

# Features of the US Strategy towards the Arab Region under US President Donald Trump

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## Abstract

The study was designed to analyze the pillars of the US strategy of the US administration, in the context of US President Donald Trump regarding the developments in the Arab region. The study started from a basic hypothesis: There are no fundamental differences between US President Trump's policy and the American strategies.

The study adopted the method of systemic analysis, The results of the study revealed the limited options of the United States in the Middle East, where there are major players such as Russia, which has become active in many crises and issues such as the Syrian crisis, and many of the positions of the American President Trump and his foreign policy convictions, especially with regard to giving up the Allies, and privatizing security towards the Gulf states, which lacks realism and the lack of understanding of the complexities of the relationship between America and these parties, which are based on the exchange of interests in various forms, where the American – gulf cooperation is based on achieving many economic and military benefits for the American Interests.

**Keywords:** Features, US Strategy towards, the Arab Region.

## 1. Introduction

After 2005, the US foreign policy witnessed a slight change in its direction. This is represented in the return of the United States to the old traditional alliances. Perhaps the most significant shift in US foreign policy, which came after 2008, especially after the global financial crisis and the arrival of former US President Barack Obama, to the presidency and his attempt to restore the reputation of the United States of America, which he considered to be one of his top priorities, he put forward the principle of partnership and cooperation to solve international problems, specifying that the use of military force will be the last solution in dealing with international issues. In other words, the US President, "Barack Obama" wanted to determine the form of the new American foreign policy based on standards and behaviors that are different from what the world has witnessed under the previous administrations (Obeidi, 2015: 50-51).

The United States of America is working on formulating a clear and specific strategy and tools to implement its plans in the Arab region, in the light of the geostrategic importance of the region to America. Based on what has mentioned, this study is an analysis of the American strategy during the era of US President Donald Trump towards the Arab region, which has witnessed Structural impact on the reality and future of the region.

## 2. The Importance of the study

The importance of the study stems from the following:

### a. The Scientific importance:

The scientific importance of this study, is represented in its attempt to analyze the fundamentals of the American strategy, under the US President Donald Trump and the tools used in implementing its strategy, which helps to understand the most important stages of the development of the American strategy in the Arab region, which will serve as a backbone of the Arab and Jordanian library and the researchers.

### b. The Practical Importance:

The practical importance of the study stems from the fact that, it examines the reality of US strategy in the era of US President Donald Trump in the Middle East, at a time of major changes in the American strategy and its implications for the stability of the region, limiting the exploitation and American hegemony over the Arab region.

## 3. Objectives of the study

The study aims to analyze the pillars of the US administration strategy in the era of US President Donald Trump towards developments in the Arab region.

The problem of the study: The United States of America used most of its capabilities to reach the hegemony over the Arab region so as to achieve its objectives of protecting Israel's security, controlling the sources of energy and ensuring its supplies. At the same time, the USA has prevented the attempt of any competing power of the United States to dominate the Arab region in the framework of the US strategy to maintain its influence in the Arab region, whether through military tools, economic or media and cultural. The study tries to answer the

following main question: What is the nature of the America strategy in the era of US President Donald Trump in the Arab region?

#### **4. The hypothesis of the study**

The study started from the main hypothesis: There are no fundamental differences between the policy of President Trump and US strategists.

#### **5. Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following methods were adopted:

The Systematic Analysis Approach: The concept of systemic analysis is based on the concept of the system, where a set of elements that interact with each other in a process of interaction and the results are designed to accomplish certain functions. Internal and external influences on the US strategy in the Arab region.

The descriptive / analytical approach: This method was used to understand the pillars of American foreign policy toward the Arab region and to study the American strategy during the era of President Trump towards the Arab region.

#### **6. Terminology of the Study**

The Strategy: The term strategy can be defined as "the art of directing all means of what the state owns to ensure its success of public policies in facing its rivals and enemies" (Kiyali, 1979: 331). So, from what mentioned, strategy can be defined as the means that determine the methods of reaching the objectives to be achieved by the decision-maker in the country.

