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Comparing the Bush, Obama and Trump Foreign Policies: Continuity and Change in American Middle East Policy

Prof. Dr. Tayyar ARI

Introduction

It must be noted that after the end of the cold war and the disintegration of Soviet Union, during the eras of Reagan, Clinton and Bush, American foreign policy has been called as bilateral and selective engagement; i.e it depended on neither unilateral nor multilateral cooperation. Whereas according to George W. Bush to fill the international power vacuum, unilateral initiatives were going to be inevitable so that they would expose their intention after 9/11 respectively.

Bush made it clear that the United States “will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists”. Since Bush assumed the presidency, his administration took the number of unilateral steps to remove the United States from international arms-control and nonproliferation regimes. Bush announced the formal U.S. withdrawal from the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, suspended the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), refused to comply with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and also refused to ratify the Kyoto Treaty and the Convention of International Criminal Court. In this connection, the US government didn’t will to seek any support in the Iraqi War of 2003. This is the case of the self-image of Bush Administration that after the end of the Cold War, the United States became the main superpower and can act without coordination of its policies with other allied countries or international society. And this caused the speculation of the American engagements in other countries. As a result of this “mismanagement” of the foreign policy of Bush Administration, American existence and vital interests were questioned by all states and their societies.

Obama made certain changes which can be accepted as positive initiatives in coordination with regional governments and not to use military options to solve problems. New administration showed its willingness to cooperate with friends and gave attention not to use military discourse and hard power to resolve problems. Positive directions were anticipated toward the relations of American Administration with Russia, the Middle East, Iran, the Islamic World, and other international cooperation on the Kyoto

Treaty and CTBT. The American government was expected to no longer prefer unilateral initiatives. There was a real transformation in American foreign policy, but this disengagement increased regional conflicts and caused a power vacuum filled by Russia and Iran. The assertiveness of these governments created a suspicion about the credibility of American security policy among the US regional allies. In this study, I will try to reveal the American Foreign Policy for the Middle East in terms of regional and global changes and the new approaches of Trump Administration, which can be called realism and neo mercantism based on the "America first" strategy. In this context, I would like to discuss the region in a different context and explore the main agenda and goals of American governments towards the Middle East. I will also analyze regional issues to show continuity and changes in American foreign policy until the Trump administration.

Structure of International System

New international structure is no longer either bipolar or unipolar. According to Fareed Zakaria,¹ "The emerging international system is likely to be quite different from those that have preceded it. ...The world will not stay unipolar for decades and ...become multipolar. On every dimension other than military power-industrial, financial, social, cultural-the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from U.S. dominance. That does not mean we are entering an anti-American world. But we are moving into a post-American world." On the other hand, according to some other writers such as Richard Haas, the new age could be called nonpolarity instead of unipolarity or multipolarity. "The principal characteristic of twenty-first-century international relations is turning out to be nonpolarity: a world dominated not by one or two or even several states but rather by dozens of actors possessing and exercising various kinds of power. This represents a tectonic shift from the past." According to Richard Haas², because, globalization has increased the volume, velocity, and importance of cross-border flows of just about everything, from drugs, e-mails, greenhouse gases, manufactured goods, and people to television and radio signals, viruses (virtual and real), and weapons.

The Main focus of American Middle East Policy and the Historical context

It is claimed that basic goals of American policy toward the Middle East is to maintain economic, political and strategic objectives and in this context securing Israel

¹ Fareed Zakaria, "The Future of American Power", Foreign Affairs, Vol 87, No. 3, May/June 2008

² Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity, What Will Follow U.S. Dominance Foreign Affairs, Vol 87, No. 3, May/June 2008, p.44

and the energy resources in the region. As it is to realize economic, political and strategic objectives, at the same time including the region completely to the American sphere of influence particularly after the end of East-West conflict and the Cold War.³

It must be noted that the Middle East, as a large geography, which most of the population is Muslim, faced a very ancient historical rivalry even sometimes appeared as a military and strategic struggle. Particularly, after the First World War, in the way of exploring and understanding the importance of the oil in the region, basic parameters of the competition over the region has been radically changed.

As we remembered that after the end of the cold war and the disintegration of Soviet Union, during the eras of Reagan, Clinton and Bush, American foreign policy had been called as bilateral and selective engagement; i.e it depended on neither unilateral nor multilateral cooperation. Whereas according to George W. Bush to fill the international power vacuum, unilateral initiatives were going to be inevitable so that they would expose their intention after 9/11 respectively.

It must be looked at traditional American foreign policy so far in order to understand the developments in Bush administration foreign policy agenda. As it is remembered, American government with Truman Doctrine in 1947 announced the beginning of the Cold War for itself and promised to save the free nations against the communist threat. Similarly, in 1957 Eisenhower administration declared to use American power if needed or requested by nations faced with direct or indirect threat of international communism. Such policy was known as Eisenhower Doctrine which remained in agenda for 1950's to involve international crises militarily and as a result of this policy US government was drawn into Vietnam crises which last more than ten years in 1960's. Therefore, American government as a consequence of negative implications and reactions of this policy, President Nixon who took power by the elections of 1968, declared that American military

³ Michael C. Hudson, "To play the hegemon: Fifty years of US policy toward the Middle East," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 1996); Walid Khalidi, "The American Factor in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Middle East International*, No. 567, (30 January 1998); Duncan L. Clarke, "US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel: Politically Untouchable?", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2, (Spring 1997); John W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 8th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980); Ernest R. May, "Cold War", Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Ed., *The Making of America's Soviet Policy* (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1984); Gary Sick, "The Evolution of U.S. Strategy Toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Regions," Rubinstein (ed.), 1983; Bruce Kuniholm, "Retrospect and Prospects: Forty Years of U.S. Middle East Policy", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Winter 1987); Jed C. Snyder, *Defending the Fringe: NATO, The Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987); Richard M. Nixon, *US Foreign Policy for the 1970's the Emerging Structure of Peace, A Report to The Congress*, February 9, 1979 (Wash, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1972); Charles G. Macdonald, "U.S. Policy and Gulf Security," *Gulf Security Into the 1980s*, Robert G. Darius et. Al. (ed.), (Stanford, Cal.: Hoover Ins. Press, 1988); Maxwell Orme Johnson, *The Military as an Instrument of U.S. Policy in Southwest Asia: The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, 1979-1982* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983); Jeffry Record, *The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf* (Washington: Ins for Foreign Policy Inc., 1981).

