

# **The Role of US Foreign Policy in the Middle East**

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Received Date: June 20, 2016

Accepted Date: October 4, 2016

## **Abstract**

After World War II, due to the geopolitical position and the geostrategic significance of the Middle East, the United States changed the rules and distribution of regional and international power. Developing the new order, the United States made the Middle East a vital part of its security sector and its supplier. Due to the non-integrated political structure of North Africa and the Arab Middle East, the USA strategic, geopolitical and geo-cultural structure, and the type of its former interactions with the Middle East, the country has already taken on various forms of behaviors and policies regarding the new transformations in the Middle East, along with its declarative policies of supporting democracy. This paper is based on an explanatory approach, and a theoretical framework and use of the library method, and seeks to pursue and interpret the role of the United States foreign policy in the Middle East. Generally, it can be concluded that the United States policies regarding the Middle East were, for a long time, to support the authoritarian and allied governments which protect Washington interests in the region. Furthermore, maintenance of stability, as the main component of the approach, forms US general policy in the Middle East.

**Keywords:** the Middle East; the United States of America; Foreign policy

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### **1. Introduction**

Foreign policy of the countries is a function of various national strengths and abilities and directly linked to the elements of the national power of the countries; so that, with the change in the level of national power of the countries for any reason, their foreign policy will also change. Aiming to enhance and restore its former international power and position, the US. prioritize their efforts to rebuild its economy and solve domestic problems; so that, most of the country's new foreign policy decisions and changes can be analyzed based on that. The US government concerns include the attempt to adapt itself to new domestic and international conditions and requirements, to rebuild a crisis-torn economy, and restore its international reputation. However they severely damaged as a result of the misguided policies of the Bush administration and thus, the financial crisis. In line with the Obama administration's desire to allay interference in the complex issues of the Middle East within the framework of regional balance-of-arms policy, Washington gave its allies in the region, namely, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, the right to act at their own expense and without US involvement to develop and maintain their and the United States' desired order. In this regard, the United States has practically not taken a decisive role and policy in the developments and revolutions in the Arab countries, and subsequently the unrest in Libya, Syria and Iraq. Only after observing that all the costs of combating terrorism in recent years and its vital interests were endangered as a result of the policies and support of its allies for the extremist and terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, the US sought to fight against ISIL in a limited way and by establishment of an international coalition. This reflects the failure of regional equilibrium and the transfer of affairs to regional allies in the Middle East, in contrast to Obama's plans and priorities for exiting the Middle East and the emphasis on economic priorities and focus on the Eastern Asia (Pour Ahmadi, Mansourian, 2014: 104).

The return of Republicans to power, especially by Donald Trump success in presidential election of the US, with his unique personality traits, brought about a new approach to US foreign policy in general and its strategy toward the Middle East in particular. Therefore the US foreign policy was subjected to various judgments. Contrary to Barack Obama's administration in which changes in US foreign policy were addressed, Donald

Trump's administration is more concerned with the breakdown of the US foreign policy (Ali Tabar, Niakuye, Mottaghi, 2018: 175). The study aims to investigate the role of US foreign policy in the Middle East, and examine the US different approaches to the Middle East strategic region.

## **2. Theoretical Literature**

### **2.1 the US approach toward the Middle East in the Cold War**

US presidents' doctrines in the post-World War II period aimed to confront and restrain the Soviet Union. All of these doctrines - Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, Carter, and Reagan - were directly or indirectly related to the Middle East (Fallah Nejad, 2018: 4). In the post-World War II context, the US foreign policy toward the Middle East was based on stability and no change in the political environment and authoritarian political systems of the region. Due to the international rivalry with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, the United States was highly sensitive to changes in the nature and relations between the Middle Eastern governments. Due to global politics, as well as the special political-security situation in the Middle East, the strategy of maintenance of the status quo was the top priority of various American states, until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

After the Second World War, the US foreign policy processes in the Middle East have always been connected with challenge, threat and security crisis. Middle Eastern nations believe the United States has failed to establish the balance, coordination and collaboration among the Middle Eastern entities. In other words, these nations are trying to analyze US security policy based on the structural configurations of the Middle East, the role of the United States in supporting the Zionist regime, as well as the enduring conflicts in the region. The US regional behavior in the Middle East and during the Cold War was modeled based on structural indicators in the international system. That's why, in 1956, Eisenhower made an incredible effort to provide the context for the withdrawal of British, French and Zionist troops from Egypt. On the other hand, the Soviet authorities opposed the sale of ultra modern weapons to Egypt in 1972. It indicates that in the bipolar structure, there were manifestations of coordination, cooperation and balance between the US and the Soviet Union. After the Cold War, such a process underwent obvious changes. The erosion and

collapse of the bipolar structure can be recognized as one of the challenging factors to the US Middle Eastern politics. Such challenges can be seen during Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama (Matthew, 2011: 213).

