submitted to the

Graduate School, the College of Arts and Letters, and the Department of Political Science,

International Development, and International Affairs at The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1366&context=masters_theses

Kelly, John H. *Lebanon: 1982-1984*, Ch. 6. *Of U.S. and Russian Policymaking With Respect to the Use of Force*, Azrael, Jeremy R., and Payin Emil A., editors. RAND cooperation, 1996.

Print. www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/2007/CF129.pdf

Krieg, Andreas. "Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East." *Oxford University Press*, Vol. 92, No. 1, pp. 97-113, Jan 1, 2016.

www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/ia/INTA92_1_05_Krieg.pdf

Lake, Eli. "Why Obama Let Iran's Green Revolution Fail." *Bloomberg*, August 24, 2016

Norman, Julie M. "How the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resisted Obama's efforts." *The Conversation*, Nov 18, 2016. www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2016-08-24/why-obama-let-iran-s-green-revolution-fail.

Laidi, Zaki. *Limited achievements Obama's Foreign Policy*. Palgrave Macmillan, Ed. Lequesne, Christian. Series Title: The Sciences Po Series in International Relations and Political Economy. DOI 10.1057/9781137020871, Sep 2012.

Lebow, Richard N. "The Journal of Modern History: Woodrow Wilson and the Balfour Declaration." *The University of Chicago Press, Jstor*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Dec, 1968, pp. 501-523. www.jstor.org/stable/1878450?seq=1

Levitt, Matthew. "Ignoring The Warning Lights On Hezbollah: The Case For A European Ban On Hezbollah." *The Henry Jackson Society*, 2012.

www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Levitt20121108-HJS.pdf

Little, Douglas. "1949-1958, Syria: Early Experiments in Covert Action." *Coat, Press for Conversion!*, No. 51, May 2003, pp. 12-13.

coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue51/articles/51_12-13.pdf

Logiurato, Brett. "Obama: Iran must play a role in ending Syria's civil war." *Business Insider*, Jul 16, 2015. www.businessinsider.com/obama-iran-syria-2015-7

Loi, Stefano. "Obama's military legacy (III): the wars in Libya and Syria." *ISCTE-Universitario De Lisboa*, Jan 25, 2017. blog.cei.iscte-iul.pt/obamas-military-legacy-iii-the-wars-in-libya-and-syria/

Lund, Aron. "From Cold War to Civil War: 75 Years of Russian-Syrian Relations." *The Swedish Institute Of International Affairs | Ui.Se*, Feb 2019. www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/ui-publications/2019/ui-paper-no.-7-2019.pdf

---. "Red Line Redux: How Putin Tore Up Obama's 2013 Syria Deal." The Century Foundation, Feb 3, 2017. productiontcf.imgix.net/app/uploads/2017/02/03040545/red-line-redux-how-putin-tore-up-obamas-2013-syria-deal.pdf

Mannina, Ryan N. "How the 2011 US Troop Withdrawal from Iraq Led to the Rise of ISIS." *Small Wars Journal*, Dec 23, 2018. smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/how-2011-us-troop-withdrawal-iraq-led-rise-isis

Manyok, Phillip. "Saddam Hussein's Trial, Execution: A Case For Forced Justice." *ResearchGate*, March 22, 2010.

www.researchgate.net/publication/272507673_Saddam_Hussein's_Trial_Execution_A_case_for_forced_justice

Marquis, Christopher. "Bush Imposes Sanctions on Syria, Citing Ties to Terrorism." *The New York Times*, May 12, 2004. www.nytimes.com/2004/05/12/world/bush-imposes-sanctions-on-syria-citing-ties-to-terrorism.html

McCullough, David G. *Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972*. New York : Simon & Schuster, 1992.

Digitalized by Internet Archive, 2011, pp. 547-548. Accessed Feb 12, 2020.

Print.archive.org/details/truman00mccu/mode/2up

McMillan, M. E. *From the First World War to the Arab Spring: What's Really Going On in the Middle East?*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. DOI: 10.1057/9781137522023. Print.

