GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE DILEMMA OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE ARAB SPRING: FROM *MORALPOLITIK* TO *REALPOLITIK*

PH.D. THESIS

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FEBRUARY, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the various stages of conceptualization, research, and editing of this dissertation. First of all, I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. A. Füsun TÜRKMEN, without whom this dissertation could not have been possible. Beyond her ability to pass on her expertise and insights in a variety of domains, she was a constant source of support and motivation. Her valuable supervision, encouragement, and immense scope of knowledge have not only guided me throughout this thesis but also enlarged my horizon and inspired my vision regarding the academic career ahead of me.

I was honored to have two other inspiring individuals on the supervisory committee. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Dr. Mesut Hakkı CAŞIN and Assoc. Prof. Beyza Ç. TEKİN for their encouraging comments, sharp insights, and for spending their valuable time to review my work. Also, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Prof. Dr. Mustafa KİBAROĞLU and Assoc. Prof. Selcan SERDAROĞLU POLATAY for sparing their time for the thesis jury and sharing their rewarding insights.

I have been lucky in the colleagues and companions who have encouraged and motivated me to complete this thesis. An immense debt of gratitude goes to Dr. S. Eren ÖZYİĞİT, the Chair of the International Relations Department at İstinye University, and my colleagues, Res. Ass. Ahmet GEDİK, Res. Ass. Enes KURT, and Res. Ass. Ceren Ece GÖCEN for providing me a comfortable working environment that allows me to focus primarily on my research and for motivating me in moments of deep stress. Also, I would like to express special thanks to Erdem VERAL, who, time and again, has helped me to overcome logistical difficulties for having the books and other resources that I could not easily procure in Turkey.

Last but not least, words are certainly not enough to express my debt and gratitude to my family for always supporting and encouraging me to follow the path I

desired in life. Without the support of my mother, Mine DONDURAN, and the inspirational guidance of my father, Bülent DONDURAN, who has watched me from somewhere over the clouds, I could not have been who I am today. And, of course, the patience, tolerance, understanding, and compassion of my wife, Cansu GÜNAYDIN DONDURAN, were what have enabled my persistence and devotion throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **II**

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **IV**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **VII**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **VIII**

RESUME ..... **IX**

ÖZET ..... **XIV**

ABSTRACT ..... **XIX**

INTRODUCTION **1**

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK **4**

RESEARCH THEME **16**

PART I- AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE MIDDLE EAST **41**

I- AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY THROUGHOUT HISTORY **43**

A- Historical Background: The Persistent Struggle Between Ideals and Interests 44

1- The American Foreign Policy Vision 55

2- The Impact of Strategic Culture 89

3- Domestic Context of U.S. Foreign Policy 99

B- *Moralpolitik* vs. *Realpolitik* within the Framework of U.S. Foreign Policy 117

1- The Alternation of Priorities 119

2- The Question of Intervention in *Moralpolitik* and *Realpolitik* 132

II- AMERICA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY 142

A- The Presidential Doctrines and the Middle East During the Cold War 147

1- The Truman Doctrine 148

2- The Eisenhower Doctrine 151

3- The Nixon Doctrine 161

4- The Carter Doctrine 169

5- The Reagan Doctrine 176

B- The Middle East Policy of the U.S. in the Post-9/11 Era 186

1- The Bush Doctrine 191

2- The Obama Doctrine 204

a- Obama and the Middle East 210

PART II- THE ARAB SPRING AND THE OSCILLATION OF THE U.S. APPROACH 216

III- THE ARAB SPRING AND THE UNITED STATES 218

A- The Wave of Change in the Middle East: "People Want the Fall of the Regime" 219

1- Egypt 227

2- Libya 236

3- Syria 240

B- The Changing Regional and International Dynamics 248

C- The U.S. Reaction in the Face of the Upheavals 257

1- Response to the Uprisings Across the Middle East 259

2- Ambivalence in Egypt 269

3- Military Intervention in Libya 277

4- Hesitation and Retrenchment in Syria 286

IV- DETERMINANTS OF THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE ARAB SPRING 299

A- Systemic Factors: The Return of the Great Power Rivalry..... 300

B- The Influence of Humanitarian Concerns 320

C- Domestic Constraints 327

CONCLUSION..... 343

BIBLIOGRAPHY 367

BIOGRAPHY 405

LIST OF FIGURES

Page Number

Figure 1.1: Funnel of Causality: Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy……...11

Figure 4.1: The U.S. Foreign Policy Pendulum in Egypt, Libya, and Syria.....342

LIST OF TABLES

Page Number

Table 1.1: Strategic Subcultures within the United States…….…….…….22

Table 2.1: The Cold War Doctrines Related to the Middle East…….…….146

Table 4.1: U.S. Foreign Policy toward the Arab Spring…….…….....340

RESUME

Deux concepts apparemment incompatibles mais parfois convergents, à savoir les valeurs libérales et les intérêts nationaux se font concurrence, depuis les premiers jours de la République, pour inspirer la politique étrangère américaine. En se basant sur les différentes interprétations des lignes tracées par les Pères Fondateurs, dans le domaine de la politique étrangère, la réponse à la question de savoir quel devrait être le principal moteur de l'action américaine au niveau international a toujours été à l'origine d'un débat. Cette nature dichotomique, illustrant le dilemme perpétuel, a ouvert la voie à l'émergence d'un modèle de comportement pendulaire qui souligne les deux contradictions fondamentales de la politique étrangère américaine le long d'un spectre politique, notamment entre *moralpolitik* et *realpolitik*, ainsi qu'entre isolationnisme et interventionnisme, désengagement et internationalisme. Le débat devient crucial quand il s'agit du Moyen-Orient car la région est apparue comme le carrefour de multiples intérêts idéationnels et géostratégiques des États-Unis, surtout depuis le début de la Guerre Froide. Le point central de cette thèse est donc le « Printemps Arabe » du point de vue de ces contradictions inhérentes à la politique étrangère américaine.

Le débat entre réalisme et idéalisme dans le cadre de la politique étrangère américaine a ses racines dans la genèse des États-Unis. Au cours des premières décennies qui ont suivi l'indépendance du pays, sa politique étrangère a été formée par une détermination catégorique de rester à l'écart des affaires des autres continents, surtout de l'Europe. En ce sens, Le premier Président George Washington a établi la première tradition substantielle en matière d'affaires internationales par son Discours d'Adieu (1796), dans lequel il avertissait contre des liens politiques permanents avec les pays d'Europe. A l'époque, la caractéristique dominante de la position internationale des États-Unis était l'isolationnisme ayant un caractère hémisphérique alors que la place des valeurs libérales sur lesquelles le pays a été construit était également cruciale dans la politique américaine. L'attachement à ces valeurs, telles que la liberté, la démocratie libérale et l'indépendance, et la conviction que les États-Unis

devraient soutenir, d'une manière ou d'une autre, les nations qui se battent pour telles valeurs découlaient de deux éléments fondamentaux de la culture américaine : l'exceptionnalisme américain et l'idée de la Destinée Manifeste (*Manifest Destiny)*. Alors que le premier met l'accent sur le caractère unique du peuple américain à plusieurs égards, le deuxième souligne le devoir divin - ou la Providence spéciale – accordé aux Américains pour la promotion des valeurs libérales universelles dans le monde.

En effet, les quatre écoles de pensée de la politique étrangère américaine, l'Hamiltonisme, le Jeffersonisme, le Jacksonisme et le Wilsonisme, se sont formées autour de ces contradictions fondamentales. Ils sont le produit d'une recherche de réponses aux questions de savoir comment les États-Unis devraient et peuvent s'engager avec le monde extérieur et quel devrait être le principal guide de leurs actions internationales. Alors que le Jeffersonisme et le Jacksonisme insistent sur une approche relativement introvertie à cet égard, les deux autres soulignent la nécessité d'une attitude proactive pour faire avancer les intérêts américains et promouvoir les valeurs fondamentales à l'étranger. De plus, les impulsions morales imprégnées d'une vision cosmopolite sont considérées comme les principaux déterminants de la politique étrangère par les Wilsoniens et les Jeffersoniens. Par contre, les Jacksoniens défendent une vision fondée sur un type de nationalisme étroitement défini and unilatéral tandis que les Hamiltoniens insistent sur la priorité des intérêts économiques and commerciaux. Étant donné que l'axe de cette thèse est constitué par le dilemme de *realpolitik-moralpolitik*, nous nous concentrerons sur l'école Wilsonienne car elle représente, avec sa nature idéaliste, la dimension *moralpolitik* du spectre politique.

L'ère de l'après-guerre civile aux États Unis a conduit vers une diminution progressive de la prévalence de la position isolationniste en faveur d'une vision pro-engagement. À la suite de l'engagement décisif des États-Unis dans la guerre contre l'Espagne en 1898 – considérée comme la première intervention humanitaire de l'histoire du pays, vu que l'objectif déclaré était de soutenir la lutte d'indépendance de Cuba envers l'Espagne, sans pour autant négliger une politique d'influence dans les Caraïbes - les fondements mêmes de la vision isolationniste ont commencé à être brisés. L'attitude détachée des États-Unis, qui se sont concentrés sur eux-mêmes à l'époque, a donc été remplacée par une vision plus favorable à l'engagement, illustrant le rôle croissant et approfondi des États-Unis au niveau international. À l'exception de

la période marquée par la vague de l'internationalisme wilsonien, il faudrait attendre la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale pour que l'attitude pro-engagement acquière une position dominante dans le domaine de la politique étrangère. Alors que les États-Unis sont devenus une superpuissance, engagée, de surplus, dans la Guerre Froide, l'isolationnisme a cessé d'être considéré comme une option durable pour la politique étrangère du pays, et cette transformation a fait passer le débat de l'isolationnisme-internationalisme à *moralpolitik-realpolitik,* en se concentrant essentiellement sur les principaux déterminants de l'engagement américain dans les affaires internationales. Bien que la convergence perçue des préoccupations morales et géostratégiques dans le cadre de la lutte contre le communisme, sans doute à quelques exceptions près, a globalement provoqué un déclin relatif de cette tension réaliste-idéaliste, la lutte pour éviter tout empiétement soviétique au Moyen-Orient - et certains d'autres régions - a maintenu le débat vivant.

La fin de la lutte idéologique et donc de l'ordre mondial bipolaire, n'a ni modifié la position centrale du Moyen-Orient dans la politique américaine ni mis fin au mouvement pendulaire de sa politique étrangère. En fait, les développements importants des années 1990 et 2000 qui ont déclenché des transformations radicales au niveau international, notamment la dissolution de l'URSS et les attentats terroristes du 11 Septembre, ont imposé des orientations similaires à la politique étrangère américaine. Washington a nécessairement adapté ses politiques à ces transformations résultant des deux cas, mais la tension réaliste-idéaliste inhérente à la définition de son intérêt national et à l'élaboration et à la mise en œuvre de ses stratégies est restée intacte. En d'autres termes, les changements structurels et institutionnels drastiques au sein du système international n'ont pas mis fin à l'oscillation du pendule de la politique étrangère américaine.

En ce qui concerne le Printemps Arabe, ce modèle de comportement pendulaire de la politique étrangère américaine a préservé son influence sur les décisions prises à Washington. L'oscillation était bien tangible dans la réponse américaine aux soulèvements arabes, en particulier en Égypte, en Libye et en Syrie. La réponse hésitante et équilibrée des États-Unis aux soulèvements en Égypte a ensuite été remplacée par une stratégie plus proactive et fondée sur des valeurs qui a abouti à une intervention humanitaire en Libye. Par la suite, la Syrie est devenue une débâcle pour les États-Unis, puisqu'elle a été forcée par les circonstances internationales et les

contraintes nationales à adopter un ton déférent, et la politique étrangère américaine a finalement évolué vers une direction plus réaliste.

Comme on peut le constater, l'interaction de multiples facteurs aux différents niveaux se trouve à l'origine de l'oscillation de la politique étrangère américaine au cours du Printemps Arabe. D'une part, les préoccupations morales ancrées dans l'ADN politique des États-Unis, nourries par des considérations humanitaires, déplacent le pendule vers la *moralpolitik*, comme ce fut le cas en Libye. D'autre part, les facteurs systémiques, tels que la réémergence de la rivalité des grandes puissances et le déclin relatif de la puissance américaine, imposent, comme on l'a observé en Syrie, une trajectoire orientée vers la *realpolitik*. De plus, avec un impact plus limité sur le mécanisme décisionnel, par rapport à ces deux autres groups de facteurs, les contraintes politiques internes - l'opinion publique et le Congrès - jouent un rôle secondaire mais assez significatif en affectant l'oscillation du pendule. À ce point-là, il faut se rappeler que l'impact de chaque groupe de facteurs n'avait pas la même force. Si les éléments systémiques semblent être les plus influents, les considérations humanitaires doivent être étayées par des circonstances favorables aux niveaux national et international, les exigences d'un intérêt national vital ou la forte probabilité de succès à coût modéré pour être le principal déterminant d'une action politique au niveau international. Les contraintes internes, à leur tour, dépendent principalement de l'un des deux autres groups de facteurs et ne jouent qu'un rôle complémentaire dans l'oscillation du pendule.

En ce sens, cette thèse vise à analyser le pendule inhérent à la politique étrangère américaine, qui a oscillé le long d'un spectre politique allant de la *moralpolitik* à la *realpolitik*, pendant le Printemps Arabe. Après avoir mis en avant le contexte historique, les origines et l'évolution de cet ancien dilemme de la politique étrangère américaine, nous analyserons, à travers trois études de cas, les facteurs qui ont provoqué l'oscillation incessante du pendule et sa réflexion sur la réponse américaine aux soulèvements populaires dans le monde arabe.

De plus, l'hypothèse selon laquelle les lignes séparant les domaines politiques nationaux et internationaux se sont constamment érodées au cours des dernières décennies constitue la base de l'approche théorique et méthodologique de cette recherche. Ce phénomène découle sans doute des développements suscités vers la fin des années 80, notamment la fin de la Guerre Froide, et des transformations radicales

engendrées par la mondialisation. Conformément à cette hypothèse, l'analyse de cette thèse est développée à travers une approche synthétique qui combine les facteurs internes et externes affectant la politique étrangère des États-Unis, dans le cadre réaliste néoclassique, en vue de développer une analyse du changement de l'attitude des États-Unis face aux manifestations du Printemps Arabe en Libye, en Égypte et en Syrie. De plus, notre méthodologie qualitative est soutenue par la pré-théorie à cinq dimensions de la politique étrangère de James Rosenau. En ce sens, les variables sociétales et externes, ainsi que les facteurs politiques internes, sont utilisées comme variables intermédiaires dans cette étude. Nous traitons donc le mécanisme d'élaboration de la politique étrangère comme une structure en forme d'entonnoir qui filtre les données d'entrée à travers les multiples variables intermédiaires aux différents niveaux.

La réponse américaine aux soulèvements dans chaque pays était le produit final d'une approche non doctrinaire, plutôt que d’une vision monolithique. Pour certains, une telle attitude a abouti à une politique incohérente mais en fait, elle a découlé du dilemme inhérent à la politique étrangère américaine. En effet, la source de cette approche hésitante était les difficultés rencontrées par Washington pour décider de suivre ses instincts moraux qui soulignent la nécessité de soutenir les manifestants pro-démocratie dans ces pays ou les exigences stratégiques imposées par ses intérêts et ses relations avec certains autocrates du Moyen-Orient. Alors que toutes ces inquiétudes ont provoqué une réponse ambivalente et controversée des États-Unis, un autre facteur qui a nourri l'hésitation de Washington était « la peur du pire » qui se base sur la menace d'une vague islamiste montante dans la région en raison ces troubles populaires. En effet, cette crainte n'était pas étrangère à la politique étrangère américaine. Tout au long de la période de la Guerre Froide, une considération similaire avait expliqué la tolérance de Washington envers certaines autocraties non marxistes. Dans le monde de l'après-Guerre Froide, et notamment de l'après-11 Septembre, l’Islamisme a remplacé le communisme, mais la peur est restée la même, ouvrant la voie à une réaction américaine ambivalente face aux soulèvements dans le monde arabe. Par conséquent, l'impact inégal de divers facteurs de différents niveaux a inspiré la direction de la réponse américaine au Printemps Arabe, alors que les préoccupations géopolitiques, moraux et stratégiques l'ont rendue ambivalente. Les origines du mélange de tous ces facteurs remontent aux débuts de la République, reflétant son dilemme inhérent.

ÖZET

İlk bakışta birbiriyle zıt gibi görünen, ancak zaman zaman uyumlu hale gelen iki kavram olan liberal değerler ve ulusal çıkarlar, ilk kuruluş yıllarından bu yana Amerikan dış politikasını şekillendirmek için rekabet halindedir. Bu bağlamda, "Kurucu Babalar"ın dış politika alanında belirledikleri çizgilerin farklı yorumlarına dayanarak, uluslararası düzeyde Amerikan eylemlerinin ana itici gücünün ne olması gerektiği sorusunun yanıtı, her zaman çeşitli düzlemlerde şekillenen hararetli bir tartışmanın kaynağını oluşturmuştur. Daimî ve içkin bir ikilemi vurgulayan bu ikili doğa, ABD dış politikasının özellikle değerler politikası (moralpolitik) ile çıkarlar politikası (realpolitik) ve buna bağlı olarak, izolasyonizm ile enternasyonalizm/müdahalecilik arasında şekillenen iki temel çelişkisini ortaya koyar. Bu sarkaç hareketi, Amerikan dış politikasını belirleyen bir davranış modelinin ortaya çıkmasının yolunu açmıştır. Orta Doğu söz konusu olduğunda ise tartışma, bölgenin özellikle Soğuk Savaş'ın başından bu yana Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin birçok düşünsel ve jeostratejik çıkarının kesiştiği bir bölge olması dolayısıyla çok daha önemli hale gelir. Bu çerçevede, bu tezin odak noktasını, Amerikan dış politikasına özgü bu ikili çelişki denklemi ve bu durumun, Washington'un Arap Baharı'na verdiği tepkiye yansıması oluşturmaktadır.

Amerikan dış politikası çerçevesinde realizm ve idealizm arasındaki tartışmanın kökleri Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin ilk günlerine uzanmaktadır. Bağımsızlığın kazanılmasını izleyen ilk yıllarda Amerikan dış politikası, diğer kıtaların, özellikle de Avrupa'nın meselelerinden uzak durmaya yönelik kati bir kararlılıkla şekillenmiştir. İlk Başkan George Washington 1796 tarihli *Veda Konuşması*'nda, ülkenin uluslararası ilişkilere dahli ile ilintili ilk önemli geleneği, Eski Dünya (yani Avrupa) ülkeleriyle kalıcı siyasi bağlardan kaçınılması tavsiyesiyle ortaya atmıştır ve bu ilke uzun yıllar boyunca önemli bir dış politika belirleyicisi işlevi görmüştür. ABD'nin bu dönemdeki uluslararası duruşunun baskın özelliği, kendi bulunduğu yarı küreye odaklı bir izolasyonculuk iken, ülkenin üzerine inşa edildiği liberal değerlerin yeri de Amerikan siyasetinde oldukça önemliydi. Özgürlük, liberal demokrasi ve bağımsızlık gibi bu

değerlere bağlılık ve ABD'nin bu tür değerler için savaşan ulusları bir şekilde desteklemesi gerektiği inancı, esasen, Amerikan kültürüne ait iki temel unsurdan kaynaklanmaktaydı: Amerikan istisnacılığı ve "Kaçınılmaz Yazgı" (*Manifest Destiny*). Bu kavramlardan ilki, birçok açıdan Amerikan halkının benzersizliğini vurgularken, ikincisi, dünya çapında evrensel liberal değerleri teşvik etmek ve yüceltmek için Amerikalılara verilen İlahi görevin -ya da "Özel Lütuf'un (Special Proividence)- altını çizer.

Bu çerçevede, ABD dış politikasına yön veren dört farklı düşünce okulu olan Hamiltonculuk, Jeffersonculuk, Jacksonculuk ve Wilsonculuk, bu temel çelişkiler etrafında şekillenmiştir. Bir başka ifadeyle, bu yaklaşımlar, Birleşik Devletler'in dış dünyayla nasıl ilişki kurması gerektiği, bu dünyayla ne şekilde ilişki kurabileceği ve uluslararası eylemleri için birincil kılavuzun ne olması gerektiği sorularına verilecek bir cevap arayışının ürünleridir. Jeffersonculuk ve Jacksonculuk bu konuda görece daha içe dönük bir yaklaşımda ısrar ederken, diğer ikisi, Hamiltonculuk ve Wilsonculuk, Amerikan menfaatlerini müdafaa etmek, geliştirmek ve diğer bölgelerde Amerika'nın savunucusu olduğu temel değerleri teşvik etmek için proaktif bir duruşun gerekliliğini vurgularlar. Dahası, kozmopolit bir görüşle de beslenen ahlaki dürtüler, Wilsoncular ve Jeffersoncular tarafından dış politikanın temel belirleyicileri olarak görülmektedir. Aksine, Jacksoncular dış politika anlayışlarını daha dar tanımlı, tek taraflı bir milliyetçilik üzerine kurarken, Hamiltoncular ise ticari ve ekonomik çıkarları önceleyen bir yaklaşımı savunurlar. Bu tezin eksenini *realpolitik-moralpolitik* ikileminin oluşturduğu düşünüldüğünde, idealist doğası ile değerler politikasını temsil ettiği için odak noktamız Wilsoncu düşünce okulu olacaktır.

Amerikan İç Savaşı sonrası dönemde, uluslararası arenada daha aktif olma yönündeki düşüncenin güç kazanması sonucu izolasyoncu görüşün baskınlığında önemli bir azalma yaşanmıştır. Küba'nın İspanyol boyunduruğundan kurtulmasına destek olmak gibi resmî bir amaç gütmesiyle ABD tarihindeki ilk insancıl müdahale olan (ve fakat Karayipler'de nüfuz elde etme amacını da göz ardı etmeyen) 1898 tarih İspanyol-Amerikan Savaşı'nda ortaya çıkan kararlı Amerikan müdahalesi, izolasyoncu yaklaşımın temellerini derinden sarsan bir dönüm noktası olmuştur. Uluslararası meselelere karşı içe odaklı bir biçimde somutlaşan mesafeli tutum, böylece, yerini, ülkenin uluslararası düzeyde büyüyen ve derinleşen rolünü yansıtır şekilde, ABD'nin uluslararası politikaya dahlinin artması taraftarı bir görüşe bırakır.

Wilsoncu uluslararasıcılık dalgasının damgasını vurduğu görece kısa dönem haricinde, söz konusu duruşun dış politika alanında egemen bir konum elde etmesi için ise 2. Dünya Savaşı'nın sonunu beklemek gerekecektir. ABD bir süper güce dönüşürken ve Soğuk Savaşla karşı karşıya kalırken, izolasyonculuk ülkenin dış politikası için geçerli bir seçenek olarak görülmez hale gelmiş ve bu dönüşüm, Washington'ın uluslararası politikaya dahlinin belirleyici unsurlarına odaklanmak suretiyle tartışmanın odağının izolasyonizm-uluslararasıcılık mücadelesinden *moralpolitik-realpolitik* ikilemine taşınmasına yol açmıştır. Ahlaki ve jeostratejik kaygıların, komünizm karşıtı mücadele bağlamında, bazı istisnai durumlar haricinde, kesişir hale gelmesi, realizm-idealizm rekabetinde görece bir düşüşe neden olsa da Orta Doğu'da -ve bazı diğer önemli bölgelerde- Sovyet etkisinin artmasını önleme gayesi bu tartışmanın hararetini muhafaza etmesine yol açmıştır.

İdeolojik mücadelenin sona ermesi ne Orta Doğu'nun Amerikan siyasetindeki merkezi konumunu değiştirmiş ne de ABD dış politikasının sarkaç hareketini sonlandırmıştır. Esasen, 1990'larda ve 2000'lerde uluslararası düzeyde radikal dönüşümleri tetikleyen en önemli gelişmeler olan SSCB'nin dağılması ve 11 Eylül terör saldırıları, ABD dış politikasında benzer yolların takip edilmesi sonucunu doğurmuştur. Washington, her iki olay sonrasında da politikalarını zorunlu olarak yeni ortaya çıkan uluslararası gerekliliklere uygun olarak yeniden biçimlendirmiş; ancak, ulusal çıkarın tanımlanması ve dış politika stratejisinin oluşturulması ve uygulanmasına ilişkin içkin realist-idealist ikilem ortadan kaybolmamıştır. Bir başka ifadeyle, uluslararası sistemdeki temel yapısal ve kurumsal değişiklikler, Amerikan dış politika sarkacının salınımına son vermemiştir.

Arap Baharı söz konusu olduğunda da ABD dış politika sarkacının salınımı, Washington'daki politika yapıcıların kararları üzerindeki etkisini korumuştur. Bu durum, özellikle ABD'nin Mısır, Libya ve Suriye'deki Arap ayaklanmalarına yönelik olarak şekillenen tepkisinde açıkça görülmektedir. Mısır'daki ayaklanmalara karşı kararsız ve dengeli bir karşılığın yerini Libya'da insancıl bir müdahaleyle sonuçlanan daha proaktif ve liberal değeler odaklı bir Amerikan stratejisi almıştır. Ardından, ortaya çıkan uluslararası koşulların yarattığı baskılar ve iç politika dinamiklerinin kısıtlayıcı etkisiyle daha edilgen bir tutum takınmak durumunda kaldığı Suriye, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri için bir fiyaskoya dönüşmüş ve ülkenin dış politikası, bu kriz çerçevesinde, daha realist bir yöne doğru evrilmiştir.

Görüldüğü üzere, farklı seviyelerde etkinlik gösteren çeşitli faktörlerin karşılıklı etkileşimi, Arap Baharı boyunca ABD dış politikasının salınımının kökeninde bulunan en önemli faktör olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bir yandan, insani düşüncelerle beslenen, ABD'nin siyasi DNA'sının önemli bir parçası olan ahlaki endişeler sarkacı Libya'da olduğu gibi *moralpolitik* merkezli bir yaklaşıma doğru iterken; büyük güç rekabetinin yeniden canlanması ve ABD gücünün göreceli olarak gerilemesi gibi sistemik faktörler, Suriye'de gözlemlendiği gibi, *realpolitik* odaklı bir yaklaşımı dayatmıştır. Buna ek olarak, her iki faktör grubuna kıyasla karar alma mekanizması üzerinde daha kısıtlı bir etkiye sahip olan iç siyasete ilişkin dinamiklerin -kamuoyu ve Kongre- sarkacın salınımını etkilemede ikincil ama önemli bir rol oynamış olduğu da aşikardır. Bu noktada, bu üç faktör grubunun etkisinin eşit olmadığı unutulmamalıdır. Sistemik unsurlar etkisi en güçlü olan dinamikler olarak görünürken; insani kaygılar, bir dış politika girişiminin temel belirleyicisi olmaları için ulusal ve uluslararası düzeyde şekillenen elverişli koşullar, hayati bir ulusal çıkarın gereklilikleri veya düşük maliyetli bir başarı olasılığının yüksek olması gibi etmenlerin desteğine ihtiyaç duymaktadırlar. İç siyasete ilişkin kısıtlayıcı unsurlar ise, çoğunlukla diğer iki faktör kümesinden birine bağlıdır ve sarkacın salınımında ikincil bir rol oynarlar.

Bu anlamda bu tez, Arap Baharı sırasında değerler politikasından çıkarlar politikasına uzanan bir spektrum boyunca salınan ABD dış politikasının içsel sarkacını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. ABD dış politikasının yüzyıllardır süregelen ikileminin tarihsel arka planı, kökenleri ve evrimi ortaya koyulduktan sonra, sarkacın sürekli salınımına neden olan faktörler ve bunun Amerika'nın Arap dünyasındaki halk ayaklanmalarına tepkisi üzerindeki yansıması üç örnek olay incelemesi aracılığıyla analiz edilmektedir.

Ayrıca, iç ve dış siyasal alanları ayıran çizgilerin son dönemde sürekli olarak aşındığı varsayımı, bu çalışmanın teorik ve metodolojik yaklaşımının temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bu fenomen, kuşkusuz, 1980'lerin sonlarına doğru baş gösteren ve özellikle Soğuk Savaş'ın sonuyla beraber ortaya çıkan gelişmelerden ve hızlı küreselleşmenin yarattığı radikal dönüşümlerden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu varsayım doğrultusunda, bu tezdeki analiz, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin dış politikasını etkileyen iç ve dış faktörleri neo-klasik gerçekçi çerçeve içinde birleştiren sentetik bir yaklaşımla geliştirilmiş ve ABD'nin, Libya, Mısır ve Suriye'deki Arap Baharı protestoları karşısında değişkenlik gösteren tavrı odak noktasına alınmıştır. Buna ek

olarak, nitel metodolojimiz James Rosenau'nun beş boyutlu dış politika ön teorisi tarafından desteklenmektedir. Bu anlamda, toplumsal ve sistemik değişkenler, iç siyasal faktörler ile birlikte, bu çalışmada aracı değişkenler olarak kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma kapsamında, dış politika yapım ve karar alma mekanizması, girdiyi farklı düzeylerde çok sayıda aracı değişken aracılığıyla filtreleyen huni benzeri bir yapı olarak ele alınmıştır.

ABD'nin, ele alınan her ülkedeki ayaklanmalara tepkisi, monolitik bir yaklaşımdan ziyade doktriner olmayan bir görüşün ürünü olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu tutum, pek çoklarına göre tutarsız bir politikayla sonuçlansa da esasen bu durumun kökeninde, ABD dış politikasının içkin ikilemi yer almaktadır. Aslında, ABD'nin, görünüşte kararsız olarak görünen bu yaklaşımının kaynağı, Washington'un bu ülkelerdeki demokrasi yanlısı göstericileri desteklemek gerekliliğini vurgulayan ahlaki içgüdülerini takip etme veya jeostratejik çıkarları ve bazı Orta Doğu otokratları ile uzun süredir devam eden iyi ilişkileri tarafından dayatılan stratejik gerekliliklere boyun eğme konusunda karar vermede yaşadığı güçlüklerdir. Tüm bu endişeler Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin kararsız ve ihtilaflı tepkisine neden olurken, Washington'un tereddütlü duruşunu besleyen bir diğer faktör, doğan bu toplumsal huzursuzluğun bir sonucu olarak bölgede yükselen bir İslamcı dalga tehdidinin altını çizen "beterin beteri korkusu" olmuştur. Aslında bu korku, ABD dış politikasına yabancı bir olgu değildir. Soğuk Savaş boyunca, Washington'un bazı Marksist olmayan otokrasilere karşı gösterdiği hoşgörünün kökeninde de buna benzer bir düşünce yer almaktadır. Soğuk Savaş ve 11 Eylül sonrası dünyada, İslamcılık, algılanan başat tehdit olarak, komünizmin yerini almış; ancak, korku aynı kalarak Arap dünyasındaki ayaklanmalara kararsız bir Amerikan tepkisi geliştirilmesine yol açmıştır. Bu nedenle, farklı seviyelerden çeşitli faktörlerin farklı güçteki etkileri, Amerika'nın Arap Baharı'na tepkisinin yönüne ilham verirken, jeopolitik, ahlaki ve stratejik kaygılar, kararsızlığa neden olmuştur. Tüm bu faktörlerin karışımının kökenleri, Amerikan devletinin kuruluş yıllarına kadar uzanmakta ve ABD dış politikasının içkin *realpolitik-moralpolitik* ikilemini yansıtmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

Two seemingly incompatible but occasionally convergent concepts, namely liberal values and national interests, have been competing for shaping U.S. foreign policy ever since the early days of the Republic. Based on the various interpretations of the foundations laid down by the Founding Fathers within the realm of foreign policy, the answer to the question of what should be the main driving force of the American action at the international level has always been the source of a heated debate. This dichotomy, illustrating its perennial dilemma, has paved the way for the emergence of a pendular behavioral pattern that underscores the two fundamental contradictions of U.S. foreign policy, notably between moralpolitik and realpolitik (or values and interests), as well as between isolationism and interventionism, disengagement and internationalism, as a corollary. The debate becomes crucial when it comes to the Middle East because the region has appeared as the crossroads of multiple ideational and geostrategic interests of the United States, especially since the beginning of the Cold War. The focal point of this thesis is, therefore on the so-called Arab Spring from the perspective of these contradictions inherent to U.S. foreign policy.

The debate between realism and idealism within the framework of American foreign policy has its roots in the early days of the United States. In the first decades following America's independence, its foreign policy had been shaped by a categorical determination to stay away from the affairs of other continents, in particular, Europe. The first president George Washington has set, in that sense, the first substantial tradition in relation to international affairs through his *Farewell Address (1796),* in which he warned against permanent political ties with other countries, meaning mainly Europe. While the dominant feature of the U.S. stance at the international level in this era was isolationism with a hemispheric character, the place of the liberal values on which the country was built was also crucial in American politics. The commitment to these values, such as freedom, liberal democracy, and independence, and the conviction that the U.S. should support, in one way or another, the nations that fight

for such values stemmed from two fundamental elements of the American culture: American exceptionalism and the concept of Manifest Destiny. While the former emphasizes the uniqueness of the American people in many respects, the latter underscores the Divine duty -or the Special Providence- assigned to the Americans for promoting universal liberal values across the world.

Indeed, the four schools of thought of U.S. foreign policy, namely Hamiltonianism, Jeffersonianism, Jacksonianism, and Wilsonianism, are shaped around these fundamental contradictions. They are the products of a quest for answers to the questions of how the United States should and can engage with the outside world and what should be the primary guide for its international actions. While Jeffersonianism and Jacksonianism insist on a relatively introverted approach in this regard, the other two emphasize the necessity of a pro-active attitude in advancing American interests and promoting its core values abroad. Moreover, the moral impulses imbued with a cosmopolitan view are seen as key determinants of foreign policy by Wilsonians and Jeffersonians. The Jacksonian and Hamiltonian visions, on the other hand, advocate a parochial and unilateral form of nationalism and the primacy of commercial and economic interests, respectively. Given that the axis of this thesis is constituted by the values-interests binary, our focus will be on the Wilsonian school as it represents, with its idealistic nature, the *moralpolitik dimension* of the policy.

The post-Civil War era in the United States witnessed an incremental decrease in the prevalence of the isolationist stance in favor of a pro-engagement vision. Following a decisive American engagement in the war against Spain in 1898 -the first humanitarian intervention in U.S. history as the proclaimed target was supporting Cuba's quest for independence from Spain (not to mention the parallel target of becoming influential in the Caribbean)- the very foundations of the isolationist vision began to be shattered. The detached U.S. attitude, characterized by an inward-focus toward international affairs was, thus, replaced by a more favorable view of involvement, illustrating the growing and deepening role of the United States at the international level. With the exception of the period marked by the wave of the Wilsonian internationalism, one had to wait for the end of WWII for the pro-engagement stance to gain a dominant position within the realm of foreign policy. As the U.S. turned into a superpower and was faced by the Cold War, isolationism has

ceased to be seen as a viable option for the country's foreign policy, and this transformation has shifted the debate from isolationism-internationalism to *moralpolitik-realpolitik*, focusing essentially on the principal determinants of U.S. involvement in international affairs. Although the perceived convergence of moral and geostrategic concerns within the context of the fight against communism, doubtlessly with certain exceptions, has overall caused a relative decline in this realist-idealist tension, the struggle to eschew any Soviet encroachment in the Middle East -and some other regions- has kept the debate alive.

The end of the ideological struggle has neither altered the central position of the Middle East in American politics nor ended the pendular movement of U.S. foreign policy. In fact, the significant developments of the 1990s and 2000s that triggered radical transformations at the international level, notably the dissolution of the U.S.S.R and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, imposed a similar course in U.S. foreign policy. Washington has necessarily adapted its policies to the unfolding transformations in both cases, but the inherent realist-idealist tension with regard to the definition of its national interest and the making and implementation of its strategies remained intact. In other words, the fundamental structural and institutional changes within the international system has not put an end to the oscillation of the American foreign policy pendulum.

As for the Arab Spring, this pendular behavioral pattern of U.S. foreign policy preserved its influence on the decisions of the policy-makers in Washington. The oscillation was unequivocally palpable in the American response to the Arab uprisings, especially in Egypt, Libya, and Syria. The hesitant and balanced U.S. response to the uprisings in Egypt was later replaced by a more pro-active and value-based strategy that culminated in a humanitarian intervention in Libya. Subsequently, Syria turned into a debacle for the United States as it was forced by the international circumstances and domestic constraints to assume a deferential tone, and U.S. foreign policy eventually shifted toward a more realist direction.

As can be observed, the interplay of multiple factors at different levels is found at the origins of the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy throughout the Arab Spring. On the one hand, moral concerns that are hard-wired into the political DNA of the United States, fed by humanitarian considerations, move the pendulum toward a *moralpolitik*-centered approach, as was the case in Libya. On the other hand, the systemic factors,

such as the revival of the great power rivalry and the relative decline of U.S. power, dictate, as was observed in Syria, a *realpolitik*-oriented trajectory. Moreover, with a more limited impact on the decision-making mechanism, compared to both these sets of factors, the domestic political constraints -the public opinion and the congressional processes- play a secondary but substantial role in affecting the oscillation of the pendulum. At this point, one must remember that the impact of these three groups of factors is not equal. While the systemic elements appear to be the most influential ones, humanitarian considerations have to be supported by favorable circumstances at the domestic and international level, the requirements of vital national interests, or the high possibility of a low-cost success in order to be the principal determinant of a foreign policy undertaking. The domestic constraints, in turn, mostly dependent on one of the other two sets of factors, playing a complementary role in swinging the pendulum.

In this sense, this thesis aims at analyzing the inherent pendulum of U.S. foreign policy, which has been oscillating across a policy spectrum ranging from *moralpolitik* to *realpolitik*, during the Arab Spring. After putting forward the historical background, the origins, and the evolution of the centuries-old dilemma of U.S. foreign policy, we analyze, through three case studies, the factors that have caused the unceasing oscillation of the pendulum and its reflection on the American response to the popular uprisings across the Arab world.

Moreover, the assumption that the lines separating the domestic and international political realms are constantly eroding for the last few decades constitutes the basis of the theoretical and methodological approach of this study. This phenomenon stems, doubtlessly, from the developments that occurred toward the end of the 1980s, notably the end of the Cold War, and the radical transformations generated by rapid globalization. In accordance with this assumption, the analysis in this thesis is conducted through a synthetic approach that combines the internal and external factors affecting U.S. foreign policy within the neo-classical realist framework, with a view to understanding and explaining the changing U.S. attitude in the face of the Arab Spring protests in Libya, Egypt, and Syria. In addition, our qualitative methodology is supported by the five-dimensional pre-theory of foreign policy developed by James Rosenau. In this sense, the societal and external variables, along with domestic political factors, are used as intervening variables in this study.

We thus treat the foreign policy-making mechanism as a funnel-like structure that filters the input through multiple intervening variables at different levels.

The U.S. response to the uprisings in each country was the ultimate product of a non-doctrinaire approach, rather than a monolithic vision. Although such an attitude, for many, resulted in an inconsistent policy, it stemmed, in fact, from the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the source of this seemingly hesitant American approach was the difficulties Washington had in deciding whether to follow its moral instincts that favored supporting the pro-democracy demonstrators in those countries or the strategic requirements imposed by its interests and its long-established relations with certain Middle Eastern autocrats. While all these concerns caused an ambivalent and controversial response by the United States, another factor that nurtured Washington hesitance was "the fear of worse" that underscores the threat of a rising radical Islamist wave in the region as a result of the popular unrest. Indeed, this fear was not unfamiliar to U.S. foreign policy. Throughout the Cold War, a similar consideration was what could be found in the root of Washington tolerance toward some non-Marxist autocracies. In the post-Cold War, and notably, the post- 9/11 world, Islamism replaced communism, but the fear has remained the same, paving the way for an ambivalent American reaction to the uprisings in the Arab world. Therefore, the unequal impact of various factors from different levels inspired the direction of the American response to the Arab Spring, whereas the geopolitical, moral, and strategic calculations caused it to be ambivalent. The origins of the blend of all these factors can be traced back to the early days of the Republic, reflecting its inherent *realpolitik-moralpolitik* dilemma.

"Our national determination to keep free of foreign wars and foreign entanglements cannot prevent us from feeling deep concern when ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

John F. Kennedy

INTRODUCTION

"The strength of a great power is diminished if it ceases to serve an idea"[1]

Raymond ARON

"Americans, being moral people, want our foreign policy to reflect the values we espouse as a nation. But Americans, being a practical people, also want our foreign policy to be effective"[2] said the former Secretary of State, George Schultz, who seems to summarize in a nutshell the inherent contradiction of the American political thinking with regard to international affairs.

The efforts to achieve these two sometimes contradictory ambitions at the international scene have long been at the core of the domestic discussion in the U.S. This dilemma has existed since the early days of the Republic, in the shape of an oscillation between isolationist tendencies and commitment to the core values.[3] As noted by George Schweigler, " [t]he struggle between realists and idealists over the pursuit of foreign policy goals is as old as the American Republic itself."[4] Even though the beginning of the nineteenth century is seen, by many observers, as characterized by the isolationist approach, the interventionist tendencies based on moral necessities or on strategic interests have also been visible in the foreign policy of the United States. "During the period of American innocence and isolation, the United States had forces stationed on or near every major continent in the world; its navy was active in virtually every ocean, its troops saw combat on virtually every continent, and its foreign relations were in a perpetual state of crisis and turmoil."[5] However, even if it has been

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[1] Raymond Aron, "En Quête d'un Philosophie de la Politique Étrangère", **Revue Française de Science** Politique, 3(1), 1953, p. 91.
[2] "Excerpts From Speech by Schultz", **New York Times Archives**, December 10, 1984, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/10/world/excerpts-from-speech-by-shultz.html (Access: 27.10.2018).
[3] Walter Russel Mead, **Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World**, Routledge, New York, 2002, pp. 3-10.
[4] George Schweigler, "Domestic Sources of US Foreign Policy", in. Bernhard May, Michaela Hönicke Moore (Eds.), **The Uncertain Superpower: Domestic Dimensions of U.S. Foreign Policy After the Cold War**, Springer Fachmedien Weisbaden, Berlin, 2003, p.60.
[5] Mead, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 26.

there all along, it is undeniable that the years when this pendulum became clear and a determining factor of American international actions coincide with the last years of the nineteenth century. Particularly, as Fareed Zakaria puts it, the presidency of William McKinley and "his declaration of war on Spain [1898] and annexation of the Philippines [1899]" constitute, in that sense, a veritable turning point. These controversial decisions "… launched the United States on a different path…" and since then, "… Washington had alternated between idealistic pledges it could not fulfill and well-meant but misguided crusades to change the world…"[6] This alternation of American foreign policy constitutes the axis of our thesis. We will, therefore, seek an answer to this question: To what extent does this dilemma appear throughout U. S. policy toward the Arab Spring? By examining crucial cases, we will investigate the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy during this process and try to evaluate the impact of the realism-idealism pendulum on the foreign policy choices of Washington toward the upheavals in the Middle East.

Since the beginning of the 1900s, especially following the election of President Woodrow Wilson, until today, two competing visions have shaped the traditional framework of the foreign policy of the United States. On the one hand, we have the idealistic approach to the realm of foreign policy, which is based on the values and other cultural elements along with their worldwide defense and promotion, and on the other hand, the realist vision that puts emphasis primarily on power considerations and vital national interests in the foreign policy formation and implementation process. In that sense, with regard to the foreign policy of the United States, the realism-idealism pendulum, or in other words, the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* dilemma will be central in our analysis. Moreover, the question of intervention in both these approaches will be tackled separately in order to avoid any misinterpretation that generally leads to see interventionism as an extension of solely *realpolitik* tendencies while non-interventionist intentions are considered as a result of *moralpolitik* considerations.

Within this context, our analysis will be limited to a region where the pendulum of American foreign policy has been particularly visible, especially since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, the Middle East, as "the most troublesome region for U.S.

[6] Fareed Zakaria, **From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998, pp. 181-182

foreign policy"[7] constitutes, so to speak, the testing field of this thesis. The U.S. engagement in the region has been considerably intensified since the second half of the 1950s. The political vacuum left by France and Great Britain following the Suez Crisis in 1956 was filled by the United States. The Eisenhower Doctrine, approved by Congress in 1957, through its emphasis on the "vital interests" in the Middle East, placed the region at a crucial position within American foreign policy during the Cold War.[8] Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the U.S commitment to Israel's security, the desire to control the energy transit routes and the natural resources of the region constituted the main driving forces of America's Middle Eastern policy. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the nature of the American vision related to Middle East affairs has undergone a dramatic change and this transformed view will constitute our main focus of interest.

Therefore, focusing particularly on the American policies after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, we will be analyzing the actions taken by the United States in relation to the Arab Spring that triggered the wave of structural changes in the region even though the results gained in different countries are not basically the same. In accordance with our main purpose, which is to analyze the dilemma that affected America's actions throughout this process, the cases we will be tackling are Libya, Egypt, and Syria, since in the American responses to these three cases the oscillation from *moralpolitik* to *realpolitik* is particularly palpable.

Finally, we will use neo-classical realism as a theoretical context, which is not only a theory of international politics but also a theory of foreign policy. As this particular approach integrates internal and external factors exerting a considerable impact on the shape of an actor's actions at the international level, it will help us develop a comprehensive analysis. As a matter of fact, while *moralpolitik* is part of the oldest political tradition in America, *realpolitik* has appeared progressively in conjunction with its international standing as a superpower. Thus, examining the impact of factors in both -internal and external- levels, within that framework, is key in developing a better understanding of the subject in hand.

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[7] Howard J. Wiarda, **American Foreign Policy in Regions of Conflict: A Global Perspective**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.107.

[8] Vincent Cloarec and Henry Laurens, **Le Moyen-Orient au 20e Siècle**, Armand Colin, Paris, 2012, p.117.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

"American foreign policy is not the mechanical calculus of the nation's goals and interests. Instead, its determination is the product of a complex political process anchored in tradition and colored by contemporary developments at home and abroad."[9] Thus, any theoretical framework within which the foreign policy of the U.S. will be analyzed ought to embrace multiple aspects of the policy formation process underscored in this definition.

Various theories can be used throughout the exploration of the foreign policy choices of the United States. Some of them accentuate the role of the international environment whereas, others insist on the importance of internal factors.[10] However, as seen in the definition, among various possible theories that could be used to explain American foreign policy, the one with the inclination to involve both domestic and systemic factors into the analysis must be chosen in order to put forward a comprehensive understanding. As noted by Zakaria, "[a] good account of a nation's foreign policy will point to the role played by the systemic as well as other factors."[11]

First of all, it must be noted that the discussion about Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) in the academic realm has not yet come to an end. The main question of this discussion is whether FPA must be seen as a distinct field of research with its own theoretical ground or a subfield of the International Relations (IR) discipline. The development of FPA has begun in the mid-twentieth century and intensified throughout the late 1980s. Although some progress has been made through the inclusion of the bureaucratic and organizational elements of the policy-making process as well as psychological factors into the analysis, these efforts could not lead to the emergence of a distinct theoretical ground. For this reason, it is not possible, in our opinion, to claim FPA as an independent intellectual field. Subsequently, the comparative approach, which was inspired by Rosenau's works, has not sufficiently filled this gap and FPA lost its attraction for a while. The first step to revive this domain is, therefore, to take it as a subfield of IR. As stated by Smith, Hadfield, and Dunne,

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[9] Eugene R. Wittkopf, Christopher M. Jones, Charles W. Kegley Jr., **American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process**, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont, 2008, pp.14-15.
[10] Brian Schmidt, "Theories of US Foreign Policy", in. Michael Cox, Doug Stokes (Eds.), **US Foreign Policy**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 10-16.
[11] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p. 17.

"the dynamics of foreign policy are found in a wide range of IR works."[12] Thus, to analyze the foreign policy of an actor, it is not needed to have an FPA theory. Any IR theory with relevant insights and components and with the support of "pre-theories" of FPA, if necessary, could be fully sufficient in explaining every international behavior of a state.

What ought to be underlined, at this point, is the importance of a distinction between the traditional IR theories that take the state as an opaque black box and the recent ones that respond to the contemporary requirements by avoiding a categorical state-centric and system-oriented stance. As new actors and predominantly economic new forces emerged and the interdependence of these new elements has increased, not only the nature of international relations has changed but also the theoretical tools that help us understand the inter-state relations have been transformed.[13] Besides, the conventional IR theories are concerned mostly by the operation of international affairs, the functioning of the international system and the states' reactions to it. To put simply, a theory of international politics explains the reasons why states with a similar position at the international level react in a similar way. However, to explain foreign policy dynamics, a broader perspective is needed. As pointed out by Kenneth Waltz, "… a theory of foreign policy would explain why states similarly placed in a system behave in different ways. Differences in behavior arise from differences of internal composition."[14] Given the scope and objective of this thesis, the intellectual position and theoretical structure of FPA will not be discussed to a further extent. In our opinion, the decision regarding the theory to be used for explaining U.S. foreign policy has to be made in parallel with the assumption that FPA is part of the IR discipline and that a relatively sophisticated IR theory that embraces all aspects of foreign policy dynamics will help us build our analysis.

Indeed, the choice of theory is made also in accordance with the requirements imposed by the post-Cold War world. To be clear, in a bipolar system guided by the ideological struggle, the foreign policy actions of states, especially the two

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[12] Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne, "Introduction", in. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne (Eds.), **Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, pp. 4-5.

[13] Steve Smith, "Theories of Foreign Policy: An Historical Overview", **Review of International Studies**, Vol.12, 1986, p. 13.

[14] Kenneth Waltz, "International Politics is not Foreign Policy", **Security Studies**, 6(1), Autumn 1996, p.54.

superpowers, were shaped, in general, by systemic factors. From the American perspective, for instance, the fight against communism, with its moralistic components, urged the United States to intervene in Vietnam and Korea at a time when the international distribution of power seemed favorable. Consolidated public support behind the ideology has been a facilitating factor for such assertive foreign policy moves until, at least, the last phases of the Vietnam War. Following the collapse of the "evil empire", however, this course has been dramatically changed. "The growing interaction of international and domestic politics complicates the task of state officials seeking to realize objectives in both realms" and in the end, it has become "…evident that the realization of international objectives depends meaningfully on domestic politics and economics."[15] In fact, this interplay between domestic and external realms has always existed but what recently has been transformed was its nature and impact on political issues. "The linkage of domestic interests with foreign policy actions for the United States (or for other countries) is hardly a new phenomenon. In recent decades, that linkage has been driven, and indeed accelerated, by the process of globalization."[16]

"The very division between home and abroad, domestic and foreign, inside and outside has been brought into question from a number of different viewpoints, conceptual and political."[17] This increasing interrelatedness between domestic and external factors is what the traditional theories, either realist or liberal, tend to disregard in the quest for explaining the foreign policy behavior of a given state. The realist view in accordance with its categoric stance which is associated with the assumption of the *Primat der Außenpolitik* (the primacy of foreign policy) prioritizes the latter whereas, liberalism, as a result of its inside-out approach, puts emphasis on the former.[18] This one-sided vision diminishes effectively the explanatory power of an analysis in the realm of foreign policy. To be clear, the foreign policy of any state, including the United States, cannot be explained, in our opinion, without any reference to its domestic sources as well as the international stimulus. As stated by Kenneth

[15] Michael Mastanduno, David A. Lake, G. John Ikenberry, "Toward a Realist Theory of State Action", **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol: 33, 1989, pp. 457-458.
[16] James M. McCormick, "Introduction: The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy", in. James M. McCormick (Ed.) **The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence**, Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2018, p. 3.
[17] Christopher Hill, **The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p. 1.
[18] Schmidt, **op. cit.** 2008, pp. 10-15.

Waltz in his seminal work, *Man, the State, and War,* "The third image describes the framework of world politics, but without the first and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy; the first and second image describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their result."[19]

The foreign policy-makers, regarding their decisions, have to take into account the reaction of various actors from different environments. While states and non-state actors at the international system constitute a significant portion of the audience, "… most tangibly, they must address their own constituents -the 'inside' of their community, as opposed to 'outside' for which they have no formal responsibility. They must face the fact that policy outcomes are vulnerable to events which are primarily 'domestic' and, conversely, that foreign policy impacts upon domestic politics."[20] The domestic sources, in that sense, "… reflect not only current concerns and interests but also long-standing traditions of foreign policy behavior and orientations… They [these traditions] structure the debate, both in the public realm as well as in the decision-making bodies, and thus influence policy outcomes. They tend to make some policies more likely than others."[21] Hence, in order to avoid this theoretical pitfall and to put forward an analysis as comprehensive as possible, we tend to use the synthetic view provided by neo-classical realist theory.

To begin with, "neo-classical realism is", as stated by Randall Schweller, "essentially the only game in town for the current and next generation of realists."[22] According to the definition offered by one of the precursors of this paradigm, Gideon Rose;

> "*it [neo-classical realism] explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents are realists because they take the state's place in the international system and its relative material power capabilities as a primary guide that*

[19] Kenneth N. Waltz, **Man, the State, and War: Theoretical Analysis**, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001, p. 238.
[20] Hill, **op. cit.** 2003, p.219.
[21] Schweigler, **op. cit.** 2003, p. 57.
[22] Randall L. Schweller, "The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism", in. Collin Elman, Miriam Fendius Elman (Eds.), ***Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field***, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 344-345.

> *determines the scope and ambition of its foreign policy. The reason why they are considered as neoclassical is that they believe the impact of such power capabilities on state's foreign policy action is indirect and complex and that systemic pressures must be filtered through certain intervening variables at national (unit) level."*[23]

Thus, neo-classical realists agree with the neorealist assumption that the relative power of states at the international scene is what primarily shapes their foreign policy choices. They combine it with the classical realist view that defends the importance of national-level variables related to statecraft and state-society relations in shaping the state's external actions. So, "… [its] analytical framework retains the rigor and theoretical clarity of structural realism… without sacrificing the practical insights about foreign policy and the complexity of statecraft found in twentieth-century classical realism."[24]

Within this neo-classical image of foreign policy, unit-level elements, as intervening variables, play the role of a filter between the systemic stimulus and the foreign policy outcome. In other words, external factors alone cannot compel a state to pursue any specific foreign policy. They can push or pull it in one direction or another but, a given foreign policy decision is eventually determined after they are filtered through domestic constraints. "…[V]ariables at the unit-level", therefore, "often intervene between the international system and state behavior to determine the precise nature and direction of a state's foreign economic, and military policy."[25] In that sense, neo-classical realism "… bridges the gap between second and third images."[26] So, it ends the spatial-divide (domestic-external) by taking into account the impact of domestic political factors on foreign policy action. By seizing the middle ground, neo-classical realists assume that the anarchical structure and the relative distribution of material power have a considerable impact on defining state's security interests and they also introduce the framework for a general foreign policy strategy. However, these systemic factors are not capable of dictating specific policies to

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[23] Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", **World Politics**, Vol. 51, No.1, (Oct., 1998), p. 146.
[24] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Robert W. Wishart, "Neoclassical Realism: Domestic Opportunities for Great Power Intervention", in. Jennifer Sterling-Folker (Ed.), **Making Sense of International Relations Theory**, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2013, p.47.
[25] Colin Elman, Michael A. Jensen (Eds.), **Realism Reader**, Routledge, New York, 2014, p.11.
[26] Colin Dueck, "Neoclassical Realism and the National Interest: Presidents, Domestic Politics, and Major Military Interventions", in. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p. 141.

decision-makers. Thus, without taking into account the domestic variables, systemic factors alone do not signify too much in terms of foreign policy behavior.

The involvement of intervening variables brings us to another critical point related to the concept of power in terms of foreign policy. Certainly, the power reserve at its disposal is one of the most determining factors that affect the foreign policy of a state. However, a perspective based on solely an outside-in or inside-out view inevitably prevents us from recognizing a significant distinction, which is the one between national power and state power. All national power in reserve is not available for international objectives because "… foreign policy is made not by the nation as a whole but by its government; consequently, what matters is state power, not national power."[27] "State power"[28] in that sense, "is that portion of national power the government can extract for its purposes and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends."[29] In other words, "this entails the resources that the state-level can extract domestically and deploy through foreign policy at the international level."[30] According to Walter Lippmann "[i]n assaying ideals, interests, and ambitions which are to be asserted abroad, his [ideal statesman's] measure of their validity will be the force he can muster at home combined with the support he can find abroad among other nations which have similar ideals, interests, and ambitions."[31] Furthermore, the availability of state power depends, in a broad perspective, on the extracting capacity of the government, as well as the nature of the foreign policy issue in question or public opinion on the matter. Bureaucratic and societal variables, therefore, play a central role in determining this capacity of a decision-maker and the volume of resources he or she can extract for the pursuit of foreign policy objectives. They push the decision-maker either to make certain concessions in exchange of public support for any foreign policy action or to make the domestically popular choice even though it is not, for him or her, what is required by the international conjuncture.

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[27] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p. 9.