During the post-Cold War era, US presidents were trying to use new initiatives to overcome the crisis. However the evidence suggests that such initiatives have failed to produce good results for regional proofing. Obama used the soft war- as a tactic- to confront radical countries. The core of the policy of change in the US security approach might be confrontation with radical governments through social forces. In such a situation, the social revolution replaces the coup or other manifestations of subversion. Obama used such a model in confrontation with Egypt. Obama's main goal could be developing political turmoil through groups with an ideological and identity link with Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the United States imposed widespread and extensive international pressure on Syria, for instance, by sending Syria's nuclear file to the UN Security Council. In addition, significant economic and security sanctions were imposed on the Syrian authorities.

However, it should be noted that US foreign policy focused on Europe and on counteracting the development of Soviet influence in that region, and the Middle East had a far greater dimension in the US foreign policy. Nevertheless, due to the geo-strategic and geo-economic position, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the phenomena such as the Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979), the importance of the Middle East in the US foreign policy gradually increased, and by the beginning of the new century, the region turned into the most strategic region in the world within the context of global rivalry, and from the perspective of policy makers and decision makers (Fallaghnejad, 1397: 4).

## **2.2 the US approach toward the Middle East after the cold war**

With the disappearance of the threat of communism and the Soviet Union, US foreign policy suffered a semantic gap, which caused US foreign policy to not be specific in the 1990s, and many of the Cold war organizations, including NATO, to lose their existential philosophy, although the US attempted to preserve the various pretexts of this transatlantic institution (Gohari Moghadam, 2007: 116-117). In fact, the main issue of the US foreign policy after the Cold War was identity crisis, being obvious in George Bush's

administration from the beginning. Therefore, George Bush introduced his foreign and national security policies only after more than a year of his presidency (while it is conventional among presidents to introducing his foreign and national security policies as soon as possible). Clinton also had this problem, because he faced the same crisis of identity in foreign policy (Gohari Moghadam, 2007: 118).

As the sole hegemon of the international system after the Cold War, the United States recognized itself as committed to providing security to different regions of the world. One of these regions, which is more focused on than any other region in terms of security, politics, economy, etc, is the Middle East. The region is considered one of the most important strategic areas of the world for various geopolitical reasons, such as massive oil and gas reserves, successive instabilities, political Islam, and so on. Its security played a fundamental role in US foreign policy. But what is remarkable about US security implications in the Middle East is its unilateral approach to different global and regional powers, known as US “unilateralism”.

### **2.3 the US approach toward the Middle East after September 11, 2001**

After the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001, by establishing a global campaign against terrorism, the United States prioritized opposition to extremism and terrorism in its foreign policy, and sought to strengthen its military presence in areas such as the Middle East for a full-fledged battle against terrorist groups and their allies. But a look at the security situation in the Middle East today raises doubts about the effectiveness of US foreign policy in countering terrorism. Following the onset of the incident, on September 11, various views were raised in the United States about the future of its military forces in the region aiming at countering terrorism. A view expressed by neoconservatives was based on more involvement and a wider military presence in the region based on the view of war forerunning. For the advocates of this approach, it is better for the United States to forerun the war rather than fight with these groups in the United States and attack them on their own land (Zakaria, 2015). Accordingly, George Bush's strategy was to send the military forces (and in particular, the ground forces) to the Middle East. As a result, the US attacked Afghanistan within an international coalition, and then attacked Iraq unilaterally and with some cooperation of Britain.

With the Obama administration, the idea of war forerunning was undermined, and Obama emphasized the necessity of balance of threats against terrorists. In fact, he tried to modify Bush's military policy in the Middle East, and to this end, to gradually withdraw his forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the Obama security team, the best form of US military presence in the region was a very limited but useful non-terrestrial presence aiming at training and support of its allies in the region and, if necessary, targeted and effective air strikes (CNN, 2015). Since the recent events in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, Obama changed his approach and increased the military forces in the region, and in particular in Iraq, to confront ISIL, although this increase was mainly through the dispatch of military advisers and equipment and sending fighter planes.

