

**ATILIM UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S PROGRAMME**

**THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL, DOMESTIC, AND  
INTERNATIONAL FACTORS DETERMINING US FOREIGN  
POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST DURING OBAMA PERIOD**

**Master's Thesis**

**Ömer Alkaçar**

**Ankara-2018**



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## ACCEPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that thesis titled “The Effects of Individual, Domestic, and International Factors Determining US Foreign Policy in the Middle East during Obama Period” and prepared by Ömer Alkaçar meets with the committee’s approvals by a unanimous vote as Master’s Thesis in the field of International Relations following the successful defense of the thesis conducted in June 26, 2018

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## ETHICS DECLARATION

I hereby declare that;

- I prepared this thesis in accordance with Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive,
- I prepared this thesis within the framework of academic and ethics rules,
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- I cited all sources to which I made reference in my thesis,
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Ömer Alkaçar



## ÖZ

[ALKAÇAR, ÖMER]. [Amerika'nın Obama Döneminde Orta Doğu Dış Politikasını Belirleyen Bireysel, Yerli ve Uluslararası Faktörlerin Etkileri], [Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, [2018].

Tezde Amerikan başkanlarının kişilik özelliklerinin Ortadoğu poitikasına etkisi ele alınmaktadır. Bunun için Barak Obama dönemi inceleme konusu yapılmıştır. Tezde analiz düzeyi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, Obama dönemi Ortadoğu Politikası, bireysel, devlet ve uluslararası düzey olmak üzere üç farklı açıdan incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, devlet ve uluslararası düzey faktörleri etkili olsa da, Obama döneminde ABD'nin Ortadoğu'ya yönelik dış politikasında belirli başarılar sağlanması ancak zaman zaman da sınırlılıklara yol açan yumuşak güç yaklaşımında görüldüğü gibi, bireysel özelliklerin dış politikanın belirlenmesinde en etkili faktör olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

*Amerikan Dış Politikası, Ortadoğu Diplomasi, Krizler, Diplomatik Güç, Yumuşak Güç, Değişim, Güç İlişkisi*

## ABSTRACT

[ALKAÇAR, ÖMER]. [The Effects of Individual, Domestic, and International Factors Determining US Foreign Policy in the Middle East during Obama Period], [Master Thesis, Ankara, [2018].

This thesis focuses on the role of personal characteristics of the US presidents in determination of the US foreign policy toward the Middle East. In order to find out if the personal characteristics play a decisive role in foreign policy making, Barack Obama period and his policies were selected for the discussion. The level of analysis was used as the basic analysis method of the thesis. Foreign Policy of President Obama towards the Middle East was examined within the framework of individual level analysis, state level analysis and structural level analysis. It was found that although the state and structural level elements were effective in determining Obama's foreign policy, the individual characteristics as revealed in his soft power approach has been the dominant factor in his foreign policy formation and mostly responsible for his successful attempts and his limitations in his Middle East policies which supports the argument that the individual policies play decisive role in US Middle East policies.

### **Keywords**

*US Foreign Policy, Middle East, Crisis, Power Relations, Democracy, Non-Interventionist, Soft Power, The Change,*

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## LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS

US: United States

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

GWB: George Walter Bush

EU: European Union

IGO: Intergovernmental Organization

WTC: World Trade Center

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

USA: United States of America

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

AFPAK: Afghanistan – Pakistan

ISIS: The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham  
Islamic State

WMR: Willard Mitt Romney

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

PJAK: Party of Free Life of Kurdistan

PKK: The Kurdistan Workers' Party

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency

P5: Permanent five

YPG: Yekineyen Parastina Gel-People's Protection Units

G7: Group of Seven

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## INTRODUCTION

The main object of the thesis is to determine the effects of individual, domestic and international factors in the formation of the US Middle East Policy during the Obama presidency. Since Barack Obama has served two terms as the US president during the period between 2008 and 2016, two chapters are devoted to examine his foreign policy toward the Middle East and his first term policies are discussed under the title of “The First Term of Obama” whereas his second term is examined in chapter “Second Term in the White House”. His policies and their outcomes are tried to be evaluated together in order to understand Obama era and his Middle East Policies more clearly. Before entering to the deep discussion of those polices, the importance of the Middle East in American long term interests is explored in the thesis to create better view of the Obama’s Middle East polices.

The Eurocentric world perception categorizes the regions of the world as middle and far regions according to their distance to the Europe. The term Middle East reflects that conceptualization. In 1902, American maritime historian Alfred Thayer Mahan first used the concept of Middle East, which had a political content from a geographical concept, to express the region between Arabia and India. The region called the Middle East has a very special preface to the world. The Middle East has been home to civilizations with its cultural features and geographical location, and has been guiding history many times. Many developments that have affected the lives of people in the past have first occurred in this region. For example, the first settled life, the first agricultural activities, the first literary texts, the first written laws and the first religions appeared in this region and spread to the world. The Middle East has great strategic importance for the United States. Especially the petroleum in the Middle East region is big issue for USA. The US interest in Middle Eastern oil began immediately after the First World War. The main reason for the interest of the US in relation to the Middle East oil is to reinforce the decreasing US reserves and to create cheap energy source for the West, whose economic growth is dependent on oil. It has been during the Second World War that oil emerged as strategic natural resource which can affect international political equilibrium. Because of the great majority of oil is supplied by

the Middle East region, political forces such as the United States needed to prevent any attempts which posing to threat to flow of petroleum from the region. For United States, it was crucial to keep the Soviet influence out of the region and to prevent oil exporting countries from nationalizing their oil companies. America has to control oil in the Middle East because it did not have an alternative energy source to oil. So, America's policy is directly proportional to the protection of the safety flow of the Middle Eastern oil, at any cost. Since the confusion and conflicts that may take place in the Middle East would harm the stability of the oil flow, the US took necessary steps to provide stability. In the 1920s, the oil companies became aware of the petroleum and in the Middle Eastern region and entered a race to grab a share. As a result, the interest of the USA increased in the region however the US did not show a serious military presence in the region until after the Second World War. In the Cold War years, the US increased its military power has increased in Mediterranean and Indian Ocean to surround the Soviet Union.

The Suez Crisis, which broke out in 1956, has brought a new dimension to the US Middle East policy. Plans for establishing a kind of Middle East Defense Organization with support of the United Kingdom and the United States against the increase in the Soviet influence in the region put into force. Then President Eisenhower implemented a policy which is named as Eisenhower doctrine. Eisenhower doctrine suggests that if any Middle Eastern country by a communist government that country would be defended by any means including supplying with weapons or military assistance or intervention<sup>1</sup>. In 1969, the Nixon Doctrine, based on the principle of increasing military and economic aid to the countries of the Middle East rather than the direct intervention of the United States in the region, is explained<sup>2</sup>. According to this Doctrine, the US has paid great attention to Iran and Saudi Arabia, which is thought to play an important role in defending the Middle East region against the Soviet threat. In line with this plan, the United States increased its arms sales by 1979<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia of the New American Nation, <http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/A-D/Doctrines-The-eisenhower-doctrine.html>, Accessed 24 April 2018

<sup>2</sup><http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/A-D/Doctrines-The-nixon-doctrine.html>, Accessed 24 April 2018

<sup>3</sup>Leepson, M. (1979). America's arms sales. Editorial research reports 1979 (Vol. I). Washington, DC: CQ Press. <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1979050400>, Accessed 3 June 2018

The oil crisis that erupted at the beginning of the 70s, once again proved the importance of the Middle East region for the United States. After the oil crises of 1973 and 1974, the US tried briefly to seize power in the Middle East oil.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in the same year required the US to intervene more in the region, because these two developments were changing the power balance in the region in favor of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the US changed its policy in the region and adopted the Carter Doctrine in 1980. US President Jimmy Carter explained in detail his new policy in his speech to the US Congress on January 23, 1980. In his speech, Carter declared that any alien force in the Middle East would be considered as a threat to US strategic interests, and that any attempt to gain effectiveness would be considered as a threat to US interests, including any use of military force<sup>4</sup>. Since the Second World War, almost every US President has emphasized that the Middle East and the Gulf are both economically, politically, and strategically important to the United States and have developed policies in this direction. Truman Doctrine, Eisenhower Doctrine, Nixon Doctrine, Carter Doctrine, Reagan, Father and Son Bush's military interventions to the region have been concrete manifestations of this policy. For example, the above-mentioned Carter Doctrine also included alternatives to military intervention in the Middle East when there was any threat to energy security. In the Middle East, which has 65% of the world's oil reserves, one of the key elements of US policy is the security of the oil resources in the Gulf<sup>5</sup>.

Throughout the Cold War era, the Middle East countries have been hesitant to enter into close military and political relations with the United States. With the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, the bipolar system has come to an end, which has been replaced by the unipolar system, which is the sole subject of US sovereignty. After the end of the Cold War, with the victory of the capitalist block, the new goal for the United States was seen as an attempt to prevent any states that could replace the Russian Federation. According to this basic policy, the US

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.18

<sup>5</sup> Mamoun Fandy, "U.S. Oil Policy in the Middle East", [https://fpif.org/us\\_oil\\_policy\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east/](https://fpif.org/us_oil_policy_in_the_middle_east/), Accessed 3 June 2018

intended to prevent the emergence of a regional power that would contradict the interests of the United States in any part of the world, even if it did not challenge global hegemony.

Apart from the petroleum interest, Israel's security as an independent state, preventing the US hostile state's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and uninterrupted flow of energy resources to the world markets are the key elements of the US policy in the Middle East. Besides, prevention of a strong hostile state in the Gulf, maintaining the success of the Middle East peace process, establishing good relations with the pro-Western Arab states, the continuation of well-connected state regimes and the control of regional terrorism are all defined as very important national interests.

The key elements that determine the policies of the USA towards the Middle East region, can be listed as follows: to control the continuous circulation and prices of oil and energy resources; to guarantee Israel's security; to undermine the countries that have the potential to threaten Israel; to control Iraq; Syria, Lebanon and Iran in this context. In addition to these, removing chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction from the countries of the region and preventing them from becoming sources of terrorism and reducing anti-American sentiments can be considered as determining factors in shaping USA's Middle East policy. The aim of the US Middle East policy is to prevent the emergence of a force that would undermine the sovereignty of the region and to prevent the oil from leaving American control. The only super power of our day is that the US is pursuing an expansionary policy all over the world in order to continue its own power and dominance. Although this is now identified with the US, it is not specific to the United States. When the history of states and empires is examined, it is seen that they all tried to control strategic regions, resources and routes to become a great power and sustain the power they have. As historically the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of England, the same applies to the US today. But countries have shown differences in purpose, means and style when implementing their expansionist policies as a necessity. Before the industrial spice and silk was very important and it was also critical for world powers to dominate the regions where they were produced and shipped. After industrialization

revolution energy sources replaced silk and spice. Hence, it can be said that the countries that have these energy sources or control the energy sources today will be the dominant power in the world. After the Cold War, the world's sovereign power has become the USA and it continues its expansionist policy to continue this position. What the US wants to mean by the New World Order is actually a system in which the political ideology of America is dominant in the world<sup>6</sup>.

The expansionist policies implemented by the US can be explained as; the US needs more energy resources to meet the needs of its own citizens and to ensure their satisfaction. However, it is not possible to meet that demand by depending only on their own soil. In order to obtain necessary resources, the US had to look for them in other parts of world. From this point of view, the reasons for the wars and operations carried out in countries such as Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, which are thousands of kilometers away from the US itself, can be understood more clearly the US, which accelerated production during the war, caused postwar industrial and agricultural production to go far beyond its own needs. For this reason, American politicians and economists believe that it is necessary to enter foreign markets in order to sell more surplus products and to accelerate economic growth, and even argue that an aggressive foreign policy should be followed if necessary. For the Middle East region, the expansionist policies are not so different. The US sees it is right to have or control the energy resources of the Middle East or to attack the countries that oppose its policies and contradicts with its own interests<sup>7</sup>. In principle, the United States does not do any operations against the countries it has agreed with. If we give an example, the US will not enter into conflict with a country such as Saudi Arabia if it gets what it wants. But if the US cannot reach a consensus at the point where he wants, he will definitely take what he wants by using any means.<sup>8</sup>

The US has also dominated the Middle East region by using these policies. With the collapse of the Ottoman State, Britain and France are regarded as masters of

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<sup>6</sup> Hal Brands, America's New World Order Is Officially Dead, 27 September 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-09-27/america-s-new-world-order-is-officially-dead>, Accessed 3 June 2018

<sup>7</sup> Komal Newspaper, On the US and the Middle East, <https://chomsky.info/20040102/>, Accessed 3 June 2018

<sup>8</sup>Mahir Kaynak ve Emin Gürses, "Büyük Ortadoğu Projesi", Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul, (2008), p.18

the Middle East. However, as a result of the weakening of these two countries after the Second World War, the influence on the Middle East has weakened. At the same time as their withdrawal, due to the strategic importance of this region, the US has taken control of the region and has become the most important force for the region, increasing its influence on the region since then up to today.

The United States, while carrying out its expansionist policies on the Middle East and the world, covers up its general goals and its main objectives by claims such as human rights, democracy, more freedom and women's rights that will not be opposed by the world public opinion. Mahir Kaynak evaluates US policies as follows; "The issue is to take over. If there is an obstacle in front of it, if there is a structure established there, it will be intervened there in the name of democracy. From there, democracy will be demanded. "While interfering with the Middle East region, the US is using similar discourses to conceal its original purpose and always avoids expressing such things as oil and energy resources<sup>9</sup>. James Woolsey, the former administrator of the US Central Intelligence Agency, said after the September 11 attacks that the US fought for the Middle East. World War has begun. The war against terrorism is only part of it. This war is a war of liberal civilization we have built and defended throughout the 20th century, widening democracy against threats from the Arab and Muslim world "claiming that this war will continue until freedom is granted to the region<sup>10</sup>. We see a similar target deflection during the invasion of Iraq. It was later understood that the real aim was capturing Iraqi oil, as the US was essentially a pretext for the weapons of mass destruction that Iraq has put forward as an excuse for occupation.

The US while taking into consideration the resistance that has been shown to her in the region is trying to cover up its destructive policies in the Middle East by embracing the false claims of democracy, ignoring the violations of human rights and war crimes reactions that international organizations have unveiled. The United States uses all kinds of media such as radio, television, magazine, newspapers and internet in a very effective way to provide this cover. While these tools are in use, she tries to put

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p.20

<sup>10</sup>Text of George Bush' speech, The Guardian, 21 September 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa13>, Accessed 16 May 2018

her own claims under the headings of democracy, human rights, freedom of opinion which everyone respects and accepts.

This thesis aims to focus on the US Middle Eastern policy during the presidency of Barrack Hussein Obama in order to better understand and analyze the US approach to the Middle East. As it is mentioned above Obama and his predecessors had followed different types of policies in the Middle East and it is underlined that whether they are isolationist or interventionist mostly they followed the same aims in the Middle East and the US benefited from those policies. When Obama became president in 2008 it was a matter of concern if he would be like his predecessors although he has almost totally different kind of personality. Thus, in this thesis, the answer will be sought as to how personal, domestic and structural factors shape the Middle East politics of America during Obama period.

One of the reasons that prompted me to do research on America was especially the question of how a country that has entered the arena of world politics just after the First World War became a world power in such a short time. In the history of America we see a country that is constantly developing especially after Independence Day. This development has continued without a period of stagnation as such experienced in the Ottoman supremacy and successfully imposed its ideology to the world. A country that has been able to take the right steps in order to get more efficiency from events that sometimes harm other countries - especially after the Second World War - is now seen as the only power in world politics. Although in recent times its power and image have been damaged, America's power is still dominant. The prospect of Middle Eastern foreign policy implementation during the Obama period is due to the differences compared to other periods. Obama decided his foreign policy by being influenced by external events. He is a leader who has built his foreign policy on soft power.

But in his eight-year presidency, external factors forced him to make a decision. For example, in the case of Arab Spring, which no one expects, Obama has had to take decisions that he does not even want. If the American president was fully prepared for the Arab Spring, perhaps he could produce different policies. In short, events that were not allow to develop foreign policy affected the decision-making process of the Obama and he could not fully determine its foreign policy.

When we examine the events that took place during the Obama era, it would not be right to criticize the presidents with just the decisions they make. The examination of the events that took place during the Obama era in different ways will provide a new perspective. When examining both previous and succeeding American presidents with the points addressed in this thesis, it would be possible to assess the influences of American presidents or personal traits. At the same time it would be possible to understand how American foreign policy influenced by the decision-making mechanisms of foreign actors. The international context will bring another perspective to the literature.

The chapters following the Introduction section deal with the level of analysis, which is the conceptual framework that will form the backbone of the thesis. In Chapter 2, Obama's individuality, which is mentioned in the level of analysis thesis, will help us to examine each of the other actors in the foreign policy and international system. The level of analysis itself benefits from explaining the foreign policy of the Obama period, while referring to individual, domestic and structural factors. For example; we can see that Obama's decisions taken during the senate period are also applied during his presidency, while the individual level analysis mentions that the political experience of the presidents is important. Apart from this, the public opinion is mentioned in the domestic level of analysis part which is probably the most important factor that determines the foreign policies of the countries. When Obama comes to the presidency he showed his determination to keep his campaign promises in his victory speech by the declaration of bringing back American soldiers to home. Obama tried to meet the expectations of the American society. American society backed its administration in his policies developed after the 9/11 incident at the beginning. But after the Bush administration trapped in extremism, dissatisfaction emerged and the degree of support given to Bush policies fell obviously. The other factor that determines the foreign policy is structural level analysis. It can be said that it is one of the factors that forms the American foreign policy. Although presidents themselves are the dominant factors in policy making it is obvious that international events force them while deciding which policy to choose.

Although the Obama administration's red lines in foreign policy have been clearly defined, Arab Spring led the Administration to take decisions which should not be taken otherwise. In order to analyze and understand the Obama's foreign policy implemented in that chaotic period we applied level of analysis as a best tool to analyze and understand the period in this chapter.

In the third chapter, Obama's prior life before the US presidency had to be addressed before starting to examine the Obama period since Obama's foreign policy was formed before the American presidency. With respect to American traditional soft power-hard power foreign policy culture, Bush administration's policies can be described as hard power policies. Obama claimed that he was going to use soft power policies during his administration. Obama's red lines in foreign policy was shaped in his childhood where his father thought him the principles of peace and happiness. Obama, who was in politics in the period before the presidency, criticized the Bush administration's foreign policy toward the Middle East and declared that if the Bush administration implements them, it would put America in a bad situation and turn around. Both his adoption of his father's principles and the adoption of peace and soft power during the senate period have determined how Obama's foreign policy in the US presidency will be.

Being the first African American president, growing up in a Muslim family, and embracing soft power as the principle of its foreign policy Obama was the hope of the Middle East at first. These are discussed in chapter four when Obama's first term which covers the period 2009-2013 and his decisions and policies related to the Middle East were examined. In this section, the term of Obama was assessed at certain points in the period of George W. Bush, the previous American president. The main reason for this is that the new president of America is often in the process of changing the outcome of decisions that the previous president has taken. The best example of this is Obama's aim to take the US soldiers to home from abroad. Although Obama promised to withdraw troops from the Middle East, because of the events that happened, he was not hesitant to postpone this statement when the events prevented him to execute his promise. Then he preferred give not a definite date for the withdrawal and could give the order in 2014.

The biggest problem that Obama experienced in his early period was the Arab Spring an uprising in Arab countries which no one expected. The popular uprising that started in Tunisia spread to other Middle Eastern countries within a short period of time and efforts were made to bring democracy and stability to the people and to whole central eastern region.

Obama supported the peaceful change in the region at first and defended any nonviolence activity in the Arab countries. However the Middle East became unstable day after day and Obama was constrained to change his policies contrary to what he said before. During this period, President Obama, who has become hope for the Middle East in 2008 presidential elections, lost his popularity in the region and Middle East left him. As it is mentioned earlier that Obama is overly soft power pro. In the wake of the Libyan crisis intervention by the US and other actors would have helped to restore the stability in the country as well as so-called image of America. However America failed to take the initiative and left the situation to NATO and France instead of intervening. In short, Obama, as mentioned earlier, has been careful to keep the US as far away as possible from the conflicts, but in fact he could not predict that even in that case America was seen as the number one country who is responsible of all those events. Early periods of the presidents are generally seen as the period of correction of previous presidents' actions. The first period of the Obama is actually a good example. But those who think that Obama, who once again won the presidential election in 2013, will not be as passive as it was in the first period they were wrong.

In the fifth chapter, the Obama's second term, between 2013 and 2017, was discussed. The main focus was the Middle East as it was in the first period. The effects of the decisions taken by Obama on the Middle Eastern region are also discussed in this chapter as well as the questions of the ISIS and Russia's rising influence on the region. Obama in his last term used passive or in other terms soft power politics as in his first term. Without discussing his performance as successful or not he was criticized widely. In his last term he was expected to implement relatively aggressive politics in the Middle East but he preferred to advocate soft, peaceful policies and tried to change the image of the US as he promised in his election campaign. In this section it is also tried to address these developments in the US politics. This had to be avoided in terms

of good or bad aspects, either in terms of explanation or discrimination, so the second period was taken into account, depending on the result relation rather than the distinction.

In short, this case study covers the period from 2008 to 2016 in two periods. The first was examined under the title of "inexperienced term for Obama". In this first period, Obama tried to take steps to change the negative consequences of the previous presidency. Because this section cannot be examined separately from the Bush era the Obama period is examined in comparison with Bush presidency. In the second part, the second period of Obama was discussed under the title of "second chapter in the White House". This section focuses on Middle Eastern foreign policies of Obama, which became more experienced at that time. His policies and their outcome are tried to be evaluated together in order understand Obama era and his Middle Eastern policies more clearly.

I was planning to conduct survey in America; however not having enough economic independence forced me to conduct a documentary analysis. However the negative side of the documentary analysis is that the authors may have biased thoughts that will make the writing phase of the dissertation difficult.



## CHAPTER 1

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section the level of analysis approach will be used to explain the topic since different factor should be taken into account in the analysis of a foreign policy of any country. It is also thought that level of analysis will better explain the Middle East policy of Obama administration.

#### **1.1. Level of Analysis in International Relations**

It can be argued that international relations has in general been dealing with the identification, explanation and prediction of the behavior of states and other international and transnational actors. International relations is explained as "a branch of policy science dealing with the relations between political units at national level, and particularly dealing with factors such as foreign policy, the organization of governmental bodies related to foreign policy, and the geography and economy that determine the functioning and foreign policies<sup>11</sup>".

What determines the dynamics of international relations? What are the role on and effect of the leaders in international relations management? There are periods which the leaders became the dominant power in domestic and foreign relations and in those periods countries were defined with its leaders. Germany's Hitler, Mussolini's Italy, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Putin's Russia or George W. Bush's United States of America are examples are such. Another question may also be asked; how do the ruling styles influence the relationship with other countries? Is "democratic countries do not fight each other" phrase can be easily accepted despite the fact that the existence of wars between those countries in political history? Or is it true that the countries follow their own aspirations and do whatever necessary including as such are reflected in many ideological wars throughout the history?

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<sup>11</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield: G & C MeriamCo. 1968), p. 1181

Starting from early 1950s the behavioral movement started a discussion between two approaches namely atomistic and holistic one<sup>12</sup>. These two approaches were actually known as reductionist and systemic Waltz defined his book “Theory of International Politics”<sup>13</sup>. The atomistic/reductionist approach is basically inductions approach which claims the part is the representative of the whole and studying components of the system is enough to understand the system as a whole. The holistic/systemic approach can be called as the inverse of this approach which defends the whole cannot be understood through just components of the system since the parts are reshaped by the system itself.

Waltz claims that human nature, the nature of states and the nature of the international system can cause of war. These three states leads three level of analysis of the international relations. The level of analysis depends on the human nature is called individual level of analysis. The nature of states represents the state analysis. And the nature of the international system is stemming for system analysis. These three level indeed, operate at the same time under the international system. There are many defenders of each level of analysis in the literature. For example Singer and Kaplan favor unit level/state level analysis while Waltz uses the system level as he defends system comprehends many units. It should be noted that the most attractive level of analysis is system analysis in the international relations literature.

There are some academics like Singer who tries to use two levels of analysis at the same time as they are complementary<sup>14</sup>. He defends that national subsystems are operating within the space of international system. He argues that international level of analysis enable to make predictions since it reveals pattern of interactions of the subsystems.

He argues that although systemic level of analysis study international relations in the whole and pave the way for predictions, its lack of details makes this level of analysis weak. Singer proposes unit level of analysis to cope with this problem. While

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<sup>12</sup> Barry Buzan ‘The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations Reconsidered; in Steve Smith and Ken Booth (ed.) International Relations Theory Today (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996) p.198-216.

<sup>13</sup> Waltz, Theory or International Politics (New York: Random House, 1979)

<sup>14</sup> Singer, J. D. The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations. World Politics, p.77-92.

systemic approach attributes generality to the actors' behaviors, national level of analysis underlines specific type of goals that the nation deserves. At national level, behaviors differ from the system level with due to effect of internal and external factors. Singer claims that sub-systemic or actor-oriented unit level system analysis covers richer details than systemic level analysis although this is more compressive than unit level analysis. Further he admits that each level of analysis has its own advantages and disadvantages so the study of international relations should not be limited to those two level of analysis. He also points out that more explanatory level of analysis may be put forth.

## **1.2. Individual Level Analysis**

Life is a constant struggle for improvement and accumulation of experience. With every new problem faced with, people try to compare with the old ones in order to define, understand it and figure out the ways to solve it with the least damage. This process is same for every individual including the leaders of the countries. The leaders as ordinary people use the same analyzing process when they tackle highly level political question and use the previous examples to define and understand the new one.