Mognaire, Ilya J. "This Is How Obama Defeated Iran And Russia Without Direct Intervention On The Ground In Syria And Iraq." *The Opinion*, Vol. 18, No. 13559, Aug 15, 2016.

www.alraimedia.com/Newspaper/FlipBook/2016/8/15/UZ6nM2bmgmSQslaashlX94TfTewplusplus/P018.pdf

Nicholas, Peter. "Obama calls on Syrian President Bashar Assad to step down." *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 18, 2011. www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2011-aug-18-la-fg-us-syria-sanctions-20110819-story.html

Norman, Julie M. "How the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resisted Obama's efforts." *The Conversation*, Nov 18, 2016. theconversation.com/how-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict-resisted-obamas-efforts-65823

Obama, Barack. "Obama's Speech in Cairo." *The New York Times*, June 4, 2009. Web . June 4, 2009. www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html.

---. "Obama's Speech to Troops at Fort Bragg." *The New York Times*, Dec 14, 2011. www.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/us/politics/obamas-speech-to-troops-at-fort-bragg.html.

---. "Remarks By President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered." *The White House*, April 5, 2009. obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered.

---. "Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria." *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, Aug 18, 2011. obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/statement-president-obama-situation-syria

Obama, Barack, and Abbas, Mahmoud. "Meeting with Abbas." *Internet Archive, the White*

House, Office of the Press Secretary, Oval Office, May 28, 2009.

web.archive.org/web/20090530020829/http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/Images-of-Abbas/

Obama, Barack, and Netanyahu, Benjamin. "Remarks By President Obama And Prime Minister Netanyahu Of Israel In Press Availability." *Internet Archive, the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Oval Office, May 18, 2009.*

web.archive.org/web/20090603193135/http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-and-Israeli-Prime-Minister-Netanyahu-in-press-availability/

---. "US President Barack Obama in 'red line' warning to Syria over chemical weapons."

YouTube, uploaded by The Telegraph, Aug 21, 2012.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=avQKLRGRhPU.

"Obama Confirms Plan For US Troop Withdrawal From Iraq." *BBC News, Aug 3, 2010.*

www.bbc.com/news/10839342

Pariona, Amber. "Why Did Iraq Invade Kuwait In 1990." *World Atlas. Web. April 1, 2019.*

www.worldatlas.com/articles/invasion-of-kuwait-why-did-iraq-invade-kuwait.html.

Patman, Robert G. "The Obama Doctrine and the Syrian Crisis, 2011-2015." *Research gate, Jan 2016.*

www.researchgate.net/publication/291972986_The_Obama_Doctrine_and_the_Syrian_Crisis_2011-2015

Peel, Mick. "Iran and the "US Hostage Crisis" of 1979-1980." *ResearchGate. Web. June 16, 2014.*
www.researchgate.net/publication/263090670_Iran_and_the_US_Hostage_Crisis_of_1979-1980

Pinto, Ferreira M. "Mapping the Obama administration's response to the Arab Spring."

ResearchGate, Vol.55, No.2, Dec. 2012, pp. 109-130. DOI: 10.1590/S0034-

73292012000200007.
www.researchgate.net/publication/291243319_Mapping_the_Obama_administration's_response_to_the_Arab_Spring

Reimann, Jakob. "False hope, broken promises: Obama's belligerent legacy." *JusticeNow. Map.*

Jan 19, 2017. twitter.com/iucanalysts/status/650591770317684738.

Rietveld, Jochem. *Explaining the puzzle: why did the US not intervene in Syria?*. Leiden University, June 12, 2014. MSc International Relations and Diplomacy thesis. openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/31948/Thesis-%20supervisor.pdf?sequence=1

Risen, James. "Secretes of History: The C.I.A in Iran." *The New York Times*, 2000. Accessed Aug 21,2020. archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html

Ryan, Sheila. "Journal of Palestine Studies: Israel's Invasion to Lebanon: Background to the Crisis." *University of California Press, Jstor*, Vol. 11/12, Vol. 11, no. 4 - Vol. 12, no. 1,pp. 23-37. Web. Jan 26, 2013. DOI: 10.2307/2538330. sheilaryan.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Israels-Invasion-of-Lebanon.pdf

Scharf, Michael P. "How the War Against ISIS Changed International Law." *Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons*, 2016. scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2637&context=faculty_publications

Sawani, Youssef M. "The United States and Libya: Turbulent History and Uncertain Future." *International Relations*, Dec 27, 2014. www.e-ir.info/2014/12/27/the-united-states-and-libya-turbulent-history-and-uncertain-future/

Shuster, Mike. "The Middle East and the West: The U.S. Role Grows." *NPR Special Series*. (English transcript). Web. August 23, 2004. www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=3865983

---. Interviewed by Chadwick, Alex. "Conversations on Iraq: U.S. Links to Saddam During Iran-Iraq War." *NPR's DAY TO DAY*, Sep 22, 2005. www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4859238.