#### **2-4 the US approach toward the Middle East after the Arab Spring (anti-government protests)**

The Middle East, and the Arab world in particular, has faced many changes since in 2011. Instead of building a new state based on a regional order, the developments called “Arab Spring” or “Islamic Awakening” led to a new wave of unprecedented crisis and instability by various variables and factors such as terrorist-takfiri groups, Kurds’ ethnic movements, Turkey's political role in the Middle East, Saudi effort to change the balance of power, Obama's doctrine, and regional rivalry.

The Middle East has always faced political crises. The awakening of Muslim nations in the Arab countries resulted in major changes in some of these countries, which will undoubtedly have important regional implications. Popular uprisings in the Middle East today are among the most significant and controversial international phenomena. The uprisings were triggered in Tunisia- an African country- and quickly expanded to other parts of the region, such as Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and several others, after the overthrow of the country's dictator president; so that, a domino of uprisings and protests in the Middle East were formed during a few months, and the nations, as the main contributors of these events, rose to overthrow the tyrannical regimes of their countries.

In a five-page note to the White House entitled “Political Reforms in the Middle East and North Africa”, Obama called for challenging the traditional idea that stability in the Middle East

would always preserve the vital interests of the United States. In that note, he declared the dangers of a continuous support for the repressive and non-popular regimes on the one hand, and exertion of strong pressure from the United States to carry out a quick political reform, on the other hand. Obama's speech on May 11, 2011 indicated a contradiction and inconsistency in his strategy in dealing with the Arab uprisings. Supporting the Libyan and Syrian revolution and, to some extent, Egypt and Tunisia, while supporting the continuation of authoritarianism in Bahrain, reflected these contradictions. Despite the fact that each of these movements was pretended to be democratic, a quick reading and interpretation of international responses to the Arab Spring represents a lot of inconsistencies. For instance, while France indirectly supported the continuation of Ben Ali's rule in Tunisia and was a leading country in the coalition of military forces to drive Gaddafi out of Libya, it's very difficult to clearly specify the US role in this regard. For this reason, the management of the Arab Spring was sharply criticized by both scholars and politicians. Many opponents recognized the crisis as a result of the strategic interests of the United States in the Middle East, and in particular the threats of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and its impact on the Middle East peace process (Shahaabi, Abbasi, 2015: 9).

Proponents were worried that overemphasis on the stability issue in the Middle East could put the president in a historic mistake. They considered his victory in foreign policy strength in the re-presidential election. Moreover, his role in contributing to the peaceful process of the Egyptian revolution and encouraging the Egyptians to maintain peace with Israel, was one of Obama's strengths in management of the Arab revolution. Despite these controversial views, after France, Kuwait, and Jordan, Obama expressed his position regarding the issue on day 24 of the Tunisia's crisis. On day 27, he withdrew from Ben Ali's support and declared his support for the Tunisians democratic movement, stating: The United Arab Emirates supports the Tunisians and their democratic aspirations. Although the Obama administration's concern about the democratization process in this country is that there are many ways to go, but there is no institutional experience in this regard (US Department of State, 2011). On January 28, the Obama administration explicitly announced that in the event of the use of violence, it will review its foreign assistance to Egypt. On January 30, Hillary Clinton clearly announced that the US is

willing to begin a new political order in Egypt. She stated that the US wants a regular transition in Egypt; so that, it will result in a democratic government (Sharp, 2011). Early in February, Margate Scoie negotiated Mohamed El Baradei to support the Egyptian transition and explicitly stated: Egypt's transition to democracy must be peaceful and begin now. Moreover, in Obama's view, the future of the US and Egypt relations is subject to respect of the Egyptian government for the rights of its people, and in particular to prevent any form of violence, and frequently warned about any measures to escape the real reforms, as well as apparent democracy and the end of the state of emergency, the constitutional reform, the dissolution of the Parliament, and holding fair elections (Lynch, 2011).