At this point the following question needs to be asked: is the foreign policy of a country primarily depend on and explained by its leaders experience and choices? Are there other factors to be considered in foreign policy making? It is thought that it is necessary to focus on the Individual level analysis in order to better understand the influence of the individuals on the determination of the foreign policy as these questions imply.

### **1.2.1. How Foreign Policy is perceived by the Individuals?**

The people's consideration or evaluation of foreign policy is not different than their consideration of any other issue. Since people use comparing as a basic instrument for thinking process, the foreign policy of the people also depends on their past experiences and comparing the current issue with that experience. As the

similarity between the current situation and the past one increases it is assumed by the people that the outcome of the current issue will be the same as the past experience and the valuation of the policy as good or bad is based on that expectation. In other words, people base their final decisions on any kind of situation in front of them by using similar past example to define, understand and evaluate.

That process brings the importance of the perception in to the scene. Perception is a major factor in people's decisions. "Perception can be defined as our knowledge and interpretation of sensory information. Perception also includes the following information. We can think of perception as a process where we take in sensory information from our environment and use that information in order to interact with our environment. Perception is the function of framing and the frame leads people how they see the situation either bad or good<sup>15</sup>". Since perception is the key to the evaluation of the situation, understandably it can be easily asked if it plays a role to determine political decisions. The answer is yes. As we can see below perception management is one of the major issues in US foreign policy towards Middle East.

Perception management is one of the key factors of political communication. The propaganda is one of the most common way for leaders to share their ideas with the society is in fact a form of perception management. Leaders widely use this political tool to influence their own society or other countries and other societies. When it is looked at the America's foreign policy in a more descriptive way, it can be said that perception management is one of the key founding pillars that the foundation stands on. Throughout political history, American foreign policy is based on the principle of favoring the domestic ideology or policy while strongly opposing any other ideology or ideas. American politic elites have done whatever available to keep their society out of reach of those ideologies or policies. For example, in the Cold War Era, communism is labeled as an evil ideology and communists are called enemies while people encourage to favor liberalism. In any cases in which American interests are threatened politicians tries to persuade and shape American society to see such threat as a national interest threat through communication means and persuasion

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<sup>15</sup> What is Perception in Psychology? – Definition & Theory, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-perception-in-psychology-definition-theory-quiz.html>, Accessed 16 May 2018

mechanisms. This attitude can be easily seen and detected especially in its Middle East policies.

The major slogan labelling American policy toward the Middle East was “Bringing democracy to the Region”. Although this slogan implies a peaceful and prospering process, American policy made the situation worse for the region. American presence in the Region is perceived by the Middle Eastern people as a hostile and greedy power aiming to divide the Arab states. This perception is mainly strengthened and stemmed by the speech of American leaders. The presidents' views on foreign policy and their explanations strongly influenced the people of the Middle East. After the 9/11 attack, American president George Bush directly attracted the public attention to that situation in one of his speeches by asking why the Middle Eastern Muslim community hate Americans. President answers his question by saying the hatred is stemmed in the difference between the political culture of US and the Middle East. According to President Bush Middle East community hate the freedom in the US in the context of religion, freedom of speech, freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other<sup>16</sup>. Bush claimed that “the people of Islamic countries have significant grievance with the West in general and the United States in particular<sup>17</sup>”. President Bush’s hostile language against Muslims has clearly strengthened their negative attitude against the US.

Barack Obama had a completely different posture against the Muslims. Although this topic will be discussed below, it should be briefly mentioned that Obama’s personality, being a person grown up in the Muslim family, exhibiting his opposition against war and saluting the crowds in the Muslim countries by speaking Arabic had contributed to change the public opinion in the Middle East against the United States. An optimistic expectation such as downgrading of aggressive US policies against the Middle East and rising level of cooperation with her spread vastly in the region.

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<sup>16</sup>Address to joint session of congress following 9/11 attacks, [www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm) Accessed 5 July 2018

<sup>17</sup>Bordou Daragahi, 9/11 from Arab Shores, 9 September 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/09/09/911-from-arab-shores/>, Accessed 16 May 2018

In short, people tend to identify the countries with the leaders in the administration. This is actually called as selective perception. People see the other side as how they want to see them. For example, after 9/11, American President G. Bush seemed to surprise with the attitude of Muslims against him. He said that he is amazed that there was such misunderstanding of what they were doing while he was defining himself as an ordinary good hearted American<sup>18</sup>. However Muslims saw the picture opposite side and they were hostile to America. Stanley D. Brunn explains this contradictory situation by pointing out that Muslims feel the West lacks respect for Arabs and Islamic values, and treats Arabs unfairly<sup>19</sup>. But the same Muslim countries were seen that they changed their ideas radically after 2008 Presidential elections about "Obama's speech at Cairo University on June 4, 2009" created a big difference. He faced a Muslim World bursting with optimism about his middle name - Hussein! ... Assalaamu Alaykum, Obama said using the traditional Arabic salutation Muslims use to greet one another. Peace be upon you<sup>20</sup>". Those two different and opposing atmosphere in the Middle East against the US reveals that the personalities of the leaders of the countries are very important in their political views and approaches.

### **1.2.2. Leaders and their personal features**

How foreign policy perceived by other people was touched upon above. The influence of the perception management changing the people's attitudes in line with the change in the leadership of the country is also mentioned. We take these as convincing evidence for the fact that the personal characteristics of the leaders and their political background are determining factors. Before going in to deeper analysis of this point it should be mentioned that the age of the leaders has highly affect their foreign policies. Experiences acquired over time affect people's approach to their maturing and encountering problems. Interactions affect people's character as well as their way of thinking. Horowitz, McDermott and Stam examine this interaction as

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<sup>18</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/wp\\_srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bush\\_text101101.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp_srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bush_text101101.html)

<sup>19</sup> Stanley D. Brunn, 11 September and its aftermath the geopolitics of terror, p.234

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Sullivan, Much of the World views Obama favorably, nut the Middle East feels disappointment, 18 November 2016, [www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/middle-east-relations.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/middle-east-relations.html), Accessed 16 May 2018

young and experienced in two different ways. According to the reviews, "older leaders may be more capable of initiating militarized disputes than younger leaders due to more fully consolidated political influence over time. Younger leaders are potentially more likely to owe their place in office to political patrons and more likely to be governed<sup>21</sup>. In short, younger people do not consider military sanctions as compared to experienced ones.

### 1.2.2.1. Personality

Does personality have an effect on leader's decision making process? If it is yes how far can be effective? There are four types of categorization schemes about personality. Presidents' characters can be differentiate into four types as active - positive; active - negative, passive - positive and passive - negative. James David Barber defines those characters as it is in

**Table 1: Personality of the Leaders**

	Positive	Negative
Active	<p><b>ADAPTIVE:</b> Self – confident; flexible; creates opportunities for action; enjoys the exercise of power, does not take himself too seriously; optimistic; emphasizes the “rational mastery” of his environment; power used as a means to achieve beneficial results.</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson, F. D. Roosevelt, H. Truman, J. F. Kennedy, G. Ford, G. W. Bush (?)</p>	<p><b>COMPULSIVE:</b> Power as a means to self – realization; expends great energy on tasks but derives little joy; preoccupied with whether he is failing or succeeding; low self – esteem; inclined to rigidity and pessimism; highly driven; problem managing aggression.</p> <p>John Adams, W. Wilson, H. Hoover, A. Lincoln, L. B. Johnson, R. Nixon</p>

<sup>21</sup> Michael Horowitz, rose McDermott and Allan c. Stam, Leader age, regime type and violent international relations, , the journal of conflict resolution, vol.49, no.5 oct 2005 p.661-685

**Table 1 (continued)**

Passive	<p><b>COMPLIANT:</b> Seek to be loved; easily manipulated; low self – esteem is overcome by ingratiating personality; reacts rather than initiates; superficially optimistic.</p> <p>James Madison, W. H. Taft, W. Harding, R. Reagan, Bill Clinton</p>	<p><b>WITHDRAWN:</b> Responds to sense of duty; avoid power; low self – esteem compensated by service to others; responds rather than initiates avoids conflict and uncertainty, emphasizes principles and procedures and an aversion to politicking</p> <p>George Washington, C. Coolidge, D. Eisenhower<sup>22</sup></p>
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James David Barber's research on the characters of the presidents can be called Active - Positive for George Bush, but some have different opinions about him. Among them, John J. DiIulio's assessment of G. Bush is as follows: "active-positive; he loves the job and is very energetic and focused. Likewise, Karen M. Hult is right that Bush management preferences have helped to produce the administration's characteristic discipline and the premium it places on security<sup>23</sup>. Where can we put Barack Obama in this categorization? Looking at the early stages of his presidential period, Obama was heavily ambitious about changing America in every sense. Affordable care act and increasing federal institution show that he was definitely active. But was he negative or positive? According to Barber's negative and positive assessment, it could be said that it was a classical negative. Edward Klein points out that he does not learn from his mistakes and who repeats policies that make our economy less robust and our nation less safe<sup>24</sup>. Klein's assessment can be harsh, but it could be said that he failed on some policies. So those assessments make Obama active - negative.

<sup>22</sup>Michael Horowitz, rose McDermott and Allan c. Stam, Leader age, regime type and violent international relations, , the journal of conflict resolution, vol.49, no5 oct 2005 p.661-685

<sup>23</sup> John J. DiIulio, Jr, Inside the Bush presidency: reflections of an academic interloper p.3, <https://www.princeton.edu/csdp/events/Bush2003/diulioipaper.pdf> Accessed 16 May 2018

<sup>24</sup> Edward Klein, The amateur Barack Obama in the White House, p.3

### 1.2.2.2. Personal Experience in the Politics

After analyzing the possible effects of individuals' characteristics on foreign policy decision-making process it would also be appropriate to analyze the individuals / leaders political background and personal experiences on politics before concluding the individual level analysis. Like perception and personality, the political background and the staff have an almost identical effect on the foreign policy-making and decision-making process. Having a political past and having individual experience are two completely different perspectives. A political background help the leaders to analyze the problems encountered and at the same time gives clues about how the leaders to react. For example, after the attacks on the US during the Bush administration, the president reacted to the excessively rather than to wait, and thought that it was necessary and his policy was supported by the public. On the other hand, when Barack Obama was elected as president, he pursued a passive policy because he thought the aggressive policy was damaging US image internationally and he was also supported by the public as though it was during the G. Bush era. The reason for public support of those two opposite policies can be explained by the president' political communication abilities stemmed from their political background. The failure of President Donald Trump to in his struggle to face with international and domestic polices can be attributed to his lack of political experience. President Trump seems that he does not know how to react to the difficulties experienced and how to follow the policies.

Having a political background - being directly or indirectly involving politics shape decision making mechanism of the leaders. G. W. Bush was a close campaign ally of his father George Bush in late 1980s and gained his first political experience in that campaign before serving as a Texas governor<sup>25</sup>. His education helped him to handle Iraqi problem during his presidency. He acted on to take over Saddam Hussein who Father Bush failed to move and attracted the criticism of George W Bush. Bush

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<sup>25</sup> Jay Rey and Charity Vogel, Family Matters Elder Bush Trying to let Son Stand on His Own, September 21 2000, [Buffalonews.com/2000/09/21/family-matters-elder-bush-trying-to-let-son-stand-on-his-own](http://Buffalonews.com/2000/09/21/family-matters-elder-bush-trying-to-let-son-stand-on-his-own), Accessed 16 May 2018

first threatened Saddam by trying to kill his father during his visit to Kuwait in 1993<sup>26</sup> and presented that policy as a personal one.

Observing Barack Obama, who is not as aggressive as George Bush and who believes that he can make America more prosperous in his new era, is also affected by his father. His policies are almost equally personnel as President Bush and he also followed his fathers' footprints like President Bush. Obama has tried to make his father's dreams come true, as Bush did. Dinesh D'Souza points out where Obama's dreams are based. Obama had decided the anti-colonial philosophy of his dad and that anti-colonialism shapes Obama's worldview and help people to predict what Obama is going to do<sup>27</sup>. President Obama including in his presidential campaign he always defended peaceful policies in every occasion. After he just won the race in his statement he underlined that he would support anyone who seek peace and security<sup>28</sup>.

Individual level analysis proves that the effect of decisions taken by the people is very important since that decisions that people take are not just about countries, but also about other people. Judging from the examples given earlier, the decisions taken by the American presidents affected both the rule of the people and the politics of the leaders of the country, and changed the way other countries looked toward America. It has been observed that apart from these, the political experiences possessed are even more productive and debatable than the inexperienced people. But restricting the factors that determine external politics to just individual level analysis will not be satisfactory enough. It is necessary to evaluate the other effective analysis, namely State Level Analysis which below section is dedicated to.

### **1.3. State Level Analysis**

Until now, the focus was on the leaders' viewpoints, their political history, their ability to reflect this on their own presidency, and their influence on their foreign policy. It can be said that the leaders influence the process of determining the foreign

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<sup>26</sup> John t. Rourke, International Politics on the World Stage p.76

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uuh9k6Tsm00>:10-0:33

<sup>28</sup> The Telegraph, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/3383581/barack-Obama's-victory-speech-full-text.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/3383581/barack-Obama's-victory-speech-full-text.html), Accessed 16 May 2018

policy but the foreign policy making at the same time should be explained by the state mechanism itself especially when the countries are considered as being a living entity. In explaining the state level analysis, John Rourke points out that "this level of analysis emphasizes the characteristics of state and how they make foreign policy choices and implement them<sup>29</sup>.

What are the factors that determine preference for foreign policy choices at the state level? The first one is the ruling system of the country-whether the country is democratic or autocratic. The second one is the situations that country face with-crisis periods are basically different than the normal periods or non-crisis periods. The third is the preferences of the society-leaders should take into consideration of the public wishes. Finally the economy - economic investment of the country shows how to pursue foreign policy. These four factors form the basis of the state of analysis.

### **1.3.1. The Governing and the Situation on Foreign Policy Process**

The process of determining foreign policy is a complex process and there are some factors that countries should take into consideration when determining the policies to be taken. These factors are directly proportional to the way the countries are governed. The regime of the country whether it is governed by democracy or autocracy implies that the decision making process differs with the regimes in practice. In a country which is governed by an autocracy means that the country is based on a single person's decision ability-the president. In the form of autocracy, the administration of the country is bound to a single person and other institutions, organizations and persons have only very limited access to the ruling. However, the existence of secondary managers - prime ministers, foreign ministers, bureaucrats, interest groups and other elements are important because the leaders might consult to them and decide on where he needs to.

The process of determining foreign policy in the form of democratic governance is differing from the autocracy. In the countries governed by democracy,

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<sup>29</sup> Rourke, John, International Politics on the World Stage, p.78

decision-making mechanisms is wider. Within this spectrum, as in the autocracy regime, secondary management, i.e., prime ministers, foreign ministers, bureaucrats, interest groups and other elements can play an important role in decision making but the most important one is the public itself. Public opinion in democratic states can easily affect policy making. In countries where democratic tradition is settled such as in US, non-government institutions reflecting public opinion can heavily affect presidential decision making and prevent them decide alone.

One of the strongest and most important sides of the American presidential system is the principle of separation of forces. Within the framework of this principle, legislative, executive and judicial powers are not held in the hands of a single person or a zealot; each is independent of each other. This plays a crucial role in preventing the dictatorship, which is an element in the heart of the American presidential system.

America's legislative body is the congress. The Congress consists of two sub-units named Senate and Representative Assembly. The main task of the House of Representatives is to pass federal laws affecting the entire country. This law is prepared by the Assembly, presented to the Senate for approval, and comes before the President in case of approval. If the Senate rejects a law, the Assembly must prepare the law or give up the law.

If the President vetoes a law that comes before him, the law will be sent back to the Assembly. In this case, the Assembly shall either reschedule the law or take a decision of annulment. However, an existing system in terms of restricting the President's powers is to re-enact the law vetoed by both the Assembly and the Senate by the President with a majority of two-thirds. In this case, the President's veto decision will be enacted and the law will be passed. So, as you can see, there are various forces of the Assembly and the Senate to break the President's unlimited authority. The Senate has various powers and duties that the Assembly does not have. For example, if no majority in the House of Voters is elected and no one is elected president, the Senate appoints the new vice-president, while the new president appoints the Vice-President. The Senate also approves treaties between countries; it appoints cabinet secretaries, federal judges, other federal executives, military executives, regulatory officials, embassies and other uniformed officers to be sent to other countries. The president or

other officials sent by the Assembly on charges of misconduct adjudicate judgments and decisions. As it can be understood from these authorities, the Senate is a much more prudent and prestigious institution than the Parliament. In addition, the fact that the Senate is made up of individuals with longer terms of office, smaller, and having a nature that equally encompasses all the provinces has made the Senate more neutral and effective.

Apart from these procedural processes, public has always affected the foreign policy making as such can be seen after 9/11 when George W. Bush declared war on terror. In his speech he mentioned his war on terror begins with Al-Qaeda but it did not end there. It would not end until every terrorist group of global had been found, stopped and defeated<sup>30</sup>. George Bush was supported by the American people despite his aggressive stance after this statement. The public showed their support and belief that they are completely confident in their president. However the same public uncomfortable with the increasingly aggressive attitude of the same president, likewise chose Barack Hussein Obama as American president replacing Bush because of his calm attitudes and rhetoric during his presidential campaign in 2008. The phrase "it's time to bring American troops home with honor they have earned<sup>31</sup>" found incredible support and increased belief in Obama as Americans changing their beliefs in Bush.

It is true that the management styles of countries affect the decision-making process in foreign policy but the existence of crisis or not is also affect foreign policy making. In the absence of a crisis, the process of determining foreign policy is proceeding in a normal way as usual but in crisis periods a different path is taken since sudden decisions must be taken during crisis periods. When countries are under threat they can be easily turned into aggressive mood. The crisis periods are characterized by three main features. First in a crisis period there is a military threat towards the country. Second, a shock caused by an unexpected event which paralyzed or confuse the management should exist. Third, a short time to react must be valid.

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<sup>30</sup>American Rhetoric, George W. Bush Address to Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks September 20 2001,

[www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm), Accessed 1 July 2017

<sup>31</sup>Obama: US to withdraw most Iraq troops by August 2010, February 27 2009, Edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/27/obama.troops/index.html, Accessed 16 May 2018

To illustrate this by example it should be mentioned that America faced with may crisis during the George W. Bush presidency. During his period of crisis, the US administration felt extremely threatened, especially in the 9/11 incidents. After the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the US administration thought that it could be exposed to more attacks. Consequent feeling weak and vulnerable to threats G. W. Bush declared War on Terror and his immediate reaction had been military attack to Iraq. During that period American people show their solidarity with the Presidency and supported almost every decision taken.

### **1.3.2. Public Opinion**

Until now, the process of determining the foreign policy of the country and the state of the country in which the country is located are noted as key factors directly influencing the process. The variables such as legislature, bureaucracy and interest groups are also important in decision making mechanisms in the democratic countries. On the other hand public should not be ruled out since it is although not directly but indirectly equally important factor in policy making process. The degree of interest of public in international affairs and the tendency of the people to evaluate the world politics through their leaders' perspective and behavior should be taken into consideration in order to make clear the role of the public in determination of foreign policy.

#### **1.3.2.1. Public's Interest in World Politics**

The consent is a sine qua non of democracy, shown by the people or public to the system. In democratic regimes, the building of consent without using any pressure is only possible if the communication channels between the government and the public are clear and open. Democracy is based on free elections, which give rise to the voice of social reason. On this occasion citizens will participate in the election by choosing the ones to direct themselves through the elections. In democracies media is vital for the voters to be able to make the most rational decisions in voting, to supervise the

elected officials and to be informed about the politics implemented.<sup>32</sup> In democratic regimes, the supervision of the people is not only provided by elections held at regular intervals and the media. In addition to these institutions, there is a continuous control over political power through pressure groups, interest groups and therefore the public opinion. It is seen that in countries with an advanced democratic system, public opinion is important if it is felt as a force in political life and influences government policies. Accepting the existence of different social sectors and attempting to reach consensus by all sides are key elements in democratic system. In democratic systems, political powers place great importance on the public opinion and allow it to form freely<sup>33</sup>.

Not every person's ideas have to be the same, and their interest in politics need not be at the same level. Public can be separated into three segments related to their interest in political affairs; closely following politics, likely to follow politics according to the situation of the country, and finally ignorant. Having said that the people can be categorized according to their interests in politics into two groups. The first group can be described as sensitive citizens. These people closely follow world politics and vote accordingly in the elections. The latter can be described as a semi-sensitive citizens. Those people are generally do not closely watch world politics and tend to give their votes in parallel with the government policies especially when the country face with a crisis at the international level.

Although the information mentioned above is a kind of generalization, it also reflects some truths about the interest of American citizens in politics. A research done by The Framework Institute reveals some characteristics of the US citizens' interests. According to the research only 29% of Americans say they are "very interested" in news about other countries, and 60% are "very interested" in news about their local community<sup>34</sup>. The remaining 10 percent indicate that they are not interested in politics at all.

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<sup>32</sup>Süleyman İrvan, Demokratik sistemde medyanın rolü, p. 68-69.

<sup>33</sup> Arsev Bektaş, İletişim ve Demokrasi, p. 241-251

<sup>34</sup>Meg Bostrom, Public Attitudes Toward Foreign Affairs An Overview of the Current State of Public Opinion, 1999, p.11

Considering the degree of interest in world politics it can be assumed that 29% of the American citizens are voting according to the developments of international affairs, the role of the US and the efficiency of the US government. The 10 % do not take into any consideration of international affairs when they vote. The semi-active group which comprise 60% of all do not usually care about the international affairs but in any crisis period this group can change its behavior. As it is mentioned above, the most likely action to be taken by this group in times of crisis which means America is facing a threat abroad following the leader. In crisis period such as a terrorist attack to US forces in other countries or to American interests this group starts to concern about the international issues and their concern transforms in a coherent attitude with the administration since they do not have detailed information about the issue US facing with and the only choice for them is relying on the government itself. The voting behavior of this group does not show any difference they usually supports government policies in the polls.

### **1.3.2.2. Public and Leaders Thoughts**

The public are differentiated in their thoughts and degree of interest in politics. This is reflected in how they see their leaders and their foreign policies. This is also true for the evaluations of the leaders' achievements in international relations. Some part of the public may find himself successful in foreign policy issues but the rest of the public may not, or some part of the public may find him thriving just because his achievements in international relations but the others not.

Table 2 below reveals the public opinion on several international issues and points out the difference between the leaders and the society.

**Table 2: Differences between the leaders and the society on international and domestic issues**

<b>Opinions of U.S. Leaders and Public</b>					
Issues on Which Leaders and Public Agree			Issues on Which Leaders and Public Disagree		
The United States should	Leaders Favoring	Public Favoring	The United States should	Leaders Favoring	Public Favoring
Take active role	97%	67%	Make protecting American jobs a top goal	41%	78%
Play the role of global police force	18%	20%	Stress halting global flow of illegal drugs	46%	63%
Stress halting spread of nuclear weapons	87%	73%	Decrease legal immigration	10%	54%
Emphasize combating global terrorism	84%	71%	Make U.S. military superiority a top priority	37%	50%
Stress spreading democracy abroad	29%	14%	Make improving global environment a top goal	61%	47%
Make strengthening the UN a top goal	40%	38%	Do more to combat World hunger	67%	43%
Stress protecting U.S. business interest	22%	33%	Make helping poor countries a top goal	64%	18%
Be more willing to accept decisions of UN	78%	66%	Reduce U.S. military aid	40%	65%
Keep military bases in South Korea	71%	62%	Reduce U.S. economic aid	9%	64%
Keep military bases in Germany	54%	57%	Keep military bases in Saudi Arabia	25%	50%
Keep military bases in Japan	56%	52%	Keep military bases in Turkey	63%	46%
Bomb terrorist training camps and facilities	83%	83%	Keep military bases in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba	47%	58%
Assassinate terrorist leaders	52%	68%	Use troops to defend S. Korea from N. Korea	82%	43%
Not torture suspected terrorists for information	88%	66%	Use troops to protect oil supply	36%	54%
Remain in NATO	66%	58%	Topple governments that support terrorism	38%	67%
Join Kyoto Protocol to cut CO2 emissions	72%	71%	Use troops to protect Israel from Arabs	64%	43%
Give UN power to control global arms trade	55%	57%	Use troops to protect Taiwan from China	51%	33%
Participate in UN peacekeeping	84%	78%	<sup>35</sup>		
Wage preemptive war in some circumstances	71%	70%			
Use troops to halt genocide	86%	75%			
Ratify treaty to ban all nuclear weapons tests	85%	87%			
Ratify treaty to ban all land mines	80%	80%			
Use nuclear weapons only if attacked by them	57%	57%			

<sup>35</sup> John t. Rourke, International Politics on the World Stage, p.89

*\*the percentage saying “made progress” minus the percentage saying “lost ground”*

The satisfaction degree of the public with the policies of the presidents can be measured by the degree of how many promises given in the election campaigns are kept during the presidential era. If the promises or number of promises of the election campaigns are not met, it is possible that public do not evaluate the president as a successful one. President Barack Obama made promises concerning domestic policy in his election campaign which magical word “change” was the main slogan. The voters attracted with the charm of change and hoping that Obama would not repeat the mistakes of George W. Bush elected him. However, Table 3 shows that anticipations of the community were not fully met and society thought Obama was ineffective in some areas.