[28] The concept of "national political power" defined as "the ability of state leader to mobilize their nation's human and material resources behind security initiatives" is developed by Thomas Christensen and it is very similar to Zakaria's concept of 'state power'. Thomas Christensen, **Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 11.

[29] **Ibid.**

[30] Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities", **International Studies Review,** Vol. 17, 2015, p. 647.

[31] Walter Lippmann, **U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic**, Little Brown Books, Boston, 1943, p.10.

Furthermore, “neoclassical realism's comparative advantage lies in its willingness to integrate ideational and material variables into a coherent explanatory framework."[32] Moreover, its top-down approach to state affairs and its analytical framework characterized by a multilevel nature, provide effectively, a strong basis for accurate explanations in terms of foreign policy actions of international actors on a wide range of issues. “… [N]eoclassical realist theory can explain political phenomena ranging from short-term crisis decision making, foreign policy behavior, and patterns of grand strategic adjustment of individual states, to systemic outcomes, and ultimately to the evolution of the structure of the international system itself."[33] Thus, neo-classical realism helps to increase the explanatory power of the realist paradigm and to broaden the range of issues that can be analyzed successfully within this perspective.

Nevertheless, the most common criticism toward neo-classical realism, especially coming from adherents of other strands of realism, is concerned with the determination of intervening variables to take into account while developing an analysis. As argued by Stephen Walt, “neoclassical realism tends to incorporate domestic variables in an ad hoc manner, and its proponents have yet to identify when these variables will exert greater or lesser influence.”[34] However, as demonstrated by Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell in response to these arguments, unit-level variables employed by neo-classical paradigm could simply be classified in four broad categories, notably, “images and perception of state leaders, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutional arrangements.”[35] They reflect various constraints on actors each regarding a different point of policy formation process and the use of these four ranges of intervening variables in a neo-classical analysis does not depend on the particularities of the case in hand. This means evidently that they are not chosen in an *ad hoc* manner. Moreover, they are taken into consideration with respect to the scope of their impact on decision-making and policy implementation process.[36] In that sense, it is ought to be underlined that the relevant domestic (intervening) variables of neo-classical realism are determined, rather than being *ad*

[32] Taliaferro, Wishart, **op. cit.** 2003, p. 48.
[33] Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, p. 1.
[34] Stephen Walt, “The Enduring Relevance of Realist Tradition”, in. Ira Katznelson, Helen V. Milner (Eds.), **Political Science: State of the Discipline**, W. W. Norton, Washington D. C., 2002, p. 201.
[35] Ripsman, Taliaferro, Lobell, **op. cit.** 2016, p.59.
[36] Ripsman, Taliaferro, Lobell, **op. cit.** 2016, pp.58-79.

hoc, based on their political importance, that is to say, their impact on the formation of foreign policy decisions and behavior.

In order to strengthen the explanatory capacity of our analysis, the "five-dimensional pre-theory of foreign policy" put forward by James Rosenau is going to be used within this theoretical framework.[37] In his study, Rosenau, focusing on the factors that affect foreign policy-making, offers a significant insight by putting forward five sets of variables as sources of foreign policy. These sets consist of the systemic, societal, governmental, role, and individual variables.[38] As opposed to the idea that the foreign policy behavior of an actor is shaped only by systemic forces, Rosenau's pre-theory insist on a funnel-shaped scheme composed of five filters at different levels.

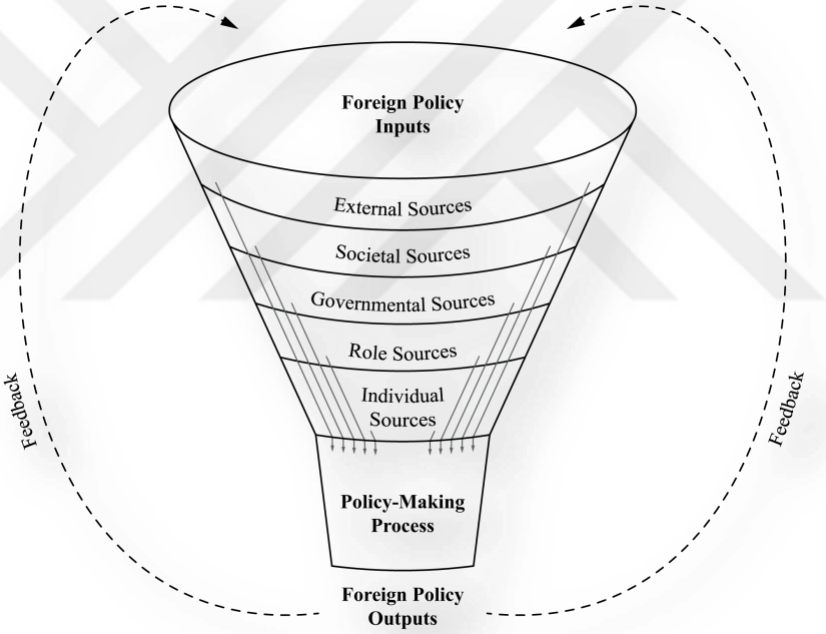


Figure 1.1: Funnel of Causality: Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy
Source: Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 18.

Thus, whatever the main force behind an actor's international behavior, as claimed by the pre-theory, it has to be filtered through this funnel before taking its ultimate shape. "The stimuli which produce external behavior must be processed by the value and decision-making systems of a society, so that it ought to be possible, as with rats in maze, to link up varying types of responses with varying types of

[37] James N. Rosenau, **The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy: Essays on the Analysis of World Politics**, Frances Pinter Publishers, London, 1980.
[38] Rosenau, **op. cit.** 1980, p. 128

stimuli."[39] At his point, one must understand that this theoretical framework does not imply that every single one of these sources has to be employed as variable in order to analyze any foreign policy decision. Depending on the nature of the actor or the case in hand, as well as the present international environment, the intervening variable that plays an effective role can be varied. These factors also affect the degree of significance of each effective variable in the foreign policy-making process. "Each of these five sources can be considered as independent variables that either individually or collectively help to explain the foreign policy behavior of the United States, the dependent variable."[40]

One of the five sets of variables, notably "societal variables", will provide us with a necessary perspective in determining our intervening variables. Focusing on internal influences on external behavior, the concept of societal sources of foreign policy puts emphasis on the non-governmental aspects of society which affect the state's foreign policy behavior. In this view, the national character and value orientation of a nation shape core values to promote ideology. The factors such as major value orientations of a state, its degree of national unity, the extent of its industrialization could be considered as some examples of societal variables.[41] Such factors are also critical in the sense that they have a considerable impact on the actor's capacity to extract and mobilize domestic resources that are required for a successful foreign policy. In that respect, the nature of the issue taken into consideration plays an important role in shaping foreign policy choices. Although the lines that separate them may seem arbitrary, it is possible, claimed Rosenau, to underline four issue areas: "the territorial, status, human resources, non-human resources." While internal and external factors have a different degree of impact on foreign policy actions regarding issues of different nature, societal variable, in that matter, plays a relatively more central role for status-area issues."[42]

The category of societal variables embraces effectively various subcategories such as the culture of the society, public opinion, state-society relations, etc. The cultural factors, since they have the capacity to shape the effect of other subcategories, seem the most central ones. Moreover, as we are analyzing U.S. foreign policy within

[39] **Ibid.** p. 123.
[40] Schmidt, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 8
[41] Rosenau, **op. cit.** 1980, p. 128.
[42] **Ibid.** pp. 162, 168.

the framework of its long-standing tradition, the cultural elements that serve as the basis of this tradition are, therefore, more relevant to our analysis than others. From this perspective, the components of political and strategic culture are taken as highly critical elements with a significant role in shaping the foreign policy decisions of an actor. "Foreign policy embraces the goals that the nation's officials seek to attain abroad, the values that give rise to those objectives and the means or instruments used to pursue them."[43] As seen in this description of the scope of foreign policy, cultural elements -values and principles- constitute the source of the objectives of a state at the international level.

As a matter of fact, incorporating the cultural factors in studies that analyze foreign policy is hardly a new phenomenon. In the traditional sense, FPA takes cultural elements as independent variables that have causal links to the foreign policy.[44] The concept of culture, in these works, is generally considered as a foundation, as a part, or as a resource of foreign policy.[45] However, the inclination to take cultural elements as independent variables not only diminishes the explanatory capacity of the analysis because of its inherent disregard of the systemic factors, but also makes the comparative approach almost inevitable, since the most reasonable way to claim that culture determines a behavior is to make a comparison between two actors having two different cultural traits. Instead, taking such factors in a secondary role as intervening variables, in our opinion, leads, in the end, to a more accurate and comprehensive interpretation of the foreign policy actions of an actor.

Given the fact that "[s]tates do not act passively to absorb cultural values and act as neutral channels for their expression,"[46] the main components of the nation's political culture, notably the political values, ideas, beliefs, and ideals, affect, under systemic pressures, the strategic preferences of the actor on the international scene. They do not substitute for systemic pressures that are more influential on foreign policy decisions in the long term. The cultural and ideational factors, in turn, exert a powerful impact as complementary components of this foreign policy-shaping

[43] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p.17.
[44] Jean-Frédéric Morin, **La Politique Étrangère,** Armand Colin, Paris, 2013, p.97.
[45] Frode Liland, "Culture and Foreign Policy: An Introduction to Approaches and Theory", **IFS Info**, No:1, 1993, pp. 5-34.
[46] David Ryan, **U.S Foreign Policy in World History**, Routledge, New York, 2000, p. 298.

process.[47] As stated by David Elazar, quoted by Wittkopf, Jones, and Kegley Jr., the political culture's influence "lies in its power to set reasonably fixed limits to political behavior and provide subliminal direction for political action."[48] In this sense, Goldstein and Keohane affirm that "… ideas influence policy when the principled or causal beliefs they embody provide road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals or ends-means relationships, when they affect outcomes of strategic situations in which there is no unique equilibrium, and when they become embedded in political institutions."[49] Thus, political culture, rather than determining directly any specific course of foreign policy action, offers a repertoire of relevant alternative policies to policy-makers. "Culture either presents decision-makers with limited range of options or it acts as a lens that alters the appearance and efficacy of different choices."[50] It sets, therefore, the agenda over which political contents take place.[51] In terms of foreign policy, the behavior of a state is determined by the systemic factors that are processed through a cultural filter. The values, beliefs, and ideas embedded in the political genetics of a society, along with its foreign policy tradition that has been developed throughout history, are the main components of this filter.

Even though its significance is relatively less than the cultural factors, public opinion might also have a considerable impact on foreign policy. Its influence depends, indeed, on the nature of the society under consideration. As for the United States, since it is a "society-dominant system," this kind of societal forces exert a profound influence on state behavior even in relation to national security issues.[52] First of all, the public opinion-foreign policy relation is closely linked to the realist-idealist debate. The liberal view, on that matter, is to engage public opinion, which they see as "force for enlightenment" in the conduct of foreign affairs whereas, the realist stance is quite skeptical regarding the public's involvement in foreign policy because "it [realism] has always been grounded in a pessimistic theory of human nature."[53]

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[47] Colin Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy,** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 166.
[48] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 246.
[49] Judith Goldstein, Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework", in. Judith Goldstein, Robert O. Keohane (Eds.), **Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993, p.3.
[50] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", **International Security**, 19(4), (Spring, 1995), p.42.
[51] David Elkins, Richard Simeon, "A Cause in Search of Its Effects or What Does Political Culture Explain?", **Comparative Politics**, 11(2), 1979, pp. 128-131.
[52] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit**. 2008, p. 280.
[53] Ole R. Holsti, **Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy**, The University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1999, pp. 2-5.

Moreover, as put by Thomas Risse-Kappen who compared the impact of public opinion in four liberal democracies, namely the U.S., France, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany, in the United States, even in relation to foreign and security policy, "[t]he openness of the political system provides the society with comparatively easy access to the decision-making process."[54] This openness, or the "weakness" of state apparatus, was what prevented the U.S. from becoming a "garrison state" by limiting the power of the state over society and economy during the protracted superpower struggle of the Cold War era[55] and it always acts as a restraining force in terms of foreign policy decisions. From that perspective, it is not unlikely that foreign policy decisions are made by taking into account the reactions at the domestic as well as international level.

In light of this investigation of the societal variables so far, it must be noted that, by reflecting the idiosyncrasies of the nation in every respect, they enable the emergence of an understanding of international politics within the society in question. This unique understanding, called "the national style," is notably useful to grasp every aspect of the foreign policy decisions of a state in relation to a wide range of issues. As put wisely by Steven Hook, "[t]he conduct of every country's foreign policy reflects its distinctive sense of place within the international system. This sense of place, in turn, is shaped by tangible factors such as geographic location, the availability of national resources, and the size and characteristics of the population. Other factors, such as a country's historical experience, also influence its national style."[56]

Thus, as a country whose ideational origins are found in the Enlightenment thinking, the national style of the United States is formed not only by some material factors but also by diverse normative elements. The cultural factors that historically have shaped its view of international affairs still have a considerable impact on foreign policy. "National core values and ideas, that find expression in public rhetoric, are likely to influence the way national policymakers and public opinion perceive and respond to international events."[57] The beliefs and values are considered as "the basis

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[54] Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies", **World Politics**, 43 (4), (Jul. 1991), p. 491.
[55] Aaron L. Friedberg, "Why Didn't the United States Become a Garrison State?," **International Security**, 16 (4), (Spring, 1992), pp. 109-142.
[56] Steven W. Hook, **U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power**, CQ Press, Washington, 2008, p.15.
[57] Eugenio Lilli, **New Beginning in US-Muslim Relations: President Obama and the Arab Awakening,** Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p. 24.

of America's foreign policy actions… because policy actions are always taken within such a value context."[58] In that sense, the American "exceptionalism" and messianic notion of "Manifest Destiny", as parts of America's political culture, add, to some extent, a moralistic dimension to U.S. foreign policy as they are essentially based on the so-called moral superiority of the American nation. These concepts are, in this sense, fundamental principles of one of the two competing foreign policy approaches, namely idealism.[59] Moreover, it is this competition between the realist impulses and the Wilsonian ideals that put forward the foreign policy dilemma, which is the main point of interest of our analysis.

In sum, the limits of our thesis in theoretical terms will be shaped by the neo-classical realist insights related to the foreign policy of the United States. This perspective will effectively be supported by the five-dimensional pre-theory of foreign policy suggested by Rosenau, and the issues treated in this analysis will be evaluated depending on the area to which they belong in order to take the most relevant societal variables into account rather than being chosen in an arbitrary manner. As we are analyzing American foreign policy that has deep roots in historical experience and culture, the non-tangible societal variables will be our main methodologic tools in this thesis.

Research Theme

"A foreign policy consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable power surplus in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power."[60] According to this concise definition, the foreign policy of a state is determined by the weight of two main concepts in the formation process: its commitments and power. With regard to the United States of America, its commitment to universal liberal and democratic values, and to the security of its allies, along with its considerations of self-evident national interests and power, are seen as the guide of its foreign policy choices. The question is which of these forces has been or is at the driving seat and what reflection does this situation create at the international level?

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[58] James M. McCormick, **American Foreign Policy and American Values**, F. E. Peacock Publishers, Illinois, 1985, p.1.
[59] Ryan, **op. cit.** 2000, p.8.
[60] Lippmann, **op. cit.** 1943, p.9.

The debate between realism and idealism within the framework of American foreign policy has its roots in the early days of the United States. "The evolution of US foreign policy oscillated between the pursuit of power and material opportunity on the one hand and the maintenance of its stated ideals on the other."[61] Throughout the first decades following America's independence, its foreign policy had been shaped by a categorical determination to stay away from the affairs of other continents, in particular, Europe. The first president, George Washington has set, in that sense, the first major tradition in relation to international affairs. In 1796, in his *Farewell Address*, President Washington warned against permanent ties with other countries and insisted that "the great rule of conduct for [the U.S.] in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible."[62] These remarks by President Washington "attained almost a religious stature"[63] and non-entanglement, remained for a long time, as the primary strategic objective of American foreign policy. Thus, "isolationism," one of the deeply rooted foreign policy traditions in America, finds its origins in this address and throughout the nineteenth century, particularly under the influence of the "Monroe Doctrine" enunciated in 1823, became the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. As a matter of fact, during this period, the isolationist stance of the American administrations gained a hemispheric character, illustrated by the Westward expansion and the heavy involvement in Latin America.[64] "Ironically, the Monroe Doctrine, which had been initiated to prevent intervention from abroad, was now used to justify American intervention in the Western Hemisphere."[65] The claim that the nineteenth century, with regard to U.S. foreign policy, was marked by isolationism within the national borders is, therefore, nothing but an illusion. In fact, "virtually every presidential administration from Washington's to Wilson's sent American forces abroad or otherwise faced a war crisis with a great European power."[66] As a result, what appeared is "…a post-1823 world in which a de facto Anglo-American

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[61] Ryan, **op. cit.** 2000, p.3.
[62] "George Washington's Farewell Address to the People of the United States," Senate Document No: 106-21, 2000, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21/pdf/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21.pdf (Access: 11.11.2018).
[63] Colin Dueck, "Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy: Explaining America's Peculiar Path to World Power", **Security Studies**, 14(2), (April-June 2005), p. 221.
[64] Mead, **op. cit.** 2002, pp. 8-29.
[65] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 15.
[66] Walter Russell Mead, "The American Foreign Policy Legacy", **Foreign Affairs**, 81(1), (January/February 2002), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2002-01-01/american-foreign-policy-legacy (Access: 12.11.2018).

condominium had been established in the Western Hemisphere."[67] While the country followed a relatively interventionist path in its own hemisphere, America had not engaged in the troubles that occurred in Europe of Napoleonic Wars and in the following century that led to WWI. In his famous address of 1821, then-Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States (1825-1829), warned the Americans regarding the dangers of excessive idealism and pointed at the American vision by stating that "[w]herever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."[68] The commitment to the values, such as freedom and independence and the conviction that the U.S. should support, in one way or another, the nations that fight for such values stem, actually, from two basic elements of American culture, namely, American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny.

The origin of the term exceptionalism can be found in the *opus magnum* of French writer Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*:

> *"The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin -their exclusively commercial habits- even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts –the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits, without relapsing into barbarism- a thousand special causes, of which I have only been able to point out the most important- have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passions, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite drawing the native of the United States earthward: his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and*

[67] William Earl Weeks, **The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Dimensions of the Early American Empire, 1754-1865, Vol:1**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013, p.118.
[68] Carl C. Hodge and Cathal J. Nolan (Eds.), **U.S. Presidents and Foreign Policy: From 1789 to the Present**, ABC Clio, Santa Barbara, 2007.

distracted glance to heaven. Let us cease then to view all democratic nations under the mask of the American people…"[69]

Thus, the "exceptional" character of the American nation has a long pedigree in American history and dates back to the Pilgrims' arrival on the Continent. When the Puritan leader, John Winthrop stated, in 1630, while sailing to Massachusetts Bay, that their objective was to make the new settlement a "city upon a hill," he certainly hoped to create a model to be followed by the rest of the world.[70]

This view of Americans as exceptional people has inevitably considerable reflections on the vision of the newly founded Republic with regard to world affairs. As put by one of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, America "was the bearer of a new diplomacy, founded on the confidence of a free and virtuous people that would secure its ends based on the natural and universal rights of man."[71] This new approach to diplomacy was what separated the United States from its European counterparts and what offered to the Americans an opportunity to avoid the *raison d'état*-oriented order of the Old World's international affairs.

Furthermore, the self-defined exceptional character of the United States is closely tied to the liberal values espoused by the American nation. As a country populated by immigrants, the U.S. defines itself, in terms of values and ideals shared among its members instead of ethnic origins. In that sense, the assumptions of liberalism in the Lockean sense are heavily embedded in the social, economic, and political life of the United States[72] and ultimately become more than simple principles and turn into a proper ideology. "The basis for the ideology of liberalism... is the exceptional American experience."[73] In this liberal ideology, what is at the center is the individual. Additionally, the role of government is limited and it must only make necessary efforts to ensure the security and liberty of its citizens whose well-being is its ultimate responsibility. Therefore, the belief in American exceptionalism built upon certain realities such as "military primacy, economic dynamism, and political

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[69] Alexis de Tocqueville, **Democracy in America, Book Two**, Gece Kitaplığı, Ankara, 2014, (Original manuscript dates back to 1835), p. 58.
[70] John Winthrop, "A Model for Christian Charity", https://online.hillsdale.edu/file/american-heritage-2017/lecture-2/A-Modell-of-Christian-Charity.pdf (Access: 12.11.2018).
[71] Thomas Jefferson, **Thoughts on War and Revolution**, (Edited and Annotation by Brett F. Woods), Algora Publishing, New York, 2009, p.2.
[72] Louis Hartz, **The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution**, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1955.
[73] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008 p.244.

diversity" has played an ideological role, encouraging interventionist and expansionist policies in the name of liberal values, and it has served, throughout history, to justify the imperial ambitions of the United States.[74] This uniqueness and exceptionalism of the American experience, which is not true but just a myth for some observers holds an inherent implication that the United States is destined to serve a special mission in the world. This "Manifest Destiny," with a prevailing moralistic dimension, constitutes the second basic cultural element of the United States that affects profoundly its approach to international affairs.

The term Manifest Destiny is inherently ambiguous and hard to describe in a precise way. "[I]t is best understood," according to William Earl Weeks, "as a web of justifications, rationalizations, and idealizations designed to legitimate the seizing of North America (or at least a large portion of it) from its Native American residents and European claimants."[75] It is, as an ideology, based on three main assumptions: "the special moral virtue of the American people; their mission to redeem the world in the name of their own distinct concept of freedom; and their presumed destiny under Divine Providence to accomplish that mission."[76] Thus, in the early years of the Republic, Manifest Destiny was part of a continentalist, or, in other words, hemispheric American vision. In accordance with this vision, in which "country's boundaries" were viewed "as temporary obstacles to fulfilling their 'manifest destiny,'" the new Republic expanded first to the west then to the south.[77]

This understanding of Manifest Destiny has undergone a dramatic change in relation to two fundamental aspects. First, the religious tone of the concept has been diminished, and "[i]n the twentieth century, the American government established a secular version of their missions, one designed to spread values, skills, and institutions, that Americans considered crucial for success -above all economic success- in the modern world."[78] Secondly, its hemispheric character has been substituted by a global approach. "Where Manifest Destiny had earlier referred to America's preordination to spread across its continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, by the end of the nineteenth

[74] Daniel Deudney, Jeffrey Meiser, "American Exceptionalism", in. Cox, Stokes (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2008, pp. 28, 32.
[75] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p.122.
[76] **Ibid.**
[77] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p.55.
[78] Michael Mandelbaum, **Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016, p.9.

century the idea had expanded to include more imperial ambitions and the foreign policies executed them."[79] This change has generated an irreversible transformation with a profound impact on the nature and the orientation of U.S. foreign policy in the upcoming years. In that sense, especially after its growing engagement into world affairs since the first decades of the twentieth century, "[t]he promotion of a more liberal international order, broadly speaking, has always been a central goal of American grand strategy."[80] This impulse to foster democratic institutions abroad and to spread the universal values espoused by the American people constitutes, first, the axis of the process initiated by the internationalist worldview of President Woodrow Wilson, and then, the fight against communism, and subsequently, the interventions to stop the repressions of non-democratic regimes and put an end to humanitarian crises in different countries, especially in the Middle East. This view, as bluntly stated by Madeleine Albright, the first woman Secretary of State in U.S. history under President Bill Clinton, is grounded on the conviction that the United States has "...an inescapable responsibility to build a peaceful world and to terminate the abominable injustices and conditions that still plague civilization."[81] Hence, the impact of exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, in an internationalist sense, has been considerably profound not only on the strategic culture of the U.S but also its foreign policy choices.

Nevertheless, a critical classification has to be carefully made in order to put forward a better image of the American strategic culture and to establish a solid framework within which our further analysis will be shaped. There are two major and long-standing features of American strategic culture. These are the significance of classical liberal assumptions and the inclination to limited liability in strategic affairs. Under these labels, there exist four distinct subcultures, namely, internationalists, nationalists, progressives, and realists.[82] Within this perspective, the promotion of a liberal order has appeared as a common ground for U.S foreign policy-makers since a significant majority of them consider it a worthy objective to be pursued. They differ from each other on the means to use to attain this end. Some of them, exemplarists, defend the idea to lead by example, which means spreading liberal values and ideas overseas by just setting an example, whereas some others, crusaders, believed in the

[79] Douglas Brinkley, **History of the United States**, Viking, New York, 1998, p. 303.
[80] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, p.22.
[81] Quoted by Doug Bandow, "America's Balkan Quagmire", **CATO Institute**, May 30, 2001, https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/americas-balkan-quagmire (Access: 14.11.2018).
[82] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, p.21.

necessity of an active advancement of such values even by force, if needed.[83] Apart from this approach shaped by the liberal creed of the American political culture, adherents of limited liability, in search of diminishing the cost of the global engagement, want the U.S. to play a less significant role in international affairs. With regard to the other four subcultures, there are some nuances that separate them from each other, such as the degree of commitment to liberalism or to limited liability, their view about multilateralism at the international level, etc. (See Table 1.1). At this point, it must be underlined that realism with its weak commitment to both strains of the strategic culture in the U.S. constitutes the worst fit for American foreign policy.[84]

Table 1.1: Strategic Subcultures within the United States

	Internationalists	**Nationalists**	**Progressives**	**Realists**
Liberal Creed	Strongly Committed	Weakly Committed	Strongly Committed	Weakly Committed
Limited Liability	Weakly Committed	Strongly Committed	Strongly Committed	Weakly Committed
Multilateralism	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Promotion of Liberal Order	By All Means Necessary	Skeptical About the Possibility. The U.S. Interest First	Peaceful Means Only	Skeptical but Open to All Options
Adherents Throughout History	W. Wilson H. Truman J. F. Kennedy J. Carter B. Clinton B. Obama	A. Jackson G. W. Bush D. Trump	T. Jefferson J. F. Kennedy J. Carter B. Obama	A. Hamilton D. Eisenhower R. Nixon R. Reagan G. H. W. Bush

Table Designed by Author

[83] **Ibid.** p. 23; Lilli, **op. cit.,** 2016, pp. 35-37.
[84] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, pp.25-34.

Within this context, American strategic subcultures have constituted the basis for four schools of foreign policy, which were named after historical figures of American political life: Wilsonianism (internationalists), Hamiltonianism (realists), Jeffersonianism (progressives), and Jacksonianism (nationalists). While Wilsonianism and Hamiltonianism could resonate within a wider audience with their universal character, the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian schools, as the products of the idiosyncrasies of Anglo-American culture, remain less well-known.[85] At this point, it must be remembered that the four schools identified by Mead are just ideal types that would give a basis to the understanding of U.S. foreign policy throughout history, and sometimes, it is possible to find traces of more than one school in the foreign policy decisions taken by a single administration. However, that does not change the fact that these typologies are potentially useful analytical tools that provide us with a solid framework to follow the lines drawn by certain persistent views regarding America's international strategy, and thus, to grasp substantially the country's foreign policy actions. "A fundamental distinction amongst the four traditions is between those that seek to perfect and protect the virtues of the republic (Jeffersonian and Jacksonian) and those that seek to remake the world in its image (Hamiltonian and Wilsonian)."[86] In responding to the question of how the United States should engage with the world, the first two advocate an inward-looking approach, whereas the others underscore that it requires an activist, crusader approach. In Walter McDougal's well-known words, thus, these subcultures seek to explain why the U.S. should act, on the international scene, as a "promised land" or a "crusader State."[87]

Given the scope and objective of our thesis, we will focus on, as it represents the *moralpolitik*-edge of the pendulum that is at the heart of this work, the Wilsonian school. Being inherently idealistic, Wilsonianism is based on "a view that insists that the United States has the right and the duty to change the rest of the world's behavior, and that the United States can and should concern itself not only with the way other countries conduct their international affairs but with their domestic policies as well."[88] The Wilsonian ideas, in fact, had existed long before Wilson took office and they have

[85] Mead, **Special Providence…** pp.174-175.
[86] Michael Clarke, Anthony Ricketts, "Donald Trump and American Foreign Policy: The Return of Jacksonian Tradition," **Comparative Strategy,** Vol. 36, No.4, 2017, p. 366.
[87] Walter A. McDougall, **Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776,** Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1997.
[88] **Ibid.** p. 138.

become one of the main intellectual and practical guides of U.S. foreign policy long after his presidency, particularly, in the post-Cold War era. These ideas and principles constitute the basis of the urge of the U.S. "to encourage and even implant Western institutions in a series of non-Western countries," and this urge is "part of the country's political and cultural DNA."[89] "His legacy epitomized the liberal tradition in American foreign relations"[90] and "Wilson's principles have remained the bedrock of American foreign policy-thinking."[91]

"Wilsonianism," as defined by Fromkin, "was a response to the shattering experience of the Great War and to the millennial expectations that the war aroused."[92] As summarized in President Wilson's Fourteen Points Address on January 8, 1918, it offers the foundation of a just and peaceful new world order for the post-WWI period.[93] This new order must have been founded, he proclaimed, on four basic principles: (a) national self-determination, (b) Open Door globalization, (c) collective security, (d) progressive historicism.[94] Peace must, therefore, be established in conformity with American values and principles, which would appeal to all people. President Wilson insisted that to build a stable and peaceful world order, "there must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace."[95] "These principles were quintessentially American… but at the same time could and should be applied universally."[96] Although President Wilson could not, then, turn the impressive success he achieved in Europe during the Paris Peace Conference into a domestic victory as the Senate opposed the partial transfer of sovereignty required by the membership of the League of Nations, his ideas with a universal character gained a considerable resonance at the international scene. "Woodrow Wilson presented Americans with an all-or-nothing choice regarding internationalism and they chose against his vision, but the fallout from the battle over

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[89] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 8.
[90] Lloyd E. Ambrosius, **Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, p. 1.
[91] Henry Kissinger, **Diplomacy**, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, p. 52.
[92] David Fromkin, "What is Wilsonianism?", **World Policy Journal**, 11(1), (Spring, 1994), p.110.
[93] Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points Address", January 8, 1918, https://www.ourdocuments.gov/print_friendly.php?flash=false&page=transcript&doc=62&title=Transcript+of+President+Woodrow+Wilsons+14+Points+%281918%29 (Access: 12.11.2018).
[94] Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and World War I", in. Robert D. Schulzinger (Ed.), **A Companion to American Foreign Relations,** Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2003, p. 149.
[95] "Address of the President of the United States to the Senate," January 22, 1917, http://www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~ppennock/doc-Wilsonpeace.htm (Access: 13.11.2018).
[96] Erez Manela, **The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, p. 23.

entry into the League of Nations turned into a political disgust with world activism that echoes to this day."[97]

Furthermore, the intellectual roots of Wilsonianism can be found in Kantian liberal international tradition. "Indeed, the entering wedge of Wilson's liberal vision," according to Ikenberry et. al. "was the conviction… that the internal characteristics of states are decisive in matters of war and peace."[98] Thus, this conviction is strongly associated with the liberal international belief that autocratic states are relatively more war-prone than democracies. In this sense, six ideas can be considered as the basis of Wilsonianism:[99]

1. The post-war order "must be built on a community of democratic states" not just because they are less war-prone, but also, they are susceptible to elaborate intense and wide-ranging types of cooperation.

2. Free trade and socioeconomic interactions by preventing tyranny and oligopoly from growing, exert a "civilizing and modernizing effect on states" and reinforce the ties between the members of the international community.

3. Being the product of a long-standing custom, international law and the cooperative structures at the international level have the same civilizing and modernizing effect on states.

4. The stability and peace must be founded on this "community of power," which refers to the notion of "collective security" that is put forward, for the first time, by President Wilson, and which was concretized by the League of Nations.

5. The realization of this project of a new order built around these conditions -democracy, trade, law, collective security- is only possible "because the world was moving in a progressive and modernizing direction."

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[97] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p. 187.
[98] G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Tony Smith, **The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011, p. 10.
[99] **Ibid.** pp. 11-13.

6. The United States, as "the great moral agent in history" and "God's chosen midwife," has a special mission to fulfill by guiding this progressive change.

As has been seen throughout history, Wilsonianism, with its broad perspective, is more than a mere idealist worldview. The Wilsonian thought and its implications in the foreign policy realm reflect a multi-dimensional character that encompasses, on the one hand, the issues related to spreading democratic and liberal values, and, on the other hand, the weight of the considerations with regard to the establishment of a rule-based cooperative order built on the principle of multilateralism and collective security. Moreover, the insights of the Wilsonian vision reflect overtly a persistent duality within the liberal tradition: liberal internationalism and liberal imperialism (liberal interventionism).[100] Indeed, Wilson showed, particularly in the early years of his presidency, that the intervention in the name of promoting values and ideals is, for him, an acceptable policy option. This assumption was evidenced when the U.S. troops occupied a Mexican city, Veracruz, in 1914 in order to undermine the autocratic regime of Huerta and paved the way for his liberal opponents. The occupation of Haiti between the years 1915-1934 constitutes another example of President Wilson's initial interventionist impulse.[101]

As a result of the lessons drawn from these two initiatives, and under the influence of the international atmosphere heated by WWI, his inclination to interventionist moves vanished but the question of intervention, even today, has remained as a fault line within the liberal tradition. As noted by Belloni, "Wilsonianism [inspired] the intervention efforts following World War I and World War II, and was re-affirmed at the end of the Cold War."[102] State-building operations with liberal democracy at their core and the interventions to alleviate multiple humanitarian crises in various regions of the world marked the post-Cold War era. All these efforts have been shaped around the objective of political and economic liberalization without taking into account the root causes of the conflicts, which were usually ethno-confessional. As defined by Roland Paris, the political liberalization "means democratization, or the promotion of periodic and genuine elections,

[100] **Ibid.** pp. 2, 13-14.
[101] Manela, **op. cit.** 2007, p.32.
[102] Roberto Belloni, "Rethinking 'Nation-Building': The Contradictions of the Neo-Wilsonian Approach to Democracy Promotion", **The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations**, 97, 2007, p. 101.

constitutional limitations on the exercise of governmental power, and respect for basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and conscience."[103] In turn, the economic liberalization refers to "marketization, or movement toward a market-oriented economic model, including measures aimed at minimizing government intrusion in the economy, and maximizing the freedom for private investors, producers, and consumers to pursue their respective economic interests."[104] The interventions realized in order to promote such principles, since they ignore the underlying reasons of the conflict, could not, generally, reach a full-scale success. The insufficiency to address the specific character of identity conflicts with ethnical and/or religious roots and the problems they give rise to constitutes, today, the primary shortcoming of contemporary neo-Wilsonianism.[105] Thus, Wilsonianism, in relation with its basic principles, which are the promotion of democracy and the international cooperation through an organization of collective security, seems to be part of an inherent contradiction of American foreign policy, notably, the oscillation between *moralpolitik* and *realpolitik.*[106] Moreover, the humanitarian interventions of the post-Cold War era and the concepts such as the responsibility to protect (R2P), state-building, peace-building, and even regime change give rise to a significant problem that requires further development of the neo-Wilsonian vision in order to be fully captured. The cases of Iraq, in 2003, and Libya, in 2011, have made this clearer than ever for the whole world.

Thus, Wilsonianism is characterized by "an internationalism solidly grounded on shared interests of nations and on aspirations of men and women everywhere transcending national boundaries."[107] Because of its idealist vision, the Wilsonian thought has often been the target of harsh criticisms, especially from the adherents of the realist perspective. Its ambitions castigated as utopian or impracticable when faced with the realities of the world by the opposing view. Moreover, the moralistic aspect of the Wilsonian approach was also criticized as it is seen as not applicable in a way that would allow, at the same time, the satisfaction of the American interests.

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[103] Roland Paris, **At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p. 5.
[104] Ibid.
[105] David Chandler, "Back to the Future? The Limits of Neo-Wilsonian Ideals of Exporting Democracy", **Review of International Studies**, 32(3), (Jul. 2006), pp. 475-494.
[106] Füsun Türkmen, "Woodrow Wilson" in. Erhan Büyükakıncı (Ed.), **Barış Çalışmaları**, Adres Yayınları, Ankara, 2018, pp. 82-83.
[107] Akira Iriye, **The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945, Vol: III**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2015, p.72.

However, the moral rationale of U.S. foreign policy put forward by Wilsonianism and the interest-based approach of realism are not categorically incompatible. With regard to some issues, such as supporting democracy and freedom, and opposing repression and tyranny, moral principles and security interests might converge.[108] For this kind of instances, naturally, the negative impact of the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* dilemma could be easily minimized. The real problem arises when this convergence does not exist or is not visible for the decision-makers. Given the fact that states are generally more loyal to their interests than they are to the moral considerations, especially when the stakes involve the national security issue, it must be admitted that there are limits to an idealistic foreign policy vision.

As a matter of fact, "the history of American diplomacy in the twentieth century is the repeated encounter of American liberal ideas with the tough and often unyielding realities of the wider world."[109] The liberal influences that provide the basis for idealistic actions for American foreign policy have been, for most of the time, bounded by the necessities of great power politics that ultimately prioritize the interests and the balance of power considerations. As stated by one of the Founding, Alexander Hamilton, "safety from external danger is the most powerful director of our national conduct. Even the ardent love of liberty will, after a time, give way to its dictates."[110] Moreover, societal factors have always played an important role in keeping this debate heated.

The limits to the idealistic policies became widely evident by the time that America turned into a global power after WWII. In that sense, traditional elements of American foreign policy, economics, morality, and democracy, have become the victims of "continental realism" that had formed European politics for centuries, and has been the dominant force of the U.S. approach to international affairs during the Cold War. It must not be disregarded, at this point, that the fight against communist expansion on a global scale had also a moralistic dimension with regard to its commitment to liberal values and democracy, and this aspect of superpower struggle could be considered as a convergence of *moralpolitik* and *realpolitik* concerns. This

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[108] Elliot Abrams, **Realism and Democracy: American Foreign Policy After the Arab Spring**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2017, p. 244.
[109] Ikenberry et. al. **op. cit.** 2011, p.6.
[110] Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, **The Federalist Papers**, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, 2001, p.32.

conviction, nevertheless, should not lead to the denial of the fact that the principal paradigm of this period was realism and, as a result, the constraints on liberal tendencies have become visible in U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, the Western victory at the end of this ideological struggle brought about profound changes in international politics, and these changing realities had a considerable impact on American policies. As stated by Walter Russell Mead, in the post-Cold War World, the substantial positions of the above mentioned three traditional dimensions - economics, morality, and democracy- of U.S. foreign policy should be restored without totally ignoring the exigencies of the balance of power politics. Moreover, unlike the Cold War era, the systemic factors cannot be seen anymore as the principal determinants of foreign policy. These external factors must be taken into account, along with the domestic variables, in order to adapt the state to contemporary international affairs.[111]

According to Daniel Deudney and Jeffrey Meiser,

> *"... liberal influences on US foreign policy have been bounded by exigencies of great power politics, because the United States, like all states living in international anarchy full of uncertain threats and opportunities has been by necessity keenly attentive to the requirements, often arduous, of great power politics. The USA did not emerge so successfully through its long succession of wars by ignoring the demands of power and interest, but by being exceptional in their mastery."*[112]

The Wilsonian idealism suffered, in that sense, from two basic problems within the Cold War context. First, it was not fully practical. Through the experiences in Latin America, where the United States supported certain dictators in order to prevent those countries from slipping into the Soviet sphere of influence at the expense of public popularity, the consequences of this problem have become palpable. The second problem was of ideological nature and stemmed from the tendency of the United States to tolerate or turn a blind eye to the abuses of the "evil regimes" within the Western bloc.[113] "My evil is better than yours" kind of thinking, even if it is seen as what is

[111] Mead, **Special Providence…** pp. 35-37.
[112] Deudney, Meiser **op. cit.** 2008, p. 35.
[113] Abrams **op. cit.** 2017, pp. 2-3.

required to succeed in a superpower rivalry, has reflected the main deficiency of the liberal foreign policy vision in face of the real world challenges. Furthermore, the quest for eliminating this problem, after the Cold War, has eventually put the concept of "regime change" as a veritable policy option at the center of the discussion. In other words, instead of developing close ties with some non-democracies, which are often considered "friendly tyrants"[114] the U.S ought to consider forcing them, by any means, to change their governmental structure. As stated by Kagan and Kristol "the idea… that the United States can 'do business' with any regime, no matter how odious and hostile to our basic principles, is both strategically unsound and unhistorical." In parallel with this view, "when it comes to dealing with tyrannical regimes", they stated, "the United States should seek not coexistence but transformation."[115]

Nevertheless, the constraints, or limits, imposed on the purely liberal value-oriented foreign policy vision of the United States has given rise to a concept that was described, by Condoleezza Rice when she put forward, in her memoirs, the axis of the Freedom Agenda of the Bush administration, as "a distinctly American realism."[116] The concept refers to a careful linking of America's strategic interests and the values espoused by the U.S. in search of coherence. In that sense, it seems to us that, American realism, as a guiding principle in strategic terms, is the product of the deep-rooted struggle between strategic interests and the Wilsonian ideals for being the driving force of foreign policy. American realism, with regard to U.S. grand strategy, corresponds to what is called "liberal realism." To melt its core values and strategic interests in one pot, the United States' grand strategy, according to Ikenberry and Kupchan, needs to be shaped around five critical points: "[1] the operation of the balance of power; [2] terrorism and its impact on the international system; [3] the role of rules and institutions in maintaining order; [4] the connection between legitimacy and international governance; and [5] the management of deficits, trade and the global economy."[117] This seems to be the only way to have a "democratic foreign policy,"[118]

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[114] Daniel Pipes, Adam Grafinkle (Eds.), **Friendly Tyrants: An American Dilemma**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1991.
[115] William Kristol, Robert Kagan, "Introduction: National Interest and Global Responsibility", in. Robert Kagan, William Kristol (Eds.), **Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy**, Encounter Books, San Francisco, 2000, pp. 17-20.
[116] Condoleezza Rice, **No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington**, Crown Publishers, New York, 2011, p. 325.
[117] G. John Ikenberry, Charles A. Kupchan, "Liberal Realism: The Foundations of a Democratic Foreign Policy", **The National Interest**, Fall 2004, pp. 38-49.
[118] **Ibid.**

as opposed to the neo-realist proposition of John Mearsheimer, "offshore balancing,"[119] which "would preserve U.S. primacy far into the future and safeguard liberty at home," whereas the core American ideals, such as promoting peace and democracy or halting genocides, etc. although desirable, are not among the principal goals of this strategy.[120]

Thus, two fundamental pillars of American foreign policy are its historical traditional foundations and the exigencies of present international circumstances toward which the actions are taken. In that sense, one of the main claims of this work is to avoid the prevailing superficial approach to American foreign policy, considering it as solely the outcome of the economic and imperial ambitions. According to this vision, the United States is considered to have a veritable foreign policy only since WWI, and until then, the country, as an isolationist state, hadn't had any experience to allow it to build a solid tradition related to international relations. However, in our opinion, American foreign policy, until the present day, has been the product of a long-standing tradition. Every element of this tradition has an impact of various degrees, depending on the context or on the issue in hand, but ignoring the existence of such historical background means disregarding most of the significant factors that shape American policies today and depriving the analysis of many crucial variables. That is why the present work, while focusing on the U.S. Middle Eastern policy since the beginning of the Arab Spring, will follow the line drawn by this long-established foreign policy tradition, in particular, the realism-idealism struggle.

The Middle East is certainly the region that has been most affected by the limits to the idealistic policies and their struggle to prevail over the realist alternative. As admitted by Condoleezza Rice, then-Secretary of State, in a speech given at the American University in Cairo, the United States "for 60 years… pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region… and… achieved neither."[121] Given the fact that Middle Eastern peoples have lived through the first decade of the twenty-first century by experiencing two transformative incidents, notably the 9/11 terrorist attacks

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[119] John J. Mearsheimer, **Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2001.

[120] John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 95, No:4, 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/case-offshore-balancing

[121] Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks at the American University in Cairo", June 20, 2005, https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/48328.htm (Access: 15.11.2018).

and the Arab Spring protests that take the autocratic regimes in various countries as its target,[122] the oscillation of American foreign policy has become more visible and perhaps, more problematic than ever. As a result, the region has turned into a veritable arena to evaluate multiple aspects of the American foreign policy pendulum.

In retrospect, the significance of the Middle East for U.S. foreign policy has increased toward the end of WWII. "Following on his declaration in 1943 that the defense of Saudi Arabia was vital to American security, Roosevelt took the first step, in his post-Yalta trip, in making the United States an ongoing actor in the region."[123] The central regional factors that pulled not only Franklin D. Roosevelt but also his successor Harry Truman and other presidents into the complex web of the region were essentially the same: "access to oil, the Arab-Jewish conflict, the geographic centrality of the area, its key shipping lanes, the threats the area held to global peace and security…"[124] The whole region has been, in the course of the Cold War, an area of indirect confrontation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., both superpowers seeking to establish their regional authority and to expand their sphere of influence.

Subsequently, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Middle East turned into an arena of regional conflicts with unyielding ethnic and sectarian issues in the background. Then, has come another turning point, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the region started to be considered, by the United States and the international community, as the principal battlefield of the worldwide fight against Islamic radicalism and certain autocratic regimes that were seen as a threat to the Western values and as sources of terrorism. According to Michael Oren, in light of the developments of the post-9/11 period, and especially after the Iraq War in 2003, "the United States [was] extensively, profoundly, and perhaps existentially involved in the Middle East."[125] Despite the evolution of this region's representation within the framework of American foreign policy, its main objectives have not been subject to a radical change. "The perennial U.S. aims in the Middle East have been to prevent adversaries from dominating the region, to maintain access to region's oil and water-ways, to reduce proliferation risks, to support Israel and other friendly states in order to increase

[122] Eugene Rogan, **The Arabs: A History**, Penguin Books, UK, 2018, p. 609.
[123] Joel S. Migdal, **Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East**, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014, p. 3.
[124] **Ibid.** p. 4.
[125] Michael B. Oren, **Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to Present,** W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2007, p. 9

regional security, and, especially since 9/11, to prevent the region from becoming a platform for mass-casualty terrorist attacks against the US homeland."[126]

In light of these interests of different nature with regard to the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy has inevitably abandoned its post-Cold War attitude after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. With a more hawkish tone, the strategy of the Bush administration in a "global war on terror" has placed the spread of liberal democratic values at the center of American foreign policy toward the Middle East Washington considered as the source of the fundamentalist ideas behind the attacks. As stated in the National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2002, "[t]he U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better."[127] This vision inspired by American realism constituted the framework for the Iraq War in 2003. Despite the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein's autocratic regime in this country, the increasing human and economic costs triggered skepticism in the public realm, as well as within the foreign policy elite with regard to democracy promotion overseas, especially by military force. The American experience in Iraq showed, once again, the difficulty of democratization when imposed from outside.

The United States under the Obama administration, has therefore adopted a pragmatic attitude in the face of the structural regional changes. Regarding relations with regional actors, "the focus was moving toward dealing with governments rather than helping their oppressed citizens."[128] At the beginning of the Arab Spring, the administration followed this path, rather than supporting the protesters until, at least, the fall of the regime in Tunisia. Then, American engagement to the demonstrations across the Middle East, in one way or another, gradually intensified. "Hesitantly, Obama moved to support the demonstrators, uncertain as to who they were and how their success would affect American interests in the region."[129] President Obama declared, in May 2011, after Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt stepped aside, the U.S. approach to the upheavals: "We must respond in a way that advances

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[126] Stephen G. Brooks, William C. Wohlforth, **America Abroad: Why the Sole Superpower Should Not Pull Back from the World,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2018, p.118.
[127] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America", September 2002, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf (Access: 15.11.2018).
[128] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 86.
[129] Warren I. Cohen, **The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Challenges to American Primacy, 1945 to the Present**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2015, p. 337.

our values and strengthens our security."[130] Even though this kind of messianic insights have had a limited place in the Obama administration's agenda, "the spread of liberal institutions and values remained an important U.S. security interest that played a central role in shaping America's response to the Arab Spring protests, at least in some key cases."[131]

American reaction to the protests was shaped differently depending on the specific context. There may be many reasons to explain this differentiated American approach. In essence, however, it stemmed from a few major determining factors: the intensity and significance of U.S. interests related to the country in question, the nature of the country's relations with the United States, and its internal dynamics. Pushing forward a liberalization agenda or a regime-change is much simpler when the stakes are not high and/or the leader of this country had adopted an anti-American attitude. "When a government is not friendly to the U.S. or the country in question does not much matter to American security interests, promoting human rights and democracy is a much easier policy option."[132] Moreover, this country-specific U.S. reaction was shaped, along with the factors at the international level such as the repeated Russian-Chinese vetoes at the Security Council, by the geopolitical, economic, legal and domestic elements. Thus, "the individual dynamics of each case" constitute the underlying causes of this alternating U.S. reaction, especially regarding the question of intervention.[133]

At this point, the logic behind our choices with regard to case studies must be explained. Even though it might seem arbitrary, it is actually the result of a careful examination of the events. Although the Arab Spring protests that were sparked in Tunisia affected various countries in the Middle East, it is not possible to pretend that every country, in this regard, is of the same degree of significance not only from a global perspective but also for U.S. foreign policy. While the revolts in certain countries encourage direct American engagement, some others created nothing more

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[130] Barack Obama, "Remarks of President Barack Obama: A Moment of Opportunity", May 19, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-barack-obama-prepared-delivery-moment-opportunity (Access: 15.11.2018).

[131] Mark L. Haas, **The United States and the Arab Spring: Threats and Opportunities in a Revolutionary** *Era*, Westview Press, Boulder, 2014, p. 6.

[132] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 220.

[133] Füsun Türkmen, "From Libya to Syria: The Rise and Fall of the Humanitarian Intervention?", Presented in ACUNS Annual Meeting, 2014, Kadir Has University, pp. 2, 28, https://acuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/From-Libya-to-Syria-The-Rise-and-Fall-of-Humanitarian-Intervention.pdf (Access: 17.11.2018).

than a rhetorical initiative. The possible effect of the protests on American strategic interests, as well as on the global balance of power, played an important role in determining the U.S. attitude, and naturally, our choice. As bluntly stated by Michael McFaul, a high-rank foreign policy official of the Obama administration, "Tunisia had only a marginal impact on American national interests. When the Arab Spring fever spread to Egypt, however, [our] top foreign policy advisors became engaged."[134] Thus, the Egyptian case is among those to be tackled because of its considerable significance for U.S. foreign policy. Regarding Libya, where the American strategic interests were not on the table, what makes the revolts in this country critical is essentially the NATO-led international intervention on a humanitarian basis. The Libyan case is, therefore, crucial as it reflects the *moralpolitik* edge of the policy pendulum that is at the heart of our study. Our last case study, the Syrian protests, constitutes a crucial breaking point from many perspectives. First of all, with the direct engagement of Russia and Iran, the Syrian crisis became a substantial arena in which global and regional distribution of power could be dramatically affected. Likewise, a Russian-American confrontation in such a critical region made this case a top priority for various actors. Moreover, Syria has become a field where the realistic limits to the idealistic approach of the United States, has undeniably crystallized. Thus, our choice with regard to case studies was made according to the significance of the cases at the international level, along with their places on the orbit of the realism-idealism pendulum of U.S. foreign policy.

Within that context, the U.S. adopted, to put simply, a "wait and see" policy toward the Egyptian uprising until the last moment in order not to be seen as opposed to the democratic demands of protesters in Tahrir Square, while not forcing an old friend, Hosni Mubarak, to leave office because of the fear of even worse alternatives.[135] On the contrary, Washington favored an international military intervention in Libya for humanitarian considerations. With regard to Assad's Syria, what determined the rules of the game, in the first place, has been the decisive Russian involvement in the case. Thus, in Syria, the morality and American commitment to democratic values have been undervalued since the traditional balance of power considerations have become the most effective force determining the American reaction to the demands of the Syrian people.

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[134] Michael McFaul, **From Cold War to Hot Peace: The Inside Story of Russia and America**, Allen Lane, 2018, p. 205.
[135] Hillary Rodham Clinton, **Hard Choices**, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2014.

With its demographic, geopolitical, and cultural characteristics, Egypt has always been one of the most crucial countries of the region. As wisely put by Howard Wiarda, "as goes Egypt so goes (much of) the Middle East."[136] Therefore, the direction of the uprisings in this country was vital for the future of the demonstrations across the region. Under the thirty-year regime of Mubarak in Cairo, even long before him, the country had established good relations with the U.S. and become, in time, one of the biggest receivers of American foreign aid.[137] While all these factors contributed to the initial American hesitation regarding the upheavals in Egypt, the main reason was different. Being organizationally weak, the Egyptian protesters did not have a veritable political vision other than overthrowing the regime. The youth had been kept out of political life for years by Hosni Mubarak and this, as a corollary, caused their incapacity to develop a coherent and veritable political agenda. In fact, the only fraction that was allowed in Egyptian politics and that seemed like the potential winner of a successful revolution, if ever it occurred, was the Islamists regrouped within the Muslim Brotherhood, an old movement with roots going back to the 1920s. Currently, it was an Islamist alternative to the military dictatorship. Hence, this was what Egyptian uprisings represented in the eyes of the American decision-makers and the main reason why the United States adopted a hesitant, if not ambivalent, approach toward the Egyptian case.

Libya, in that sense, offered a clear opportunity to the U.S. not only to improve its image shaken in Egypt but also to put an end to the hostile regime of Colonel Qaddafi, who had been governing the country since 1969. The disorganized state structure of Libya and its relative weakness in military terms, as well as broad international support in favor of a humanitarian intervention, certainly set the ground for such a decision. Muammar Qaddafi's statements that bluntly signaled an upcoming wave of mass violence, without a doubt, accelerated the decision process and contributed to the consensus reached by the international community. In his Address to the Nation on Libya in 2011, President Obama indicated clearly that what was at stake in Libya was not solely American values but its strategic interests. The factors, such as "an international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join [the U.S.], the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people

[136] Wiarda, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 120.
[137] James McBride, "How Does the U.S. Spend its Foreign Aids?", **Council on Foreign Relations**, October 1, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/how-does-us-spend-its-foreign-aid (Access: 17.11.2018).

themselves," set the ground for the intervention. However, he emphasized the selective nature of this type of decisions in these words: "It's true that America cannot use [its] military wherever repression occurs. And given the costs and risks of intervention, we must always measure our interests against the need for action."[138] This is exactly what happened in Syria.

From a broad perspective, the situation in Syria was no different from the other two cases. That was also true for the initial course of events in the country. The autocratic Ba'athist regime founded by Bachar al-Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, in 1971, was naturally not immune to the democratic demands of its people. The long history of brutal repression of the Alawite regime, especially toward the Sunni majority of Syria, caused eventually, as a result of the domino effect of the Arab Spring, the street demonstrations in the name of democracy and then, these demonstrations turned into a full-fledged civil war. During this process, the scope of the international reaction was limited by Russian and Chinese positions in the UN Security Council, and the United States did not act unilaterally in favor of an intervention although it "… had more compelling humanitarian and strategic reasons to intervene in Syria than in Libya."[139] Given its well-structured statecraft, well-equipped army, and global and regional allies, Syria was certainly stronger than Libya in terms of its individual dynamics. However, behind the American decision of non-intervention in Syria lay, primarily, the requirements of the international environment shaped by the active involvement of Russia and Iran into the Syrian case. The systemic factors, therefore, played the determining role in this case and increased the ambiguity of American foreign policy within this context.

This country-based reaction of the U.S. to the protests, whether it stemmed from the internal dynamics of the country in question, and of the United States or the international circumstances, constitutes the axis of our research. We will, after evaluating the nature of the American approach to the three cases underlined above, analyze these foreign policy choices from the perspective of the relevant U.S. tradition. The oscillation of the American attitude toward the protests in Egypt, Libya, and Syria will definitely help us develop a comprehensive scheme revealing the various aspects

[138] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya", March 28, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya (Access: 18.11.2018).
[139] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 306.

of the traditional contest between realism and idealism in this country's foreign policy. It needs to be remembered that a synthesis of both might be the most convenient way to establish an objectively better foreign policy strategy for the United States, as asserted by multiple experts.[140] Our central aim is to analyze, through selected case studies, every aspect of the oscillation of U. S. foreign policy, from idealism to realism, in the course of the Arab Spring and to put forward an objective evaluation of this phenomenon within the framework of the American foreign policy tradition.

Within this framework, this thesis will be divided into two parts. In the first part, we will initially examine the evolution of U.S. foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic and the impact of societal and international factors in shaping the decisions within this realm. In so doing, we will put forward a clear image of the origins of the long-standing American foreign policy tradition, illustrating the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* dilemma. Subsequently, we will treat the Middle East policy of the United States during and after the Cold War. By focusing on the Middle East-related presidential doctrines of this period, we will assess the nature of the U.S. vision with regard to the region, as well as the adaptation of the American strategies to the radical international transformations generated by the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks.