power would no longer be used in international crises, instead it would encourage regional allies to counter related crisis by taking American economic and political support as well as military support but American soldier wouldn't be used. Since this policy was declared by Nixon firstly in Guam, an American island in the Pacific ocean, was going to be known as Nixon or Guam Doctrine which last until the end of 1970's when Soviet Russia invaded Afghanistan and a regime change happened in Iran and Shah who was an American friend was overthrown and replaced by an Islamic regime with the leadership of Shia clerics. Beside these and some other developments such as fall of Somoza in Nicaragua and replacing of existing administrations in Somali and South Yemen with pro-Soviet regimes instigating American government to look over low profile policy. And so American government returned once again to the interventionist policy like Eisenhower and Truman who legitimized to use American military power in overseas crises if required. In 1980 with new policy called as Carter Doctrine American government revealed that US would use military power if American interest was under threat particularly in the Middle East by any country from inside or outside. As though this policy was deemed primarily to coup with crises which might emerge in the Middle East, President Reagan who took power as a result of 1980 elections, according to new policy, American military power was going to be used against any threat wherever American regional and global interests were threatened. Consequently, starwars came in this atmosphere in 1980s.

The first initiative of Bush administration which took power as a result of a very controversial election process in November 2000, was to present the anti ballistic missile Project and in this framework, announced to repeal the ABM treaty of 1972 unilaterally in December 2001. In another words, September 11 attacks triggered to implement supposed policy of Bush administration without hesitating. In this connection, so called Bush Doctrine which was assumed to attack possible threats preemptively to prevent any attack in advance, has been fundamental policy change in American policy in terms of change from multilateral to unilateral engagement.

Bush made it clear that the United States "will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists." Since Bush assumed the presidency, his administration took a number of unilateral steps to remove the United States from international arms-control and nonproliferation regimes. Bush announced the formal U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty on December 13, 2001, stating, "I have concluded that the ABM Treaty hinders our government's ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue-state missile attacks." The Bush administration suspended the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the U.S. Department of Defense's 2002 Nuclear Posture Review stated that "[t]he DOD and [Department of Energy] will reassess

the need to resume nuclear testing and will make recommendations to the president.” The administration also refused to comply with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Bush administration also announced that they would not ratify the Kyoto Treaty and the Convention of International Criminal Court. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, addressed that the Washington administration was going to withdraw from the engagement not serving to the interests of the US. White House was going to decide political initiative for security issues unless it was required to take the support of allies. In this connection, US government which tried to take international support for justification during the Gulf Crises in 1990 didn’t willing to seek such a support in the Iraqi War of 2003, since American foreign policy was going to be dominated by a notion that “you are with us or you are with the terrorists”. In this way, without waiting UN mandate, Bush administration preferred unilaterally recourse to war with Iraq. Preemption obviously reflected the Bush administration’s intention for unilateralism. In fact, this is the case of the self-image of Bush administration that after the end of the Cold War, United States became the main superpower and could act without coordination of its policies with other allied countries or international society. This was also the perception of Bush administration that international structure became a unipolar system in which it could do everything and pursue all policies that she wants and take unilateral actions that she likes. And also some countries such as Russia and China tried to lead a new counter-coalition against the American hegemonic behaviors and consequently increased their popularity.⁴

Such policies caused to increase rapidly anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism since most of figures among the Bush administration were Zionist or pro-Israel politicians and Sharon government as it suspended the peace process, increased to use military power

⁴ Kenneth W. Stein, “The Bush Doctrine: Selective Engagement in the Middle East,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2002); James J. Wartz, “U.S. Policy on Preventive War and Preemption,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Spring 2003, ss. 113-123; Lawrence Freedman, “Prevention, Not Preemption,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2003, ss. 105-114; Jeffrey Boutwell, “The US and No First Use: Preemption Trumps Deterrence,” *Puwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs*, Nov. 15-17, 2002. [Www.ciaonet.org/wps/boj03/boj03.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/boj03/boj03.html); Neta C. Crawford, “The Slippery Slope to Preventive War,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Annual Journal of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003: http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/cceia/cceia_2003_1g.html; Anthony F. Lang, Jr. “Evaluating the Preemptive Use of Force,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Annual Journal of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003: http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/cceia/cceia_2003_1b.html; Gary J. Schmitt, “Europeans Shrink from Applying ‘Bush Doctrine’ to Iraq,” *European Affairs*, Spring 2002. [Http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/ea/2002_spring/2002_spring_78.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/ea/2002_spring/2002_spring_78.html); Richard K. Betts, “Striking First: A History of Thankfully Lost Opportunities,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Annual Journal of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003: http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/cceia/cceia_2003_1e.html; Richard F. Grimmert, “U.S. Use of Preemptive Military Force: The Historical Record,” *U.S. Foreign Agenda*, an Electronic Journal of The U.S. Department of State, Vol. 7, No. 4 (December 2000), 41-43; Anthony Clark Arend, “International Law and Preemptive Use of Military Force,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2003, ss. 89-103; Thomas M. Nichols, “Just War, Not Prevention,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Annual Journal of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003: http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/cceia/cceia_2003_1f.html.

for security reasons. But Bush administration lately warned that this policy couldn't be prosecuted for realizing American interests. Furthermore, it has been noted that in the succeeding crises the attitudes and standpoint of allies were going to be regarded in the policy making process particularly about the issues related to allies. Well, then support of NATO allies to persuade Putin was very important. In this direction the trip of Condolize Rice and President Bush to Europe, in the same month were interesting. President Bush once again met with European leaders of allies on occasion of extraordinary conference of NATO on March 2005 in Brussels. Above initiatives of Bush administration have been influential because of European leader's support for American policy against Syria during the crises of assassination of Hariri and the pullout process of Syrian soldiers which had been in Lebanon for 30 years. American government also preferred to wait the result of European leader's initiatives about the nuclear programme of Iran. These developments and the efforts of American government certainly reduced slightly the anti-Americanism in the world and the region as well.

Iran government was replaced in 1979 with an American enemy which would be main security consideration for further American administrations. Whereas Iran until then as a very important American ally, was a buffer state to prevent Soviet expansionism toward the Middle East. Iran also opposed the Soviet proxy insurgents and gave full military and political support to the regional countries which were under communist threat. Unfortunately, with the revolution in 1979 Iran not only was lost but also it became major threat for American government and its allies in the region. As a consequence, double containment policy was put in to action by Clinton administration toward Iran and Iraq.

Of these countries, Iraq was occupied on March 2003, when it was understood that it didn't get support from inside and outside as a consequence of process began in 1991 and weakened by embargoes and sanctions since then. Similarly, Iran was isolated and tried to be weakened by embargoes began to apply in 1995. Bush government took Iran as a primary target when he took power in 2001 and September 11 attacks accelerated this process.