American strategy: a concept that refers to the set of plans and programs that the United States of America put in the framework of American strategic thinking to achieve its objectives and interests in the Arab region. This study is limited to analyze the American strategy in the Arab region during the period 2001-2017.

The Arab region: Also known as the Arab World, which is a geographical and political term that refers to the geographical area extending from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the Arabian Gulf in the east and the number of Arab countries are (22)(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2014)

#### **Explanatory of the theories of American foreign policy**

After the events of September 11, 2001, American foreign policy was collected between the Jacksonian school (as per President Jackson 1829-1837) under the slogan: "The only alternative to achieve victory is victory and the Wilsonian (Wilson's) school" (In relation to President Wilson 1913-1921).

This school represents an American tradition of spreading American values in the world, especially democracy as the message of the United States. This is the basic guarantee of America's security and safety. President Bush adopted the principles of the Wilsonian school (in reference to USA former president Wilson to approach the neoconservative thought of the Wilsonian school of democratization. As a result, the events of September 2001 led the neo-conservatives to adopt new ideas: pre-emptive war, which means dividing the world into an axis of good and an axis of evil without compromise, using force against the axis of evil on the basis of "who is not with us is against us" (Ma'ale, 2016: -128).

New Liberalism: it is the doctrine of liberals among most scholars and thinkers. It is a central principle between reactionary and radicalism, with a willingness to introduce changes that are not recognized by tradition. The liberal doctrine is concerned with social advancement and improving the general situation without resorting to serious changes in the system and structure of society. Liberalism is defined as "a political and ideological trend that includes the supporters of the bourgeois parliamentary system and the freedom of the capitalist world of business and finance, and expresses the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie in their struggle for political and economic domination. Revolutionary hip (The proletariat) expresses the demands of the liberals for democratic freedoms (Nima'a and others .2016: 35)

The theory of "the end of history" paved the way for the emergence of globalization and painted the integrated frameworks of this phenomenon, as it recognized the process of history, in its global movement and its main steps have been stopped in the one-polar world order (United States of America) after its victory over the communist camp and the dominance of liberal capitalism and the market economy. This means that there should be no new intellectual doctrines or beliefs and no ideologies that stand in the face of absolute control of liberal capitalism as the model that prevailed in the West. Therefore, all countries of the world must try to emulate or copy it. It also has to remain in its orbit for its dictates (Al-Hadithi, 2002: 48)

#### **The Liberal theory is based on three main trends**

- Democratic Peace: The spread of democratic values and the adoption of ideas by States will make peace prevail throughout the world.

- Interdependence: This theory emphasizes the freedom of trade between states and considers it important to achieve international peace.

- Institutional Liberalism: The establishment and strengthening of the role of financial and economic institutions is the cornerstone of global peace-building.

To achieve its goals, successive US administrations have developed specific strategies that clearly reflect the US foreign policy trends during the Cold War and the conflict with the former Soviet Union. America applied the containment strategy of former President Truman to confront his enemies internationally.

In the era of former President Eisenhower, the United States adopted a policy of comprehensive retaliation. In the era of former President Kennedy, he pursued a strategy of flexible response to changes in the international environment. America followed the strategy of confirmed destruction under President Johnson. American political developments prompted former President Jimmy Carter to adopt the strategy of direct intervention and rapid deployment, and at the beginning of the accession of former President George HW Bush in the United States of America, and raised the former US President (George HW Bush) the slogan of the new international order and the strategy of adapting the rest of the major and regional countries with the new international reality, but in the era of former President (Clinton) the US administration followed strategy of dual containment, and the former president (Bush the son) has adopted on the strategy of preventive strike or preventive defense and the fight against terrorism, However, this strategy has declined during the presidency of (Barack Obama), which relied on the strategy of the diplomatic force in achieving its objectives in the Arab region (Al-Tai, 2009: 42).

### **The Previous studies**

The previous studies that are concerned with the subject of the study were presented and classified as follows:

#### **First: Arabic Studies:**

- The study of Jubouri, (2012) entitled: "**Trends in contemporary American political discourse , an analytical scientific study**", this study aimed to identify the trends of contemporary American political discourse, and the study adopted the method of analysis of content, where the American discourse believes that the American security guarantees for Europe and East Asia are the means by which the strategy of hegemony and leadership maintain a sound international political order that leads to interdependence.