Singh, Robert. *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy, The Limits of Engagement*.

Bloomsbury Academic, RKBUKZ, June 7, 2012. Print.

rk2bukz.cf/read.php?id=YQnrSo2YyTEC

Siyech, Mohammed S. "Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses: A Comparative Analysis of 'Islamic State' & Al Qaeda in Yemen." *International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, JSTOR*, Vol. 8, No. 8, Aug 2016, pp. 12-16.

www.jstor.org/stable/26351443?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents

Sopel, Jon. "Islamic State crisis: A speech Obama hoped to avoid." *BBC News*, Sep 11, 2014.

www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-29152592

Sterling, Rick. "The Wicked War on Syria: Hillary Clinton in Her Own Words." *Counter Punch*, Sep 30, 2015. www.counterpunch.org/2015/09/30/the-wicked-war-on-syria-hillary-clinton-in-her-own-words/

Stoff, Michael B. "The Business History Review: The Anglo-American Oil Agreement and the Wartime Search for Foreign Oil Policy." *The President and Fellows of Harvard College, Jstor*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 1981, pp. 59-74. DOI: 10.2307/3114442.

www.jstor.org/stable/3114442?seq=1

Stravato, Alexandra L. *Operation Ajax and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. HIS 345--Research Paper submitted to Department of Political Science, Providence College, May 7, 2019.

www.researchgate.net/publication/333633967_HIS_345Research_Paper_Operation_Ajax_and_the_1953_Coup_in_Iran.

Strobel, Warren and Karouny Mariam. "U.S., Russia agree on Syria weapons, Obama says Force still option." *Reuters*, Sep 14, 2013. www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE98A15720130914

Tabrizi, Bassiri Aniseh and Pantucci, Raffaello. *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*. Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, Aug 2017. www.rusi.org/sites/default/files/201608_op_understanding_irans_role_in_the_syrian_conflict_0.pdf

Taddonio, Patrice. “Flashback: How US-Backed Kurds Defeated ISIS in Kobani, Syria.”

Frontline, Oct 9, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/flashback-how-us-backed-kurds-defeated-isis-in-kobani-syria/>

Telatar, Gökhan. “Barack Obama, the War on Terrorism and the US Hegemony.”

Turkish Journal Of International Relations, *dergipark.org*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Winter 2014, pp. 43-58. dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/19349

Travis, Hannibal. “Wargaming the Arab Spring: Predicting Likely Outcomes and Planning U.N. Responses.” *Cornell International Law Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Article 4, Winter 2013.

scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1805&context=cilj

Velasquez, Julian. *United States Foreign Policy In The Middle East And North Africa: Ideology, Hegemony, And Grand Strategy Under The Presidencies Of George W. Bush And Barack Obama*. Centre international de formation européenne institut europeen. European institute, Master in advanced European and international studies, Mediterranean Branch, 2015-2016. www.ieei.eu/Ressources/FCK/image/Theses/Julian_VELASQUEZ.pdf

Welch, Stewart J., and Bailey, Kevin. “In Pursuit of Good Ideas The Syria Train-And-Equip Program.” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, No. 36, Sep 2016.

www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote36-WelchBailey.pdf

Wilson, David N, and B, A. *The Eisenhower Doctrine and its Implementation In Lebanon – 1958*. Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts, Dec 2002. Print. apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a408984.pdf

Yacoubian, Mona. “Critical Junctures in United States Policy toward Syria: An Assessment of the Counterfactuals.” *Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide*

Series of Occasional Papers, No. 3, August 2017. www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Yacoubian-

Critical-Junctures-US-Policy-Syria.pdf

Yossef , Amr. *The Six-Day War Revisited*. Working Paper submitted to the University of Trento School of International Studies, Feb 2006. Web. Jan 2018.

www.researchgate.net/publication/322628613_The_Six-Day_War_Revisited

Zohny, Ahmed Y. “ American Foreign Policy and Diplomacy During and After the Arab Spring, the Challenge of Democratization & the Legacy of President Obama’s Administration.”

David Publishing, Vol. 5, No. 7, July 2017,pp. 371-388. Doi: 10.17265/23282134/2017.07.001.www.davidpublisher.org/index.php/Home/Article/index?id=32512.html.