However, there are many obstacles to occupy Iran, since unlikely to Iraq; it has real strategic engagements with Russia and China beside its economic and political engagements with major European countries particularly such as France and Germany. Those countries aren't giving support to use military power against Iran; their priorities have been solving existing questions stem from nuclear programs in favor of peaceful ways. Moreover, Iran, unlike Iraq didn't have an organized opposition to facilitate American military operation or to cooperate with Washington to change regime in Tehran. As remembered Iraqi opposition groups were organized and financially

supported by Washington for more than ten years. Besides, Iraqi opposition had a real public support from inside, since Iraq Kurds comprising 20 % of the population and Shi'as comprising 60 % of the population had been isolated from the political structure for years. Whereas situation was very different from Iraq since Persians as 50 % percent of the population and Turks as 30 % percent of the population which was main ethnic groups sharing political powers in Iran, only Kurds could be excluded and they did a couple of initiatives in history but they failed. If it is compared Iran's position with Iraq in terms of political stability and homogeneity, Iran is more stable and sound than Iraq. These factors have potential to strengthen the opposition and force them to organize in underground. And also its persistence to have nuclear programs are getting weaken the position of Iran and might get to be isolated.

Obama and Foreign Policy

If we look at the first term of the Obama administration, foreign policy served to restore the image of Washington in the world. Positive multilateral engagement of Obama Administration was expected to increase the profile of American leadership to engage regional and global issues. Positive directions were very certain to look forward the relations of American Administration with Russia, the Middle East, Iran, the Islamic World, and other international cooperation on the Kyoto Treaty and CTBT. It was certain that the American government wasn't going to prefer unilateral initiatives. Instead, the proliferation of WMD would be the priority of the Obama administration. The relation between Russia was promised to reset and to strengthen this option, Obama declared not to deploy a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. Despite some similarities about Iran policy, there was a difference in diplomatic style. United States government still, was against the Uranium enrichment of Iran to have nuclear capability, but insisted that diplomatic option would be first and foremost to solve the problem with Tehran. Obama's Cairo speech was an important signal to the Islamic world that there would be no prejudice about Islam and no confusion Muslims with terrorists.

Obama also gave important messages about two-state solution and in this regard the necessity of freezing settlements by Israel. Obama's approach to Syria as understood was different than Bush who refused to diplomatic contact with Damascus by anyway as well as with Hamas. Obama administration was expected to be willing to give an opportunity to Hamas at least unofficially to forward the establishment a unity government in Palestine.

Obama's Cairo speech was a good beginning for the Middle East policy, because of basic points which Obama underlined. He stated that America's strong bonds with Israel were well known. It was based upon cultural and historical ties and the recognition that

the aspiration for a Jewish homeland was rooted in a tragic history that could not be denied. This bond was unbreakable. On the other hand, the situation for the Palestinian people was intolerable and America would not turn backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration. Aspirations could be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each would live in peace and security. Hamas must have put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist. The United States was not going to accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction would continue to violate previous agreements and undermine efforts to achieve peace. It was time for these settlements to stop.⁵

Another test area of the Obama administration was whether America would reconcile the relation with Iran in many perspectives such as nuclear issue and regional problems. Among these, Iran's nuclear program was still a prior issue for Washington. There were at least three differences between Obama and Bush administration. The first difference was that the Obama administration was not reluctant to set direct dialogue if Iran sends positive messages. Secondly, the Obama government instead of categorically rejecting all of the nuclear programs of Iran, rather focused on the aspiration of being a nuclear power. Therefore, the American government was continuously stating on the right of Iran to have peaceful nuclear energy, not nuclear weapons.

The third policy difference of the Obama administration was about the ways to solve the problem with Iran. Obama administration wasn't mentioning about military option as Bush administration used to. Instead, as long as Iran was willing to cooperate with international society and abiding the resolutions of United Nations, US government was promising to give up all sanctions upon Tehran. If these objectives could not be achieved, Washington was resolutely determined to tighten the sanctions by taking the support of Security Council and international society. Obama administration, first of all, wanted to give an opportunity to the process of 5+1 countries (United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, and Germany) that was already in place. Obama was accepting the previous offer which was to freeze further sanctions in return Iran's freezing all uranium enrichment activities.⁶

On the other hand, Obama's Afghanistan and Iraq policy cannot be assessed as successful as expected. In Afghanistan, the future was not certain and there was no exit

⁵ Obama's Speech in Cairo

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=8&_r=1

⁶ What now for Obama's Iran policy?

<https://www.iiss.org/publications/buy-now/?OriginalPath=/publications/buy-now/?entryid9=28293&q=0%C2%ACWhat+now+for+Obama%ef%bf%bds+iran+policy%C2%AC&entryid9=28293&q=0%c2%acWhat%20now%20for%20Obama's%20iran%20policy%c2%ac>

plan. In Iraq, violence was not stopping. A new AP-GfK⁷ poll shows a majority of Americans opposed to the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Speaking at a ceremony at the Pentagon on the eight-year anniversary of the September 11 attacks, President Barack Obama vowed that America would “renew our resolve” to fight al-Qaeda and insisted that he would never waiver from that course of action. However, on this anniversary, America has roughly 130,000 troops in Iraq and roughly 68,000 troops in Afghanistan. President Obama also dramatically increased the number of drone attacks inside Pakistan. He’s also increased tensions with both Iran and North Korea, nations which had essentially zero al-Qaeda presence.”⁸

On the other hand, Turkish-American relations by the Obama administration especially in the first term, gained new momentum. Both visits of Secretary of State Clinton and President Obama created a positive atmosphere in Turkey. The expectation from the Obama administration as well as other countries was still very high in Turkey. Speech of Obama in the Turkish parliament was well accepted by Turkish people. Obama administration was supporting Turkish democracy and appreciated the Turkish new positive engagement in regional and global issues. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Washington, during the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu, stated that “we obviously already collaborate. Not only are we both members of NATO, but we are working with the G-20 to respond to the global economic crisis, we’re exploring ways to enhance our trade and commerce between our two countries, we’re working to develop new energy sources, including resources from the Caucasus and Central Asia. We’re partners in the fight against global terrorism. We share the goal of a stable Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to deny al-Qaida safe haven that can threaten our countries and many others. We support Turkey in its fight against the terrorist activities of the PKK, which has been a very important cooperation”⁹ And as American Ambassador Jeffrey stated¹⁰ that both sides are not against the right of Iran to have peaceful nuclear energy. But both countries are very concerned about Iran’s aspirations to be a nuclear power and cooperating for the stability and peace in the Middle East.