Subsequently, in the second part, after explaining the multi-dimensional characteristics of the Arab Spring, we will analyze its evolution in the three countries concerned, namely Egypt, Libya, and Syria. We will then investigate the principal tenets of the American response to the uprisings in each of these countries, taking into account the changing international, regional, and domestic dynamics. Lastly, we will focus on the factors that have held the driving seat of U.S. foreign policy and compare the impact of the systemic, humanitarian, and domestic elements that have acted as filters processing the foreign policy output. In light of this analysis, we will be demonstrating the extent to which the persistent pendulum has been apparent and influential in inspiring the making and the implementation of U.S. foreign policy.

Indeed, the changes that occurred in the global distribution of power among international actors should be considered as the main reason for the differentiated U.S.

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[140] Mead, **Special Providence…**; Henry Kissinger, **World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History**, Penguin Books, USA, 2015, p. 329.

reaction to various developments in the Middle East. In other words, the world in which the United States has not or could not intervene in Syria to topple down the Assad regime is not the same unipolar world in which the Bush administration has waged a costly war in order to overthrow the Saddam regime in Iraq two years after the 9/11 attacks. Besides, the change in the balance of power is not the only transformation. The changes in the actors' perception of the international situation and each other's strategy constitute also one of the main causes of different U.S. approaches. It is undeniable that the internal influences on external actions are critical in the present international system characterized by "non-polarity."[141] However, how the actors view their counterparts within the anarchy of the international system matters as well. "The problem is not unipolarity *per se*, but changes in the exercise of U.S power that have in turn changed foreign perceptions of U.S. intentions and how the United States will use its preponderant strength."[142]

In addition to this system-oriented view, it must be underlined that domestic support is a *sine qua non* condition for a decisive foreign policy strategy. There are multiple variables affecting the process of mobilizing popular support and increasing the state power of a country available for an international action. Right after the 9/11 attacks, there was massive support of a frustrated nation behind the Bush administration's decision to wage a "war on terrorism" on a global scale. What changed the view in that sense was the unexpected duration and relative failure of the war in Iraq. In Libya, while moral considerations limiting the public opposition to the intervention, burden-sharing with European allies, and the weakness of this country compared to Iraq of Saddam or to Syria of Assad, played a substantial role in convincing a significant portion of American people to the righteousness of this decision. However, when a similar intervention in Syria has come into question, public reaction, along with the considerations related to the possible human and material costs, and apart from the changed international equilibrium, did not allow the Obama administration to make a decisive move.

Finally, related to such foreign policy decisions, interests at stake must be seen as critical determinants. The degree of the substantiality of the national interest perceived in an intervention depends, doubtlessly, on its possible costs as well as

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[141] Richard N. Haass, **Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order**, Basic Books, New York, 2014, p. 15.
[142] Ikenberry, Kupchan, **op. cit.** 2004, p. 39.

expected ultimate gains. Nevertheless, the conformity of the interests represented by the issue in hand to the values embedded in the political culture of the country affects considerably the decision-making process. For the U.S., balancing the core national values and national interest is, perhaps, the toughest aspect of foreign policy-making. The ambiguous American reaction to the incidents occurring against Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in the early days was due mostly to the hesitation generated by this balancing effort.

All these conditions, and many others, of course, have not ceased to change not only since 2001 but also from the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010 to the present time. The structural and circumstantial transformations have doubtlessly accelerated and crystallized the oscillation of American foreign policy and contributed to the intensification of the dilemma, which is our central focus of research. We are convinced that analyzing the changes in American behavior during the Arab Spring and treating the principal external and internal transformations will, eventually, provide us with a better understanding of American foreign policy.

PART I- AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

"America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens."[143]

George W. Bush

Lord James Bryce, Great Britain's ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913, described the foreign policy in this country as "the snakes in Iceland" only to put emphasis on its absence. He claimed that there was no foreign policy in the United States, and foreign policy issues have not occupied, contrary to the situation in the European countries, a significant place in domestic political life.[144] Even though it reflects the prevalent Eurocentric view of the era regarding American foreign policy, the belief in the inexistence of foreign policy in the United States until at least WWI is nothing but a myth or an illusion. On the contrary, the American Republic, beginning from its foundation, pursued a subtle foreign policy that has followed the lines delicately drawn by the Founding Fathers and certain other important figures. After more than a century under the isolationist tendencies understood in a uniquely American way, U.S. foreign policy has undergone a dramatic transformation and gained global reach since the end of the nineteenth century. "Imbued with the conviction that its course would shape the destiny of the mankind, America has, over its history, played a paradoxical role in world order: it expanded across a continent in the name of Manifest Destiny while abjuring any imperial designs; exerted a decisive influence on momentous events while disclaiming any motivation of national interest; and became a superpower while disavowing any intention to conduct power politics."[145] Throughout this process, until today, the main lines that have constituted

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[143] President George W. Bush's Inaugural Address, January 20, 2001, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/inaugural-address.html (Access: 30.03.2019).
[144] James Bryce, **The American Commonwealth Vol: II,** The Macmillan Company, New York, 1920, p.565.
[145] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p. 234.

its framework have remained almost the same as products of the strategic culture and the core values of the United States.

The Middle East, in this regard, appeared as one of the crucial regions for U.S. foreign policy. The period when the region gained this position coincided, not surprisingly, with the era of post-WWII American strategy. Although American involvement in the Middle East, through cultural and missionary activities, dated back to the early years of the Republic, "the United States has played an important and steadily increasing role in Middle East security issues since World War II, driven initially by oil, then by anticommunism, and, over time, by its growing relationship with Israel."[146] Initially, the American approach toward the region was that of a conventional great power seeking local stability to ensure constant access to the natural oil resources at a reasonable price. Then came the Cold War, the period when the Middle East was considered, by the American policy-makers, as one of the most crucial links in the chain that was designed to contain the communist expansion. Subsequently, once freed from the ideological struggle, it became a region where the local conflicts came to surface while preserving its significance to U.S. foreign policy because of its rich natural resources and the American commitment to Israel's security concerns. The date, September 11, 2001, triggered radical changes not only within the Middle East but also in the American approach to the region. As put by Donald Rumsfeld, then-Secretary of Defense, the 9/11 terrorist attacks created "the kind of sense of urgency" and offered "the kind of opportunities that World War II offered, to refashion much of the world."[147] These so-called opportunities presented by the most tragic terrorist attacks in history on the U.S. homeland dramatically affected the faith of the Middle East, as well as the U.S. attitude toward the region.

Thus, in order to better comprehend the ground and the nature of U.S. response to the Arab Spring, one needs to be acquainted with the historical background, or the tradition of U.S. foreign policy in general, and the evolution of its approach to the Middle East.

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[146] John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, **The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy**, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2007, pp. 7-8.
[147] "Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with the New York Times", October 12, 2001, http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2097 (Access: 01.04.2019).

I- American Foreign Policy Throughout History

As bluntly stated by Walter Russell Mead "…one of the most remarkable features of contemporary U.S. foreign policy is the ignorance of and contempt for the country's own foreign policy tradition…Although the history of U.S. foreign policy from Pearl Harbor onward is known to most educated Americans, developments before the Second World War lie buried in obscurity."[148] However, every international action of the United States, whether it is successful or not, must be considered as the product of a long-standing tradition that finds its roots in the early years of the Republic.

All traditions need a solid ground on which they can be built. The foreign policy tradition of the United States, in this sense, is no exception. The belief in American exceptionalism, with the concept of Manifest Destiny deeply embedded in the national identity, has constituted this ground for U.S. foreign policy. Built upon this foundation, U.S. foreign policy initially followed an isolationist path. At this point, it must be underlined that the term isolationism, with regard to U.S. foreign policy, does not refer to an era of innocence or internal perfection. Instead, the term is used to label first, the continental, then, the hemispheric policies of the United States in a way that fits the advice of George Washington, one of the Founding Fathers and the first President of the United States, in favor of eschewing permanent political commitments.[149] One of the main sources of this approach was definitely the geographic features of the country. To describe the advantages provided by the geography, the oft-referred formulation of Jules Jusseraud, French ambassador to the United States from 1902 to 1925, is definitely striking. For Jusseraud, America is "blessed among the nations. On the north, she had a weak neighbor; on the south, another weak neighbor; on the east, fish, and the west, fish."[150] While insulated by two massive oceans from the threat of foreign invasion and attack, these conditions have provided the United States with an undeniable opportunity for its further continental and hemispheric expansion. Thus, what had shaped the fundamental pillars of this strategy was nature itself, along with

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[148] Mead, "The American Foreign Policy Legacy" **op. cit.** 2002.
[149] "George Washington's Farewell Address to the People of the United States", **Senate Document No: 106-21**, 2000, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21/pdf/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21.pdf (Access: 11.11.2018).
[150] Jules Jusseraud quoted in. Stephen M. Walt, "U.S. Middle East Strategy: Back to Balancing**," Foreign Policy,** November 21, 2013, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/21/u-s-middle-east-strategy-back-to-balancing/ (12.11.2018).

the international conjuncture of the era. Subsequently, this partial isolationism gradually came to an end as the economic and strategic interests have become overwhelming, and the United States has turned into one of the major powers of the world toward the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the pull of certain international developments was added to these internal transformations, and U.S. foreign policy has incrementally become engaged in global affairs. That marks the period when liberal internationalism, associated with the Wilsonian ideals and ambitions, emerged as one of the most influential tendencies in the foreign policy realm.

The main problem that arose, in parallel with this increased engagement, was about the guiding principle of American foreign policy. Should the United States, as a country founded upon the Enlightenment values, follow the line drawn by those values in international affairs rather than its interests as a global power? The foreign policy history of the U.S., especially since the 1900s, is the quest for a credible, viable, and consistent response to this question. In this search, the American strategic culture, heavily affected by the values espoused and the Lockean liberalism, has played an important role, along with the public opinion and certain sensibilities within the American society. Within this context, the oscillation between the value-oriented idealist impulses and the interest-based realist approach has remained as the central characteristic of U.S. foreign policy until today. Moreover, the question of intervention in the name of liberal values and strategic interests has constituted the core argument of the critics to each end of this foreign policy spectrum.

A- Historical Background: The Persistent Struggle Between Ideals and Interests

The tension between the concepts of realism and idealism has been an inherent feature of Western political thought, and thus, it must not be seen as a problem that solely belongs to American political life. Indeed, the roots of the everlasting conflict between ideals and amoral interests can be traced back to Ancient Greece. In his account of the Peloponnesian War, the first realist historian, Thucydides noted the proclamation of Pericles who, in his oration, insisted on morality as the basis of the Athenian government. By arguing that “it is only Athenians who, fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality,” he put forward probably the oldest expression of the realism-idealism binary, and it persisted throughout centuries as an inherent characteristic of

international affairs.[151] Furthermore, the realist insights proposed by Niccolo Machiavelli to statesmen constituted a veritable opposition to prevalent Christian thinking that put emphasis on certain ethical limits. Subsequently, *raison d'État*-centered political approaches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries faced significant opposition from the Enlightenment ideas, based upon notions like peace and welfare instead of strategic and economic interests. "While the American clash between realism and idealism owes an intellectual debt to antecedent European thought, it was in the United States that both doctrines were fully established in theory and practice."[152] There were various incidents that triggered this realist-idealist debate in the United States during the early years of the Republic. The war between France and England in 1792, the War of 1812, the Greek Revolution in 1821, and Latin American independence movements in 1822 illustrated not only the struggle between these two opposing views of international affairs but also their potential to exert influence on America's decisions in this regard.[153]

In fact, this dichotomous view of foreign policy has always been visible in the U.S. since then. Even though some firmly opposed to this argument with regard to the realist-idealist dilemma of U.S. foreign policy and insisted on the continuity of expansionist and imperial tendencies in American history,[154] it is hard, if not impossible, to affirm this claim by an analysis based on the historical records. Certain periods when the idealist impulses gained priority over the realist perspective, especially after 1898 and the end of the Cold War, evidently demonstrate the existence and perennity of this dichotomy. Furthermore, the fact that many foreign policy actions have been shaped under the influence of realist ideas does not imply the absence of this intellectual struggle. Whether effective or not, almost every debate regarding a substantial foreign policy issue has had a side arguing in favor of idealistic priorities. The dichotomy is, therefore, not about the winning side of the foreign policy debates, but it is about their existence.

The idealism-realism binary has constantly shaped the making of U.S. foreign policy throughout history. This binary refers to the endless struggle between the ends

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[151] Thucydides, **The History of the Peloponnesian War**, Wilder Publications, Floyd, 2015, p. 73.
[152] Norman A. Graebner, "Realism and Idealism," in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Vol: III,** Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 2002, p. 311.
[153] **Ibid.** pp. 314-317.
[154] Hilde E. Restad, "Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism," **American Political Thought**, Vol.1, No.1 (Spring 2012), p.71.

based on the promotion and preservation of moral values and the categorical pursuit of amoral national interest by any means. In the realm of U.S. foreign policy, argued Ronald Powaski, "…the problem of reconciling national interests with ideals held sacred by the nation has always been a central theme of American foreign relations, and it is one that is never completely resolvable."[155] American foreign policy, in a sense, has been consisted of endless efforts to reach decisions that promote its values and interests at the same time, instead of choosing one over the other. These efforts to create a synthesis of the realist impulses and the idealist view were, in fact, not in vain, and "great historical moments [in American history] have occurred when both were combined."[156] However, the nature of the issue in hand has not all the time allowed to satisfy both. These issues that have made values and interests incompatible are generally the turning points that have ignited serious debates without depending on the leader or the party in power.

On the one hand, the rationale behind the advocacy of realist approaches is simply based on the need to internal perfection, on geographic advantages possessed by the U.S., or on the requirements of power considerations notably after the United States' assuming the role of global power. On the other hand, the roots of the idealist impulses can be found in the creed of American political thought, and they are strongly associated with the Lockean liberalism embedded in America's political and social life since the beginning. Indeed, the intellectual foundations of U.S. foreign policy have historically been shaped by idealistic instincts, which have been the characteristic components of the American national ethos. The traditional European-style realism, as it seemed peculiar to the politics of the Old World, could not constitute a widely accepted alternative in the realm of foreign policy. Even though there were certain periods during which the *realpolitik*-oriented vision dominated the foreign policy realm in the United States, the decisions taken within this framework were generally either supported by some idealistic elements or clothed in the liberal language. Therefore, the realist approach, in a distinctly American sense, has therefore been considerably affected by the idealist perspective. The realist premises, such as "… the acquisition and pursuit of national power, the concept of balance of power, and highly ethnocentric definitions of the national interest have historically held little appeal for

[155] Ronald E. Powaski, **Ideals, Interests, and U.S. Foreign Policy from George H. W. Bush to Donald Trump**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2019, p. 2.
[156] Felix Gilbert, **To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970, p. 136.

the American mind." Accordingly, Americans have expected that the application of power abroad to be legitimized by "… worthwhile human goals."[157] Thus, the concepts, such as "American realism"[158] or "liberal realism"[159] have been developed in order to invoke this unique interpretation of the traditional realist assumptions. When talking about realism, within the context of U.S. foreign policy, one must keep in mind the understanding of the notion in the American way. "American foreign policy," as put by Irving Kristol, "must be defensible in moral terms as well as expediential ones… Pure, amoral *realpolitik* is no part of the American political tradition."[160] In this sense, the central question to be answered through the realism-idealism debate has usually been was how to create a foreign policy based on a blend of both perspectives and which vision would contribute more to this mixture.

It was in the mid-20th century that many scholars agreed on the idea that the United States, throughout history, had developed a liberal tradition.[161] In his seminal work published in 1955, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Louis Hartz puts emphasis on the absence of a feudal past as the principal reason for the establishment of the liberal tradition within the United States.[162] "Unlike most other liberal regimes, the United States was 'born' democratic and thus did not have to reconcile its Liberalism with other political ideologies or define its Liberalism in opposition to other ideologies."[163] The U.S., in this sense, established its democratic system without a revolution. It skipped many stages that the Old World had been through before the institutionalization of democracy. "Americans did not have to strip away in thought or practice the traditional bonds of class, church, guild, and place to discover that all men are naturally free, equal, and independent."[164] Within this context, American liberalism was fundamentally grounded on four main assumptions: (1) change and development in the social, political, and economic realms are relatively easy; (2) all

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[157] Cecil V. Crabb, Jr. **American Diplomacy and the Pragmatic Tradition**, Louisiana State University Press, Louisiana, 1989, pp. 3-4.
[158] Rice, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 325.
[159] Ikenberry, Kupchan, **op.cit.** 2004, pp. 38-49.
[160] Irving Kristol, "Toward a Moral Foreign Policy" **Wall Street Journal**, November 15, 1983, quoted by Elliot Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 33.
[161] Jill Lepore, "A New Americanism: Why a Nation Needs a National Story", **Foreign Affairs**, February 5, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-02-05/new-americanism-nationalism-jill-lepore (Access: 07.04.2019).
[162] Hartz, **op. cit.** 1955.
[163] Michael C. Desch, "America's Illiberalism: The Ideological Origins of Overreaction in U.S. Foreign Policy", **International Security**, Vol.32, No.3 (Winter, 2007/2008), p. 10.
[164] Marvin Meyers, "The Liberal Tradition in America: An Appraisal", **Comparative Studies in Society and History**, Vol. 5, Issue. 3, April 1963, p. 263.

good things go together; (3) radicalism and revolution are bad; (4) distributing power is more critical than accumulating power. All these assumptions point to a political system based on the distribution of power to multiple centers, namely democracy. Such a governing system is doubtlessly preferable compared to a stable system in which a concentrated accumulation of power is observable, and there is a limited possibility, if not none, for popular control over leaders.[165]

Thus, as a nation that was born free and equal, unlike other countries, notably its European counterparts, the Americans developed a sense of difference, and even a belief in their superiority. This self-attributed "uniqueness" had two major consequences with regard to U.S. foreign policy. First, Lockean liberalism has become embedded in the making and conduct of foreign policy. In rhetoric, as well as in practice, the liberal influences have always been apparent in America's actions at the international level. "American leaders –regardless of their partisan or philosophical labels– routinely reaffirm the convictions basic to the Lockean liberal tradition."[166] Within this context, "no U.S. leader is ever entirely free from the influence of liberal ideas…"[167] and their efforts have usually been directed to ensure "… an acceptable balance between the protection of the strategic national interest and the promotion of the ideal national interest."[168] In accordance with the premises of the Lockean liberal approach, the paramount of American culture has been the individual. Likewise, in its well-known paragraphs, the Declaration of Independence contained explicit references to some main Lockean concepts.[169] One of the most striking passages of the Declaration of Independence, in this regard, stated these Lockean ideals: "We [Americans] hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."[170] The second consequence, directly related to the belief in American difference and superiority, was the emergence of the concept of American exceptionalism as the core element of national identity. "The fact

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[165] Robert A. Packenham, **Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973, pp. 112-160.
[166] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p.244.
[167] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 163.
[168] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 6.
[169] Thomas E. Patterson, **We the People: An Introduction to American Government**, McGraw Hill Education, New York, 2015, pp. 9, 32.
[170] "The Declaration of Independence," July 4, 1776, https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript (Access: 07.04.2019).

that the U.S. has been so liberal is what makes it exceptional."[171] The belief in exceptionalism has, therefore, constituted the framework of U.S. foreign policy and a common ground for both idealists and realists in the United States.

"The term American exceptionalism describes the belief that the United States is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history; not only unique but also superior among nations."[172] Like any other nation, the United States is influenced by the fundamental assumptions of its national culture and identity. What one can easily find at the center of American political culture and identity has always been the belief in American exceptionalism. "The distinctive American myth was grounded in British history and Enlightenment hope, affirmed by the nation's founding elites, carefully elaborated by its historians, instilled in its schoolchildren over succeeding generations, attractively portrayed in its popular culture, embraced by its citizens, promulgated to eagerly accepted by masses well beyond its shores."[173] It has, thus, acted, for centuries, as a lens through which Americans tend to view themselves and the rest of the world.

"[T]he core idea in American nationalism" has been "that the nation manifests exceptional morality in political affairs."[174] American exceptionalism, "the nation's civic religion,"[175] helped to shape not only the tradition in the foreign policy realm but also the public discourse regarding political issues. It turned out to be a "… distinctive ideology and rhetoric that characterized the United States as a 'redeemer nation'…" and within this context, it has constituted "… the philosophical foundation of American foreign relations."[176] Accordingly, the term exceptionalism has a comprehensive meaning. It has acted as an umbrella concept that has characterized the United States' political culture, along with its foreign relations. As a central component of the political culture and national identity, the belief in American exceptionalism has "… performed for generations of Americans that essential function of giving order to their vision of the world and defining their place in it."[177]

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[171] Deudney, Meiser **op. cit.** 2008, p. 29.
[172] Trevor B. McCrisken, **American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy Since 1974,** Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p. 1.
[173] John Kane, **Between Virtue and Power: The Persistent Moral Dilemma of U.S. Foreign Policy,** Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, p. 3.
[174] David P. Forsythe, Patrice C. McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 1.
[175] Jeffrey Sachs, **A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism**, Columbia University Press, New York, 2018, p. 2.
[176] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p. xxi.
[177] Michael Hunt, **Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy**, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2009, p. 14.

Furthermore, it was derived from multiple origins, religious and secular, and it reflected the Americans' self-understanding based on the belief in its uniqueness and in a divinely-ordained mission. Its origins, as a result of its extensive nature, can be explained in religious, philosophical, historical, political, social, and geographical terms, but above all, in the fact that the United States was the only country founded on the idea of freedom. As a result of the multi-dimensional character of its sources, the concept of exceptionalism has been conceived in different ways by the adherents of different perspectives.[178]

According to Charles Kupchan, the traditional concept of American exceptionalism was about "America first." "American exceptionalism 1.0," in his words, had been dominant in the formation of American grand strategy until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941. Subsequently, has come "American exceptionalism 2.0" that focused on the idea of *Pax Americana* backed by a strategy of global engagement.[179] Even though the first signs of a break from the classical version of American exceptionalism were manifested, in 1898, through Spanish-American War, it is true that the turn toward a more global policy became almost totally free from traditional isolationist pulls after WWII. Moreover, Kupchan notes five national attributes on which American exceptionalism was based on in its first period:[180]

1- The geography as a factor that has facilitated American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere;

2- Unparalleled autonomy both at home and abroad;

3- A messianic mission;

4- Unprecedented social equality and economic mobility;

5- The belief in the exceptional character of American people, Anglo-Saxons, as the racial dimension of the concept.

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[178] James W. Ceaser, "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism", **American Political Thought,** Vol.1 No.1, (Spring 2012), pp. 3-28.
[179] Charles A. Kupchan, "The Clash of Exceptionalisms: A New Fight Over an Old Idea", **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 97 No. 2, March/April 2018, pp. 139-148.
[180] **Ibid.**

Kupchan's periodization of American exceptionalism reflects, actually, the two-fold identity inspired by the concept. As it was a fluid and accommodative phenomenon, American exceptionalism encouraged different interpretations. It has been perceived as a concept based either on the difference of Americans from the rest of the world or on their superiority compared to the other nations on earth. As a result, the belief in the concept of exceptionalism has become the source of even opposing views, in strategic terms, regarding foreign affairs. "Ironically, exceptionalism can stimulate both crusading interventionism and complacent withdrawal from world affairs."[181] Thus, this two-fold identity embracing both an exemplarist vision and a crusader view caused, in turn, the emergence of a two-fold foreign policy: isolationism (policy of aloofness) and internationalism. As a matter of fact, the seemingly opposing views –exemplarist and crusader (or missionary)- have shared a common ground defined as the belief in American exceptionalism. Likewise, the advocates of both these perspectives have been motivated by the same ambition based on the desire to ultimately reach a world where the liberal democratic values and institutions spread. Despite the shared idealistic elements and their repudiation of traditional power politics, what differed them was the strategy that has seemed appropriate to each for achieving their objective.[182] Although some suggested that this dichotomous view of identity that inspired two foreign policy traditions had actually vanished after the Revolution,[183] these two visions have marked the domestic debate in the United States and kept the contest between realism and idealism heated with necessary adaptations to the requirements of a given time period or the nature of the event in hand.

Nevertheless, the concept of American exceptionalism, despite its comprehensive character and widely accepted premises, lacked a complementary element that would add a sense of mission to it and enforce particularly its religious and racial tone. This gap was bridged by the concept of Manifest Destiny that refers to a mission given by Divine Providence to Americans in order to redeem the other "inferior" peoples. "A central component of American exceptionalism is the belief that America has a special mission, ordained by Providence or self-chosen, to lead the world toward more political freedom."[184] Essentially, the concept was described as

[181] Tami R. Davis, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Citty Upon a Hill", **Foreign Policy**, No. 66, (Spring, 1987), p. 21.
[182] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 23.
[183] Restad, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 57.
[184] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 10.

"… the doctrine that one nation has a preeminent social worth, a distinctively lofty mission, and consequently, unique rights in the application of moral principles."[185] Even though it is strongly associated with the first Pilgrims' belief that they were to be settled in "promised lands" to make a divine plan work on earth, the roots of Manifest Destiny in American foreign policy history can be traced back to 1845, right before the Mexican-American War (1846-48). The concept was publicly employed in order to claim the United States' right to Oregon territory disputed by the British.[186] The following annexations of Mexican territory were, therefore, considered as a natural result of the sacred mission of the U.S. to spread liberty and self-government in the Western Hemisphere. This belief was clearly expressed in the words of George Washington's first inaugural address in 1789: " … the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the Republican model of Government are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."[187] In that sense, the concept of Manifest Destiny was the harbinger of the predestination of the United States to expand its limits across the hemisphere.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing unusual or exceptional about a nation believing that it has a special mission in the world, given the circumstances of the era. The concept of Manifest Destiny, in essence, was not different from the British belief in "white man's burden," the French conviction about "*la mission civilisatrice*," or the Portuguese advocacy of "*missão civilizadora*" in search of justifying their colonialist activities. For Americans, "[t]he messianic vision," argued Sachs, "provided the energy and vision to overcome the unimaginable difficulties of settling a new frontier thousands of miles from the European homelands."[188] The victory of a weak, an infant nation over two of the world's greatest powers, namely Great Britain and France, strengthened, among Americans, the conviction that God was on their side. They believed that the U.S. had a central role to play in God's providential plan for humankind, and this view shaped, especially in the early decades of the Republic, the foreign policy decisions and the country's view of foreign affairs.

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[185] Albert K. Weinberg, **Manifest Destiny: A Study of National Expansion in American History**, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1935, p. 8.
[186] Trevor B. McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Vol: II**, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 2002, p. 68.
[187] "Washington's Inaugural Address of 1789" https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/inaugtxt.html (Access: 07.04.2019).
[188] Sachs, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 21.

Furthermore, the belief in Manifest Destiny is closely related to the idea that freedom and liberty at home are bound to the spread of such values abroad, primarily in neighboring territories. That is why U.S. foreign policy, during the first decades, gained a hemispheric character. Moreover, Manifest Destiny was the reflection of a so-called moralistic dimension of U.S. strategy at the international level. In this sense, it has constituted the source and philosophical foundation of the American impulse to foster democratic institutions and to spread liberal values in various regions of the world. U.S. policies based on humanitarian concerns must also be considered as clear reflections of the influence of the idea of Manifest Destiny that later became "the American Century"[189] in a secular disguise. This self-image of uniqueness and chosenness has characterized U.S. foreign policy for a long time and constituted the underlying motive behind many decisions.

Notwithstanding, the concept of American exceptionalism and relevant views and approaches, even though widely acknowledged, have been subject to harsh criticisms from many angles. Two points of the concept, in this regard, have generally come in for criticism: its righteousness and its instrumentalization for expansionist policies. In one of the most known examples of these critical essays, Stephen Walt described American exceptionalism as a "myth" and claimed that "… the conduct of U.S. foreign policy has been determined primarily by its relative power and by the inherently competitive nature of international politics." Then, he articulated five myths in order to demonstrate that Americans and their experience was not exceptional at all. According to Walt, (1) the United States neither have unique responsibilities toward other people nor a superiority compared to other nations; (2) unlike what many Americans think, the United States is not an exceptionally virtuous nation and that it does not behave better than the others do; (3) the success of the United States dues not only to its exceptional genius but also to good fortune concretized by certain

[189] The term "American Century" was first used by Henry Luce in an article published in Life magazine on February 17, 1941. In this article, Luce argued that the XXth century would be the American Century and emphasized that the U.S. had to "accept wholeheartedly [its] duty and [its] opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of [its] influence." For him, Americans must fulfill their duty with "…passionate devotion to great American ideals." In this sense, with its reference to a special duty and to the greatness of American ideals, Luce's conceptualizing of the American Century must be considered as an updated version of the concept of Manifest Destiny with a prevalent secular tone. Its secular character was mainly derived from the fact that it was based more on the relative power of the United States at the international level rather than Divine Providence for it.
Henry Luce, "The American Century," **Life**, February 17, 1941, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mlassite/discussions261/luce.pdf (Access: 06.04.2019).

geographic and political advantages; (4) the United States' contribution to the development of democracy and liberalism in the world is overstated; and finally, (5) the conviction that the U.S. is a major part of a divine plan causes, not surprisingly, a hubristic attitude that eventually lays the ground for certain unsuccessful initiations.[190] His criticisms are, thus, directed to the righteousness of the exceptionalist claims.

However, what has continuously shaped certain foreign policy actions and political rhetoric in the United States and what has played a significant role in this regard is not American exceptionalism as a concrete fact, but the apparent and pervasive belief in it. The myth, being a mythical phenomenon, is the product of imagination, and it does not have the claim to describe reality. In this sense, "…the source of its sustenance is not reason but faith."[191] In other words, whether it is true or not, the leaders -and Americans in general- usually believe that their country is exceptional and this belief has been one of the fundamental determinants of U.S. foreign policy. In terms of foreign policy and within the scope of this thesis, the focus will be on the influence of the belief in American exceptionalism in the making and conduct of U.S. foreign policy not on its righteousness. Another criticism is centered on the opinion that American exceptionalism is a tool that has been used in order to legitimize expansionist tendencies.[192] Exceptionalism, in this sense, must not be considered as "…an archetype of the Promised Land but an artifact of the Crusader State."[193] This view reflects, in fact, a narrow, one-sided vision of American exceptionalism. It is true that the concept, particularly its missionary strand, harbors inherently certain expansionist impulses, and these impulses have, from time to time, dominated the foreign policy action of the United States. However, one must not ignore the fact that there exists another strand, the exemplarist, believing that the U.S. does not have to assertively advance its values and principles, but it should play the role of an encouraging model for others to emulate. Even though it might be true that throughout history certain leaders tend to cloak their expansionist moves in the exceptionalist discourse in order to gain public support and approval of their

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[190] Walt, **op. cit.** 2011.
[191] Kane, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 5.
[192] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p. xxi
[193] Walter A. McDougall, "The Unlikely History of American Exceptionalism", **The American Interest**, February 12, 2013, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/02/12/the-unlikely-history-of-american-exceptionalism/ (Access: 07.04.2019).

constituency, this does not mean that the belief in American exceptionalism is an artificial concept created only for this purpose.

Therefore, "the exceptionalist narrative has set the boundaries of public discourse and provided a political and ideological foundation for U.S. grand strategy."[194] Moreover, by providing the framework of the realism-idealism debate, the belief in American exceptionalism has become one of the principal characteristics of U.S. foreign policy since the beginning. Within this context, the central topic of this debate has been related to the role of values in the making and conduct of foreign policy. There exist, in this regard, three main approaches: (1) values should be the driving force in determining the policies to pursue; (2) values should play no role, and U.S. foreign policy should be based on a realistic appraisal of national interests; (3) the role of values should be instrumental. They are a means of achieving a goal.[195] A profound analysis of American foreign policy vision since the foundation of the Republic indicates that each of these three approaches has prevailed, in different periods, within the foreign policy realm in the United States. Nonetheless, "during the generations of general peace between 1815 and 1898, American idealism and realism remained compartmentalized, the former residing in the realm of opinion, ideas, and moral posturing, the latter existing in the realm of policy and action."[196] The transformation, in this regard, has occurred, starting by the end of the nineteenth century, and since then, both approaches have had the chance to fundamentally affect, from time to time, the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, this persistent debate has kept its centrality in the United States, where realism and idealism have been conceived, interpreted, and employed in relatively different ways as a result of its idiosyncrasies.

1- The American Foreign Policy Vision

Regarding the study of U.S. foreign policy, there are basically two views among scholars and experts. The adherents of one view observe a turning point - the Spanish-American War of 1898- that separates an early American foreign policy tradition based on caution, modesty, and reluctance and a later more elusive era characterized by ambitious policies and expansionist tendencies. Many others, in contrast, insists on the

[194] Kupchan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 140.
[195] Deudney, Meiser, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 38.
[196] Graebner, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 320.

constant domination of expansionist impulses on the U.S. decisions throughout history.[197] The distinction between these approaches is essential for our work, as well as for the research field because it is, indeed, directly related to the central concept of this thesis, the realism-idealism pendulum.

Those who see continuity in expansionist tendencies in the U.S. foreign policy history tend to refuse the idealist claims in certain American behavior at the international level and emphasize overwhelming power considerations on its decisions. According to them, "the seeming contradiction of the imperialism of anti-imperialism…disappears when one realizes that Americans were not opposed to all empires, only to those different from their own…" which "they equated… with progress, civilization, and, above all, freedom…"[198] Within this framework, they also disavow the story of isolationism, claiming that the United States has always been internationalist and expansionist and that its foreign policy during the early period of the Republic "laid the foundations for a twentieth-century superpower status." In this regard, the War of 1898 is, for instance, considered as a step in the search of great power status by the United States rather than an "imperial aberration."[199] Thus, the idealist motives behind the McKinley administration's decision to enter the War of 1898 were totally disregarded by them.[200] However, such motives have often been determining factors of the American response to certain cases, and the Spanish-American War of 1898 was one of them.

The refusal of isolationism, in turn, must be argued on the basis of a flawed definition instead of using it as proof of the constant American tendency to territorial expansion. Simply, the United States, in military and political terms, was isolationist for a while, not within its national borders, but first, within its continent then, its hemisphere that, according to the American mind, "had been kept" in the Providence of God "unused and waiting for a peaceful people who loved liberty and the rights of men more than they loved anything else, to come and set up an unselfish

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[197] Walter Russell Mead, Review of *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion,* by Walter T. K. Nugent, **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 87, No. 6, November/December 2008, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2008-11-06/habits-empire-history-american-expansion (Access: 10.04.2019).
[198] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p. xviii.
[199] Restad, **op. cit.** 2012, pp. 65-66; **American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World,** Routledge, New York, 2015, pp. 27-28.
[200] Mike Sewell, "Humanitarian Intervention, Democracy and Imperialism: the American War with Spain, 1898, and After", in. Brendan Simms, D. J. B. Trim (Eds.), **Humanitarian Intervention: A History**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 303-322.

commonwealth."[201] The expansionist initiatives carried out during this period must be assessed, from this perspective, with the concept of Manifest Destiny in mind. The American expansion in the Western Hemisphere could be explained, in Andrew Jackson's famous words with regard to the annexation of some Mexican territory, as the efforts for "extending the area of freedom."[202] The westward expansion and other initiatives in favor of such tendencies were, therefore, not the results of some conventional territorial ambitions, but they were what required the divinely ordained spread of liberty.

Therefore, the term isolationism must be better defined in a way that would include the idealistic, perhaps, the internationalist elements inherent to the American political tradition. To claim that the United States has never been isolationist and that it has always been expansionist causes, inevitably, the underestimation or the oversight of the transformation of U.S. foreign policy, initiated by the War of 1898 and intensified in the post-WWII era. Nevertheless, instead of redefining the term isolationism, it could be wise to use another expression, such as the policy of aloofness, to avoid such misinterpretations. As Eurocentric as it might seem, this concept of aloofness contains the geographic advantages that the United States held, as well as its remote stance toward international politics. This policy of aloofness was characterized by a unilateralist approach that "…provided the framework for geographic expansion through what would become known as America's 'manifest destiny,' and it allowed the country to strengthen economically through trade and, eventually, industrialization."[203] As its growing economic interests required strong protection abroad, the United States has developed its military might. Thus, in this sense, "…unilateralism allowed the United States to become a 'great power'…by the end of the nineteenth century."[204] Henceforth, the terms isolationism and the policy of aloofness will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

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[201] Woodrow Wilson, "Preparedness to the Soldier," Address at the Military Academy, West Point, June 13, 1916, in. Albert Bushnell Hart (Ed.), **Selected Addresses and Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson**, University Press of the Pacific, Honolulu, 2002, p. 127.
[202] "Andrew Jackson to Aaron V. Brown, February 9, 1843, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett", https://cdn.loc.gov/service/mss/maj/06165/06165_0148_0151.pdf (Access: 10.04.2019).
[203] Joyce P. Kaufman, **A Concise History of U.S. Foreign Policy**, Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2017, p. 17
[204] **Ibid.**

It was not both events and ideas that have formed the foreign policy traditions of the United States. In retrospect, the history of U.S. foreign policy, argued Mandelbaum, consists of four distinct periods characterized by different features. The first of these periods began with the first presidential term of George Washington (1789) and lasted until the Spanish-American War of 1898. Throughout this period, the issues like settling in North America, the Civil War (1861-1865), and economic development were top priorities in the political agenda of the new state. "The nation's focus was," therefore, "largely inward." In the second period between 1898 and 1945, this inward-looking stance underwent a radical transformation. Having emerged from the Civil War as the world's largest economy, the U.S. became one of the great powers of the era and engaged, for various reasons, in global affairs and joined forces with the others in two great wars. The Cold War constituted the third period that, within the context of U.S. foreign policy, was characterized by the leadership of the Western world in the realms of economy and security. The United States, as one of two nuclear superpowers, triumphed, with its allies, in almost a half-century-long ideological struggle against the Soviet Union, and that victory carried U.S. foreign policy to the post-Cold War era. In its fourth period, since the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy has enjoyed, especially in the 1990s, an unprecedented increase in its relative power but experienced, paradoxically, less success than previous periods. The broad range of missions initiated in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Middle East with various motives and scopes, along with other ambitious enterprises, such as encouraging the protection of human rights in China and providing technical assistance to the Russian economy until its crush in 1998, demonstrated that the U.S. success in foreign policy is not in direct proportion to its relative power at the international level.[205] In fact, the 9/11 terrorist attacks of which the impact in every aspect of U.S. foreign policy cannot be overstated, marked the end of this era. Given the drastic turn it generated in foreign policy, the 9/11 tragedy has put an end to the post-Cold War period, leading to a fifth one shaped around the global war on terrorism, the central tenet of President Bush's neoconservative Freedom Agenda. Culminated in overambitious ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, the post-9/11 period has already marked the most controversial era in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Doubtlessly, the 9/11 altered the priorities, character, and thrust of U.S. foreign policy, encouraging active use of military force, especially in the Middle East. Therefore, U.S. foreign

[205] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, pp. 367-368.

policy appeared to espouse a rather hegemonic new vision, "a vision of unilateral power, military competence, and the removal of dictators…"[206] The unchecked American unilateralism in response to the attacks not only gradually alienated friends and foes alike but also turned out to be detrimental to the moral posture and soft power of the country. While the world has witnessed, throughout this period, an increase in multipolarity, the growing U.S. overseas commitment created unease at home and abroad. Lastly, the eruption of the Arab Spring protests has done nothing but exacerbate the relative vulnerability of the U.S. in geostrategic terms, further deepening the country's engagement in the Middle East. In the end, initially characterized by the unwavering U.S. resolve for countering terrorism and promoting democracy, this period has come to be defined by the ambiguity in U.S. actions and the relative decline in U.S. power.

The inward-focus that marked the early period of U.S. foreign policy was apparent, especially in the first three decades of the Republic. "Isolationism developed its roots in the early American republic when foreign policy was mostly about domestic policy."[207] The turmoil first created by the Revolution, and then by the European wars, incited a substantial tendency for an approach based on "…separateness and unilateral freedom of action merged with national pride and a sense of continental safety to foster the political isolation."[208] With the exception of the Jay Treaty (1795) that was concluded with Great Britain to resolve certain issues that remained unsolved since the U.S. gained its independence, the isolationist attitude of the United States was the prevailing foreign policy approach. Isolationism, defined as "…the avoidance of political and military commitments to or alliances with foreign powers, particularly those of Europe,"[209] constituted the main framework of the American approach to international affairs for almost a century. The foundation of this guiding principle can be found in the geographic advantage the United States enjoyed. Being aloof from the Old World, in physical and political terms, Americans prioritized the economic development and other internal problems that the new Republic faced.

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[206]Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, "American Foreign Policy after 9/11," in. Michael Cox, Doug Stokes (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2008, p. 418.

[207] Henry R. Nau, **Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan,** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2013, p. 43.

[208] Warren F. Kuehl, Gary B. Ostrower, "Internationalism" in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Vol: II,** Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 2002, p. 241.

[209] Manfred Jonas, "Isolationism", in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Vol: II,** Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 2002, p.337.

"The basic aim of both Washington and Jefferson," two of the founders and the first and third presidents of the U.S., respectively, "was to safeguard the independence of a new and weak nation by avoiding, whenever possible, involvement in the military and political affairs of the major powers while at the same time expanding trade and commerce as a means of fostering national development."[210] This self-evidently inward-looking policy was definitely facilitated by the fact that the United States was a country favored by nature itself. Precisely, its location on Earth not only lessened its security concerns but also provided it with relatively easy access to the world economies. In other words, "[t]he world's oceans functioned both as highways and as moats, insulating the United States from excessive fear of invasion… even as they provided commercial access to the markets of the world."[211] That is exactly why the term aloofness seems like the most appropriate expression to describe this era of U.S. foreign policy.

Furthermore, the main lines of this view were illustrated by President Washington's words in his Farewell Address and many other documents written by the founders of the Republic and, in this regard, served as the guiding principles in the realm of foreign policy. Within this context, the policy of aloofness that characterized the era was primarily influenced by certain pragmatic and realist insights. President Washington's caution against the "…permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others…"[212] and Thomas Jefferson's invocation that U.S. foreign policy must be grounded on the principle of "… peace and commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none"[213] demonstrate that the statesmen of the era were guided by pragmatic and relatively realist concerns rather than lofty ideals. As the leaders of an infant state, a former colony, their priority was based on the desire to gain and to preserve certain room for maneuver for institutionalizing the U.S.' independence and to lay the foundations of a developed economy, while struggling to ease the tension among the members of the new state. The logic behind their approach was simply centered on

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[210] **Ibid.** p. 339.
[211] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p. xxi.
[212] "George Washington's Farewell Address to the People of the United States", **Senate Document No: 106-21**, 2000, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21/pdf/GPO-CDOC-106sdoc21.pdf (Access: 12.04.2019).
[213] "Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Address", March 4, 1801, **The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 33, 17 February to 30 April 1801**, https://jeffersonpapers.princeton.edu/selected-documents/first-inaugural-address-0 (Access: 15.04.2019).

benefitting from the favorable geography to assure the stabilization of the Union. This geographic advantage, combined with the rich natural resources, formed "a perception," within the United States, "that foreign policy was an optional activity."[214] As unilateralist as it might seem, U.S. foreign policy's principal objectives in this era were to enforce independence abroad and to ensure unity at home. "The first several generations of U.S. leaders were conscious of America's relative weakness vis-à-vis the European powers, and they feared that involvement in foreign intrigue might corrupt their young nation's political principles. As U.S. confidence grew, this commitment to unilateralism came to include insistence on freedom of action in the Western Hemisphere."[215] The enunciation and the implementation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 marked the initiation of a partial change in U.S. foreign policy and ultimately caused the long-standing debate about the isolationist stance of the U.S. As a matter of fact, by gaining a hemispheric character, the foreign policy of the United States showed clear signs of a changing course in this period. However, the main lines drawn by the founders, despite an extension in their scope, remained almost the same within the context of the Monroe Doctrine.

"The 'most significant of all American state papers'" noted Samuel Flagg Bemis, "appropriately bears the name Monroe Doctrine."[216] President James Monroe's message sent to the Congress on December 2, 1823, was formalized after a series of debates between the advocates of a joint undertaking with Great Britain with regard to the protection of the newly independent states of South America on one side and those who defended the idea of avoiding any political commitment to a foreign power and who insisted on the preservation of the isolationist stance of U.S. foreign policy. The latter camp led by John Quincy Adams, then-Secretary of State, who put forward and formalized the central tenets of the doctrine prevailed in the debate, and a unilateralist policy that "…put South American intervention off-bounds for all non-American powers…" was ultimately articulated.[217] The core objective of the Monroe Doctrine was basically to compel European powers to eschew interference into the affairs of the American continent. In this regard, it stood upon two pillars: non-colonization and

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[214] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p. 237.
[215] Stewart Patrick, **The Best Laid Plans: The Origins of American Multilateralism and the Dawn of the Cold War**, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, 2009, p. 1.
[216] Samuel Flagg Bemis, **John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy**, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949, p. 408.
[217] Edward J. Renehan Jr., **The Monroe Doctrine: The Cornerstone of American Foreign Policy**, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 2007, pp. 80-87.

non-intervention. The first of the three parts of the document cautioned all non-American powers that the United States would not tolerate any attempts to further colonization of the American continents. The second part concerned the issue of European interference in the Americas, especially the newly independent South American republics. Such action, according to the Monroe Doctrine, would be seen as unacceptable and face a veritable resistance by the United States. Lastly, in the next section, it was emphasized that the policy of the United States would continue to be one of not intervening in the internal affairs of any European power.[218] Emphasizing America's total separation from the Old World, the Monroe Doctrine, therefore, introduced the concept of the sphere of influence for the United States in the face of the potential ambitions of European powers.

In fact, Monroe's strategy was not different from the legacy that he inherited from his predecessors. It represented just a partial departure, by introducing "specific guidelines for U.S. involvement in international affairs" from the general political isolationism promoted in President Washington's Farewell Address.[219] Likewise, solidifying the Union internally was still one of the main objectives of his administration. Moreover, expanding foreign trade, ameliorating commercial networks while avoiding binding commitments were also among the central elements of his approach. The Monroe Doctrine's significance lay, nevertheless, in its tendency to broaden the scope of U.S. foreign policy by making "hemispheric policy 'an American cause' unrelated to European concerns."[220] It was conceived as the last phase of the War of Independence and as an instrument used to fulfill America's Manifest Destiny to spread liberty across the American continents. Alive for decades, the Monroe Doctrine was further expanded by the Polk administration in 1845, in a way that would combine American ambitions with the assumptions of Manifest Destiny. In that sense, the interference of Europeans in the territorial ambitions of the United States in the Western Hemisphere became off-limits. Toward the end of the century, first under the presidency of Ulysses Grant and then Groover Cleveland, the Monroe Doctrine found itself expanded even further, acting as a basis for the U.S. claims to expand its boundaries in the hemisphere whenever it deemed necessary.[221]

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[218] Glenn Hastedt, **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy,** Facts on File, New York, 2004, p. 319.
[219] James M. McCormick, **American Foreign Policy and Process**, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2010, p. 13.
[220] Weeks, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 116.
[221] Renehan Jr., **op. cit.** 2007, pp. 91-96.

The last step in the direction of enlarging the scope of the Monroe Doctrine was taken by President Theodore Roosevelt, who, in his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine proclaimed in 1904, "arrogated to the United States the exercise of an international police power in the Caribbean" and within the context of this self-assigned mission, "for the next twenty years U.S. marines landed periodically in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and, on occasion, even Mexico."[222] The naval blockade imposed by Britain, Germany, and Italy, on Venezuela as the country defaulted on its foreign debts, "raising old fears that European powers would try to undermine U.S. dominance in the region,"[223] triggered such an assertive U.S. response. Although for some, it was considered a mere redefinition of the Monroe Doctrine "to justify U.S. interventionism against Latin American revolutionaries,"[224] the Roosevelt Corollary illustrated not only the expanded reach of the Doctrine but also the growing international role and engagement of the U.S.

As observed throughout this analysis, U.S. foreign policy gradually evolved throughout the nineteenth century, and eventually embraced an approach that favored an explicit engagement in international affairs. Apparently, the difference between the traditional policy of aloofness and the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 was much less than it was at the end of the century. The reason for this transformation was doubtlessly multidimensional. The economic aspect, despite its central importance, could not be the sole explanatory factor. Even though the need for access to the export markets abroad was one of the critical issues that led the United States to global engagement, this was not a problem that emerged in the 1890s. In the mid-nineteenth century, in the wake of the Civil War, the United States was a strong industrial state, an economic giant, compared to most of the other international actors, but its reluctance to follow an activist path at the international level, precisely the isolationist tradition, was still the main tendency. It was, thus, "afflicted with the Dutch disease."[225]

This traditional line was followed until the last decade of the century. The reason for this seeming inconsistency must be looked for in any other realm than the economy, and the most probable explanation lay in the domestic political structure because the

[222] Jonas, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 342.
[223] Kaufman, **op.cit.** 2017, p. 44.
[224]Walter LaFeber, **The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913, Vol: II,** Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013, p. 190
[225] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p. 5.

conversion of national power into international influence through assertive policies is only possible with the establishment of "… the mechanisms and institutions that make this conversion possible."[226] In other words, extracting necessary national resources and mobilizing them to achieve any ambitious foreign policy goal requires a centralized domestic political structure. The systemic pressures can only be responded directly by the decision-maker when these conditions are met. "Between the late 1870s and the late 1890s, America's political structure changed dramatically as two key institutions gained strength: the federal government and the presidency."[227] The centralization of the political structure at the executive level, in the United States, was one of the main characteristics of the period under the McKinley administration.[228] In this regard, he set the precedent for the next presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Therefore, the radical transformation undergone by U.S. foreign policy at the end of the nineteenth century was a direct result of the changing nature of the domestic political structure, as well as the broadened economic interests. In this regard, the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the annexation of the Philippines represented a critical turning point toward the direction of a more internationalist approach in U.S. foreign policy. "It was not until the close of the nineteenth century… that the United States engaged in full-scale hostilities overseas with another major power."[229] As a great power with a developed industrial capacity and a centralized state structure, the United States saw the need to convert its power into international activism, which meant, as a corollary, to "translate its long-proclaimed universal moral relevance into a broader geopolitical role."[230]

The War of 1898 was described, by Ambassador John Hay, as "the splendid little war; begun with the highest motives…"[231] Hence, the motives behind the war that marked the transition from the traditional policy of aloofness to an activist path at the international level within the context of U.S. foreign policy were two-dimensional. There were, on the one hand, humanitarian concerns and the belief in Manifest Destiny that shaped the public discourse and political rhetoric with regard to the oppression of the Spanish rulers, particularly in Cuba, where concentration camps were established.

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[226] **Ibid.** p. 93.
[227] **Ibid.** p. 92
[228] Walter LaFeber, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 169.
[229] Kissinger, **World Order…**, p. 240.
[230] **Ibid.** p.246.
[231] Hay to Roosevelt cited in William Roscoe Thayer, **The Life and Letters of John Hay**, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1915, p.337.

On the other hand, there were undeniable strategic and economic American interests at stake in the face of a veritable risk of instability in the islands or consolidation of the Spanish power on these islands, few miles away from the American coasts. Thus, in this sense, the war was an issue on which the strategic interests and the core values to be promoted abroad converged. "Islands a cannon-shot from American possessions might fall into the rival powers if left independent, and there was a moral obligation not to return any to Spain's oppressive power."[232]

Combined with a more effective executive and a compliant Congress, this convergence significantly facilitated the American entry to the war. It is hard, if not impossible, to determine whether the moral concerns or the strategic considerations were the primary driving force behind the U.S. decision. For some, like Walter LaFeber, America's concern for establishing order and stability in the islands was secondary.[233] The U.S. actions in this period were considered even as "quasi-colonialism."[234] For others, it was the call of a sacred duty that urged the United States to intervene, and McKinley was "the first [American president] to respond to the call of a broad philanthropy toward other less fortunate people."[235] In this regard, the reason why the United States did not advocate for the independence of these islands was the firm belief in the impotence of the local population for self-governing. It can be noted that humanitarian concerns seemed like the determining factors of the intervention in the Cuban revolt, whereas the annexation of the Philippines resulted mainly from the strategic considerations clothed in the language of humane values. In the end, the Spanish-American War of 1898 was the first overseas American enterprise, in terms of foreign policy, that was influenced by both realist and idealist impulses. Moreover, through this war, limited liability as one of the traditional strands of U.S. foreign policy was downplayed by the missionary internationalism.

The period between the election of William McKinley and 1908 "… saw a marked expansion of American interests abroad, as the United States pursued a formal and informal imperialism… Also… [it] was characterized by a booming economy, a strong presidency, and a relatively compliant Congress."[236] This view was bluntly

[232] Sewell, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 314.
[233] LaFeber, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 136.
[234] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 24.
[235] E. K. Smith, "William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate over the Taking of the Philippine Islands," cited in Sewell, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 307.
[236] Zakaria **op. cit.** 1998, p. 154.

expressed by Woodrow Wilson, who would move to the White House a decade and a half later:

> *"Much the most important change to be noticed is the result of the war with Spain upon the lodgment and exercise of power within our federal system: the greatly increased power and opportunity for constructive statesmanship given the President, by the plunge into international politics and into the administration of distant dependencies, which has been that war's most striking and momentous consequence. When foreign affairs play a prominent part in the politics and policy of a nation, its Executive must of necessity be its guide: must utter every initial judgment, take every first step of action, supply the information upon which it is to act, suggest and in large measure control its conduct."*[237]

It was, thus, affirmed through the War of 1898 that the United States, after solidifying internal unity and establishing a strong state structure, would act as a great power with an activist approach not only within its own hemisphere but also in other regions. The circumstances were ripe for the United States to assume a major world leadership role with all its responsibilities. Within this context and "in adaptation to the nation's evolving modern development, US foreign policy needed to be recast beyond mere continental and hemispheric horizons (isolationism), and refocused on a global perspective suited to the US moving from the status of a great continental and regional power to that of a great world power."[238] The victory against Spain directed American attention to the Pacific region in the framework of the Open Door policy that aimed to assure access to the Asian markets and to shelter them from any other foreign domination. It was, perhaps, the most significant extension of American interests abroad since the annexation of Texas. Moreover, activism and assertiveness in the realm of foreign policy remained robust throughout the following decades, except the isolationism of the inter-war period. From this period on, internationalism has become a general foundation for U.S. foreign policy. The traditional realism-idealism debate

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[237] Woodrow Wilson, **Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics**, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1900, pp. x-xi.

[238] Martin J. Sklar, **Creating the American Century: The Ideas and Legacies of America's Twentieth-Century Foreign Policy Founders**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2017, p. 119.

has usually revolved, since then, around the struggle between the accommodationist and hardliner strands of internationalism.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the internationalist view that had inherently influenced American political thought gradually came to surface. Later, this tradition was effectively cemented by the Wilsonian initiatives that were strongly related to the belief in the universal character of American liberal values seeking to make the world safe for democracy. Building upon McKinley's legacy, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson carried American activism at the international level much further. The roots of the internationalist view, in fact, could be found in the colonial era when certain thinkers had developed some cosmopolitan ideas. However, until at least the second half of the nineteenth century, the isolationist tendencies have downplayed the internationalist ideas within the context of U.S. foreign policy.

The definition of internationalism, one must note, varies depending on the time when it is defined. For different generations, it refers to different ideas. Within the context of our thesis, it is defined as the foreign policy tradition based on "the thought favoring involvement of the United States in the world through permanent alliances or formal trade, aid, cultural, and military commitments. It is the antithesis of isolationism, desiring the abstention of these relations."[239] The first international conference which an American delegate attended in 1863, even though the signing of the treaty related to the Red Cross was rejected in 1864 as a result of the impact of the prevailing isolationist stance, could be considered as the initiation of an evolutionary process in favor of internationalism. This Geneva Convention was signed and ratified by the United States in 1882. "Thereafter, cooperation on economic and social matters seemed acceptable, but political issues, especially those involving Europe, were generally avoided until the end of the century."[240] This period was also marked by the efforts to develop arbitration treaties seeking to resolve the interstate disputes through cooperative means. The Conference of the Hague in 1899, the first international assembly of nations, in this regard, was encouraging for the internationalist thought that would further extend its ideas ushering in the advocacy of a permanent court of justice.[241] The internationalist thinking in the United States was, within this

[239] Donald W. White, "History and American Internationalism: The Formulation from the Past After World War II", **Pacific Historical Review**, Vol. 58, No. 2, May 1989, p. 146.
[240] Kuehl, Ostrower, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 241.
[241] **Ibid.** pp. 242-243.

framework, mainly limited to the initiatives that could facilitate the elimination or, at least, decrease the possibility of war.