**Table 3: Public Opinion about policies during Obama Presidency**

	<b>Made Progress %</b>	<b>Stood Still %</b>	<b>Lost Ground %</b>	<b>Net* (pct. pts.)</b>
<b>Situation for gays and lesbians</b>	68	11	16	52
<b>Energy</b>	46	26	23	23
<b>Climate change</b>	33	38	23	10
<b>Economy</b>	42	20	36	6
<b>Healthcare</b>	43	13	43	0
<b>Trade relations</b>	32	28	36	-4
<b>Situation for blacks</b>	30	27	37	-7
<b>Education</b>	31	28	39	-8
<b>National defense and military</b>	30	28	39	-9
<b>Taxes</b>	23	40	34	-11
<b>Situation in Afghanistan</b>	26	26	38	-12
<b>Immigration</b>	37	27	45	-18
<b>U.S. position in the World</b>	30	19	49	-19
<b>Terrorism</b>	28	20	49	-21
<b>Situation in Iraq</b>	25	23	47	-22
<b>Race relations</b>	25	20	52	-27
<b>Gap between rich and poor</b>	14	34	48	-34
<b>Crime</b>	21	21	56	-35
<b>Federal debt</b>	21	18	57	-36 <sup>36</sup>

### 1.3.3. Economy

People's interest in politics and their evaluations of the leaders' foreign policy affect their political behavior. However, the economic issues are also play important role in determination of political decisions of the public. According to a public survey conducted on November 2, 2010, the public saw the economy as one of the most

<sup>36</sup>Micheal Smith and Frank Newport, Americans Assess Progress Under Obama , January 9 2017, [http://news.gallup.com/poll/201683/americans-assess-progress-obama.aspx?g\\_source=position2&g\\_medium=related&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://news.gallup.com/poll/201683/americans-assess-progress-obama.aspx?g_source=position2&g_medium=related&g_campaign=tiles), Accessed 16 May 2018

important priorities, and that they would make their choices accordingly. Voters are turning to candidates who promise to raise jobs and raise their welfare<sup>37</sup>.

The economic voting model defends that economics is the dominant factor in determining political choices of the people. It provides important clues to explain in the fluctuations in voting. The model explains that if there are multiple parties with similar approaches in the electoral race, the party that the individuals would prefer may be different than the previous election<sup>38</sup>. Rational or, in other words, the economic voting model suggests that political and economic factors unique to each election period affect voting behavior at a decisive level. In this approach, people prefer parties that meet their personal preferences and expectations as a result of benefit - cost calculations. This can explain the last election in which Donald Trump won against Hillary Clinton, a representative of rich elites of US.

The electorates who are tired of the failing policies of the Obama era to mend the problems of economy caused by 2008 financial crisis changed their preferences in favor of Trump. The main reason of this change is found in Trumps' personal achievement in economy. Trump has successively turned 1 million \$ firm inherited from his father to more than 100 million \$ company in relatively short period of time. His entrepreneur skills attracted the voters and convinced them to vote for him in an economically unstable period.

#### **1.4. Structure Level Analysis**

Two of the four factors that determine foreign policy were discussed before. The effect of the leaders' character on the formation of the foreign policy was held in individual level analysis. It is claimed that the peaceful character of the leader led him to more peaceful policy options compared to more aggressive type leaders. President

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<sup>37</sup>Amerika'da Seçmenler Ekonomiye Bakıyor, 21 October 2010, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/amerikada-secmenler-ekonomiye-bakiyor-105472678/888500.html>, Accessed 16 May 2018

<sup>38</sup>Robert Andersen and Anthony Heath, Social cleavages, attitudes and voting patterns: A comparison of Canada and Great Britain, p.2-13, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.514.6466&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, Accessed 16 May 2018

Obama and President Bush are chosen as two examples of peaceful and aggressive type leaders. It is also discussed how the administrative experiences and past political history of the leaders and their level of understanding of world politics affect the foreign policy practices. In this respect President Obama is compared with President Trump.

It is known that in democratic type of ruling the contribution of the members of the society is generally limited to their voting behavior as long as the stability of the country is continuous. However in crisis situations like 9/11, the society can directly and heavily affect the foreign policy formation especially if the opinion of the leader tunes in with the public opinion. As the public opinion differs with the opinion of the leader, the leader may be forced to favor the public opinion and choose a policy which is not his best option. These arguments are the main issues of the democratic level analysis.

While leaders and public clearly play an important role in the formation of the policy, what is the importance of the activities of the states in the international arena? The system level analysis helps to answer this question by exploring the effects and the relationships of the states in the international level.

Before diving into the system level analysis, the history of the international relations of the countries should be mentioned. Historically, there are some representative countries that show why some countries had to act with some specific countries, for instance, Turkey – Germany, Russia – Iraq, USA – Iraq, and etc. At all cooperation's, one of them benefited from the other party. During WWI, Turkey supported Germany because Germany seemed more powerful one compared to others. Besides that, their economic agreements and political close relationships let them cooperate with each other. After World War II, the world got into another chaotic situation with the Cold War. With it, the world divided into two as USA supporters and Russia supporters or in other words Liberalist vs. Communist. Europe and Israel sided with the USA against Russia and some Asian and middle eastern countries. After that, in the 2000's before 9/11, the USA sold some old-fashioned weapons to the Iraqi government for boosting their economy and possible integration into the Middle East. Thus, in 2001, Iraq declared war against Kuwait because of oil consumption. This was an economic cooperation. However, it ended with war and the Middle East became a more chaotic region. So, what

all does it mean? Shortly, whatever it happens it is always because one tries to dominate other politically in the world political arena. All those proves that there is a power relation with countries and economic integrity is really significant for World politics.

#### **1.4.1. Power Relations**

It can be said that the concept of power is one of the most complex concepts in international relations. The basic reason of this is the difficulty in giving a clear definition for the term of power. Power in its simplest is the form the dominance of one on another. In international relations there are number incidents in which power relations can be detected. In areas such as economy, military and culture, the countries try to put pressure and struggle to dominate each other.

Apart from these power definitions another two of them should be mentioned. John Nye describes the power as hard and soft. According to his definition, soft power is a power which uses political sanctions rather than concrete, physical or military means.<sup>39</sup> Cold War era constitutes a good example of soft power practicing. Starting from 1945 until the end of 1990s, US and Soviet Russia had tried to overcome each other through political and social warfare without using any direct military intervention. In this era, those two countries while struggling with each other used all available economic means such as grants or economic aids in order to convince third countries to join their sides and support them. The close ties between US and Israel is the result of those policies put into practice in that era. Nye's hard power concept underlines the usage of military intervention.<sup>40</sup> The recent example of this kind of power is the US intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 incident.

Indeed there is another kind of power description apart from those four types of power mentioned earlier as economic cultural power and military one namely balance of power. This concept is mainly used to describe the international political situation in 19<sup>th</sup> century but it is also used to describe 20<sup>th</sup> century political scene. The concept

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<sup>39</sup>John Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs p.5

<sup>40</sup>John Nye, *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, p.11

describes a situation in which none of the countries or groups can establish political or military superiority against rival group or a country does not take into consideration power struggle in international relations with respect of economic and cultural policies. American foreign policy has been targeting economic dominance under the name of democratization of other countries. US has always backed some countries economically to help them emerge as a regional power which naturally implement policies in parallel with US international policies favoring US interests.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it can be said that each continent has at least one dominant power which has every means to affect international balance of power easily. This naturally provokes us to discuss another important topic.

#### **1.4.1.1. Powerful Actors in the International System**

One of the questions to be asked in order to understand international political system is how many leading actors there are at the scene. Historical background reveals that there are three types of world balance of power; multi polarity, bipolarity and uni-polarity. The recent past is characterized by bipolarity and uni-polarity. Chronologically, the balance of power in the world After Europe's withdrawal from the world politics as a powerhouse, it can be said that the world order dominated by two powers, namely the US and the Soviet Union, at least twenty years. Two ideologically opposing countries struggled to establish their own influence on the world scene after the World War II. The European states and other countries that have been ruined by the have been forced to cluster around these two states. Thus, a two-polar equilibrium emerged. Those two states tried to overcome the other with using economic, military and cultural means in regional and international level. That new situation, which is called shortly as "Cold War," has continued its influence for twenty years, and even today it cannot be said that all the consequences statements have been left behind.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in early 1990s meant the demolition of the bipolar world order established at the end of the Second World War. This led to the withdrawal of one superpower from the world political scene, paving the way for

the other, the US to position itself as an only superpower of the world. Therefore, from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of superpower has only begun to be used for the United States. American hegemony, thought to have weakened because of the Vietnam War in the 1970s, began to regain its old strength in a sense just after the end of the Cold War.

The emergence of the United States as a hegemonic power cannot only be attributed to the demolition of the Soviets, the international conjuncture totally helped that process. In the 1990s the successor of the Soviet Union the Russian government was struggling between economic stagnation, political corruption and the endless war in Chechnya. Besides the newly established Russia, the situation of the European Union was not very bright. It was only established in 1992 and it was very difficult to talk about a consensus among member countries. These states were attracted not only to the common currency, which was newly introduced into the market, but also to the EU, and they could not follow a common security policy against ethnic wars in the Balkans. In short, the international conjuncture in the 1990s has helped the US hegemony to dominate the whole world.

It is mentioned that countries have to face with some rules in international political arena which limit their policy choices while they exercise their freewill in their domestic policies. The major reason for this is the threatening of the balance of power by some countries. The 21th century international political arena witnesses crack down of the balance of power situation. It is true that there is no worldwide stability. There is grouping of countries around a single powerful country creating a regional balance of power situation. Such alignments led by USA and Russia and China and Korea pose a threat to world politics. Although USA and Russia have a solid state in the world arena emergence of China as an economic giant clearly affect the foreign policies of these states. More than one rivalry in power struggle means more investments in defense industries in those countries. In other words if one country gains advantage in terms of power against the others, this provokes the others to invest in military industries to protect themselves. The intensive investment in military industry and Iraqi invasion afterwards in Bush Presidency became a warning signal and led other countries to invest in their military industries and increasing arm race.

The countries clearly may threaten the balance of power and it is also true that the same is true for IGO when they clearly act in double standard. A striking example is the invasion of Iraq by US in 2002. USA had claimed that Iraqi government possessed weapon of mass destruction and put the case in Security Council. But when it recognized that there was a high probability of vetoing any decision, she took the case from international legitimate arena namely United Nations and started the invading operation under the name of Freeing Iraq with its close ally United Kingdom. After the invasion of Iraq it was understood the weapons of mass destruction which was the main reason for the invasion did not exist. That was a clear breach of international legal order which create hesitation about the law enforcement power of United Nations and raised a question as if the United Nations is capable enough to maintain international order when a dominant power such as US felt free herself to protect her own interests. The Israeli-Palestine Conflict which has started by almost the foundation of the United Nations continues to be one of the main international conflicts today. The complete failure of the implementation of the UN resolutions on the issue and the never ending tension and clashing in the Palestine territory clearly put the UN in question as a capable and trustworthy peace keeping international organization.



## CHAPTER 2

### HUSSEIN BARACK OBAMA

This section will focus on personal characteristics of Obama and his rise to power. The political experience and personality aspects of his character which are mentioned in individual analysis of the will be examined deeper since these are highly important for clearly understand his role in Middle East policy making. For this purpose his years in Senate, his campaign for presidency and his presidential era will be put in focus.

#### 2.1. Senator Barack Obama

The common characteristics of American presidents are that they involved directly or indirectly heavily in politics before becoming president. Obama has a political past, like other presidents. His political history began in 1996 when he was elected to the Illinois state senate and continued until his presidency. During his senate period, Obama has taken many important steps and in this period he showed the signals of how to be elected president in 2009. The experience resulted from the events that he faced during his senate period gave him the ability to use his experience in the presidency period and solve the problems that he encountered later with that experience. Long before the presidential period, during his senate period, there were some problems awaiting Mr. Obama.

The biggest problem Obama faced during his senate term was invasion of Iraq. What does the invasion of Iraq mean? Where were the premises based on? The invasion of Iraq triggered the Iraqi attack against Kuwait in 1990. The main reason for this is that the Iraqi government has claimed land from this country, claiming that Kuwait has stolen the oil that Iraq owns and has begun to pursue aggressive policies against all the countries in the region. And in 1991, America waged war on Iraq, and in the same year America freed Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Just after that thinking

that Iraq would remain a constant threat in the Middle East and The US started to impose political and economic sanctions against this country.

At the end of 2000, after Bush Jr.'s victory in the elections a new Jewish conservative cadre, largely able to be influential in this administration, has not only directed foreign policy, it also has shaped the Middle East policy effectively. The September 11 attack in 2001 gives the opportunity to the Bush administration to occupy Iraq in 2003 in order to get rid of such incidents that could damage the American interests – namely maintaining the security of Israel and flow of oil safely to world markets.

Senator Obama gave support to some of the policies of Bush Jr. While severely criticizing some others such as the invasion of the Iraq issue. The invasion of Iraq was largely supported by Democrat politicians but Obama claimed that the invasion of Iraq was an intervention with ambitions lacking international support and he insisted that it would trigger new battles in the Middle East<sup>41</sup>.

However, Obama supported the Iraq War in 2005-2006 by considering that the war was not preliminary serving western interests but it was a mean for bringing peace, liberation to the region and asked for a pragmatic solution to the war<sup>42</sup>. He also supported the withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2007 and the increase in the war budget. Again that year, he backed the Israeli policies in the US-Israel Public Affairs Committee and pointed out that Iran was a potential threat risking the interests of Israel and the United States in the region.

## **2.2. Road to White House**

Obama, who began his 13-year political history by the Illinois state senate in 1996, was elected twice to the senate in 1998 and 2002. But he did not succeed to enter the US House of Representatives in the year 2000. When he was elected to the US

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<sup>41</sup>Biography, <https://www.biography.com/people/barack-obama-12782369>, Accessed 10 February 2018

<sup>42</sup>Barack Obama, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/barack-obama>–Accessed 10 February 2018

Senate in the next period, he won 70 % of the votes, a clear landslide victory<sup>43</sup>. Obama took office in the Senate Foreign Affairs Commission and made official visits to Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. Announced on February 10, 2007 he declared himself as the Democratic Party's candidate for the 2008 US Presidency. It was an extraordinary situation for the United States and one of the most challenging processes of American history since he would become the first African-American presidential candidate in American history.

Obama knew in his own way that he should prepare the election campaign very carefully addressing to all segments of the society and covering all main political issues ranging from domestic to the external relations.

The most important factors for an election victory is the ability of the leaders to transfer their ideas to the public through their rhetoric and their body language. The language and rhetoric clearly strengthens the pre-decided public to vote in favor of the leader. The charisma of the leader highly contributes to the formation of the decision structure of the public.

The voting model study claims that the charismatic candidates are always one step forward relative to other candidates. Apart from charisma, there is no doubt that the strength of the election is also highly important. Strong election campaigns are actually separated into two<sup>44</sup>. In one type, the campaign is based on the exaggerated belief in the rightness of the ideas claimed in the campaign and overwhelmingly spreading of these ideas by intense propaganda during the campaign. The candidate thinks his campaign is stronger than the others. The second type is proportional to criticizing the other presidential candidate's campaign or criticizing him directly.

People also make choices according to the situation they are in. In fact, the situation is divided into two<sup>45</sup>. The first is related to the fact that people feel themselves belonging to a certain group - in the US this can be said to be democratic or republican. The other one is generally proportional to economic reasons, not to the strength of the

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<sup>43</sup>Barack Obama, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/barack-obama>, Accessed 10 February 2018

<sup>44</sup>RuiAntunes, *Theoretical Models of Voting Behaviour*, p.148

<sup>45</sup>Betül AYDOĞAN ÜNAL , *OY VERME DAVRANIŞI MODELLERİ*, p.97

country, and sometimes to the foreign policy of the country<sup>46</sup>. When American voters are in question, American citizens often base their votes on their own economic situations and on the foreign policy of the country

Under those assumptions about the voting behavior and election campaigns it can be said that Obama's win is not something to be surprised at all. Although Hussein Barrack Obama was not a charismatic leader, he was able to appeal to the masses because of his strong preparation of his campaign and because of the situation that created by negative consequences of policies of the former president of the United States, namely George W. Bush.

The biggest problem of the Obama, as the other leaders is living in his own time with the problems the previous leaders had created. In other words, the new presidents are forced to continue on the road with the previous good presidents' heritage. While Obama made sure steps towards the presidential election with a successful election campaign, America was troubled both in foreign and domestic politics problems which were the caused by G. W. Bush. Obama continued to address those problems in his election campaign. It was necessary to change worldwide anti-Americanism thoughts and behaviors that Bush had created by his foreign policy. In addition to the problems outside, domestic politics was also in trouble result of heavy military investments and severe economic situation. Those problems had to address smoothly rather than with an aggressive tone. He stressed the need of change in every sense to get rid of all kind of problems in the country whether political or economic.

The cornerstone of Obama's election campaign has been a campaign for change and appeal to the public. Obama's campaign was based on the slogan of "change"<sup>47</sup>. The slogans "Change Can Happen"<sup>48</sup> and "Yes, We can"<sup>49</sup> were the main slogans of the election campaign. Obama promised to make the exchange with the people. With

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid, p.104

<sup>47</sup>Campaign Slogans of Barack Obama in the US, <http://www.afriprov.org/news-archive/443-campaign-slogans-of-barrack-obama-in-the-us.html>, 25 December 2017

<sup>48</sup>Campaign Slogans of Barack Obama in the US, <http://www.afriprov.org/news-archive/443-campaign-slogans-of-barrack-obama-in-the-us.html> 25 December 2017

<sup>49</sup>Campaign Slogans of Barack Obama in the US, <http://www.afriprov.org/news-archive/443-campaign-slogans-of-barrack-obama-in-the-us.html> 25 December 2017

the slogan "Yes, We Can", the change created the image that the public wanted to participate in the process. He claimed that the previous administrators were elite in the mansions, unaware of the facts and as a consequence unable to solve the problems.

During his election campaign, Obama promised to withdraw US troops in Iraq in a certain order, one brigade per month, and shift more troops to Afghanistan. While he was a senator, he defended the use of the mighty US army as a deterrent to dialogue in the process of dialogue, rather than fighting war and armed interventions, by taking on the role of good police against war policies.

As the election campaign continued, the financial turmoil turned into a great tsunami and brought the American economy to the brink of recession. The Republican administration, which has ruled the country for 8 years, was also in the defendant chair. The Republican administration had become a fire starter of the fire, leaving the financial markets to be a complete idleness with the "free market" approach. The US had no other choice than to change. The American people's need to get out of the current crisis allowed Obama to vote.

In addition, Obama made some promises about health and insurance issues. He said that the government would spread health insurance and reduce the problems of poor people receiving health services. In America, there are 46 million uninsured laborers roughly. These are people who do not have the chance to cure when they are sick. It is claimed that cheap policies of millions of employees belonging to health insurance do not work well. Within this, Obama promised to increase their incomes by cutting publicly-paid health care, work and less tax. So, with his slogan, he promised work, bread and freedom.<sup>50</sup>

### **2.3. First Afro–American in the White House**

Barack Obama as a Democratic Party candidate with the strong tailwind created by the slogan “change” was elected the 44th president of the United States,

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<sup>50</sup> Linda Qiu, Barack Obama’s top 25 campaign promises: How’d he do?, 5 January 2017, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/jan/05/tracking-obamas-top-25-campaign-promises/>, Accessed 24 May 2018

taking 52% of the vote in the presidential race in the elections held on November 4, 2008<sup>51</sup>. For the first time in American history, an African-American black president was elected. Obama made a remarkable achievement that with the votes and the provinces he won, in the last 30 years no Democratic Party candidate has achieved. He earned traditionally Republican provinces like Virginia, Florida and Ohio. The most change demanding and most discriminating voters came from Hispanics, Blacks, Asian descent and the unemployed.

The themes used in the election campaign brought different age, ethnic, religious and economic groups together, the reaction against Bush period, and the need for change and Obama's diplomatic and consensual view of the issues have been a decisive factor in the US foreign policy.

The American public which was suffered by the loss of the Afghan and Iraq wars, by the increasing threats of rising anti-Americanism in the Muslim world which was mainly caused by the Bush policies and finally by the Mortgage Crisis or world financial crisis were in favor of Obama with the hope of restoring the American image in the world and awaiting the bright days of Clinton to come back<sup>52</sup>.

### **2.3.1. The Obama Doctrine**

Obama has argued that both the senatorial and the election campaign must be constructive, not destructive, in order to change the situation of the Americans. He argued that the hard power did not work and America should get rid of the image of being enemy and became a constructor by using her diplomatic leverage or soft power. Those thoughts frequently repeated during the presidential campaign later turned into a new doctrine which was named by president's name and called as Obama doctrine. That doctrine can be summarized in a few principles describing Obama's American perspective for domestic and international scenes. More clearly, his ambition to reform

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<sup>51</sup>CNN Politics, [Election Center, http://edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/president/](http://edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/president/), 20 March 2018

<sup>52</sup>Robert McGuigan Burns, Barack Obama: How an Unknown Senator Became President of the USA, December 12 2014, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/12/12/barack-obama-how-an-unknown-senator-became-president-of-the-usa/>, Accessed 25 December 2017

America and restore her image with respect to domestic and international public was reflected in Obama doctrine with seven simple principles.

Principle 1: Protecting the world and the United States from what others see at American power. Obama finds the American Power's magic more dangerous than his enemy threats. That is why in 2009 Cairo and United Nations speeches, President Obama apologized for the unilateral decisions of previous US administrations.

Principle 2: Multilateralism. The Obama Doctrine is based on the synthesis of elements of different paradigms with treating all of them equally. It includes four main elements of liberal multilateralism:

- a- compliance with the law, binding power of treaties and international norms;
- b- Believing the effectiveness of multilateral institutions in different matters, including international security;
- c- Suspicion of using "hard power" instead of traditional national interests;
- d- The use of force for humanitarian objectives when the international public considers legitimate.<sup>53</sup>

Principle 3: Minimizing the importance type of regime and ideology. The Obama Doctrine also includes important points of neorealism such as reducing the importance of regime type or ideology in international politics. Like the neorealist, President Obama does not accept the foreign policies of President Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, who define the regime type as basis for aggression. Instead, it defines and promotes peace in a liberal democratic region. Obama's neorealist tendency is partly due to his willingness to re-establish US relations with authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia and Iran.

Principle 4: Using hard power as the last resort for the appropriate, multi-sided, limited and restrictive purpose with only limited exceptions. President Obama's policies were not always peaceful indeed. His statement as using force sometimes is inevitable

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<sup>53</sup> David Rohde, "The Obama Doctrine", <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/27/the-obama-doctrine/>, Accessed 5 June 2018

proves that he is not a person afraid of clash. His ordering of Osama bin Laden to be killed on May 2, a killing Al Qaeda leaders by increasing number of drone assaults (remote controlled unmanned aerial vehicles) in Pakistan proves this. Nevertheless, the President is very cautious in military interventions, especially where the UN resolution has not been ratified.

The Libya is a clear example for in what conditions the Obama Administration prefer to use of force preferred by the Obama Administration. The UN and the Arab League have sought to end pressure and civil war, which Muhammad Qaddafi imposed on civilians in Libya, by granting restricted, multilateral operation. In practice, this operation led to regime change. Obama wants a similar result for the Syrian civil war. President Obama favors policies for keeping security in international politics rather than balance of power against hegemonic and periodically emerging threats.<sup>54</sup>

Principle 5: Focusing on Soft and Unconventional Threats Instead of Strong Power and Competition. The Obama Doctrine is based on soft power and focusing in protecting the American interests through cultural means and diplomacy. President Obama is more concerned in unconventional threats such as global warming or failed governments rather than threats of great powers and contests of competitors. Russia and China were rarely mentioned in his 2011 National Security Strategy as potential threats. The priority was given on environmental issues and humanitarian aid.

Principle 6: Acceptance of Decrease of American Power. Increasing the number of alternative power centers in the world, such as China and the European Union, inevitably leads to a decline in American solid power. Obama's desire to solve the US's national problems is a fundamental approach of Obama doctrine. The president's priorities have been based on US economy, rather than US military strength abroad.

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<sup>54</sup> Daniel Drezner, "Five Thoughts on the Obama Doctrine", [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/03/11/five-thoughts-on-the-obama-doctrine/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.14d78ae81767](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/03/11/five-thoughts-on-the-obama-doctrine/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.14d78ae81767), Accessed 5 June 2018

For this purpose Obama proposed a substantial budget reduction in military spending within ten years.<sup>55</sup>

Principle 7: Compromise against Potential Challengers and Adapt to the existing balance. Obama has gone ahead of his predecessors in compromising and adapting to existing and potential enemies. The president is very confident in changing American foreign policy. As David Remnick expresses, "he sees himself as a bridge to the reconciliation of Americans and other races and the United States to the world. "In short, Obama turned the US's hard power policy which was favored by the Bush administration into a Soft Power policy and remained faithful to this policy both during his all tenure starting from his election campaign<sup>56</sup>.

Obama's every step of the way, using soft power, was strategically important to improving the shaky image of the United States. International power has now begun to be determined by the parameters of economy, technology and education, which are now parallel to the military force. Today, managing the world in the political arena is with the international power, which is also the factor in determining the use of hard power or soft power<sup>57</sup>. This is one of the reasons for Obama's preference for the "soft power" policy.

Soft power can be described as the ability to attract others instead of manipulating others to get the desired results<sup>58</sup>. Obama favored the soft power, which was also appropriate for his character, to get rid of the impression of a state using crude power. Obama used the soft power features that he had in himself and explained it by harmonized what he had to do in the two speeches that he spoke to the Islamic world. He showed that he was sincere by giving himself an example in his conversations and in a compromising attitude by correcting the wrong things he did. Obama wanted to restore the US image against the world by using this feature.

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<sup>55</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, "Is there an Obama Doctrine?", <https://www.csis.org/analysis/there-obama-doctrine>, Accessed 5 June 2018

<sup>56</sup> <http://obamaspeeches.com/>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnyUUauFJ98>

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Nye, *SoftPower: The MeanstoSuccess in World Politics*, 2005, p.167.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Nye, "Powers toLead", New York, Oxford UniversityPress, 2008, p.29.