### **3. The US Democracy Development Policy in the Middle East**

Within the framework of the American Ideal Discourse, it should be noted what signs constitute the discourse and to what extent the American identity is sustained. Accordingly, evidence such as exceptionalism, benevolent hegemony, freedom, democracy, liberalism, and Christianity had a major role. The discursive spaces of liberalism and democracy, Christianity, human rights, and freedom, as the identity discourses shaping the US identity, reflect the normative framework of American ideals in which borders between "self" and "other" are identified (Asgarian, 2015: 153). Although the United States sought to promote its own meanings, norms and internal identities under the liberal democracy in its foreign policy, its actions, particularly, against the Arab countries are contrary to this (Rasouli Sani Abadi and Alipour, 2013: 63). Promotion of democracy in the Middle East was never a goal in the US foreign policy. Over the past few decades, the main concern of various US governments has been maintenance of stability in the Middle East and, accordingly, advancement of Washington's desired peace in the Middle East, guaranteeing the trade of oil from the region to the Western markets, and curbing radical movements calling for a change of the situation in the region constituted the basic principles of White House foreign policy in the Middle East. As long as the Arab states of the region helped the US to achieve these goals, the US was more concerned with the stability of such

regimes in the region and less concerned with the lack of democracy in the regional communities (Gordon, 2003). Consequently, the United States was more inclined to have relations with the authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, and refrained from paying serious attention to human rights and the establishment of a process of democracy (Wittes, 2008: 17). Indeed, whenever there were conflicts with the US interests, including oil interests and fears of the claims of any kind of left-wing movement inclined towards the Soviet Union, it opposed the democratic governments in North Africa and the Middle East. (For instance, participation in the collapse of the elected and popular state Iran in 1953.) (Forsyth: 1993:8). Indeed, preserving stability in the Middle East, which has an extraordinary strategic importance in terms of energy resources, was so important to the US foreign policy that they even refrained from exerting serious pressure to promote democratic changes in non-allies regimes such as Syria (Hawthorne, 2003:21). Generally, in the framework of its global policies and the growing rivalry with the East bloc and the Soviet influence, the US had the strategy of “stability” and inhibition of the increasing influence of the Soviet Union into the Middle East on its agenda. Thus, avoided to adopt transformative strategies, such as, democratizing the region.

#### **4. Changes in the US Foreign Policy and the Middle East Transformations**

In recent years, the US prioritized more focus on domestic issues and more efforts to rebuild the economy and to mitigate the impact of imposing new costs on the country's crisis-hit economy. Naturally, it leads to new transformations in its foreign policy, including more emphasis on multilateralism at the global level, the adoption of the policy of focusing on Asia, ending the policy of combating terrorism and the unwillingness to have direct presence in all important and strategic global areas, which together with the prosperity of US oil and gas production, reduced the importance of the Middle East in US foreign policy. After the World War II, both during the Cold War and the post-Cold War world, the Middle East, and in particular, the Persian Gulf has been of great importance to the United States, due to the important of energy for the Westerns and avoidance of Soviet influence. In the 1970s, while English troops withdrew the Persian Gulf, the United States occupied it. After the September 11 incident, the United States

expanded its security objectives in the Persian Gulf region. Indeed, the incidence of September 11 provided the opportunity for the US to legitimize its presence in the Middle East in the global public opinion. The fight against terrorism, the widespread military presence in the region, the achievement and stabilization of energy security, the fight against the opposition, including Iran, through its permanent presence in the region, etc. were some of its security objectives in the Middle East. Thus, it can be said that due to the recent crisis and its aftermath, the Middle East has lost its former significance to the United States. It can be clearly observed in the Obama annual speech, titled "Union Status," delivered at the House of Representatives on January 29, 2014. In that speech, the domestic and economic issues and the reconstruction of parts of the US economy that were damaged by the crisis were all the more prominent issues. And the Middle East was not the US focus of attention. Nevertheless, it did not mean that issues of the Middle East were not addressed, but there was less attention both quantitatively and qualitatively, compared to the past (Sajjadpour, 2014).

The 2008 crisis persuaded many in the United States and the Middle East that the country no longer has the resources to continue its imperialist presence, and the Arab Spring and its consequences have aggravated the situation and caused much instability, and the political forces led to apparent noncompliance with Washington. In general, as a result of the transformations in the Middle East and US foreign policy in recent years, the importance of this region for the USA., and thus, the US influence in the region diminished (Gege, 2013: 300). Former US Ambassador, Chase Freeman, in Saudi Arabia states: we have lost our influence and control over many of the Middle East challenges. We must accept the fact that the USA cannot expect to have the same power and influence in the Middle East region as it used to have (Dreyfuss and Turse, 2013).