In parallel with these early steps favoring the internationalist vision within the realm of foreign policy, the view regarding the global role of the United States, particularly after its engagement in Cuba and the annexation of the Philippines, has been dramatically transformed. With the increased interdependence between the international actors accompanied by the affirmation of American interests abroad, along with its conviction in a sense of moral responsibility toward other peoples, the role played by the United States on the global scale inevitably became deeper and more comprehensive than ever before. Theodore Roosevelt, described as "a brilliant cosmopolitan," was, in this regard, "the first president to grapple systematically with the implications of America's world role," which would be "…a global version of the role Britain had performed in Europe in the nineteenth century."[242] The presidency of T. Roosevelt, who was "…the first modern American president and the last traditional American statesman," marked a decisive turn in U.S. foreign policy with regard to its role, as well as its vision. His "… willingness to use civilization as a political guideline marked him as a major figure in the rise of American internationalism."[243] In this sense, he was "seen as the statesman who laid the foundations of the subsequent decades of liberal internationalism."[244] For President T. Roosevelt, the preservation of humanitarian values, as well as the American interests, was strongly linked to the geopolitical success of liberal countries. The United States had to act, in his view, as the guardian of the global equilibrium and international peace. In this sense, he was seen as "… the first president since the Founding Fathers to resurrect the Hamiltonian idea of treating the balance of power as the distinctive feature of international relations and to undertake active American role in shaping it."[245] His internationalism, informed by the geopolitical considerations, was shaped in a legal and political perspective favoring the codification of international law. Indeed, what made him one of the main figures in the development of American internationalism was his recognition of the United States' need to leave its isolationist attitude in order to fulfill its responsibilities.

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[242] Kissinger, **World Order…,** 2015, p. 247.
[243] Frank Ninkovich, "Theodore Roosevelt: Civilization as Ideology", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 10, Issue. 3, July 1986, pp. 223, 245.
[244] Ryan, **op. cit.** 2000, p. 76.
[245] Henry Kissinger, **Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century**, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001, p. 240.

The country's active involvement in the operation of global equilibrium was inevitable. Its duties and responsibilities could not, thus, reduced to performing an exemplarist role. His concern for the spread of the core American values was, therefore, secondary, if not none. Theodore Roosevelt "… [offered] a particularly dramatic illustration of the degree to which the 'rise to world power' was an affirmation of core American policy ideas. [He] believed fervently in America's mission… [and] called for the United States to assume its proper role as policeman and colonial master. It should stand on a par with the European powers, help bring 'order out of chaos,' and build a navy equal to these new national responsibilities."[246]

In the prewar period, internationalism and imperialism were seen as two concepts that could advance hand in hand. This belief was crystallized around the debate regarding the American role in the Philippines. Therefore, the internationalist view, developed under the presidency of Roosevelt and partially, his successor, William H. Taft, was founded on a legalistic foundation and aimed at achieving its objectives via the rule of law and the military capacity. With the growing conscience with regard to increased interdependence on the global scale, another version of internationalism based on a sense of global community with multiple common interests has developed. This firm idealist vision has essentially constituted the basis of Wilsonianism. Throughout this period, despite the undeniable acceleration of the evolution of the internationalist thinking, it was still the fears of nationalists that prevailed over the optimistic vision of internationalists. In other words, U.S. foreign policy continued to be driven by the isolationist pulls, not by the internationalist push. The establishment of the idealist view of world affairs introduced by the internationalism as a veritable tradition was eventually possible during Woodrow Wilson's tenure in office between 1913 and 1921.

"In the isolation America came to enjoy in the nineteenth century, its statesmen elaborated two themes…: that America's values and institutions were applicable universally but, also, that their spread would be all the more certain if America refined them at home without contaminating them by extensive political interaction with the rest of the world."[247] The former assumption has been valid for U.S. foreign policy in the course of the next century, even in the post-Cold War era. The latter, on the

[246] Hunt, **op. cit.** 2009, pp. 126, 128.
[247] Kissinger, **Does America Need…,** p. 239

contrary, has been subject to a dramatic change with the arguments introduced by the Wilsonian foreign policy. Woodrow Wilson's quest to reorganize the international relations in a more liberal and democratic way was the result of his firm belief in the nature of the foreign policy that must transcend selfish national interest and serve for human concerns.[248] Wilson, like Roosevelt, recognized the new American role after the War of 1898, and his foreign policy was an explicit reflection of his willingness to make the United States lead the world toward a more peaceful and liberal order. He, in this regard, offered a moral rationale for U.S. foreign policy. "His confidence in progress toward democracy, and his interpretation of the frontier's closing in 1890 provided an explanation for involvement in world affairs. He combined these ideas in a new foreign policy during the World War."[249]

Indeed, Wilson's thinking before 1917, was widely influenced by the historical diplomatic tradition of the United States. His initial reaction in the face of the Great War was an explicit reflection of the dualism inherent to the American spirit. In accordance with the common belief of the time, he first sought to maintain America's isolationist tradition that had long been thought to be required for the country's independence. "Assuming a polarity between the Old and New Worlds, he alternated between isolationist and internationalist tendencies… He attempted to maintain neutrality until 1917; then, leading the United States into the European war, he called for a new order under the future League."[250] As a matter of fact, until the last moment, President Wilson was unwilling to enter the war even in the face of the *Lusitania* incident, the sinking of an American cruise liner by a German submarine attack and causing the death of 128 civilian American citizens. However, the aggressive German plans revealed by the Zimmerman Telegram – in which the German Foreign Minister was trying to persuade Mexican authorities for a joint invasion of US territory through the states of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico to be subsequently annexed by Mexico- and the continued German submarine warfare pushed him in this undesired direction.[251] President Wilson's initial unwillingness and his anti- war stance were clearly palpable in his address to Congress on April 2, 1917. His justification for the

[248] George C. Herring, **From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 380.
[249] Lloyd E. Ambrosius, **Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective,** Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990, p. 11.
[250] **Ibid.** p. 9.
[251] Füsun Türkmen **op. cit.** p. 68.

war decision has illustrated his hard choice: "We enter this war," said the president, "only where we are clearly forced into it because there are no other means of defending our rights."[252] Thus, felt threatened by a potential German victory and convinced that the United States had a leading role to play in order to protect its national interest, as well as to serve mankind, Wilson decided in favor of U.S. entry to WWI.

In accordance with the mainline of the prewar American internationalism, the motive behind this decision was not to restore the European balance of power and to end the war but to end all wars.[253] "…[F]or Wilson it was not enough to defeat Germany. He wanted also to defeat those banes of humankind that Germany stood for -imperialism, militarism, and autocracy. A victorious war would be for him only the prelude to global reform. An enlightened peace would redeem the bloody sacrifices of the war and break the grim cycle of suspicion, hatred, and conflict."[254] Thus, perceiving German militarism as "… a menace to world peace and civilization," Wilson placed the fight against it "…in a universalistic, historical framework by asserting the militarism itself was a product of an autocracy that had long suppressed democratic aspirations of the people."[255] Espoused the idea of moral responsibility to fulfill by Americans, his decision to intervene in the Great War was the initial step of an agenda designed to establish a new world order based on liberal democratic institutions and a sense of community. "The United States emerged as the leading world power after the war, and it brought an ambitious institutional agenda aimed at binding democratic states together in a universal rule-based association."[256]

Wilsonianism, emerged within this context, was a multifaceted foreign policy vision that consisted of a set of beliefs and ideals with the objective of structuring the world on American terms. Its principal source of inspiration was the nineteenth-century liberalism, and accordingly, the Kantian idea of "democratic peace." Through the Monroe Doctrine, the United States had affirmed its continental dominance in the Western Hemisphere while liberalizing Latin America. Then had come the Spanish-American War and the American involvement in the multiple Caribbean and Pacific

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[252] Woodrow Wilson, "Necessity of War Against Germany", Address to Congress, April 2, 1917, in. Bushnell (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2002, p. 196.
[253] Sachs, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 24.
[254] Hunt, **op. cit.** 2009, p. 134.
[255] Iriye, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 41.
[256] G. John Ikenberry, **After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, p. 117.

islands, and America had projected its power and interests overseas by the early twentieth century. And now, by the end of the WWI, the United States, fully engaged in a devastating European conflict, had turned into a global power. The Wilsonian ideas offered Americans, in this regard, the opportunity to shape the world, by benefitting this relatively advantageous position, in their image. Additionally, based on its advocacy of the common interest of the entire human community, Wilsonianism has also aimed at serving the interests of every man and woman in the world. The principles expressed in his Fourteen Points were the affirmation of the fact that Wilsonian vision was an ideology that carried the old American tradition, isolationism, to new limits that were shaped by international activism and assertiveness performed in the name of liberty and peace for the whole world. The Wilsonian thought was formed by an understanding of internationalism based on a firm conviction with regard to the existence of common interests of humanity. Furthermore, another source of inspiration for Wilsonianism was its unwavering belief in the universal character of the core American values, such as individual liberty and freedom, and self-government grounded on the consent of the governed. "The ideals on which American society was founded," Wilson had no doubt, "would appeal to all peoples."[257] Peace must, therefore, be built upon these American values and principles. His personal belief in the universality of these values and the impact of this belief on his policy vision was unequivocally expressed in an address to the Senate in 1917: "These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail."[258] These principles and policies were clearly illustrated by the defining elements of Wilsonianism.

To define the notion Wilsonianism in a clear and concise way is, like any other "ism" related to international affairs, a hard task. It can be interpreted differently, depending on the present circumstances. In that sense, instead of trying to formulate a definition that would encompass every dimension, we will put forward four main pillars upon which the Wilsonian tradition has been built: (1) the ambition to make the worldwide promotion of democracy, under the banner of national self-determination,

[257] Manela, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 23.
[258] "Address of the President of the United States to the Senate", January 22, 1917, http://www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~ppennock/doc-Wilsonpeace.htm (Access: 20.04.2019).

a foreign policy priority for the United States; (2) the desire to establish a world order based on the principle of multilateralism that would facilitate the preservation of peace through an understanding of collective security; (3) the advocacy of economic openness as opposed to any mercantilist practices; and (4) the belief in the necessity of deep U.S. engagement in international affairs to make the world safe for democracy.[259]

Therefore, the first element of Wilsonianism, the global promotion of democracy, was not, in fact, a distinctive departure from American tradition, in which "the impulse to foster democratic institutions and policies beyond the borders of the United States" had a long-standing place, "going all the way back to the founding of the republic and even to the Pilgrims' arrival in the New World."[260] It was the transformation of a policy program designed by the Founding Fathers for the United States itself to an agenda applicable to the rest of the world. Thus, the intention was to achieve on a global scale what the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door policy achieved in the Americas and the Pacific region. This vision remained relevant for U.S. foreign policy for the decades to come during the Cold War, or even until recently. This desire for a democratic plural world stemmed from a solid conviction that by the promotion of democratic government on a worldwide scale, the U.S. security interests would likely be well served.[261] At this point, it is worth noting that the word "democracy" was not even mentioned once in Wilson's Fourteen Points Address. Rather, his claim was that the democratization "would be an automatic consequence of implementing the principle of self-determination."[262] Put simply, the regime type matters for international affairs. A governmental structure that would be based on popular sovereignty and that would be justified by the consent of the governed was the key to a peaceful and just international order. His insistence on the principle of national self-determination for all was the main reason why the Wilsonian vision reached a wide audience within the colonized and oppressed societies, as well as the victors. Even though Wilson has not hidden his belief in racial segregation stemming from his southern upbringing, through a governing system that would later be called the mandate, "the ultimate goal" for him, "must be to lift the colonized to the

[259] Tony Smith, "Wilsonianism", in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2002, pp. 617-620
[260] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 287.
[261] Smith **op. cit.** 2002, p. 618; Ikenberry et. al. **op. cit.** 2011, p. 53.
[262] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p. 260.

level of colonizers and make them at least equal members of the family of nations."[263] Thus, the principle of self-determination was an extension of the ambition to create a world order in which the actors would turn into less war-prone entities through the establishment of liberal democratic governmental structures. The multilateral cooperation among them was, in this regard, also vital for the Wilsonian vision of international affairs.

Another central tenet of Wilson's vision was to carry international relations beyond the volatile dynamics of balance-of-power politics. A rule-based order grounded on the principle of equality of its members was, for him, an essential requirement of a better post-war world. To "domesticate international politics," pointed Henry Nau, Wilsonians attributed a central role to the international institutions. "They envision the day when the liberal experiment prevails across the globe, but they believe the world gets to that point best not by relying on example or the balance of power but by including all nations, whether democratic or not, in universal international institutions that regularize procedures and the rule of law for resolving international disputes peacefully without the use of force."[264] Collective security, grounded on multilateral linkages among nations and organized within the framework of an international institution -the League of Nations- was the best solution, for the Wilsonian view, to this desire. "Thus Wilson presented a case for a new international organization to supervise and guarantee the peaceful settlement of disputes and reinforce democratic government worldwide, most critically in Europe."[265] His idea of collective security and multilateralism were, simply, built on "the conviction that a range of international institutions based on the rule of law could keep the peace among states pledged domestically to the same principles."[266] This multilateralist aspect of Wilsonianism was, in fact, what represented a radical break from the historical American tradition with regard to world affairs. Eschewing permanent entanglements, in this perspective, was no longer a viable foreign policy option for the United States. Leading the world toward a more peaceful and fair future required naturally certain binding commitments. The Wilsonian initiative in favor of a collective security arrangement was nothing but the redefinition of American national interest by "…linking it with global interests institutionalized in the League

[263] Manela, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 29.
[264] Nau, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 48.
[265] Ikenberry, **op. cit.** 2001, p. 242.
[266] Smith, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 619.

of Nations…" and accordingly, Wilson "linked America's security with universal needs and a more peaceful world."[267] The insistence of the Wilsonian idealism on multilateralism as the organizing principle of the postwar order was faced with firm opposition, in the Senate, by the dominant isolationist camp led by the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. The Versailles Treaty, because of the concerns it created among Republicans by its articles related to the League of Nations, was rejected as both Wilson and the opposing side refused to compromise on fundamental issues. Despite its initial failure, the Wilsonian ideas have come to fruition in the second half of the 1940s through the establishment of multilateral institutions in the economic, political, and military realms. These developments were also so significant as they demonstrated the impact of the Wilsonian approach in shaping American thinking.

Furthermore, the last two defining elements of Wilsonianism -economic openness and deep American involvement in world affairs- were nothing unexpected. While the former was totally compatible with the main lines drawn by the Founding Fathers, who insisted on the importance of commercial relations with the world, the latter was the natural requirement of the Wilsonian liberal internationalist vision. Its relevance was crystalized by the widespread commitment of the United States to internationalism in the years that followed WWII. As can be observed throughout the history of U.S. foreign policy, Wilsonian idealism created, in this regard, a radical turn. Bringing a moral rationale for American initiatives at the international level, Wilson challenged the long-standing isolationist tradition in this realm. He was convinced that the values and principles that had long been advocated by the U.S. might play a vital role, with the necessary arrangements, in not only achieving the U.S. foreign policy objectives but also satisfying the basic needs of humanity. "He wanted each nation to serve not only its own interests but those of the world at large. America, he said, should release its energies for the service of mankind."[268]

With this approach, what Wilsonianism changed was not only the future of world affairs but the nature of the domestic debate about foreign policy within the American society. Until the end of WWI, the traditional realism-idealism debate had been centered on the extent of the U.S. involvement in international affairs, especially regarding political and military issues. The transformation began toward the end of the

[267] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 42.
[268] Iriye, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 72.

nineteenth century, particularly with the pervasive impact of the War of 1898 and the following development of American internationalism. The vision introduced by Woodrow Wilson, with its multifaceted character, has carried this process even further and set the ground for liberal democratic internationalism to be the foundation of U.S. foreign policy. "The genius of this vision has been," pointed Kissinger, "its ability to harness American idealism in the service of great foreign policy undertakings in peace-making, human rights, and cooperative problem-solving, and to imbue the exercise of American power with the hope for a better and more peaceful world."[269]

The last obstacle to overcome in order to fully eliminate the traditional isolationism from the American foreign policy view was its dominance in the period between the rejection of the Versailles Treaty by the Senate and the Japanese attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbour in 1941. From this date forth, until at least the first decade of the twenty-first century, the foreign policy debate concentrated, especially after the Vietnam War, on the struggle between the subdivisions of the internationalist approach. In this sense, the competition between the accommodationists who favor multilateralism and the hardliners (militant internationalists/crusaders) who prefer an interventionist attitude for forceful persuasion closely track realism and idealism.[270] The fault lines in this debate were, as expected, the compatibility of values and interests, the material and human costs of liberal internationalist policies, their relevance to the strategic national interests, and the appropriateness of the means for the desired ends. Nevertheless, it must not be ignored that the affirmation of the internationalist view as the main ground of U.S. foreign policy was not a phenomenon that emerged without facing any veritable opposition. To the contrary, denounced as naively idealist and incompatible with the realities of international affairs, the Wilsonian view has become subject to harsh criticism mainly by the adherents of the realist perspective.

Walter Lippman, for instance, insisted that because of this idealist stance, the U.S. has become, in the twentieth century, a state that chases broad objectives like collective security and peace, which were nothing but "mirages."[271] According to Kissinger, "Wilson's intermingling of power and principle" has constituted the main reason for "decades of ambivalence as the American conscience tried to reconcile its

[269] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p. 269.
[270] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 259-260.
[271] Lippmann, **op. cit.** 1943, pp. 47-49.

principles with its necessities."[272] The critics focus also on the moral aspect of the Wilsonian foreign policy approach. Following the line drawn by eminent American realist, Hans Morgenthau, according to whom, "a foreign policy which is guided primarily by moral considerations is not only threatened with failure; it can be successful only by accident,"[273] George Kennan, one of the architects of U.S. foreign policy pursued during the Cold War, insisted on the necessity of "an amoral, or even immoral, foreign policy" for the United States in order to put forward effective actions in the international arena.[274]

The fundamental problem related to the moralistic aspect of the idealist perspective was, for Irving Kristol, that it encouraged the United States to commit itself to numerous treaties and institutions "under the illusion that we are moving toward an eventual world community."[275] Thus, this has ultimately caused the substitution of the efforts to preserve the national interests by those aiming at the reconciliation of the interests of all. This approach, in the end, has been criticized for corrupting the nature of foreign policy. Another point on which the criticisms have centered with regard to Wilsonianism was its insistence on the possibility of the liberal democratic government for all. This point has resulted in the emergence of the practicability problem of the idealist foreign policy. As a great power or even a superpower, the American interests at the international level could require alignments with undemocratic regimes. As such rapprochements were deemed unacceptable by the idealist face of U.S. foreign policy, it has constantly been "tormented by moral dilemmas… It is only since World War I… that American foreign policy began to disregard the obvious for the sake of the quixotic pursuit of impossible ideals."[276] The regime-change initiatives could be a veritable option with regard to the relations with undemocratic regimes, but the objective limits to the American power have made it hard to implement everywhere. Therefore, for the anti-Wilsonian camp, the United States must, instead of "abstract slogans," put its national interest at the center of its foreign policy. "The utopian enthusiasm" introduced by Wilsonianism, stated Kristol,

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[272] Kissinger, **op. cit.** 1994, p.52.
[273] Hans Morgenthau, "The Primacy of the National Interest", **The American Scholar**, 18(2), (Spring, 1949), p. 210.
[274] George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy", **Foreign Affairs**, Winter 1985/86 https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1985-12-01/morality-and-foreign-policy (Access: 13.11.2018).
[275] Irving Kristol, **Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead**, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1983, p.227.
[276] **Ibid.** pp. 262-263.

caused "a foreign policy that is intellectually disarmed before all those cases where a government is neither totalitarian nor democratic, but authoritarian in one way or another, to one degree or another.[277] As a matter of fact, a foreign policy approach focusing mainly on moral concerns may suffer from its failure to notice the objective limits to power when faced with the complex realities of international politics. However, the solution must be based on, instead of a purely power-politics-centered approach, a synthetic view that combines moral considerations and strategic necessities. Any solution reached via either one of these views might hold up until a revisionist power takes the supremacy over the others. As for the relations with undemocratic regimes, U.S. foreign policy must, while protecting the balance of power at the international level, tend to push them toward a democratic direction. The means used for this end would have to be shaped, naturally, by the limits of the state power, as well as the significance of the issue in hand. In this regard, instead of questioning the place of moral concerns within the realm of foreign policy, what must be done, particularly by Wilsonians, is to develop alternative approaches for promoting the liberal democratic internationalist agenda abroad.

Apart from the morality and the practicability issues, one of the most recent criticisms put forward by John Mearsheimer targets not particularly Wilsonianism but all foreign policy visions inspired by the liberal perspective. Liberalism, for him, ought to be considered "in the realm of international politics" as "a source of endless trouble."[278] As the concept of balance of power is a *sine qua non* condition of order at the international scene, a great power cannot pursue a liberal policy that does not take its assurance as a priority unless the system is unipolar.[279] However, this brings us to another problem, which resulted in inconsistency between rhetoric and practice in the realm of foreign policy, especially in the United States, creating what is called the "discernible gap [that] separates public rhetoric from the actual conduct of American foreign policy."[280] In this sense, he claims that the American logic with regard to foreign policy has always been a realist one, but as *realpolitik* has held little appeal, if not none, within the American public, this logic is "usually couched in the language

[277] **Ibid.** pp. 264-265.
[278] John J. Mearsheimer, **The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities**, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2018, p. 218.
[279] **Ibid.** pp. 1-2, 218.
[280] John J. Mearsheimer, **Tragedy of Great Power…,** p. 25.

of liberalism."[281] It might be true that public rhetoric flavored by certain liberal tenets could resonate within a wider audience in the American society and that in specific circumstances, some statesmen might tend to use this advantage in order to extract or mobilize more resources for any foreign policy issue. However, claiming that U.S. foreign policy has always been inspired by the realist insights and that the liberal concerns have been solely used by the decision-makers to consolidate public support behind a foreign policy decision or to obtain popular approval does not conform with the reality. As the historical record has demonstrated, there have been many incidents over which the United States acted as a result of its humanitarian considerations. The costly intervention in Somalia after the end of the Cold War was one of the most recent and clear examples of this kind of undertakings. More importantly, if a foreign policy initiative is not the reflection of a pure liberal enterprise, this does not mean that it resulted from a logic that is fully realist. Many American initiatives, such as the anti-communist containment during the Cold War and the intervention in Kosovo in 1999, might well be shaped by the liberal and realist concerns at the same time. In fact, this convergence is something desirable for any reasonable international actor. Therefore, ignoring many historical shreds of evidence to claim that the liberal internationalism has never been a source of conduct for U.S. foreign policy is a result of an approach that is flawed, if not biased.

Despite firm opposition and harsh criticisms since it appeared, the Wilsonian view of U.S foreign policy has been developed even after its defeat in the Senate in 1920. Wilson had proposed to the world an alternative order "in which war and the preparation for war were not the normal conditions. Peace would be the norm."[282] It was in total contradiction with the then-dominant European vision according to which the peace was the absence of the war, and the only guiding principle was the balance of power. The interwar period, from the perspective of U.S. foreign policy, was characterized, for many, by the return of the isolationist impulses to the driving seat. "Although the United States was one of the major powers after World War I, its policy of limited international engagement evidenced in its foreign policy decisions did not reflect that status."[283] The impact of societal factors on this incoherence between U.S. foreign policy and its global role was certainly more significant than the influence of

[281] **Ibid.**
[282] Hastedt, **op. cit.** 2004, p. 520.
[283] Joyce P. Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 60.

the international circumstances of the post-war years. As a result, the attractive perspective presented by the Wilsonian idealism was, in a short while, replaced by the traditional American impulse favoring limited liability with regard to international politics. "Immediately after the war, isolationism reasserted itself over what role the United States should play in building the peace."[284] The Senate's refusal to approve the American membership of the League of Nations was the most clear-cut illustration of the revival of the traditional isolationist stance.

Nonetheless, the hopeful prospect of the disarmament efforts, particularly in Europe, constituted the main challenge for this isolationist tendency. "The Republican administrations that followed Wilson's presidency were just as committed to Wilsonian internationalism as he himself, at least insofar as disarmament was concerned."[285] This attitude was evidently a result of the desire to avoid the mistakes of the pre-1914 world. Moreover, given the present conditions of world affairs in the 1920s and the growing role of the United States in military, political, and economic terms, a policy grounded on the aloofness from European affairs was not possible. "In the 1920s, America's mood was ambivalent, oscillating between a willingness to assert principles of universal applicability and a need to justify them on behalf of an isolationist foreign policy."[286] On such a basis, the United States followed an isolationist policy course that could be described as the "cooperation without commitment."[287] In the first decade that followed WWI, thus, U.S. foreign policy was under the influence of the traditional impulses limited by the realities of the world. Moral concerns, such as the prevention of war, were being handled by an internationalist stance, while any military or political commitment was categorically avoided. It was not full-blown isolationism. Nor was it internationalism. This period marked by this ambivalence resulted in "a foreign policy that veered erratically between internationalism and isolationism…"[288] This course has started to be changed by the threatening revisionism of some totalitarian regimes, namely Germany, Italy, and Japan. Initially encouraging isolationism, this transformation ended up in, perhaps, the most internationalist period of the U.S. foreign policy history.

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[284] Bruce W. Jentleson, **American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century**, W. W. Norton Company, New York, 2010, p. 85.
[285] Iriye, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 79.
[286] Kissinger, **Diplomacy…,** p. 371.
[287] Jonas, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 344.
[288] Kuehl, Ostrower, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 252.

Throughout the interwar period, Americans' "incapability" to perceive the potential impact of any substantial incident that occurred outside the Western Hemisphere on their security and interests was still present. This perception was overcome by the successful policies pursued by the F. D. Roosevelt administration seeking to convince an isolationist public to engage to a "remote" war, as well as the Nazi atrocities causing the eradication of "the distinction between fighting to promote American values and fighting to defend American security."[289] Toward the end of WWII and during its immediate aftermath, U.S. foreign policy witnessed, despite the failure of the interwar period, the "triumphal return" of the Wilsonian principles demonstrating their pervasiveness and deeply rooted nature in American self-perception.[290] To reverse this course toward an isolationist path was impossible for at least three reasons: "(1) the global political and economic conditions of 1945 to 1947; (2) the decision of leading political figures within the United States to abandon isolationism; (3) the rise of an ideological challenge from the Soviet Union.[291] The political and economic vacuum that appeared in Europe required a deep and assertive American involvement in international affairs to prevent it from being filled by the Soviet Union. Additionally, the fact that the U.S. response to the post-WWI requirements, which was grounded on an isolationist stance, was ill-advised had become clear through the disastrous course and the consequences of WWII. Isolationism was, therefore, not among viable policy options to be implemented in response to the new challenges embodied in the Soviet Union. The establishment of the Bretton Woods system in the economic realm, along with the creation of the United Nations, NATO, and the implementation of the Marshall Plan, were clear indications of the commitment of the United States to liberal internationalism in its fight against the Soviet Union. Almost three decades later, what shaped the postwar order was the Wilsonian liberal internationalism. The United States pursued, during the Cold War, a two-track policy: the global containment of communism, and the construction and protection of the liberal democratic sphere as the leader of the free world.

The ideological engine of U.S. Cold War policy, anti-communism, was a concept on which the strategic American interests and moral considerations evidently converged. "The adaptations in American foreign policy that occurred during the Cold

[289] Kissinger, **Diplomacy…,** p. 369-393.
[290] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p. 269.
[291] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 26.

War," argued Wittkopf, Jones, and Kegley Jr., "were confined largely to the means used to achieve persistent ends sustained by immutable values."[292] Linked to the belief in moral righteousness, the American vision of international politics was reduced to a struggle between good and evil. Fighting against the evil in order to shelter the good - the free world- from its ambitions was as much a moral responsibility as it was what required the U.S. security interests in the face of the expansionist Soviet initiatives. In this regard, the belief in the role of the United States as a moral force was evident in the policies of every Cold War administration to one degree or another, even though the dominant Cold War strategy of the United States has always been inspired, for some, by the realist insights supported by "lip service to democracy promotion, human rights, and other idealistic concerns..."[293]

However, even one of the leading figures in the most "realist" Cold War administration of the United States under the presidency of Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, confirmed this view by stating that "all twelve postwar presidents have passionately affirmed an exceptional role for America in the world."[294] Thus, even the Nixon-Kissinger tandem "could not completely escape the domestic influence of classical liberal assumptions, and consequently, American grand strategy continued to pursue certain Wilsonian goals under their leadership."[295] In that respect, the core values and beliefs of the United States gained a significant place within the framework of the country's foreign policy in this period. "The heritage of moralism" was, as underlined by McCormick, "more readily evident in the cold war period and the containment policy… [It] served as the primary justification for American policy once again."[296] Along with the values and beliefs, the strategic considerations were also in play within the context of containment. In fact, the realist perspective supported by geopolitical requirements was the dominant one given the nature of the superpower struggle. In this regard, the containment strategy of the United States was grounded on "the premises of *political realism* and *liberal internationalism*, 'logics' of American foreign policy that emphasize power and international cooperation, respectively."[297]

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[292] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 17.
[293] Stephen M. Walt, "The End of Hubris And the New Age of American Restraint", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 98, No.3 (May/June 2019), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-04-16/end-hubris (Access: 24.04.2019).
[294] Kissinger, **World Order…,** p.276.
[295] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 87.
[296] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 57.
[297] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 9.

A distinctive departure from this Cold War strategy was observed during Richard Nixon's term in the White House (1969-1974). Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, who later became Secretary of State, developed a strategy based solely on power politics and strategic calculations appeared to replace moral concerns as motivating factors. During this period, what was commonly observed was a distinctive "separation between American domestic values and American foreign policy actions."[298] Indeed, the *realpolitik* approach implemented by the Nixon-Kissinger tandem was not a total refusal of American idealism. The main aim of their approach was to ensure a stable order and to achieve this objective in "a world which [was] bipolar militarily and multipolar politically," the idealist vision must be placed in an appropriate perspective in conformity with the requirements of "the physical equilibrium," in other words, the balance of power.[299] Given the fact that this period coincided with the last years of the Vietnam War, what actually influenced U.S. foreign policy in a more "realistic" way this war's traumatic effect. Creating a considerable domestic turmoil, the Vietnam experience shattered the consensus on the U.S. role in global politics, as well as the place of moral values in foreign policy that eventually became a subject of public debate.[300] This devastating experience gained in Vietnam has made Americans think that they "are a nation like other nations."[301] Moreover, it even precipitated them, to some extent, to the opposite extreme of American exceptionalism: a complex of guilt. The questions regarding the morality and legality of the intervention and the conduct in Vietnam grew substantially as the influence of liberal democratic values in the U.S. actions at the international level was naturally decreased.[302]

After a process of healing and restoration under the Presidency of Gerald Ford, moralism regained its central place in the realm of foreign policy, with a clear emphasis on human rights, during the tenure of Jimmy Carter. His term in the office must be seen, in this respect, as a period of restoration of morality in American policy. His globalist attitude and the approach he introduced facilitated the "reemergence of

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[298] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 87.
[299] Henry Kissinger, **American Foreign Policy (Third Edition),** W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1977, pp. 51-97.
[300] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 77.
[301] Daniel Bell, "The End of American Exceptionalism", **The Public Interest**, Fall 1975, https://www.nationalaffairs.com/storage/app/uploads/public/58e/1a4/c02/58e1a4c0275fd468387975.pdf (Access: 21.04.2019).
[302] McCrisken, **American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam…,** pp. 26-29.

American idealism with a clear emphasis on traditional American values and beliefs."[303] The Carter administration was well aware of the limits to American power thanks to the Cold War experiences in various regions. Therefore, drawing upon both exemplary and missionary strands of American exceptionalism and strongly committed to internationalism, Carter shifted the emphasis of U.S. foreign policy from superpower rivalry,[304] notably to a more global, North-South axis -a phenomenon to be reversed by the Reagan administration. While the issue of human rights was the lynchpin of his foreign policy, along with his firm insistence on moral concerns and commitment to international cooperation for a peaceful world order, the presidency of Jimmy Carter represented a return to the initial Cold War strategy without much antagonistic stance against the Soviet Union until the invasion of Afghanistan by the latter. This would trigger harsh criticism, sanctions, and the return of suspicion. Subsequently, until the end of the Cold War, the traditional American view inspired by the belief in the Americans' exceptional character and moral righteousness was dominant in U.S. foreign policy that focused, as it used to do, on the fight against communist evil. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 entailed an inevitable reorganization of the American foreign policy approach.

For some, the American policy-makers could not succeed in finding a guiding principle for the post-Cold War world and President George H. W. Bush "never had a vision of the role the United States would play in the years ahead."[305] Nevertheless, it might be argued that the United States, left without a peer rival and involved in the Gulf War, needed a period of transition in order to move toward a veritable foreign policy direction guided by a clear motive. However, this situation was not to last too long. Rather, "with the end of the Cold War, an event that realism failed to predict, Wilsonianism has received renewed attention and respect as a theoretical perspective for organizing thinking about world politics."[306] As put by Brent Scowcroft, a former National Security Adviser, the unprecedented U.S. superiority in terms of relative power at the end of the Cold War was perceived as "the rarest opportunity to shape the world," along with "the deepest responsibility to do so wisely for the benefit of not just the United States but all nations."[307] Such an understanding with regard to the U.S.

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[303] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 99.
[304] McCrisken, **American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam…,** p. 59.
[305] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 253.
[306] Hastedt, **op. cit.** 2004, p. 520.
[307] George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, **A World Transformed**, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1998, p. 564.

role as the sole superpower on the international scene led to a self-perception as the "indispensable nation" acting on the global scale for the common values of humanity.[308] In sum, during the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy, described as "liberal hegemonism," was built upon cooperative relations within the free world under an uncontestable American leadership. Its liberal incentives were limited by the requirements of the superpower rivalry framed by the geopolitical and strategic considerations.

In this regard, Washington's strategy inspired by the liberal internationalist perspective was composed of the initiatives supporting a liberal program when it served, at the same time, national strategic interests. The United States "was generally prudent enough to scale back its expectations in situations where the promotion of democratic government could be seen as of little value, or even counterproductive, to what it defined as the national security."[309] Once freed from the constraints imposed by the competition with a peer rival, in other words, in a unipolar world, U.S. foreign policy turned into a strategy of "liberal imperialism," characterized by a strengthened liberal internationalist tone and assertiveness. As the strategic concerns lost their relative significance, liberal internationalist thinking became "a veritable ideology" that encouraged a "policy that was as self-assured as it was self-righteous and self-interested."[310] The main objective of this approach, as it became evident, especially after the end of the 1990s, was world supremacy. "The main focus of American foreign policy shifted from war to governance, from what other governments did beyond their borders to what they did and how they were organized within them."[311] Thus, the unshakable conviction regarding the universality of American values and institutions was palpable among the post-Cold War foreign policy officials, and most importantly, the American leaders, as well as the firm belief in an American role to spread those on the global scale. Marking the apogee of *Pax Americana*, the 1990s was characterized by the return of Wilsonian ideals, with less constraint, to the realm of foreign policy. The means or the strategy to be used for spreading those values worldwide was what separated the American administrations throughout this period. With pendular

[308] "Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright: Interview on NBC-TV "The Today Show" with Matt Lauer", February 19, 1998, https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/980219a.html (Access: 25.04.2019).
[309] Ikenberry et. al. **op. cit.** 2011, p. 73.
[310] **Ibid.**
[311] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 4.

alterations and "[w]ithout the lodestone of the Soviet Union to orient US strategy, Washington's foreign policy cycled –and could afford to cycle- between the poles of international activism and inaction."[312]

Within this context, the main characteristic of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, particularly in the 1990s, was the increasing Wilsonian tone epitomized by the Democratic Enlargement strategy of the Clinton administration. While aiming at strengthening a sense of community composed of market economies and democracies, supporting the liberalization of anti-democratic states, encouraging market economies and democracies wherever possible, and helping those structures to strike root in regions of grave humanitarian concerns, the focus of the strategy was on "primary U.S. economic and strategic interests" in the name of political viability.[313] Moreover, the growing importance of the issues related to human rights since the 1960s was also visible within the context of U.S. foreign policy during this period. Despite the selective nature of the decisions in this regard, the interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and later, in Bosnia and Kosovo, illustrated the relative adaptation of the value-based -Wilsonian- U.S. approach, with or without significant strategic concerns, to the present humanitarian considerations. Described as "hubristic fantasy"[314] by Walt, the costly humanitarian ventures of the following years, the controversial decisions taken by the post-Cold War U.S. administrations in this respect, and the selective attitude assumed with regard to humanitarian issues have stimulated serious debates. These debates over the relatively modern concepts like peace-building, state-building, regime change, R2P and military intervention (and non-intervention in some cases) were, in particular, heated under the presidency of George W. Bush, who "pursued one of the most controversial foreign policies in American history."[315]

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 had doubtlessly a transformative impact on U.S. foreign policy vision. The rhetoric about the U.S. military intervention in Iraq, U.S. foreign policy in the post-2001 era in general, put forward a basic Wilsonian vision for the decades to come. As emphasized in the NSS published in 2002,

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[312] Thomas H. Henriksen, **Cycles in US Foreign Policy Since the Cold War**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2017, p. 11.
[313] Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine", **Foreign Policy**, No:106 (Spring, 1997), p. 116.
[314] Walt, **op. cit.** 2019.
[315] Ikenberry et. al. **op. cit.** 2011, p. 1.

"freedom, democracy, and free enterprise" were the main elements, along with the war on terror, of "a single sustainable model for national success," and within this framework, the United States was willing, even compelled by its historical mission, to "stand firmly for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property."[316]

However, American actions inspired by the neoconservative insights under George W. Bush's presidency revealed a fundamental question with regard to the nature of the Wilsonian vision, a multidimensional concept. What was the core tenet of the Wilsonian foreign policy perspective? The promotion of democracy by any means necessary or the establishment and the consolidation of a rule-based cooperative international order characterized by multilateralism and strengthened by a collective security organization. The former, for the Bush administration, was the correct answer as was observed through the logic of the American actions in the name of the war on terror and the unilateralist tone of the U.S. approach. This was under the presidency of Barack Obama, who had, in terms of foreign policy, "a Wilsonian soul" that characterized his rhetoric and "a realist soul" that shaped his practices,[317] the emphasis shifted from democracy promotion to multilateralism and international cooperation as required by the growing multipolarity of the international system. Thus, the influence of the Wilsonian foreign policy vision on U.S. behavior at the international level was increasingly evident during the post-Cold War era with an emphasis placed on its different aspects. Nevertheless, while the core American values and their promotion as key objectives were effectively acting as determining elements of U.S. foreign policy, the strategic interests and the relative distribution of power among the international actors have constituted the main constraints imposed on this idealistic approach.

In sum, the American foreign policy vision since the foundation of the Republic must be studied by recognizing the existence of certain divisions that would facilitate the elaboration of the analysis. On the one hand, on a chronological basis, the dividing incident is the Spanish-American War of 1898. Ideationally, on the other hand, two distinctive views of international politics -realism and idealism- have determined the

[316] "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America", September 17, 2002, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf (Access: 23.04.2019).
[317] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 227.

choices of the United States in the face of many critical events. In the pre-1898 period, while U.S. foreign policy has been characterized by a firm insistence on the exceptional nature of the American nation and a sense of moral responsibility toward its environment, the arena of this vision was limited to the boundaries of the Western Hemisphere. The Old World, in this regard, was viewed as a potential source of trouble and corruption and the aloofness from it was, for Americans, a virtue to be preserved. "In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the United States was weak, leaders from George Washington to William McKinley mostly avoided foreign entanglements and concentrated on building power domestically, expanding the country's reach across North America and eventually expelling the European great powers from the Western Hemisphere."[318] The inherent realism-idealism debate was, thus, mostly related to the degree of this isolationist stance. The profound effects of the War of 1898, the economic development, and the rapid industrialization of the United States have inevitably extended these boundaries to a great extent. In more or less two decades, the foreign policy vision advocated by the United States turned into an agenda favoring the promotion of its core values in order to structure the world in its own image. Despite constant opposition favoring an approach based on the principle of limited liability, this liberal internationalist vision inspired by the Wilsonian thought has become not only a vigorous foreign policy tradition but also a common ground for the upcoming international actions. The foreign policy debate, especially in the post-Vietnam era, has centered on differences between two strands of the internationalist perspective, namely accommodationist and hardliner. Furthermore, the susceptibility of the Wilsonian idealism, naturally constrained by the strategic considerations depending on the present international conditions, of evolving in order to ensure its adaptation to the significant changes in the nature of global politics has facilitated the preservation of its relevance throughout this period.

Nevertheless, the evolution of U.S. foreign policy has not occurred in a social vacuum and in the absence of various domestic factors. Along with the historical background that has inherently shaped the worldview of the American decision-makers, the cultural and ideational elements, as well as the domestic political context, have played a crucial role in shaping the American understanding of international affairs. A complete analysis of U.S. foreign policy is only possible with the study of

[318] Walt, **op. cit.** 2019.

the influence of these factors acting as, throughout this process, filters of a multilayered foreign policy funnel.

2- The Impact of Strategic Culture

As bluntly put by James Rosenau, "[f]oreign policy does not occur in a vacuum. Nor does it arise exclusively out of the demands that originate within societies."[319] Put differently, analyzing an actor's foreign policy by focusing solely on its domestic structures and process, *Innenpolitik,* or on the international stimulus as the only determining factor of its behavior is equally misleading. Any approach that places domestic factors as substitutes for systemic influences, or vice-versa, is bound to reach one-sided consequences, and the accuracy of these consequences would, in the end, be highly dependent on the nature of the issue under consideration. In turn, an analysis that does not ignore the impact of various variables from different levels on foreign policy behavior would potentially be as comprehensive as it would be accurate. In other words, "a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factor."[320]

Essentially, this view does not tend to disclaim the primacy of the external factors in shaping a state's international actions. Instead, it is argued that these factors alone cannot compel sovereign units to behave in one way or another. On the one hand, the attributes of the anarchic environment are the determining forces shaping the ends to be achieved by the units and viable policy options. Forming their ultimate end, whether it is survival or cooperation, they create certain similarities regarding the international actions of different actors. On the other hand, the influence of these attributes does not emerge in a vacuum. In other words, the anarchic international environment is not the only context in which foreign policy behavior is shaped. The making of foreign policy is a process, functioning through a funnel-like mechanism in which the impact of the external factors is filtered by some unit-level variables, and that is what causes differences in policy preferences of various actors in the face of similar issues. Thus, as far as foreign policy is concerned, "choices are not selected because they are objectively more rational, but because they make sense to actors

[319] Rosenau, **op. cit.** 1980, p. 368.
[320] Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay", **International Security**, Vol. 17, No.1, (Summer, 1992), p. 198.

given their contexts. The domestic process is such a context, but it does not exist in a vacuum. It is, instead, a context within a context, acting as a causal variable within a given environment."[321] In this sense, the domestic variables with causal links to the policy-making process must be considered not as the only factors, but the final arbiters of state behavior at the international level. The pure systemic analysis of foreign policy is, therefore, incomplete and cannot fully account for the foreign policy choices of an actor.

Within this context, the sources of foreign policy preferred by an actor in general, by the United States in particular, can be placed in five broad categories. These are notably the external environment, the societal context, the governmental structure, the roles of policy-makers, and the individual characteristics of decision-makers. When it comes to the adjustment or implementation of a grand strategy, as well as to the decisions regarding major foreign policy issues, the societal environment, especially the political (strategic) culture, and the public opinion, play a central role in shaping international actions. Given the fact that "foreign policy decisions are likely to be guided more by concern for the reactions they might provoke at home than abroad," both factors become crucial for framing the issue, determining available options and choosing on among them.[322] To obtain the popular support required for effective foreign policy and to increase the objective capacity of the government to be used to extract and to mobilize resources for a given action, the choices made by the decision-makers must resonate within a broad audience at home. Thus, the shared values and beliefs of the members of society regarding politics and their country impose certain constraints on the preferences of decision-makers. Either limiting the available options or attributing primacy to one of these options over the others, cultural factors affect, independently from the international stimulus, the making and implementation of foreign policy decisions.

The elements of the strategic culture, therefore, have acted, throughout history, as filters on potential foreign policy options. The most striking manifestation of this function of strategic culture can be seen in the need for domestic support of foreign policy officials in order to initiate a critical strategic move. It is true, especially for the radical changes in the strategic approach, that such moves considerably require the

[321] Jennifer Sterling-Folkner, "Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables", **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol.41, No.1, (Mar. 1997), p. 20.
[322] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 242.

extraction and mobilization of national resources. Such moves, in this respect, "must be politically feasible at home before they can be implemented; they must be viewed as legitimate."[323] The "law of anticipated reactions," thus, "captures the potential constraining effects of the political culture."[324] Putting emphasis on the importance of possible public responses toward any given strategic move, this view points out the fact that certain options might be screened out by policy-makers, who also individually share the assumptions of the national strategic culture. "Individuals manifest or express their political culture without generally being aware of it."[325] Moreover, such elimination of alternatives can sometimes fail, particularly when the elements of the strategic culture clash with the impositions of national interests or the requirements of the role played by the country on the global scene. This was actually the case during the Cold War when U.S. foreign policy disregarded, from time to time, its commitment to the liberal values as a result of the fear of communism and national security concerns.

As far as American foreign policy is concerned, the societal environment constitutes "the broadest layer" of the funnel, and "the political culture of the United States - the basic needs, values, beliefs, and self- images widely shared by Americans about their political system- stands out as a primary societal source."[326] In fact, it is not surprising that "the impact of societal forces is potentially strong," considering that it is "deeply rooted in its history and culture."[327] Thus, as a result of the strong historical ties strengthened by a sense of unity and success, the elements constituting the political culture of the United States must be seen as potent forces that account for the role it plays in the realm of international politics. The cultural constraints imposed on American decision-makers, either by limiting available options or favoring one option among others, even amidst an unprecedented nuclear tension, was best illustrated by Robert Kennedy, the former U.S. Attorney General, in his memoirs regarding the Cuban missile crisis:

> *"Whatever validity the military and political arguments were for an attack in preference to a blockade, America's traditions and history*

[323] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 19.
[324] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** p. 246.
[325] Elkins, Simeon, **op. cit.** 1979, p. 137.
[326] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2018, p.11.
[327] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 20.

> *would not permit such a course of action… [because] in the last analysis, [this was] a surprise attack by a very large nation against a very small one. This, I said, could not be undertaken by the U.S. if we were to maintain our moral position at home and around the globe. Our struggle against Communism throughout the world was far more than physical survival -it had as its essence our heritage and our ideals and these we must not destroy."*[328]

As stated by Robert Isaak, "American foreign policy does not contradict the internal structure and values of the country but rather expresses them. To change this country's foreign policy, its internal structure must change."[329] In this respect, not just for changing it, but for better analyzing it as well, the societal structure affecting U.S. foreign policy, as an intervening variable, must be sufficiently treated in order to grasp the nature of the country's international actions in response to a given international issue. The societal factors hold more explanatory power with regard to the formulation of U.S. foreign policy than about its ends and the means to assure them. "They operate more as forces constraining foreign policy than as forces stimulating radical departures from the past."[330] In this regard, the strategic culture of the United States, with its historical roots, ought to be seen as one of the main determinants. As its citizens are "linked not by a shared ancestry but allegiance to a common set of ideals," a proper understanding of U.S. politics at every level "begins with an assessment of the nation's political culture."[331]

The essential elements of this political culture, not surprisingly, can be found in the initial vision of the European immigrants regarding domestic and international affairs and their self-perception. Two driving forces behind their settling in North America, asserted Felix Gilbert, were the physical advantages offered by this new land and some "utopian hopes." These were also the determining factors of their vision toward foreign affairs. While the first of these factors -search for physical advantages- was concretized by the strong link between the economic and commercial initiatives and foreign policy in the eyes of Americans, the second factor -utopian hopes- resulted

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[328] Robert F. Kennedy, **Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis**, Signet Books, New York, 1969, pp. 37-38.
[329] Robert A. Isaak, **American Democracy and World Power**, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1977, p. 2.
[330] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 322.
[331] Thomas E. Patterson, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 7.

in difficulties for them to smoothly integrate themselves into the present state system and "to become a power like other powers." Their utopian enthusiasm was founded on the conviction that the emergence of their state would eventually stimulate a distinctive break in international affairs and "would usher in a new and a better world."[332] As for domestic politics, the main aim of the revolutionary Americans was to eliminate tyranny and oppression in the name of liberty and freedom. In turn, concerning the enthusiastically envisioned international affairs, they hoped to secure strong commercial ties with the rest of the world while working for the abolishment of war and the promotion of peace among nations. "Commercial interest and revolutionary idealism thus blended to form the basis for American thinking about foreign affairs that lasted well into the twentieth century. To some extent, this blending is still present in American thinking about the world."[333] This view of Americans with regard to world affairs supported by the firm belief in their exceptional character encouraged, first of all, the efforts to steer clear of the mercantilist policies pursued by the monarchies of the Old World and resulted in the emergence of one of the main elements of America's strategic culture, namely the principle of non-entanglement. The optimistic, even utopian aspect of this initial American vision, on the other hand, induced the "reliance on moral principle as a guide to world affairs" in accordance with the liberal values and beliefs espoused by the U.S.[334] In this sense, from this dualism emerged the two traditional features of the American strategic culture: the preference for limited liability and the advocacy of classical liberal assumptions.[335]

In retrospect, these two mainstream strands of strategic culture have been the essential forces shaping the U.S. actions at the international level. Their persistent impact on American foreign policy choices throughout history has been so strong that they have eventually become the key determining factors of the country's tradition in this realm. Two traditional views of foreign policy in the United States, namely isolationism and internationalism, were the products of these two dominant features of the American strategic culture. The inherent struggle within the realm of U.S. foreign policy has, therefore, occurred between a firm conviction in the necessity of promoting liberal order on the global scale through various means and the apparent reluctance

[332] Gilbert, **op. cit.** 1970, pp. 16-17.
[333] Gordon S. Wood, **Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different**, The Penguin Press, New York, 2006, p. 168.
[334] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 21
[335] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 21.

with regard to the costs of this idealist vision often requiring significant commitment overseas. In this sense, have emerged four distinct subcultures that derived from these reluctant and idealist views. Strongly linked to the classical liberal aspect of the American strategic culture, two subcultures, namely progressive and internationalist, have emerged, whereas realist and nationalist views have appeared as an extension of the preference for limited liability. These four subcultures correspond to four ideal types put forward by Mead regarding the traditional foreign policy schools within the United States: Wilsonianism, Hamiltonianism, Jeffersonianism, and Jacksonianism.[336]

The significance of a foreign policy strategy based on a deep-rooted inclination toward limited liability was evident for more than a century following the foundation of the Republic. Despite the increase in the relative power of the United States, especially in the post-Civil War era, the weight of the assumptions grounded on the principle of limited liability was so considerable that the U.S. involvement has remained limited by the boundaries of the Western Hemisphere. "Historically, the United States has tended to prefer limited liability in strategic affairs relative to the goals laid out by U.S. officials, and relative to America's actual material power."[337] The importance of this view was even visible in the progressive approach strongly committed to the liberal creed. While advocating the promotion of more liberal world order, the progressives, with an inherent reluctance regarding the cost of their vision, have favored an exemplarist stance that placed the United States as a model for other nations to emulate. This vision, seeking to reduce the costs of the idealist agenda, has demonstrated the significance of the preference for limited liability for the Nation's strategic culture.

The liberal creed of the American strategic thinking has had, on the other hand, strong ties with certain material conditions, as well as "the recurrent need to integrate new immigrants from a variety of backgrounds."[338] The Lockean liberalism embedded in the nature of the American nation has effectively attributed a central place to the core liberal values and beliefs within its strategic culture. Their impact on the making and conduct of U.S. foreign policy has increased in parallel with the role of the country at the international level. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, particularly with the entry of the United States to WWI, the unsustainability of a foreign policy strategy

[336] **Ibid.;** Mead, **Special Providence…**
[337] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 27.
[338] **Ibid.** p. 21.

based on the preference for limited liability for the United States has started to become evident. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 made this view even clearer for the eyes of Americans. As the country has become, since then, a global power, the impact of the inclination toward limited liability was overridden by a strategy founded upon the classical liberal assumptions. However, this does not mean that the limited liability-centered approach to foreign affairs has totally lost its appeal. On the contrary, it has existed along with the liberal creed, provoking the inherent debate of U.S. foreign policy regarding the struggle between the idealist worldview and U.S. interests.

With regard to the four subcultures that have affected the underlying motives of U.S. foreign policy throughout history, the internationalist view, Wilsonianism in Mead's typology, deserves, given the axis of this thesis, special attention. As one of the two mainstream foreign policy traditions, internationalism has played a central role, particularly since the end of WWII. With its firm commitment to the liberal values and its idealistic vision, the internationalist approach has had deep roots in the national character of the United States. Its characteristics were drawn directly from the American experience.[339] Advocating the promotion of liberal world order characterized by the democratic regimes, open market, and multilateral institutions, internationalists have considered the costs of this idealist image acceptable compared to its potential benefits for the United States and mankind. Their willingness to use any means necessary to achieve their ambitious international goals is what separates them from progressives who have supported the idea of the promotion of liberal values by only peaceful means.[340] In other words, while the adherents of the internationalist subculture are more committed to the liberal creed than they are to limited liability, those of the progressive vision manifest commitment to both strands. Furthermore, nationalists (or Jacksonians, to be U.S.-specific) reflect a narrow interpretation of national interest and firmly insist on refusing to cede, even a little, the U.S. sovereignty to international institutions. In this sense, they underestimate the idea of multilateralism and generally oppose overseas commitment. It is the most hawkish school of thought in the realm of U.S. foreign policy. "It is an expression of the social, cultural, and religious values of a large portion of the American public," and with this intrinsically populist stance, they "believe that the government should do everything

[339] Mead, **Special Providence…,** p. 134.
[340] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 31-32.

in its power to promote the well-being -political, moral, and economic- of the folk community."[341] Lastly, the realist aspect of the American strategic culture has always been the weakest of all four subcultures as it had represented, in the eyes of Americans, an extension of the corrupt and war-prone Old World politics. As weakly committed to both liberalism and limited liability, realists tend to promote the national interest of the United States in a balanced way. It must be noted at this point that realists in the United States are not just typical advocates of *realpolitik*. They share, to some extent, a broad commitment to certain values embedded in Anglo-American thinking, and this is what makes them "American realists."[342] What separates them from internationalists with regard to their view of the liberal values is that they see them precious and important not because they are universal, but because they are unique.[343] Thus, "for Americans, foreign policy realism is a corrective, rather than a starting point. Americans of all parties have long believed that the spread of classically liberal norms, free exchange, and popular forms of self- government abroad will ultimately lead to a more peaceful and friendly international system."[344] Within this context, every foreign policy decision taken since the foundation of the Republic must be interpreted through the lens constituted by these cultural factors. This is not to claim that the present international environment has not played a critical role in shaping U.S. actions. However, without being filtered by the strategic culture of the country, the international stimulus has never been in a position to dictate any behavior to the United States. It is worth noting that more than one of the subcultures mentioned above might be effective within a single American administration with regard to different decisions.[345]

Thus, in U.S foreign policy history, the first dominant cultural element was an inherent inclination toward non-entanglement that led to a strong commitment to limited liability for more than a century. Encouraging the isolationist tendency within the realm of foreign policy, this commitment has prevented any veritable U.S. involvement in foreign affairs, despite the growth in the relative power of the country,

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[341] Mead, **Special Providence…,** pp. 226, 238.
[342] **Ibid.** p. 127.
[343] Samuel P. Huntington, "The West: Unique not Universal", **Foreign Affairs**, November/December 1996, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-11-01/west-unique-not-universal (Access: 09.05.2019).
[344] Colin Dueck, "Conservative American Realism", in. James M. McCormick (Ed.), **The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence**, Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2018, p. 43.
[345] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 33.

until the War of 1898. Subsequently, through the experiences of two great wars, the inevitability of American engagement has become clear for most of the American foreign policy-makers. Nevertheless, during all these times, the tendency toward limited liability has been in competition with the reliance on the moral principle that has constituted the basis of the other mainstream tradition of U.S. foreign policy, namely internationalism. In fact, this reliance on morality has always been existent within the American society for centuries. As argued by Henry Kissinger, "it is part of American folklore that, while other nations have interests, [Americans] have responsibilities; while other nations are concerned with equilibrium, [Americans] are concerned with the legal requirements of peace."[346] Overridden by the initial inward focus and the sense of aloofness from the Old World, this moralistic view of foreign affairs has come to surface as one of the main motives behind the American behavior at the international level, first, temporarily during President Wilson's tenure, and then, permanently, in the aftermath of WWII. The strategy of containment was, in this respect, a clear reflection of the two strands of the American strategic culture as the fight against communism was not only a strategic necessity but also a responsibility toward other peoples.