- The study of Abdul Halim, (2012) entitled "**The United States of America and the popular revolutionary transformations in the countries of the axis of Arab moderation 2010-2011**". This study sought to reveal the positions of the United States of America from the popular revolutions in the Arab world. That means the American administration dealt with the Arab revolutions in the countries of the axis of moderation, based on the basis of achieving the American interest, and maintains the gains, and seeks to reduce the negative effects of the Arab revolutions on US interests in the region.

#### **Second: The Foreign Studies:**

Michael Clare's Study, (2015). "**Hard Power, Soft Power, energy Power**".

This is known as the New Foreign Policy Tool. This study sought to identify soft power, solid power and energy power as new tools for US foreign policy. They are coercive means such as military power, soft power and means less aggressive means of persuasion such as diplomacy, economic aid, propaganda, and the concept of power of energy. It is intended to exploit the advantages of the state in the production of energy and technology to promote its global interests.

- Jeffsdev and Takeh, (2012), entitled. "**Transformations of US Policy in the Middle East after Revolutions**".

This study aimed at explaining and clarifying the most important changes in American policy in the Middle East after the Arab Spring revolutions. The revolutions in the Arab world have been a shift in the American position by Obama's declaration that "America's interests are not hostile to the hopes of the people."

What distinguishes this study from previous studies?

The previous studies dealt with the American policies in the Arab region and the Middle East under the administrations of the United States, which followed force from the former US President George HW Bush and ending with former US President Barack Obama, while this study is distinguished from the previous studies of modernity that raised the topic of US strategy under President Trump towards the Arab region and the fundamentals and tools of the American strategy towards the Arab region, which is a scientific addition that contributes to enrich the Arab and Jordanian library of a methodology study on this important subject.

#### **Donald Trump's American Strategy 2017**

US President Donald Trump won the US presidential election and became the 45th President of the United States. Donald Trump, in his foreign policy, adopted the principle of "America First" as a major goal of his foreign policy.

In the era of former President Barack Obama, with the need to abide by US interests and deal with it on the basis that it is the main motive for any action at the level of foreign policy, America does not have to bear the

burden of protection or defense of other countries free of charge, and US President Trump followed the principle of "A slip in foreign policy," believing that the United States should not interfere in the organization and management of the world's issues and crises and solve its problems. His speech is dominated by the nationalist spirit and even magnifies the importance of the nation-state as he explicitly stated in his foreign policy speech (Suleiman, 2016: 2).

US interests in the Middle East dictate Trump's continued engagement, but with the realism of interest-building, the tendency for stability and cooperation with counter-terrorism regimes, the decline of idealism, the promotion of democracy, the support of freedoms and human rights, The Arab Spring, where Trump believes that the support of democracy in the region led to instability and the spread of civil wars in many Arab countries and the rise of terrorist organizations such as (Da'ish) and the Front of victory (Al Nusra) and others, therefore, Trump's doctrine of non-engagement and to give priority to the fight against terrorism and stop the flow of refugees to the United States through coordination with stable countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and cooperation with Russia in the Syrian crisis, with the possibility of tension with Iran because of its position on the nuclear power agreement.

Regarding the Palestinian issue, under the right-wing Israeli government headed by Netanyahu, who refuses to make real concessions to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, but wants peace in the way of establishing a Palestinian state like self-rule and rejection of the right of return, With Trump's strong bias toward Israel and his positions, the stalemate will remain dominant on the Palestinian issue until further notice (Ahmad, 2016: 2-3) There are a number of internal and external determinants that influence President Trump's policy towards the Middle East, including:

#### **The internal determinants of US strategy under President Donald Trump**

The American foreign policy during the era of US President Ronald Trump was influenced by a number of determinants and the most important ones (Ahmad, 2016: 3-4):

- **Decision-making institutions in the United States:** The decision-making mechanisms of US foreign policy and the directions of President Trump's team are influencing the direction of US policy towards the Arab region.