Among other factors influencing the changes mentioned in US foreign policy and the decline of Middle East importance for Washington is the discovery of huge oil fields in North America and the improvement of US position in oil production. Declaring America's independence of the Middle East oil could affect international equilibrium and power structures globally. The United States has been plagued by political and military presence in this

region because of its dependence on the Middle East oil. With the disappearance of this need the USA could enjoy greater emancipation in foreign policy and security (Michaud, 2014). However, it does not mean a complete withdrawal of the USA from the region and its substitution with global and regional rivals. The USA is aware that to continue to dominate the region by supporting its regional allies because of its importance to other actors would be a unique means of exercising power for the country.

The unconditional support of the United States of America for Israel has to be seen as a wonder of its international policies over the past few decades. The maintenance of the national interests of the United States required the country to approach the Middle East, because the Middle Eastern countries hold the world's largest reserves of oil, and they are, with a high population and high income, potentially the best consuming market for the USA; while Israel, with a small population, has neither strategic significance nor material interests for the USA. In spite of that, annually, the United States spends billions of dollars on this small country with more than a few million people (Israel). The reason for this must be sought in the unprecedented success of international Zionism in influencing foreign policy in the United States (Atay and Aqareb Parast, 2006: 21).

### **5. Priority of Economy in the USA Foreign Policy**

In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the recession and the rise in unemployment and many other problems and the spread of dissatisfaction, in particular in the form of social movements, such as occupation of Wall Street, or 99th percentile, and the Tea Party movement in America, different communities in the USA realized that, today, the main priority of the country should be to eliminate the increasing dissatisfaction, reform the domestic situation, reconstruct the country's economy, strengthen the middle class, change the current procedures, and avoid costly and unnecessary international responsibilities. (Pour Ahmadi and Mansourian, 2014:104)

In general, observing the decline of its national power as a result of the effects of the crisis and a number of other factors in recent years, meanwhile, the emergence of new political and economic powers, such as China, Brazil, India and Russia, which are gaining international strength and power with their prosperous economy, the USA government concluded that the country would have to pay

the most attention to domestic affairs and regain international power and influence in order to maintain its superior international position. Accordingly, given the importance of economic power in the global position of the United States and the national security of the country and the damage of this part of the USA power in the recent crisis, and the emergence of new powers, today one of the most important priorities of the US government is to restore economic power and to provide all the conditions that make this happen. The focus of the government on domestic affairs can be clearly observed in the National Security Strategy outlined in 2010 in which Obama acknowledges: "Our strength and influence abroad depends on what steps we are taking in the interior." He also pointed out that, "it is no longer the time for war against terrorism, we must act based on multilateral diplomacy (Junior, 2010).

For the USA and Obama, especially in his second term, addressing domestic issues is so important that, according to Stephen Walt, if President Obama seeks to leave his legacy (as all presidents follow in the second term), it would be in relation to domestic affairs. He believes that Obama hopes to finish his second term with the institutionalization of his health insurance program and the revitalization of the economy, and the reform of tax and budget, and to ensure that the long-term financial problem is resolved. This will be the legacy that Obama will be happy with (Walt, 2011: 14). Certainly, the USA foreign policy toward the Middle East cannot be read in the two Obama and Trump administrations alike. Just as an example, the views of the two presidents on the relations with Islamic countries indicates many things. For instance, one of the obvious differences between the two administrations is Trump's attempt to ban on the immigration of citizens of seven Islamic countries, and then six Islamic countries to the USA (Dombrowski and Reich, 2017: 125). However, in realists point of view, Trump will not be able to make a lot of changes in the US foreign policy (Abdullah, Balogun, Hafiz Bin Mohamed, 2017), because a comprehensive analysis of foreign policy as well as the Middle Eastern strategy of the United States requires attention to the impact of factors on foreign policy at three levels, i.e. the individual, national and international. At the individual level analysis, Trump's unique personality traits is the most remarkable issue in examining the USA foreign policy; they are even more important than his personal beliefs. The origin of Trump's policies