In this regard, the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy is, in fact, an inevitable result of the global position of the United States as a superpower and its being a country with a moral rationale that has vigorously affected its attitude toward international affairs. In the aftermath of the Civil War, these factors have placed "power and identity" in an increasingly influential position with regard to foreign policy and caused, over time, the refusal of a policy based on aloofness.[347] While these two dimensions of U.S. foreign relations have thwarted the isolationist tradition from being the dominant force again in the twentieth century, this controversy has also limited the idealist ambitions at the international level. "Whereas domestic cultural forces tend to constrain U.S. behavior abroad, and pull it in a more 'liberal' direction, international conditions tend to stimulate American involvement overseas, while forcing unwanted compromise on liberal principles."[348] Although the impact of these two cultural elements has become increasingly apparent following the two world wars, they, indeed, had played a central role in the formation of previous foreign policy

[346] Kissinger, **American Foreign Policy…,** pp. 91-92.
[347] Nau, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 46.
[348] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 5.

choices of the United States. The categorical avoidance from the Napoleonic Wars and the tendency to set a limit to U.S. influence within the Americas, and later, within the Western Hemisphere stemmed from the commitment to the principle of limited liability, which was the dominant view in the realm of foreign policy, rather than the relative distribution of power or the international conditions of the era. Likewise, it was the impact of this commitment that could account for the United States' policy of non-involvement pursued in the post-Civil War era until the end of the century when the country reached the eventual unity internally and appeared as one of the most powerful nations, perhaps the most powerful one, in economic terms. Nevertheless, the change in the course of U.S. foreign policy that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century could be explained, along with the affirmation of overseas interests and the growing U.S. place at the international level, by the transformation within the American society. The societal structure of the country with its persistent convictions affecting its view of international politics became subject to a veritable change during this period when the cultural foundations of the twentieth century-internationalism were laid. As is observed by Ninkovich through the published opinions in the influential journals and magazines of this era, the American mind was evolving toward a global mentality.[349] This transformation has gradually become visible not only in public opinion related to international affairs but also in the decreasing significance of the commitment to limited liability in favor of expressing morality while achieving the U.S. ends overseas. Viewed from this perspective, the annexation of the Philippines and the intervention in the Cuban revolt were the initial products of a long evolutionary process leading to the replacement of the commitment to limited liability by the reliance on moral principles in international affairs. The growing predominance of this view, demonstrating the direction of this irrepressible evolution, was expressed by Theodore Roosevelt, who argued that the United States was "the chosen nation" with a "manifest duty" that has come with a responsibility abroad which was to ensure the preservation of the rights that were advanced and advocated by itself.[350] This process was later advanced by Woodrow Wilson, and then, after WWII, has become the main feature of the American approach to foreign affairs. If it were solely the international circumstances that could shape U.S. foreign policy without any societal impact, the country's passage to a policy of engagement had to occur, at least, in the second half

[349] Frank Ninkovich, **Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865-1890,** Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 2009, pp. 1-10, 16.
[350] McCrisken, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 71.

of the nineteenth century. The evolution of the societal structure, notably the dominant element of the strategic culture and public opinion in this regard, has appeared as the only force that could account for this time lag of almost a hundred years.

Consequently, it is undeniable that "cultural and ideational legacies have a powerful impact on grand strategy, independent of international pressures."[351] The societal forces, in this sense, have exerted a considerable impact on U.S. behavior at the international level. Accordingly, the strategic culture must be considered as one of these vital forces. The significance of the inclination to limited liability, as a fundamental trait of the strategic culture, constituted the underlying reason behind the reluctance of U.S. foreign policy toward international involvement until the beginning of the twentieth century. The evolutionary change undergone by the societal structure of the United States resulted later in an incrementally engaged stance of the country regarding international affairs. Without disregarding the importance of the international stimulus and the role played by the United States in this respect, this turn was a direct result of the transformation that occurred in the minds of Americans, who have always struggled to strike an acceptable balance between their liberal nature and national interests. In other words, "Americans are torn between their democratic ideals and their conservative empire. The conflict between America's liberal ethos and America's position as a superpower in world politics threatens to divide the American people internally and to lead to national decline externally."[352] Notwithstanding its undeniable significance, the strategic culture is not the only effective societal element with regard to the making and conduct of foreign policy in the United States. It is strongly linked to public opinion that has had the potency to affect, to a certain extent, the choices of the decision-makers as well as the guiding principles of the country's behavior abroad.

3- Domestic Context of U.S. Foreign Policy

Within the realm of American politics, the influence of public opinion has always been of a considerable degree since the early years of the Republic. As stated by President Abraham Lincoln, a Civil War hero, "in this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing

[351] Dueck, **Reluctant Crusaders…,** p. 166.
[352] Isaak, **op. cit.** 1977, p. 1.

can succeed."[353] Notwithstanding its principal focus on domestic politics, Lincoln's view was later reemphasized by Cordell Hull, then-Secretary of State, within the context of foreign policy: "Since the time when Thomas Jefferson insisted upon 'decent respect to the opinions of mankind,' public opinion has controlled foreign policy in all democracies."[354] Thus, while views vary regarding the degree of its impact or the ways it affects the formation and implementation of policy, public opinion, throughout history, has been seen as one of the critical factors in the policy-making process. Indeed, like strategic culture, public opinion is a societal variable that, without defying the causal primacy of the international stimulus, has played a significant role, in one way or another, in shaping foreign policy. Today, according to Holsti, we are living in the "age of polling." The period that encompassed WWII and its immediate aftermath marked the increase in interest with regard to public opinion and its influence on foreign policy.[355] Public opinion can be defined, from a broad perspective, as "the politically relevant opinions held by ordinary citizens that they express openly."[356] In retrospect, the approach toward the subject differed among the adherents of realism and liberalism. Broadly speaking, while realists assumed a skeptical attitude toward the public's involvement in decisions related to foreign affairs, liberals, to the contrary, insisted on seeing public opinion as a force for enlightenment, a trustworthy shaper of foreign policy.

Starting with the realist view, the dominant approach for the first decade of the Cold War, public opinion is considered impotent, even dangerous to be a determining factor of a nation's international actions. This skepticism built upon various arguments, such as the public's lack of structured knowledge and interest related to foreign affairs, or the easily changing nature of its view, resulted in an approach that has been based on a conviction in the necessity of shielding America's foreign and security policy from the public. As stated by Edward Carr, for realists, "it seemed undeniable that, in international affairs, public opinion was almost as often wrong-headed as it was impotent."[357] For them, "formulating foreign policy requires

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[353] Paul M. Angle (Ed.), **The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858,** The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 128.
[354] "Address Delivered by the Secretary of State at Buenos Aires, December 5, 1936" in. U.S. Department of State, Publication 1983, **Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941,** United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943, pp. 345-346
[355] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1999, p. vii, 13.
[356] Patterson, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 177.
[357] Edward H. Carr, **The Twenty Years' Crisis,** Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2001, p. 37.

complicated trade-offs, access to secret information, and sophisticated reasoning, which the public lacks."[358] These requirements of sound foreign policy cannot be fulfilled by the average citizen, or the common man, who "lives in a world which he cannot see, does not understand, and is unable to direct."[359] Another realist argument against the involvement of public opinion in foreign policy has put emphasis on the emotionally-driven nature of the public's view. In this sense, "the rational requirements of good foreign policy cannot from the outset count upon the support of a public opinion whose preferences are emotional rather than rational."[360] This line of argument constituted the basis of Almond's view, according to which public opinion, far from being stable, was seen as a mood. "The gravest general problem confronting policy-makers is," argued Almond, "that of the instability of mass moods, the cyclical fluctuations which stand in the way of policy stability."[361] Thus, in the realist perspective, public opinion is either impotent or ill-informed, sometimes even both. For that reason, it must not play a significant role, if not any, in the making and conduct of foreign policy. Policy-makers, as representatives of citizens, must act even against the will of their constituents, if necessary, in order to achieve the given international objectives. What is called "the Almond-Lippmann consensus" by Holsti, in this respect, stands on three propositions:

- *"Public opinion is highly volatile and thus it provides very dubious foundations for a sound foreign policy.*
- *Public attitudes on foreign affairs are so lacking in structure and coherence that they might best be described as 'non-attitudes.'*
- *At the end of the day, however, public opinion has a very limited impact on the conduct of foreign policy."*[362]

The liberal philosophy, in contrast with the realist view, grants a central place to public opinion in the making of legitimate and sound foreign policy. This approach was best illustrated by Immanuel Kant, who argued that non-republics confront fewer constraints than do republics when they consider options related to a decision in favor

[358] Douglas C. Foyle, **Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy**, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, p. 4.
[359] Walter Lippmann, **The Phantom Public**, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1993, p. 4.
[360] Hans Morgenthau, quoted in. Holsti, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 7.
[361] Gabriel A. Almond, **The American People and Foreign Policy,** Harcourt, Brace, and Company, New York, 1950, p. 239.
[362] Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus", **International Studies Quarterly,** Vol. 36, No.4, (Dec. 1992), p. 442.

of declaring war. As the public holds no place in such decisions in a non-republican state, "the head of state, [who] is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state," could easily decide to engage in war "without any significant reason" as it would not compel him to make many sacrifices. However, "if… the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise."[363] This view was later reemphasized by Elihu Root, who stated that "…while there is no human way to prevent a king from having a bad heart, there is a human way to prevent a people from having an erroneous opinion."[364] Thus, the Kantian assumptions that inspired Wilsonian idealism were based on the conviction that the public is rational and sufficiently enlightened and that it is capable of making a considerable contribution to the formation process of foreign policy. Within this context, "Wilsonian liberals believe that public opinion affects foreign policy formulation by limiting extreme elite tendencies, providing policy innovations, and leading the government to select the policy the public prefers."[365] Acting either as a break that prevents adventurous inclinations or a guide to follow, public opinion must be regarded, for liberals, as a central factor determining the direction and the shape of policy decisions.

Thus, the first debate with regard to public opinion has taken its nature as the focal point. Disagreeing on the characteristics of the concept, in the traditional perspective, the public is considered "uninterested, ill informed, and subject to being led from the top," while the other view that has become more appreciated, particularly in the second half of the Cold War, has advocated that it "plays a somewhat larger, albeit still limited, role." Despite certain deficiencies, public opinion is, within this framework, "more structured and consistent over time than many have previously contended."[366] These contrasting views have led to the emergence of another debate in this respect. The linkage between public opinion and foreign policy has been at the center of this second debate. How much influence does it have on the decision-making process? Through which channels public opinion exerts its impact, and what is its exact role in the making and implementation of foreign policy? Is it a shaper or a

[363] Immanuel Kant, **An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,** Penguin Books, New York, 2009, pp. 20-21.
[364] Elihu Root, "A Requisite for the Success of Popular Democracy", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.1, No.1, (Sep. 15, 1922), p. 5
[365] Foyle, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 6.
[366] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 552.

follower? The answers to such questions are key to determine the place of public opinion in the realm of foreign policy, especially in open societies like the United States.

"The public opinion-policy relationship is," argued Holsti, "usually complex, variable, and interactive rather than simple, constant, and unidirectional."[367] In other words, both phenomena hold the capacity to influence the other. While the decision-makers have the power to shape the public's view toward a given foreign policy issue, the public, in a bottom-up way, can play a central role in shaping the policy agenda, imposing constraints on certain policy alternatives, especially when a major issue is on the table. The evolution of this relationship in the United States, for instance, was shaped by three wars of the twentieth century, namely WWI -the first public relations war- WWII, and the Vietnam War.[368] Thus, the significance of the issue and its penetration, in one way or another, into the individual environment of the citizens has always been central not only in determining the impact of public opinion on foreign policy but also in developing the relevant view on this matter. "The general public does not pay much attention to world affairs unless an event intrudes on their everyday life."[369] Thus, the events that trigger a mass reaction, such as 9/11, and that produce consequences dramatically affecting the course of people's lives should be seen as important turning points for the research in this field.

From the traditional perspective, public opinion was seen as a follower within the context of foreign policy issues. This view was widely accepted, especially since the beginning of the Cold War until the last years of the Vietnam War. Within this context, the leading figure, the president, occupied the most critical position in determining the public's approach to any event. As put by Seymour Martin Lipset, "The President makes opinion, he does not follow it. The polls tell him how good a politician he is."[370] The emphasis was, in this regard, on the capability of the decision-maker in shaping or even manipulating public opinion. As Machiavellian as it might sound, an ideal politician, therefore, is expected to decide in a way that is right and rational for the national interest rather than in accordance with the popular demands

[367] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 204.
[368] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1992, p. 439.
[369] Henriksen, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 9.
[370] Seymour Martin Lipset, "The President, the Polls, and Vietnam", **Trans-Action**, (September/October, 1996), p. 22.

that can easily be harmful and dangerous and that were usually ill-advised and inconsistent. Thus, "… because the public is not well informed on foreign policy issues, a tendency has developed for it to defer to the president's judgment on such matters."[371] This "rally-around-the-president"-centered view has been radically transformed, if not disappeared, by the disappointing experience of the Vietnam War. With its increasing skepticism toward the war, the rationality of the public was reassessed and it was started to be seen "as more enlightened than the [Johnson] administration."[372] This transformation in the view toward the nature of public opinion has inevitably led to a considerable change in the approach toward its role within the realm of foreign policy. In that respect, the general tendency was to affirm or to support its role in the making of foreign policy as a source of relatively valuable contribution.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the context within which the influence of public opinion is treated ought to be seen as a decisive factor. Precisely, in times of crisis or war, public opinion becomes more influential and independent from elite tendencies, whereas, in the face of relatively insignificant international issues, its impact is more limited, and it is inclined to be a follower rather than a shaper. Indeed, "normally, public opinion is latent on foreign policy issues with decision makers only concerned about the potential activation of popular interest. In the absence of public activation, officials feel free to act."[373] Such activation is only possible when a major foreign policy issue is under consideration, and some other factors, such as large media coverage is assured. Moreover, "… the more protracted the decision process, the more likely are policymakers to be subjected to the impact of public opinion through the activities of Congress, interest groups, the media, and opinion leaders."[374] Notwithstanding these various views about its nature, as well as its impact, the role of public opinion in the formation of foreign policy decisions have always been almost incontestably limited. It has never been a force that is capable of compelling policy-makers to take a specific action. The reciprocal influence between public opinion and policy-makers has usually been shaped by the context of the decision, the pervasiveness of the effects of the issue within the social and economic life, and its significance. Perhaps, the more critical role of public opinion for policy-makers is that

[371] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 558.
[372] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1992, p. 445.
[373] Philip J. Powlick, Andrew Z. Katz, "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus", **Mershon International Studies Review,** Vol.42, 1998, p. 29.
[374] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 36.

its capacity to facilitate or to prevent, in some cases, the mobilization of resources and the extraction of state power required by the international action in hand.

Principally, according to Bruce Jentleson, public opinion can affect foreign policy in five different ways. First of all, the "parameter setting" has put emphasis on its limiting effect on policy alternatives available to the decision-maker. Secondly, through "centripetal pull," public opinion forces decision-makers to build coalitions at the center in order to gain the support of different factions of the society. The third way is, in this respect, to affect Congress benefitting from its excessive sensitivity to public opinion. Fourth, public opinion is capable of influencing diplomatic negotiations since the diplomats feel the need to know the terms that would be widely accepted at home while on the table. Lastly, public opinion plays an effective role through presidential elections as the issues related to foreign policy, especially the major ones, are susceptible to shape voting behavior under certain circumstances.[375] As can be observed from each of these five ways through which public opinion may become influential with regard to foreign policy, it is difficult, if not impossible, for public opinion to dictate a specific course of action at the international level. Moreover, given the fact that some relevant information cannot naturally be accessible for the public, its view, especially regarding ordinary foreign policy issues, would be either framed or even manipulated and, as a result, the direction of its influence would be shaped by others, particularly, policy-makers. However, when a major issue with pervasive effects is in hand, as the public's interest would be relatively high, public opinion tends to be more effective than it generally is. Nevertheless, while this issue- or context-based approach is one way to assess its influence on foreign policy, the impact of public opinion is even more visible, independently from specific events, on the general strategy and distinctive foreign policy patterns of a given state. This is definitely the case in the United States, as the public's view has constituted one of the principal factors shaping the country's foreign policy pendulum.

"Like America's diplomatic history, public attitudes toward the U.S. role in the world have alternated between periods of introversion and extroversion, between isolation from the world's problems and active involvement in shaping them to fit American preferences."[376] In other words, behind the pendular movement of U.S.

[375] Jentleson, **op. cit.** 2010, pp. 65-67.
[376] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 250.

tendencies at the international level has been found the public's view toward the place of the United States on the international scene. This argument was evidenced through almost every turning point within the realm of foreign policy throughout the twentieth century. It was not a coincidence that Woodrow Wilson, a leader who acknowledged the undeniable significance of public opinion, had decided to undertake an extensive tour across the country in order to gain support for the League of Nations. Even though his stroke -and subsequent death- did not let him complete his tour and pull the public in favor of the League, this initiation was important as it demonstrated the growing role of public opinion regarding major foreign policy issues in the eyes of certain, if not all, American decision-makers. In more or less two decades, another example of such an approach was put forward by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who "took an isolationist people into a war between countries whose conflicts had only a few years earlier been widely considered inconsistent with American values and irrelevant to American security."[377] The central element of his success in convincing a pro-neutrality Congress to enter WWII and then, in laying foundations of further American engagement in global affairs was notably his ability to direct public opinion. "…Roosevelt's role in moving his isolationist people toward participation in the war serves as an object lesson on the scope of leadership in a democracy."[378] Thus, once again, an American leader grabbed the importance of public opinion in the face of a major decision and successfully this time, turned it into the wind at his back. Furthermore, as the Vietnam War has, to some extent, increased optimism with regard to the nature of public opinion, since then, relative stability and consistency have been observed within the public's view. In the post-Vietnam years, public opinion has remained supportive of an internationalist strategy but with different tactics or approaches. Put differently, public opinion has favored a foreign policy strategy based on internationalism, but its preferences have alternated, depending on the context and the present circumstances, between a crusader version and an accommodationist one. "Although support for active involvement in world affairs rebounded in the 1980s from its nadir in the 1970s, internationalism or global engagement in the wake of the Vietnam tragedy came to wear two faces—a cooperative one and a militant one."[379] These two dimensions of internationalism, argued Holsti, "…correspond closely to the

[377] Kissinger, **Diplomacy…**, p. 370
[378] **Ibid.** p. 369.
[379] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 257.

most venerable approaches to international relations: realism and liberalism."[380] Putting emphasis on a stable and somewhat structured public opinion, this view has preserved its relevance, as far as the foreign policy pendulum of the United States is concerned, in the post-Cold War era.

After the end of the Cold War, the priorities of U.S. foreign policy have, not surprisingly, shifted from the ideologic rivalry to multiple issues, such as ethnic conflicts, other sources of disagreement in critical regions, and the rise of China. A foreign policy agenda fraught with such diverse issues has naturally required a relatively more sophisticated and prudent U.S. approach. Nonetheless, internationalism, as the main framework of Washington's post-Cold War strategy, has remained viable. This continuity in terms of foreign policy strategy was only possible gracefully to the fact that the decision-makers of this period have generally obtained popular support for their internationalist undertakings. However, it was the different interpretations of the internationalist approach –faces of internationalism- that have always found support from various factions of the society. Americans, thus, were supportive of active U.S. involvement in global affairs, but as a result of the increasing domestic concerns and the changing nature of international affairs, they progressively preferred a more limited role for the country. While, in 1993, 79% of Americans approved that the United States should think in international terms instead of focusing mainly on domestic issues, almost the same portion of them (78%) favored a shared leadership role with other countries and the U.N. helping Washington to carry the burden.[381] The cautious attitude of the public toward international affairs that has shaped U.S. foreign policy in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War was described, by John Rielly, first as "pragmatic internationalism"[382] and then, as "guarded engagement."[383] This approach was built upon the fact that "Americans [were] more reluctant to shoulder the burdens of international leadership alone, but [were] willing to share responsibility through participation in multilateral organizations."[384] Thus, this post-Cold War approach, characterized by public preference in favor of multilateralism and the support for involvement aiming at defending vital interest but

[380] Holsti, **op. cit.** 1992, p. 449.
[381] "America's Place in the World", **Pew Research Center**, November 2, 1993, https://www.people-press.org/1993/11/02/americas-place-in-the-world/#report-summary (Access: 23.05.2019).
[382] John E. Rielly, "The Public Mood at Mid-Decade", **Foreign Policy**, No. 98 (Spring, 1995), p. 76.
[383] John E. Rielly, "Americans and the World: A Survey at Century's End", **Foreign Policy**, No. 114 (Spring, 1999), p. 105.
[384] Rielly, **op. cit.** 1995, p. 76.

not fostering change in various parts of the world, fits clearly into one of the above-mentioned two faces of internationalism, namely, cooperative internationalism.

The permanence of internationalism with different interpretations as the main framework of U.S. foreign policy was affirmed, once again, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that dramatically increased the threat perception in the eyes of Americans. "Despite this sense of threat, the public's commitment to internationalism after 9/11 and with the onset of Iraq War and beyond continued at remarkably high levels."[385] With the increased interest and growing knowledge regarding world affairs, the public attitude, labeled as "refocused internationalism," characterized this era. The term refers to the refocusing of American internationalism on "containing and defeating the terrorist threat."[386] While 83% of Americans thought, according to a survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2002, that "it is either 'very desirable' (41%) or 'somewhat desirable' (42%) that the United States exert strong leadership in world affairs." Nevertheless, the public's favorable view of multilateralism has remained intact as almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents rejected the United States' responsibility to play the role of world policeman, and a majority of 61% said that it should work with other countries instead of acting alone in responding international crises.[387] Thus, the public's rejection of unilateralism and commitment to multilateralism, along with an unshattered conviction in superpower status for the United States, marked the post-9/11 era in terms of public opinion. In other words, internationalism, particularly its cooperative strand, prevailed within the public, even after one of the greatest tragedies of American history. Even though the initial responses of the United States under the Bush administration were inspired by the unilateralist impulses that were not compatible with the public's general view, the stability in public opinion, in this respect, resulted in the reintegration of multilateralism as one of the main components of U.S. foreign policy after President Obama moved to the White House. This post-9/11 public attitude has illustrated, first, the stability and coherence of public opinion even in the face of crisis and peril; second, its significance in swinging the foreign policy pendulum with internationalism remaining as its main framework.

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[385] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 573.
[386] Marshall M. Bouton, "Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion & Foreign Policy", *The Chicago* **Council on Global Affairs**, October 1, 2002, p. 10.
[387] **Ibid.** pp. 22; 26-27.

Another important aspect of the public opinion-foreign policy nexus is the way through which the public's view affects the policy. While special interest groups have played a significant role in directing the influence of public opinion in an organized and effective way, their impact has mainly depended on their access within the legislature, which is excessively sensitive to the public's view. "Public opinion influences foreign policy, when it does, indirectly through its representatives in the legislature rather than directly the foreign security policy executive."[388] Thus, before analyzing the role of interest groups in orienting the impact of public opinion on foreign policy, a brief examination of the legislative-executive relations within the context of U.S. foreign policy is necessary in order to better grasp the main framework. It is noteworthy that as we are dealing with the role of societal variables in shaping U.S. foreign policy within the scope of this thesis, we will not be focusing on the congressional influence in shaping policy on an institutional basis in order to avoid slipping into the dimension of governmental variables. In other words, instead of investigating the internal structure and processes of Congress, we will focus on its extent and nature as an intermediary of public opinion's influence.

Constitutionally, the prominent place in shaping U.S. foreign policy belongs to the president as he/she is the Nation's chief diplomat and the commander in chief. With regard to crucial foreign and security policy issues, such as the use of force, the president has been equipped with ample authority. Nevertheless, his authority within the realm of foreign policy is not unlimited. The US Constitution, by attributing significant powers to Congress, has aimed at creating a well-established system of checks and balances in order to impede presidential adventures. "That the Founding Fathers did not intend to create an 'imperial presidency' is evident by the extensive powers given to the Congress in foreign affairs. Chief among them are the power to declare war, the power to authorize and appropriate funds, the power to raise and support an Army and Navy, the legislative power, the power of the Senate to advise and consent to treaties, and the power of the Senate to confirm executive appointments."[389] However, having all these powers does not mean that Congress

[388] Norrin M. Ripsman, "Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Interest Groups," in. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), **Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy,** Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, p.171.

[389] Joseph N. Nogee, "Congress and the Presidency: The Dilemmas of Policy-Making in a Democracy," in. John Spanier, Joseph Nogee (Eds.), **Congress, the Presidency, and American Foreign Policy**, Pergamon Press, New York, 1981, p. 190.

would use them whenever possible. What matters in this respect is, thus, its willingness to play a decisive role in the realm of foreign policy. Whether Congress would assume an assertive or deferential attitude depends on the answer to three fundamental questions: "Does the country see itself as threatened or secure? Are the president's policies working or not? Does the president's party control Congress or not? Times of peace favor congressional activism, while times of war favor congressional deference. Successful presidents have more followers than failed ones do. And presidents get friendlier treatment when their party is in the majority on Capitol Hill."[390]

The legislative-executive competition has long been one of the recurrent themes of American political history. The balance of power between the two ends of Pennsylvania Avenue -the White House and Capitol Hill- has always shifted back and forth throughout history, depending on political tides. They have been, as wisely stated by Richard Neustadt, "separated institutions *sharing* powers."[391] As far as the post-WWII era is concerned, particularly in the first stages of the Cold War, as a result of the high threat perception and increasing security concerns, the presidency had enjoyed an excessive primacy compared to Congress with regard to foreign policy. It was the case until the emergence of the traumatic consequences of the war in Vietnam. "Before Vietnam, the effective conduct of American foreign policy was associated with a strong presidency. The war, however, produced widespread disillusionment with the 'imperial presidency.'"[392] The Vietnam War, along with the Watergate scandal, has radically changed the legislative-executive relations in favor of the former. Since then, "…Congress has sought to redefine its relationship with the president in two ways. First, it has sought to place limits on presidential power… Second, it has sought to take the initiative by promoting its own foreign-policy agenda."[393] The most significant initiative of Congress aiming at constraining the war-making ability of the president and to reassert its control over foreign and security policy issues was the War Powers Act of 1973. In this sense, the resolution "… has several important provisions that require presidential consultation and reporting to

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[390] James M. Lindsay, "The Shifting Pendulum of Power: Executive-Legislative Relations on American Foreign Policy," in. James M. McCormick (Ed.), **The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence**, Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2018, p. 220.
[391] Richard E. Neustadt, **Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan,** The Free Press, New York, 1990, p. 29.
[392] John Spanier, "Congress and the Presidency: The Weakest Link in the Policy Process," in. John Spanier, Joseph Nogee (Eds.), ***Congress, the Presidency, and American Foreign Policy***, Pergamon Press, New York, 1981, p. ix.
[393] Hastedt, **op. cit.** 2004, p. 100.

Congress on the use of United States forces, that limit the time of deployment, and that provide Congress a mechanism for withdrawing these forces prior to any time limit."[394]

Furthermore, this trend favoring the Congress accelerated following the end of the Cold War. The relatively secure environment of the immediate post-Cold War period caused even an increase in congressional assertiveness, except a short while encompassing the Gulf War, when the popularity of the elder George Bush was very high as a result of the rally-around-the-flag effect.[395] In the course of the subsequent period, until 2001, Congress has had a strong voice with regard to foreign policy. The immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks marked the return of a deferential Congress. "Foreign policy suddenly became a top priority with the public. Not surprisingly, the pendulum of power swung sharply back toward the White House."[396] This attitude has facilitated for the Bush administration to engage in costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nonetheless, this was not to last too long and in time, particularly in the face of certain issues like sending additional troops to Iraq, the reassertion of congressional control over foreign policy has appeared. The assertiveness of Congress has continued throughout the presidency of Barack Obama, especially with regard to the initiative to close down the prison in Guantanamo, the Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya in 2011, and the Syrian question.

Within this context, Congress is not solely a governmental source of foreign policy. As a result of their nature, both Houses on Capitol Hill and their foreign policy-related committees have been accessible to public opinion. In this sense, benefitting from constitutional powers attributed to it, Congress holds the ability to reflect the public's view on foreign and security policy issues. The influence of public opinion on the legislature goes far beyond the individual electoral support or polls. A certain number of people organized within an interest group with excessive access in the Capitol can easily affect foreign policy in the direction desired by the idea or interest they represent. "Interest-group lobbying represents an important avenue through which the public can express its foreign-policy preferences. Interest groups serve as intermediaries that help organize and channel the public voice and, as such, differ from voting in elections and public opinion polls that allow for the direct communication of

[394] McCormick, ***American Foreign Policy and…,*** p. 312.
[395] Lindsay, **op. cit.** 2018, pp. 226- 227.
[396] **Ibid.**

the public's thinking to policy makers."[397] Moreover, think tanks, in this respect, play a significant role in shaping the foreign policy debate at the domestic level and in framing the issues within the realm of foreign policy. The axis of such groups might be of various nature, such as economy, ethnicity, and ideology, while the degree of their influence depends on the group's focus, the number of members, its being relatively monolithic, and its capacity to control its members' voting behavior.

> *"In democratic states," therefore, one should expect "the greatest influence from well-organized, coherent, vote-rich, single-issue interest groups that can provide an electoral payoff, the legislature that can act as a veto for the government's policy agenda, groups that can frame executive thinking on foreign affairs, and, occasionally, the public as a whole. A lesser and less frequent influence may be expected from wealthy or resource-rich groups, simply because of the countervailing resources of opposing groups."*[398]

Clearly, the lobbies built around ethnic causes fit into this description of potentially influential interest groups. Particularly, the pro-Israel lobby, whose influence on U.S. foreign policy has long been debated from various perspectives, appears to sufficiently fit into both dimensions of this description as far as its well-organized structure and rich resources are concerned. Besides, all ethnic diaspora communities, as a result of their relatively consistent voting behavior and single issue-oriented nature, have potentially more influence compared to other interest groups having multiple objectives.

In this respect, the lobbies have, for many years, played a vital role in connecting public opinion and policy-makers in the United States, although they represent a certain portion of the society. For instance, it was the effectiveness of the pro-Israel lobby in Congress that made it difficult for the United States to play a mediating role between Israel and its Arab neighbors after the 1973 Yom Kippur War as it pushed for a more pro-Israel stance. Similarly, the dispute between Turkey and Greece regarding the island of Cyprus resulted in an arms embargo against Turkey, and this decision was also taken under the considerable influence of the Greek lobby within the

[397] Hastedt, **op. cit.** 2004, p. 230.
[398] Ripsman, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 185.

legislature, while the stance of the executive was relatively favoring the Turkish side.[399]

As is widely acknowledged, the most influential of these ethnic lobbies is the pro-Israel lobby. According to Mearsheimer and Walt, "…the overall thrust of U.S. policy in the [Middle East] is due primarily to U.S. domestic politics and especially to the activities of the 'Israel lobby.' Other special-interest groups have managed to skew U.S. foreign policy in directions they favored, but no lobby has managed to divert U.S. foreign policy as far from what the American national interest would otherwise suggest, while simultaneously convincing Americans that U.S. and Israeli interests are essentially identical."[400] The degree and the nature of the lobby's influence have often been the central subject of many debates. However, what is noteworthy for us at this point is that "[a] key pillar of the lobby's effectiveness is its influence in the U.S. Congress, where Israel is virtually immune from criticism."[401] This clearly demonstrates how public opinion can affect foreign policy, even with regard to one of the crucial regions, the Middle East, through interest groups that are influential within the legislature. This is, perhaps, the most effective way for the public's interest to be reflected in foreign policy choices. Therefore, public opinion, by forming special interest groups, exerts a considerable impact on U.S. foreign policy. As such groups "typically have greater access to –and greater influence over- the legislature than the executive,"[402] the U.S. Congress appears as the central tool for public opinion to reach policy-makers. In other words, public opinion "filters through to the executive indirectly through the legislature."[403] And although this is a given of US politics, the impact of lobbies has increasingly become a controversial issue as it sometimes triggers foreign policy decisions in contradiction with longer term national interests, such as, precisely, the US policy toward the Middle East, defined by Israel's security and well-being.

Lastly, another important point in relation to the public opinion-foreign policy relationship is the nature of the issue in hand. Certain types of events have often been subject to more popular sensibility than have the others, and therefore, in such cases,

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[399] Spanier, **op.cit.** 1981, p. xi.
[400] John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy", **Middle East Policy,** Vol. XIII, No.3, Fall 2006, p. 30.
[401] **Ibid.** p. 42.
[402] Ripsman, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 190.
[403] **Ibid.**

the impact of public opinion tends to be greater than it usually is. The issues with a high probability of use of military force or a potential humanitarian intervention increase the susceptibility of the public to be involved effectively in the decision-making process. As far as the use of American military force abroad is concerned, the high level of popular support that was observed during the initial phase of the Cold War was affected by the traumatic experience in Vietnam and has radically weakened. However, starting with the 1980s, a relative normalization in this trend has been observed and, in this respect, "the principal policy objective" has turned out to be the determining factor of the public attitude toward the use of military force. "The distinction is between force used to coerce foreign policy restraint by an adversary engaged in aggressive actions against the United States or its interests, and force used to engineer internal political change within another country whether in support of an existing government considered an ally or seeking to overthrow a government considered an adversary."[404] In other words, the public's view of any military reaction at the international level has been shaped by the legitimacy of the goals that entailed such action. When a direct threat to American interests and security is perceived, the public tends to be more supportive of the use of force than it generally is in the face of relatively controversial ends, such as fostering change in other countries.

From a broad perspective, with regard to the post-Cold War undertakings, for "military interventions abroad that may pose the risk of casualties, the public is selectively supportive rather than reflexively opposed. Support is most likely for interventions in such areas of traditional concern as Europe, when the purpose is to prevent or punish aggression rather than to promote American values or institutions, and when there is a reasonable prospect of success."[405] Thus, instead of blindly rallying around the president, the American public is highly cautious with regard to the use of military force abroad, and the foreign policy objective, within this context, is the key factor in shaping the public's view toward such decisions. Nevertheless, even though the public is divided or almost wholly against military involvement in any case, the decision-makers may opt for using military force. Once at war, the president's public approval increases as a result of the patriotic or nationalist characteristics of

[404] Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force", **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol.36, No.1, (Mar. 1992), pp. 49-50.
[405] Ole R. Holsti, **Making American Foreign Policy**, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 262.

Americans. This was notably the case during the First Gulf War.[406] The war in Iraq, in 2003, was not much different, as well.

Furthermore, from a broad perspective, behind the public's general view of the use of military force, according to Jentleson, one can observe three general patterns:

> *"First, public support tends to be greatest when the principal policy objective for which force is being used is to coerce foreign policy restraint on an aggressor threatening the United States, its citizens, or its interests. Second, the public tends to be least supportive of military force when the principal objective is to engineer internal political change in another country's government. Third are humanitarian interventions, for which public support tends to fall between."*[407]

The concerns related to the normative aspect of military action and its efficacy, thus, have been the main shapers of public opinion. It is noteworthy that other factors, such as burden-sharing, have played, in certain cases, a significant role in this respect. The intervention in Libya in 2011 was one of the best illustrations of some cases, as public opinion was softened by the promises of limited costs for the United States, the willingness of other actors to share the burden of intervention.

One last factor that dramatically affects the level of public support for using military force abroad is notably the number of American casualties in war. As put forward by John Mueller, who investigated popular support during the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the increase in the number of American casualties has triggered a decrease in the public's initial supportive attitude toward both wars. "The assumption is that people react more to the cumulative human costs of the war rather than to its duration."[408] Mueller later advanced his casualty-centered interpretation in a way that would include the Iraq War of 2003 and observed the same phenomenon. "In all cases" he argued, "[the public's] support decreased as casualties -whether of draftees, volunteers, or reservists– mounted… [and thus], what chiefly matters for American public opinion is American losses, not those of the people defended."[409] For some, the

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[406] Foyle, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 217.
[407] Jentleson, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 334.
[408] John E. Mueller, *War*, **Presidents and Public Opinion**, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1973, p. 59.
[409] John Mueller, "The Iraq Syndrome", **Foreign Affairs**, November/December 2005, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2005-10-01/iraq-syndrome (Access: 26.05.2019).

changing trend in public opinion toward warfare in all these cases was related to the situation in the field rather than the number of casualties. As "the casualties were suffered in battlefield defeats, not in battlefield victories," what matters the most is the progress in the field.[410] However, given the fact that the public has always been excessively sensible to the number of casualties in the battlefield rather than to military advancements or setbacks, the argument advocated by Mueller seems more plausible than that of Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler. Not just in these three wars but also in some other cases that were even more limited in scope -but well-publicized by the media- as was the case in Somalia, the public's attitude was dramatically affected by the number of American casualties abroad. Thus, while the objective of use of force plays the role of the determining factor of popular support before the decision, later, it would be replaced, once the war escalated, by the relatively low level of casualty tolerance of Americans.

Consequently, the nature of the relation between public opinion and foreign policy has remained highly complex and generally unpredictable. As far as the general framework of a foreign policy strategy –e. g. internationalism- is concerned, however, it turns out to be a relatively stable and coherent phenomenon. "One of the reasons American foreign policy has proved so resistant to change for so long is that public images of international politics are themselves resistant to change."[411] Particularly, since the United States entered WWII, the public's view of international affairs has been characterized by the support for an internationalist foreign policy agenda. Depending on the given context or the present circumstances, public opinion tends to be supportive of different tactics, but without breaking off the internationalist framework. In this sense, the public's support has oscillated between the crusader and accommodationist strands of internationalism. Yet, it must be noted that four years under the presidency of Donald Trump, shaped by zealous efforts to tarnish the core pillars of the liberal international order, might have caused a shift in the conventionally pro-internationalist public mood in the United States toward a more inward-looking, if not isolationist, inclination. The medium- and long-term effects of the Trump

[410] Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, Jason Reifler, **Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflict**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2009, p. 25.
[411] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 276.

administration in this regard would likely be the subject of further scrutiny and research in the future.

Furthermore, the impact of public opinion on specific foreign policy decisions is doubtlessly limited and even very weak. Indeed, "…the effect of public opinion on individual policy decisions appears to be sporadic and exceptional."[412] Its influence is mainly dependent on the nature of the issue in hand. In this sense, "the pattern of the public's influence can be generally described as either no-impact or constraint during crises and elite efforts to lead public opinion on longer-term decisions."[413] Thus, it can act, at best, as a constraint imposed on the policy alternatives available to each decision-maker in the face of a major foreign policy issue. While playing a significant role in shaping the fundamental foreign policy strategy, the influence of public opinion remains relatively low, if not none, in choosing a specific policy among options. It is noteworthy that the issues that entail military engagement or intervention in humanitarian terms ought to be seen as potential exceptions in this respect. The decisions related to such events, depending on their legitimacy and efficacy in the eyes of Americans and on the course of events following the initiation of war or intervention, have usually been subject to the considerable influence of public opinion. In sum, it is undeniable that public opinion matters in shaping U.S. foreign policy, especially through its impact on the legislative. The magnitude of its influence and the ways through which it is exerted, however, remains debatable. Moreover, it must be remembered that, in the United States, the influence of public opinion is much more visible in the general foreign policy tendency, namely the internationalist agenda, rather than policy choices in the face of various international events.

B- *Moralpolitik* vs. *Realpolitik* within the Framework of U.S. Foreign Policy

In the nineteenth century, a European visitor in the United States, Fanny Trollope, underscoring the gap between the discourse that emphasizes the mythical American virtuousness and practices, observed that "it is impossible for any mind of common honesty not to be revolted by the contradictions in their principles and practice. … You will see them with one hand hoisting the cap of liberty and with the other flogging the slaves. You will see them one hour lecturing … on the indefeasible

[412] McCormick, **op. cit.** 2010, p. 582.
[413] Foyle**, op. cit.** 1999, p. 259.

rights of man, and the next driving from their homes the children of the soil, whom they have bound themselves to protect by the most solemn promises."[414] This undeniable, even inevitable gap stemmed fundamentally from the confrontation of the mythical belief in the superiority and innocence of the United States and the harsh realities of the world. As a consequence of this inconsistency between their words and deeds, Americans have constantly been subject to charges of either pure hypocrisy or incurable *naïveté* by experts and commentators, depending on their predilections. As for the conduct of foreign policy, this gap takes the shape of a recurrent struggle between *moralpolitik* and *realpolitik.*

The foreign policy pendulum swinging back and forth from one to the other is, indeed, a direct result of two interrelated dynamics. Firstly, the self-attributed role and the relative position of the United States at the global scene have shaped the direction and the pace of the oscillation in this regard. Not surprisingly, the framework of foreign policy undertakings of a regional power differs radically from that of a global leader, and this difference includes the underlying logic and motives behind such initiations. Likewise, a higher rank in the list of global powers and the absence of a peer competitor or a powerful state with the capacity and will to alter *the status quo* provide the U.S. with larger room to maneuver and facilitate, or even encourage the implementation of certain policies that are, to some extent, guided by moral concerns rather than the calculation of material interests. Secondly, also linked to the first dynamic, the change in the context of the international system, by dramatically affecting Washington's foreign policy objectives and priorities plays a central role in shaping its choices regarding the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* struggle. The transformations observed during the second half of the twentieth century -the initiation of the Cold War, the Vietnam trauma, *détente,* and the end of the Cold War- illustrate the alternations in the nature of international politics and, for a major actor, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of acting on a single constant basis in the face of these irreversible changes.

Within this context, military intervention appears, regardless of the approach opted for, as a problematic issue. No matter what grounds a decision-maker tries to

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[414] Frances Milton Trollope, **Domestic Manners of the Americans**, Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., London, 1832, p.180 https://books.google.com.tr/books/about/Domestic_Manners_of_the_Americans.html?id=GjcTAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y (Access: 09.07.2019).

justify a military intervention, his decision always becomes the target of criticism within the American society and beyond. Simply, while an intervention for moral concerns takes criticism as it insufficiently serves the national interest, if not none, any military intervention opted for under the influence of the calculation of pure interest is generally blamed for betraying or disregarding the long-standing American values and ideals. A similar problem arises regarding the nature and the main motives of the given intervention. Is the main aim of the intervention regime-change within a foreign nation? What is hoped to be eliminated by means of intervention is a threat to international peace or vital American interests? Will there be "boots on the ground?" The answers to these questions, along with a view of the objective possibility of success, the existence of a rational exit strategy, a veritable post-intervention vision, and the estimated number of casualties during the conflict affect not only the degree of popular support for intervention but also the level of political opposition. In this sense, the question of intervention holds a significant place within the context of the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* debate. Therefore, for better evaluating the pendular movement of U.S. foreign policy during the Arab Spring, one must well comprehend all these dynamics.

1- The Alternation of Priorities

"Man is immortal; his salvation is hereafter; the state has no immortality, its salvation is now or never,"[415] once said Cardinal Richelieu, who, according to Kissinger, was "the father of the modern state system."[416] His formulation has put forward the bedrock principle of *realpolitik* as a policy approach that follows solely the guidance of national interest. Thus, while the philosophical roots of realism can be traced back to the times of Thucydides in Ancient Greece, the political origins of *realpolitik* date back to seventeenth-century Europe. *Moralpolitik*, on the other hand, as the antidote of *realpolitik*, refers to do what is morally right, which could be interpreted in light of religious principles of this era. This view was later strengthened by the Kantian ideas and eventually gained a relatively secular tone.

The introduction of both concepts as foreign policy approaches in British and American political life is, however, a more recent phenomenon. Within the framework

[415] Stanley Chodorow et. al., **The Mainstream of Civilization Since 1500**, The Harcourt Press, New York, 1994, p. 478.
[416] Kissinger, **Diplomacy…,** p. 58.

of Anglo-American political thinking, "the real *realpolitik*" said John Bew, "emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Europe from the collision of the Enlightenment with the realities of power politics."[417] It was viewed as a means to "achieve liberal, enlightened goals in a world that does not follow liberal, enlightened rules."[418] Similarly, *moralpolitik* was initially introduced to the realm of U.S. foreign policy in the late nineteenth century. "Humanitarian motives were not strange to American liberal thought, but before 1898 they had never governed action."[419] It was during President Wilson's tenure in the White House that a veritable policy framework inspired by moral concerns was integrated, to some extent, into American political understanding. This period, according to Irving Kristol, marked, for U.S. foreign policy, a transition, "… via the utopian enthusiasm… preaching 'self-determination,' 'human rights,' 'one man, one vote,' 'a world without war,' as if these were in fact unproblematic possibilities."[420] Until then, and even now for some, it was thought to be a smokescreen for a struggle for strategic advantages and power. Built upon this historical background, the debate on the place of *realpolitik* and its opposite, *moralpolitik*, within the scope of U.S. foreign policy, has preserved its relevance in the face of the challenges of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries as both approaches have struggled for primacy. Although a decisive victory for any concept has been of low probability, if not none, one of the main dynamics that have determined the evolution of their effectiveness on foreign policy decisions was the changing priorities of the United States at the international level.

"Where the age-old antagonism between freedom and tyranny is concerned, we are not neutral. But other imperatives impose limits to our ability to produce internal changes in foreign countries. Consciousness of our limits is recognition of the necessity of peace -not moral callousness. The preservation of human life and human society are moral values, too," said Kissinger, to illustrate the reflection of the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy on its approach toward *détente* and the question of encouraging internal change in the Soviet Union.[421] According to John Kane, this "irresolvable tension has marked the relationship between American power and

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[417] John Bew, "The Real Origins of Realpolitik", **The National Interest**, No. 130, THE GOP'S BALANCING ACT (March/April 2014), p. 42.
[418] **Ibid.**
[419] Graebner, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 321.
[420] Kristol, **op. cit.** 1983, p. 264.
[421] Kissinger, **American Foreign Policy…**, p. 145.

American virtue from the very beginning, causing recurrent uncertainty about the justice of American actions abroad and rendering the national psyche peculiarly vulnerable to doubtful exercises of power."[422]

Multiple factors play a significant role in shaping a state's foreign policy priorities, but chief among them is the nation's place in the global power ranking. In other words, the relative distribution of power at the international level is central in determining foreign policy objectives of a state. At first glance, the link between the state's relative international position and its foreign policy priorities might seem rather indirect. However, considering the impact of the international status on the perception and definition of the national interest would be helpful in recognizing the causal relationship between these two phenomena. In this sense, the changing international status of the United States has been key for understanding its national interest in different periods and, thus, its foreign policy priorities. A state's national interest, which can be defined as "the goals or preferences that guide the country's external behavior,"[423] is directly linked to its foreign policy decisions. As far as the United States is concerned, the concept of national interest refers to a multifaceted phenomenon. Its reach goes beyond the strategic and socio-economic concerns. "National interests usually combine security and material concerns, on the one hand, and moral and ethical concerns, on the other."[424] As put by Joseph Nye, "in a democracy, the national interest is simply the set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world. It is broader than strategic interests, though they are part of it… The American people clearly think that their interests include certain values and their promotion abroad…"[425] As is seen in these definitions, the national interest of the United States is shaped by multiple considerations that can also be affected by many other factors, such as the nature of the given issue or the structural dynamics of the international system. This multidimensional character of the national interest causes inevitably the alternation of the state's priorities at the international level.

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[422]Kane, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 2.
[423] Gideon Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", **World Politics**, Vol. 51, No.1, (Oct. 1998), p. 152.
[424] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Erosion of American National Interests," **Foreign Affairs**, September/October 1997, p. 35.
[425] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Redefining the National Interest", **Foreign Affairs**, July/August 1999, pp. 23-24.

In this regard, "what should the United States do with its power?" asked Stephen Walt and added: "U.S. leaders have wrestled with this question since the founding of the country, and especially since America's rise to Great Power status."[426] The change in U.S. foreign policy over time and its persistent pendular move have constantly reflected the change in America's perceived interests and its international status. Throughout the nineteenth century, the U.S. had acted as a regional power desiring first to establish and then, to preserve its hemispheric superiority. In retrospect, from a realist standpoint, there have been two central goals shaping U.S. foreign policy behavior as the main requirements of the national interest: (1) assuring the security of the State in the Western Hemisphere and (2) the maintenance of European balance of power.[427] This was mostly the case until the end of the century, or even beyond. While the former had been the main motive behind U.S. attitude concretized by an isolationist stance and the Monroe Doctrine, the latter had shaped the choices of the United States in the face of major international turning points from the Napoleonic Wars to the Great War. As argued by Paul Kennedy, the year 1892, when "the European Great Powers upgraded the rank of their diplomatic representatives to Washington from minister to ambassador" was decisive as it signaled that the United States has become a "first-division nation."[428] The scope and the nature of the national interest of a great power were, not surprisingly, more ambitious than those of a regional power.

Within this context, isolationism, with its categorically unilateralist attitude, has become insufficient in light of the changing perceptions of national interest. Toward the 1890s, "as the country grew and prospered," writes Kaufman, "U.S. business and investment became more international and global in scope. This also changed the direction of U.S. foreign policy, as the country had to protect those interests, militarily if necessary, when they were threatened."[429] This paved the way, thus, for the affirmation of overseas interests and assertive actions for preserving and promoting them. At this point, one should keep in mind that what matters with regard to the definition and perception of national interest is, along with many other dynamics from

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[426] Stephen M. Walt, ***Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy,*** W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2005, p. 39. 2005, p. 1.
[427] Hans J. Morgenthau, "What is the National Interest of the United States?" **The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 282, The National Interest-Alone or with Others? (Jul. 1952), pp. 4-6.
[428] Paul Kennedy, **The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000**, Random House, New York, 1987, p. 194.
[429] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 52.

different levels, state power, not national power. "The definition of…interests is shaped by individual statesmen, by domestic politics, by the general values and culture of the society, but in the first instance, by a state's power."[430] As only a certain portion of this power can be extracted and mobilized for foreign policy objectives, "… statesmen will expand the nation's political interests abroad when they perceive a relative increase in state power, not national power."[431] This view explains why the United States had waited until the end of the 1800s to actively engage itself in international affairs despite its emergence as one of the main industrial powers in the aftermath of the Civil War in the mid-nineteenth century.

This reinterpretation of the national interest of the United States has yet gained another dimension by the injection of a normative aspect into foreign policy through the ideals and moral concerns advocated by Woodrow Wilson. In other words, by this time, along with the scope of the U.S. foreign policy priorities, their character has been subject to a significant transformation. The increasing tone of morality within the realm of U.S. foreign policy has ultimately caused the affirmation of a serious alternative to the amoral interest-oriented approach, as well as the emergence of a new understanding of the concept of interest. This has created, argued Morgenthau, "the illusion that a nation can escape, if it only wants to, from power politics into a realm where action is guided by moral principles rather than by considerations of power."[432] In accordance with this approach that is, in fact, deeply rooted in the American understanding of international politics, the national interest of the United States has been interpreted from two different perspectives. While one has focused on strategic aspects, the other has given priority to ideational elements. The main reason behind the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy between *realpolitik* and *moralpolitik* has been the perceived incompatibility between these two concepts. In other words, when an American statesman feels compelled to choose one of these approaches over the other in the face of an international issue, the problem arises. As a leader's' behavior is determined by various factors, such as cultural backgrounds, political views, and party ideology, the choice depends, naturally, on the approach assumed by the then decision-maker. When, on the other hand, both views seem to converge, the oscillation decelerates, if not stops, and the intensity of the debate regarding foreign policy

[430] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 1998, p. 185.
[431] **Ibid.** p. 35.
[432] Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions," **The American Political Science Review**, Vol. 44, No. 4, (Dec. 1950), p. 840.

weakens. Moreover, the struggle between material and immaterial interests has caused, along with the tides in the making and implementation of U.S. foreign policy, a gap between rhetoric and practice. "When ideal interests dominate decisions on foreign policy, there is often consistency between values publicly professed and actual policies undertaken. On the contrary, when realist and socio-economic interests prevail, we could experience a disconnect between the rhetoric and the practice of US foreign policy."[433] Thus, Washington's foreign policy priorities, depending on the nature of the perceived national interest and how it is interpreted, are central in comprehending the underlying causes of the swinging foreign policy pendulum.

Furthermore, an important dynamic that has considerably affected the pendular movement is the international stimulus shaping the international objectives of the United States. The international environment, with its opportunities and potential threats, has a central role in defining the national interest. Among various examples, the most striking one is doubtlessly the transformation of U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of WWII, when the United States, as one of the newly emerged superpowers in a bipolar world, has tended to project its power globally in the name of the fight against communism. Throughout the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy was rightly interpreted through a prism of pendular ebbs and flows of active international engagement and retrenchment. The containment policy, with its emphasis on both the preservation of the strategic interests and the promotion of the ideational ones, has constituted, at the macro level, the common ground for realistic and moralistic policies. At the micro-level, however, the oscillation was rather palpable as certain pro-American regimes, despite their autocratic tendencies, have been exempted from U.S. actions based on moral considerations. These "friendly tyrants" have been very useful to the United States as they "have viewed the Soviet Union and its proxies and allies as a threat and often have acted in ways that enhance American security, whether in coordination with [the U.S.] or on their own."[434] South Korea, Pakistan, South Africa, and many others have been in this category for a long time with different levels of autocracy. The dilemma of friendly tyrants, as one of the most persistent dilemmas of U.S. foreign policy, has been a source of debate throughout the Cold War and beyond, and most recently, a similar pattern has emerged during the Arab Spring as the United

[433] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 93.
[434] Daniel Pipes, Adam Grafinkle, "Introduction," in. Daniel Pipes, Adam Grafinkle (Eds.), **Friendly Tyrants…,** p. xv.

States showed, toward certain popular liberal movements increasingly dominated by extremist groups, a distance stemming from the fear of worse.

Prior to that, had already occurred another fundamental change in the nature of the international system. The end of the Cold War raised, not surprisingly, the question about the definition of the national interest and foreign policy priorities in a world where there seemed no peer rival to the United States. As argued by Irving Kristol:

> *"With the end of the Cold War, an era of American foreign policy has come to a close. We won that war. 'Global containment' of communism did work -far better, indeed, than we anticipated … So where … does that leave us? What is our foreign policy now about?... [W]e are now a world power that is no longer compelled by an adversary to be interested in every part of the globe. We are now free to pick and choose and assemble a coherent agenda. In short, we are now free to define our national interest instead of having it defined for us."*[435]

Richard Haass explained the ambivalent nature of U.S. foreign policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union by underscoring the need to discover a new lens through which Washington would see the world: "The United States emerged from the Cold War with no rivals, but also with no consensus as to what it should do with its unrivaled power. Containment, the compass that had guided U.S. foreign policy for four decades, was useless in the new circumstances. And policymakers and analysts struggled to settle on a new framework."[436]

Within this context, this period characterized by "the search of the national interest" has generated a significant acceleration of the foreign policy pendulum rather than stability and coherence with regard to American behavior at the international level. Indeed, this search of a redefinition of American national interest in the absence of a major threat triggered, toward the end of the century, an intense intellectual debate, which was essentially about the waning of the idea of "national interest" following the

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[435] Irving Kristol, "In Search of Our National Interest," **Wall Street Journal**, Eastern Edition; New York, June 1990, https://search.proquest.com/docview/398156489?accountid=15955 (Access: 20.07.2019).

[436] Richard Haass, "Present at the Disruption: How Trump Unmade U.S. Foreign Policy," **Foreign Affairs,** September/October 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/present-disruption (Access: 20.08.2020).

collapse of the Soviet Union. For some like Huntington, "the loss of the other" shattered the shared understanding of the concept of national identity within the American society and "without a sure sense of national identity, Americans have become unable to define their national interest..."[437] From a broader perspective, the United States has had difficulties in defining its national interest because the threat perception in Washington has plummeted as the world turned into a unipolar arena in the 1990s. Writing in 1989, Stanley Hoffmann argued that "in period of extreme international tension, when there appears to be one global enemy, any move made by the adversary tends to be seen as a threat, creating a national interest in repelling it… Now that the enemy recedes, a redefinition of those interests becomes possible and necessary."[438]

To put forward a coherent and sustainable foreign policy strategy to achieve a clearly-defined national interest, it was necessary to comprehend the nature and the intensity of the risks confronting the United States. In this regard, to elaborate a conceptual framework, Ashton Carter and William Perry proposed a hierarchical categorization of the risks to U.S. security. "At top of the hierarchy would be an 'A list' of threats to U.S. survival… [and] this list is empty today," they wrote and added: "The two 'major regional contingencies' in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean peninsula… form a 'B list' of imminent threats to U.S. interests, but not to the survival or way of life of Americans. The third place in this hierarchy is occupied by the Kosovos, Bosnias, Somalias, Rwandas, and Haitis that compose a 'C list' of important contingencies that indirectly affect U.S. security but do not directly threaten U.S. interests."[439] As images speak louder than words, the media coverage of humanitarian crises in certain places where no vital U.S. interests were at stake has generated a significant reaction within the American public. In the information age, "… the reality [was] that nonvital crises like Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and Kosovo continue to force their way to the foreground because of their ability to command massive media attention."[440]

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[437] Huntington, **op. cit.** 1997, p. 29.
[438] Stanley Hoffmann, "What Should We Do in the World?", **The Atlantic,** October 1989, https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/politics/foreign/hoffman.htm (Access: 29.11. 2019).
[439] Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry, **Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy of America,** Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1999, p. 11.
[440] Nye, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 30.