Turkey, by growing economy and functioning democracy, and accepting positive diplomacy in the region, Mark Parris stated¹¹ that seeking to play as a mediator among

⁷ http://www.ap-gfkipoll.com/pdf/AP-GfK_Poll_HC_Politics_Econ_Flu_Topline_91509.pdf

⁸ Jason Ditz, Obama Vows to Never Stop Pursuing al-Qaeda, September 11, 2009

<http://news.antiwar.com/2009/09/11/obama-vows-to-never-stop-pursuing-al-qaeda/>, accessed 17 Sep 2009.

⁹ June 5, 2009 Treaty Room - Washington, D.C. http://turkey.usembassy.gov/statement_060509.html, accessed on 8 August 2009.

¹⁰ Ambassador James Jeffrey’s Interview with Murat Akgun, NTV Ankara, June 19, 2009

http://turkey.usembassy.gov/amb_jeffrey_061909.html

¹¹ Mark R. Parris, Prospect for U.S.-Turkish Relations in the Obama Era, Visiting Fellow, Foreign Policy YASED Conference - Istanbul, Turkey, February 11, 2009, http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2009/0211_turkey_parris.aspx,

Israelis and Syrians, Syrians and Lebanese, Russians and Georgians, Iraqi Sunni and Shia Arabs, Iran and the world, Israelis, Palestinians and Egyptians, and even Armenians and Azeris. Turkey as a country that can operate in such circles is important in terms of U.S. interests. Turkey also is a member of NATO, OECD, IMF and World Bank, a candidate for EU membership and a newly elected member of the UNSC. It belongs to some really good clubs. It also, as a country 99% Muslim, demonstrates in concrete terms that there is no necessary contradiction between Islam and the West, between Islam and globalization, between Islam and parliamentary democracy, between Islam and free markets. This is the American interest to pay attention to its relation with this country for the stability and peace in the region.

Obama Doctrine and Arap Spring

The main focus of the Obama administration toward the Middle East was to correct the damage caused by the Bush administration. Because the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq caused a great reaction against the American presence in the region and this necessitated to lower the US military appearance in the region. Therefore, in a sense, the Obama administration has tried to reduce the profile of American military presence in the region since it came to power. However, the United States, in accordance with the decision taken in August 2014 in the context of the struggle against ISIS, began to air operations from September, differentiating from the philosophy of President Obama that American military power will not be used in regional conflicts.¹²

In fact, it was pointed out that there were actually two important threats to US interests in the Middle East during Obama's second term. One of them was Iran and the other was ISIS. Both increased their efficiency by taking advantage of the power vacuum that emerged in the region. However, since September 11, these two threats have been targeted, but at the end of the sixteen-year struggle, both had increased their power remarkably. Al Qaeda is now becoming a much more effective terrorist organization with different names in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, Mali and Libya, and became a much bigger threat to the Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Although the Obama administration says it will not use military force at any opportunity overseas, it has not excluded the option of intervention while the conflict is continuing in Syria and explained that the use or mobilization of chemical weapons is red

accessed 15 Sep 2009.

¹² Kenneth M. Pollack, "U.S. policy toward a turbulent Middle East", March 24, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/u-s-policy-toward-a-turbulent-middle-east/>

lines. However, the US's adoption of a passive stance in Syria since the beginning of the crisis led to the prolongation of the conflict. Although it seems that the US administration would intervene for a moment on the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons in Damascus East Gouta region in August 2013, it has been given up with the agreement that Russia and Syria should be cleared of chemical weapons in a timetable. The main aim of the United States was to activate this option when there was a threat to American interests rather than to intervene in the face of all human rights violations. However, Samantha Power, the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, argued that "the international community is responsible for the protection of human rights abuses and that intervention should be sought."¹³ Others thought that the US intervention in this incident was a moral responsibility.¹⁴ In defending this, in fact, the doctrine of responsibility to protect was referred to.¹⁵ Therefore, one of the main axes of the conflict that determined the region after the Arab Spring was the struggle between the Islamic parties and the existing powers, the second was the sectarian conflict led by Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia, and the third was the threat from Al Qaeda and ISIS.¹⁶

The failure of the American administration to adopt a decisive stance in Syrian policy has given a very important role in the continuation of the problem. The Obama administration's support for the opposition remains very limited. Especially the train & equip program could not be said to be successful. The opposition did not achieve a sustainable success in the face of the Assad administration, which had heavy weapons and had the military and political support of Russia and Iran. Moreover, it was almost impossible for the Syrian opposition to struggle with groups like ISIS and Nusra to succeed. However, the impact of war of attrition to fight the Syrian government was transforming not only include Turkey, was also felt in neighboring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon heavily. Therefore, the war was not expected to end as long as Russia and Iran continued their support for the Assad regime.¹⁷

¹³ Jeffrey Goldberg, Atlantic Council April 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>; accessed on 5 May 2017

¹⁴ Samantha Power made a career arguing for America's "responsibility to protect." During her years in the White House, it became clear that benevolent motives can have calamitous results. Dexter Filkins, *The Moral Logic of Humanitarian Intervention* September 9, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/16/the-moral-logic-of-humanitarian-intervention>, accessed on 18 January 2020; Shadi Hamid, "Obama and the Limits of 'Fact-Based' Foreign Policy", <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/obama-foreign-policy/513380/>; accessed on 5 May 2017

¹⁵ The **Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP)** is a global political commitment which was endorsed by all member states of the United Nations at the 2005 World Summit in order to address its four key concerns to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

¹⁶ Tamara Cofman Wittes, "The regional impact of U.S. policy toward Iraq and Syria", April 30, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-regional-impact-of-u-s-policy-toward-iraq-and-syria/>

¹⁷ Tamara Cofman Wittes, "The regional impact of U.S. policy toward Iraq and Syria", April 30, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-regional-impact-of-u-s-policy-toward-iraq-and-syria/>

Meanwhile, since the main goal for the United States was to fight ISIS, it seemed as if the Assad regime was no longer a priority. On the other hand, the nuclear deal between the US and Iran has opened up an important field of activity for Iran in the region, which made Iran more comfortable in foreign policy. However, this situation made Iran a priority for the countries in the region than ISIS. The difference between the priority of the United States and the regional allies in the region during the Obama period negatively affected the relationship between the US and the regional countries.¹⁸