## **2.4. Initial Foreign Policy of Obama**

Hussein Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States, had many problems awaiting for the official swearing-in ceremony on 20 January 2009. Obama knew very well that, first of all, he had to correct America's distorted image. As mentioned earlier, Obama turned the US "hard power" policy of the Bush era into a "soft power" policy and had to stick to this policy during his rule. Today's international power covers not only the military force but also the economy, technology, and training parameters which are the factors of soft power.

Obama has chosen soft power to manage the international order which is suitable for his own character and fits his policy to get rid of the image of US as a kind of state using crude power. There are actually two reasons why the president chooses soft power. The first one is due to the wrong policies that were inherited from the Bush administration as mentioned before. Those policies implemented by the Bush administration damaged both the American economy and its external relations in which the US is completely adhered to the enemy country. The other one is based entirely on his youth years. Dinesh D'Souza claims that Obama was educated by his father during his early age with an anticolonial philosophy that shaped his world views which made easy for him to adopt soft power policy<sup>59</sup> as his main policy to rule international relations of the US. "Obama used the soft power features of his own and explained it to the Islamic world and showed his sincerity in his two speeches addressed to the Islamic world.

### **2.4.1. New President**

New beginnings mean new hopes. The presidency of the Obama also has created new hopes for both the American people and the world countries. The Bush administration's International Polarization and Arming Initiative, the use of military force that disregards international law and the political pressures it creates and the threats created by the rise of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world and the economic crisis that emerged as the loss of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars were highly tiresome

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<sup>59</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uuh9k6Tsm0>

for the international relations. Obama was seen as a man who could change that situation. The Mortgage Crisis or World Financial Crisis which was badly affected domestic economy and created many miseries which served as a means for Obama to be seen as a savior.

**Table 4: Countries thoughts against Bush and Obama Presidency**

Will Do Right Thing in World Affairs			
%confidence	Bush 2008	Obama 2009	Diff
U.S	37	74	+37
Canada	28	88	+60
Britain	16	86	+70
France	13	91	+78
Germany	14	93	+79
Spain	8	72	+64
Poland	41	62	+21
Russia	22	37	+15
Turkey	2	33	+31
Egypt	11	42	+31
Jordan	7	31	+24
Lebanon	33	46	+13
Palest. Ter.	8	23	+15
Israel	57	56	-1
China	30	62	+32
India	55	77	+22
Indonesia	23	71	+48
Japan	25	85	+60
Pakistan	7	13	+6
S. Korea	30	81	+51
Argentina	7	61	+54
Brazil	17	76	+59
Mexico	16	55	+39
Kenya	72	94	+22
Nigeria	55	88	+33

In a survey conducted in US in 2008 it is found that American people consider the correcting the US image in international arena was the most important issue in foreign policy subjects. Being aware of these feelings of the people, Obama criticized the occupation of Iraq in election campaign and stated that relations with countries such as Russia, China and Iran should be developed. Obama gave his friendship messages to the world by saying "America is the friend of every country ..." in the first speech he made when he became president.

The Middle East, which was the most problematic and difficult foreign policy issue for every president has also been a factor for Obama to be welcomed positively in this part of the world. Obviously "his familiarity with Islam and his ability to quote comfortably from the Quran (he did it four times) is bound to resonate in the Middle East<sup>60</sup>. By July 23, 2009 according to the Pew Research Center report, the US image, which was badly damaged during the Bush era, began to improve with Obama's policies as appears in Figure 1<sup>61</sup>.

#### **2.4.2. New Challenges with new administration**

Even if the election of President Obama was welcomed both in the country and in certain parts of the world, the new administration had to determine new foreign policies. Obama's steps were crucial, especially because of the bad management that he inherited from the Bush administration. Obama's foreign policy and national security issues are centered on the "Greater Middle East". (Note that the Greater Middle includes East Egypt, Israel-Palestine, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Afghanistan and Pakistan. North Africa and Yemen was excluded from this concept.)

US was facing long lasting serious problems in the Middle East when Obama and his administration stepped into the white house. Even during the presidential

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<sup>60</sup>Richard Spencer, Barack Obama's speech to muslim world welcomed by the press, The Telegraph, 05 June 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/5450146/Barack-Obamas-speech-to-Muslim-world-welcomed-by-the-press.html>, Accessed 26 December 2017

<sup>61</sup>Pew Research Center, Confidence in Obama Lifts U.S. Image Around the World, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2009/07/23/confidence-in-obama-lifts-us-image-around-the-world/>, Accessed 26 December 2017

campaign US was in war with Afghanistan's El-Qaida and Iraq. In Afghanistan there was a military base of US and the situation much worse in this country than in Iraq. An administrative collapse in these countries could trigger a series of fanatic religious terrorist attacks. The instability and fundamentalism in these regions constituted a major threat to nuclear weaponry. Another important issue that needs to be addressed when Obama took office was Iran and its nuclear program.

Actually, on the agenda of President Obama, Islamic terrorism and these three issues had to be resolved immediately. Apart from that, there was another situation brewing that no one could have guessed. Obama and his administration have been totally unprepared for the Arab Spring starting in 2010. Obama had to try to resolve the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians. Obama, who said he would be on an equal approach to the world during the election period, also knew that it was so difficult to be neutral this time. In the first years

When Obama came up with a successful move, he forced Israel and Palestinians to start negotiation process again in order to win their credits. Obama has appointed two special representatives to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem and to serve in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton traveled to Asia and the Middle East to revise the image with public diplomacy, while making her first international trip to Indonesia. In February 2009, as a result of soft power policy a new diplomacy was adopted by Obama to improve relations between the US and the Muslims for soft power policy, and the report "A New Direction: A Route Change for the Muslim World and US Relations" was published which can be seen as a clear sign that America's priority in diplomacy was Islam<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Daniel Brumberg, A new Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World, [https://www.sfcg.org/Documents/CPRF/oct\\_2008.pdf](https://www.sfcg.org/Documents/CPRF/oct_2008.pdf), Accessed 28 December 2017



## CHAPTER 3

### FIRST TERM FOR OBAMA

In this section, the first term of presidency of Barack Hussein Obama starting from November 4, 2008 until the election held in 2013 will be discussed. In this discussion, there will be many references to the presidency of the former US president George Walter Bush since it is thought that it would help to analyze and interpret the Obama period better. It is widely believed that new presidents usually do not have the time and space to apply their policies in their early years or their policies are highly affected by the former president's policies. This phenomenon is seen more sharply in the Obama era. So it would be more efficient to address the Bush era before moving on to the Obama period.

#### **3.1. G. W. Bush Emancipating his Father**

It can be said that the George W. Bush era is a kind of repetition of the complex era of the George Herbert Walter Bush (Father Bush) the interventionist American foreign policy practiced in George W. Bush presidency reminds the similar policies of the aggressive policies took place during his father's time. It should be noted that the basic determinant of the aggressive policies of the George W. Bush presidency is the 9/11 incident namely the terrorist attacks targeting the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The American foreign policy naturally shaped by that attack.

On September 11, 2001, attacks on the US military (Pentagon) and economic (WTC) hegemony triggered a rapid change in US domestic and foreign policy. Following the attacks, the United States, which has entered into a sense of intense vulnerability and insecurity, has begun to take a more aggressive, one-sided foreign policy orientation under the name of the war against terrorism. When we look at the foreign policy of America, we can see that Democracy is a structure that aspires to take its hegemony to the other countries as much as possible, taking refuge in the politics of spreading the other continents, and to maintain its place in world politics as

the sole power. As a matter of fact, that the use of the military force during the reign of G.W. Bush following the democratic peace and international justice structure established during the Clinton era has removed all the obstacles in front of the US<sup>63</sup>. In the post-Cold War era, the globalization and sustainability of American hegemony must be more intrusive under the name of spreading democracy. After September 11, terrorist organizations and those who support them can be said to have disturbed both the plans of America and grew on the bread. In parallel with this new perception of threats, the United States has begun to use preemptive attack against potential threats to national security and has tried to legitimize it by saying it also does it for the security of the whole world at the same time. The political, economic and social consequences of the occupation of Afghanistan, which started in March 2003, and the occupation of Iraq have shown to the whole world that they are structured steps of the strategy to globalize and consolidate the US hegemony.

As pointed out earlier, the purpose of the foreign policy that the United States followed after the attacks of September 11, is not only to prevent the development of opponent forces that have been obstructing the hegemony, but also to accept the absolute sovereignty of the entire international system at the same time. For this purpose, the United States, which has naturally entered into an aggressive and one-sided foreign policy orientation, has started to spread over the first time in its history.

It was very important that the American post-September 11 foreign policy became very aggressive. The assumption that seizing new places will increase the cumulative gains and that the state will increase its power because it will bring new natural resources are the main factors that cause American foreign policy to become aggressive. The example that best reflects these assumptions in the post-9/11 period has been the invasion of Iraq. Before the invasion of Iraq, the US administration resorted to justifications as Iraq's alleged compliance with al-Qaeda, which Saddam produced weapons of mass destruction (WMD), claimed to have been deployed in Iraq with the September 11 incidents, and Iraq's UN resolutions, in order to justify the occupation. President Bush, using particularly exaggerated statements against WMD

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<sup>63</sup> The White House, "The Clinton Presidency: A Foreign Policy for the Global Age", <https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-10.html>, Accessed 3 June 2018

in Iraq's hand, noted that Saddam could use these weapons to threaten US national security<sup>64</sup>. The occupation of Iraq in March 2003 and the inability to actually find WMD in the country has revealed that the main cause of the occupation is different.

This is one of the main and most important reasons for the occupation of Iraq by the USA, which is based on the interest of the American to the Middle East to dominate the Iraqi petroleum and to sustain and strengthen the material basis of hegemony. The ever-increasing US dependence on the Middle East oil has made Iraq's oil control and security a priority and vital issue for the United States<sup>65</sup>. For this reason, one of the most important reasons for the US occupation of Iraq, despite the fact that the US administration put forward other reasons, provided full control over Iraqi oil.

Another assumption about the extreme spreading of aggressive realistic states is that spreading strategies become quite favorable when conditions are in favor of the aggressive state. In other words, the Sept. 11 attacks on the US administration created an inexplicable ground both nationally and internationally to follow aggressive and one-sided policies. Afghanistan, legitimized under the name of the war against terrorism, caused the US to be exposed to a terrorist act on its territory, causing both national and international opposition to be very weak against the occupation. The United States, in the process of going to the occupation of Afghanistan, intensively committed itself to terrorism as a victim both nationally and internationally. A similar situation has been experienced in the process of Iraq's occupation, and the United States has used to the present conditions that it can reflect its occupation as a war against dictatorships and terrorism,

As Snyder notes, continuing toward the periphery and every over-propagation causes the expense of expansionism to pass its benefits after a point<sup>66</sup>. For this reason, trying to achieve security through empowerment can often become an aggressive state harming itself. Since 2001, the United States has spent more than \$ 1.2 trillion on military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other regions in order to fully deploy

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<sup>64</sup> New York Times, Threats and Responses; Bush's Speech on Iraq: 'Saddam Hussein and His Sons Must Leave', <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/us/threats-responses-bush-s-speech-iraq-saddam-hussein-his-sons-must-leave.html>, Accessed 3 June 2018

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, Amerikan Emperyalizminin Son Baharı, p. 256–257.

<sup>66</sup> Snyder, Myths of Empire, p. 6–7

hegemony<sup>67</sup>. This figure does not include the US benefits to the Middle East countries due to their support for the war, hidden appropriations, destroyed military vehicles, and government spending on wounded soldiers. Along with these, it is estimated that this figure reached \$ 4.5 trillion<sup>68</sup>. Despite all the expenditures, however, the US, Iraq and Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern countries have not succeeded in securing the troops and their superiors.

Nevertheless, the cost of the US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan has led to a great depression in the US economy, and a continuation of the US budget. After the September 11 attacks, rising military expenditures have started to give serious budget deficits and this deficit has exceeded 1.2 trillion dollars in 2009<sup>69</sup>. This shows that; although the United States, Iraq and Afghanistan have gained huge profits by controlling their natural resources, when it was actually thought of in the short term, it had to bear a serious financial burden of earning. The September 11 attacks, the US that acted in the direction of globalization of the hegemony after the end of the Cold War, have greatly reduced the path to achieve this purpose. The United States has decided not to go through changes in security policies to regain the loss of prestige it has suffered in the face of attacks that have shaken the myth of impunity and invincibility, and to ensure the continuity of its hegemony. In a speech of President Bush at the United States Military Academy (West Point) on June 1, 2002, he said, "The war on terror will not be won by defense. We must take the battlefield to the enemy's territory, distort its plans and neutralize the threats that arise from it without leaving the opportunity to appear. In today's world, the only way to safety is through action ...<sup>70</sup>." This approach, which has made the use of military force the main element of foreign policy, also known as the "Bush Doctrine", left the enemy undefined and thus created the opportunity to strike the desired goal in the direction of globalization

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<sup>67</sup>AmyBelasco, TheCost of Iraq, Afghanistan, andOther Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, Washington: CongressionalResearch Service, 2011, p. 5

<sup>68</sup>Mepa News, "11 Eylül'ün ABD'ye maliyeti tahminlerin 3 katı çıktı", 9 November 2017, <https://www.mepanews.com/11-eylulun-abdye-maliyeti-tahminlerin-3-kati-cikti-10815h.htm>. Accessed 25 April 2018.

<sup>69</sup>Posta Gazetesi, Irak savaşı resmen bitti, 25 Aralık 2011, <http://www.posta.com.tr/irak-savasi-resmen-bitti-haberi-100725>, Accessed 25 April 2018

<sup>70</sup>Office of thePressSecretary, President Bush DeliversGradution Speech at West Point, 1 June 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>. Accessed 25 April 2018.

of hegemony to the US. The Bush Doctrine has been expressed quite clearly in the principles set out in the "US National Security Strategy"<sup>71</sup> report released to the public in September 2002. The principle of the use of preventive offense against states and terrorist organizations that have or are in possession of mass destruction weapons in the National Security Strategy has justified the legitimacy of the military interventions to be carried out. In addition, preventive attacks have been seen as a way to promote democracy, peace and human rights all over the world, especially in the Islamic world. Kissinger, on the other hand, put forward the need for an international system based on the US's own absolute sovereignty, and considered the preventive attack as a universal right of the United States<sup>72</sup>.

The Bush administration has been more than intellectual prejudice to put the aggressive new foreign policy into practice following the September 11 attacks. The current prejudice about Islam, the historically negation of Western civilization, has helped a lot in getting the people's attention to the aggressive foreign policy to the Bush administration. President Bush has consistently addressed possible threats from the Islamic world and terrorist-supporting states to persuade American public opinion about new foreign policy. Using Bush's "axis of evil" statement to North Korea, Iran and Iraq, Bush stressed that these countries should be punished for their efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction against US security<sup>73</sup>. The Bush administration, which is trying to attract the attention of the American public to the threat created by the axis of evils, has succeeded in getting the American public to acknowledge the necessity and inevitability of fighting terrorism with the support of the media and the army.

In the aftermath of September 11, American foreign policy has entered an aggressive and disseminating direction, and the Israeli lobby in the United States has a great influence. The Israeli lobby, which is the primary goal of securing the security of the Israeli state and protecting its interests, is the most important power behind the

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<sup>71</sup> "The National Security Strategy of The United States of America", September 2002, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf>, p.1-29, Accessed 17 November 2017

<sup>72</sup> Henry Kissinger, "Önleyici Vuruş Stratejisi ve Westfalya'nın Sonu", NPQ, vol.6, no.1, 2004, p.24.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, Amerikan Emperyalizminin Son Baharı, s. 83; Bob Woodward, Saldırı Planı, Melik Pekdemir ve Şefika Kamcez (Çev.), Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınları, 2004, p. 91-93.

US administration's decision to invade Iraq<sup>74</sup>. The Israeli lobby is able to be very influential on American domestic and foreign politics, thanks to its well organized, support of other lobbies and the mobilization of them in their own interests and their wide availability<sup>75</sup>. This effect was expressed in the words of US Secretary of State Colin Powell that after the completion of the invasion of Iraq, he described the operation as "clearing an enemy of Israel from the scene<sup>76</sup>."

The American administration has made the security of the Israeli state safe following the 9/11 attacks, making it a major theme in the foreign policy agenda. Undoubtedly, this has been a major influence on the initiative and effectiveness of the Israeli lobby. Whether Iraq's occupation is perceived as a threat to Iran's US interests in the Middle East is directly related to the security of the Israeli state. The US did not oppose Israel's nuclear power; violent opposition to Iran's ownership is in harmony with American foreign policy, which emphasizes Israel's security.

Following the September 11 attacks, strong interest groups in the United States have controlled US foreign policy to a significant extent, by providing an alliance and using propaganda resources successfully. This control caused the US, which is said to have a democratic system, to become a country with an increasingly cartelized system. The growing influence of narrow interest groups on national policy by forming a coalition for their mutually agreed aims has been one of the main reasons for American foreign policy to be more aggressive and spreading after the September 11 attacks.

### **3.2. New Hopes Come With Change**

After the September 11 incidents in G. W. Bush's period, after the turmoil in the Middle East, criticism in both the public and the international arena was not a benefit for America, so America had to pursue a more passive policy and provide a peaceful environment. The main reason for the election of President Obama in the presidential election in 2009 is because he is expected to follow a more peaceful and

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<sup>74</sup>Muhittin Ataman, "Değerler ve Çıkarlar", p. 413.

<sup>75</sup> Tayyar Arı, Amerika'da Siyasal Yapı, Lobiler ve Dış Politika: Türk, Yunan, Ermeni, İsrail ve Arap Lobilerinin ABD'nin Dış Politikasına Etkileri, İstanbul: Alfa Basın Yayın Dağıtım, 2000, p. 239–250

<sup>76</sup> Ataman, "Değerler ve Çıkarlar", p. 414.

passive foreign policy. After 2009, in his 'The Change' campaign President Obama, 44th President of the United States, criticized during the G. W. Bush and promised not to make same mistakes that he made in his foreign policies. But it was unlikely that Obama would pursue his foreign policies during his first four-year presidency. It is true that this is also the main problem of American presidents. In the first years of the new presidency, it is necessary to correct what the former president did wrong. The presidents can only find opportunity to implement their policies freely if they succeed to be elected for another term which seems a viable rule for the American politics.

In this context, Obama needed to deal with many problems in the first period. After 9/11, American President Bush had to stabilize and stabilize the Middle East's chaos. In spite of Bush, who created many problems such as extreme hard power use, politics to protect Israel, Obama's individual identity positively influenced America's image in the Middle East. His respect against Muslim values and spending his early childhood in a Muslim family created hope for the Muslims of the Middle East. Obama was obliged to answer the rising hopes among the people of Middle East and at the same time he has to meet the curiosity of the Middle Eastern leaders about his policy toward Israel. Besides those political problems Obama was about to hit by an economic and financial tsunami when he took the office at the beginning of 2009. Not only the United States but the whole world was shocked by so called mortgage crisis was a main challenge he inherited from the Bush administration.

### **3.3. Middle East Policies**

The United States suffered a great shock with international terrorism on September 11, 2001. Barack Obama's analysis of this incident was the American image that lost its reputation at the international scene. The unilateral political attitude of the Bush administration after September 11 caused the US support to fall. Anti-Americanism has risen, especially in the Middle East, while reducing European support. Barack Obama had to follow a public diplomacy using his soft power elements effectively to correct the foreign policy in order to regain the distorted American image and regain its reputation among the anti-American societies,

especially those in the Middle East. Obama views Middle East as a marsh needed to be stay away. Because of this, Obama had to determine the politics of the Middle East very carefully. Obama had to enter the Middle East via Turkey. The history of US – Turkey relations reveals that both countries have the ability to follow parallel foreign policy towards the Middle East and Turkey can be a close ally of the US to pursue those policy aims.

### **3.3.1 Meeting with Turkey and Egypt**

As mentioned earlier, when Obama came to the presidency, he had to make a lot of effort to correct the Middle East wreck that he had taken over from the Bush administration. So Obama made his first overseas official visit to Turkey in order to give the message that his policies are quite different from G. W. Bush's policies. Democrat President Bill Clinton was the first US president to speak at the Turkish Parliament in 1999 after the devastating earthquake. Obama became the second US President to make such a Grand National Assembly speech. Obama touched upon subjects which affects Turkey and the Middle East and tried to show that the US was sharing the foreign policy objects with the countries in the region. Those objects and policies became the guidelines of the US foreign policy strategy during the Obama presidency<sup>77</sup>.

In his speech on 6 April 2009 in Parliament Obama stated that countries should work together for justice, security and peace and that no country alone will be able to resist the problems and threats. Hence Obama asked Turkey to act together with the US not only in the critical region but in other parts of the world for common goals. He stated that establishing a sustainable peace between Israel and Arab countries is one of his priorities. In addition, Obama has stressed on the nuclear weapons possessed by Iran and claimed that Iranian policy would not bring benefit to anyone but is posing a clear threat to regional countries, including Turkey and even to the US presence in the

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<sup>77</sup>Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Obama Approach to the Middle East: The End of America's Moment", *International Affairs*, 2013, p.303.

region. He pointed out that Iranian threatened to be addressed in collaboration with the United States and the regional countries.

At this point Obama mentioned that Iran has to put an end to its nuclear activities and it is better for the Iranian government to establish a good future for its people, and that a similar situation applies to Iraq. Obama claimed that he wants a secure and united Iraq. The security of Iraq is not only important for the US but also all Middle Eastern countries to which al-Qaeda and PKK terrorist activities pose an important threat. In his speech Obama pointed out that Iraq's fragmentation or destruction will not be tolerated by the US and NATO and promised Turkey to pledge support against the terrorist activities of all kinds.

The Obama administration should restore and improve Islamic World's confidence in America which was lost because of the policies of the Bush era. Obama pointed out that the United States has never been in war with Islam and he is coming from a Muslim family. He offers partnership and cooperation in all aspects including the increase of the world's wealth level. The American abstraction that extended these calls and friendship was by constructing the American image that was damaged during the W. Bush era. He advocated the need to shape the future by producing an alternative, by working together with the political approaches called soft power. He summarized his approach by the analogy used in the region, if there is a fire do not go into the fire with bellows.

### **3.3.2. Speech at Cairo**

Following Turkey President Obama's visit to Cairo and made a speech in Cairo University in June 2009 in which he tried to make more explicit his foreign policy.<sup>78</sup> He declared that made at the university. Obama declared that his presidency in Cairo coincided with a tense time between the US and the Muslims. He defended that tension was not rooted in politics but historical. That approach was an attempt to declare that he would continue his soft power policy without blaming previous administration

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<sup>78</sup> New York Times, Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo, 4 June 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>, Accessed 24 May 2018

namely George W. Bush era. Obama claimed that historical events such as the Cold War had threatened Muslims, and that modernization and globalization cause the West to be seen as an enemy to the Islamic tradition. Starting from this point, he defended that a small extreme Muslim group caused the September 11 incidents and led a hostile perception of Islam in America and the West. Obama underlined that he came to make a new start in Cairo based on the fact that America and Islam depend on overlapping common principles such as collective respect and will to live together. He said that the change would not occur in a day, but that he had to open a new page on both sides to make progress and leave behind the past.

In his speech Obama claimed that America and American people like himself were together with Islam throughout the history and he emphasized the importance of acting together. Recalling the speech of Ankara, he declared that the US is not they were not fighting with Islam but they underlined that they should protect the American people against terrorist groups. He expressed that the US military forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan are a necessary policy to be kept since the region is vulnerable to potential terrorist activities. He said that these extreme people killed and harmed Muslims and that terrorism is a common problem. He explained that Iraq is in a similar situation, that the Iraqi people did not need Saddam Hussein, and that they showed their efforts to reach their sovereignty. Similarly, American troops would be withdrawn from this country in a short time.

Referring to the Israeli-Palestinian tension in the Arab world, Obama emphasized that the US's cultural and historical ties with Israel will never be broken, but that the Palestinian situation will not be accepted and will not turn its back to the Palestinian state which is in preparation on the legitimate ground. He pointed out that Hamas should play an active role in the peace process, Arab countries should end their tensions with Israel and help Palestine-Israel consequently the United States would support the peace process.

One of America's biggest problems in the Middle East is nuclear weapons that Iran possesses. Obama has argued that countries should use political approach to solve their problems instead of using hard power, referring to the fact that nuclear arming would become a race if the neighboring countries feel threatened. Apart from these,

Obama pointed out that his problems with Iran were based on the Cold War period and he mentioned that country has been hostile to his country since the Islamic Revolution. He said that the years of problems could not be easily resolved but that he would like to solve this problem and secure the peaceful use of nuclear power as agreed with other countries.

When both Obama's Cairo speech and his speech in Turkey are examined it would be clear that Obama never reflected a negative thought or hostility against the Islamic world. In his first interview with Al-Arabiya television when he started this message, he explained that his family lived in a Muslim country and that despite his being a Christian, his family members were mostly Muslims. These expressions clearly influenced the Islamic world<sup>79</sup>. He stressed that the general framework of his policies for the Middle East would be different that the politics of Bush as liberation and democratization and concentrated on economies and development.

### **3.3.3. Iraq**

We can even today see the consequences of the wrong policies that America has followed during the previous occupation of Iraq. The protection of so-called regional balances and the policies of promoting democracy in the Middle East US have actually upset the regional balances and dragged the region into instability. Apart from these, in the process of the withdrawal from Iraq the US handover the power to the regional forces the region has been dragged into an atmosphere of conflict and the formation of new terrorist organizations such as ISIS.