It has become clear that the United States, despite growing neo-isolationist pulls and a narrow interpretation of its national interest by some, had an interest in the world order, and achieving this interest required more than acting as an example. As pointed out by Kenneth Waltz, with regard to U.S. foreign policy, "the interest of the country came to be identified with the maintenance of a certain order…Once a state's interests reach a certain extent, they become self-reinforcing. In attempting to contrive an international-security order, the United States also promoted its economic interests and gave expression to its political aspirations for the world."[441] Thus, one might argue that, without disregarding the hierarchy proposed by Carter and Perry, the issues from the "C list" could not be ignored. In this new world, "… the United States has a general interest in developing and maintaining the international laws and institutions that deal not just with trade and the environment, but with arms proliferation, peacekeeping, human rights, and other concerns."[442] Washington had to, within the limits of its power, achieve various objectives in a recalcitrant post-Cold War world. Instead of trying to terminate trouble everywhere in the world, the United States should "… devise what could be described as a new containment: not of the Soviet Union…but of the various forms of violence and chaos that a world no longer dominated by the Cold War will entail."[443] Its national interest had, thus, become broader than imminent security threats and material considerations or geopolitical concerns. Rather, it has appeared to include a vast array of issues related to maintaining, if not improving, the present world order, while preparing for the future challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this sense, another significant aspect of the national interest debate focused on the extent to which the core American values and principles should affect the formation and direction of U.S. foreign policy. Building on the inherent dilemma of the American foreign policy tradition, many argued that the role of principles in the aftermath of the ideologic rivalry of the Cold War years had to dwindle as material and geopolitical interests, in a unipolar world, would become more crucial than before. From this perspective, a clear distinction between interests and values had to be made, and the use of force, limited to the defense of vital interests, not the "secondary" ones, such as democracy promotion and human rights concerns. For some, like Stanley

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[441] Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1979, p. 200.
[442] **Ibid.**
[443] Hoffmann, **op. cit.** 1989.

Hoffman, however, "the distinction between interests and values is largely fallacious."[444] Both concepts were, in his view, so intertwined that a sustainable foreign policy strategy had to be the product of their synthesis. Thus, the U.S. should not refrain from acting in the name of projecting, assertively, if necessary, its values abroad. Likewise, Joseph Nye argued that "a democratic definition of the national interest does not accept the distinction between a morality-based foreign policy and an interest-based foreign policy. Moral values are simply intangible interests."[445] Therefore, while determining its actions at the international level, the United States should not ignore the moral aspect of foreign policy and the values it has stood for since the foundation of the Republic. This was also what required the preservation and enhancement of a liberal international order under U.S. leadership. As will be tackled later in detail, this debate would come to an end in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the result would be a decisive victory of the neoconservative ideology advocating an assertive and hawkish foreign policy approach in the name of defending the interests and promoting American values abroad.

Furthermore, one of the most important consequences of such a debate was the accelerated oscillation of the foreign policy pendulum of the United States seeking to find its new strategic guidance. "The post-Cold War cycles roughly conformed to the presidential terms…The US foreign policy pendulum's yawing between cycles of interventionism and retrenchment generally conformed to a president's tenure in office. Each president came into office determined to zig where his predecessor zagged."[446] Including the term of George W. H. Bush in the Oval Office, all post-Cold War administrations have oscillated, within the realm of foreign policy, from *moralpolitik* to *realpolitik*, from multilateralism to unilateralism, from engagement to detachment, if not restraint. According to Henriksen, while the approaches assumed by G. H. W. Bush and G. W. Bush were significantly pro-engagement, the Clinton and Obama administrations opted for a strategy of limited engagement, if not disengagement, with a large inward focus.[447] Such a categorization of presidents with respect to their view toward the question of engagement, however, hides significant

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[444] Stanley Hoffmann, "In Defense of Mother Teresa: Morality in Foreign Policy." **Foreign Affairs**, Vol: 75, No: 2, (Mar. – Apr. 1996), p. 172.
[445] Nye, **op. cit.** 1999, p. 24.
[446] Henriksen, **op. cit.** 2017, pp. 3, 303.
[447] **Ibid.** p. 4.

nuances between their policies. For instance, the two presidents labeled as "pro-engagement," opted for opposite decisions regarding the wars in the Persian Gulf region. While the elder Bush did not enter Baghdad to overthrow the Saddam regime during the First Gulf War, his son, George W. Bush, chose to invade the Iraqi capital in 2003, toppled his oppressive regime, and undertook an ambitious nation-building mission. Similarly, Clinton, one of the "disengagement-oriented" presidents according to Henriksen, eventually intervened in conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo to end atrocities and human suffering. On the contrary, the Obama administration avoided, despite certain discourses in the opposite direction, military intervention in Syria, where the circumstances were no less violent than those in Kosovo. Therefore, the policies developed by the administrations in response to specific conditions do not exactly reflect the general orientation of the given president, and this kind of categorization might be misleading. However, they can be useful to illustrate the oscillation of the American policy pendulum. As it will be tackled later, the Trump administration, following a similar pattern, has pursued a foreign policy with an inward-looking focus and an emphasis on unilateralism in the name of the preservation of the national self-interest. Moreover, the oscillation can even be visible through the decisions of a single administration in the face of different issues. At this point, one ought to remember a key detail that the activism-inactivism (or engagement-disengagement) pendulum does not exactly conform to the tides of *moralpolitik-realpolitik*. That is to say, an administration's pro-engagement tendency, for instance, does not say much about the guiding principles of its foreign policy approach. Thus, the administrations' orientations related to U.S. grand strategy do not shape their guiding principles. Rather, it is the perceived national interest or the international environment that pushes U.S. foreign policy in a moralistic or realistic direction.

Emphasizing the superiority of the United States in terms of power within the international system, Zakaria claimed that "U.S. hegemony in the post–Cold War era was like nothing the world had seen since the Roman Empire."[448] This global balance of power, unprecedented in modern times, provided Washington with an environment full of opportunities to shape the world in its own image. Under such circumstances, the spread of core American values and lofty ideals has gained a significant place in shaping U.S. actions abroad. One may rightly argue that all post-Cold War

[448] Fareed Zakaria, "The Self-Destruction of American Power: Washington Squandered the Unipolar Moment," **Foreign Affairs**, July/August 2019, Vol.98, No. 4, p. 10.

administrations, except the Trump administration inspired by "Jacksonian instincts,"[449] have tended to actively promote those values, even though the level of priority of this task varied from one administration to another. Independently from their view related to international engagement, thus, four of these five administrations have granted, to varying extents, importance to moral principles as foreign policy guides. The two engagement-oriented post-Cold War administrations –G. W. H. Bush and G. W. Bush- have, respectively, conducted a humanitarian intervention in Somalia and intervened in Afghanistan and Iraq to wage war against terrorism and to foster democracy in those countries. In turn, the other two administrations –Clinton and Obama- despite their advocacy for restraint at the international level, did not hesitate to intervene in Haiti, Kosovo, and Libya for humanitarian concerns. Moreover, the worldwide encouragement for democratization movements under the presidency of Bill Clinton can be added to the list of moralistic foreign policy initiations of the United States in this period. Thus, as the threat perception has decreased and as a result of a favorable balance of power within the international system, moral concerns have prevailed over those related to material interests. The oscillation, therefore, has concerned the tools to be used to pursue the *moralpolitik*-centered goals, and this orientation lasted until the beginning of the new millennium.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks, within this context, triggered the initiation of another transformative process regarding U.S. foreign policy. Causing an increase in the threat perception in Washington, this tragedy strengthened the conviction that both interpretations of the national interest -ideal and strategic- were of complementary nature. In the post-9/11 era, "democracy, the president [Bush] came to believe, provided the surest antidote to terrorism. Promoting it therefore became a way of defending the United States."[450] Thus, the prevailing belief among the members of the Bush administration was that the spread of liberal values, particularly the liberal democratic regime, was a central requirement of America's security interests, as well as its moral duty. Clothed in strong Wilsonian rhetoric, the ventures undertaken in Afghanistan and Iraq were the direct results of this vision. These foreign policy choices have also shown how the change in the perception of interest affects the ends and means at the international level. While the relative failure in the Middle East quagmire

[449] Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal Order," **Foreign Affairs**, March/April 2017, Vol. 96, No.2, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-01-20/jacksonian-revolt (Access: 25.07.2019).
[450] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 287.

can be seen as a proof that "democracy promotion and nation building are beyond America's capabilities,"[451] the fluctuating popular reaction to both interventions has amply demonstrated the importance of the means used in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Whether the strategic or ideal national interests are at the center of a state's actions at the international level, the tools and methods used for preserving and/or promoting them are key in justifying it as well as obtaining popular support.

Although the focus of U.S. foreign policy, in the aftermath of the Cold War, has mainly been on the *moralpolitik*-centered approach, this does not mean, without doubt, that strategic interests were totally disregarded throughout this period. Along with some specific cases to which the reactions of the United States were inspired by pure power considerations, the value-oriented policies were shaped by the conviction that the promotion of those values serves the national interest, as well as the interest of mankind. In other words, in accordance with the United States' historical background, especially in the unipolar post-Cold War world, the national interest of the United States has been interpreted, to some extent, as linked to the global promotion of American values. This view has even been considered by some observers as a consensus among policy-makers regarding the benefits of spreading America's core values. As argued by Hammer, "the consensus position in the United States is that there is no way to choose material interests over values or vice versa, but that the United States has to pursue both at the same time because its values and interests are inherently intertwined."[452] Hence, what differs their foreign policy approaches from one another is their answer to the question of how best to achieve this objective. Put differently, while a relative agreement on foreign policy goals to pursue at the international level exists, disagreement appears concerning the appropriate means to be used to achieve these objectives. Should the United States follow its crusader instincts or focus on being the beacon of liberal values, a model for other nations to emulate? Therefore, the question of intervention arises, amidst the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* debate, as a major fault line within the realm of U.S. foreign policy.

[451] Brooks, Wohlforth, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 119.
[452] Christopher Hammer, **American Pendulum: Recurring Debates in U.S. Grand Strategy**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2015, pp. 10-11, 176.

2- The Question of Intervention in *Moralpolitik* and *Realpolitik*

"The American soldier is different from all other soldiers of all other countries since the world began . . . [H]e is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace and happiness," claimed Elihu Root, who served as Secretary of War in the McKinley administration and Secretary of State under President Theodor Roosevelt.[453] This view, embraced by a significant fraction of the American society, and many members of the foreign policy elite, demonstrates the close and direct link between the belief in the moral responsibility of "virtuously superior" Americans -i.e. American exceptionalism- and their tendency to interventionist behavior abroad. Military intervention in other countries either for fostering liberal democracies or safeguarding the threatened ones has always been, throughout history, one of the most appreciated options within the realm of U.S. foreign policy. "Outright military intervention," along with "the maintenance of a high military profile abroad, the practice of military deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and displays of force-short-of-war," has constituted one of the main "elements of the interventionist thrust of America's globalist foreign policy posture."[454] Although the intervention was not unfamiliar to U.S. foreign policy before the Cold War, with the initiation of a conflict on the global scale, interventionism has turned into an integral part of the ideological struggle for decades. Even after the end of it, it has preserved, with certain changes in its nature, its place as one of the sources of foreign policy debates within the United States. Starting with the First Gulf War, in places like Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and lastly, Libya, the choice of intervention has aroused harsh criticisms of some, as well as firm support of many. Conversely, the policy of non-intervention in Rwanda and Syria, causing other problems and human suffering, heated the debate rather than appeasing it.

Discussed from many different perspectives, perhaps the most significant aspect of the interventionist policies is centered on the objectives. Conforming to the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* dichotomy, military intervention is, for some, legitimate only when it serves the vital interests of the U.S., whereas some others see moral considerations as acceptable motives for intervening militarily in foreign countries. As political realism is mostly -and rightly- associated with rivalry and conflict by many

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[453] Elihu Root quoted in. Andrew J. Bacevich, **American Empire: The Realities & Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy,** Harvard University Press, London, 2003, p. 167.
[454] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 84.

observers, intervention, within this context, is generally believed to be the extension of the *realpolitik*-centered approach. However, this causal linkage -between the realist view of foreign policy and military intervention- is not objectively accurate. In fact, as liberals hold a strong belief in the universality and the enduring character of the values they advocated, "it is not surprising that powerful liberal states adopt highly interventionist policies abroad."[455] Most recently, the opposition of thirty-three realist scholars to the military intervention in 2003 illustrated this case. In a New York Times advertisement published on September 26, 2002, they warned against the unjustified character of a possible military intervention in Iraq as they claimed that "military force should be used only when it advances U.S. national interests [and] [w]ar with Iraq does not meet this standard."[456] Thus, the framework proposed by realists for intervention is relatively narrower than that of liberals, who advocate intervention for not only the vital national interests of the United States but also the well-being of others –i.e. humanitarian intervention. Particularly, in the post-Cold War era, with the growing emphasis on the concept of "the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)," the liberal view has gained impetus, and the long-standing foundations of the notion of state sovereignty, as a corollary, have come into question from multiple perspectives.

Before focusing on the place of intervention within the framework of the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* dilemma during and after the Cold War, a brief historical analysis of the United States' interventionist past is necessary in order to better elaborate on the contextual structure of the subject. In retrospect, the history of U.S. interventionism can be divided into four distinct periods. The first period covers roughly the first century following the foundation of the Republic. Assuring the control over the American Continent and neighboring regions was, throughout this time span, the main objective of many American interventions within the notion of "Manifest Destiny." Although the expansionist tendencies were strong, as was observed in the cases of Oregon, California, and the annexation of Texas, this period was characterized by the stress on non-interventionism.

The second period was initiated toward the closing decades of the nineteenth century and lasted until the 1930s. The interventionist tendency of the United States reached its peak, especially throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.

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[455] Mearsheimer, **The Great Delusion…,** pp. 219-220.
[456] "War with Iraq is not In America's National Interest," **The New York Times,** September 26, 2002, https://www.bear-left.com/archive/2002/0926oped.html (Access: 04.08.2019).

Starting with the Olney Corollary, which set the ground, within the context of the Monroe Doctrine, for the American intervention in the Anglo-Venezuelan boundary dispute in 1895-96,[457] the imperial attitude of the United States within the Western Hemisphere has favored an interventionist path. This attitude was strengthened, in 1904, by the emergence of the Roosevelt Corollary that encouraged the United States to play the role of the international police to stabilize the nations in the Western Hemisphere. Having fought against the Spanish in the Philippines and intervened in Cuba, the United States, then involved militarily in the Mexican Revolution in 1914 and occupied Haiti in 1915.

The third period includes the years leading up to WWII and the Cold War. In the beginning, the United States tended to make (non)interventionist policies collective undertakings, which was the main rationale behind the establishment of the League of Nations. Later, the intensity of the ideological struggle and the weakness of the collective enterprises paved the way for a relatively unilateralist and interventionist American approach, particularly in the name of fighting against communism. This attitude was illustrated in Asia, namely Korea and Vietnam, and to some extent, in the Middle East. Subsequently, while the policy of *détente* and traumatic experiences of relatively unsuccessful interventions caused the decline in the United States' interventionist tendencies toward the end of the 1960s, this retreat in anticommunist interventionism was later counterweighted, in a gradual manner, by the increased engagement for moral concerns.

Lastly, the post-Cold War years were marked by the diversification of rationales behind the policies of (non)intervention pursued by the United States. While the preservation of world peace and security appeared as one of the main motives of such policies, humanitarian interventions, as was observed in places like Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, were started to be seen as moral responsibility despite persistent criticisms. Another rationale was based on the conviction that the United States, as the uncontested hegemon of the world, had to act as the global policeman to safeguard the world from any wrongful action or significant misbehavior by the members of the international community.[458] Thus, the unipolar post-Cold War environment facilitated

[457] George B. Young, "Intervention Under the Monroe Doctrine," **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 57, No. 2, (Jun. 1942), p. 247.
[458] Doris A. Graber, "Intervention and Nonintervention," in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2002, pp. 323-330.

a broad definition of "national interest" and encouraged the use of military force for lofty, idealistic objectives. The U.S. military, within this context, was seen, especially by American policy-makers, as a "force for [the] good."[459]

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the use of military force was generally associated with material interest-oriented policies, such as territorial expansion, securing trade routes, the establishment of regional hegemony, etc. Since the 1890s, derived from the increased tone of moral concerns within the realm of foreign policy, the United States has undertaken military interventions in foreign countries to put an end to human suffering or to export liberal democratic values. President Wilson, in this sense, played a significant role in shaping the framework of intervention for U.S. foreign policy inspired by idealist insights. By authorizing many military interventions in Latin and Central America and the Caribbean, Wilson's policies amply demonstrated the direct link between *moralpolitik* and the use of military force. Walter LaFeber wisely pointed out that "determined to help other peoples become democratic and orderly, Wilson himself became the greatest military interventionist in U.S. history. By the time he left office in 1921, he had ordered troops into Russia and half a dozen Latin American upheavals."[460] Thus, he did not hesitate to resort to military intervention for what he believed to be right for everyone. Paradoxical as it might seem, Wilson "…did not use democratic and constitutional means to achieve his [liberal] objectives."[461] Following the Clausewitzian dictum, Wilson considered military intervention a legitimate and often necessary means of foreign policy.

Throughout the Cold War, the concurrence of the ideal and strategic national interests has facilitated, at least until the traumatic repercussions of the Vietnam War, American engagement in military interventions all over the world. In the name of the anti-communist fight on a global scale, Washington has ordered troops in places like Korea, Vietnam, and has also stationed many more in regions like Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In the meantime, however, stemming from the impact of the decrease in the intensity of the superpower rivalry and as a result of the Vietnam syndrome, the American view toward military initiatives abroad would change dramatically.

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[459] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 137.
[460] Walter LaFeber, **The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750**, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1989, p. 261.
[461] Roger R. Trask, "Wilsonian Missionary Diplomacy," in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **op. cit.,** 2002, p. 633.

First of all, starting in the mid-1970s, especially under the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the traditional strategic concerns have lost their prominence in favor of moral concerns as acceptable motives behind any military undertaking. This transformation in the nature of the use of force and U.S. motives for intervention later accelerated and intensified in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Secondly, after the death of 241 American troops in Beirut, in 1983, the United States developed a cautious approach with regard to military engagement in conflict zones. The architect of this approach was Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense of the Reagan administration. "It became known as the Weinberger Doctrine and, later and more famously, as the Powell Doctrine."[462] The decision to use military force abroad, according to Weinberger, must be subject to six major tests: (1) for the decision to be taken, the given "engagement or occasion" must be "deemed vital to [American] national interest or that of [American] allies"; (2) the commitment of combat troops must be made "wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning"; (3) for a military engagement there must be "clearly defined military and political objectives"; (4) the "size, composition and disposition" of the forces sent to combat "must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary"; (5) the troops must be assured that they will "have the support of the American people and…Congress"; (6) "the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be a last resort."[463] Later, Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, embraced the Weinberger Doctrine and "…in 1990-1991, [he] had added a seventh point: before troops were committed to battle, U.S. officials must have worked out a and 'exit strategy' in a definite time frame, so the soldiers would not be expected to stay anywhere and fight indefinitely."[464] The prevalence of this vigilant attitude assumed with regard to military engagement abroad for "no more Vietnams" was ephemeral and lasted until the last months of 1992, when the United States conducted a military intervention for purely humanitarian considerations in Somalia. This was the first sign of the changing vision of Washington in relation to the policies of intervention, as well as the

[462] Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," **Political Science Quarterly,** Vol. 124, No. 1 (Spring 2009), p. 73.
[463] "The Uses of Military Power," Remarks by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to the National Press Club, November 28, 1984, http://insidethecoldwar.org/sites/default/files/documents/Statement%20by%20Secretary%20of%20Defense%20Weinberger%20at%20National%20Press%20Club,%20November%2028,%201984.pdf (Access: 05.08.2019).
[464] LaFeber, **op. cit.** 2009, p. 76.

transformation of the international environment after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Indeed, the main rationale behind the American interventions during the post-Cold War era was summed up, in his Farewell Address (2001), by President Clinton, who stated that "America cannot and must not disentangle itself from the world. If we want the world to embody our shared values, then we must assume a shared responsibility."[465] Even before, in the 1998 U.S. NSS for a New Century, "humanitarian and other interests" have been added, as a distinct third category of the national interest, to the other two categories, namely, "vital interests" and "important national interests."[466] Doubtlessly, the growing inclination toward humanitarian intervention in this era stemmed from the victory of Wilsonian liberalism at the end of the Cold War. Within this context, emerged the concept named as the "new interventionism" that refers to "… responses to a changed and changing environment in which humanitarian concerns and international values often trumped other explanation of state behavior."[467] As put by Stedman, "the new interventionism has its roots in long-standing tendencies of American foreign policy -missionary zeal, bewilderment when the world refuses to conform to American expectations, and a belief that for every problem there is a quick and easy solution. It reunites divided strains of American foreign policy liberalism: traditional Wilsonian liberalism, defined by support for international organizations and self-determination of peoples; and its Cold War cousin, defined by anticommunism."[468] The interventions in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Libya have illustrated the concretization of this view.

Resulting from the increased significance of the issue of humanitarian intervention, two camps have aroused within the American body politic with contradicting views. The main cleavage was between "'selective engagers'… who argued that U.S. military intervention should be reserved for those isolated cases when U.S. vital strategic interests directly threatened…and 'liberal humanitarianists'…who supported military intervention to provide humanitarian relief to aggrieved

[465] William J. Clinton, "Farewell Address to the Nation," January 18, 2001, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address-the-nation-1 (Access: 05.08.2019).
[466] "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," October 1998, p. 5, http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1998.pdf (Access: 04.08.2019).
[467] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 85.
[468] Stephen John Stedman, "The New Interventionists," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 72, No. 1, America and the World 1992/93, p. 4.

populations and to stop or prevent atrocities perpetrated against civilians."[469] As a matter of fact, to intervene militarily on behalf of broad cosmopolitan goals is not a new phenomenon. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many European colonial powers were driven, in good faith or not, by similar objectives. For some, these initiatives were guided by "narrow nationalism and the pursuit of national self-interest, despite the rhetoric of saving religious and ethnic brethren."[470] Even though it might be true that most of such interventions carried out until the end of the Cold War were, with few exceptions, the reflections of parochial nationalism disguised in cosmopolitan rhetoric, this situation has changed since the 1990s, "the golden age of humanitarian intervention."[471] Starting with Somalia, where there was no evidence of U.S. strategic interests and Haiti, and Bosnia (later, Kosovo), where national self-interest of the United States was not sufficiently significant for engagement without the impact of humanitarian concerns, the concept of humanitarian intervention has turned into one of the key practices within the realm of U.S. foreign policy. The intervention has, therefore, become the most effective and prevailing means for the *moralpolitik*-oriented vision aiming at the spread of liberal values. Even without the authorization of the UN Security Council, as was illustrated by the case of Kosovo, the United States demonstrated no hesitation to carry out an intervention on humanitarian grounds. While this intervention conducted under NATO auspices would later be labeled, by the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, as "illegal but legitimate,"[472] it also heralded the significant transformation in this regard.

Within this context, the concept of humanitarian intervention has continued to evolve to respond to the requirements of this "new world." The framework of this evolution is, in this sense, constituted by neo-Wilsonianism that covers the concept of new interventionism. Political and economic liberalization are, within the neo-Wilsonian framework, seen as preconditions to stability and peaceful foreign and domestic policies, and what it emphasizes is that international interventions aiming at strengthening civil society to protect the rights of civilians in the face of state authority must be viewed as legitimate.[473] Thus, the most significant development in this regard

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[469] Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," in. James McCormick (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2018, p. 328.
[470] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 64.
[471] **Ibid.** p. 68.
[472]The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, **The Kosovo Report: Conflict, International Response, Lessons Learned,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 4.
[473] Türkmen, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 83.

was the answer to the question of how to halt atrocities against civilians within the borders of a "sovereign" state. The distinctive feature of the new interventionism (and neo-Wilsonianism, of course) is the willingness to intervene, in the name of human rights concerns and democratization, in conflicts occurring "within" states. Moreover, "the use of troops for purposes of peacekeeping…and peace enforcement…are key policy instruments underlying the new interventionism."[474] This has constituted the point of departure of the revolutionary journey leading to the emergence of the concept of R2P developed by the Independent Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Likewise, the new concepts, such as nation-building, peace-building, and state-building, along with R2P, are the products of the same firm conviction that to stop human rights violations is a moral duty of the international community, and the requirements of this duty outweigh the concerns of state sovereignty.

Therefore, the concept of R2P shifted the debate from the right to intervention to responsibility. "The main intent of R2P language was the responsibility of the international community to help sovereign states govern in a responsible way."[475] The best -and the only- example of intervention carried out within the framework of R2P was in Libya in 2011, as the dictator Muammar Qaddafi threatened to wipe out his opponents -"rats" and "cockroaches" as he called them- in a brutal way.[476] Nonetheless, this relatively successful practice of R2P –although subsequently criticized for having triggered a violent regime change and turmoil- could not be repeated in another Arab country going down a similar path, namely Syria, under the Assad regime. The crisis in Syria, though less violent and less threatening than the process in Libya at the beginning, did not arouse the interest of the international community in the striking way that the Libyan crisis did. Despite certain initiations of the Obama administration within the UN Security Council, the requirements of the balance of power, notably, the unequivocal Russian engagement supporting the regime in Damascus, have prevented a solution through international intervention within the framework of R2P. As we will see later in more detail, the Syrian case demonstrated

[474] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr. **op. cit.** 2008, pp. 85, 86.
[475] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 74.
[476] "Libya Protests: Defiant Gaddafi Refuses to Quit," **BBC**, February 22, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12544624 (Access: 05.08.2019).

the selective nature of such decisions, as well as their dependence on various factors at different levels.

The international dynamics, in this sense, play a key role in shaping any decision related to an interventionist policy. The global balance of power at the time of the planned intervention, along with the coalitions built and the alliances of the country under consideration, has the capacity to determine the fate of such an action. Likewise, the domestic political issues usually have considerable influence in this regard. "Policies of intervention, like other foreign policies, also tend to become entangled with events on the domestic political scene."[477] The domestic pressures can sometimes become so irresistible that a president might find himself/herself compelled to change his/her previous stance dramatically with regard to intervention or to ignore campaign promises. Likewise, whether it is the election year or not, or the president has a reelection bid or not, can push for a change in this respect. Probably the most effective one of the domestic dynamics has often been the popular support for a policy of (non)intervention. The American public has persistently had a volatile attitude toward such policies. Going back and forth between intervention and nonintervention, the "…swings in public opinion have been common, often based on reactions to the success or failure of the most recent foreign policies and on the country's economic strength."[478] More precisely, as far as humanitarian interventions are concerned, "the' rebound effect'…[which] is the specific impact of the previous intervention"[479] has played a central role in shaping the public's view. At this point, one must keep in mind that a strong and consolidated public support for a purely humanitarian intervention is not of high probability unless the public is convinced to comprehend a broad redefinition of the national interest in a way that covers moral concerns. That is why sometimes, depending on the public mood, policy-makers tend to cloth military intervention based on the idealistic impulses in the language of national self-interest or *vice versa*.

Nevertheless, the policies of intervention have been and will likely remain one of the main elements of U.S. foreign policy. Especially, the end of the Cold War rivalry and the growing number and intensity of regional, ethnic, and sectarian conflicts have paved the way for the United States' interventionist policies. In other words, "…the

[477] Graber, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 323.
[478] **Ibid.**
[479] Türkmen, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 2.

nation's long history of intervention in the affairs of others to remake the world in its own image is likely to survive in some form or another."[480] The increased sensitivity toward humanitarian concerns and the strengthened tendency to push for democratization and liberalization have, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, constituted the other major sources inciting the interventionist instincts of the United States. With these in mind, one must remember that the interventionist policies serve both as a means to achieve the *moralpolitik*-centered objectives and the *realpolitik*-oriented considerations, depending on the domestic and international circumstances. That is to say, the intervention must not be seen as a policy alternative associated specifically with one of these approaches. What determines its character as liberal (idealist) or realist is its ultimate objective. Moreover, it can be the result of a policy derived from a combination of both.

Consequently, within the realm of U.S. foreign policy characterized by the internationalist vision, the intensity and frequency of the interventionist policies have been highly affected by the interpretation of internationalism espoused by the given administration. Thus, an administration favoring policies of "crusader internationalism" is more likely to follow an interventionist path compared to an administration advocating "exemplarist internationalism." Given the fact that "once the United States became a world power… example tended to give way to crusade, though never without protest from those who believed that ruin would follow,"[481] it is not surprising that the intervention will preserve its central place within U.S. foreign policy so long as the United States remains in the position of the global leader. Therefore, the intention to fulfill its moral duty, respond to the requirements of its responsibilities as a leader, along with the tendency to protect its national interests, the interventionist policies, for one reason or another, would probably continue to be pursued by the United States. What may change, in this regard, is the ultimate objectives and/or the nature of interventions. Thus, "[l]iberty may remain the quintessential goal of American foreign policy, but whether the United States will go abroad in search of monsters to destroy is problematic."[482]

[480] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr. **op. cit.** 2008, p. 104.
[481] Kane, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 6.
[482] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr. **op. cit.** 2008, p. 104

II- America's Middle East Policy

For Westerners, the Middle East, as "the cradle of Western civilization, the source of three Semitic world religions, [and] the birthplace of a number of historic cultures," claimed Malik, "is associated with, and its significance is restricted to, only such things as strategy, oil, Palestine, and history."[483] All these factors, along with many other circumstantial ones, have played a significant role in encouraging great powers to interfere in the affairs of the region in search of economic and political gains. As for the United States, whose involvement in the region dated back to the late eighteenth-century missionaries and explorers, various factors have affected the shape of its attitude toward the Middle East. In this sense, Michael Oren pointed at three principal factors that could explain "the central motives in America's involvement in the Middle East": (1) "power" that has served not only the U.S. interests but also its principles; (2) "faith" with its secular dimension that has pushed Americans to promote their liberal values abroad; and (3) "fantasy" fed by oriental myths that have long influenced the West's view of the region.[484] While the third theme is not of interest or significance for the context and the purpose of this research, the other two, conceived as mutually inclusive elements, illustrate the perennial dilemma of U.S. foreign policy, echoing its oscillation between moral concerns and material considerations.

Furthermore, seen through a geopolitical lens, the importance of the Middle East and North Africa (M.E.N.A.) has two main dimensions: strategic and economic. Economically, its vast reserves of natural resources, namely fossil fuels, have made the region the most vital energy centers of the globe, given the dependence of the industrial powers on these sources. In strategic terms, what has made the Middle East so special is its position as "a crucial strategic crossroads of Eurasia."[485] Thus, "it was never oil alone which shaped the fate of the Middle East; for as far back as known history of civilization reaches, long, long before the discovery of oil, the Middle East has been the strategic crossroads of Eurasia and Africa combined, as it is today. With

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[483] Charles Malik, "The Basic Issues of the Near East," **The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 258, Looking Toward One World (Jul. 1948), p. 1.
[484] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, pp. 12-14.
[485] Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "The Middle East as a Strategic Crossroad," **Executive Intelligence Review**, May 26, 2002, https://larouchepub.com/pr_lar/2002/020602_zayed_speech.html#container (Access: 08.09.2019).

or without petroleum, the historic strategic significance of the Middle East would remain."[486]

This economic and strategic significance, along with a steady desire to secure energy transportation routes and Israel, has shaped the U.S. interest toward the region. Adding to all these purposes, the intense Cold War strategy that has sought to contain the Soviet Union, it is not surprising that the Middle East emerged as one of the most crucial regions of the world for the United States throughout the twentieth century and even beyond. "The American romance began in earnest in the 1930s, when geologists working for Standard Oil of California discovered commercial quantities of oil on the eastern shores of Saudi Arabia. In the years that followed, enchantment turned into obsession."[487] This "obsession" was formalized, in February 1945, when F. D. Roosevelt met with Saudi King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud on the U.S.S. Quincy and the two leaders established one of the most significant strategic relationships of the century, which was based on U.S. protection for Saudi Arabia in exchange for the provision of inexpensive oil to the international markets. Within this framework was shaped U.S. foreign policy over the course of the Cold War, and most of the administrations of this period had to put a special emphasis on the Middle East while defining their political and military strategy to pursue. In this sense, a rigorous analysis of the relevant presidential doctrines might be helpful in grasping the essence of the American approach to the Middle East. For such an analysis, we must, first, put forward a clear understanding of a presidential doctrine with its distinctive features.

A presidential doctrine, doubtlessly, is more than mere words without any standing in law.[488] However, their legally non-binding character does not indicate that presidential doctrines are meaningless. Indeed, "they have more meaning [than legal force] for being informal and unilateral, in that they have required regular reconfirmation."[489] One can rightly argue that there are also useful doctrines in various realms such as military, security, etc. However, what separates presidential doctrines from these and the other official statements of purpose or principle is that they are

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[486] **Ibid.**

[487] Toby Craig Jones, "America, Oil, and War in the Middle East," **Journal of American History**, Vol. 99, No. 1, June 2012, p. 208.

[488] Presidential doctrines have no legal force. The only exception in this respect is the Eisenhower Doctrine, which gained congressional approval through the promulgation of the Middle East Resolution on March 9, 1957.

[489] H. W. Brands, "Presidential Doctrines: An Introduction," **Presidential Studies Quarterly**, Vol.36, No.1, Presidential Doctrines, (Mar. 2006), p. 3.

elaborated directly by the highest executive office, and they *ipso facto* have the ability to alarm the relevant bureaucrats whether it is intended to put forward a coherent vision or it is a statement for "public or foreign consumption."[490] Even though the presidential powers within the realm of foreign policy are subject to constitutional limits, a doctrine enunciated by the president is key to comprehend, along with the president's rhetoric, the administration's stance and worldview with regard to national security and international affairs. It also helps the bureaucracy to develop solutions and find ways to adapt itself to the new approach.

"Presidential doctrines can be hard to identify because presidents often make statements that contain general principles, but only a handful have been awarded the label of the 'doctrine.'"[491] The fact that there is not a clear-cut definition of presidential doctrine does not make it banal, trivial, or useless. Rather, doctrines are indispensable to send out messages to allies and adversaries, to form coherent policies, and to obtain mass support for foreign policy. Broadly, they constitute the guidelines of a given administration's foreign policy choices and reflect its understanding of the national interest and international objective. In this sense, "doctrines are typically unilateral declarations of policy, designed to elicit domestic public support, to serve as axiomatic policy guidelines for domestic decisionmakers and bureaucrats, and to announce basic policy to foreign governments."[492] A presidential doctrine has been, throughout American history, "a statement of purpose; a strategic end state to be achieved."[493] One of the most significant characteristics of presidential doctrines is that they can reduce the policy to be pursued in a few-words-long sentence, to a relatively short slogan that can be written on a bumper sticker. They must not only be "simple, concise and lucid" in order to reach a broad audience but also "abstract and flexible" for providing room to "subordinate policies."[494] Moreover, presidential doctrines are also so significant as they are used as the communication tools to reveal, for the domestic public and foreign audiences, the priority accorded to the given issue and the administration's determination to deal with it. "Regardless of the principle advocated,

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[490] Jeffrey H. Michaels, "Dysfunctional Doctrines? Eisenhower, Carter and U.S. Military Intervention in the Middle East," **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol.126, No.3, 2011, pp. 465-466.
[491] **Ibid.** p. 467.
[492] William H. Overholt, Marylin Chou, "Foreign Policy Doctrines," **Policy Studies Journal**, Vol. 3, No. 2, December 1974, p. 185.
[493] Rexford Barton, "What is a Presidential Doctrine?," **The Strategy Bridge**, May 3, 2017, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/5/3/what-is-a-presidential-doctrine (Access: 07.09.2019).
[494] Overholt, Chou, **op. cit.** 1974, p. 186.

its being cast as a doctrine demonstrates to the intended audience that a certain foreign policy issue is being given high priority."[495] Thus, a presidential doctrine is much more than a mere statement of principles or a broad vision. Instead, it is an official announcement of how the administration evaluates the present international circumstances and what is considered to be its top priority.

Within this context, presidential doctrines may well be regional, multi-regional, or global in scope. Depending on the present international circumstances and the event (or the rival) to which it responds, its scope and essence may vary. What does not change is their significance for understanding U.S. foreign policy. They present a template, a path to follow at the international level in the face of major events or certain actions of a major adversary. They offer hints about how the administration under consideration will handle international affairs within a given context or region.

"… [N]o nation in history," argued Cecil Crabb, "has relied so heavily upon 'doctrinal' statements and principles in foreign affairs as the United States… [and] many of the landmark developments in American diplomatic history are encompassed by the foreign policy doctrines."[496] From the Monroe Doctrine (1823) to the present, almost every substantial foreign policy undertaking of the United States has been shaped by certain principles emphasized in a presidential doctrine. While this was the Monroe Doctrine on which the decision to fight a war against the Spanish colonialists in the Philippines was based, the idea of containing the Soviet Union was the fruit of the Truman Doctrine, and engagement in the Middle East, militarily if necessary, was a direct result of the main tenets of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Despite their chronological differences and varying requirements of the era, "presidential doctrines do not mark, necessarily, a departure in U.S. foreign policy, but most cases adaptations of it."[497] For instance, the approach assumed by T. Roosevelt, which is viewed as a doctrine itself by some, may easily -and more accurately- be seen as a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine or the Eisenhower, Carter, and Reagan doctrines may well be considered as alterations or rhetorical variations of the Truman Doctrine. In accordance with their axiomatic character of presidential doctrines, they were widely

[495] Michaels, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 469.
[496] Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., **The Doctrines of American Foreign Policy: Their Meaning, Role, and Future**, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, p. 2.
[497] Joseph M. Siracusa, Aiden Warren, **Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Barack Obama,** Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2016, p. xvi.

accepted as distinct doctrines because their scope and focus differ fundamentally from one another, and in this work, each of these will be treated as respective doctrines.

Table 2.1: The Cold War Doctrines Related to the Middle East

Presidential Doctrine	Scope	Essence	Bumper Sticker (Slogan)
Truman	Global	Worldwide containment of communist expansion	Containment
Eisenhower	Regional	The U.S. resolve to defend its vital interests in the Middle East	Middle East Containment
Nixon	Multi-Regional	Increased reliance on regional allies receiving U.S. aid and assistance to contain the Soviet expansion.	Détente
Carter	Regional	Any encroachment in the Persian Gulf region will be repelled, militarily if necessary	Hands off the Gulf!
Reagan	Global	Global support for any anti-communist movement	Rollback

Table designed by the author

Consequently, "foreign policy doctrines, in particular, serve to defend actions already underway or to persuade others to support new plans."[498] They simplify the United States' international objectives so that everyone can assume them and be mobilized for any action required to achieve it. As is seen in the history of U.S. foreign policy, the presidential doctrines have been principal tools for understanding,

[498] Julia Azuri, "Defending the Nation, Defending Themselves: The Politics of Presidential Doctrines", **Washington Monthly**, May 30, 2014, https://washingtonmonthly.com/2014/05/30/defending-the-nation-defending-themselves-the-politics-of-presidential-doctrines/ (Access: 09.09.2019).

analyzing, and, to some extent, foreseeing American behavior at the international level. This is especially true for U.S. foreign policy related to the Middle East as the region has occupied a central place in strategic and economic calculations of the United States since the beginning of the Cold War and as it was one of the major focal points of the presidential doctrines during this period. In light of this brief analysis on what constitutes a presidential doctrine and what it means within the framework of U.S. foreign policy, a detailed analysis of the relevant doctrines would be helpful in understanding the background of the recent American approach toward the Middle East in the face of the Arab Spring uprisings that have brought about tectonic movements within the region.

A- The Presidential Doctrines and the Middle East During the Cold War

"If you want a war, nourish a doctrine," said presciently William Graham Sumner, in 1903.[499] His words about the Monroe Doctrine have remained pertinent as "during the next hundred years doctrines would multiply, and all would explicitly threaten or broadly imply the use of American military force."[500] Aside from their militaristic character, the presidential doctrines enunciated throughout the Cold War served as official declarations that conveyed the essential orientation and the direction of U.S. foreign policy, in a given period, to the American public and bureaucracy, as well as the foreign audience at both sides of the Iron Curtain. Furthermore, every presidential doctrine, from President Truman to Reagan, has put a special emphasis, to varying degrees, on the Middle East reaffirming the significance and the vital nature of the region within the context of the superpower rivalry. The doctrines were also critical as they set the ground for the attitude assumed by the United States during the post-Cold War era and in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. They have held, in a sense, a key role in grasping the essence of the Middle Eastern policies Washington has pursued. Therefore, analyzing these doctrines would be of utmost importance to develop a better understanding of the background of the American view toward this part of the world and shed light on the motives and inherent dilemmas of the U.S. approach in the face of the Arab Spring.

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[499] Albert Galloway Keller, Maurice R. Davie (Eds.), **Essays of William Graham Sumner Vol. 1,** Yale University Press, New Haven, 1934, p. 169.
[500] Brands, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 1.

1- The Truman Doctrine

As the first of several modern presidential doctrines, the Truman Doctrine was, with its global scope and ambitious rhetoric, significant for the fate of what would later be called the Cold War, as well as U.S. foreign policy until today. It marked a watershed, in this regard, as its traces can be seen in the subsequent doctrines and as "the proliferation of presidential doctrines since… suggests that the doctrinal moment has become an integral component of American political culture."[501] Moreover, as the one with the broadest scope and the most veritable foreign policy guide in the pantheon of presidential doctrines, the Truman Doctrine "set the doctrinal tone for the subsequent decades."[502] In addition to its global reach and main objective, which was to elaborate a veritable foreign policy map for the United States in the face of the rising Soviet threat, the doctrine has also held a significant place in shaping Washington's approach toward the Middle East. The control of the oil-rich region either for halting the advance of communism or any other reason after the Cold War, has been one of the priorities of U.S. foreign policy, and the seeds of this vision were initially planted by the Truman Doctrine. To a considerable extent, and for a limited time, "Harry Truman managed to harmonize America's newfound status as the prominent power in the Middle East with its traditional role of liberator and peacemaker."[503]

The explicit purpose of the doctrine enunciated by president Harry Truman on March 12, 1947, in a joint session of Congress was to obtain approval for economic and military aid to Turkey and Greece. However, the speech delivered by the president included more than a mere foreign aid program. Rather, pledging the United States to "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,"[504] it was, indeed, the announcement of a broad and potentially long struggle against the totalitarian Soviet regime which, at that time, constituted an open and immediate threat to Turkey and Greece. As later explained by the President himself, "the assistance [that the U.S.] gave…was in keeping both with the American character and with America's new historic responsibility. To help peoples in distress

[501] Dennis Merrill, "The Truman Doctrine: Containing Communism and Modernity", **Political Studies Quarterly,** Vol. 36, No.1, (March 2006), p. 37.
[502] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 86.
[503] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 506.
[504] "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947, http://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/nss/documents/truman-doctrine.html (Access: 23.09.2019).

was not only a tradition [of the United States] but was also essential to [its] security."[505] The aid program, therefore, emphasized a self-assigned responsibility of the United States to help other nations to choose "a way of life free from coercion."[506] "Although the statement was initially aimed at winning congressional support for U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey where the administration feared Soviet penetration, it ultimately underpinned U.S. Cold War policy throughout Europe and around the world."[507]

The roots of the policy proposed by Truman can be found in George Kennan's warning about the insecurities and the power-oriented policies of Moscow and his advice that "…the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."[508] Fearing a cascading catastrophe, a domino-like propagation of communism across the globe, the United States had to defend and reinforce liberal democracies worldwide. This was necessary for the establishment of a world order based on the traditional balance of power and enlightened values. The policy of "containment," in this sense, aimed at preserving both the security of the United States and international security. It has, thus, brought together the elements of *realpolitik* and those of Wilsonian idealism through the fight against communism. Along with its prioritization of the post-war European reconstruction to block the westward Soviet advance -as demonstrated by the Marshall Plan- the Truman Doctrine also aimed at containing Russian moves in other parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East. Within this context, helping Greece and Turkey to protect their independence and integrity was an important step to close the door for the penetration of Soviet influence in this region. If these two countries could not remain outside the Soviet sphere of influence, as stated by Truman in his speech, "confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East."[509]

Indeed, it would be vain to try to reduce the reach of the Truman Doctrine to one country, one region, or any specific part of the world. Rather, it represented a call for

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[505] Harry S. Truman, **Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope, Vol II,** Signet Book, New York, 1965, p. 135.
[506] "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947, http://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/nss/documents/truman-doctrine.html (Access: 23.09.2019).
[507] Merrill, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 27.
[508] George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," **Foreign Affairs**, July 1946, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct (Access: 22.09.2019).
[509] "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947, http://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/nss/documents/truman-doctrine.html (Access: 23.09.2019).

a global struggle, under U.S. leadership, against an "evil" regime in the name of freedom and dignity. However, it was undeniable that certain regions have held a more significant place than the others within the framework of American strategic interests. Directly threatened by the Soviet actions, Europe was, not surprisingly, one of them, and that is why its economic recovery was an immediate concern for the administration. Nevertheless, the war-time collaboration with the Soviets against the Nazis made some sort of balance between the U.S. interests and the Soviet demands inevitable. The Russians thought that, given their enormous efforts to save the continent from fascism, they had certain rights to claim in this region. However, this was not the case for the Middle East, where the vacuum to be left by the British needed to be filled by a friendly Western power.

"The region was considered a British sphere. If the British faltered, historic Russian ambitions there would have to be thwarted by someone else. To a Soviet sphere of interest in Eastern Europe, to Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe, Roosevelt, Truman and most of their principal advisers were prepared to accede, but not in Iran, nor Greece, nor Turkey, not in the Middle East."[510] In other words, allowing its oil resources and its crucial strategic position to fall into unfriendly hands was more damaging for Washington than the loss of any Eastern European country in favor of Moscow. Greece and Turkey, though deprived of oil or gas reserves, have signified a crucial strategic advantage as the latter has held control over the Straits, and the former has a critical geographic position to control access to the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, possible expansion of the Soviet sphere over these two countries would not only open the doors of the Middle East to Moscow but also hamper Western access to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. In this regard, for securing the flow of energy resources to the industrial Western states, the first step taken by Washington would be to prevent decisively any Soviet encroachment in Greece and Turkey. The dominant British role in the region, thus, would have to be succeeded by the United States. Otherwise, the fate of the free world, in economic and strategic terms, would be in the hands of the totalitarian Soviet regime, and its containment would become almost impossible as it would have a vast and advantageous sphere of influence. "An assured flow of oil at a reasonable price was essential not only to American military and industrial power but to that of its friends and allies as well. The oil of the Middle

[510] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 31.

East was a vital ingredient of the international economic system Washington advocated…"[511]

The ultimate concern of the aid to Greece and Turkey was, indeed, the assertion, the projection of American power in the Middle East, which was thousands of miles away from U.S. shores. This was also the first signal of a series of ventures, interventions in multiple corners of the world, and massive military spending that would constitute the focus of the U.S. foreign policy debate. Such an ambitious vision, while sometimes facilitating the intermingling of the advocacy for the core American values and strategic interests, has brought about immense costs in economic and humane terms. While the Truman Doctrine based on the containment of the Soviet Union accelerated and sharpened the polarization at the international level, a National Security Council Directive presented to the president on April 14, 1950, NSC-68, encouraged the militarization of the Cold War. Underscoring the relative American weakness with regard to military and moral capabilities, the document suggested that a "rapid building up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world" was necessary to meet the Soviet threat and to deter its aggression.[512] This document that remained classified until 1975 was significant as it shed light on the logic behind the course of American actions in the post-1950 period. Starting with Korea, where "the nature and imminence of the Soviet threat appeared obvious,"[513] the United States, under the influence of the nightmare of the domino theory, has militarily engaged in multiple conflicts around the world. The implications of this attitude on its policy toward the Middle East has particularly become apparent in the mid-50s, under the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961).

2- The Eisenhower Doctrine

During the 1950s, the Cold War significantly gained momentum as the East-West tension deepened and expanded to various regions of the world. This exacerbating superpower competition resulted, within the framework of U.S. foreign policy, in brinksmanship and increased assertiveness without renouncing the policy of

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[511] Warren I. Cohen, **America's Failing Empire: U.S. Foreign Relations Since the Cold War,** Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2005, p. 5.
[512] "A Report to the National Security Council, NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950, Washington D.C. p. 44, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116191.pdf?v=2699956db534c1821edefa61b8c13ffe (Access: 23.09.2019).
[513] Cohen, **America's Failing Empire…,** p. 4.

containment as the main guideline. This was in such an atmosphere that Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of Allied Forces on the Western Front during WWII and the first commander of NATO forces, was elected to the office of the presidency. His years as president "were characterized by international tension and a tenuous balance of power."[514] Another dominant characteristic of this period was the rising interest in the Third World as a result of the decolonization wave carrying numerous nations to independence and making them open to the penetration of superpower influence. Thus, it was not surprising that the Middle East came to be considered vital by both giants and became one of the main chessboards of the Cold War game. Thus, the region was placed by the officials of the Eisenhower administration at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.

The most striking change brought to the realm of foreign policy by the "New Look" of the Eisenhower administration was grounded on the reduction of "defense spending by cutting conventional forces and increasing reliance on nuclear deterrence."[515] This principle of "massive retaliation" constituted the main difference between Eisenhower's foreign policy and that of Truman. In other words, following the recommendations made in NSC-68, both administrations opted for different responses. While the Truman administration, believing that "deterrence would work by creating certainty in the mind of the adversary," advocated the principle of symmetrical response; the Eisenhower administration, in turn, espoused asymmetry to "combine the certainty of a response with uncertainty as to its nature."[516] This attitude stemming from the superiority of the American nuclear arsenal has gradually turned into a source of unendurable tension, and later even a heavy burden, but for most of the 1950s, it was the main feature of the U.S. stance at the international level. Therefore, during the first half of the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration launched significant foreign policy undertakings in places like Korea, Vietnam, and Laos. However, the Middle East, as "a gap in the network of alliances with which [Eisenhower, Dulles, and their advisers] were determined to encircle the Communist

[514] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 97.
[515] Richard M. Filipink Jr., **Dwight Eisenhower and American Foreign Policy During the 1960s: An American Lion in Winter,** Lexington Books, New York, 2015, p. 1.
[516] John Lewis Gaddis, **Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War**, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, pp. 148-149.

bloc,"[517] was turning into the focal point of U.S. foreign policy as the fear of Soviet encroachment grew.

As the focus of the superpower rivalry shifted to the Third World in the mid-1950s, "the Middle East took center stage in this new phase of the Cold War and posed especially complex challenges."[518] The dominant force within the regional actors, despite the considerable pressure imposed by the ideologic competition, was nationalism, supported by strong anti-Western, anti-colonialist, and anti-Zionist feelings and led by Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. This anti-Western view and the insecurity of the Arab states in the face of Israel offered encouraging opportunities to the Soviet Union, and, not surprisingly, worried Washington. "The Middle East," described Crabb, "was caught in the grip of two forces -Nasserism and communism- keeping it in a state of turbulence and insecurity."[519] In this sense, the United States sought to form a new foreign policy strategy that could accommodate to Arab nationalism and prevent communist penetration into the region. Especially after the Suez Crisis in 1956, which resulted in the decline of British power in the Middle East and discredited the Western influence, this new strategy was *sine qua non* for the United States to be able to pursue its policy of containment. The American perception was that the conflict over the Suez Canal "was not between Nasser and the West but rather between Middle Eastern nationalism and the imperialism of Europe."[520] In this sense, the U.S. stance denouncing the actions of the European powers -and Israel- evidenced the moral concerns prevailing over the strategic calculations. Although one might argue that the fear of losing Egypt in favor of the Soviet Union has affected the American vision with regard to the crisis, the overriding driving force of U.S. foreign policy was the anti-colonialist insights that inspired the decision-makers in Washington and shaped its policy path even at the expense of good relations with the longtime allies.

Therefore, acting together with Israel, in response to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the British and French caused frustration within the Arab world. Moreover, as one of the rare incidents on which the Soviet Union and the United States were on the same page as they denounced such imperialist moves, this crisis caused

[517] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 104.
[518] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 671.
[519] Crabb, Jr., **op. cit.** 1982, p. 167.
[520] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 515.

fissures between Washington and its traditional European allies. Yet, the real problem for the United States was the declining Western prestige and influence in the region where it vied for influence with the Kremlin. Thus, the officials of the Eisenhower administration believed "…that the resulting reduction in British power and influence would create a diplomatic, political, and military vacuum in the Arab world. They also agreed that the United States had to fill that vacuum before the Soviets filled it themselves, and that a major U.S. initiative must be launched for this purpose."[521] Playing the role of the catalyst of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the Suez Crisis demonstrated again that the Middle East was of vital nature for the American strategic interests, and the stability and security of the region must be assured through a sound strategy without letting Soviets seize the opportunity. This was also important to show the United States' resolve with regard to the global fight against communism. No less importantly, the Suez Canal crisis helped Washington to face the simple reality that the "containment of the Soviet Union and its fellow traveler, Nasser, now rested on the survival of pro-Western regimes, no matter what their internal political system, state of economic development, or social structure."[522] This understanding has, since then, become the guiding principle of most of the U.S. actions in the region.

Within this context, on January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower, in a joint session of Congress, demanded authorization for economic cooperation, military assistance, and the use of force "to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of [the Middle Eastern] nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism."[523] Expanding, thus, the Cold War responsibilities of the United States and making security commitments truly global, President Eisenhower, through his namesake doctrine, reaffirmed America's resolve to keep the Middle East within the free world. By linking economic development with military assistance and the pledge to use armed force when demanded, Washington was convinced that it could bring stability and security to the region and halt Soviet advance. Concisely, the Eisenhower Doctrine was "a firm

[521] Salim Yaqub, **Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East,** The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2004, p. 58.
[522] Roby C. Barret, **The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: US Foreign Policy Under Eisenhower and Kennedy,** I. B. Tauris, New York, 2007, p. 38.
[523] "The Eisenhower Doctrine," January 5, 1957, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-quot-eisenhower-doctrine-quot-january-1957 (Access: 03.10.2019).

declaration of intent to preserve the Near and Middle East for the free world."[524] "The doctrine consisted of a major commitment by the United States to the security and the stability of the Middle East and signaled a new level of U.S. resolve to exert influence in international affairs."[525] Charles Malik's words, published few months before the enunciation of the doctrine, put forward a clear image of international politics and the region during this period: "At the moment when the Near East is coming again on the stage of history, the United States is entering the history of the Near East."[526]

One of the main purposes of this dramatic reorientation of U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East was to restore the discredited Western image and influence across the Arab world. Assuming the self-assigned role of the policeman of the Middle East, "the United States replaced the British as the dominant regional power after forcing the British and French to back down during the Suez Crisis in 1956."[527] Earlier, in accordance with the New Look's emphasis on regional alliances, the United States encouraged, without officially taking part in it, the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1954 to strengthen the "northern tier." However, like most of the similar initiatives, this pact not only alienated key leaders with anti-imperialist sensitivities, like Nehru and Nasser, but also deepened the difficulties with regard to striking a balance between the expectations and demands of Israel and those of its Arab neighbors. With a more assertive and direct involvement, the United States intended to check Nasser's influence, as well as Soviet expansionism, while filling the political vacuum left by the British.

Nevertheless, for such an ambitious strategy to be pursued successfully in one of the most troublesome and complex regions of the world, popular support at home, along with the embracement of local leaders and population, was overwhelmingly important. As far as the public opinion in the United States was concerned, given the strong anti-Soviet sentiments among the Americans, this new policy had the tacit support of the American people. According to a poll conducted in June 1957, "dealing with Russia" was on top of the list of the most important problems as 40% of the

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[524] John C. Campbell, "From 'Doctrine' to Policy in the Middle East," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Apr. 1957), p. 441.
[525] Peter L. Hahn, "Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957," **Presidential Studies Quarterly,** Vol. 36, No. 1 (March), 2006, p. 38.
[526] Charles Malik, "Call to Action in the Near East," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 34, No. 4, (Jul. 1956), p. 654.
[527] Filipink, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 9.

American people affirmed.[528] By early February, the President's performance was approved by 79% of the American people, while 11% indicated disapproval, and 10% had no opinion.[529] By mid-June, more than six months after the declaration of the doctrine, the poll showed that 62% of the people approved Eisenhower's performance as president, while 23% disapproved, and 15% held no opinion.[530] Concerning the Middle East, the poll conducted in February 1957 also showed unequivocal popular support for Eisenhower's strategy. According to a Gallup poll conducted specifically on this matter, 70% of the Americans approved economic aid to the friendly nations in the Middle East, while 19% disapproved, and 11% expressed no opinion.[531] About the arms-aid to such nations, the approval of the majority of the Americans (53%) was still assured against the disapproval of 34%.[532] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, 50% of the American people were favorable to the use of American armed forces to defend the region against any Soviet attack, while 34% percent of them were against such an undertaking and 16% had no relevant opinion.[533] Therefore, following the Suez Crisis and the proclamation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the President's overall performance and his new approach developed specifically toward the Middle East had the support of the American public, reflecting the dominant mood within the society. However, this was not the case for the Middle Eastern peoples. Although the doctrine was welcomed by certain states, notably non-Arabs and pro-Western, such as Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Lebanon, the "…predominant Arab opinion was hostile to the Eisenhower Doctrine, fearing that it presaged a new era of Western hegemony in the Middle East."[534] The lack of endorsement by the Arab actors that considered it as a neo-colonial undertaking constituted the biggest obstacle to the implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine in the region.