However, when Obama left Iraq in December 2011, he explained that they left behind a sovereign, stable and self-sufficient country. But in June 2014, ISIS occupied a third of Iraq within a few days, while the weakness of the Iraqi army revealed what Obama left behind. By August 2017, the Iraqi government was able to take control of Mosul with the help of the coalition forces (US-led coalition to defeat ISIS). It was not yet known when full control over Iraq would be achieved and that Iraq would become a truly stable, sovereign and self-sufficient state. In fact, ISIS, led by Abu Bakr Baghdadi since 2010, has become a major force that controls one-third of Iraq, which was destroyed by the American occupation, and then Syria. In this process, Iran's sectarian policies and the support of the Iraqi and Syrian regime to resort to excessive violence and force against the Sunnis cannot be underestimated.¹⁹

Undoubtedly, the American administration's preference to wait instead of solving the problem increased the concerns about Obama's policies towards the region. As the end of 2014, the United States eventually dispatched some 5,000 troops to Iraq to fight with ISIS. Since September 2014, it has been announced that the main priority of the US is the struggle against ISIS. For this purpose, an international coalition of approximately 60 countries was formed and air operations against ISIS were launched. However, this process led to an increase in civilian casualties, while helping ISIS to find more militants. The US no longer regarded the Assad regime as a priority threat and considered Iran an important partner in the fight against ISIS. US policies also led to a deep disappointment over a NATO member such as Turkey. US policy was not only concerned about Turkey but also other Arab countries in the region, even the Sunni tribes in Iraq were skeptical about the US struggle against ISIS. Serious doubts arose that the US military training for the Iraqi army did not work very well. Although the cost of the 2003 invasion of Iraq amounted to \$ 2 trillion, the failure of the outcome increased suspicion of confidence in US policy.

¹⁸ Tamara Cofman Wittes, "The regional impact of U.S. policy toward Iraq and Syria", April 30, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-regional-impact-of-u-s-policy-toward-iraq-and-syria/>

¹⁹ Abdel Bari Atwan, "American Middle Eastern Policy Takes A U-Turn Into 2015" Special to Gulf News, 10 January 5, 2015, <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/america-s-u-turns-on-middle-east-1.1436584>

On the other hand, the general opinion was that the US policy in the Middle East was a complete failure. While it was criticized for allowing the Islamists to come to power by keeping silent to the fall of secular leaders during the Arab Spring, on the one hand it adopted a passive attitude in the Syrian civil war and led to the prolongation of the conflict as well as regional actors such as Russia and Iran and non-state actors such as Hezbollah and ISIS became very effective to fill the power vacuum. However, the US administration itself was accused of both uncovering and supporting the deash. In this context, a Nusra militant stated that the US has helped a lot in the past, even though it has accused them of being a terrorist organization.²⁰

In fact, during the Arab Spring, the opposition Islamic parties in the Arab countries were eager to believe that the American administration was going to support them. But what happened in Algeria in 1992 to the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) was not forgotten. The secular military structure took action and canceled the elections, and more than 300,000 people lost their lives in the civil war, and the FIS was driven underground. Because the Islamic parties were not only fighting against the existing regime inside; they also had to fight against their international supporters. They were cautious because they were very popular in the region and had wide public support, but did not know what would happen to them. Because the situation of the Ikhwan in Egypt was the same. They knew that the regime would not give them a chance to rule. In Egypt, with the help of the international community, not less than a year later, the internal secular parties which were in power showed that they would not surrender power to Islamists. What was happening in Syria was no different. Eight years after the clashes and a million people lost their lives, the issue was still to establish cease-fire or safe haven.²¹

On the other hand, although the Obama administration says it supports the revolution in Tunisia, it soon became clear that it was not ready to give up Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Egypt was an important ally of Israel both in the struggle against Iran and in the Palestinian question. Nevertheless, both the Arab countries in the region and most of the international actors seemed to support the process one way or the other at the beginning of the Arab spring or did not directly oppose it. Only in Bahrain, the Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, provided direct assistance to the Bahrain government in suppressing the uprising with security forces. The Obama administration did not react to the overthrow of Morsi in a military coup in Egypt on 3 July 2013. However, the same administration was contented with suspending military aid only for a short time, despite the fact that the

²⁰ Tyler Durden, "America Is On Our Side": Al-Nusra Commander Tells German Press US Is Arming Jihadists", <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-09-26/america-our-side-al-nusra-commander-tells-german-press-us-arming-jihadists>, Sep 26, 2016 9:13 PM

²¹ Shadi Hamid "Islamism, the Arab Spring, and the Failure of America's Do-Nothing Policy in the Middle East" OCT 9, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/middle-east-egypt-us-policy/409537/>

Sisi administration resorted to violence against the opposition and killed thousands of Ikhwan supporters demonstrating in the Rabia al-Adaviye mosque. According to Secretary of State Kerry, in Egypt, General Sisi had put democracy in its path. While from Gulf countries only Qatar had provided financial support to Mursi administration, Sisi administration was lucky in that sense too. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE provided substantial support, totaling \$ 12 billion. In fact, those Gulf countries were cautious against the Islamic opposition, fearing that a similar situation might happen in their countries to their power.²²

In his state of union speech in January 2015, President Obama first pointed out that terror were approaching the door of America.²³ Obama, who stated that he reduced the number of soldiers in Afghanistan from 180,000 to 15,000 when they came to power, claimed that they had stopped the advance of ISIS in Iraq and Syria with the coalition they had formed and provided important assistance to the opposition in Syria. Obama emphasized that they supported democracy in Ukraine, strengthened the alliance within NATO against Russia and took steps to change relations with Cuba, Obama also stressed that his diplomatic efforts were successful and convinced Iran to conclude an agreement to halt nuclear activities. Obama argued that non-diplomatic methods were not approved in the American public and said he wanted the war to be the last resort. He also claimed that they invested in diplomacy, focused on the smart use of power, that made America an exceptional state, and that American standards were always much better than the rest of the world.