Obama gave a speech on February 27, 2009, titled "Responsibilities of the Finishing of the Iraq War." He said that Iraq should now have a new formation

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<sup>79</sup>SamSteln, Obama on Al-Arabiya: First Formal Interview as president with Arab TV network, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/26/al-arabiya-obama-does-fir\\_n\\_161087.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/26/al-arabiya-obama-does-fir_n_161087.html), Accessed 25 April 2018).

supported by local forces<sup>80</sup>. And in the time of presidential elections, Obama's first target, the Iraqi withdrawal plan, could take place in three stages.

1. The beginning of withdrawing of the combat troops from Iraq: On December 15, 2011, American troops lowered the American flag in Baghdad and achieved the first phase of Obama's withdrawal plan. But some of the soldiers had to be pulled out of Kuwait. Thus, the cost of withdrawal would be reduced<sup>81</sup>.
2. After Saddam Hussein, an atmosphere of sectarian conflict has been created by increasing political activities in Iraq. The fact that the Shiite leader, Maliki, became president and this caused a larger chaotic environment. The corruption caused by Maliki, the exclusion of the Sunnis, the relations with the Kurds led to the increase of security problems and the emergence of terrorist organizations which constituted a bigger problem. With this emerging situation, we can say that the second stage of Obama's withdrawal plan is not successful<sup>82</sup>.
3. In the third phase, which aimed to support Iraq policy with policies in the Middle East, Obama was worried that Shiite groups like Muqtada al-Sadr and Al-hekim in Iraq approached Iran. Regarding Iraq's stability, Obama, was uncomfortable about the lack of support of the countries in the region, entered into the process of rapprochement with Iran in the second period of his presidency considering his interests. He had to involve Iraq in this process as well. With the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iran has taken an enemy out of the way. The Iraqi government formed in the new era after Saddam is strategically positive for Iranian because they are the Shiite Muslims who are connected with Iran. Iran has supported Prime Minister Nuri El Maliki<sup>83</sup>, who is a Shiite Muslim. Maliki has supported Iran's regional goals,

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<sup>80</sup> Remarks of President Barack Obama: "Responsibility Ending the War in Iraq", The White House. SpeechesRemarks, 2009. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-ndash-responsibly-ending-war-iraq>, (erişim tarihi:18.01.2016).

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Logan, Reuters, "Last U.S. troops leave Iraq, ending war", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-withdrawal-idUSTRE7BH03320111218>, Accessed 3 June 2018.

<sup>82</sup> Erkmen. a.g.m. s.15.

<sup>83</sup> Kenneth Katzman and Carla E. Humud, "Iraq: Politics and Governance" CRS Report RS21968, 244

for example opening Iraqi airspace to Iran to support the Assad regime. Iran has helped the Baghdad government against the Islamic State Organization threatening the Iraqi government. Although Iranian policies support America's contribution to the Iraqi government, in many respects America is having difficulty in developing policies in Iraq because of Iran<sup>84</sup>.

Obama wants to prevent Iraq to be a base al-Qaeda-like terrorist organizations from becoming a safe haven for pro Iran organizations. But the situation in Iraq is rather complicated. Shiites and Kurds do not want a new Sunni dictator, Sunnis and Shi do not want an independent Kurdish state, Kurds and Sunnies do not want Shi'ite Islamic state. US policy has been based on explaining why these three groups cannot reach their ultimate goals. Accordingly, it has been the political goal of the United States to express the three groups that they could not reach their goals.<sup>85</sup> Obama has supported the establishment of a coalition government and prevented the groups opposing his idea because he knows the importance of the coalition government in Iraq for his purpose. In addition, Obama kept the promise of withdrawing the American army, which he has always been talking about during the presidential election. He withdrew his forces according to a specific plan from Iraq until December 2011<sup>86</sup>. But the withdrawal of American troops has brought some problems together. At the beginning of this comes Iran. The fact that Iran is more important than Baghdad, Beirut or Damascus reveals that Iran is a serious factor to be interested in. Moreover, the capture of Baghdad is very important for terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, because Baghdad, an important city for Islam once the caliph lives, is an ideologically key city. Apart from that, Iraq was very important to establish an army to protect the country and oil reserves. After the withdrawal of the American army, securing the area was very important. Finally, Arab-Israeli peace talks will be another issue to be influenced after the withdrawal of the American army.

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<sup>84</sup> MohammedNuruzzaman, "PresidentObama'sMiddle East Policy", 2009-2013", InsightTurkey, 2015, s.171-186.

<sup>85</sup> HarveySicherman , "New PoliciesandOldRealities in theMiddle East" ForeignPolicyResearchInstitute, s.390.

<sup>86</sup> Sicherman, a.g.m. s.394.

### 3.3.3. Afghanistan

The US has been shaken materially and spiritually after the September 11th terrorist attack. Al-Qaeda, which has been determined to perform this attack and deployed from central Afghanistan, has been targeted by the United States. With the decision of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the coalition forces intervened in Afghanistan under the leadership of the United States and set up a temporary Afghan administration in Kabul by removing the Taliban who ruled Afghanistan<sup>87</sup>. In 2002, the UNGK supported the International Support Force (ISAF) and undertook to provide security in Afghanistan. ISAF later has undertaken the restructuring process of the country. In order to combat terrorism, it is planned that the Taliban will be deactivated by UNGK by establishing "Operation Enduring Freedom" - Operation of Providing Freedom and controlling Afghanistan. The responsibility in Afghanistan was later transferred to NATO.

The US followed the policies that started in the time of George W. Bush as to take NATO and neutralize the Taliban, continuously and did not hesitate to use military force if he feels necessary. However after a long time since the US invaded Afghanistan, Al Qaeda and the Taliban threats were not disappeared and on the contrary they became active not only in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan. This has become an urgent issue for the US and NATO. When Obama came to power, he announced the highly anticipated strategy of Afpak Strategy at West Point Military Academy on 1 December 2009. Obama's key aspects of new strategy was as follows<sup>88</sup>.

Instead of bringing democracy to Afghanistan Obama with his strategy Afpak, he targeted to rebuild the Afghanistan state<sup>89</sup>. The establishment of Afghan security, defense and interior ministries to combat terrorism has given priority to strengthening the Afghan government. It also aimed ensuring greater involvement of the international community and regional actors in Afghanistan. In his new strategy,

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<sup>87</sup>Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi Uluslararası Güvenlik ve Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, ABD'nin Irak'tan Çekilme Süreci Ve Bölge Dinamikleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi, BUSAM, İstanbul 2009, <http://content.bahcesehir.edu.tr/public/files/files/1.pdf>, Accessed 25 April 2018

<sup>88</sup>Mark Lander, The Afghan War and the Evolution of Obama, 1 January 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/world/asia/obama-afghanistan-war.html>, Accessed 16 May 2018

<sup>89</sup>Wahabuddin Ra'ees, Obama's Afghanistan Strategy: A Policy of Balancing the Reality p.89

Obama added support for issues such as corruption, agriculture and education, as well as issues related to the elimination of the needs of the people, and said that he needed to establish a partnership with Pakistan which became one of the important points he added to his policies<sup>90</sup>.

Obama has convinced the international public by developing this new strategy. According to the strategy, the number of troops in Afghanistan will be increased from 110 thousand to 150 thousand and more effective fighting with the Taliban will be weakened by more effective fighting and during this process Afghanistan Security Forces will be strengthened and there will be no problem in the withdrawal of allies. Allied forces will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2011 and early 2012 in the framework of this plan. This plan, which was deemed appropriate in theory, was not successful in practice, and this strategy, revised a few times, failed to reach the target, and Obama first extended the withdrawal plan to 2014, and then this date was further advanced<sup>91</sup>. Despite America's inability to withdraw from Afghanistan on the international platform, it did not leave Afghanistan because the intention of occupation is the neutralization of the al-Qaeda structure and capturing its leader Osama bin Laden<sup>92</sup>.

Both developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan were mutually affect both countries, so the hiding of al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan can be seen as a natural consequence. America has struggled to capture Bin Laden for ten years for preserving its reputation both in its own people and in international fora. Bin Laden was the target because he was the founder of the Al Qaida and his terrorist activities against the US<sup>93</sup>. The CIA has taken Bin Laden's follow-up in Abodabad in Pakistan for months. Since August 2010, local press in Pakistan has been followed up. The habits and daily activities of the people in Bin Laden's house were observed. Usame Bin Laden was

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<sup>90</sup>Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, New York, 2010, p.355

<sup>91</sup>Ibid, p.355.

<sup>92</sup> Maththew Rosenberg and Micheal D. Shear, "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay in Afghanistan to 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html>, Accessed 5 June 2018

<sup>93</sup>Hasan Yalçın, "Obama Stratejisi ve Ortadoğu", *Akademik Ortadoğu*, vol.9, no.2, 2015, p.59.

killed by the operation with US government special forces gathering enough information on 1-2 May 2012 with helicopters<sup>94</sup>.

The United States, acting in concert with Pakistan in fighting terrorism, has not shared any information about Bin Laden operation with Pakistani government. This sparked a wide protest against the US. The US explained this situation with its fear of leaking any information which may put the operation in danger. America says that it does not share the operation with Pakistan because of her ethnic background, popularity of Taliban ideology and social education factors of the society.

Pakistani intelligence is based on the schema of a Muslim country's intelligence organization. Namely Iranian Intelligence Organization. Similarly, Pakistan and Afghanistan supported Muslim groups in the Soviet Union resistance and based this support on jihad. Pakistani intelligence has been one of the reasons to worry about America because of its close contact with Iran and Afghanistan groups. Having an inadequate educational system, Pakistan has not been able to prevent the increase in the number of madrasa who have a fundamentalist tendency and are prone to violence. The critical point in the Pakistani state of madrasa graduates has ensured the continuation of security and stability problems in the country. It is known that the US felt more secure by the death of Osama bin Laden for three reasons:

1. Impact on US enemies; Operation Abbottabad has signaled to the opponents of the United States that there are no hiding places for them and will eventually lose their lives. Studies conducted by the US on drones (airplanes without pilots) revealed that on the Afghanistan / Pakistan border they have prevented many al-Qaeda operations. The death of Usame Bin Laden is the turning of these accumulations into punishment. The Abbottabad operation has shown that despite enemy resources, abilities, or security measures, the enemy of the United States will be followed and the end of the enemy will be inevitable. Computer hard drives captured in Abbottabad operation reveal plans for Al Qaeda. Though the contents of these captured computers were kept quite

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<sup>94</sup>International Business Times, Osama bin Laden trivia: CivilEngineer, AffluentConstruction MagnateandBomber, 5 May 2011, <http://www.ibtimes.com/osama-bin-laden-trivia-civil-engineer-affluent-construction-magnate-bomber-282133>, Accessed 25 April 2018

secret, Bin Laden's involvement in al-Qaeda operations was recognized more than ever, and plans for attack similar to September 11<sup>th</sup> on Obama and CIA president David Petraeus and American trains were seized<sup>95</sup>. These attacks are a threat to the US nation and important information about Al Qaeda has been seized. Operation Abbottabad has given the terrorists and supporting countries the message that those who threaten US security are not safe.

2. Impact on relations with Pakistan; Operation Abbottabad was appreciated by Pakistan. Usame Bin Laden's presence in Pakistan was under the control of some Pakistani Security Forces, and if Usame Bin Laden was in Pakistan, a Taliban or Jihad-based administration could have occurred.
3. The younger generation, especially Muslims and Arabs, which the Bin Laden ideology might affect; that bin Laden's support to his calls in Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions will not be underestimated. With the operation, Usame Bin Laden was seen as a person who knelt in front of a master enemy, not a martyr in the eyes of these people. The anti-American jihadist was described by journalist Christopher Hitchens as "a sick patient of a collapsed regime".

#### **3.3.4. Libya Crisis**

Libyan leader Muammer Al Gaddafi came to power with a coup in 1969 and ruled Libya for 42 years. The inability to distribute the income from the natural resources of Libya to the people and the prohibition of the political parties led to the rebellion of the Libyan people after Egypt and Tunisia (the succession of the Arab Spring). But as a result of these rebellions, one country was intervened while others were remained indifferent. The opposition rebellions that started in Libya succeeded against Gaddafi and managed to control many regions. A large part of the Libyan armed forces continued to support Gaddafi, while some of them went to the opposition. But later on, the Gaddafi forces exerted their control over the regions where the

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<sup>95</sup>NicholasSchmidle, "Getting Bin Laden", The New Yorker, August 8, 2011, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/08/08/110808fa\\_fact\\_schmidle](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/08/08/110808fa_fact_schmidle), Accessed 25 April 2018

opponents gained. However, due to the large number of people lost in this process, the UNSC decided to take action and take measures in Libya.

Gaddafi continued his rule by interfering with Libya's power balances and social-religious structure for 42 years through the Jamahiriya system, the "state of masses"<sup>96</sup>. Although the Jamahiriya system is the system that the people have power, it was a system in which the people wanted by Gaddafi were brought to the key points. In this system, which is a mixture of socialism, Arab nationalism and Islam, the people are designed to direct themselves without the need for political parties<sup>97</sup>. Gaddafi has suppressed opposition against himself with manipulative movements of local governments and tribes. Libya can be considered as a structuring based on elites, tribes, dissidents and armed forces in government. Gaddafi state structure suddenly does not appear in the foreground, "Brother Leader" has taken place in the capacity. Gaddafi, who does not take an official duty and introduces himself as a revolutionary or a guide, wanted to collect the perception that he is different from the kingdom or totalitarian regimes.<sup>98</sup>

Gaddafi preferred to follow a flexible policy that would adapt to changing conditions while acting on certain principles. This is followed by an opportunistic foreign policy under the protection of the interests of the country. While Gaddafi control Libya, he put forward Arabic Nationalism and his views against imperialism, he tried to put Libya at the center of Arab culture and used this argument to establish Arab Unity and linked all his arguments with Islam. Gaddafi's description of Arab nationalism and Islam as meat and nail depends on his Jihad understanding. Because capitalism, communism and imperialism was seen as thoughts against social justice understanding in Arab society<sup>99</sup>. Gaddafi by supporting many groups and movements for Jihad against imperialism, became one of the major rivals of Israel and America. He has also made initiatives to set up the Arab Unity with Algeria, Morocco, Egypt,

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<sup>96</sup>“Ülke Rehberi: Libya”, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/ozeldosyalar/2011/02/110224\\_libya\\_rehber](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/ozeldosyalar/2011/02/110224_libya_rehber), Accessed 25 April 2018

<sup>97</sup> Dirk J. Vandewalle, *Libya Since Independence: Oil And State Building*, Cornell University Press, 1998, p.77

<sup>98</sup> Phillip C. Naylor, “North Africa: A History from Antiquity to Present” ,Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005 p.206

<sup>99</sup> St. John Ronal Bruce, “Redefining the Libyan revolution: the changing ideology of Muammer Al-addafi” , *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2008, p.91–106.

Tunisia, and Syria. He has also established the Islamic Invitation Society (Jam`iyat ad-Da`wa Al-Islamiya) against Christian missionary activities in Africa. Despite his efforts the Arab Unity idea lost its enthusiasm in the 1970s and this caused a reduction of the importance of Libya in both the Middle East and Africa.

The uprisings that started with the burning of a mobile dealer himself in Tunisia (the beginning of the Arab Spring) and then the demonstrations in Tahir Square in Egypt caused withdrawal of the presidents in those countries. However, the uprising in Libya was tried to press by the pressure of the Gaddafi regime. The oppression of the Gaddafi regime. This could only be stopped by "United Protective Operation" of NATO<sup>100101</sup>. While the international public was turning their attention to Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab Spring, the prospect of the events in Libya was not understood, but the military aggression of Gaddafi on the people was noticed in time.

Many people believe that Obama wants to use soft power instead of hard power and his intention to solve the problems by reaching mutual agreements with the countries. Obama's attitude was showing his tendency to apply relatively passive policies to solve international crisis but the international public was wondering how he would react in Libya crisis. Obama was not the person who initiated the wave of change in the Middle East but he was trying to take a position consistent with the wave and shape it. Having a controlled transition in the region, Obama has struggled to stand out in the Libyan crisis. The American President's cautious approach to Libya stemmed from the fact that the power, intention and inner harmony of the opposition in Libya was unclear, among other things, from his own character, increasing economic problems in his country due to bitter experience that Iraq and Afghanistan had experienced. Obama administration would like to stay away from new military adventures unless it is very necessary.

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<sup>100</sup>The Guardian, "Libya Resolution: UN security council air strikes vote – as it happened, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/17/libya-united-nations-air-strikes-live>, Accessed 5 June 2018.

<sup>101</sup>DuncanRobinson, "Libya: A BloodstainedHistory", New Statesman, 28 Mar 2011, <http://www.newstatesman.com/africa/2011/03/libya-control-tripoli-arab>, Accessed 25 April 2018

The fact that international forces like the United Nations emphasized that Libya should be intervened insistently also attracted attention in the world public opinion. Similar rebellions are taking place in Bahrain and Yemen in 2011, while civilians continue to die. However, it seems that no intervention has taken place for these countries. When examining the causes, it can be said that the western uses the discourses such as democracy and human rights as a means to defend their interests of the region<sup>102</sup>. It is normally acceptable that the United States has chosen to have limited support in Libya due to the difficulties experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq. From 19 March 2011, Obama and his staff decided to intervene in Libya<sup>103</sup>. But because of the situation in the country they preferred to wait for a convenient time.

The conflicts have not ceased in Libya and the United Nations have made alternative decisions. Alternative options from a military operation to the declaration of a restricted area to the flight and the arming of the rebels were put on the table. It has been decided that the United Nations should prevent the sale and supply of weapons and military ammunition to Libya or to sell weapons and take all the necessary measures against the sale or supply of weapons and military ammunition. Obama was been cautious about the French and British proposal to build a forbidden flight zone and has chosen to stay on the backstage by stating that such an attempt would involve military action. However the discourse of "humanitarian intervention" caused Obama's decision to change and led to a green light to US military operation. As a result, after Gaddafi intensified his air strikes against the opposition in Benghazi, many countries, especially France and USA, acted by using military force. On March 19, 2011 some of the coalition forces' war planes in Libya began bombing. Mutual conflicts continued until August. But neither NATO nor the opposition nor the Gaddafi forces received a meaningful result. The first successes against the powerless Gaddafi forces came in the city of Zaviyaby the opponents with the support of NATO. Shortly after, Tripoli was lost by the regime. Later on in Zintan, the opposition seized strategic

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<sup>102</sup> Mehmet Emin Babacan, İrfan Haşlak ve İsmail Hira. "Sosyal Medya ve Arap Baharı", Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, vol.6,no.2, 2011, p.

<sup>103</sup>FawazGerges, *Yeni Ortadoğu Arap Dünyasında Protesto ve Devrim*, Matbuat Yayın, 2014, p.366

territories, which led to the intermission of the Gadhafi regime's relations with the West and Southern provinces<sup>104</sup>.

### 3.4. Unexpected Arab Spring

The revolutions that started in Tunisia on 18 December 2010 affecting most of the Middle Eastern Arab countries, especially Egypt, Libya, Syria, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and Lebanon, have been referred to as Arab Spring in International Relations literature<sup>105</sup>. These upheavals to overthrow existing regimes have caused a new era in the Middle East. When we look at Arab history, it is not seen that there is a very strong new common consciousness among the Arab countries in the nearest century until the Arab Spring.

This new consciousness formed in the region has become a real transformative effect in these countries. The masses, who seek their reputation, dignity and freedom, devote their protest from country to country and cause them to overthrow long-term authoritarian regimes or counter-revolution to weaken this transforming power of the Arab Spring. Unlike Bush, the US stance during the Arab Spring was aimed at solving the problems with the help of international organizations such as UN and NATO, if not possible through diplomatic means, without military intervention, especially in the Obama Period. Before going into the examine Obama policies during the Arab Spring it would be useful to explore how the spring spread quickly among Arab countries.

There is no single reason for explaining these social explosions that are deeply affecting the political system in the Middle East. There are many political, technological, sociological and economic factors behind the uprisings. Freedom, bread and social justice, a slogan constantly used by protesters during the uprising, reveal the economic and political factors behind rebellions. Al-Karama (honor and pride), another most widely used slogan, clearly expresses the poverty suffered by many

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<sup>104</sup>Akademik Perspektif, İnsani Müdahale Kavramı ve Libya Operasyonu'nun Meşruiyeti Tartışması, 7 February 2012, <http://akademikperspektif.com/2012/02/07/insani-mudahale-kavrami-ve-libya-operasyonunun-mesruiyeti-tartismasi/>, Accessed 27 March 2018

<sup>105</sup>Amar Paul, Vijay Prashad, *Arap baharından Kesitler*, İntifada Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, s.11.

<sup>103</sup> Mehmet Ali Göngem, "Arap Bahararı Karşısında ABD'nin Tutumu", Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 2014, p.2

people from social and economic rights. This is why Tunisians, Egyptians, Libyans, Yemenis, Bahrain's and Syrians especially young people have risen up to improve their living conditions and economic situations.

How did the Arab society come together against these injustices, and how the rebellion expanded so much and affected the Arab geography so widely? Technology has enabled individuals to conceal their identities and reach the conclusion in electronic form. Media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Myspace, LinkedIn, Flickr, Instagram, Blogger, forums were virtual worlds where Elvis, CNN TV channels and mobile phones were freely defended by Sky people. Here the individuals were able to come together and exchange ideas with their own thoughts, with their associates and the community's united parts for the same purpose. It spread not only in the country but also in neighboring countries, neighboring countries, places in the same continent, and even all over the world. This is a more effective weapon than a very strong army. In a very short period of time Zeynel Abidin Bin Ali in Tunisia, Husnu Mubarak in Egypt and Muammer Gaddafi in Libya have been forced to withdraw from the administration<sup>106</sup> through that new force.

Obama had a good sense of public well-being as the election campaign began with a renewed-image of the US. President Obama, who has received peaceful support from the people, has sought to avoid the use of military force in foreign policy. Obama, who knows the material and spiritual costs of Vietnam, Iraq wars, legitimizes the use of military power by acting with other countries and legitimizing these movements with UN-like multinational forces.

The Arab Spring, which lived in the Middle East, allowed Obama to take a political stance on this model (to take the modified shaping support of the international community). This approach has produced different results in different countries. The Obama administration instead of a direct intervention in the events in Libya, NATO countries (Britain, France, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey) constructed with air and offshore military operations, has left the land battle to the rebels. Instead of interfering within Libya's domestic affairs, Obama has moved

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<sup>106</sup>Selcen K k ve Mehmet Tekerek, Sokak Siyasetinden Sosyal Ađlara Yeni Aktivizm: Arap Baharı Deneyimi", II. B lgesel Sorunlar ve T rkiye Sempozyumu, 2012. p.59-65.

international organizations such as the UN and NATO into action. He let France to become a leader and preferred to stay at the back stage<sup>107</sup>.

Despite the fact that the situation in Egypt did not improve as Obama wanted, the United States is not yet an interventionist. Muslim Brotherhood leader Mursi opened the human Gaza Strip corridor, supported negotiations between Hamas and Fatah, and improved relations with the West. In November 2012, Mursi supported Palestinians against Israel's assault and he was toppled by a military coup d'état due to its Islamic identity. Obama has adopted military intervention in Egypt for preventing chaos and violence<sup>108</sup>.

While Arab Spring led to the overthrow of the leaders of many countries, chaos continued in Syria. Syria, located in a very special position in the Arab Spring. It is a country with good bilateral relations with Iran, which took part in the USSR block during the Cold War period. Syria was trying to support Hamas and Hezbollah, who were fighting with Israel.

It is governed by an ethnic structure by Baath regime... In the country where Russian military bases are located, Obama defended the development of regional initiatives and emphasized diplomatic efforts to solve the problem. When the problems in this country turned in unsolvable character Obama stepped back in 2012 and withdrew his diplomats from this country and expressed that Assad should go from the administration. Obama left the option of direct intervention on the agenda of the UN but did reject Russia and China to intervene in Syria<sup>109</sup>. Obama has tried to produce activating diplomatic solutions through the Arab League, the Islamic Conference Organization, countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Sectarian and ethnic divisions in Syria, jihadist organizations (ISIS, El-Nusra), the vetoes of Russia and China of the sanctions against Syria, regional balances led to

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<sup>107</sup>Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Obama Approach To The Middle East: The End of America's Moment*, International Affairs, 2013, p.303.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid, p.207.

<sup>109</sup> Birol Akgün, "ABD'nin Suriye Politikası, Suriye Krizinde Bölgesel ve Küresel Aktörler Perspektifleri", *Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri, Stratejik Düşünceler Enstitüsü*, 2012, p.14.

Obama's preference to stand back in Syria. But President Obama has said for Syria that he will lead an international coalition for the security of the people of the region<sup>110</sup>.

In summary, Obama preferred not to be active during the change in the Middle East namely Arab Spring period. In May 2011, when the movements came out unstoppable, he stated that he would set a direction in the direction of "the voice of the people" and stated that he would not take a leading role. This policy of backward stance (which led to the loss of power in the Middle East, not only of the unspoiled consequences of the Arab Spring, but also to a certain extent that the unipolarity that emerged after the Cold War period came to an end) is continuing in the countries like Yemen and Bahrain. In situations where it would be dangerous, he preferred putting allies in the region into action to terminate the anti-governmental movements even by blood.

Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq and Morocco events emerged and spread in a very quick period of time which do not leave enough time for Obama to position himself adequately. However, he was severely criticized for policy failure to develop to the ongoing crisis in Syria started in 2011. Because during the time lost the dynamics of the region have changed, and the emergence of terrorist organizations like ISID became possible. It can be said that Obama's efforts to change America's image and his tendency to implement soft policy weakened its hegemony in the Middle East. One of the reasons of this the emergence of the Russian factor under Putin's regime. The next chapter is devoted to Obama's losses and these factors will be touched upon in detail.