- **The isolationist trend in American politics:** US President Donald Trump, under the implementation of his strategy, relies on the principle of "America First." This strategy reinforces the potential of rebuilding the United States as a key player in the international system.

- **Internal problems in the United States:** America has faced many internal problems with regard to economic conditions, immigration problems, unemployment and social injustice. The United States has seen increasing inequality in incomes among individuals, widening the gap between social classes, as the International Monetary Fund alerted in June 2016 of increasing poverty and inequality in the United States, as it hinders the ability of the US economy to grow, and the economic and most influential issue is the rapid rise in debt, debt to about \$ 20 trillion by the end of the year 2016, which makes the cost of servicing the debt burden on future generations, the emigration of capital abroad, and the spread of violence in many US cities, which prompted the American voter to vote for Trump choice as President of the United States of America (Al-Qudsi, 2016).

#### **-The Trump Doctrine and the Concept of the Deal**

The American president, in dealing with foreign political issues, adopted the principle of the deal, which indicates that the intervention of the United States in world affairs is linked to the economic benefits achieved by the United States of America. Trump believes that American relations with its allies are based on the principle of exchanging common strategic interests in all areas (economic, political, and military).

#### **-Adopting the principle of "Realism School" in USA foreign policy**

US President Donald Trump believes that supporting democratization processes in the Arab region has contributed to instability in the Arab world, the rise of terrorist organizations such as Da'ish and the spread of civil wars in many Arab countries such as, (Syria, Yemen and Libya), as well as President Trump rejected the idea of "American exclusion," and the moral leadership role of the American world (Lotfi, 2016: 3).

- **Change in mechanisms and objectives:** There is agreement among all American administrations that the American objectives and constants do not change, but rather the mechanisms of achieving them change depending on the solid mechanisms, especially the use of military force in the fight against terrorism.

- **The differences between electoral statements and political responsibility:** After the presidential candidate assumes his presidential responsibilities, his positions and statements change. President Trump's positions and statements during his campaign on Middle Eastern issues differed from his position on responsibility. Therefore, President Trump may take a long time to review policies in the region, before adopting new policies.

External determinants affecting the US strategy in the Arab region under President Trump: They include:

a)- **US Interests in the Middle East:** America's fixed interests in the Middle East are to support and protect Israel's security, the war on terror, and the alliance with friendly and moderate states. President Trump is

working to achieve these interests and maintain them with new mechanisms as a priority of US foreign policy.

b)- US limited options in the Middle East: The United States is no longer the only player in the Middle East, unlike in the years following the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union. In the past decade, major players have emerged in the region, such as Russia, which has become active in many crises and issues such as the Syrian crisis. This Russian rise was a direct result of the Obama administration's fractious policy, its belief in not directly engaging in conflicts in the Middle East and re-positioning in other parts of the world, such as East and South Asia (Ahmad, 2017: 5).

President Trump will face a major challenge of how to reconcile the raising of the slogan "America First", which could increase the isolation of America in the world, which weakens its role at all levels of political, economic and military, and at the same time openness to the world, which will exacerbate many crises, especially since the Obama administration has not introduced a new policy to address these challenges and issues.

#### **Trump's policy towards developments in the Middle East:**

1)- The continuation of the war against the organization of the Islamic state, "Da'ish"; US President Donald Trump since he assumed the presidency that one of the most important objectives in the Arab region is to fight the organization, where the internal terrorism has become a burden on local and foreign policy of America, Proactive approach to the hotbeds of extremism and terrorism and countering the expansion of terrorist organizations in the world will be a top priority for President Trump.

2)- Being extremist toward Iranian nuclear file:

US President Donald Trump described his signing of the nuclear deal as "catastrophic", prompting Trump to announce its amendment to the terms of the agreement, thereby increasing tensions between the two sides. In this context, President Trump asserted that the United States of America had economic interests in the continued enforcement of the nuclear agreement. The President also opposed the nuclear deal agreement where he said we were able to sign a better one with Iran.