However, Stephan Walt pointed out the confusion about what the United States was trying to do in the Middle East during the Obama era, and that the US had lost the trust of its allies in the region and even faced certain problems with them. Especially because Syria and Iran policy with regional allies' serious difference of opinion was on the agenda. According to Stephan Walt, Israel was trying to sabotage both the two-state solution and the nuclear deal with Iran.²⁴

Obama's most criticized policies were primarily the lack of support for the Syrian opposition, and although the red line on the Syrian regime was violated by the Syrian regime in August 2013 and despite the chemical attack resulted the death of 1400 civilians, refused the demand for being tough, and also opened up a field of action for Iran in the

²² Shadi Hamid "Islamism, the Arab Spring, and the Failure of America's Do-Nothing Policy in the Middle East" OCT 9, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/middle-east-egypt-us-policy/409537/>

²³ "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address" January 20, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>

²⁴ Stephen M. Walt "The United States Should Admit It No Longer Has a Middle East Policy," <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/29/the-u-s-should-admit-it-has-no-middle-east-policy-obama-cold-war-israel-syria/> JANUARY 29, 2016.

region as confronted his traditional allies such as Saudi Arabia, as well as saw climate change as a priority rather than to fight ISIS, but consequently all were great loss for US credibility and deterrence.²⁵

However, although it is not possible to speak of a holistic and promulgated doctrine like the doctrines attributed to previous presidents, it was possible to speak of an Obama doctrine through an evaluation of generally followed policies. At least it could be said that a policy which depends on soft power seemed more important than hard power. It was believed that non-military methods such as isolating and imposing sanctions as a means of foreign policy could be functional in achieving the same outcome. In this context, it was considered as important as US treasury and finance secretaries as US foreign and defense secretaries. In this context, it was possible to define the most fundamental feature of US policy as an idealist and neoliberal internationalism and a policy based on negotiation and multilateral cooperation rather than conflict and unilateral initiatives. Although it occasionally made unilateral initiatives, it was possible to characterize Obama's policy primarily as moral multilateralism.²⁶

However, it didn't prevented Iran from developing ballistic nuclear missiles, supporting terrorist activities and implementing destabilizing policies in the region. Obama left behind a very unstable and divided Middle East, al-Qaeda was stronger than a decade ago, and there was no definite result in the fight against ISIS. In addition, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq were registered as failed states.²⁷

One of the foreign policy principles and concepts of the Obama era was the concept of strategic patience which was used for the first time in February 2015.²⁸ It was pointed out that the US patience was not infinite and stated that this patience had a strategic meaning. However, the concept of strategic patience has received a lot of criticism, as Obama has been slow to act on issues such as the fight against ISIS. The Obama administration thought that the US would remain the leading country, but should not be expected to intervene in all regional problems in the world. Therefore, many of these problems required the US to have a strategic patience. But critics argued that Obama's policy was nothing more than encouraging competitors. It was pointed out that actors such as ISIS, Iran or Putin used the power vacuum that Obama left.

²⁵ Is there an Obama Doctrine? Analyzing Jeffrey Goldberg's "The Obama Doctrine"
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/there-obama-doctrine>, March 10, 2016

²⁶ Moral Multilateralism: The Obama Doctrine's Christian Realism Matt Gobush | July 25, 2016

²⁷ Matthew Kroenig, "The Case for Trump's Foreign Policy" <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2017-04-17/case-trump-s-foreign-policy>

²⁸ "Obama security agenda urges 'strategic patience,' drawing criticism amid ISIS threat"
<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/02/07/obama-security-agenda-urges-strategic-patience-drawing-criticism.html>

President Trump and the Rising of Conservatism in American Politics

The White House stressed that the Trump administration's foreign policy was going to be oriented to maximize American interests and American national security. There would be no abandonment of the powerful American principle in ensuring peace, and this principle became the basic principle of foreign policy.²⁹ It was emphasized that defeating ISIS and other “radical Islamic” terrorist groups was the US's top priority. In order to eliminate these organizations, coalitions would be used in addition to America's own power. In the fight against these terrorist organizations, they would work with international partners to cut their financial resources and cooperate with them in the exchange of intelligence. Apart from these, there was a relative decrease in American military power and it was hoped that this would be compensated as soon as possible. Because American military power had to be in a position that could never be challenged. Particular emphasis was placed on the irresistible superiority of the US military power. In this context, the Trump administration predicted significant increases in defense budget. Meanwhile, it was stated that the necessary importance would be given to diplomacy.³⁰ He said that the US had left the Transpacific trade partnership to protect its economic interests and to increase domestic employment, and would offer to negotiate with the NAFTA members.

However, it was estimated from the election campaigns that protectionism and isolationism would be two main principles of American foreign policy, but it was realized that isolationism would not be possible with the policy changes towards Syria, Russia and North Korea. However, it was understood that values such as human rights and democracy would not be a direct concern in American foreign policy, but it would continue to be instrumentalized. Moreover, it was understood that the interests of Israel and the Christian world would be given higher priority, especially the Middle East policy would be largely determined within the framework of Israel's interests.

In this context, it is possible to say that the essence of Trump Doctrine is classical realism. Another expression of this is the new right-wing and right neoconservatism,³¹ and was largely implemented during the Bush era. Trump and his team summed it up with the slogan “America first”. It meant that the Washington administration would not be involved in a policy and military engagement that America did not win. This policy corresponds to a practice where military power is a priority, defense spending is increasing, and the arms lobby and the Zionist lobby are highly effective. During the

²⁹ “America First Foreign Policy”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/america-first-foreign-policy>

³⁰ Making Our Military Strong Again, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/making-our-military-strong-again>

³¹ Stephen Wertheim, Return of the Neocons, January 2, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/01/02/return-of-the-neocons/>

election campaign, however, they were somewhat concerned about Trump's policies. Because even though protectionism was right for them, possibility of isolationism and insulation disturbed these segments.

The main principle of Trump Doctrine is to achieve absolute power and, if possible, to create a unipolar world based on American supremacy. The main purpose is to have an irresistible power. Instead of chaos, order will be focused and the use of force will not be avoided. It was understood that the Trump administration, considering Obama policies to cause chaos, would not avoid using force to prevent chaos and establish order. According to Trump, foreign policy should be based on national interests rather than ideology. For Trump, American interests are above all else and nothing can be sacrificed. In Trump's foreign policy, the concepts of power and interest are used in the same sense as in classical realism. Therefore, human values will be taken into account to the extent that they are consistent with American interests in Trump's foreign policy. It focuses on relations with Russia and China from this point, and the main objective is to increase American military and economic power. Soft power, which is the basis of Obama policy, is no longer a priority for Trump. In Trump's foreign policy, the concepts of friends and enemies or the concepts of war and negotiation are used side by side. We can call it pragmatism. Because realism does not reject pragmatism. International alliances are formed at the intersection of national interests and correspond to practical requirements. In realism, today's ally can be viewed as the enemy of tomorrow. All allied states are also potential enemies. As in realism, from Trump's point of view, there are always American national interests, rather than eternal friends and eternal enemies.³²

Trump's election as president in November 2016 was welcomed in Egypt, while his other allies met with cautious optimism. The statements he made during the election to Sisi administration played an important role in the pleasure of the Egyptian government. The most important common point of both leaders was that they had problems with democracy, that is, respect for human rights and fundamental values. Of course, much more important was their proximity to Israel. Since the main priority of the US in the new era will not be human rights and democracy issues, it was not expected to have a problem with Sisi. Because it was understood that the main priority of the US would be economic and security related interests.³³ Trump, who has repeatedly stated that the main priority of the US will be to fight ISIS, was also to reduce or to eliminate Iran's influence in the region. Trump, in the statements he made both before and during the election campaign, stated that he could terminate the nuclear agreement with Iran.