### **3.4.1. Crisis in Syria**

It was thought that bilateral relations between the US and Syria could be resumed when President Obama came to power Syria which facing US increasing economic sanctions since the President W. Bush categorized that country as a member

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<sup>110</sup>Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Obama Approach To The Middle East: The End of America's Moment*, International Affairs, 2013, p.307.

of Evil Axis<sup>111</sup>. The words of the mediation initiative to increase peace and stability in the Middle East, which Obama stated in his election campaigns, were considered an opportunity for Assad. Obama's first year with the unexpected talks between Israel and Syria via Turkey began. Earlier, talks with Israel on disarmament of Golan Hills and water problems resumed because Assad was oil-free and needed Iran. Obama planned to release Syria from Iran by giving American support to the Syrian regime after he took care of the problem of the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria<sup>112</sup>.

The US thought that President Bashar al-Assad had to be withdrawn from the administration for a political solution in Syria. But Iran wanted its nearest Arab ally to remain under the rule of Assad. Iran has been sending the weapons to Hezbollah through Syria. Hezbollah's is an organization that Iran and the Syrian administrations use against Israel for their terrorist activities and regional purposes. Therefore, Syria's support of Hezbollah may seem quite normal. Otherwise, the administration of the Republic will be in danger. Iran states that Assad is the last front to be used against the Islamic State. American sources reported that Iran provided finance and arms to the Syrian regime and also fund Hezbollah and non-Syrian Shia fighters<sup>113</sup>. At the same time, some experts also state that Iran does not want Assad to overthrow Maliki in Iraq. However, with the demolition of Bin Ali in Tunisia, the protests against the Assad administration started in Syria. In January 2011, demonstrations of dissatisfaction with the Ba'ath regime, which manifested itself in the form of self-burning acts, began to take place in the squares of Syria<sup>114</sup>. Similar revolts against the Ba'th regime in Syria were first seen in world politics as a rebellion against the authoritarian regimes in Tunis and Egypt. However, these revolts led to a further deconstruction of the religious groups in the Syrian society and the gradual militarization of the conflicts evolved into a civil war grouped as pro-government or anti-government. Obama administration evaluated those rebellions in Syria as an extension of Arab Spring. He maintained his general attitude against Syria and remained his distance to the conflicting groups and

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<sup>111</sup> <http://politikaakademisi.org/2012/10/16/abdnin-suriye-politikasini-anlamak/> 2.05.2018

<sup>112</sup> Ibidp.394.

<sup>113</sup> WillFulton, Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyer, "IranianStrategy in Syria," InstitutefortheStudy of War, May 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Amar, a.g.m, s.279.

refrained to intervene the turmoil in the country as he learned from harsh lessons of the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The greatest development in the Obama period was the Arab Spring. The administration has not been able to follow a specific policy because of the unprepared capture of the Arab Spring. Tunisian, Egyptian, and Libyan revolts in which the leaders were thrown have also caused Obama to remain distant and cautious in Syria. However, due to the increasing news of the deaths of the civilians in the region led wide reactions in the international public and Obama made a statement in August 2011 that Assad should resign<sup>115</sup>.

Apart from that, America preferred only providing logistical support to the opposing forces in the conflict in the region. In the Middle East at every opportunity Obama left the solution to local forces and preferred to train them instead of direct military intervention in the conflict. Obama, Syria crisis in search of solution to Syria crisis, led the international organizations such as the UN and Arab League take the initiative and encourage them to engage in finding solutions in the Middle Eastern conflicts. It has been said that the unstable and conflicting atmosphere in Syria will never end and the withdrawal of the American army from the region will affect the situation negatively. In particular, if Obama's second term needs to be addressed briefly, the emergence of forces like ISIS in the region which has brought Obama's Syrian policy to another dimension should be addressed.

As ISIS began to become a threat to the region, the US government and coalition air forces began to attack the region. For the realization of air strikes Turkey have led coalition forces to use the Incirlik Air Base which eventually led Russia to start operations in Syria. Russia intended to allow Syria to remain alone in this intervention but at the same time Russia tried to defend the strategic city of Lazkiye where the Russian military base is located. By the Russian move into Syria it was the first time since the Cold War that two great super powers have been confronted. Obama administration, however, tried to avoid any crisis with Russia in recent times

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<sup>115</sup> The Guardian, Barack Obama's speech on Middle East – full transcript, 19 May 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/19/barack-obama-speech-middle-east>, Accessed 24 May 2018

because he refrained to take any decision that may leave the USA in a difficult situation in the Middle East during his last term.



## CHAPTER 4

### SECOND TERM IN THE WHITE HOUSE

In this section, the second term of Obama, from 2013 to 2017, will be discussed. As mentioned earlier, in the previous period, we said that American presidents could not implement the politics he wanted exactly in their early years. Presidents who have had a chance to be elected for the second time usually start to apply their policies in this period. Therefore, in this section, Obama's policies in the first period will also be taken into account and the second period will be discussed comparatively.

#### 4.1. Second Chance

In the previous chapter, the four-year presidency of B. Obama, who succeeded in becoming America's first African American president was discussed. One can say that those four years were controversial. Obama followed a diplomatic foreign policy as he promised in his election campaign and tried to renew the image of the America as a peaceful country. Many found him successful in his efforts but some were not satisfied with his performance.

Obama in his first tenure struggled with the restoration of American image and coping with growing economic crisis. The Anti-Muslim attitude which emerged during the Bush era mainly became more visible after September 11, should be erased and proven that America is not hostile to Muslims and other religions. Obama who has to deal with the economic crisis, should decide carefully where to concentrate his attention. One of the difficult tasks to be fulfilled by Obama is the withdrawal of the American soldiers from warzones such as Afghanistan and Middle East. According to his estimates, Obama, who said the soldiers will return in 2010, first delayed it to 2012 and then 2014. Obama, tried to protect American interests in the Middle East which

was seen as a marsh. Another challenge in his first period is the Arab Spring which was a surprise for both Obama and European countries and all the countries and people in the Middle East as well. That event which can be described as an uprising against the oppressive regimes spread all over the Middle East in a very short time and both European countries and America remained distant against the issue at the beginning. The hesitation of Obama or the policies implemented during the Arab Spring such as leaving the issue at the hand of NATO seemed to erase all positive expectations of 2008. The Egyptian activist Wael Eskandar evaluated the Obama policies by saying that "you cannot hold Obama responsible for what happened in Egypt. Egyptians do determine their fate... but Obama has disappointed people more, and that's what his legacy is..."<sup>116</sup> "Can Obama really be a part of the change, or just a word he uses to win the presidency?"

#### **4.1.1. New Page with New Election**

It is true that Obama failed to show a stable and consistent management style in the first four years mainly because of the emergence of unexpected events. But when the calendars showed November 2012, an opportunity emerged since Obama's re-election may affect the foreign policy completely. As noted earlier it was important for the presidents to be elected a second time in order to be able to implement their own policies. The burden of necessity of correcting negative consequences of former President's policies would be left behind and the second term will be an opportunity to follow his own policies. Because of this Obama needed to be elected a second time and open a new page in order to make the change as he promised before. In 2012 presidential elections Obama beat W.M. Romney and re-elected for another four years<sup>117</sup>. Obama was expected to renew his policies with his new term and in his re-

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<sup>116</sup> Kevin Sullivan, Much of the World views Obama Favorably, but the Middle East feels disappointment, 18 November 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/middle-east-relations.html>, Accessed 9 April 2018

<sup>117</sup> CNN Politics, Election 2012: Results, 10 December 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/election/2012/results/main/>, Accessed 9 April 2018

election speech in Chicago, he framed his new policies and evaluated his previous term in general as follows.

In his election speech Obama did not really talk about America's foreign policy, he concentrated mainly on internal politics.<sup>118</sup> We can say that he does not pay attention to foreign politics as long as there are no significant events, but that there is more work to be done in domestic politics. From this point, it should be claimed that observers can easily predict Obama's foreign policy in his second term. However, the Middle East was significantly different than four years ago mainly affected by the Arab Spring which force Obama more pay attention in his steps toward the Middle East.

## **4.2. Second Part in the Middle East**

### **4.2.1. Stable Partner in the Middle East: Egypt**

International relations have also made it more difficult to predict how large the effect would be, if it were a very large and unexpected event known as the Arab Spring. The events that started in Tunisia were followed by other Middle Eastern countries as expected. The events that started at the 2011 Tahir Square led to insurgency in Egypt and triggered political and social events in the country and the beginning of the changes. The over thrown of President Mubarak in January 2011 could be said to be the first impact and continued with the military administration of the Egyptian High Council of the Armed Forces until the end of June 2011. Muhammad Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood became the first democratically elected president of the country after the military administration ended<sup>119</sup>.

The election of Muhammad Morsi as President was seen as an event that would cause the destiny of Egypt to change. For many years Egypt, governed by anti - democracy, chose its president by democracy after many years. Immediately after Morsi came to power, the Islamic sections, who have been oppressed and

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<sup>118</sup> The Guardian, Barack Obama's victory speech – full text, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/07/barack-obama-speech-full-text>, Accessed 11 April 2018

<sup>119</sup> Paul Amar ve Vijad Prshad, *Arap Baharından Kesitler*, İntifada Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, p.50.

excommunicated for years in the country, have begun to find themselves in the political scene. But the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is taking part in the Egyptian administration has begun to annoy both national and international actors. The bureaucracy, the judiciary, the media and the business world actors in the possession of all privileges of the Mubarak era have experienced the fear of losing their privilege by coming to power in Islamic politics. In the Middle East, both the United States and its allies in Israel, as well as some other Western countries, were worried that the course of harsh relations they had carried out in the region might change. The fear that the same actors' interests in the region would be shaken was also due to the new administration. Obama and his administration have never reacted during the revolution and have made plans to get rid of the new administration in the next period<sup>120</sup>.

The Arab states of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, the United States' Middle East ministries, have strengthened the old regime against Morsi. Turkey, Qatar and other countries in the region such as Libya try to support to Morsi but administration has managed to maintain its power again. With the protests that started on June 30, 2013 the planned intervention resulted in the dismissal of the democratic president Morsi.

President Mohammed Mursi, was overthrown in a military coup in 2013 by Abdulfettah Sisi. Although in Fiscal Year 2012 statement<sup>121</sup> it is mentioned that the United States would cut aid to the countries if there will be any military intervention in the counties<sup>122</sup> the US continued to help Egypt. This is not the first time for the US. In 2015, the US supported Egypt with \$ 1.3 billion in aid<sup>123</sup>. Since Egypt was involved in operations in Yemen and Libya, Obama's military aid in Egypt in October 2013 supported Egypt with 12 F-16 warplanes, 20 Harpoon missiles, and 125 M1A1 tank

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<sup>120</sup> Nebi MİŞ ve İsmail Numan Telci, "Devrimden Darbeye: Mısır'da Askeri Vesayet Dönemi", Ortadoğu Analizi, Ağustos 2013, vol. 5, no.56, p.20.

<sup>121</sup> Consolidated Appropriations Act 2012, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ74/html/PLAW-112publ74.htm>, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>122</sup> Alexis Sowa, "Aid to Egypt by the Numnbers", Center for Global Development, 2013 <http://www.cgdev.org/blog/aid-egypt-numbers>, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>123</sup> Büşra Ulukuş, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Mısır'a Yardımı, Arka Planı, Tartışmaları, 23 January 2015, <http://akademikperspektif.com/2015/01/23/amerika-birlesik-devletlerinin-misira-yardimi-arka-planı-tartismalari/>, Accessed 6 May 2018

equipment<sup>124</sup>. Obama has done this by advocating US national security interests. Obama emphasized that Egypt is effective in fighting with Shia Husilles in Yemen and fighting against ISIS in Libya. Therefore, the US after losing Iraq and Libya tried to keep Egypt by providing financial and military aid. The United States has dictated that despite continued support to Egypt, it will provide support especially on conditions that favor its own National Security<sup>125</sup>.

While Israel and Iraq in Mesopotamia central Middle East are very important to the US which Afghanistan and Egypt, both sides of the Middle East, play a key role in managing the strategies in this region. Within these countries, Egypt worked in harmony with the US after the Six-Day War with the exemption of the Arab Revolution. Also, if the economic constraints of the Arab Revolution are excluded, the United States regularly helps Egypt in military terms. Military aid to Egypt provides a three-way contribution to the United States:

- I. US national security: Egypt is an ally in which the United States acts jointly against radical groups operating in the Middle East. Egyptian military bases are used by the United States when necessary, and at the same time, the United States is a partner in the Middle East that is as safe as Israel.
- II. Egypt's connection with Europe and Russia is a major obstacle to the loss of a strong US partner. Egypt has had quite coordinated processes with these countries that have bought weapons. The US administration has had to be sensitive about this in Egypt.
- III. Maintenance and repair of this machine-equipment is made by the USA, as the military aids are made with US technology, and over time, the US is getting economic income from this machine-equipment. Moreover, military assistance to foreign countries is not a threat to the United States because the United States has always exported sub-technologies.

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<sup>124</sup> NTV Haber, ABD Mısır'a 1.3 milyar dolarlık askeri yardımı serbest bıraktı, 1 April 2015, [https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/abd-misira-1-3-milyar-dolarlik-askeri-yardimi-serbest-birakti.HEuMsJ8vbU2k\\_8Es\\_TTfxg](https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/abd-misira-1-3-milyar-dolarlik-askeri-yardimi-serbest-birakti.HEuMsJ8vbU2k_8Es_TTfxg). Accessed 6 May 2018

<sup>125</sup> Marc Lynch, "AmericaandEgyptAftertheUprisings" Survival: Global PoliticsandStrategy, vol.53, no.2, 2011, p.31-42.

But it is the authoritarian government in Egypt that makes it difficult for America to develop policies in the region. President Obama and his administration thought that the lack of basic human rights and political rights of this authoritarian regime would increase violence. But the Egyptian government saw the enemies of Islam as terrorists and the efforts of the US as friendly<sup>126</sup>.

While Obama administration was busy with Iraq and Syria problems and was seeking nuclear negotiations with Iran, Egypt was out of priority for America. But the Obama administration and the Egyptian government were struggling for Egypt's determination. At the same time, Obama administration was developing military relations with Egypt without ignoring Egyptian opponents<sup>127</sup>.

With the removal of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi from the administration in July 2013, the US has taken a decision to oversee Egypt's aid policy. America has not cut its military aid fully but the United States put military system on hold and declared that the aid was bound to the developments in democracy. During the one-and-a-half-year waiting period of this military equipment, the Egyptian government criticized US President Obama. During this period, the Egyptian did buying military equipment agreements with Russia (S-300) and France (Rafale Warriors)<sup>128</sup>. Although the US handed over the Apache helicopters in December 2014, President Sisi stated that America's approach constituted a belief among Egyptian people that America would not support Egypt. As the terrorist attacks on Egypt continued in the spring of 2015, the US administration was forced to remove the embargo. After the meeting between Sisi and Obama on March 31, 2015, the White House lifted embargo. The White House has also reorganized aid to Egypt.

The United States has gone to different practices in its political strategy not to lose the old allies of Egypt. For this purpose, it first stretched the constitutional rule as not to help the coup d'état governments and later totally ignored it. Moreover, although President Sisi opposes the opposition and secular Islam by violating human rights, the

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<sup>126</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, "Congressional Research Service: Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations", Council Foreign Relations, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>, p.17, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>127</sup> "Remarks of President Obama, Commencement Address," West Point, New York, May 28, 2014.

<sup>128</sup> İlke Haber, Rus S – 300 füzeleri Mısır'da, <http://www.ilkehaber.com/haber/rus-s-300-fuzeleri-misirda-31276.htm>, Accessed 6 May 2018

United States remains silent. The most basic reason for this is the fear to lose Egypt to Russia by making wrong political moves.

Despite the fact that Egypt was not the primary priority in the Middle East, Obama was making great efforts not to lose this strong ally in the region. This effort required military assistance and, if necessary, political sense. In the political sense, America has strengthened itself in the Middle East by taking Egypt, which has good bilateral relations with Israel. Egypt was strengthening its relations with Israel by appointing ambassadors recalled home in 2015 by Morsi.

The recovery of America and Israeli - Egyptian relations has close relations with the fact that Palestinian Hamas organization which is considered as a common enemy for both Israel and Egypt. The tunnel on the Sinai Peninsula threatens the security of both Egypt and Israel in this region. Egypt, which controls this region, is also trying to prevent terrorist activities. This is in fact consistent with American foreign policy. The fact that Egypt will take the natural gas that Israel found in the open sea in 2017 indicates that the two countries should cooperate in energy field. The attitude of Sisi towards radical Islamic activities in Libya overlaps with American foreign policy, increasing the belief that Egypt is a partner that should not be lost in the region in terms of America.

The US government is saying that the role of Egypt in the Israeli-Arab tension is no longer producing a solution that would make a noise in the international arena. Some of the people in the US government is also believing that Egypt is supporting terrorist activities by pointing at the role of the Egyptian al Qaeda members in September 11 attacks.

The Egyptian Administration in the Arab Spring has changed hand between Islamists and soldiers, and the arrival of an authoritarian military force in 2013 caused America to look suspiciously at Egyptian democracy. President Obama argues that the authoritarian military regime in Egypt has increased the violations of human and political rights in the country<sup>129</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> Jeremy Sharp, Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations, 8 February 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>, p.8-12 Accessed 17 May 2018

#### **4.2.2. Obama and Iran**

Obama sought to negotiate ways to resolve the problem with Iran in diplomatic ways during his own time, despite all the objections of Israel's allies in the Middle East. One of the biggest problems of the period was Iran's nuclear program threatening both the Middle Eastern countries and American interests and security. The European Union and the United Nations also convinced Iran that sanctions would be aggravated in order to bring it to the table. After long and complicated years, the ice between America and Iran, which cannot be surpassed by hanging the Iranian nuclear program, has begun to unravel. Before commenting on the nuclear program between America and Iran, it is necessary to look at the relations before Obama period.

##### **4.2.2.1. Relations with Iran before Obama Administration**

History, cultural richness and rich natural resources, as well as its geographical location make Iran an important country for the United States. In fact, Iran was once the most important ally of the US in the Middle East. It should be noted that before the revolution Iran was a close ally of the US when Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon were following pro-Soviet policies. But with the Islamic revolution, which took place in 1979. In that period when Iran emerged as an opposition country against the US the balance of power in the Middle East has changed. A new process that will radically influence not only America and the Middle East but also world politics began by the start of Khomeini period in Iran.

America had to turn to Egypt to provide a new balance after the changing balances in the Middle East. It had to develop new policies for alliance with Egypt. For this, talks between Egypt and Israel have restarted. When Egyptian-Israeli agreement signed in Camp David ensuring Israel's withdrawal from the peninsula of Sinai, Egypt became one of the most important ally of the US in the Middle East. Not satisfied with this, the American government began to leap in order to find common ground with Iraq. In the Iran-Iraq war that began in 1980, the US government started to support Iraq in order to weaken Iran's military and political power.

One of the most important events affecting the Middle East was the Iran-Iraq war, which emerged in the 1980s. Iraq, which wants to control the Shatt al –Arab watercourse, has signed the most critical event of the period with its attack on Iran. America did not want to see a strong Iran in the region, so started to help Iraq. Another reason for the US to support Iraq was the occupation of US Tehran Embassy by Iranian pro-revolutionary students. Since the US Tehran Embassy has been occupied and the staff has been held hostage for 444 days, the US wants to take revenge from Iran and want to undermine Shia administration<sup>130</sup>. Some Middle Easter states had also tried to stop Iran apart from America and Iraq because they saw the Islamic Republic of Iran as a threat. For this reason, Iran-Iraq war can be described as a war between a county eager to spread the Islamic Revolution and those who want to lift it out.

During the Iran-Iraq war in America provided Iraq with food and financial assistance as well as military aid. Much of this aid is financed by Arab countries such as rich Saudi Arabia and Iraq. He even went so far as to sell weapons to Iran. But this war between Iraq and Iran has caused problems for both countries. Beyond the beginning of the economic collapse by the end of the war, a very serious number of people have also caused losses. The US has not reached its targets in Iran, but has led to a further consolidation of the people around the Khomeini revolution, and it has provided America with solidarity under anti - Islamic roof with Israel. Russia, which wants to have a say in this region, has also begun to pursue a policy closer to America by changing its foreign policies. But the effects of the war have not come to an end, Iraqi Kurds and Shiites have started to rise up against Saddam<sup>131</sup>.

Iraq's situation is the most critical in this war which consequences are so heavy on both sides. At the same time, Iraq was looking for a one-sided solution to the problem between the two countries while at the same time benefiting from the gap created by the Iranian Revolution. Although the war was planned to take its victory and all manner of support was given throughout the war Saddam Hussein,

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<sup>130</sup> Yaşar Semiz ve Birol Akgün, “Büyük Ortadoğu Jeopolitiğinde İran-ABD İlişkileri”, SÜ İİBF Sosyal ve Ekonomik Araştırmalar Dergisi, p.165.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p.166

unfortunately, was not seen as an ally by the United States anymore and was abolished by a military intervention.

After the Islamic revolution of Iran, it started to follow a policy without cutting its ties with the outside without compromising the basic values of the revolution. His foreign policy is generally based on the Caspian - Middle Asia, Middle East - Gulf and American - Israeli hostility and revolution. Of course, the policy that Iran pursues has not been directly proportional to the policies of the United States that want to control the region and keep the control of its oil resources. Despite the fact that the US has sought to cooperate with Iran, the US has gone so far as to stop Iran with economic embargo and military threats<sup>132</sup>.

America has reported that they will retaliate against Iran and Syria if they continue to support Afghanistan after the September 11 incidents. After the 1979 regime change, the former ally Iran cut its relations with America and turned to Russia and China. Iran did not want to take the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics, which was the superpower of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, while fighting with Iraq. Instead, he supported the USSR against the protection of the Shiites and the Khazar<sup>133</sup>. With the disintegration of the USSR and the First Gulf War, Iran has become the target of America and its possible allies. But with the September 11 attacks, Iran has become a target again in the fight against American Islam with radical Islam and terrorism.

Iran's support for terrorism, its work on nuclear energy issues, and the Arab-Israeli peace process, undermining Israel's threat to the United States was very uncomfortable. The US administration retaliated against this situation and during the Bush administration, the PKK's Iranian extension, PJAK, and other many Sunni guerrilla and terrorist organizations were supported<sup>134</sup>. America was determined to do all the political maneuvering that would have been possible to weaken Iran. In fact, even the Bush administration accused Iran of supporting terrorist groups. Interestingly, after the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan, America even gave support to the

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p.166.

<sup>133</sup> OliverRoy, *Afganistan'da Direniş ve İslam, İstanbul*, Çev. Kadri Mustafa Orađlı, Yöneliş Yayınları, 1990, p.34.

<sup>134</sup> Seymour Hersh, "The Redirection", *The New Yorker*, 5 March 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/05/the-redirection>, Accessed 15 May 2018

present enemies of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in order to reduce Iran's influence. Since the Taliban's goal is the Sunni Islamic State, Iran has used all the resources available to prevent the spread of Taliban insights. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban's "Anti-Shiite" approach has been a significant part of the progress of the Shiites, advocating that they are not Muslims<sup>135</sup>. Both Iran and the Taliban is against the presence of America in Afghanistan. The influence of Iran on the west of Afghanistan is disturbing the Afghanistan government. The tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the instability in Afghanistan are to factors that connect Kabul to Iran.

Iran was developing an energy policy similar to its strategy towards Central Asia with Armenia and Russia and planning to include Turkey and Georgia. So if Iran's strategy went as planned, America's power would have weakened. But Obama is arguing that the Iran policies in the Bush administration are wrong because he has decided to increase negotiations to regain Iran. America was aware of the geopolitical theme of Iran. America was seeing Iran as a trump card to be used against its opponents China and Russia and this doubled the importance of Iran. Iran was aware that it was important to get closer to the United States to get rid of the embargo that it had been facing for years.

America, as always, has developed new strategies to attract continually changing events in the Middle East in its favor. Particularly in support of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi support has been frozen and declared it as hostile. The two Gulf Wars on Iraq are indicative of this policy. Likewise, after the overthrow of Egyptian President Mursi by Sisi in a coup, America provided military support to Egypt. Despite the fact that the US Constitution is conditioned on the need to cut aid to countries with military coups, US support to Egypt can be described as its ambition to replace its lost allies with a new one. America has begun to seek new strategic partnerships instead of a partner that has lost in the Middle East to keep the balances as close as possible<sup>136</sup>. At this point, Obama's struggle to find new allies with his soft power strategy leads a question whether his new ally could be Iran. On the other hand, if other countries

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<sup>135</sup>Richard Whelan, "Al-Qaedaism, TheThreatToIslam, TheThreatToThe World", Dublin: AshfieldPress, 2005, p. 88-89.

<sup>136</sup> MohammedNuruzzaman, "PresidentObama'sMiddle East Policy", 2009-2013", InsightTurkey, 2015, p.171-186.

such as Libya and North Korea which one Bush declared as evils can be included as new American ally. The US government has so far removed Libya and North Korea from the status of a state that has helped terrorist countries. Can the approaches to Iran be seen as a continuation of these efforts? Or is it an effort to pull Iran from the Russia-China partnership. The fact that Iran is active in the region and that it is opposed to the US on a state basis makes it possible for America to approach Iran in a different way than other Middle Eastern countries. In sectarian conflicts, the support of Sunni Muslims in general has led America's to non-victimization policy in the Shia. But even if Obama thinks that Iran could be a potential American ally, Iran's nuclear program was still regarded as a problem for America and this situation had to be corrected immediately.

#### **4.2.2.2. A New Crisis in the Middle East**

Obama lived many crises during his time. These crises, did not stem from America's own policies comparison to the Bush era. When we look at the crises that took place during the Bush era, crises arise from decisions that US President Bush has taken in foreign policy. But when Obama's crises are examined, it is different from his foreign policies. One of the biggest examples of this is Arab Spring. Another crisis in is the Iranian nuclear crisis, which is also happening outside its own foreign policy. Even though the crisis eventually comes to a certain point, it can be said that there are problems both on the ground and on the result.