US President Trump expressed his strong support for Israel as a military and economic partner in the Middle East, as he supports the unilateral Israeli attack on Iran. Trump sets three points for dealing with the Iranian file (Suleiman, 2016: 6)

a)- The importance of confronting Iran's attempts to destabilize and control the security and stability of the region. Iran poses a threat to the countries of the region as the main supporters of terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

(b)- Review and amend the nuclear agreement in accordance with US interests.

c)- Seek to dismantle Iran's global terrorist networks if Iran has a strong network, the US can control Iran.

3)- The complexity of the Palestinian issue: The US President Donald Trump pointed out that, he will make Jerusalem the capital of Israel and transfer the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Therefore, the Palestinian issue will remain one of the most important external issues that will not witness any tangible change during the Trump administration. With Trump largely stand and support in favor of Israel, the stalemate will remain dominant on the Palestinian issue. Trump's administration thus constituted the most American administration in favor of Israel. This was evidenced by the appointment of Trump to David as an American ambassador to Israel, a Zionist Jew who supports settlement largely (Ahmad, 2017: 7).

4)- The Syrian Crisis: US President Donald Trump announced during his election campaign his policy towards the Syrian crisis, which was as follows : (Ibrahim, 2016: 45)

- President Trump is not convinced of the American policy of supporting the moderate Syrian opposition, because it is difficult to determine who the moderate opposition is, and that the programs allocated by the administration of the former president Obama to spend on moderate opposition and arming proved their failure.

- President Trump is adopting a position from President Bashar al-Assad different from the Obama administration, where he believes that the main problem in Syria lies in the extremist terrorist organizations, especially the organization of the Islamic State (Da'ish) and the front of the victory ( Al Nusra), but not President Assad. Based on this perception, Trump does not see Assad's removal or the need for his departure from power as a top priority, as the Obama administration has adopted. The Trump administration is therefore expected to adopt a flexible stance from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and with prospects for consensus with the Russian side, it is not unlikely that Assad will continue to maintain the gains he made on the ground after the Russian intervention.

President Trump pointed out that it is in the best interest of US national security to prevent the proliferation and use of chemical weapons. President Trump justified the US strike on Syria, which is justice, seeking to make itself a guardian of international justice, maintaining American national security and preserving innocent children. (Suleiman , 16,20: 3).

With President Donald Trump's reaching in power in the United States, the US position on the right-wing

crisis has undergone a major shift in the context of US militancy against Iran and its allies of armed Shiite groups and militias that are fueling sectarian conflicts and threatening the stability of the region and the world passing through the Strait of Bab el Mandab of the Red Sea.

The positions of the former US administration under the former president (Barack Obama administration) were in the resentment of the politicians and the Yemeni elite against the coup, describing their positions as intended to save the coup, and the new US administration, "Donald Trump," unlike the previous administration, as a supporter of the Arab coalition countries and the Yemeni authority Legitimacy, and this was evidenced by the invitation of former US ambassador to Yemen Gerald Firestein to support the Arab alliance and the legitimate Yemeni authority to liberate the port of Hodeidah, an invitation warned by the spokeswoman of Foreign Minister Maria Zakharova of the liberation of the port, justify her warning that it was for humanitarian reasons and fear that it would be in the interest of terrorist groups ( Qae'd , 2017).

In Syria, the position of the United States and the West on the situation in Syria has emerged as an obstacle to achieving peace with Israel, rejecting projects to eliminate national issues, and demanding the Syrian regime a permanent and just solution based on UN resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, according to the American and European classification, which has the most prominent role in leading the axis of opposition to Zionist and American projects in the Arab region, and support and embrace Arab resistance in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, and its alliance with Iran, which constitutes a real threat to the interests of The United States of America in the Gulf and the security of Israel. The US position on events in Syria has been very strong since the beginning of the events. Former US President Barack Obama commented on events in Syria, saying "President Bashar al-Assad should lead the transition in his country or step down." He praised the Syrian people for bravery against the crackdown, which is practiced by the regime (Al-Ass, 2016: 2).

The US position continued with the continuation of peaceful protests and the Syrian regime's repression of the demonstrators with harsh sanctions against President Bashar al-Assad and six other officials. The US administration considered it as "another step to increase pressure on the Syrian government to stop the violence against civilians and to start the process of democratic transformation in Syria." On April 7, 2017, the US Defense Department announced that the United States targeted Syria's military airfield in the central Syrian province of Homs with a total of 59 Tomahawk missiles, from US naval vessels stationed in the Mediterranean.