Furthermore, some critics accused the Eisenhower Doctrine of vagueness and imprecision. Without clearly defining the expressions like "armed attack" or "International Communism," the officials had probably tried to have a certain flexibility, room for maneuver concerning its application. However, such imprecision

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[528] George H. Gallup (Ed.), ***The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971, Vol. II***, Random House, New York, 1972, p. 1493.
[529] **Ibid.** p. 1467.
[530] **Ibid.** p. 1492.
[531] **Ibid.** p. 1467
[532] **Ibid.**
[533] **Ibid.**
[534] Crabb Jr. **op. cit.** 1982, p. 175.

brought about questions like whether the subversion is seen as an armed attack or not; or, for instance, Yugoslavia was part of International Communism or not, etc. Such criticisms can be summarized by the words of Senator William Fulbright who, during the proceedings on the Middle East Resolution, expressed that the White House "asks for a blank grant of power over [American] funds and Armed Forces, to be used in a blank way, for a blank length of time, under blank conditions with respect to blank nations in a blank area… Who will fill in all these blanks?"[535] It was such suspicions that caused the delay of the promulgation of the Middle East Resolution until March 1957, and it was only possible after certain changes in initial expressions.[536] In this sense, the Eisenhower Doctrine obtained congressional approval, along with considerable popular support to reorganize U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

The implementation of the doctrine in the face of crises that occurred in the Middle East, notably in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, appeared problematic and opened the U.S. resolve to further questions. In Jordan, in 1957, as a result of the unrest caused by the Palestinians, with behind-the-scene support of Syria and Egypt, targeting Jordanian King Hussein, the U.S. Sixth Fleet was sent into the eastern Mediterranean, and the country received $10 million as economic aid within the framework of the Eisenhower Doctrine. In the middle of the same year, Syria faced a major political crisis characterized by the increasing influence of anti-Western groups and communist fractions. The reluctance of Washington about an intervention in Syria stemmed fundamentally from possible Arab frustration against the United States. Non-intervention was also problematic as it would diminish the credibility of the Eisenhower Doctrine and encourage the Soviet Union to take more ambitious steps in the region. The creation of the United Arab Republic by Syria and Egypt, in February 1958, was what saved the United States from the consequences of a choice in the face of such a dilemma. Lastly, the implementation of the doctrine was at the center of debates focusing on the revolt against the pro-Western president of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, in April 1958. Following the fall of the pro-Western monarchy of Iraq in July 1958, Chamoun invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine to be applied to his country. Determined to help, the landing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon demonstrated that the

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[535] **Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 85th Congress, First Session, Volume 103 – Part 1, January 3, 1957 – To February 1, 1957,** p. 1856.
[536] "Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East," Mar. 9, 1957, Pub. L. No. 87-5, 71 Stat. 5, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-71/pdf/STATUTE-71-Pg5-2.pdf (Access: 01.12.2019).

crisis already turned into a major test for the doctrine. However, it did not take too long for the Americans to recognize that the roots of the problem in this country was mainly linked to its heterogeneous structure rather than any threat from international communism. Later, within three months, American troops left the country after Chamoun was persuaded not to run for reelection.[537] Although one might argue that in these three incidents, the Eisenhower Doctrine prevented a direct Soviet involvement, its overall record, in the final analysis, was not of foreign policy success. The resolve and ambition of the words were replaced, when faced with the hard realities of the region, by caution and reluctance. This is why Peter Hahn, like many others, explicitly claimed that the doctrine "faded in practical importance in the aftermath of the 1958 interventions."[538] Moreover, the inconsistency in determining the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was, to some extent, maintained. As was observed through the American attitude toward multiple cases, from Iran to Egypt, from North Africa to Lebanon and Syria, the administration could not succeed in stopping the foreign policy pendulum. "Torn between the antipodes of principles and *realpolitik,* the Eisenhower administration had effected a bewildering succession of reversals in the region, embittering its allies and further provoking its foes."[539]

There were two fundamental elements behind this relatively low record of success demonstrated by the Eisenhower Doctrine. Firstly, it lacked the required local endorsement within the Arab world because of the inherent anti-Western instinct of these nations. Moreover, the feeling of insecurity nourished by the United States' "special friend," Israel, provoked Arab hesitation toward such an ambitious undertaking. In other words, Washington's inability to apprehend that the threat posed to its strategic interests by Arab nationalism was far greater than the one posed by the Soviet Union in the Middle East was at the root of the disappointment created by the doctrine. Sought to fill the perceived vacuum, the proactive character of U.S. foreign policy, along with its assertive rhetoric, alienated the Arab world. "Interventionism had cost the U.S. Arab goodwill and further destabilized the region, and played into Soviet hands."[540] Misreading the regional dynamics and the source of the real danger, in the aftermath of the disappointments in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, "U.S.

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[537] Yves-Henri Nouailhat, **Les États-Unis et le Monde au 20e Siècle**, Armand Colin, Paris, 2000, p. 215.
[538] Hahn, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 46.
[539] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 518.
[540] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 679.

leaders found themselves caught in the Middle East, unable to relinquish the responsibilities that they had accepted even as those responsibilities became increasingly difficult to fulfill. And they were caught in the middle of the Arab-Israeli conflict, unable to resolve a dispute that would generate instability for years to come."[541] Secondly, the doctrine turned out to be the victim of the vagueness and imprecision of its language. It generated, on the one hand, a domestic debate concerning its implementation and the interpretation of the events occurred in the Middle East. Moreover, such ambiguities encouraged the pro-Israel public and politicians to hamper, to some extent, any aid and support toward Arab nations. On the other hand, this reluctance feeding certain unwieldiness ultimately damaged the credibility of the doctrine and caused the questioning of Washington's resolve by the Middle Eastern actors. Doubtlessly, Nasser's popularity and determination were among the main factors that facilitated their distanced stance in the face of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Nevertheless, from a broader perspective, the Eisenhower Doctrine marked a historical turning point concerning the U.S.- Middle East relations. Indeed, as far as U.S foreign policy is concerned, it was not a distinct break from the recent past. As wisely put by Cecil Crabb, "Eisenhower's foreign policy dictum represented no significant innovation in American foreign relations… [It] was clearly harmonious with the overall trend of American foreign policy since the end of World War II…The Eisenhower Doctrine was merely an application of the containment principle to the Middle East."[542] For some others like Walter LaFeber, the link with the past was even more profound and could be traced back to the Monroe Doctrine. The Eisenhower Doctrine, in his words, "had also been integrated into a global Monroe Doctrine… [and] was an extension of the dogmas of 1823 into the Middle East…"[543]

In this sense, the transformation it created was not about U.S. foreign policy in general but the vision related to the American interests in the Middle East, where the foreign policy undertakings of the United States had remained limited to certain missionary zeal until almost WWI. In a few decades, it was affirmed by the

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[541] Peter L. Hahn, **Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict**, **1945-1961,** The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2004, p. 293.
[542] Crabb Jr., **op. cit.** 1982, p. 164-65
[543] Walter LaFeber, **America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1971**, Jon Wiley and Sons Inc., New York, 1972, p. 198.

Eisenhower Doctrine that the region had become a strategic area constituting the junction of vital U.S. interests. Despite some unsuccessful initiatives in the short-term, this fact, within the framework of U.S. foreign policy, has remained salient throughout the Cold War and even beyond. Furthermore, despite its short life-span, "the Eisenhower Doctrine left a major legacy in U.S. diplomatic history… It signaled a growing American willingness to accept responsibility for the security and stability of the Middle East…[and] provided another building block for the foundation of American preeminence in the region. On a broader scale, the Eisenhower Doctrine's precedent of using military force to stop the spread of communism outlived the Eisenhower presidency."[544] It, thus, considerably contributed to the shaping of U.S. Cold War policy in the post-1950 period, as well as the creation of a veritable American approach toward the Middle East. Even in the twenty-first century, replacing "communism" by "terrorism" the Bush Doctrine employed a similar logic based on the use of military force in the Middle East in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Likewise, in Syria, non-state entities that emerged as important actors of international affairs in the post-Cold War world received military support from the Obama and Trump administrations while fighting against ISIS and/or the Assad regime.

As demonstrated by these examples and many others, the traces of the Eisenhower Doctrine have been visible on almost every significant step taken by the United States in the Middle East since then. However, it does not mean that it was the last Cold War presidential doctrine affecting U.S. Middle East policy. The two subsequent presidents, namely John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, were mostly preoccupied with the Cold War disputes in other regions. The escalation of the tension over Berlin following the Soviet ultimatum, the Cuban missile crisis, and the Vietnam War were chief among their priorities. Stemming from this overextension of priorities and the inevitable escalation of the Cold War tension, Washington maintained during the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson, a low-profile in the Middle East favoring balancing conservative and friendly regimes and radical nationalist actors within the Arab world. Meanwhile, the containment of the Soviet Union and the relations with Israel, which have incrementally become "special" during these years, were kept in sight by the American policy-makers. This relative calm over U.S. foreign policy in the region was, first, shattered by the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, and then replaced by

[544] Hahn, **op. cit.** 2006, pp. 46-47.

a new vision formed by the new foreign policy team in the White House, President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser, and later, Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.

3- The Nixon Doctrine

Writing at the end of the 1960s, in the aftermath of the War of 1967, Kissinger bluntly put forward a diagnosis with regard to U.S. foreign policy and signaled the change he would bring into this realm. For him, "in the years ahead, the most profound challenge to American foreign policy will be philosophical: to develop some concept of order in a world bipolar militarily but multipolar politically. But a philosophical deepening will not come easily to those brought up in the American tradition of foreign policy."[545] As required by this need to philosophical change, "acting in concert with President Nixon, Henry Kissinger…orchestrated a foreign policy for the United States based on the European realist tradition…"[546] In fact, the Nixon-Kissinger vision marked a return, at the ideational level, to the ideas on which George Kennan built his proposal about the strategy of containment. Emphasizing "…a 'strategic' logic transcending time and circumstance…," both approaches, according to Gaddis, have "striking similarities."[547] Highlighting these similarities between Kissinger and Kennan, the author pointed out that;

> *"both adhered to a multidimensional conception of power in the world. Both insisted that means were limited, and that distinctions had to be made, accordingly, between vital and peripheral interests. Both saw the Soviet Union, and not international communism, as the major threat to those interests. Both sought to contain that threat by responding asymmetrically: by relying on diversity to maintain the balance of power, by exploiting fissures within the international communist movement, by combining pressures and inducements to try to bring about long-term changes in the Soviet concept of international relations. Both believed in leaving the conduct of foreign policy in the hands of a professional elite, with only the*

[545] Kissinger, **American Foreign Policy…,** p. 79.
[546] Tony Smith, **America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, pp. 207-208.
[547] Gaddis, **op. cit.** 2005, pp. 305, 306.

> *broad outlines of policy cleared in advance with Congress and the public."*[548]

Thus, this period marked the rise of the weakest strain of the American foreign policy tradition, accompanied by a sense of geopolitical thinking prioritizing the concept of balance of power. "The… Nixon years that saw the low-water mark of American fortunes in the Cold War," pointed out Mead, "also witnessed the high-water mark of the conscious influence of Continental realism in American foreign policy."[549] Additionally, in contrast with the dominant view of the post-war period, the United States, under the presidency of Nixon, accepted the fact that not every interest was vital. A clear distinction between primary and secondary interests would ultimately help the United States to use its efforts and resources more efficiently. Nevertheless, the significance of the approach established by Nixon and Kissinger laid in their success in recognizing not only the changing nature of the international order but also the transformation of the concept of power. They, in this sense, tended to adapt U.S. foreign policy to this changing structure of international politics. Moreover, as observed in Vietnam, there were limits to U.S. power, and this reality had to be taken at face value while adapting to the new scheme. "Keenly aware of the relative decline in U.S. power, they [Nixon and Kissinger] adapted by exploiting the rivalry between their two Communist adversaries, scaling back commitments, and using regional powers to promote world order."[550]

The first target of the Nixon administration was to end the Vietnam War. In accordance with this priority, the Nixon Doctrine came out first to describe the future U.S. foreign policy in Asia. At the end of a long diplomatic journey around the world, on July 25, 1969, in Guam, President Nixon announced the guiding principles in adapting U.S. foreign policy to the post-Vietnam environment. In fact, the trip, as later admitted by Nixon in his memoirs, was planned as "the perfect camouflage for Kissinger's first secret meeting with the North Vietnamese."[551] Besides, the real intention of the President was not to make a crucial foreign policy statement. "To this day I do not think," said Kissinger, "that Nixon intended a major policy pronouncement in Guam; his original purpose had been to make some news because

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[548] **Ibid.** p. 305.
[549] Mead, **Special Providence…,** p. 74.
[550] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 760.
[551] Richard Nixon, **RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,** Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1978, p. 394.

of the empty period produced by the crossing of the international dateline. That a formal pronouncement was not at first on Nixon's mind is indicated by the fact that his remarks were made on background."[552] Whatever the real intention was in Nixon's mind that day, his statements about Vietnamizing the Vietnam War -that is, transferring military command and strategy to the South Vietnamese ally- and the principles he put forward in Guam later became the central points of the Nixon Doctrine. As stated in Nixon's Foreign Policy Report to the Congress on February 18, 1970, partnership, in the sense of burden-sharing among friends and allies; strength against threats to the vital interests of the United States; and, a willingness to negotiate in search of peace were central elements of the doctrine.[553]

The Nixon Doctrine, signaling a dramatic change in the realm of U.S. foreign policy, had three key tenets:

- *"The United States will keep all its treaty commitments;*
- *[The U.S.] shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with [it], or of a nation whose survival [the U.S.] consider vital to [its] security and the security of the region as a whole.*
- *In cases involving other types of aggression, [the U.S.] shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But [it] shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense."*[554]

Accordingly, the main objective of the doctrine was to ensure a considerable reduction in U.S. overseas involvement. Affected heavily by the anti-interventionist mood of the American public, the Nixon-Kissinger duo aimed at relieving their domestic audience by denouncing America's overcommitment abroad, while, as required by the inherent dynamics of the Cold War struggle, assuring allies and friends of the U.S. loyalty to present commitments. In other words, by reducing the dependence of the countries in the Western bloc, especially in Asia, upon itself,

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[552] Henry Kissinger, **White House Years**, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1979, p. 224.
[553] "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: A New Strategy for Peace," Report by President Nixon to the Congress, Washington, February 18, 1970, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d60 (Access: 05.10.2019).
[554] Kissinger, **White House…,** pp. 224-225.

Washington was determined not to repeat the same mistakes that had dragged the United States into the conflict in Vietnam. It, thus, "represented a major shift overturning the interventionist practices of previous presidents."[555] "No more Vietnams!" was the slogan that exactly described the intention and orientation of this approach. From a broader perspective, Nixon and Kissinger sought, by this doctrine, to foster "…a strategy that would combine the tactical flexibility of the Kennedy-Johnson system with the structure and coherence of Eisenhower's, while avoiding the short-sighted fixations that had led to Vietnam or the ideological rigidities of a John Foster Dulles."[556]

The principles highlighted by the doctrine demonstrated another significant characteristic of the Nixon-Kissinger tandem. That is to say, they firmly saw the Third World and the issues related to this environment through the prism of the superpower rivalry. They, in this sense, highly prioritized *détente* with the Soviet Union and the rapprochement with the People's Republic of China. Playing "the China card" against the Soviet Union was, indeed, one of the components of America's *détente* policy. The other two were the concept of "linkage" and arms control. As these issues have constituted the principal concerns of U.S. foreign policy during this period, the other peripheral regions of the world were important insofar as they contributed to the U.S. success in this regard, and they were deemed as liabilities when they posed risks to the achievement of principal U.S. objectives. This has largely determined the administration's handling of Middle Eastern issues. Echoing the President's predilection for a realist stance, America's "policies were informed solely by his sense of the Soviet threats facing the region and of the potency America needed to meet that menace. All other objectives…became, in Nixon's mirthless mind, subordinate to Cold War exigencies."[557] Within this context, "the Middle East was of interest to Nixon and Kissinger mainly because the Arab-Israeli conflict impinged on superpower relations and Persian Gulf oil fueled the economies of America's allies in Asia and Europe."[558] Particularly, the War of 1967 has had important ramifications on Washington's posture in the region. The United States faced significant setbacks in the

[555] Jeffrey Kimball, "The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding," **Presidential Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 36, No. 1, (March), 2006, p. 59.
[556] Gaddis, **op. cit.** 2005, p. 273.
[557] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 528.
[558] Roham Avlandi, "Nixon, Kissinger and, the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf," **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 36, No. 2, (April 2012), p. 347.

economic, military, and political terms, and its vital interests within the Middle East were threatened by the radical nationalist regimes and Soviet intentions. As Nixon, like Kissinger, "was against the idea of a *modus vivendi* with radical nationalisms" they opted for "simple repression" as "the appropriate US response to currents of Third World change."[559]

Therefore, "the Nixon Doctrine of negotiation, partnership, and strength applies as much to the Middle East as it does to Indochina."[560] The United States, accordingly, tended to stabilize and preserve the *status quo* in the region, and the primary objective was to "Vietnamize" the Persian Gulf. The reliance on regional powers was one of the indispensable conditions of the American strategy developed under this doctrine. However, "the weakness of the conservative Arab regimes in the face of rising public pressure made them unreliable allies for the United States."[561] While pushing Washington toward "a greater commitment to Israel,"[562] this also accelerated its efforts to strengthen militarily, economically, and politically some conservative regional actors, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, upon which the United States would build its Gulf policy. The National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 92, prepared by Kissinger on November 7, 1970, constituted the watershed in this respect. Opposing the reduction of the U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf, the document expressed approval for "promoting cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the desirable basis for maintaining stability in the Persian Gulf while recognizing the preponderance of Iranian power and developing a direct U.S. relationship with the separate political entities of the area."[563] The pillars of the U.S. policy aiming at stabilizing and protecting the Gulf region following the British withdrawal were, thus, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Yet, the burden that would fall on the shoulders of these conservative powers was not equally divided. Ironically, Iran's share in this burden was heavier than that of Saudi Arabia, which was considered vulnerable to a revolutionary change resulting from high public pressures. However, this assumption turned out to be a misjudgment

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[559] William Stivers, **America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-83**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1986, p. 60.
[560] "Nixon's Strategy in the Middle East," **MERIP Reports**, **No. 13 (Nov. 1972),** Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. (MERIP), p. 3.
[561] Naseer Aruri, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Mideast," **The New York Times**, May 20, 1972, https://www.nytimes.com/1972/05/20/archives/the-nixon-doctrine-and-the-mideast.html (Access: 07.09.2019).
[562] **Ibid.**
[563] "National Security Decision Memorandum 92 on U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf," November 7, 1970, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdm-nixon/nsdm-92.pdf (Access: 09.10.2019).

as the Shah's regime in Iran was overthrown by an Islamic revolution, unexpected for the officials in Washington, in 1979. Nonetheless, in 1970, Iran was the primary pillar of the "Twin Pillars" strategy, which was even called, by some, "the strategy of Iranian primacy" as "between 1970 and 1972, Iran and the Persian Gulf became synonymous in the minds of Nixon and Kissinger…The vulnerable Saudis were never regarded by the Americans as a 'pillar' of Nixon's Persian Gulf policy in the same sense as Iran."[564] In this logic, Saudi Arabia occupied only a rhetorical place in the strategy so as not to offend the Arab world and the largest oil producer -itself- in the Middle East.

In any case, Iran constituted "the eastern anchor of [the United States'] Mideast policy."[565] Not surprisingly, such a strategy brought about "a massive U.S. arms transfer to [these] two 'key countries' in the area."[566] Inflicting the burden of policing the Persian Gulf region on Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Nixon administration willingly assumed the responsibility to militarily strengthen them. While modernizing their forces with American military equipment, they were expected to develop cooperation that would ultimately lead to economic progress and, particularly, to regional stability. In accordance with the general approach offered by the Nixon Doctrine, these two countries would do what the United States did not want to do by itself. In other words, Washington's main intention was to eschew the high costs of establishing a military capability for defending the Persian Gulf. With respect to its effect on the middle and long term, however, one might argue that the Nixon Doctrine, contrary to the approaches assumed by the previous administrations, "opened the floodgates" of massive military aid to allies within the Gulf region by providing such overwhelming assistance.[567] In this sense, the application of the doctrine constituted the source of lengthy debates in subsequent decades regarding U.S. foreign policy.

In fact, the logic behind the initiative undertaken by the Nixon administration was simple. The view held by Nixon and Kissinger toward the Third World was characterized by a firm stance against any revolutionary change. In conformity with this view, they had opted for an ambitious project that was expected to consolidate and strengthen the conservative regimes, while revealing the weakness and disadvantages

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[564] Avlandi, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 354, 358.
[565] Henry Kissinger, **Years of Upheaval**, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1982, p. 524.
[566] Stivers, **op. cit.** 1986, p. 63.
[567] Michael T. Klare, **Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum,** Owl Books, New York, 2005, p. 43.

of the radical and revolutionary movements. However, had they drawn the right conclusion from the tragic experience in Vietnam, the outright struggle was not the answer to the question. A superpower like the United States must have come up with a more comprehensive strategy with enough flexibility in the face of the popular push for radical nationalist change in a region that was at the vortex of international affairs. Assuming that Kissinger was right in his claim that "in the Persian Gulf, the alternative to friendly authoritarianism is almost inevitably hostile totalitarianism,"[568] the United States must have been able to forge a better approach that could help either to choose the right "authoritarian friend" to support or to create another veritable alternative under such circumstances. A similar "fear of a worse alternative" reemerged almost four decades later when the United States faced a choice between the unorganized and unsubstantial liberal youth opposition and the fundamentalist Islamist movements during the Arab Spring. Yet again, this lack of creativity and its odd willingness to accept the so-called limits with regard to the development of a new foreign policy strategy in the face of an abrupt change in the *status quo* -such as the rise of Arab nationalism, the withdrawal of the British from the Gulf region, or the outbreak of popular upheavals within the Arab World- have been costly, in the economic and political terms, for the United States. Thus, the Nixon administration would not be the only one to fail in this regard.

Returning to the issue at hand, U.S. foreign policy under President Nixon represented a shift from the past American approaches to international politics as it was shaped mainly within a realist framework. In other words, "America's approach to the world had come full circle. From an initial postwar moral crusade, driven largely by fervent anti-communism, the United States had now adopted an approach driven by the principles of pragmatism and 'power politics'"[569] While responding to the demands of an anti-interventionist public at home, the Nixon Doctrine tended to reduce the overseas commitments of the United States without abandoning allies and friends to the mercy of the Soviet Union. This did not, indeed, mean a total retrenchment. Avoiding direct involvement in Third World conflicts, the United States aimed at allocating more resources and energy to what it regarded as primary, namely superpower *détente* and relations with communist China. Furthermore, the doctrine emerged in a world that started to be characterized more and more by multipolarity.

[568] Kissinger, **Years of Upheaval…,** p. 483.
[569] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 88.

Within this context, the value of the doctrine has mainly laid in its effort to bring "the nation's foreign policy commitments" into "an approximate balance with its capabilities or power."[570] Influenced heavily by the Vietnam syndrome, it represented, thus, a redefinition of America's global role in a transforming world, and, in this sense, it considerably affected its approach to the Middle East.

Under the Nixon administration, the logic of U.S. foreign policy toward the region was grounded on certain principles: (1) revolutionary change must be prevented; (2) conservative regimes must be supported to preserve the *status quo*; (3) and local powers receiving U.S. assistance must assume the primary responsibility in defending the region. However, it later became clear that the issues of this challenging region, where multiple vital U.S. interests overlapped, could not be handled remotely. The efforts to reduce the American involvement, especially in Third World affairs, have eventually generated increased reliance on a new network of global relations and the emergence of new types of special alliances, mostly unwritten but profoundly binding. Despite all the undertakings in the opposite direction, the United States was again, in the end, dragged into the Middle East and even entangled in an Arab-Israeli War (1973) that brought the world on the brink of a superpower confrontation. "Ultimately, they [Nixon and Kissinger] produced the very result they sought to avoid, massive popular disillusionment with global involvement and a marked turning inward. This, rather than a generation of peace, was their principal legacy."[571] Despite the fact that their foreign policy record was relatively unsuccessful and that their hopeful and ambitious initiatives abroad have, in the final analysis, turned out to be unproductive, Nixon's -and Kissinger's- tenure in the White House marked a significant period to the extent that it has affected the evolution of the policies pursued by the subsequent administrations, especially those focused primarily on the Middle East. With the change it brought into Washington's strategic vision toward the region, the Nixon Doctrine, without a doubt, "…helped set the stage for the Carter Doctrine and for the subsequent direct U.S military involvement in both the Gulf War and the Iraq War."[572]

[570] Crabb, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 320.
[571] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 809.
[572] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 132.

4- The Carter Doctrine

Underscoring the fate of President Carter's high hopes and ambitious pledges "defeated" by the pervasive and overriding Cold War realities and the reflection of this defeat on the Middle Eastern dynamics, William Stivers wrote, "few administrations produced such sharp divergence between promise and performance as the administration of Jimmy Carter. And in no area of policy was the divergence so great as in the Middle East."[573] Entering the highest Office with a firm determination to change the fundamental tenets of America's post-WWII foreign policy, President Carter endeavored to establish a vision transcending the East-West struggle, enforce U.S. ties with the Third World, and replace the Cold War lens through which the Americans have seen the world for the last three decades. For him, the United States "can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of justice, equity, and human rights," and what he saw was "a new world that calls for a new American foreign policy –a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in [America's] historical vision."[574] Despite Carter's strong desire to integrate such an ambitious vision into U.S. foreign policy and change the nature of the Cold War, the international undertakings of his administration have eventually turned out to be the victim of the harsh realities of ideological rivalry and power politics. In Herring's words, "Carter sought to escape the Cold War and became its captive."[575]

From an objective perspective, Carter's presidency, in terms of foreign policy, was constituted by two different periods characterized by two distinct approaches. The initial phase that lasted until 1979 marked the period of moralism insisting on the American commitment to the core values on which the Republic was founded, notably human rights. As he "has embraced the moralism while rejecting the isolationism"[576] in terms of grand strategy in the traumatic post-Vietnam era, an unabashed attachment to the promotion of human rights throughout the world constituted the most decisive characteristic of the Carter administration's foreign policy. Emphasizing the lessons drawn from past experiences in his Inaugural Address, in 1977, Carter made a call for

[573] Stivers, **op. cit.** 1986, p. 77.
[574] "A Foreign Policy Based on America's Essential Character," President Carter's Commencement Address at Notre Dame University, May 22, 1977, **Department of State Bulletin**, Vol: LXXVI, No: 1981, June 13, 1977, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. p. 622.
[575] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 810.
[576] Mead, **Special Providence…,** 2001, p. 7.

a return to the basic values.: "Let our recent mistakes bring a resurgent commitment to the basic principles of our Nation…" Then, he added that "[America's] commitment to human rights must be absolute…"[577] In comparison with the previous administrations, "what gave the new foreign policy its credibility and sense of purpose, and distinguished it from the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford policy was its attachment to human rights."[578] Indeed, his devotion to the cause of human rights has not stemmed solely from his personal idealism or "pure *naïveté*" as perceived by some. It was, at the same time, an central component of the American strategy pursued against the Soviet Union. Carter saw, as would do his successor, Ronald Reagan, "a strong human rights policy" as "a crucial element in an effective Cold War strategy" because, for them, "…the… struggle with the Soviet Union required a moral dimension."[579] In this sense, his desire was to restore morality within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, an approach that was totally compatible with the American foreign policy tradition but long downplayed by the policy-makers as a result of the excessive pressure of Cold War dynamics.

Another foreign policy priority for the Carter administration was to shift the East-West emphasis of U.S. foreign policy to the North-South axis, that is, from fighting communism to helping the developing world. Indeed, "the area of greatest success for the Carter administration in implementing its global design was in addressing Third World conflicts."[580] The conclusion of the Panama Canal Treaties (1977) that solved a deep-rooted dispute and the indirect but significant role played by the United States with regard to the question of Rhodesia and Namibia, along with a firm anti-apartheid stance assumed, were key examples that illustrated the increasing U.S. resolve to the issues in peripheral regions of international politics. Likewise, the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East was also at the center of the resolution-oriented approach of the administration. President Carter's efforts in the negotiation and mediation process culminated in the signing of the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978. It was incontestably a turning point in the history of the region resulting in President Sadat of Egypt and Israel's Prime Minister Begin being

[577] Jimmy Carter, **Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President**, Bantam Books, New York, 1982, p. 20.
[578] John Dumbrell, **American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton**, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1997, p. 17
[579] Mead, **Special Providence…,** p. 75.
[580] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1985, p. 111.

awarded a shared Nobel Prize in that year.[581] This bright image would, however, be tarnished by the unsettling events of late 1978, signaling the end of the hopeful first period of Carter's presidency. The revolution in Iran leading to the overthrow of the Shah, America's key regional ally, the hostage crisis that created a national shock wave for more than a year, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 pushed the Carter administration to return to a more realistic foreign policy approach reminiscent of the earlier Cold War administrations. In Albright's words, "the real world began to fall in on him,"[582] and the President's reaction signified a radical break from his past vision. Thus, "the origins of the Carter Doctrine can best be understood as a mixture of initial optimism followed by a series of destabilizing foreign policy concerns in the Middle East."[583]

One of President Carter's main preoccupations during his tenure has been the issues related to the Middle East as had been the case, until then, for almost every other Cold War president. As he admitted later in his memoirs, since his first day in the Office, "…there seemed to be no way [he] could stay out of Middle East affairs."[584] Ironically, despite his time and effort devoted to the regional questions, the Middle East ultimately became where the end of Carter's presidency began. The process leading to the Carter Doctrine that represented a sharp return to the conventional Cold War rhetoric and practices was triggered by the anti-regime movements in Iran in the fall of 1978. A revolutionary mass movement threatening the primary U.S. ally in the Middle East was an alarming signal for Washington either to act decisively to support the Shah or to revise its regional strategy. In its first clash with Islamic radicalism, the United States chose, as a result of a miscalculation, to remain reluctant and relatively distant. "The rapid disintegration of the Shah's regime, culminating in its inevitable downfall in early 1979, robbed Washington of its key strategic asset in the area."[585] Thus, the Twin Pillars strategy, reaffirmed during President Carter's first years in the White House, was no longer sustainable within the Persian Gulf region, which was vital for the Western Bloc in many respects. The *status quo* had to be preserved and stabilized, in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, with more direct U.S.

[581] President Carter's Nobel Prize would come well after his presidency in 2002, as the crowning of a life-long contribution to the advancement of human rights.
[582] Madeleine Albright cited in. Dumbrell, **op. cit.** 1997, p. 32.
[583] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 143.
[584] Carter, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 491.
[585] Stivers, **op. cit.** 1986, p. 83.

involvement. Later, on November 4, 1979, another crisis posed an equally important threat to the U.S. interests, as well as Carter's political future in Washington. The seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by Iranian "students" demanding the Shah's extradition for a trial (and for a probable execution) caused a great shock for the Americans as more than fifty American diplomats were detained and held hostage. The crisis that led to humiliation for the United States and a political disaster for Carter lasted 444 days and got even worse by an embarrassing and fruitless rescue operation, Operation Eagle Claw, in April 1980. "The first week of November 1979," as later said Jimmy Carter, "marked the beginning of the most difficult period of [his] life."[586] He was now under pressure from two different angles: he had to establish a new Middle East strategy to assure the security of the Persian Gulf and save the lives of Americans held hostage by hostile individuals.

The straw that broke the camel's back came from the Soviet Union on December 25, 1979, as Soviet forces moved to invade Afghanistan. The Soviets, seizing the opportunity presented by the destabilized order in the Persian Gulf area, sought to strengthen their position and expand their influence in this part of the world. Moscow's assertive undertaking in such a crucial region was the last crisis that pushed the President to change his tone in foreign policy and to enunciate what would later come to be called the Carter Doctrine. "Confronted by an overt Soviet attempt to dominate Afghanistan -and from that base, to threaten Western access to the Persian Gulf area- President Jimmy Carter made the volatile Middle East the focal point of his State of the Union Message to Congress on January 23, 1980."[587] Fearing that Afghanistan could constitute a stepping stone for the Soviets to expand their control over the whole region, and thus, a significant part of the world's oil supply, Carter clearly stated the axis of his foreign policy dictum: "Let our position be absolutely clear; an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[588] In response to these crises in the Middle East and the Soviet move that could damage the balance of power in defiance of American interests, the Carter Doctrine militarized, again, the regional policy of the U.S., while bringing back the Soviet-American relations at the center of

[586] Carter, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 459.
[587] Crabb, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 328.
[588] Jimmy Carter, "State of the Union Address 1980," January 23, 1980, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml (Access: 15.10.2019).

international politics. The doctrine was also important as it affirmed the strategic vulnerability of the United States with regard to its oil supply as a result of the volatility in the Middle East. "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan pushed Carter into the camp of hard-liners and provoked him to escalate the Cold War into its climactic phase."[589]

"Smartened by the upset of the Vietnam War and the general public fatigue of Cold War posturing, Carter's doctrine emphasized a renewed effort to fight Soviet expansionism but with a number of important changes."[590] In this sense, the Carter Doctrine, claimed Cecil Crabb, was a significant turning point within the realm of U.S. Cold War policy: (1) it represented the reaffirmation of the basic continuity of American foreign policy throughout the post-war era with a strong emphasis placed on its interests in the Middle East; (2) it was the affirmation of the United States' emergence as a Middle Eastern power with permanent strategic and diplomatic ties; (3) it was a public recognition of America's multi-dimensional interests in the Persian Gulf area; (4) it revealed a growing awareness in Washington with regard to the decline of American power and credibility in the eyes of the world and put forward a firm stance to reverse this process; (5) it represented a dramatic reversal in U.S. foreign policy concerning *détente* and signaled the re-emergence of the concept of "linkage" within this framework.[591] Therefore, relying on the essential tenets of the policy of containment, the Carter Doctrine marked not only a dramatic turn in U.S. foreign policy but also the collapse of Carter's moralistic vision in this realm. Despite his efforts in the opposite direction, his doctrine came to be, in the final analysis, a mere regional application of containment within a realist framework.

The translation of his words into substance was rapidly assured by sanctions imposed against the U.S.S.R., an overall increase in defense spending, and the reinforcement of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Accompanied by an increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean, the RDF was a new tool or mechanism developed for Third World intervention and projecting power within distant regions, particularly in the Gulf area. "After the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iraqi-Iranian War [1980], the Gulf area became a classic 'power vacuum' or zone of ongoing political turbulence and conflict with no country in a position to preserve

[589] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 852.
[590] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 142.
[591] Crabb, **op. cit.** 1982, pp. 329-332.

the regional balance of power."[592] The steps taken by Washington, in this regard, demonstrated the willingness of the United States to assume the primary role in defending its strategic interests, securing the West's oil supply, and preserving the *status quo* in the Middle East. Therefore, President Carter's approach marked a significant break from the vision implemented by the Nixon Doctrine and rendered the burden of the United States, willingly or not, heavier for the rest of the Cold War.

"Carter's early 1980 initiatives constituted a clean break with policies pursued since the mid-1960s. The United States relegated detente to the scrap heap, sharply reescalated its Cold War rhetoric, and reinstituted policies of global containment reminiscent of the early days of the Soviet-American struggle."[593] In this sense, the Carter Doctrine has signified not only an unavoidable reversal of Carter's initial optimism and goodwill but also a turning point that rewound the years of efforts to deescalate the Cold War tension. As a result of the perplexing challenges that the United States faced, President Carter was forced to a shift of priority moderating his "absolute" commitment to human rights in favor of a relatively more hawkish attitude. Not surprisingly, this new stance was national security-focused and guided primarily by material strategic concerns. The doctrine, in this regard, marked a return to unilateral foreign policy action, if necessary, to preserve Western interests, particularly in the Persian Gulf region. Moreover, the superpower struggle and power politics have, yet again, become the primary international concerns as the significance of the relations with and among the Third World powers decreased dramatically. One of the key lessons of the Cold War had been that there must be a balance between the overseas commitments of a superpower and its resources. Given the relative decline in U.S. power in this era, an overextended vision aiming at dealing effectively with an assertive Soviet Union and, at the same time, playing a leading role in Third World affairs would be unachievable for the United States. As a result, it was not only the commitment to the promotion of human rights that was downgraded within the realm of U.S. foreign policy but also its willingness to be the decisive actor in major Third World disputes, which was put aside in the name of the fight against what would soon come to be called the "evil empire."

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[592] **Ibid.** p. 362.
[593] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 856.

"By the end of his tenure, a combination of ideological opposition to communism based on the USSR's abysmal human rights record and a principled opposition to what was interpreted as Soviet aggression in Afghanistan had driven the administration back toward moral anticommunism as an organizing principle of American foreign policy."[594] Even though his doctrine obtained overwhelming public support and created, to some extent, a rally-around-the-flag effect, his failure in assuring the release of the hostages in Tehran, along with the outcome of the second oil crisis in 1979, has cost President Carter the reelection in 1980. In fact, perhaps one of the main reasons for the disillusionment created by Carter was that "he chose to pursue a foreign policy based on values and idealism at a time when pragmatism and realism probably would have been more successful."[595] The Carter administration has, to a considerable extent, changed the list of priorities in U.S. foreign policy, but it was not enough to alter the essential direction of it. As for the Middle East, the vision put forward by President Carter during his last year was, indeed, what required an effective foreign policy strategy against the Soviet Union not only in this region but on a global scale. Almost freed from its idealist concerns, U.S. foreign policy during the last months of Carter's presidency appeared to be consistent with its general post-war framework and firm enough to repel any Soviet encroachment in the Persian Gulf area. This constituted the main reason why Carter's Republican successor, Ronald Regan, while advocating a realist approach to "make America great again," called, ironically, "…to pursue the kind of foreign policy that President Carter himself had tried to initiate in his last year in office."[596]

Jimmy Carter's presidency was the best example that has illustrated the dominance and pervasiveness of the Cold War dynamics over the United States' dealings with other nations. His experience demonstrated that no matter how hard endeavored an administration to escape from its impact and shift its focal point toward another direction, it would ultimately be dragged back into the Cold War quagmire. The only choice for a superpower was, thus, to build a foreign policy strategy primarily on the relations with its counterpart and to "roll back" as strongly and decisively as possible any undertaking by the adversary seeking to expand its influence across the world. That was exactly what Reagan promised as he entered the office in 1980. Once

[594] Mead, **Special Providence…,** p. 76.
[595] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 112.
[596] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1982, pp. 118-119.

reverted to the traditional precepts of the containment strategy as its guiding principles, U.S. foreign policy, though still rooted, to some extent, in idealism, has remained within this realist framework supported by zealous anti-communism until the end of the Cold War.

5- The Reagan Doctrine

By the time he entered the Oval Office in 1980, President Ronald Reagan, a former movie star -then trade-unionist and then California governor- was viewed by many as ill-informed and inexperienced, especially in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, his involvement in national politics dated back to more than a decade, and in the course of this period, he had developed rather firm beliefs and convictions about international affairs and the United States' role in this arena. Besides, he would be accompanied by a very good team of advisers in the White House. "Reagan brought to the presidency no foreign policy experience but deeply felt views… Looking nostalgically to the days when the United States had been number one in the world, he sought to restore a position he thought had been squandered by lack of courage and will."[597] In this respect, his primary objective as president was to restore American strength at home and abroad, increase Washington's credibility, and regain respect for American power.

Another aspect of the set of beliefs espoused by President Reagan was characterized by a fervent anti-communist approach. Generating a Soviet-centric foreign policy, Reagan's firm stance against Moscow has constituted the axis of his administration's international policy. While replacing the strategic concerns related to the U.S.-Soviet relations at the center of its approach, the Reagan administration, until at least the mid-1980s, has insisted on framing every international issue from this perspective. "The focus of evil in the modern world"[598] -the Soviet Union- was, as Reagan emphasized in an interview in 1980, the source of "…all the unrest that [was] going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world."[599] Thus, for him and his administration, the world was divided into two camps -good and evil- and the relations among states were nothing but a struggle

[597] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 863.
[598] Ronald Reagan, "The Evil Empire Speech", Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelical in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983, http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/archive/files/reagan-evil-empire-3-8-83_8727d7fa45.pdf (Access: 19.10.2019).
[599] James M. Scott, **Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy,** Duke University Press, Durham, 1996, p. 17.

between these two forces. In other words, "he perceived a world in which the forces of good led by the United States were pitted against the 'evil empire,' the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its allies were adversaries with whom '[the U.S. was] at war,' a war he intended to win."[600] As the framework of his foreign policy, this view has facilitated the reconciliation of principle and strategic concerns by constituting the moral dimension of his vision inspired by American realism. He intended to roll back communism while, at the same time, remained committed to freedom, liberty, and the promotion of democracy. For Reagan, "to check or diminish communist influence, conviction mattered as much as military muscle."[601]

Having come to power in an era when the United States was relatively in decline, he sought to reverse this process. "Gone are the days when the United States was perceived as a rudderless superpower, a helpless hostage to world events. American leadership is back…and we will not return to the days of handwringing, defeatism, decline, and despair."[602] Within this context, the Reagan administration tended to bend the objective international conditions to American will in search of challenging Soviet imperialism. Reagan's foreign policy, as indicated by his Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, a U.S. Army general, and former SACEUR, has stood upon four pillars to achieve this purpose: (1) the restoration of economic and military strength; (2) the reinvigoration of America's allies and friends; (3) the commitment to progress in the developing world through peaceful change; and (4) a relationship with Moscow characterized by greater Soviet restraint and greater Soviet reciprocity.[603] Thus, harnessing moral objective with strategic requirements, the Reagan administration demonstrated its resolve to rebuild America's strength in its fight against communism. Increased aggressiveness, one of the main characteristics of this foreign policy approach, was culminated in a massive military buildup -unparalleled since the Korean

[600] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 210.
[601] Chester Pach, "The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy," **Presidential Studies Quarterly,** Vol. 36, No.1, (March), 2006, p. 80.
[602] "Excerpts from President Reagan's Speech on Foreign Policy and Congress," *The New York Times,* April 7, 1984, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/07/world/excerpts-from-president-reagan-s-speech-on-foreign-policy-and-congress.html (Access: 20.10.2019).
[603] Alexander Meigs Haig, "A Strategic Approach to American Foreign Policy," United States Department State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1981, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.319510028824003&view=1up&seq=4 (Access: 20.10.2019).

War- generating a staggering increase in defense spending as the administration opted for "a major transfer of resources into defense."[604]

Echoing this vision, the Reagan Doctrine appeared on February 6, 1985. Unlike the other presidential doctrines, "it was discovered rather than proclaimed."[605] Charles Krauthammer, a commentator, was the "discoverer" who found the doctrine which was not "launched with fanfare" like the preceding ones and which was "buried" in Reagan's State of the Union Address.[606] In his address, Reagan emphasized that the United States should not "break faith with those who are risking their lives on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth" and added that "support for freedom fighters is self-defense."[607] Announcing "an end to inaction," what the Reagan Doctrine proclaimed was, for Krauthammer, "overt and unashamed American support for anti-Communist revolution."[608] It thus combined firm opposition to communism with the acknowledgment of the unreliability of local allies and the limits of American power. The doctrine provided every enemy of communism in the Third World with American sponsorship. "In an apparent adjustment of the Truman Doctrine, which ultimately justified intervening to protect governments threatened by communists, the Reagan Doctrine proclaimed the right, indeed an obligation, to subvert existing communist regimes."[609]

In fact, "the Reagan Doctrine was born late in 1981 with presidential approval to fund insurgents…against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua… Its principal purpose was to repeal the Brezhnev Doctrine, according to which Moscow had held, since the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, that no country that became communist would ever leave the fold, even if it required Soviet military intervention to prevent such a development."[610] Likewise, in the NSS signed by Ronald Reagan on May 20, 1982, it was stated that one of the main objectives of the national security policy of the United States was "to contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military

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[604] Barry R. Posen, Stephen Van Evera, "Defense Policy and the Reagan Administration: Departure from Containment," **International Security**, *Vol. 8, No.1, (Summer, 1983),* p. 3.
[605] Pach, **op. cit.** 2006, p.75.
[606] Charles Krauthammer, "The Reagan Doctrine", **Time**, April 1, 1985, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,141478,00.html (Access: 20.10.2019).
[607] "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," February 6, 1985, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/20685e (Access: 21.10.2019).
[608] Krauthammer, **op. cit.** 1985.
[609] Siracusa, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 149.
[610] Smith, **op. cit.** 1994, p. 297.

presence throughout the world, and to increase the costs of Soviet support and use proxy, terrorist, and subversive forces."[611] According to this vision, the primary objective for the United States would be, instead of preserving the *status quo*, to encourage revolution in the developing world. Shifting the focus of the anti-communist fight to the peripheral regions, the Reagan Doctrine aimed at rolling back communism while proving America's determination to return to the ante-Vietnam mood. From a broad perspective, what was proposed as an effective anti-Soviet strategy for U.S. foreign policy was "a plan to turn the forces of nationalism against the gains the Soviet Union had made in recent years in the 'third world,' and eventually against its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe itself."[612] Therefore, by exploiting the weaknesses within the Soviet system, the United States under President Reagan would pursue an aggressive version of the containment policy to retake the superiority *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, "aside from injecting an explicitly moral component into the nation's conduct of foreign affairs, the Reagan Doctrine augmented the geopolitical rationale of earlier efforts."[613] As a matter of fact, rolling back communism was not an innovation in itself for U.S. foreign policy. This was, indeed, the vision behind the logic of the U.S. strategy of containment. While preserving its essence, the Reagan Doctrine changed the nature of the containment policy by adding an offensive dimension to it. "The fundamental premise of containment had always been that the United States was acting defensively against an adversary that was on the offensive, and was likely to continue on that path for the foreseeable future. Now, just at the moment when the U.S.S.R. seemed to be pushing for superiority in strategic weaponry, as well as influence on a global scale, Reagan rejected that premise, raising the prospect of regaining and indefinitely sustaining American preeminence."[614] Reagan believed the Truman-style containment was not inaccurate but insufficient in this new era. Supporting containment with the element of "rollback," he sought to change the balance of power in favor of the United States.

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[611] "U.S. National Security Strategy", May 20, 1982, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf (Access: 21.10.2019).
[612] Gaddis, **op. cit.** 2005, p. 369.
[613] Marc Jay Selverstone, "Doctrines" in. Alexander DeConde et. al. (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Vol: I**, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 2002, p. 536.
[614] Gaddis, **op. cit.** 2005, p. 352.

What Reagan proposed, through his doctrine, was essentially a pragmatic approach embellished with messianic insights. Inspired primarily by strategic concerns, he sought to establish a legitimate ground for his actions in the eyes of the American public and the world. In conformity with his "messianic pragmatism," he used a rhetoric that did not hesitate to label the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan or the contras in Nicaragua as "freedom fighters." This attitude raised, not surprisingly, questions regarding the degree of support accorded to various groups fighting against communist regimes in different countries and the nature of these groups. Doubtlessly, the administration was not under the illusion that all forces enjoying Washington's backing were fighting for democracy. The ultimate objective was to repel every encroachment of the Soviet Union under the Brezhnev Doctrine, and fighting for "something" other than democracy was not seen as a problem unless that "something" was not communism. In other words, the reconciliation of both objectives –rolling back communism and extending the area of freedom and liberty- appeared to be a difficult task and, in the final analysis, "most of the 'freedom fighters' that the administration supported were allies of convenience, more appealing for what they opposed than for the values they espoused."[615] Indeed, as explained by Elliot Abrams, then the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, the "fear of worse" was, yet again, what pushed the United States in this direction:

> *"…the United States is at times reluctantly compelled to support regimes which abuse human rights, because we think that their replacements would be much worse for the cause of human rights, and because we think that American (and other) pressure can greatly improve these regimes over time… In the real world the choice is frequently not between good and bad but between bad and worse or, perhaps more accurately, bad but improvable or worse and permanent. To prevent virtually any country from being taken over by a Communist regime tied to the Soviet Union is in our view real victory for the cause of human rights."*[616]

[615] Pach, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 88.
[616] Elliot Abrams, "Human Rights Problems: Complexity and Communism," Address Before the East-West Round Table of New York, April 19, 1983, in. ***American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1983***, Department of State, Washington, 1985, p. 329.

Furthermore, Reagan's understanding of the issues in the developing world was framed by his concentration on global strategic considerations. In this regard, regional issues were of secondary concern. They were, for the Reagan administration, relatively small pieces of a global-scale puzzle. Put differently, "conflicts in the developing world had to be recast into the underlying global conflict."[617] Echoing the Soviet-centric view of Washington toward international affairs, his approach had, in practice, two main components. The first was the concept of "constructive engagement," driven by U.S. initiatives that have focused on supporting the processes of transition to democracy. "Wherever it was applied, constructive engagement aimed at creating a climate of confidence, reassuring foreign governments of American commitment to their regime in the process of a difficult transition to democracy."[618] Based on the conviction that the given friendly government and the U.S. had to face a common threat (the Soviet Union), constructive engagement has put emphasis on American support to encourage liberalization within the country to achieve the preservation of the shared strategic interests. This, indeed, constituted the first step toward the establishment of the climate of strategic (or ideologic) consensus, which was the second component of the U.S. approach to the Third World. The tendency to see the whole world through the prism of the American-Soviet tension pushed Washington to seek such consensus in the developing world, especially in the Middle East. The principal assumption of this vision of "strategic consensus" was that "only after the Soviet danger was addressed could the regional concerns be brought into the resolution of the conflicts."[619] Nevertheless, such disregard of the significance of certain local issues has turned out to be a source of debate, or even failure for U.S. foreign policy in crucial regions.

"Reagan's diplomacy was at its worst in the Middle East…Ignoring the messy realities of Middle Eastern politics, Reagan officials reasoned that since Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia were all friends of the United States, they could be united in a 'strategic consensus' to check Soviet advances in a vital region."[620] Such a view was accompanied by a vast military expansion. Blinded by the realities imposed by the ideological struggle on a global scale, the central aim of the United States in the region was to prevent a possible communist takeover of a friendly government. This was

[617] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 131.
[618] Smith, **op. cit.** 1994, p. 274.
[619] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1982, p. 132.
[620] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 871.

clearly articulated by President Reagan himself in a news conference on October 1, 1981: "And Iran," he said, "I have to say that Saudi Arabia, will not [be] permit[ted] to be an Iran."[621] However, this "military metaphysic" that had dominated the early 1980s period of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East,[622] which was nourished by the search for a strategic consensus, has not succeeded neither in executing an effective anti-Soviet strategy nor in stabilizing the regional order. The U.S. desire or disregard was not enough for local realities to disappear in the face of broader conflict. The effort to establish a strategic consensus in the Middle East was eventually "…challenged by local issues that arose once again in this volatile area of the world…The greatest threat to the region thus appeared to come not from the designs of the Soviet Union, but from the unresolved problems within the area itself."[623] The long-standing intra-regional disputes were so profound that any American strategy underestimating their significance was bound to fail.

By mid-1982, the officials in Washington started to tone down the unidimensional anti-Soviet logic that turned a blind eye to the regional dynamics, such as the Israeli-Arab dispute that they had tended to see in a strategic framework also related to Soviet expansionism.[624] This policy change was later reflected by a speech delivered by President Reagan, who called for "a fresh start" in the Middle East, signaling that he had, in the end, recognized the realities imposed by the local dynamics and tended to deal with the Arab-Israeli question more seriously. In this speech, he placed the support to create "a workable basis for peace" at the center of U.S. diplomacy within the region.[625] Nonetheless, not only because the proposed peace plan was far from satisfying the expectations of both sides but also the shadow of the initial disregard of the local issues remained relatively visible in his administration's approach toward the region, Reagan's overall foreign policy record in the Middle East did not appear to be successful. In the final analysis, as put by Stivers, "the administration was left without any comprehensive strategy for the Middle East."[626]

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[621] "The President's News Conference," October 1, 1981, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/100181b (Access: 29.10.2019).
[622] Stivers, **op. cit.** 1986, p. 101.
[623] McCormick, **op. cit.** 1982, pp. 137-138.
[624] David Schoenbaum, ***The United States and the State of Israel***, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 274.
[625] "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East," September 1, 1982, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/90182d (Access: 28.10.2019).
[626] Stivers, **op. cit.** 1986, p. 105.

Evaluating his presidency from a broad perspective, Henry Kissinger stated that "Reagan's was an astonishing performance –and to academic observers, nearly incomprehensible," and added: "when all was said and done, a president with the shallowest academic background was to develop a foreign policy of extraordinary consistency and relevance."[627] It is incontestable that, marking a return to "the policies of 'us versus them,' good versus evil, democracy versus communism,"[628] Reagan's presidency has constituted a crucial period within the context of the anti-communist fight that lasted for decades. Most importantly, he reinstated, within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, the energy, self-respect, and self-confidence diminished, if not wholly lost, after the Vietnam War and the crises of the Carter era. His staunch anti-Soviet stance has, to some extent, provided the American public with the panacea it needed. His impressive rhetoric and ambitious actions strengthened Americans' conviction in righteousness and the necessity of anti-communist policy undertakings. As a matter of fact, his approach aiming at rolling back communism was not a new invention. It had already been placed as a principal objective of the containment strategy. The main difference of his approach compared to his predecessors was that "Reagan openly declared support for anti-Communist revolutionaries that Truman and Eisenhower had only expressed behind closed doors."[629] The Reagan Doctrine, in practice, "like the Nixon Doctrine… turns to proxies. Unlike the Nixon Doctrine, it supports not the status quo but revolution."[630] In this sense, what he pursued as foreign policy was nothing but an updated version of the decades-old policy of containment. "The major innovation was the so-called Reagan Doctrine, a policy of using covert arms shipments to change the *status quo* in favor of the 'free world.' In that sense alone, it departed sharply from the policies of its predecessors."[631]

In this effort to halt communist encroachment, his crusader instinct appeared to be so strong that, for some like Tony Smith, his foreign policy was characterized, rather exaggeratedly, by an "unparalleled Wilsonianism" as "[n]o administration since Wilson's has been as vigorous or as consistent in its dedication to the promotion of democracy abroad as that of Ronald Reagan."[632] Although it was true that the support

[627] Kissinger, **Diplomacy…,** pp. 764-765.
[628] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 119.
[629] Pach, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 78.
[630] Krauthammer, **op. cit.** 1985.
[631] Herring, **op. cit.** 2008, pp. 865-866.
[632] Smith, **op. cit.** 1994, p. 304.

for liberalization and democratization within the peripheral regions of world politics was among the primary foreign policy undertakings of his administration, what inspired the Reaganite crusade was not entirely Wilsonian idealism. Nonetheless, it was idealist enough to support moderate rather than extreme right regimes in places like the Philippines or across Latin America, reversing an earlier trend in Cold War foreign policy. His approach was shaped by American realism reconciling interests and values. Such a view was apparent in the administration's approach to various regions of the world, and the Middle East was one of those regions.

The consistency and the firmness of the Reagan administration's foreign policy within the context of the anti-Soviet struggle were not existent in its approach to the region. Being excessively Soviet-centric during particularly in its early years, the administration could not develop a veritable regional strategy to deal with local requirements. Even after the recognition of this erroneous view, the United States under President Reagan could not put forward an effective vision in this sense. Furthermore, the Reagan Doctrine, melting all regions in one pot, did not, unsurprisingly, change this course. In this sense, Michael Oren, underscoring the failure of his overall foreign policy record in the region, argued that "Reagan had proved incapable of coping with the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq war, and tensions between secular and Islamic regimes. The vision of establishing a *pax Americana* in the region had rarely seemed more ephemeral."[633] The regional dynamics that were partly disregarded and that could not be taken under control have prevented any effort hoping to stabilize the Middle East, and this relative ineffectiveness of Washington's regional policies in the 1980s was one of the main sources that intensified the turmoil in the Middle East paving the way to the first Gulf War. Even in the post-Cold War era, the region has remained an active source of conflict and destabilization at the international level.