When it comes to the nuclear crisis in Iran, it is based on the Islamic revolution of Iran. The main objective of the Tehran regime is to create a nuclear program to provide cheap electricity to its own people, but Western countries have thought that the program could help in the construction of an atom bomb. Over the years, the tension has increased on both sides and has not reached a certain result.

It is thought that there will be no big difference between Iran and Romney after Obama won elections in 2009 US presidential elections, but it is thought that Obama's election win will strengthen diplomatic ways of solving the problem of Iran's nuclear program. Iranian Human Rights Center Secretary Mohammad Jawad al-Rajani stated

that negotiations with the US are not a taboo and prohibition and that negotiations can be made even under worst-case conditions if Iran benefits. For Iran; He also noted that the presence of the United States in unprecedented sanctions harms relations between the two countries<sup>137</sup>. Obama said America would try to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons, whoever the ministry of defense is<sup>138</sup>. Even the US Senate accepted a decision to defend Israel against threats from Iran and advised to give economic, diplomatic and military support to Israel without thinking<sup>139</sup>.

With the arrival of John Kerry in the US State Department, it was thought that policies similar to those of the Clinton era could have occurred. Although it is expected that Kerry will play an active role in Iran and Syria, it turns out that Obama is determined to carry on his strategy in the first period<sup>140</sup>. In fact, the Obama administration has taken steps to get back on the defense budget, so US Former Defense Minister Leon Panetta has announced that they will not send a second aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf<sup>141</sup>.

Despite the positive developments in relations between the US and Iran, it was almost certain that the tension would not stop. As a matter of fact, the Iranian jets facing America's HRA just in the very next day of the election showed that the crisis was continuing... America's surveillance planes continue to detain Iran in the Gulf and international waters. It was announced by the Pentagon Spokesman that Iranian jets were attacking America's unmanned aerial vehicle while the United States routinely continued to watch Iran. The Pentagon spokesman George little revealed America's

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<sup>137</sup> Jonathan Watts, Barack Obama's election 2012 win: the World reacts, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/07/us-elections-2012-usa>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>138</sup> Alan M. Dershowitz, What are the Implications for Israel of Hagel's Confirmation, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-alan-dershowitz-hagel-and-israel-1.5231957>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>139</sup> Anadolu Ajansı, ABD'den İran'a yeni yaptırım paketi, <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/haberler/184671--abdden-irana-yeni-yaptirim-paketi>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>140</sup> Özdemir Akbal, Yeni Aktörler ve Geleneksel Politikalarla ABD'nin Orta Doğu Siyaseti, <http://www.21yyte.org/arastirma/abd/2013/03/23/6902/yeni-aktorler-ve-geleneksel-politikalarla-abdnin-orta-dogu-siyaseti>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>141</sup> Haber Türk, ABD'den İran'ı sevindirecek karar!, <http://www.haberturk.com/haber/haber/817972-abdden-irani-sevindirecek-karar>, Accessed 9 May 2018

determination by explaining that the US will continue its monitoring activities in the region<sup>142</sup>.

American military officials have announced that they are ready to protect the Gulf, which they consider very important for maritime trade, from a possible attack by Iran. Emphasizing that Iran's military power is not capable to combat the army of America in the region. Military officials have officially given the message that America's presence in the region will not be lost and so, Iran was answered harshly<sup>143</sup>.

The American Senate wanted to increase the economic hardship of Iran in the end of 2012 to stop the Iranian nuclear program and adopted new sanctions against it. The United States has taken sanctions against Iran in areas such as energy and transportation. America has also warned the neighboring countries such as Turkey about the exportation gold to Iran and announced its determination to take necessary steps<sup>144</sup>. The America's these pressures, were followed by other countries. The European Union countries stopped oil purchases, Turkey has also brought to the stage by almost stopping the oil and natural gas purchases from Iran. The Turks have tried to provide necessary oil and natural gas needs from alternative countries such as Saudi Arabia and Azerbaijan. Iran's oil revenues have decreased by half when all these developments have caused serious damage to Iran's economy.

Economic sanctions against Iran have put Tehran government in motion and are in search of new challenges. Within these quests, close relations with Pakistan, which is in need of energy, have remained in jeopardy. Pakistan has become a major trading center for Iran and is a bridge to developing relations with China. On February 20, 2013, an agreement was reached for the construction of a natural gas pipeline between Iran and Pakistan. The United States has been disturbed by the natural gas pipeline project between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan, which has nuclear technology,

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<sup>142</sup> BBC News, Iranian jets 'fired on US drone', 8 November 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20261091>, Accessed 10 May 2018

<sup>143</sup> Nick Meo, US aircraft carrier strikeforce readies in case of war with Iran, 25 November 2012, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9700439/US-aircraft-carrier-strikeforce-readies-in-case-of-war-with-Iran.html>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>144</sup> Sabah Gazetesi, İran'a altın ambargosuna ABD'den jet onay, 1 December 2012, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/ekonomi/2012/12/01/irana-altin-ambargosuna-abdden-jet-onay>, Accessed 9 May 2018

has extended economic co-operation with Iran to military and political alliances, a position that could once again hit the interests of America's region. Because of this, the US has tried to prevent Pakistan from making a possible alliance with Iran and to limit Iranian activities in the region<sup>145</sup>.

Obama published the Nowruz message in March 2013 in order to reduce the tension caused by Iran's nuclear activities and stated that Iran should avoid attempts to reduce nuclear tension and pursue peaceful nuclear activities to produce nuclear weapons. It is stated that the international community cannot be persuaded that Iran is pursuing its nuclear activities peacefully and has called Iran to endeavor to reduce the tension on the nuclear issue<sup>146</sup>.

Iran was perhaps expecting a more important event while elections in June was approaching. The president, who will win in the June elections, perhaps would form the new government that could change the crisis with America. Ahmadi Nejad's harsh attitude towards foreign politics, the emphasis on disputes in Western countries, especially in the US, has caused great damage to the country's economy. In contrast to the other candidates, Galili acted that he would follow a policy closer to Ahmadi Nejad policies and that he should stand upright against the US and its allies, and he also received support from the Revolutionary Guards and the radical Ayatollah Misbah Yezdi. Kalibaf followed the strategy of winning the election by taking the support of traditional conservatives. The absence of an institutionalized party structure in Iran can open the way for candidates to receive support from many different sectors. The fact that Khamenei emphasizes that everyone, even those who do not support the Islamic regime, should go to vote, has led to an increased interest in elections. Rafsanjani, Hatemi and the moderate policies of Mousavi and Kerrubi from the reformist leaders and the support of Rohani that wanted Iran to open up to the outside world, the other reformist candidate Mohammed Reza Arif, who supports the Rohani, has greatly increased the chances of Rohani. The election results showed that Rohani received

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<sup>145</sup> Hakan Boz, ABD'yi Endişelendiren İttifak: İran – Pakistan, 1 March 2013, <http://www.21yyte.org/tr/arastirma/guney-kafkasya-iran-pakistan-arastirmalarimerkezi/2013/03/01/6889/abdyi-endiselendiren-ittifak-iran-pakistan>, Accessed 10 May 2018

<sup>146</sup> BBC News, Obama Nowruz message: Iran must 'reduce nuclear tension', 18 March 2013 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21836928>, Accessed 10 May 2018

more than 50 percent of votes, winning elections. The closest competitor of Rohani was Kalibaf, 16 percent, and Galilee, but only 11 percent. The election results revealed that people want reforming of the political scene with the condition of staying in the Iranian regime and that let Iran more open to the outside world and the economy is more developed and more transparent policies should be followed in the nuclear negotiation process. The people voted for a candidate with a greater chance of alleviating relations with the US and EU countries, thus avoiding economic embargos and wanting to get out of the economic downturn as soon as possible. By supporting Rohani the people revealed wed that that both individual freedoms and political freedoms should be increased in the country and expressed the growing tendency to support libertarian politics in Iran<sup>147</sup>.

Rohani had more libertarian approach than Ahmadi Nejad. He opposed the methods of prohibiting or filtering the internet to provide social morality and order He claimed that by prohibiting the distinctions would become even more serious, and young people should be persuaded, policies would be in line with their requirements.

As the Rohani became president, there was a great interest in international arena about whether relations with America would be changed with respect to Ahmadi Nejad's time. It is expected that Rohani will decrease tensions between Iran and the European Union and Israel, boost the economic development of Iran and thus save the Iranian regime. Rohani's change in foreign policy and his moderate discourses are also supported by Khamenei, the religious leader of the country, and it is demanded to increase inner peace in the country. The United States could open the way for a moderate atmosphere in the nuclear negotiations process as Iran's determination to not organize military operations in Syria, an important ally of the United States. Obama sent a congratulatory message to Rohani. Rohani explained that nuclear negotiations should be resumed and emphasized the necessity of continuing these negotiations<sup>148</sup>. This can be interpreted as an important step in the solution of the problem.

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<sup>147</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, İran cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimi: Statüko ya da itidalli deęişim p.23-31

<sup>148</sup> Hakan Boz, İran ve Deęişim, 7 October 2013,

<http://www.21yyte.org/tr/arastirma/iran/2013/10/07/7241/iran-ve-degisim>, Accessed 9 May 2018

The Iranian government reveals the idea that the news of its backwardness in nuclear activities due to economic concerns will lead to an increase in expectations about the disappearance of the political crisis in America - Iran. Despite all these developments, Rohani continued to be restricted within the country by the conservatives. With the appointment of conservatives to the ministry, it has also been seen that President Rohani will not allow him to pursue an independent policy from the religious guideline<sup>149</sup>.

Iranian Foreign Minister Cevat Zarif's and Chief Nuclear Negotiator Ali Ekber Salihi's attitudes to defend pragmatist and pro-reconciliation policies demonstrate that Rohani will receive a great support in the nuclear negotiation process. Although it is thought that Rohani and Zarif will not abandon the principles of the Islamic Republic it is expected that they will lower the tension with the West, especially with the USA<sup>150</sup>.

Iranian Foreign Minister Cevat Zarif has announced that Iran is ready for nuclear negotiations and has promised that they will not develop nuclear weapons. However, he stated that Iran's peaceful nuclear activities are a non-negotiable right. Zarif called the abolishment of economic embargoes against Iran. Obama made direct contact with Rohani for the first time since 1979, making a 15-minute telephone call on nuclear issue. While diplomatic initiatives between the US and Iran are normalizing, national security adviser Susan Rice has voiced America's sensitivities by warning Iran not to build nuclear weapons and support terrorists. Despite the lack of trust between the two countries, former US President Bill Clinton has considered the process as a great chance for the development of relations<sup>151</sup>

At the end of the Geneva meeting in November 2013 on the issue of Iran's nuclear activities, the United States and Iran reached an agreement. It has been emphasized that it was the most important agreement between America and Iran since 1979. The results of the talks between P5 + 1 and Iran can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Sermin Przewczek, Iran's foreign policy under President Rouhani: Pledges Versus Reality, p70

<sup>151</sup> BBC News, Iran nuclear: Zarif says powers 'changing positions', 10 July 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33473407>, Accessed 10 May 2018

- a) Iran will be granted six-month period to limit its nuclear activities,
- b) Iran must ensure that the nuclear facilities are opened to experts dispatched by the UAEA and that nuclear facilities are to be examined daily by experts,
- c) Iran has not been able to enrich uranium over five per cent of its energy needs, dilute 20 per cent of enriched uranium in its possession and accept centrifuge production to be halted<sup>152</sup>,
- d) Iran will end the activity of Arak nuclear center,
- e) Iran will grant free entry and exit to nuclear facilities to UAEA experts<sup>153</sup>.

However, Iran's \$ 100 billion worth of assets abroad will continue to be closed or restricted. It has been decided that the limitations of twenty banks, including the Iranian Central Bank, will continue in international markets<sup>154</sup>.

Iran, in response to these concessions managed to lift trade limitations on gold, petrochemical products, automotive and aircraft parts. This agreement is considered as the most remarkable achievement of Obama in foreign policy. Cevat Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, stated that this was the first step towards establishing mutual confidence and more successful results were obtained than in the past<sup>155</sup>.

#### **4.2.2.3. Support of Iran: Hamas and Hezbollah**

##### **4.2.2.3.1. Hamas**

The US government was constantly in the process of declaring that Iran had committed terrorism. Iran's biggest terrorist investments have been on Hamas. It was

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<sup>152</sup> Sabah Gazetesi, Cenevre'den tarihi anlaşma çıktı, 25 November, 2018, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2013/11/25/cenevreden-tarihi-anlasma-cikti>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>153</sup> Global Security, Weapons of Mass Destruction, 24 November 2013, [https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/int/iran-5-1-geneva-agreement\\_2013.htm](https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/int/iran-5-1-geneva-agreement_2013.htm), Accessed 10 May 2018

<sup>154</sup> Sabah Gazetesi, Cenevre'den tarihi anlaşma çıktı, 25 November 2018, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2013/11/25/cenevreden-tarihi-anlasma-cikti>, Accessed 9 May 2018

<sup>155</sup> Julian Borger and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, The Guardian, 25 November 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/secret-usa-iran-talks-nuclear-deal>, Accessed 10 May 2018

receiving money, weapons and training support from Iran. Supported by Iran, Hamas captured the control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 and is still in control of this region. In June 2014, Hamas handed the governance of Gaza to the Palestinian government officially but it kept the responsibility of actual security of the region.

Israel has been attacked since 2005 and Hamas continues to carry out interim attacks on Israel with rockets and similar equipment supplied by Iran. Israel and Hamas experienced problems at the end of 2008 and at the beginning of 2009 and July and August 2014. The Iran-Hamas relationship began with attacks of Hamas suicide bombers to buses, restaurants and other civilian targets in Israel to cut Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in the 1990s<sup>156</sup>. But Hamas' attitude towards the Syrian issue has caused Iran-Hamas relations to stop. Sunni protesters in Syria and rebels oppose the efforts of Assad, which Hamas is backed by Iran because of sectarian sympathizers. This separation resulted in the reduction of Iran's support for Hamas in the issue of Hamas-Israeli in 2014. Iran has helped Hamas to build rockets and rebuild destroyed tunnels<sup>157</sup> in order to improve relations with Hamas again. Egypt has been demolishing illegal tunnels with military intervention since 2013 on the border between Gaza and Sinai. In addition, as Hamas is in financial difficulty, it is warmly looking to improve relations with Iran.

#### **4.2.2.3.2. Hezbollah**

Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist group established during the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the most important ally of Iran in the region. Hezbollah has worked on terrorism and armed actions in different situations and forms for both their own and Iranian interests. Iranian Hezbollah relations began in 1982 with the Dava Party of pro-Iranian Shiite leaders in Lebanon and continued under the name Hezbollah in 1985. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards helped in the development of

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<sup>156</sup> Ceren Gürseler Özbilgiç, Ankasam, 25 April 2017, <https://ankasam.org/iranin-filistin-ve-suriye-politikalarinin-olasi-izdusumu/>, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>157</sup> Gregorio Bettiza, Christopher Phillips, "Obama nation? US foreign policy one year on: Obama's Middle East Policy: Time to Decide", [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43581/1/Obama%20nation\\_Obama%E2%80%99s%20Middle%20East%20policy%28lsero%29.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43581/1/Obama%20nation_Obama%E2%80%99s%20Middle%20East%20policy%28lsero%29.pdf), Accessed 15 May 2018

Hezbollah's military wing<sup>158</sup>. Hezbollah is supported by Iran, like Hamas. Supported by Iran, Hezbollah is seen as the enemy of Israel fighting against Muslims. Iran's financial and military aid has helped Hezbollah become an important force in Lebanese politics. The attacks of Hezbollah in 2000 caused Israel to withdraw. Iran took C802 from China and gave it to Hezbollah, and Hezbollah shot an Israeli war ship in 2006<sup>159</sup>. Hezbollah is seen as a conqueror in the Arab World fighting against Israel. After this date, Iran has given Hezbollah 100,000 rockets and missiles. These include anti-ship, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles and missiles<sup>160</sup>. Because of the Syrian crisis, Israel does not frequently attack for Syrian Hezbollah leaders and for the arms shipments to Hezbollah through Syria. Although Hezbollah attacked the Lebanese – Israeli – Syrian trilateral border in January 2015 and killed two Israeli soldiers, the Israeli-Hezbollah issue at the border is not currently become a serious issue<sup>161</sup>.

#### **4.2.3. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iranian foreign policy and America**

The traditional definition of Middle East, refers to the territory encircled by Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iranian borders. But from time to time we can say that some other countries are mentioned as if they are located in the Middle Eastern region. The countries which have close relations with G8 countries or Middle Eastern countries may be regarded as Middle Eastern countries<sup>162</sup>. When we examine American foreign policy at this stage, the countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot be examined separately from the Middle East and are the countries that should be included in this thesis.

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<sup>158</sup> Addis Casey L. ve Christopher M. Blanchard, "Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress", CRS Report R414462008, p.20.

<sup>159</sup> Dünya Bülteni, Hizbullah İsrail savaşı gemisini batırdı, 14 July 2006, <http://www.dunyabulteni.net/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=3861>, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>160</sup> IAF Chief: Israel Will Destroy Hezbollah Bases in Lebanon, Even Ones in Residential Areas." Reuters/Jerusalem Post, 29 January 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/Defense/IAF-chief-Israel-will-destroy-Hezbollah-bases-in-Lebanon-even-those-in-residential-areas-339773>, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>161</sup> Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard, "Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress", CRS Report R41446, p 16

<sup>162</sup> Mehmet Fehmi Karadağ, Ortadoğu: Ülkeler ve Sorunlar, <https://www.stratejikortak.com/2017/01/ortadogu-ulkeler-ve-sorunlar.html>, Accessed 7 May 2018

Iran was helping the Afghan government, pro-Iranian groups and groups opposed to the United States by providing economic aid in order to find a partner against the US and to reduce the impact of the economic embargo. Iran's long-term intention is to influence Dari (a language close to Persian) in Afghanistan, the minority in the "Northern Alliance" and the non-Pashtun minority. Iran has made an effort to reduce the influence of the international embargo against itself by using its influence in Afghanistan. Iran and Afghanistan have also decided to act jointly against drug trafficking in their borders. Iran wants to make an impact by supporting the Afghan government<sup>163</sup>. In September 2014, Ashraf Gani was elected as president replacing President Hamid Karzai. Both of them are Sunni Muslims and Pashtun. In October 2010, Karzai explained that Iran has helped his government by two million dollars, but there is no evidence that aid is continuing. But in 2014 elections, pro-Iranian, Persian-speaking, partly Tajik, senior Afghan government administrator Dr. Abdullah challenged Ashraf Gani. The independent election council after the allegations of cheating in the elections has made the two parties make a power sharing agreement. Abdullah became a senior state manager and Gani remained as president<sup>164</sup>.

The result is that Iran is trying convince Afghanistan not to comply with the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US. According to this treaty, Afghanistan allowed America to have troops in its territories in post-2014, but according to the treaty America was not allowed military movements to another country using those bases in Afghanistan.

President Gani visited Tehran in April 2015 and signed a treaty to cooperate against Iran's Islamic State Organization. Despite Afghanistan's tie, Tehran opposed the American military power in Afghanistan and forwarded it to previous Afghan governments<sup>165</sup>. Previous Afghan governments reported that Iran was working for the Taliban's election by providing material supplies containing 107 mm rockets and that

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<sup>163</sup> Matthew Rosenberg, Annie Lowry, "Iranian Currency Traders Find a Haven in Afghanistan," New York Times, August 18, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/18/world/middleeast/iranian-currency-flows-into-afghanistan-markets.html>, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>164</sup> Dexter Filkins. "Iran Is Said to Give Top Karzai Aide Cash by the Bagful." New York Times, October 23, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/world/asia/24afghan.html>, Accessed 15 May 2018

<sup>165</sup> Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Afghanistan, Iran to Work together Against "Macabre" IS Threat." RFE/RL, April 22, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ghani-iran-visit-afghanistan/26965995.html>, Accessed 15 May 2018

Taliban warriors undertook training<sup>166</sup>. Iran also helped the Pashtun militants in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, showing that their aid is not restricted only by the borders.

All the strategy that American national security and democratic development in Afghanistan has developed is being tackled by militant groups and supporters in the region. Iran is in this sense a strategic issue for the United States. Obama has two options: First, stop the most important factors affecting Afghanistan with military action. It is impossible for Iran to intervene in Afghanistan as a result of the treaty with Afghanistan. This is not a very attractive option for the United States, as Pakistan and the countries of the region have been against such interventions. After the Gulf War, it can be seen as a fairly remote possibility if added to the damage on the countries in the region, including Turkey. The second option is "soft power". P5 + 1 - referring to the UN Security Council's permanent members, which is a treaty with China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States + Germany - softening Iran and showing that soft power politics is more effective.

The US has already been considered as the most effective way of exterminating Russia and China by lifting the embargo and relieving Iran in economic terms. Russia, which did not want to lose the most active corpse in the region, was not very lucky against this option. In the present conjuncture, it can be said that America is close to winning a new partner in the Middle East. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that America has plans other than this option since it is always a country that takes care of its interests carefully. That is why America has operated another B-plan showing that the troops in Afghanistan will remain in the country until 2016. Obama noted that the soldiers in Afghanistan will be cut by the end of 2017. Obama has defended that US troops train Afghan security forces that fighting with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban will continue to remain in the country and they will not let Afghanistan be home to those who attack America.

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<sup>166</sup> Maria Abi – Habib, "Tehran Builds On Outreach to Taliban," Wall Street Journal, July 31, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390444130304577560241242267700>, Accessed 15 May 2018

The US military forces remain in the country will be in accordance with the reason that the Afghan forces fighting the Taliban are not yet at sufficient level and Taliban is strengthening. President Gani also expressed the need for US support to continue and there should be more troops than planned in Afghanistan to prevent the situation from getting worse. Although Obama has taken some of his troops out of the region, he said that the withdrawal of the whole will take place in 2016, but it is considered as a possible B plan if Iran cannot agree with the US<sup>167</sup>.

The relations between Iran and Pakistan have always been fluctuating in recent years. Pakistan also supported Iran in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War and went on to cooperate in military terms until the 1990s. A. Q. Kahn who established Pakistan's nuclear program has sold nuclear technology to Iran<sup>168</sup>. But other factors have separated the two countries. In the 1990s, the Taliban was supported by Pakistan in Afghanistan while Iran supported Persian-speaking Shia Muslims. The Taliban have controlled Persian-speaking areas in the west and north of Afghanistan, while being very cruel towards the Shiite Afghans. In August 1998, the Taliban warriors killed nine diplomats in the Mazar-i-Sharif, which led to Iran's relocation to the Afghan border. The Taliban separatists found Pakistan safe, and Iran was still concerned that the Taliban would return to Afghanistan<sup>169</sup>.

One of the points that Obama's Middle East policy overlaps with Iran is that the Taliban is a strategy that can be used for rapprochement with Iran. The time will show if the soft power Obama implements in the Middle East bring two countries closer to each other. We have said that relations Iran is the most distant from the "soft power" policy. Obama was intent on bringing the P5 + 1 project to a certain level of relevance. As in the case of Libya-North Korea, Iran could be removed from the list of countries that supported terrorist activities and could make a good Middle East ally. Thus, America could gain confidence in Shiite Muslims in the Middle East to ensure

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<sup>167</sup> Jon Davis, "Why were US troops initially withdrawn from Iraq and who is most responsible for that action?", <https://www.quora.com/Why-were-US-troops-initially-withdrawn-from-Iraq-and-who-is-most-responsible-for-that-action>, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>168</sup> John Lancaster, Kamran Khan, "Pakistanis Say Nuclear Scientists Aided Iran", 24 January 2004, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/01/24/pakistanis-say-nuclear-scientists-aided-iran/d895f104-8657-4152-955b-c80560bce200/?utm\\_term=.5daf19580d09](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/01/24/pakistanis-say-nuclear-scientists-aided-iran/d895f104-8657-4152-955b-c80560bce200/?utm_term=.5daf19580d09), Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>169</sup> Kenneth Katzman, Iran's Foreign Policy, Congressional Research Services, september 25, 2015, p.24

national security. The US's desire to increase its trump card in the multicultural Middle East environment is an important move for America's interests. As Turkey's political structure was used in the Arab-Israeli conflict to play a mediator role, Iran's political structure can also be used as a mediator between the West (America-Europe) and the East (Russia - China-India). When we look at American political history, it is more meaningful to converge with Iran because of the close proximity of both parties to the US.

Iran and Pakistan were in military co-operation, even at low levels; The Sea Exercise, which was built in April 2014, is planned to construct a gas pipeline between the two countries. This will be a new customer for Iran while solving the Pakistani energy problem. The project was officially launched in March 2013 by Iranian President Ahmadi Nejad and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari. But the pipeline project up to the Iranian border has not been able to complete due to financial problems in Pakistan. This difficulty is to be overcome by the finance of China in April 2015. Although the United States initially opposed this project, the nuclear treaty signed with Iran has moved its opposition to this project<sup>170</sup>. This may be perceived as a gesture by Obama to see Iran next to the US. But the withdrawal of India from the post-Pakistani project, which is thought to be extended to India, may be a decision to give America a better sense of security. The extension of the line to India and the wish of the People's Republic of China to help Pakistan's economic prolongation is a strategic advantage for China that America probably does not look warm. It is obvious that America's control of the Middle East is the result of its efforts to control energy resources.