Also, the US strike was "in response to the chemical attack by the Syrian government in Khan Sheikun on April 4, which resulted in the death and wounding hundreds of innocent Syrians, including women and children," and the Syrian government denies responsibility for that attack (news now, 2017).

On the other hand, with the United States re-arranging its cards to deal with the emerging big powers, it should not overlook the role of non-state actors from multinational corporations, groups and armed militias, whose role will increasingly be beyond the control of national governments. Therefore, the future and prestige of the United States and its global role will be linked to its ability to deal with these developments that pose itself on the international scene. It can be said that US foreign policy failed in its dealings with the Syrian crisis, where Syria is still living in a state of instability, as well as the increasing activity of terrorist groups and extremism, which is no longer limited to Syria and its neighboring countries, but extends to security and the US interest as well although counterterrorism is one of the primary issues on the US agenda. On the other hand, the growing role of the major powers competing for the United States of America, which began to be active in the region at the expense of the decline of American role and influence (Alas, 2016: 3).

It is clear from the above that the strategy of US President Donald Trump in the Middle East is an extension of the policy of the previous presidents, based on a mixture of the policy of his predecessors based on soft power and solid power, by building good relations with America's traditional allies to address and to eliminate the capabilities of terrorist groups, before they become a threat to the United States.

## 7. Conclusion

The United States seeks to achieve a number of key objectives in the Middle East:

First, the geostrategic goal. This goal can be achieved by securing regional political regimes linked to American policy, as well as securing the interests of this policy in order to achieve the supremacy of US control over the Middle East. The Middle East as the world's leading forces and its leadership of the world on a political, economic and technological level.

Second, the regional objective of the Middle East. This goal is to seek a new regional system based on a new policy. According to American policy, this goal is achieved by seeking to establish a regional regime that suits American interests and thus securing those interests and resolving conflicts in the Middle East. A US strategic vision was also developed to protect the security of the new regional system to ensure that the United States is uniquely dominant in the region.

## Results of the study

### The most important findings of the study:

- Regardless of the nature of the American administration, whether Republican or democratic, there are constants that reflect America's interests in the region: protecting Israel's security, maintaining the flow of oil at reasonable prices, fighting terrorism, alliance with friendly and moderate countries and military traffic, as a continuation to the US foreign policy, while only change in mechanisms to achieve those goals, between solid mechanisms such as military intervention, sanctions and political pressure, or soft mechanisms such as diplomacy and economic assistance, Trump is expected to seek to mix these two mechanisms in dealing with issues and crisis of the region.
- The limited options of the United States in the Middle East, where there are major players such as Russia, which has become active in many crises and issues such as the Syrian crisis, and this Russian rise was a direct result of the confused policy of the Obama administration and his faith not to engage directly in conflicts and resettlement in other areas of the world, which will push the Trump administration to converge and coordinate with Putin in addressing the issues of the region.
- Many of the positions of US President Trump and his convictions in foreign policy, especially with regard to giving up the Allies, and the privatization of security towards the Gulf States, lacks realism and lack of understanding of the complexities of the relationship between America and these parties, which are based on the exchange of interests in various forms with the Gulf which is primarily aims at achieving American interests and gained many economic and military benefits

### Recommendations of the study

- A)- The United States should review its interests in the Arab region and reformulate its foreign policy priorities to reflect the changing strategic environment in the Middle East and North Africa regions so that to achieve the balance between its strategic interests in the Arab region and the interests of the countries and peoples of the Arab region.
- B)- The United States should take into account the contribution to resolving the crises affecting the stability of the Arab region because of their direct impact on its interests in the Arab region.
- C)- Supporting the establishment of two Israeli and Palestinian states living side by side, as proposed in the Arab Peace Initiative and the roadmap to peace, with the aim of removing a major recruiting tool for terrorists and reducing resentment from the main US allies, Jordan and Egypt, as well as countering anti-American sentiments and contributing to Israel's security in the long run and its continued existence as a Jewish democratic state.

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