³² For similar analysis see, Gunnar Bjornson, <http://katehon.com/article/trump-doctrine-explained>

³³ Adel Abdel Ghafar "Egypt: A lesson for Americans", <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/18/opinions/trump-presidency-international-views-roundup/>

Trump, who tied the decline of US activity in the Middle East to the passive policy pursued by Obama at every opportunity, signaled that he would be more active.

On the other hand, there was uncertainty about the US policy of Syria, until Syria used chemical weapons in Idlib. There was a perception that Trump's policy would be the continuation of Obama. The general perception was that they would continue to cooperate with the PYD and Turkey's concerns were not understood. However, it was not possible to talk about a clear change in attitude towards the PYD/YPG. On the other hand, although the issue of safe zone was emphasized, it was not yet clear where and with whom to cooperate, and this continued to concern the relevant actors. Especially the day before the Syrian regime carried out the chemical attack, US Permanent Representative to the UN Nikki Haley said on April 3, 2017 that Syrians should decide on the future of Syria and whether Assad remains at work is not a priority for the American administration. The fact that the Trump administration responded to Syria's use of chemical weapons in Idlib's Khan Sheikhoun region on April 4 and shot the Shayrat military base was considered as a change in the opposite direction in a short time.³⁴ Critics of this situation also referred to the Trump doctrine as the doctrine of uncertainty, pointing out that the most fundamental feature of Trump's foreign policy was its unpredictability and uncertainty. Trump was also quite unpredictable and uncomfortable in character; on the contrary, he saw it as a positive trait. It was pointed out that it would not be possible to speak of a Trump Doctrine because of this feature. If the use of chemical weapons is the red line in 2013, the Syrian regime used chemical weapons in East Guta, and when 1400 people lost their lives and the Obama administration tried to intervene, Trump opposed it. However, this time the attack on Idlib's Khan Sheikhoun region killed about 100 people. So there was a great contradiction. Moreover, a few days before the attack, Foreign Minister Tillerson declared that Assad was no longer the priority of the United States. In fact, critics of the Trump administration claimed that Tillerson's and Trump's statements had encouraged the Assad administration and gave green light to the use of chemical weapons.

According to Russia, the US attack on the Syrian military base in Shayrat (Hums) meant that the US could now prefer unilateral initiatives rather than multilateral solutions to the Syrian problem. It was claimed that this attack made the Geneva negotiations meaningless.

Some circles, especially those close to Israel, insist that the US should oppose the military solution, as it did during the Obama era, after Trump came to power because he did not want Assad to leave as a result of a military intervention. Instead, they argue, we

³⁴ Andrew Sullivan "The Trump Doctrine: Unpredictability and Incoherence", <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/04/the-trump-doctrine-unpredictability-and-incoherence.html>

need to focus on reasonable solutions that Assad can accept. The desire of these circles and their plan as the only solution is to bring Syria into a federal structure consisting of autonomous regions. They are trying to convince everyone that this structure will be democratic and stable; however, it is known that the proposed systems do not lead to a stable and integrated structure as in Iraq and Lebanon. Yes, maybe they have a flag, but a flag that no one respects and never thinks of dying for. This structure may have a parliament and an army, but there is an army in the country that cannot even fight against any terrorist organization, and the best examples of these are Iraq and Lebanon. However, they still think that it is time to abandon the “leading from behind” policy of the United States and present its own solution (whatever it wants), and the attack on Syria should be read as clues.³⁵

However, the main priorities of the US in the Middle East policy are the struggle against ISIS, the reduction of Iranian influence in the region, the dismissal of Assad and the security of Israel, although not explicitly stated.

On the other hand, according to Daniel Byman, a senior expert at Brookings, relations between the US and Saudi Arabia have been severely damaged during the Obama era. Therefore, one of Trump's priorities would be to restore relations with Saudi Arabia, the most important country in the Gulf region, and a country that needed it to keep oil prices at a reasonable level. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was an important country both in terms of limiting Iran and in the fight against terrorism.³⁶ On the other hand, despite Obama's veto, the law (Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act-JASTA) passed by a two-thirds majority of Congress on September 28, 2016, claiming that Saudi Arabia supported terrorism and provided funding. This law had a devastating impact on the Saudi Kingdom and damaged relations.³⁷

In fact, the Saudi authorities were skeptical of the September 11 attack and al-Qaeda and preferred to blame the United States for this. However, after al-Qaeda began to target the Saudis in 2003, Saudi Arabia started to cooperate with the United States in the fight against terrorism. The two countries signed an agreement on the fight against terrorism in 2008. As a result, Saudi Arabia's cooperation in the fight against AQAP was very important. But the Americans continued to claim that there was a significant flow of funding by the Saudis to al-Qaeda-related groups such as the Taliban, Lashkar Tayibe and

³⁵ What Should Follow the Tomahawk Attack on Syria, 13 April, 2017 <http://mebriefing.com/?p=2823>

³⁶ Daniel L. Byman “Getting real with Riyadh” https://www.brookings.edu/research/getting-real-with-riyadh/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=50897149

³⁷ For details see, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/2040/text>

Nusra.³⁸ The first sign that Trump's relations with Saudi Arabia would be different from Obama was that he made his first overseas trip to Saudi Arabia and Israel.³⁹

The first indication that the relations between the two countries will follow a different course from the Obama era was the welcome of Defense Minister and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the White House on 14 March 2017.⁴⁰ The fact that, the appointment of Tillerson, CEO of Exxon Mobil to the Secretary of State was understood as a summary of US policy towards the Gulf. It was easily estimated that issues such as human rights and political reforms would no longer be among the preconditions of the US at least during this period.

On the other hand, the fact that Trump made his first overseas trip to Saudi Arabia on May 20, 2017 allowed us to understand the main elements of the US Gulf policy. During this trip, arms sales and investment agreements were signed to increase the defense capacity of Saudi Arabia, which amounted to \$ 120 billion of which was related to arms sales, and totaled \$ 350 billion. For example, the US General Electric Company announced that it had signed a \$ 15 billion deal, while Saudi Aramco had signed a \$ 50 billion deal with 11 US companies. In particular, the \$ 120 billion arms sale agreement was the largest arms sale agreement in American history.⁴¹ Furthermore, during this trip, Trump held a meeting in Riyadh with the participation of Arab and Muslim country representatives and underlined the common struggle against terrorism. The main purpose of the meetings was to provide the support of the countries of the region against ISIS and Iran. The other list of items of these meetings were the measures to be taken against the proliferation of ballistic missiles, the end of the conflict in Yemen and the security of the Red Sea.