in terms is rooted basically in his economic attitude. Even, it is said that Trump's approach in the Middle East is a combination of militarism with economic nationalism (Mossalanejad, 2018:38). Trump is called an economic - nationalist and mercantilist. Trump prefers commercial divergence to convergence and believes that more commercial convergence will lead to economic downturn, and thus a loss to the American citizens. Trump's opposition to NAFTA and other international economic institutions could be included in this framework. This kind of attitude is not even accepted by some of his Republican counterparts (Karimid Fard, 2017: 14). Some believe that, given Trump's personality traits and beliefs, one must expect aggressive and militaristic policies. However, putting together Trump's declarative policies (notwithstanding the imperative policies so far and other national and international factors), we will find out that such a judgment is somewhat irritating. Trump also disagrees with humanitarian interventions aimed at democratization, and considers it a mistake made by former US governments. He even rejects the use of military power to change the regime (Karimi Fard, 2017: 13).

#### **6. Iran in the USA Foreign Policy Paradigm**

As one of the ancient countries in the world, Iran is the founder of a comprehensive civilization. And in its bourgeois history, it had various international roles. Prior to the rise of Islam in the form of the Persian Empire, Iran had a profound impact on the international arena, and after Islam, it had a serious civilian impact. While never being a colony in recent centuries, it had great impacts on the policies of great powers such as England and Russia. And in spite of the colonial policies of these two powers, they never succumbed (Simbar, 2010: 108). The core of US foreign policy strategy towards Iran during the years after the World War II was to make Iran a strong and stable country in the Middle East, as the weakness and instability of the Iranian government would pave the way for more intervention by the Russians and the British, and thus, their compromise to redistribute Iran would be a loss for the USA. In addition, the regional, economic, and political characteristics of Iran increased its significance, so that, the United States could fulfill its economic and political goals through Iran. Iran's foreign policy during the post-World War II period has always fluctuated from a policy of cooperation with Western powers to a policy of impartiality and even confrontation. During the Cold War, Iran's

foreign policy was influenced by the existing conditions. Therefore, it turned into a strategic ally to the USA (Simber, 2010: 108).

Given the importance and position of Iran in world politics, the US foreign policy strategy in the post-World War II years was to empower Iran as an independent country capable of preventing the spread of Communism. To this end, the US government used a variety of ways to stabilize Iran (domestically) and to achieve better opportunities for more influence on Iran. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union's forces from Iran in April 1946, and the end of the crisis in both Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, US government officials began to cooperate with Iran in establishing legal entities and establishing a democracy in Iran. However, numerous weapons and military advisers were sent to Iran, financial and economic assistance was provided to Iran, and with the expansion of diplomacy and the establishment of American state-owned organizations in Iran, the USA became increasingly influential in Iran (Azghandi, 2005: 176). On the one hand, the United States urged for democratic reform in Iran, and on the other hand, was willing to cooperate with Iran to strengthen its army. In the late 1940s, due to the formation of a bipolar system and relative stability in international relations and US planning for the economic reconstruction of Europe, the oil resources and strategic position of Iran was of greater importance to the state United, because Iran could affect the reconstruction of European countries and the West's strength to confront the probable war with the Soviet Union. Thus, the country's foreign policy strategy toward Iran has changed. Influenced by the establishment of an irreconcilable bipolar system and the beginning of the US-Soviet arms rivalry and the emergence of domestic unrest in Iran, the USA began to implement various policies and actions in Iran, in order to further influence Iran's economic, political and oil transformations. (Hasizurovsky, 1992: 103; Azghandi, 2005: 180-179). Washington hoped that Iran could stop the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East, but this strategic alliance did not last long and the Shah's dependent regime was overthrown by the Iranians in the process of the Islamic revolution in 1979. Therefore, the Islamic Republic was founded. Since then, Iran and the USA have had a very tense and hostile relationship. The regional goals of the United States include:

- Ensuring the flow of energy into the industrial world

- Providing and guaranteeing the interests of Israel
- Fighting political Islam as a struggle against terrorism and fundamentalism
- Confronting opponents of the US interests
- The expansion of American culture in the form of developing democracy, the free market economy and secularism in the region. (Hoffington Post, 2009)