#### **4.3. ISIS Crisis**

It cannot be said that Obama's administration is successful if it is to be evaluated in general, but it is also a separate matter whether or not this failure is directly related to him. Because, in foreign politics, being pro-soft power constantly seems to be a good policy, but it causes not to define foreign policy clearly in case of

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<sup>170</sup> K. Alan Kronstadt, Pakistan – U.S. Relations, 24 May 2012, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41832.pdf>, Accessed 15 May 2018

facing events that cannot be controlled by the president or his government. The ISIS problem can be given as an example. Who is this community that world politics calls ISIS? ISIS can be described as Iraq and Damascus Islamic State; briefly ISIS; (Islamic State) or Iraq and the Levant Islamic State (ILID), Iraq and Syria, and an unrecognized state. The pronunciation of the abbreviation of the old name in Arabic: Da'ish; According to the Latin alphabet of the reading, DAES or DAIS is also known by the names of DEAS. The group, which was established in the early years of the Iraq War declared its allegiance to Al Qaeda in 2004, was named Iraqi Al-Qaeda after a while. The group consists of different rebellious groups, such as the Council of Mujahideen Council, Al-Qaeda, Jaysh al-Fatiheen, Jund al-Sahaba, Katbiyan Ansar al-Tawhidvel Sunnah and Jeish al-Taiifa al-Mansoura<sup>171</sup>. The problems in Syria still did not end. Less than a year after the issue of chemical weapons, ISIS forces attacked Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, which Obama did not care about recently calling Al Qaeda's B team. Iraqi soldiers trained by the Americans escaped at the first attack and the armed jihadists quickly moved to Fallujah and Ramadi and have approached Baghdad critically in a very short time.

The jihadists had come from Syria and the bases were Syria at large, but Obama had to concentrate on Iraq in his strategy against ISIS because Iraq was a place where the effect of this strategy could be. Nevertheless, America had partnerships in Iraq in various ways with its resources, air bases and a functioning government. But there was none in Syria where Obama was fully withdrawn from diving into a sectarian civil war.

In September 2014, Obama was aware that Syria could not be ignored, but Syria was also the headquarters of the ISIS operations and Obama knew very well that the Iraq-Syrian border was permeable to absurdity - he adhered to the strategy of his supporters "Iraq first"<sup>172</sup>. The ongoing American air strikes against Iraqi forces in Iraq have been extended to Syria, but only the ways that the ISIS used to switch between

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<sup>171</sup> Kanal A Haber, IŞİD Kimdir? IŞİD'in kurucusu ve IŞİD'in lideri kimdir?, 14 November 2015, <http://www.kanalahaber.com/haber/dunya/isid-kimdir-isidin-kurucusu-ve-isidin-lideri-kimdir-267109/>, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>172</sup> Al Jazeera, Obama IŞİD'le mücadele stratejisini açıkladı, 11 September 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/obama-isidle-mucadele-stratejisini-acikladi>, Accessed 7 May 2018

the two countries were targeted. Obama also described a program in which "moderate" Syrian rebels would be trained and equipped in the bases of Saudi Arabia, but he added that the rebels would not be ready for a long time to fight the ISIS which clearly meant that Syria was pushed back<sup>173</sup>.

Days after Obama's description of the struggle with ISIS, ISID encircled Kobani town on the border with Turkey. Although previously, anthropologist and social theorist David Harvey claimed that ISIS would try to capture if it find an opportunity, the US administration did not take necessary measures<sup>174</sup>. Even though the town was not a strategic attraction, massacre was carried out here. Beyond that, ISIS was sending thousands of jihadists to the town, and this was creating an easy, clustered target that neither the Pentagon nor Obama could say no. Obama ordered a very heavy air strike, and during these attacks, an estimated 2 to 3 thousand ISIS militants were killed<sup>175</sup>.

An unexpected side of the war was that Kurdish warriors came together to take the ISIS out of town and collided very well and recaptured the town. Obama did not oppose the pursuit of ISIS in Syria, he did not see a suitable partner to carry out war on land alone. He found a partner with the Syrian Kurds and the air attacks continued in cooperation with the Kurdish assaults in general. The CIA, on the other hand, was deployed to the south of Syria and began to give back to a group of insurgents whose main objectives were to overthrow Asad. To recapitulate, we may think that Petraeus objected to arming some rebels such as the Nusra linked to al-Qa'ida, not because he was against the idea of arming the rebels, but because the plan or the rebels did not think it would succeed<sup>176</sup>. The new plan seemed more ambitious, as the CIA and the American army had studied more intelligence gathering and examined reliable forces over the past year. The US has helped YPG and similar organizations in northern Syria

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>174</sup> Toprak Ergulen, Amerikalı profesör uyardı: IŞİD Kobani'ye yeniden saldırabilir, 12 November 2015, <https://myreportsny.com/2015/11/12/amerikalı-profesör-uyardı-isis-kobaniye-yeniden-saldirabilir/> Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>175</sup> Çınar'ın Sesi, ABD Kobani'de IŞİD'e havadan saldırdı, 5 October 2014, <http://www.cinarinsesi.com/abd-kobanide-isisde-havadan-saldirdi-63026h.htm>, Accessed 7 May 2018

<sup>176</sup> Hürriyet Gazetesi, CIA eski direktörü Petraeus'tan şaşırılan IŞİD açıklaması, 2 September 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/cia-eski-direktoru-petraeustan-sasirtan-isis-aciklamasi-29966960>, Accessed 7 May 2018

and spend \$ 700 million to train and equip them to fight the ISSD. But when we looked at the result, this program, which was planned by America, was brought to an unfortunate end<sup>177</sup>. It was understood that the rebels wanted to fight against the Assad's army rather than ISIS even when they moved to Saudi Arabia for training. The result is a much larger number of militant deaths. Almost all of them lost their lives when they entered Syria again.

There seemed to be progress when we looked at Obama's operations in pieces and examined each tactical move separately. However, foreign warriors continued to flock to the region, ISIS hardly played its part. Assad's army was still very crowded, although it seemed to be in danger, and after Russia sent the tanks and warplanes to the region in September 2015, it recovered its strength to a great extent<sup>178</sup>. With this move of Russia, America has helped to show that Putin wants to reflect his own power in the region. But Putin said that Russia was not directly involved in the struggle against terrorists, but always will support the fight against them and he added that he had no ambition to control the region<sup>179</sup>. We can say that Russia has the desire to have a say in the region where it will receive an appreciation. Because it has helped the region in the Cold War period and any help will be welcomed by the region.

Obama was also open to attractive options in terms of his military stance. The Syrian Kurds were succeeding in their struggle<sup>180</sup>. For this reason, Obama approved plans for delivering more arms and to Kurds and the deployment of American Special Forces to accompany and escort Kurdish in secret operations and for raids on places where ISIS is strong<sup>181</sup>. Obama has given six casualties in actions until he announced those plans to the public.

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<sup>177</sup>Hürriyet Gazetesi, Şok iddia! ABD'den YPG'ye 700 milyon dolarlık silah, 14 September 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/sok-iddia-abdden-ypgye-700-milyon-dolarlik-silah-40578334>, Accessed 8 May 2018

<sup>178</sup>Milliyet Gazetesi, Rusya, Suriye'ye tank ve ağır silah gönderdi, 16 September 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/rusya-suriye-ye-tank-ve-agir/dunya/detay/2118186/default.htm>, Accessed 8 May 2018

<sup>179</sup>Posta Gazetesi, Putin: Esad'a destek veriyoruz çünkü..., 28 September 2018, <http://www.posta.com.tr/putin-esada-destek-veriyoruz-cunku-haberi-303389>, Accessed 8 May 2018

<sup>180</sup>BBC Türkçe, Daily Telegraph yazarı: Kürtlerin IŞİD'e karşı cesareti ödüllendirilmeli, 31 August 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-37227624>, Accessed 8 May 2018

<sup>181</sup>Sözcü Gazetesi, ADB Irak'a 275 asker gönderdi, 17 July 2014, <https://www.sozcü.com.tr/2014/dunya/abd-iraka-275-asker-gonderdi-534427/>, Accessed 8 May 2018

#### **4.4. New Era in U.S. - Russia Relations in the Middle East**

In previous sections mainly Obama's Middle East policies were discussed. When the Middle East is in question Russia and its policies towards the region should also be underlined. Any comment on the Middle East politics without taking consideration of Russian policies will be incomplete. Obama's 2009-2017 succession of the American presidency is a topic that can be discussed under a separate topic, but rather than criticizing the Obama era, it would be more accurate to deduce from the policies Obama implements.

The fact that Obama's presidency as first African American president has led to the birth of a number of positive thoughts. When we examine them under two separate headings, we have shown the hopes that the uneasiness of the people in the Bush era will disappear in terms of domestic politics, as well as the signals that excessive military investments during the Bush era may change with Obama, which negatively affects America's economy. On the other side of the issue, we can say that in foreign policy Obama has taken over a wreck from the Bush era for his own period. The US image that was destroyed during the Bush era and Obama posed to restore it. The fact that Obama is the president of the United States has received positive transformations in foreign policy as well as in domestic politics. One of the most basic reasons for this was that it had a Muslim name and that it had grown up in a Muslim family environment, which promised hope for people living in the Middle East. Unfortunately, Obama's Muslim name and Muslim family did not help to find a solution for the Middle East. Because Obama, who built his foreign policy on soft power, saw Middle East as a swamp, and a possible chaos directly affected the intervention of others. He took a secondary role instead of direct intervention by America. We can give the crisis in Libya as an example. As mentioned earlier, the United States stayed in the secondary position and wanted France and NATO to intervene in the crisis. We can say that by this policy America has lost much more than the loss of image that it lived in the Bush era namely dominance in the Middle East.

While the Middle East region is always the most important foreign policy issue for America, it also has a separate prescription for Russia, which has been in contention for years. Although America's intentions of being in the Middle East include the

concentration of both Israel and oil resources in this region, another cause is to remove the countries that Russia supports in the Cold War era and then re-sponsored countries after 2000. In order to make all of this understandable, it is helpful to mention Russia and America's past struggles in the Middle East.

#### **4.4.1. Relations with Russia during Cold War**

It can be said now that there is no reason for the "battles" between the US and Russia after the Cold War, and that the sides can now be "partners". After the collapse of the USSR, various agreements signed between the two countries also attracted attention as a sign of the close proximity of the United States and Russia<sup>182</sup>. In particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin's involvement with the United States after the September 11 incidents did not interfere with the favorable atmosphere of the post-cold war between the two countries. If Russia's situation is taken into account, we can also say that the US is not the force to be opposed in case of intervention in the Middle East. In a certain period of time, the two sides collaborated not only on the mutual reduction of nuclear weapons and fight against terrorism, but also on the solution of problems in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific geography. The inclusion of Russia into the G-7 and the conversion of the G-7 into the G-8, the overlooking of the US of the anti-democratic policies of the Kremlin made it possible for relations between the two countries to reach a new dimension which was last seen in the Second World War<sup>183</sup>. However, the perceived problem of the Cold War, the lack of mutual insecurity, and the lack of a co-operative mechanism that interests both sides have prevented the partnership agreements from being strengthened, causing the relations between the two countries to be stretched at a level that does not resemble the Cold War era.

The reasons which make Russia and the United States rivals at the beginning of the 21st century were not much different from those that started the Cold War between the parties after the Second World War. The ambition of the United States to

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<sup>182</sup>Sergey Rogov, "Çego Jdaty Ot Amerikanskih Vıborov?", [www.lenta.ru/conf/rogov/](http://www.lenta.ru/conf/rogov/), Accessed 26 April 2018

<sup>183</sup>İlyas Kamalov, Moskova'nın Rövanşı: Putin Dönemi Rus Dış Politikası, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2008, p. 23-41.

control The Middle East, the Balkans, with the Asia-Pacific, and to intervene in the geography of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which Russia calls the "backyard", its desire to pull the countries in this geography out of Russia and pull them to its side, to place missile defense system in Eastern Europe, to attract the international community's attention to the Kremlin's anti-democratic attitudes, which once regarded as Russia's internal policy, caused the opposition of the Russia which was re-emerging as a super power with the help of rising oil prices. Moscow not refraining from using its energy resources as a tool in its foreign policy by using its veto power in United Nations and by establishing close cooperation with the countries which the United States put on the black list has begun to complicate the efforts of the Us in many areas. As a result, not only did the parties agree to suspend nuclear weapons, but they also embarked on an unrelenting struggle in the vast geographies spreading from Iran to Kosovo, from Ukraine to Afghanistan. When Georgia attacked South Ossetia and then Russia occupied Georgia, the relations between the two countries dragged out completely<sup>184</sup>. After the tension in the Caucasus, the sides started to show military strength. While the US has accelerated its efforts to deploy missile shielding systems in Eastern Europe, Russia has repeated its explanations that it will direct its own missiles to Europe. Also, under NATO flag, when the US ships entered the Black Sea, the Kremlin administration sent its military ships to the Mediterranean, the Arctic and the Caribbean. The desire to get a rematch has never come to an end, as the achievement of one of the parties in any issue is described as the heavy defeat of the other side.

Despite the economic crisis that has shaken the whole world over the last few years, presidential elections in the US have put Russian-American tension in the shadow, but the most important problems waiting for the new US president are undoubtedly relations with Russia. In this context, it would be useful to remember that Obama made statements about Russia before the election.

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<sup>184</sup>İlyas Kamalov, "Güney Kafkasya'da Galibi Olmayan bir Savaş ve Sonuçları", *Stratejik Analiz*, no.102, 2008, p. 58-65.

#### 4.4.2. Obama's view of Russia

In the United States, there were people who demand reconsideration of relations with Russia, and proposals to remove Russia from the G-8. Before the presidential election, Republican McCain's stance on Russia was more severe than Obama's. McCain stressed that Russia should be isolated as it was once done to the USSR. But Obama pointed out that the dialogue with Russia should be continued on many issues, particularly on the issue of proliferation of nuclear weapons<sup>185</sup>.

Obama declared that he was ready to negotiate not only with Russia, but with Iran and North Korea, as opposed to McCain, who made his political identity during the Cold War, fought in Vietnam, and saw no difference between the USSR and Russia<sup>186</sup>. Therefore, it will be easier for the US to launch a new dialogue with Russia during the Obama period. Again, Obama's election encouraged Russian officials about a change of attitude, as Obama's opposition to the US's deployment of a missile shield system to Eastern Europe and one of the most important reasons for the tension between Russia and the United States. Although it is unexpected that the US will step back in the Obama period, it is possible to predict that the process will slow down and that the issue will come to a new dimension. Again, the fact that Obama will not begin to directly meet with the leaders of the countries listed on the black list during the Bush era, especially Iran, will temporarily reduce the incentive for Russia to cooperate with these countries.

Although American elections are closely followed in Moscow, the Russian authorities are hesitant to make any statements about elections or candidates. However, in the 2004 elections, Putin was openly supportive of Bush and was the first to congratulate him<sup>187</sup>. The silence of the Russian authorities until the very last moment can be explained by the desire of Moscow to try to get away from the elections, to show that they are indifferent between the candidates and their intention not to step back in relations with the US. It is just a coincidence that Medvedev's National

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<sup>185</sup> İlyas Kamalov, Başkan Barack Obama ve Rusya – ABD İlişkilerinin Geleceği, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/files/OA/2/8ilyas.pdf>, p:66, Accessed 17 May 2018

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.68

<sup>187</sup> Hürriyet Gazetesi, Putin Bush'un zaferinden memnun, 3 November 2004, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/putin-bushun-zaferinden-memnun-38662558>, Accessed 26 April 2018

speech in the Federal Council on November 5, 2008 overlap with the American Presidential Election Day. However, Medvedev dedicated a considerable part of his remarks in relation to the US, reflecting Russian expectations of the Obama era. Medvedev has indicated that he is ready for dialogue with the new US administration and consensus on mutual interests, but he also expressed his discomfort with the US policy<sup>188</sup>. The most disturbing issues for Moscow are the missile shield systems that the US wants to place in Eastern Europe, the expansion of NATO in the US-led direction, and the international system perception of the United States. We can say that these issues also occupy the agenda of Russian-American relations in Obama period. As a result, Obama's second term can be seen as the beginning of a second cold war when the relations between America and Russia are examined. But this remained limited during the Obama's American presidency but became more pre-screened by the end of Obama era<sup>189</sup>.

Obama at first attempted to work with Russia but events in the Middle East highly affected the outcome of his foreign policy. In particular, his soft power policy can be said to be one of the greatest factors in the weakening of America's Middle East power. As previously mentioned, Obama's views during the presidential elections and remarks in his speeches after he became the presidency showed what kind of foreign policy would be followed by Obama. There were some observers who claimed that the policies to be implemented could harm America. It was not hard to imagine that the future damage would be not from the Middle Eastern countries but from another country outside of the region. It seems that because of the ignorance of the US government they did not rightly guess that the greatest harm would come from Vladimir Putin's Russia. During the cold war period these countries directly confronted each other and create direct tension during the Cold War. However in the examining period there were no direct tension because everybody was acting in their own interests and tension arises from criticizing each other's politics.

For example, although the Ukrainian crisis and the occupation of the Crimea have both been criticized severely by both the US and Europeans, Russia ignored this

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<sup>188</sup> Kamalov, p.68

<sup>189</sup> Gareth Evans, Batı – Rusya gerginliği Soğuk Savaş dönemine ne kadar benziyor?, BBC Türkçe, 27 March 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/43551565>, 27 April 2018

situation. Apart from this, the fact that America is far away from the events in the Middle East has enabled Russia to dominate the region. Russia's diplomatic maneuvers prevented the US from potentially interfering with Syria, demanding that the Assad regime deliver all chemical weapons in its possession. In this case, Russia has moved America out of the game in this region, and Russia, which has benefited from the fact that DAES has a certain period of time in this region, has been uninterrupted in intervention and has tied the arm of America. In fact, we can say that basically Obama is responsible for this situation because he saw the region as a swamp.

Because of the description of what he sees as a marsh, as well as the fact that it is distant from the region make the America retreat from the internal confusion in the Middle East and Russia emerged as a shelter for the countries received aid during the cold war period. And as a result, we can say that Russia although has been defeated for some time has shaken the seat of America which alone ruled in world politics, and became dominant now in world politics in a certain dimension. In other words, the seat of America, which could not see the power of Russia, which had entered the recovery period after a period of loss during the cold war, was shaken by the northeastern country again and again.

In fact, we can say that the Obama period has become the beginning of America's change as it said in its own campaign and the only word that we can say when we consider the decisions made in foreign policy again and again is loss.



## CONCLUSION

During the period in question it is seen that Obama followed a soft power as he declared from the US presidential race until his last day in the presidency. Obama thought that America's image can be solved only through a diplomatic approach but we can say that he did not receive the expected turnout. At the same time it can be said that the Obama period was perhaps one of the happiest period for the American people. It is true that while Obama addressed some expectations some were remained unmet. This situation is the result of the fact that Obama was usually under the pressure of the circumstances which forced him to make a compulsory decision. Or in other words, the events on international scene highly affected Obama's policies; he could not direct the circumstances. It can be argued that the unexpected international events made the US government delayed in reaction to those ongoing affairs. In fact, this thesis addresses all those issues and tries to explain the performance of the Obama administration by explaining the effects of Obama's personal characteristics, internal dynamics and international forces in Obama's foreign policy decision making process.

Obama's positive message from the presidential race, his potential for people's hopes to blossom, and perhaps the most important of all having a peaceful character seemed to make him like America's perhaps most needed president in recent times. The influence of a president with such characteristics was expected to be great. Obama's goal was to reach all the masses through a carefully crafted change campaign. The change campaign seemed to be the beginning of an event perhaps not seen in America's history. Obama's presidency would first never experienced before in America. One of the Afro - American descent has never been an American president. In fact, the change campaign was exactly pointing to this. Being America's first Afro - American president meant that America would start to change. As a matter of fact, in 2008 presidential elections, masses also believed in change and that they gave their votes to make Obama new US president consequently he became 44<sup>th</sup> president of the US. The people were expecting too much from Obama. Obama was aware of the fact that he was taking over an almost wreckage which G. W. Bush previous President of the United States left and knew that he should work hard to prove himself and to meet the expectations. He had to make very careful policies for this aim. There were too

many distractions to focus on. In the inner dynamics there was an America where people's desires and economic problems should be addressed and in external dynamics the highly damaged image of the American image should be restored.

It can be said that Obama's presidency created an influence or affect like Abraham Lincoln once created. If we recall that Lincoln was a politician and president defending Afro-American rights in the American society Obama could be as another Lincoln. Of course, being America's first black president was more than that, because no African - American descent had ever been as American president. The change, which is the main title of Obama's campaign during the American presidential race, was already beginning here. The importance of the presidents' political history was explained in the Individual level analysis section. The diplomatic solution policy in Obama's campaign was aimed at realizing his dream inherited from his father. Obama, who made his father's idea of saving the world peace one of the main pillars of his policy was thinking that the problems faced by the Bush administration could also be solved peacefully during his tenure in the Senate. Obama has not changed his diplomatic solution advocacy when he became president of the United States and we can say that at least in this issue he is successful.

The characters of the presidents are not the only factors affecting their presidency and their foreign policy at the same time, what the public wanted was also important. The American people were unhappy at the excessive aggressive policies of the Bush administration. Although the government's policies were supported after September 11/11, the further aggravation of the administration led to the uneasiness of the American people. The military spending were destroying the economy and the losses of American soldiers in the Middle East were disturbing American people and directing them to look for other alternatives. In 2008, Obama's presidential nomination appeared to be the way out for the community. An expectation that Obama will listen to the demands of the people had emerged. Obama's promise as the US troops sent to the Middle East by the Bush administration would return to their countries as soon as possible made the people happy. Although the withdrawal of the troops in foreign policy did not seem to be so, compared to Obama's foreign policy words, the withdrawal of the troops seemed quite normal. Obama was giving promises about

foreign policy but at the same time was facing to fix problems in domestic politics. The economic crisis caused by the Bush administration has to be resolved. In addition to the crisis, the American people wanted him to develop policies to benefit from health. His approach in health issues, known in its own name as Obama care did appear to be one of the greatest steps taken in internal dynamics. As far as the issues at the international level are concerned, the external events are also play a determining role in foreign policy as the leaders' characteristics and interests of the countries. This is also true for Obama period. In other words, although the 44<sup>th</sup> American president's foreign policy is specific, the events in foreign politics have forced Obama to change his policies involuntarily.

At beginning of his presidency there were too many issues Obama had to pay attention to in his foreign policy. During the Bush era, America's international image was formally demolished. Aggressive Bush has completely changed America's image as a democracy and peace advocate. Obama had to change America's image. Obama thought the diplomatic solution was the right way to change America's image. When we look at the events that happened, there have been occasions when Obama thought it was the best way for America not to get involved. One of the biggest examples of this happened in the Libyan crisis. Obama was able to intervene in the crisis that occurred in Libya, if there were someone else in his place. Obama refrained from intervention and pointed to NATO, thinking that other countries should intervene by staying on the back.

Obama is a politician with a certain approach in foreign policy. But Obama has not always been comfortable with foreign policy making. From time to time he was forced to make decision on some occasions. The biggest example of this is the Arab Spring and the ISIS crisis in the Middle East. In these two crises that the Middle East countries did not expect, Obama did not know what to do, so instead of being intervened, he was found in the recommendations and explained his own thoughts.

Obama has taken some steps in foreign policy to regain his image of America's democracy advocate. Especially during the Arab Spring, he stated that he was against the military coup in Egypt. The defense of the military coup against Mursi in Egypt during the time of Obama, who advocates that military coups are against democracy,

is a contradiction with itself. We can think that it is important not to support military coup against Mursi during Obama's period when we consider that pro-democracy movements are important.

Although Obama has pursued a peaceful policy in the Middle East, we have emphasized the importance of other countries in the international system. America was regarded as the only power in the world politics after 90s, but it failed to recognize the re-emergence of Russia, which was developing economically and politically over time. That ignorance was regarded as the beginning of problems to be experienced then on. Obama was sometimes confronted with Russia during his time and was afraid of possible tensions however previous presidents could pursue policies as he would like in the Middle East or other regions without Russia's problems. One of the most obvious points we can criticize Obama's foreign policy is a passive policy monitoring. Obama is obviously not seeing Russia as a threat to them when he used the change campaign in the beginning of his presidency. The fact that presence of another power that may oppose American policies means that a new cold war may begin in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Obama, at his own time, unfortunately changed the image of America, and caused his power to be shaken.

As a result, if we examine the Obama period, it would be wrong to comment his American presidency covering 2008-2016 period as good or bad because Obama has encountered many different problems during his period. Therefore, at the beginning of the thesis, the question of how the individual domestic and international factors are affecting the Middle Eastern policy of the Obama period is asked. We can say that there is no only one factor affect Obama's foreign policy and each one has affected the foreign policy making differently which deserves separate evaluation. Obama has entered the presidential race over the will of the people in the presidential race and has concentrated on the will of the people during his presidency. Obama has taken the steps of self-reliance and has taken self-assured steps in foreign politics by the support of public opinion. In foreign policy Obama has had to endure the consequences of steps he has taken to change America's image. Obama has faced unexpected events such as ISIS and Arab Spring. It can be said he has failed because of his unresponsiveness in such events but he was surely successful in other occasions

such as Libyan crisis. The factors that determined Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East region are carefully examined explained in the thesis and more over the influence of previous presidents' policies are also put in focus in order to draw a clear picture for the description of the foreign policy decision process of the American presidents.

So what has been found after all research is Before examining the Barack Obama's foreign policy toward the Middle East in his presidential era, the effect of the individual, domestic and international factors on the formation of the foreign policy was discussed. It was found that the decisive factor in Obama's Middle East policies was the individual factor. The Obama's characteristic features are seen as the main derivers of the American Middle East policy and even the chaotic environment of the post-Arab spring and the weakening of the American hegemony in the Middle East emerged as the consequences of the decisions taken by Obama can be described as the reflections of his individual features.

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