The Trump administration continued its support for the coalition of the Gulf states during the civil war in Yemen. The first priority of the US in Yemen was the increasing

³⁸Daniel L. Byman "Getting real with Riyadh" https://www.brookings.edu/research/getting-real-with-riyadh/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=50897149

³⁹ Clifford D. May, "Obama's last-minute backstab against Israel" December 28, 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/clifford-d-may-obamas-last-minute-backstab-against-israel>

⁴⁰ Josh Rogin, " Trump resets U.S.-Saudi relations, in Saudi Arabia's favor", March 16 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2017/03/16/trump-resets-u-s-saudi-relations-in-saudi-arabias-favor/?utm_term=.7bb4b28e5ae7

⁴¹ "Trump in Saudi Arabia: First foreign trip starts as home troubles mount", 20 May 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39984903>; "The Future of U.S.-Saudi Relations", <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/future-us-saudi-relations>

Iranian presence in this country and the al-Qaeda elements in the south of the country. However, Iran's presence increased significantly during the country's civil war, but there was no visible increase in al-Qaeda and Daesh's effectiveness.

Meanwhile, differences between the US and Turkey on Syria have been deepening. According to Turkey, the PYD/YPG is a terrorist organization which has direct connection with PKK, whereas for the American administration it is regarded as allies in the fight against ISIS. Finally, in December 2018 when Turkey announced to launch the operation to cleanse from terrorism and to set up a safe zone along the Turkey-Syria border region the in the east of Euphrates River, President Trump declared to withdraw from Syria but he failed to exercise. In other words, the requirement of this statement was not fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Turkey's decision to purchase S-400 air defense system from Russia as a result of increasing cooperation of both sides including military and economic issues deepened the divisions between the US and Turkey. The US administration has announced that Turkey is removed from the F-35 project and also announced the stop the sale of the F-35 even though Turkey as a NATO ally has been joint production partner of the F-35 and paid 1.5 billion Dollar. As all these developments made it difficult to normalize relations, Turkey and the US decided to establish a coordination and joint surveillance in order to become a safe zone along the border with Syria. However, after seeing that the US administration continue the support to PYD/YPG, Turkey terminated the process of coordination and launched "the peace spring operations" in October 2019. Once more an agreement was reached between both sides on the creation of safe zone along the border in accordance with the agreement achieved at the meeting in Ankara on the eighth day of the operation. A few days later, as a result of negotiations between the Turkish and Russian delegation led by President Erdoğan and Putin, they agreed to remove PYD elements from the border in areas other than those agreed with the Americans.

Adoption of the Armenian resolution against Turkey in the House of Representatives and the defense budget law with particular clauses to be imposed sanctions to Turkey within the framework of the CAATSA⁴², obstructed the formation of trust-based relation between the two countries.

While all these developments were taking place, the tension between the US and Iran was escalating. This escalation took on a new dimension on December 27, 2019, when members of the Hezbollah Brigades in Hashdi al-Shaabi attacked the K1 base in Kirkuk and killed an American civilian employee. The American government responded by bombing five military bases belonging to the Hezbollah Brigades (Kataib Hezbollah) on

⁴² https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/hr3364_pl115-44.pdf

December 29th. As a response, the US embassy in Baghdad was attacked on December 31 by a crowd of influential elements in Hashd al-Shaabi, such as the Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the US retaliation on January 3, 2020, which led to a dangerous situation. In response to this attack, the United States killed Kasim Suleimani, the most important commander of Iran's military activities in the region, and along with him, ten of the top leaders of Hashdi al-Shaabi and the commander of Kataib Hezbollah were killed during the attack.

With this development, both the US-Iran relations and the US-Iraq relations came into a dead end. In recent months, the anti-regime demonstrations in both countries have become anti-American with these attacks. The Iraqi parliament and government decided on January 4 to call for American military elements to leave the country.

Iran's first reaction to these developments was to explain that it had suspended all its commitments regarding the nuclear agreement and that it would continue its activities. While NATO did not share responsibility for the murder of Kasim Suleimani at his extraordinary meeting on January 6, it was expressed that the alliance was a common view of the concern that Iran would continue its nuclear activities.

While the international community was worried about how the US attempted to eliminate the influence of Iran in the region and the tension between the US and Iran would gain a new dimension, the legitimacy of the US military presence in the region was being re-discussed. It was also possible that Trump's move might have made it in the name of getting rid of the impeachment process in Congress. Trump, on the one hand, stiffened his attitude towards Iran and made threats while on the other hand, accused the Democrats of dealing with the issue of impeachment in an environment where the country was facing a great national danger.

Conclusion

When the regional and global policies of the US are compared, it is noteworthy that republicans prefer unilateral initiatives and refrain from multilateral cooperation. In this sense, it is seen in many examples that they do not comply with international institutional cooperation processes and commitments arising from bilateral and multilateral international agreements. In this context, it should be pointed out that Bush withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2001 and Trump from the INF agreement unilaterally in 2019. In addition, Trump announced that he also withdrew from the Paris climate agreement, as Bush had withdrawn in 2001 from the Kyoto Protocol signed during Clinton's time in 1997. Trump also announced that as soon as he took office, he left the Iran Nuclear Treaty and TransPacific Partnership agreement signed by Obama and the Euro Atlantic Trade

and Investment Partnership negotiations that began during Obama's time. However, it must be noted that both the Democrat and Republican presidents have common sensitivities in terms of the security of Israel and the protection of the security of energy resources in the region, but they differ in terms of the method they follow. In this context, although the republicans pursue an interventionist policy on the use of military force in overseas conflicts and regional problems, it is seen that the democrats prefer a reverse policy in this sense, that is, they follow a different policy in terms of non-intervention and non-use of US military forces in overseas conflicts. It can be said that this difference stems from the political and social characteristics of both parties and points to an ideological difference in a sense. Because the Democratic Party is based mostly on the lower and middle classes and the minorities in the country, while the republicans are mostly supported by the upper class, big investors, businessmen and super-rich families. As a reflection of this, Democrats support liberal and democratic developments and social policies at home, while they support human rights and diplomatic initiatives in foreign policy and focus on minority rights. However, while the Republicans pursue conservative policies at home, they adopt in economic sense protective foreign trade policy, while favoring large capital at home and preferring an expansionist policy that provides security for the American companies worldwide.

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