In the same vein, immediately after the election, Obama emphasized transformation of Middle Eastern foreign policy. However, despite that, there has still not been a major change in this regard (Ottaway, 2008, pp.21-29). It should be noted that the Middle East has been selected as a goal in several respects, including the threat of terrorism against the global capitalist system in the region, the need to ensure the security of oil export and access to it, to ensure the security of Israel and to suppress or reduce the Islamic resistance of the countries of the region, as well as the expansion of Western culture. From the perspective of the policy makers of the capitalist system and the great powers, capitulation of the countries the region to the requirements and guarantees of the capitalist system is the way to remove these barriers and problems. The highest security vulnerability in the United States is related to the asymmetrical threats of international non-state and state actors who benefit from strategic asymmetries to confront the country (Matthew, 2003: 68). The preventive strategy of the National Security of the USA Advocate to confront the asymmetric threats, especially the fight against terrorism, can be pursued through integration of the Middle East into a global political economic system.

### **Conclusion**

Having rich energy resources on the one hand, and a special geopolitical position on the other, the West Asia region is a major benefit to large powers. Not only does the region not coordinate with the US political-economic order, but also it has a strong potential for resistance. Events, such as the September 11, 2001 and Saudi citizens' involvement in it and the revival of extremism in the region, reflect the conflict of interest and security between the American power and the Middle East region. Hence, pursuing political reforms within the framework of the Great Middle East project in order to establish a desirable political order and

economic reforms in line with the liberal economy and the free market in order to establish a desirable economic order were considered in the Middle Eastern policies of the United States (Vaezie, 2009). Over the past decade, the Arab world has witnessed an increasing political protests and strikes. What happened in Tunisia in late 2010 was not a completely new event. But, it was a more evident instance of common discontent across the region, in particular, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and Algeria (Ottawa and Hamzawi, 2011: 14).

The USA approach toward the Middle East was largely based on balancing and inhibition models. Therefore, the centrifugal forces in the regional political relations are controlled and regional relations are formulated within the centralized processes. But what is certain is that the issue of the power shift in the international system at the regional and trans-regional centers became inevitable. The USA ability to predict the political relations and manage the process of power shift has declined. Although the USA approach toward the regional changes is formed based on crisis management, Washington is working to prevent power shift to elements that are clearly in conflict with America's goals and interests in the area by supporting the formation of secular, liberal, and non-identity states. In addition to what is taking place in North Africa, the United States faces a complex political situation in the southern Gulf region. The widespread political unrest in the Middle East has affected the USA policy and plans in the Gulf region. As a typical example, Yemen and Bahrain are the bases for deployment of the US Navy's fifth fleet in the Gulf. The lack of structured political system based on the nation's state, and the authoritarian regimes, and monopoly of power in society led to the contemplation of the gap between society and government and, consequently, the formation of major political crises in these countries. The Americans tried to somehow control the crisis in the region by persuading their leaders to take corrective action. However, the negotiations in these countries have not been conclusive yet. In fact, the nature of the political system and the limitation of power do not come from the participation of other groups. Under such conditions, the American authorities need to create a kind of behavioral balance in their relations with these countries in the Persian Gulf region. (Jafari and Monfared, 2011: 52).

The US Middle East strategy, including its foreign policy towards the Syrian crisis in the Trump administration, should be interpreted with consideration of all factors affecting the field of American foreign policy, including individual, national and international levels. Therefore, the neoclassical realism approach might be an appropriate framework for explaining the USA foreign policy (the Trump administration) in the Middle East, because the approach takes into account both the interactions of broker structure, and the perceptions of leaders in foreign policy analysis, by combining micro and macro levels. Trump believes that the Middle East is a big swamp that the United States should keep away from, and should not hire Middle Eastern allies by paying regional security costs. Therefore, the Middle East strategy of the United States in both recent administrations (Obama and Trump) was based on the reduction of intervention and cost sharing through indirect action by regional allies. The reason for this is the interaction of the role of the factors of the individual, national, and international levels of the USA foreign policy in the position of the international hegemony power.

Finally, one can say that America's identity within the Middle Eastern politics is generated and regenerated in different ways. The Middle East policy has long been focused on supporting authoritarian governments, who are an alliance to the USA and protect Washington interests in the region. Maintaining stability, as the main focus of this approach, was the core of the Middle East policy of the United States. However, with the strengthening and further mobilization of anti-American trends and the September 11 attacks in the USA, White House politicians turned to adopting a security approach rather than maintaining stability in the region. As such, we are observing the strengthening of the realistic approach to the rulers and decision makers of the United States, and this country brought security and unilateralism to the international level.

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