It is therefore obvious that presidential doctrines reflected a combination of the core principles espoused by the United States, imbued with a missionary conviction to promote liberal democratic order worldwide, and its desire to satisfy the national strategic interests through an unyielding attitude. "Those doctrines, in fact, reveal a close relationship between the missionary ideal of a more democratic world and the

[633] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 562.

security ideal of a resilient America."[634] This combination was incontestably palpable during the Cold War years. With a changing degree of hawkishness, the doctrines guided a long-lasted and wearing ideational fight that also has had ramifications on material interests. As pointed out by Cecil Crabb, the Cold War presidential doctrines, like other major diplomatic doctrines in American history, reflected seven characteristics of American political ideology: (1) the uniqueness of the place occupied by the U.S. in the world; (2) belief in peace and nonviolent relations at the international level; (3) the conviction in the righteousness of self-government; (4) the significance of America as an example for other nations; (5) the perennial missionary vision of the United States; (6) the 'millennial' or utopian nature of American attitude toward world affairs; and (7) the traditional unilateralism that has been apparent in the American approach to foreign affairs since the founding of the Republic.[635] Without losing sight of the strategic interests, these doctrines have oriented U.S. foreign policy toward a determined objective by emphasizing these core values and principles. Gaining the upper hand in military terms was not enough in this major struggle without touching the minds of the peoples and changing their understanding of world affairs. A victory was only reachable if one of the superpowers could succeed in both aspects, and the presidential doctrines with their two-dimensional character were key to the ultimate triumph of the United States and the Western ideals. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the product of many factors, including internal economic degradation and deterioration of the well-being of the people, but, perhaps, the most critical issue in this respect was the fact that Soviet citizens had lost their faith in the worldview and the system of which they were part since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.

Among all areas affected by the policies shaped by these doctrines, the Middle East was perhaps the most crucial one as it had abundant resources and a strategically key location. As a result, Cold War history was paved by presidential doctrines focusing solely on the region -like those of Eisenhower and Carter- while it preserved its central place for the other doctrines with a larger scope. From Truman to Reagan, the region remained important for U.S. foreign policy aiming at containing Soviet expansionism and the influence of communism throughout the world. Relying either on its projected power and military presence or on proxies in the Middle East, the defense of the region has been one of the top priorities of Washington, as well as

[634] Selverstone, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 538.
[635] Crabb, **op. cit.** 1982, pp. 378-386.

building close ties with regional actors for securing the uninterrupted flow of oil to its industrially developed allies. In this sense, what changed from one doctrine to another was not the significance of the Middle East for U.S. foreign policy but the perspective and the methods employed. Doubtlessly, the circumstances of the given period were also decisive in this respect.

Furthermore, one last important aspect of U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East was that the region, despite its strategic significance, had always been just one of the theaters of the global struggle of the Cold War. It was, in the end, a ring in the chain of containment. The main scene was Europe, especially its eastern part, not the Persian Gulf or the Arab Peninsula, and the two centers of this struggle were Moscow and Washington, not Damascus and Cairo. Thus, the Middle Eastern policies of the United States were, to a certain extent, instrumental in seeking to maintain this global fight. Cold War dynamics were also the reason why direct external intervention into regional issues was considerably limited. Starting with the First Gulf War, this reality has changed, and particularly after the 9/11 attacks, the region itself has become the principal scene of U.S. foreign policy and subject to direct military interventions under the guidance of the Bush and Obama doctrines.

B- The Middle East Policy of the U.S. in the Post-9/11 Era

As the Cold War has ended abruptly, the last decade of the twentieth century appeared to be the time for forging a new order across the globe. In 2000, Condoleezza Rice, the future U.S. Secretary of State, would write that "such periods of transition are important because they offer strategic opportunities. During these fluid times, one can affect the shape of the world to come."[636] As the dominant power within this nascent unipolar world, the United States was indeed the only international actor to enjoy such opportunities in the 1990s. However, under the influence of the Cold War "hangover," U.S. foreign policy would be, for the ensuing years, far from being consistent and resolute. The emergence of new threats and the conflicts of different natures would render the adaptation of U.S. foreign policy to this new era difficult, especially under the presidencies of George W. H. Bush and Clinton. Both presidents were "…unsure how to address the emergence of ethnic conflicts and civil wars and

[636] Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 79, No. 1, (Jan.-Feb. 2000), p. 45.

humanitarian and human rights crises that accompany them [and] the result was the emergence of policies that were inconsistent and often opaque."[637] In fact, each of the three post-Cold War administrations' foreign policy directions was largely imposed by the events that occurred beyond their control and will, and especially the first two could not take the initiative in determining the course of actions.

Another characteristic of this period, in relation to U.S. foreign policy, was the tendency, within the American public opinion and even a significant part of the foreign policy elite, to take the present military and strategic supremacy that the United States had come to enjoy for granted. Such a view was accompanied, not surprisingly, by a narrow definition of the national interest and the calls for reducing the commitments abroad. For the proponents of this view, the post-Cold War era was supposed to be a time to free the United States from the immense burden of the responsibilities that it had shouldered in the aftermath of WWII and focus on the needs at home. Combined with the unawareness, even indifference of the American public toward foreign policy issues in the absence of a major threat, this call for "back to normalcy" or "come home America" started, in a short while, to undermine U.S. leadership on the international scene. In turn, a more conservative voice was raised, within the realm of U.S foreign policy, believing in the importance of the preservation and enhancement of the global predominance of the United States and the promotion of the core American values, by force when needed, throughout the world. As accurately pointed out by John Mearsheimer, a fierce realist critic, the neoconservative ideology, which has "an idealist strand" underscoring its Wilsonian instincts and "a power strand" with the emphasis on military power can be described as "Wilsonianism with teeth."[638] According to this neoconservative framework, the new U.S. role in the post-Cold War period had to be one of "benevolent global hegemony," aiming at the defense of a liberal international order.[639]

For them, "the lack of a visible threat to U.S. vital interests or to world peace has tempted Americans to absentmindedly dismantle the material and spiritual foundations

[637] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 136.
[638] John J. Mearsheimer, "Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neo-conservatism," **Open Democracy**, May 18, 2005, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/morgenthau_2522jsp/ (Access: 27.11.2019).
[639] William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 75, No. 4, (Jul. – Aug. 1996), p. 20.

on which their national well-being has been based."[640] Essentially, what the neoconservatives underscored was the fact that the omnipotence of the United States was the fruit of the policies it has tended not to pursue since the beginning of the 1990s. The U.S., thus, had to be more assertive in using its military force and promoting the "universal" values it has long espoused. In this sense, "instead of reducing military spending, they contended, the United States needed to expand its military reach to every region of the world, using America's tremendous military and economic power to create a new Pax Americana."[641] Furthermore, they believed that the concept of bandwagoning, rather than balance of power, was what mattered in international politics, and as long as the United States remained predominant, it would be able to design a peaceful and stable world order shaped in its own image.[642]

As a deep-rooted ideology in the Americans' understanding of foreign policy, neoconservatism, as argued by Fukuyama, has four inherent features: "A belief that the internal character of regimes matters and that foreign policy must reflect the deepest values of liberal democratic societies; a belief that American power has been and could be used for moral purposes, and that the United States needs to remain engaged in international affairs; a distrust of ambitious social engineering projects; skepticism about the legitimacy and effectiveness of international law and institutions to achieve either security or justice."[643] Convinced that the United States has an exceptional nature and represents universal values and ideals, the neoconservatives advocated an assertive foreign policy strategy influenced by imperial instincts. As the U.S. is the sole superpower with unique capabilities, unilateral actions are considered acceptable, even preferable for them. Moreover, the worldwide promotion of the values that the U.S. has stood for, such as liberty and democracy, is viewed, from a neoconservative perspective, indispensable for a stable and peaceful international system, as well as the well-being, security, and prosperity of the Americans. As emphasized by Irving Kristol, the "godfather" of the neoconservative vision, "in

[640] Ibid. p. 22.
[641] Gary Dorrien, **Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana**, Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 1.
[642] Brian C. Schmidt, Michael C. Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives versus Realists," **Security Studies**, 17:2, 2008, p. 196.
[643] Francis Fukuyama, **America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy,** Yale University Press, New Haven, 2006, pp. 48-49.

foreign policy, neoconservatism believes that American democracy is not likely to survive for long in a world that is overwhelmingly hostile to American values…"[644]

The prominent neoconservatives of the 1990s were gathered within a well-known think-tank called the Project for New American Century (PNAC), founded in 1997. The statement of principles signed by its members, some of whom would be either in the Bush administration or very close to the president, put forward the essence of the neoconservative view.[645] Calling for a Reaganite foreign policy, they claimed that "American foreign and defense policies are adrift."[646] Then, they insisted on four main principles that the United States had to follow to achieve its objectives at the international level: (1) an increase in the defense spending to fulfill America's global responsibilities; (2) forging stronger ties with democratic allies while challenging regimes hostile to the American values; (3) promotion of freedom abroad; (4) to assume the responsibility stemming from America's unique role in maintaining and extending a favorable international order.[647] One year later, almost the same individuals who advocated these principles wrote an open letter to President Clinton in order to warn him of the erosion of the containment of Iraq and argued that "… removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power… [must] become the aim of American foreign policy."[648]

Thus, as the neoconservative ideology has incrementally gained momentum within the realm of U.S. foreign policy toward the end of the century, Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein was simultaneously turning into one of its primary targets. The main reason for this was the disappointment of the neoconservatives about the unsatisfactory outcome of the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, where President George W. H. Bush had limited himself in freeing Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion and refused to overthrow the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, in order not to upset the already fragile geopolitical equilibrium of a volatile region. Indeed, the essential rationale behind such categorical

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[644] Irving Kristol, "What is a 'Neoconservative'?" in. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Ed.), **The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays, 1942-2009 by Irving Kristol,** Basic Books, New York, 2011, p. 150.

[645] Among the founders of PNAC, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Elliot Abrams, and Jeb Bush were the ones who either served in the Bush administration or remained close to the president.

[646] "PNAC Statement of Principles," June 3, 1997, https://www.rrojasdatabank.info/pfpc/PNAC---statement%20of%20principles.pdf (Access: 29.11.2019).

[647] **Ibid.**

[648] "PNAC, Open Letter to President Clinton," 1998, http://www.robmacdougall.org/4301/4301.25.USsince2001.pdf (Access: 28.11.2019).

hostility to Saddam Hussein's regime was shaped, along with his anti-Western approach, by the conviction in his determination to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and develop nuclear capabilities. As pointed out in the report presented by the U. S. Commission on National Security/21st Century on September 15, 1999, the acquisition of such weapons by certain "states, terrorists or other disaffected groups" would be one of the most important threats to U.S. security in the century to come, and the use of these weapons would be likely to cause the death of Americans "on American soil, possibly in large numbers."[649]

Therefore, the post-Cold War period has witnessed, as was thoroughly analyzed earlier, a significant foreign policy debate in the United States as Washington seemed floating in the winds of change and unknown threats and risks. Focusing principally on the definition of the national interest in a unipolar world and the extent to which the values should be influential in shaping U.S. foreign policy, the debate has lasted, with a varying degree of intensity, until 2001. The perceived convergence of the values and interests after the 9/11 attacks ultimately equated the promotion of the core values to the defense of self-interest. The tragedy also marked a shift in the foreign policy vision of President Bush from a realist approach that "gave priority to U.S. national interests over more idealistic concerns" to "a much more ideological philosophy…[that] argued that the United States must work to spread American ideals globally, especially democracy."[650]

This change that brought principles at the center of American foreign policy was also related to the gravity of the security challenge the United States had come to face. In other words, "heightened threat perception elevated the focus on ideals and submerged the careful calculation of interest."[651] Indeed, George Bush was not the first American leader who underscored the primacy of principles and values in times of international crises in order to extract resources and consolidate public support behind his policy choices. Strengthened by the prevailing rally-around-the-flag effect of the period, the emphasis on the core American values as central elements of the post-9/11 foreign policy facilitated the emergence of a significant consensus in this regard, at

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[649] "New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century," The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, September 15, 1999, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/nssg/Reports/NWC.pdf (Access: 29.11.2019).
[650] Powaski, **op. cit.** 2019, p. 103.
[651] Melvyn P. Leffler, "Bush's Foreign Policy," **Foreign Policy,** No. 144, (Sep. – Oct. 2004), p. 26.

least for a while. Focusing on the role of the socio-economic problems and the democracy deficit in Arab states as the root cause of the fact that global terrorism is originated in the Middle East, the Bush administration evoked, to solve these problems, the oldest and essential notions of the American political thinking, namely freedom and prosperity.[652] Consequently, the following period was, with regard to American foreign policy, marked by the prevalence of neoconservatism epitomized by the Bush Doctrine that set the ground for "the global war on terrorism" based on various unilateral American undertakings and the strategy of prevention.

1- The Bush Doctrine

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, targeting the buildings that symbolize the economic and military superiority of the United States –the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in the nation's capital- sent shockwaves throughout the country and paved the way for a new foreign policy direction. Comparable only to "the British burning of the White House and Capitol in 1814, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941," the 9/11 attacks, according to Gaddis, set the ground for "the most sweeping shift in U.S. grand strategy since the beginning of the Cold War" as it demonstrated the shortcomings of the prevailing foreign policy strategies.[653]

"Eschewing a law-enforcement strategy, the administration advanced a military approach, focusing initially on regime change in Afghanistan, where the Taliban rulers had given sanctuary and protection to Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda."[654] The immediate U. S. response to the tragedy was, therefore, to undertake a massive military operation in this country, within the context of self-defense, with immense domestic and international support behind, as indicated, inter alia, by NATO's invoking Article 5 for the first time in its history, even though the United States government chose not to have resort to it. The intervention in Afghanistan, as would be seen later, was the first step of a comprehensive strategy to be pursued in the war on terrorism and signaled one of the most significant aspects of the future doctrine, which was the equation of terrorists with the non-democratic regimes that have harbored them. Few

[652] Füsun Türkmen, "ABD'nin Dış Politikası: Devamlılık ve Değişim," **Doğu Batı**, 32, 2005, p. 165.
[653] John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," **Foreign Policy**, No.133, (Nov. – Dec. 2002), p. 50.
[654] Michael C. Hudson, "The United States in the Middle East," in. Louise Fawcett (Ed.), **International Relations of the Middle East,** Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, p. 371.

months after the attacks, in January 2002, President Bush expressed this view in his State of the Union Address, and his words foreshadowed another key tenet of his forthcoming doctrine, namely, prevention, as he underlined that the United States' second goal in this war was to prevent the "axis of evil" regimes -North Korea, Iran, and Iraq- from acquiring WMD. In this respect, the United States had no intention to wait "as peril draws closer and closer."[655] In June of the same year, at the graduation ceremony of West Point, he reiterated this view, this time in a clearer way, as he stated that "…the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. [The U.S.] must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act."[656]

These early indications were not just the signs of a mere response to the shocking terrorist attacks on the American homeland. Rather, what they were signaling was the adaptation of a U. S. foreign policy vision to the post-Cold War security environment. As 9/11 demonstrated, the nature and methods of the emerging new threats had become significantly different than those of the past challenges. "The possibility that a relatively small and weak non-state organization could inflict catastrophic damage is something genuinely new in international relations, and it poses an unprecedented security challenge."[657] Within the vision of the Bush Doctrine, enunciated in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) document of 2002, the most significant security risk of this new world "lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology."[658] Moreover, the document emphasized that the enemies of the U.S. "have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction… [and] the United States will not allow these efforts to succeed… [A]s a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed."[659] These words, combined with the earlier statements, indicated what would be the target of the new American foreign policy vision and the preemptive, or even preventive method that it would use to assure its own security, as well as that of the international community. In

[655] George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address, 2002," January 29, 2002, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11.html (Access: 01.12.2019).
[656] George W. Bush, "Graduation Speech at West Point," June 1, 2002, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html (Access: 01. 12. 2019).
[657] Francis Fukuyama, **op. cit.** 2006, p. 67.
[658] "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 17, 2002, http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2002/ (Access: 01.12.2019).
[659] Ibid.

the document, "the administration makes plain both its intention to perpetuate American military supremacy and its willingness -almost approaching eagerness- to use force to reshape the international order."[660]

Such dire threats, for the Bush administration, require new tools and strategies to be pursued, unilaterally if necessary. In this regard, according to Robert Jervis, the Bush Doctrine has four key tenets:

> *"a strong belief in the importance of a state's domestic regime in determining its foreign policy and the related judgment that this is an opportune time to transform international politics; the perception of great threats that can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war; a willingness to act unilaterally when necessary; and, as both a cause and a summary of these beliefs, an overriding sense that peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy in world politics."*[661]

As can be observed from these central features, the ideological and conceptual framework of the doctrine was provided by the neoconservative vision. Going even further, Charles Krauthammer claimed that "…the Bush Doctrine is, essentially, a synonym for neoconservative foreign policy…"[662] These elements have shaped the direction of the post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy and set the ground for the 2003 Iraq War.

Firstly, the importance attached to a state's domestic political system in its conduct of foreign policy put democracy promotion at the heart of the Bush administration's agenda. "Echoing the words of Woodrow Wilson as understood by neoconservative intellectuals, the document declared that the United States would use its power to promote democratic values worldwide. Unlike Wilson, the Bush administration contemplated using unilateral military force to remake the world."[663] From this perspective, democracy was considered as the most reliable antidote to the emerging threats, notably terrorism. It had, thus, to be promoted abroad to better

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[660] Andrew J. Bacevich, "Bush's Grand Strategy", **The American Conservative**, November 4, 2002, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/bushs-grand-strategy/ (Access: 03.12.2019).
[661] Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," **Political Science Quarterly,** Vol.118, No.3, 2003, p. 365.
[662] Charles Krauthammer, "The Neoconservative Convergence," **Commentary**, July/August 2005, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-neoconservative-convergence/ (Access: 02.12.2019).
[663] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 304.

defend the interests of the United States, as well as to assure its security. Although democracy promotion has had deep roots in the U.S. foreign policy tradition, after 9/11, it "…took a different more aggressive turn…[as]…the Bush administration relied on military force to coerce and cajole recalcitrant governments in the name of democracy promotion."[664] Believing in the exceptional character of the American values and their universality, the Bush administration pursued a neo-Wilsonian strategy putting the promotion of freedom and democracy at the center of its foreign policy. Among these values, particularly liberal democracy was viewed as the remedy to all the problems stemming from the rise of terrorism and radicalism. For President Bush;

> *there is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom….America's vital interests and…deepest beliefs are now one…[and]it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."*[665]

Furthermore, this "Wilsonianism in boots,"[666] in the words of French scholar Pierre Hassner, was hoping to build "… a balance of power that favors freedom."[667] Compatible with the neoconservative view believing in the significance of the logic of bandwagoning, Washington aimed at triggering the domino theory to its advantage. In other words, the conviction was that forcing a non-democratic regime that had supported terrorism and/or sought to acquire WMD -i.e. the regime in Iraq- would encourage other regimes with similar tendencies to change the course of their foreign policies and bandwagon with the United States. "Knocking off Saddam, the war party thought, would have a cascading effect in the Middle East, if not the wider world. The Iranians, the North Koreans, the Palestinians, and the Syrians, after seeing the United

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[664] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 40.
[665] "President Bush's Second Inaugural Address," January 20, 2005, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172 (Access: 01.12.2019).
[666] Pierre Hassner, "The United States: The Empire of Force or the Force of Empire?" **Chaillot Papers**, No. 54, September 2002, Institute for Security Studies, https://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/ebooks/files/chai54e.pdf (Access: 02.12.2019).
[667] The U.S. NSS, 2002, http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2002/ (Access: 01.12.2019).

States win a stunning victory in Iraq, would all throw up their hands and dance to Uncle Sam's tune."[668] This optimism has rapidly waned as the U.S. soldiers were not welcomed as liberators in Baghdad, and no dictator opted for liberal democracy after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

The second central element of the doctrine was its insistence on a new strategy, namely preemption, against the security challenges of the twenty-first century. The old strategies, such as containment and deterrence, were no longer sufficiently effective in the face of the terrorists who were willing to die for their "holy" cause. Besides, these transnational terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda have not had a home address to be targeted for a retaliatory strike. As put by Robert Lieber, there were, related to the terrorist attacks, two factors that demonstrate the seriousness of the danger posed by the new threats: "First, the cold-blooded willingness to slaughter thousands of innocent civilians without the slightest moral compunction raised fears about potential use of WMD… Second, in view of the fact that nineteen in the four hijacked aircraft committed suicide in carrying out their attacks, the precepts of deterrence were now called into question."[669] Thus, the United States, in order to defend itself, ought to act before the enemy would. Nonetheless, this did not necessarily mean a total disregard of the conventional strategies. As clearly stated by Condoleezza Rice, the strategy of preemption

> *"does not overturn five decades of doctrine and jettison either containment or deterrence. These strategic concepts can and will continue to be employed where appropriate. But some threats are so potentially catastrophic… that they cannot be contained. Extremists who seem to view suicide as a sacrament are unlikely to ever be deterred. And new technology requires new thinking about when a threat actually becomes 'imminent.' So … the United States must be prepared to take action, when necessary, before threats have fully materialized."*[670]

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[668] Mearsheimer, **op. cit.** 2005.

[669] Robert J. Lieber, **The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, p. 26.

[670] Condoleezza Rice, "A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom," October 1, 2002, Wriston Lecture, New York, https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/a-balance-of-power-that-favors-freedom-oct-1-2002/ (Access: 03.12.2019).

The problem with this strategy, however, was the insistence of the Bush Doctrine on the strategy of prevention cloaked in the language of preemption. Given the arbitrary interpretation of the notion of "imminence" and the decisions based on the misleading or even manipulated evidence, as was the case in the decision to invade Iraq, the United States espoused a preventive approach, which was a controversial issue with regard to the international norms and ethical concerns. A preventive war refers to a war fought now when the perceived costs of inaction are considerably high and under the influence of the fear of fighting that same war under worse circumstances later. According to Levy, "the preventive motivation for war arises from the perception that one's military power and potential are declining relative to that of a rising adversary, and from the fear of the consequences of that decline."[671] As far as the United States was concerned, this fear stemmed from the technological developments that have made imminence greater. Addressing "dynamics that are likely to contribute to the materialization of a threat before they are able to become specific, direct, or immediate," preventive wars are basically "the wars of choice."[672] The Bush administration's strategy of prevention stood, naturally, on the military power of the United States, along with its hegemony. It was, in other words, "based on strength and the associated desire to ensure the maintenance of American dominance."[673] Thus, as complementary to the strategies of deterrence and containment, prevention emerged in the post-9/11 era as an important characteristic of the U.S. response to the new threats.

The first two elements of the doctrine -democracy promotion and prevention- were logically accompanied by the third tenet, which was the unilateralist vision espoused by the United States. A strong commitment to promote democracy abroad and to act preventively (or preemptively) when necessary required the will and power to move unilaterally, as it was difficult, if not impossible, to achieve constant international consensus behind such decisions. Thus, the combination of high threat perception with unparalleled American power has tipped the balance in favor of unilateralism. The most significant illustration of Washington's "go it alone" approach was the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 despite the opposition of the international community, including even within the UN Security Council. The efficacy of American

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[671] Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,", **World Politics,** Vol. 40, No. 1, (Oct. 1987), p. 87.
[672] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, pp. 169-170.
[673] Jervis, **op. cit.** 2003, p. 370.

unilateralism was determined by a combination of American exceptionalism and military power, and the result of the administration's strategy "was an American unilateralism unmatched since the 1930s."[674] This unilateralist tendency signified a clear break from the traditional U.S. policies pursued since the beginning of the Cold War, "when much of its foreign policy was tied to formal alliances and the belief that security is best achieved if countries work together against a common enemy, rather than trying to defeat the enemy alone."[675] In fact, this unilateralist approach was the direct result of the unipolarity of the post-Cold War era, when the need for international cooperation seemed low as the United States had a military and economic capacity beyond challenge. The Bush administration thus desired to transform America's primary position and strength into a new U.S. foreign policy that would set new rules for the game and allow Washington to shape the international scene in its own image. Its vision "was not only willing to undermine established rules and multilateral fora, but was very much prepared to wield its unchecked power assets as a means to redefine foreign-policy outcomes based on what it deemed to be 'appropriate' in the post-Cold War period."[676]

Nevertheless, the post-9/11 unilateralism not only undermined the international system that the United States sought to establish and maintain since 1945 but also caused a significant schism between Washington and its traditional allies in Europe, particularly France and Germany. This fissure became visible during the process leading up to the invasion of Iraq, in 2003, as many major European powers except Great Britain, "the old Europe," in Donald Rumsfeld's words, favored a multilateralist approach against Saddam's regime, whereas "the new Europe," mostly Eastern European countries, supported the American decision defying the will of the UN Security Council.[677] Form a broader perspective, "as the image of the collapsing Twin Towers faded, the French and German governments resumed their long-standing efforts to distance themselves from America's antiterrorism tactics in the Middle East and to engage the region on an independent, nonconfrontational basis."[678] Echoing this view, then French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, in an address

[674] Walter LaFeber, "The Bush Doctrine," **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 26, No. 4, (Fall, 2002), p. 549.
[675] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 148.
[676] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 211.
[677] "Secretary Rumsfeld Briefs at the Foreign Press Center," January 22, 2003, https://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=1330 (Access: 02.12.2019).
[678] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 587.

to the UN Security Council, made the "old Europe's" position clear as he bluntly stated that "[military] force is certainly not the best way of bringing about democracy," and added: "we also want more democracy in the world, but we can only achieve this objective within the framework of a true global democracy based on respect, sharing, the awareness of a true community of values and a common destiny. And its core is the United Nations."[679] As for the relations with its allies and international cooperation, the Bush administration has assumed a pragmatic stance. The cooperation was seen as preferable only if it resulted from a consensus behind the given American objective. Put differently, "allies were useful only insofar as they unequivocally helped the United States…" to achieve its goals in its global war on terrorism.[680] The unilateralist vision of the United States at the expense of antagonizing and alienating its European allies, demonstrated "the American determination to be unfettered in its choice of war,"[681] as well as the rejection of the Clintonian optimism and faith concerning multilateralism and international organizations.

Lastly, the fourth premise of the doctrine, the belief in the indispensable nature of the primacy of the United States within the international system, was emboldened by the other three elements, and, at the same time, it nourished them by providing an overriding goal. Opting for a more assertive strategy, the Bush administration tended to maintain and even reinforce American global hegemony, which it saw as a *sine qua non* for the emergence of a more peaceful and stable world full of liberal democracies and open markets. Moreover, the strong belief of the White House in the universal character of the American values also encouraged such hegemonic tendencies. "U.S. hegemony [was] also acceptable because it [was] linked with certain values that all states and cultures -if not all terrorists and tyrants- share."[682] It was, for the administration, the association of universal values with power that shaped U.S. actions in the war on terror, and normally, the other major powers were expected to go along with what Washington considers necessary to prevent new threats from emerging. It was, however, not the case. The subjective nature of the concept of universality and the unwillingness of the other actors for either bandwagoning or going along with the

[679] Dominique de Villepin, "War is Acknowledgement of Failure," **CNN,** March 9, 2003, http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/07/villepin.transcript/ (Access: 03.12.2019).
[680] LaFeber, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 549.
[681] Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, **op. cit.** 2008, pp. 411-412.
[682] Gaddis, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 52.

United States ultimately pushed U.S. policies to a more imperial and unilateralist direction, damaging its reputation and image throughout the world.

It was, therefore, clear that what the Bush Doctrine put forward within the realm of U.S. foreign policy was, according to Ikenberry, a "neoimperial vision," characterized by "American unilateral and preemptive, even preventive, use of force… unconstrained by the rules and norms of the international community."[683] With the increased role and influence of neoconservatives in the White House, the administration opted for such policies for defending U.S. interests, as well as reorganizing the world order. Being less bound to its partners and by international rules and institutions, the United States, as the sole superpower, should act unilaterally if necessary, to face the emerging challenges in a world of asymmetrical threats. At the basis of this strategy, there was what Stanley Hoffmann called "new exceptionalism."[684] Traced back to the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance draft -"Dick Cheney's masterwork"[685]- that emphasized America's military superiority and the need not to simply maintain the international system but to change it, the Bush Doctrine, after 9/11, seized the opportunity to implement this neoconservative vision. "Indeed, until September 11, the new exceptionalism was a doctrine in search of a cause. But after that traumatic day, Americans were called to wage a 'war' on global terrorism, a cause as compelling as any administration could ask for."[686] The doctrine marked the emancipation of a giant from its international "chains." While seeking to achieve a Wilsonian end across the globe -the promotion of democracy- this neoconservative project opted for "McKinley's and Theodore Roosevelt's means to achieve it."[687] The Iraq War of 2003 was, thus, the first major test for the doctrine's foreign policy agenda.

All the central elements of the doctrine were clearly illustrated throughout the path leading to the Operation Iraqi Freedom initiated in March 2003. The country was the first stop, in the minds of the American policy-makers, in a long journey aiming at bringing democracy to the Middle East. The 9/11 tragedy, as perceived by

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[683] G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 81, No. 5, (Sep. – Oct. 2002), p. 44.
[684] Stanley Hoffmann, "The High and the Mighty," **The American Prospect**, December 19, 2002, https://prospect.org/features/high-mighty/ (Access: 02.12.2019).
[685] **Ibid.**
[686] **Ibid.**
[687] John B. Judis, **The Folly of Empire: What George Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2006, p. 171.

Washington, provided a unique opportunity, in a Wilsonian sense, for the United States to reshape the political landscape in the Greater Middle East in a way that would advance both its principles and interests at the same time. That was thus a broad agenda putting forward comprehensive ambitions and long-term expectations with regard to the internal structures of the countries under consideration. "The new task of US foreign policy was not only to conduct regime change by force if necessary but also -through vigorous democracy promotion- to shape the domestic environment of states whose educational systems, religious organizations, incompetent governments, and stagnant economies nurtured anti-American terrorism."[688] In this sense, given the "unfinished task" there, Iraq was the best starting point for making the region safe for democracy. Despite the opposition of the international community, as a result of the controversial evidence of Baghdad's intention to develop WMD and its support for terrorist organizations on which the United States based its decision, President Bush acted to complete the "unfinished" task of his father. Acting with the support of a "coalition of the willing," the U.S. demonstrated its resolve to oust Saddam from power.

In the beginning, everything on the ground seemed so smooth that the president made a premature statement on May 1, 2003: "mission accomplished."[689] The lack of a veritable post-conflict vision, combined with the fact that the U.S. soldiers were not welcomed as liberators on Baghdad streets and were rather faced by a fierce armed resistance, has transformed Iraq into a quagmire for the United States instead of an instant island of democracy in a region fraught with oppressive regimes. Moreover, the costs of fighting two wars simultaneously -in Iraq and Afghanistan- have incrementally become unbearable in the economic and political sense. The reason for this was that winning the war militarily and removing Saddam Hussein from power was not satisfactory for the White House. What the administration desired was rather a broad and ambitious social engineering project, a comprehensive nation-building initiative, which was apparently beyond America's capabilities. Ultimately, the decision to invade Iraq, for Jean Edward Smith, turned out to be "the worst foreign

[688] Hudson, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 372.
[689] "Bush makes historic speech aboard warship," **CNN,** May 2, 2003, http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/ (Access: 03.12.2019).

policy decision ever made by an American president,"[690] especially since its link to 9/11 was neither clear nor concrete.

The Iraqi case demonstrated, on the one hand, that democracy is not something one can impose, particularly by military means. Though it is not impossible, it requires specific circumstances that are similar to those in post-war Germany and Japan. On the other hand, it signified the collapse of the neoconservative project, which was overzealous and unrealistically ambitious. Convinced that "power without purpose is ephemeral, while purpose without power is impotent,"[691] the Bush administration aimed at shaping a foreign policy agenda centered at the intersection of both these concepts. Combining Wilsonian idealism with military superiority and global dominance, Washington intended to reshape the international order in the face of new security challenges. Furthermore, the catastrophic experience in Iraq has inevitably put the value-oriented foreign policy in question, undermining its appeal within the American society and the Middle East. From a broad perspective, what aroused skeptics in this regard was the vision advocated by the Bush Doctrine of which the Iraq War was the masterpiece. Within this context, "the fact that a presidential proclivity for the unilateral use of American power had been combined with a rhetorical revival of American values invited a reidentification of the latter with overbearing American imperialism motivated by oil and profits and aimed at hegemonic control of the Middle East."[692] The administration's apparent insistence, in rhetorical terms at least, on a value-oriented U.S. foreign policy has come to be perceived by many as nothing but the instrumentalization of certain lofty goals, such as freedom and democracy, for material -and less noble- objectives. The result was a deepened dilemma within the realm of U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the war in Iraq has "shattered a smug conservative assurance of the virtuous efficacy of American power, and the nation seemed as far as ever from solving the perpetual dilemma of its own foreign policy."[693]

The doctrine, ironically for some, argued that, despite its status of the hegemon, "the United States must… be a revolutionary power."[694] In other words, the U.S. must,

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[690] Jean Edward Smith, **Bush,** Simon & Schuster, New York, 2017, p. 478.
[691] Ikenberry et. al. **op. cit.** 2011, p. 54.
[692] Kane, **op. cit.** 2008, p. 318
[693] **Ibid.** p. 327.
[694] Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World," **The Washington Quarterly,** 29:3, Summer 2006, p. 10.

for the Bush administration, seek to change the rules of the game that it was leading by far. It was because, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the convergence of interests and values seemed so great that it was perceived by those who had imperial tendencies mixed with idealistic insights as an opportunity not to be missed. From the point of view espoused by the administration, as stated by Condoleezza Rice, the realism-idealism dichotomy does nothing but to "…obscure reality. In real life, power and values are married completely. Power matters in the conduct of world affairs. Great powers matter a great deal... And the values of great powers matter as well."[695] In a period when the vulnerability of the United States became obvious in the eyes of the world -and the Americans- the president and his foreign policy team wanted to change this image by promoting principles in the name of defending interests, but the resulting view of the U.S. across the globe, especially in the Middle East, was even worse.

"President Bush [was] not the first president to want to make the world safe for democracy. He [was], however, the first to use democracy to make the world safe for America."[696] Democratization, a noble objective, ultimately turned out to be perceived by other states as a means to achieve imperial goals inherent to the neoconservative ideology that the administration espoused. While the treatment of the prisoners in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison and the Guantanamo Bay detention camp caused the erosion of the moral ground of the U.S. actions, the failing efforts to institutionalize democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan raised questions about the necessity of such ambitious endeavors in a large scope. Thus, as summarized by Cohen, "Bush had begun his presidency with a superb foreign policy team, highly intelligent and experienced men and women, comparable to John F. Kennedy's best and brightest. And like Kennedy's team, the Bush team advocated policies that took the nation to the brink of disaster."[697] Probably, the best thing the administration achieved was to rid the world of a ruthless dictator. The fall of Saddam Hussein had also a substantial impact on the regional issues in the middle-term and injected hope to the minds of the other peoples living under similar circumstances and, to some extent, played a role in the popular uprisings that occurred almost a decade later.

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[695] Rice, **op. cit.** 2002.
[696] Stanley A. Renshon, **National Security in the Obama Administration: Reassessing the Bush Doctrine,** Routledge, New York, 2010, p. 54.
[697] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p.332.

"In the Bush Doctrine's prescription of power, the international order was centered exclusively around U.S. unipolar preeminence, with America utilizing its unchecked power to keep others in line while enforcing an international hierarchy on its own terms."[698] In an unequivocally unipolar world, the administration sought to follow an imperial path, and for facilitating its advance toward the desired hegemonic end, Washington believed that it could -and should- disregard the constraints imposed by the international rules and commitments. "The choice [was]," as claimed by Hassner, "between an attempt at authoritarian global U.S. rule tempered by anarchic resistance, on the one hand, and, on the other, hegemony tempered by law, concert and consent."[699] The United States, under the presidency of George W. Bush, chose the former, a choice that ultimately turned out to be self-defeating, and that considerably damaged the image, credibility, and relations of the country throughout the world.

"In the post-September 11 world exceptionalism, combined with the immensity of American power, hinted at the dangers of being a nation so strong that others could not check it and so self-righteous that it could not check itself."[700] Moreover, this tendency was what consumed the goodwill and support -domestic and international- the administration obtained in its foreign policy undertakings right after the tragedy of 9/11. Indeed, "the Iraq war highlighted the contradictions between a hegemonic and an imperial foreign policy,"[701] and the result was the emergence of skepticism and mistrust toward Washington's initiatives. This was best illustrated by a comparison of the position taken by the international community *vis-à-vis* the American operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the former enjoyed a large consensus almost without any dissenter at the international level, the latter, perceived as a war of choice, turned out to be the victim of America's worsening reputation -giving rise to an unprecedented wave of anti-Americanism throughout the world- and could not benefit from a certain degree of international support as its legitimacy has, since then, been a source of debate.

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[698] Siracusa, Warren, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 217.
[699] Pierre Hassner, "Friendly Questions to America the Powerful," **The National Interest,** December 4, 2002, https://nationalinterest.org/article/friendly-questions-to-america-the-powerful-2184 (Access: 04.12.2019).
[700] LaFeber, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 558.
[701] G. John Ikenberry, "America's 'Security Trap'," in. Michael Cox, Doug Stokes (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2008, p. 422.

Consequently, it was obvious through the Bush administration's experience that democracy could not be the cure to all the disease emerged in the twenty-first century, and an imperial foreign policy searching for a new Pax Americana was not the best way to deal with transnational terrorism. Despite the initial wave of international support behind it and the unparalleled sense of belonging and patriotism within the American public since WWII, President Bush and his team could not succeed in translating this opportunity stemming from a tragedy into a sustainable foreign policy vision that would contribute to the global dominance of the United States. On the contrary, the administration's approach has undermined the U.S. role and status while encouraging a worldwide anti-Americanism. Eventually, President Bush's legacy to his successor, Barack Obama, was strong skepticism, if not hostility toward America's intentions in the Middle East, along with "disarray in Iraq, instability in Afghanistan, and the growth of terrorist groups, especially ISIS."[702]

2- The Obama Doctrine

As he entered the White House in 2008, Barack Obama inherited, along with two protracted American wars in the Middle East, a world where uncertainty was prevailing with an increasing multipolarity and an almost sinking economy that would soon lead to a global financial crisis, the gravest since the Great Depression. While facing these harsh and perplexing realities at the domestic and international levels, another important task in his hands was, with regard to foreign policy, to assure the reversal of the venturous policies pursued by his predecessor, which ended in a dangerous overreach, especially in the Middle East. "More than anything else, President Obama wanted to shake off the legacy of the Bush administration and restore credibility to the country as a reliable, non-imperial partner in international relations."[703] He, thus, saw the need to revise America's commitments and primary objectives for adapting its policies to this world full of emerging complexities and to ensure the restoration of the country's retrograded international standing. In Ben Rhodes' words, "Obama wanted to extricate the United States from the permanent war that had begun on 9/11."[704] As stated in the NSS published in 2010, the Obama administration established its strategic approach upon the belief that the United States

[702] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 158.
[703] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 50.
[704] Ben Rhodes, **The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House,** Random House, New York, 2018, p. 290.

"…must rebalance [its] long-term priorities so that [it] successfully move beyond today's wars, and focus [its] attention and resources on a broader set of countries and challenges."[705]

Nevertheless, the President's campaign pledge to end the wars overseas would not turn into reality because of the events that occurred beyond his control. Put differently, "President Obama came into office [in 2009] pledging to end the wars of his predecessor, George W. Bush. On May 6 [2016], with eight months left before he vacates the White House, Mr. Obama passed a somber, little-noticed milestone: He has now been at war longer than Mr. Bush, or any other American president."[706] Regarding the Middle East, President Obama's conviction was that the excessive American engagement, in political and military terms, had to be reduced since such an overstretch at a time of economic crisis was illogical and unsustainable, if not unbearable. Therefore, he zealously sought to develop a strategy for "'rightsizing' the United States' footprint in the region, [which] meant not only reducing its material presence but also restraint diplomatically, stepping back and challenging allies to take greater responsibility for their own security."[707]

From a broader perspective, the vision embraced by President Obama and his foreign policy team led by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was marked by ideological flexibility and a strong emphasis on diplomacy, negotiation, and a balanced mixture of hard and soft power. This approach was made clear by Clinton in her remarks to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 13, 2009:

> *"Foreign policy must be based on a marriage of principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology. On facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice. Our security, our vitality, and our ability to lead in today's world oblige us to recognize the overwhelming fact of our interdependence…We must use what has been called 'smart power,' the full range of tools at our disposal -diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural- picking the right tool, or*

[705] "National Security Strategy," May 2010, http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf (Access: 29.12.2019).
[706] Mark Landler, "For Obama, an Unexpected Legacy of Two Full Terms at War," **New York Times,** May 14, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/15/us/politics/obama-as-wartime-president-has-wrestled-with-protecting-nation-and-troops.html (Access: 06.03.2020).
[707] Marc Lynch, "Obama and the Middle East: Rightsizing the U.S. Role," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 94, No. 5 (September/October 2015), p. 18.

> *combination of tools, for each situation. With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy…The president-elect has made it clear that in the Obama administration there will be no doubt about the leading role of diplomacy."*[708]

These principles guided President Obama's foreign policy and determined the direction and the nature of his decisions at the international level. The refusal of a distinctly ideological approach can be considered as the result of both the reaction to the ideologic ventures of his predecessor and Barack Obama's own pragmatism. His objective was to neutralize the impact of the Bush administration's policies while, at the same time, creating a larger room for himself to shape the course of U.S. foreign policy. However, his approach devoid of strict ideological elements was seen, especially by his critics, as the cause of a foreign policy lacking a solid base and the source of a perceived inconsistency in the face of the abrupt developments at the international level, notably in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, before analyzing the nature and impact of the policies pursued by the Obama administration, one must keep in mind that there has been and still is a disagreement and debate over whether Barack Obama had a doctrine in the proper sense. For many critics, the administration, assuming a pragmatist vision, followed inconsistent and *ad hoc* strategies in the face of international challenges. For others, the administration's insistence on certain principles that are fundamental for the maintenance of the liberal international order has constituted the benchmark of the "Obama Doctrine." John Mearsheimer, for instance, argued that the origins of the problems the United States confronted since the end of the Cold War, including the Obama period, laid in the fact that "it adopted a flawed grand strategy."[709] Similarly, Niall Ferguson claimed that the "colossal failure of American foreign policy [in the Middle East] was the predictable consequence of the Obama administration's lack of any kind of coherent grand strategy, a deficit about which more than a few veterans of

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[708] "Nomination of Hillary R. Clinton to be Secretary of State," Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Eleventh Congress, First Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D. C., 2010, p. 17, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg54615/pdf/CHRG-111shrg54615.pdf (Access: 08.01.2020).

[709] John J. Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," **The National Interest,** December 16, 2010, https://nationalinterest.org/article/imperial-by-design-4576 (Access: 08.01.2020).

U.S. foreign policy making have long worried."[710] Likewise, while Jackson Diehl stated that "this administration is notable for its lack of grand strategy -or strategists,"[711] Michael Hirsh stressed that "the real Obama doctrine is to have no doctrine at all."[712] In his response to Ryan Lizza, who argued that, by analyzing his strategy in Libya branded as "leading from behind," President Obama "may be moving toward something resembling a doctrine,"[713] Charles Krauthammer emphasized that "leading from behind is a style, not doctrine," and described the foreign policy of the administration as a "foreign policy of hesitation, delay and indecision, marked by plaintive appeals to the (fictional) 'international community' to do what only America can."[714]

In the opposing camp, some like Hugh White argued that the Obama administration put forward "America's most ambitious strategic doctrine since Truman committed America to contain the Soviet Union," and the focal point of this doctrine was the resolve to "resist China's challenge to [the United States'] primacy in Asia."[715] Although it is undeniable that responding to the threatening rise of China has constituted an integral part of the administration's foreign policy strategy, its elevation to the level of the central tenet of a presidential doctrine is relatively exaggerated. Lacking the ideological dimension and the single objective-oriented nature of the previous doctrines, the grand strategy espoused by the Obama team may not be seen as a distinct doctrine. However, this does not mean the president had no grand strategy with significant characteristics that could -and would- shape the orientation of U.S. foreign policy. Stemming from his refusal of a rigid ideological approach, his tone in foreign policy was far from being doctrinaire. Nevertheless, his grand strategy was composed of two main aspects. The first was based on the

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[710] Niall Ferguson, "Obama's Egypt and Foreign-Policy Failures," **Newsweek,** February 13, 2011, https://www.newsweek.com/obamas-egypt-and-foreign-policy-failures-68731 (Access: 05.01.2020).
[711] Jackson Diehl, "Obama's Foreign Policy Needs an Update," **The Washington Post,** November 22, 2010, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/21/AR2010112102263_pf.html (Access: 06.01.2020).
[712] Michael Hirsh, "Obama Has No Doctrine," **The Atlantic,** March 29, 2011, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/03/obama-has-no-doctrine/73171/ (Access: 06.01.2020).
[713] Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist," **The New Yorker,** April 25, 2011, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/02/the-consequentialist (Access: 05.01.2020).
[714] Charles Krauthammer, "The Obama Doctrine: Leading From Behind," **The Washington Post,** April 28, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html?noredirect=on (Access: 05.01.2020).
[715] Hugh White, "The Obama Doctrine," **The Wall Street Journal,** November 25, 2011, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204452104577057660524758198 (Access: 06.01.2020).

conviction that the maintenance and the preservation of the liberal international order have held a key place in achieving the security interests of the United States. As "an ideological liberal with a conservative temperament," according to Gideon Rose, President Obama's foreign policy strategy aimed at "saving the core of the liberal order [at the expense of] the periphery, both functional and regional."[716] Linked to this approach, the second aspect of the Obama administration's foreign policy strategy was the retrenchment, defined, within this context, as "pulling back, spending less, cutting risk, and shifting burdens to allies…"[717] In this sense, "for Obama, this sincere emphasis on international accommodation dovetails with a conviction that strategic retrenchment is very much in the US national interest."[718] The objective of this retraction was to reduce "the overall costs of foreign policy by redistributing resources away from peripheral commitments and toward core commitments."[719] As put by Drezner, the Obama administration pursued two grand strategies. While "the first strategy, multilateral retrenchment, was designed to curtail the United States' overseas commitments, restore its standing in the world, and shift burdens onto global partners, the second… counterpunching" was based on America's willingness to respond to challenges against the assertion of its influence and ideals and to reassure its allies and demonstrate resolve to its rivals.[720]

In this regard, the administration opted for abstentionism, especially in the Middle East. The strengthening of the multilateral order and the deepening of the international cooperation were seen as the best -perhaps the only- way to implement this abstentionist approach without creating a large power vacuum and excessive costs for U.S. foreign policy. Combined with his refusal of power-centered realist approaches to the realm of foreign policy and the firm belief that "democracy promotion was not making the cut," such an emphasis on the liberal international order has constituted the framework of the administration's foreign policy.[721] Thus, "… the

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[716] Gideon Rose, "What Obama Gets Right: Keep Calm and Carry the Liberal Order On," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 94, No. 5, (September/October 2015), p. 2, 7.
[717] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," **The Atlantic,** April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/ (Access: 07.01.2020).
[718] Colin Dueck, **The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, p. 36.
[719] Paul K. MacDonald, Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," **International Security,** Vol. 35, No. 4, (Spring 2011), p. 21.
[720] Daniel W. Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy? Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 90, No. 4, (July/August 2011), p. 58.
[721] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 112.

Obama administration promised a more practical foreign policy based on the firm conviction that democracy could not be imposed from the outside and democratization was neither sure nor rapid."[722]

"At his core," according to one of the president's closest aides, Ben Rhodes, "Obama was an institutionalist, someone who believes progress is more sustainable if it is husbanded by laws, institutions, and -if need be- force."[723] He, thus, saw multilateralism, international cooperation, and effective international organizations as keys to international stability and security, as well as to orient America's focus toward "home." Sharing the burden with allies and other international actors, he sought to initiate what was called "nation-building at home." Moreover, he was essentially concerned about the issue of overreach damaging U.S. overseas interests and causing a costly foreign policy trajectory. Indeed, both his abstentionist vision and his strong commitment to multilaterally organized liberal order were closely interrelated. Opting to move toward retrenchment, strengthened mechanisms of collective action would be, from the administration's perspective, the only viable way to prevent the emergence of power vacuums to be filled by any hostile forces or dangerous groups and organizations. Avoiding, in the Middle East or anywhere else, any engagement that would require the constant deployment of American forces or a direct military intervention for non-vital issues, the Obama administration chose to rely on collective action by the international community. Paradoxically, this approach, for those who believed that the administration must pay the price for the inefficiency of the international community, caused "the creation of power vacuum that have been filled by the likes of the self-declared Islamic State, or ISIS."[724]

Furthermore, Barack Obama's unwavering commitment to the multilateral international order nurtured by the abstentionist strategy has inevitably encouraged his foreign policy approach to lean heavily on diplomacy, negotiation, and outreach. Establishing an environment of dialogue with various actors, regardless of their domestic regimes or stance toward the United States, the Obama administration sought to find lasting solutions to certain critical problems and make diplomacy the principal tool to implement its foreign policy agenda. This negotiation-oriented view culminated

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[722] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, pp. 50-51.
[723] Ben Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 48.
[724] Bret Stephens, "What Obama Gets Wrong: No Retreat, No Surrender," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 95, No.5, (September/October 2015), p. 15.

in the leading U.S. role for the conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal (P5+1), aimed at eliminating, through diplomacy rather than coercion or the use of force, the risk posed by a nuclear Iran. As claimed by Anne Pierce, as a result of this approach favoring outreach, "it has become the policy of the United States to downplay the differences between democracies and nondemocratic states, to discount the role ideology plays in those differences, and to provide hostile adversaries with enabling compromises and friendly gestures."[725] Although this approach, accompanied with the relativist belief that democracy cannot be imposed, would later turn out to be problematic in the face of the popular revolts in the Arab world, the initial vision of the Obama administration favoring multilateral negotiations was the right path to follow to change the image of the United States in the eyes of the world. Moreover, given America's leadership role at the international level, the conviction was that Washington's lead would be followed by others only insofar as it has played by the long-established rules of the game. Within this framework, his desire was not only to prove the fact that even the most chronic international problems can be solved by negotiations but also to facilitate the implementation of the policy of retrenchment.

a- Obama and the Middle East

The Middle East was the region where the president's abstentionist impulses and distant stance toward interventionism were clearly visible. Denouncing the costly venture in Iraq, Obama, in a speech delivered in 2006, stressed that the Iraq War "stretched [American] military to the breaking point and distracted [the U.S.] from the growing threats of a dangerous world."[726] Within this context, what he proposed for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was "a strategy no longer driven by ideology and politics, but one that is based on a realistic assessment of the sobering facts on the ground and [America's] interests in the region."[727] He, in this sense, applied the general framework of his foreign policy vision based on the confidence in the liberal international order and the need for the United States to reorient its resources committed to the Middle East, at least during his first few years in the White House.

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[725] Anne R. Pierce, **A Perilous Path: The Misguided Policy of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton & John Kerry**, Post Hill Press, New York, 2016, p. 3.
[726] Barack Obama, "Way Forward in Iran Remarks," **Chicago Council on Global Affairs,** November 20, 2006, http://obamaspeeches.com/094-A-Way-Forward-in-Iraq-Obama-Speech.htm (Access: 10.01.2020).
[727] **Ibid.**

At the same time, another important task in President Obama's hands was, with regard to the Muslim world, to restore the United States' highly deteriorated image by the two wars in the Middle East and the policies of the Bush administration. President Obama's efforts to fix the rift with the Muslim world culminated in his 2009 Cairo speech, delivered at Cairo University. The speech was a major step taken in the desired direction with its essential emphasis on a new beginning in the relations between America and the Middle Eastern actors. Focusing on shared interests and principles between the West and the Muslim world, the president assumed a somewhat apologetic manner as he underscored certain Western initiations as part of the sources of regional troubles.[728] However, commenting on the Cairo speech, Anne Pierce, one of the harshest critics of the administration, concluded that "never before had an American president defined America's place in history in such negative terms to a foreign audience."[729] Yet, the principal objective of the administration, through this speech, was to improve America's position in the eyes of the actors in the region, to open ways that encourage dialogue, and to incite cooperation to establish peace and stability. Only by such a vision, President Obama believed, the United States could reduce his military engagement in the Middle East and ensure the redistribution of its resources in ways that would enhance domestic prosperity. With regard to the regional political landscape, the president reaffirmed his opposing stance toward the imposition of democracy, as he stated that "no system of government can or should be imposed [upon] one nation by any other."[730] While he asserted his commitment "to governments that reflect the will of the people," he pledged that the United States "will welcome any elected, peaceful governments."[731]

In fact, the Middle East, for Obama, represented a region of which the United States must steer clear as much as possible. Since he saw the threat posed by rising China as the primary challenge to the U.S. interests on a global scale, he sought to "pivot to Asia" in order to decelerate -or halt- America's relative decline. This was the real motivation behind his abstentionist vision marked by retrenchment and nurtured by the efforts to reduce America's dependence on energy resources of the Middle East.

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[728] "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," June 4, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09 (Access: 11.01.2020).
[729] Pierce, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 53.
[730] "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," **op. cit.** 2009.
[731] **Ibid.**

"For Obama, Asia represents the future… And the Middle East is a region to be avoided—one that, thanks to America's energy revolution, will soon be of negligible relevance to the U.S. economy."[732] However, the shock created by the Arab Spring in late 2010 rendered his desire to avoid the region impossible. Along with the growing Chinese activism in East Asia and Iran's intensified nuclear ambitions, the sweeping upheavals across the Arab world dictated an uncomfortable policy course to President Obama, who was seeking, from the outset, "retrenchment" in foreign policy.[733] A few months into the uprisings, after two autocrats -both American allies- Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak of Egypt, stepped aside in early 2011, President Obama issued a memorandum stating that America's "future is bound to this region [the Middle East and North Africa] by the forces of economics and security; history and faith."[734] Reaffirming the commitment of the U.S. "to promote reform across the region and to support transitions to democracy,"[735] the Obama administration demonstrated its resolve to respond to these tectonic changes in a cautious way that would simultaneously promote the core American values and principles and assure its security interests. Throughout the memorandum, "Obama's analysis showed a desire to balance interests and ideals. The goals of reform and democracy were couched in the language of U.S. interests rather than the sharp moral language that statesmen often use in public."[736]

The Arab Spring has, not surprisingly, radically changed the direction and the shape of U.S. foreign policy. It brought the Middle East back to the center of Washington's foreign policy agenda as it was a test that put both America's willingness to advance its ideals and its resolve to defend and achieve its interests into question. While the region was likely to move, as a result of the popular revolts, toward a chaotic future that would threaten the U.S. national interests, as well as international security and stability, any American choice with regard to direct involvement would either diminish America's credibility concerning its commitment to the promotion of its core values and principles or send a controversial signal to America's allies across the globe. This dilemma was clearly illustrated by a report of the Institute for

[732] Goldberg, **op. cit.** 2016.
[733] Stephen Sestanovich, **Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama,** New York, Vintage Books, 2014, pp. 311-312.
[734] Barack Obama, "A Moment of Opportunity…"
[735] **Ibid.**
[736] Lizza, **op. cit.** 2011.

Democracy and Cooperation emphasizing that, in the face of the Arab Spring, there were "on the one hand, liberal internationalists in the foreign policy and executive establishments lobby for the utmost support that the U.S. can offer countries wishing to democratize, and on the other, the democratic movements threaten to plunge the Middle East into chaos and war, which would not only threaten Israel, but potentially rattle the international oil markets, thereby damaging American positions in the region and the global economy as far as it is dependent on Middle East petroleum."[737] Going even further, Elliot Abrams, a neoconservative critic of the administration, argued that in the face of the Arab Spring, President "Obama came closer to the dominant realist approach to American foreign policy toward the region, an approach that aimed at retaining the status quo through backing pro-Western rulers and eschewing moral imperatives, such as the promotion of the rule of law and human rights."[738] However, rather than disregarding the moral concerns, the administration sought zealously to develop a well-balanced strategy that would allow the United States to safeguard its security interests and those of its friends in the Middle East, to confront Russia and its regional ally, Iran, and to advance liberal democratic values and human rights as far as possible. With regard to human rights, for instance, the administration's conviction was that the United States ought to pursue, as argued by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a policy inspired by "principled pragmatism,"[739] disappointing for the liberal absolutists, but closer to the international realities in the twenty-first century.

"A challenge for the Obama administration was to fashion a broadly consistent position on the challenges to Arab authoritarianism while taking into account the particularities of each case."[740] As would be tackled later, U.S. foreign policy that confronted such a complicated situation and the perplexing events in the region was shaped in a seemingly inconsistent manner. The American response to the uprisings in the Arab world was formed by *ad hoc* policy choices. This nature of Washington's actions was even more apparent in its approach to the revolts in countries where the stakes were relatively high for the Western interests, such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Thus, the harsh realities of the Middle East, combined with the re-emergence of great

[737] The Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, **The United States After the First Obama Term**, New York, November 2012, p. 175.
[738] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 173.
[739] Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks on the Human Rights Agenda for the 21st Century at Georgetown University's Gaston Hall," December 14, 2009, Washington D.C. https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/12/133544.htm (Access: 09.01.2019).
[740] Hudson, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 374.

power rivalry, have, once again, prevailed over the initial foreign policy vision of an American president, and the region reaffirmed its vital place in Washington's foreign policy agenda. From the administration's perspective, it could apply, to a limited extent, the first part of its grand strategy based on multilateralism, while the policy of abstentionism appeared as nothing but wishful thinking.

Overall, the Obama administration, with certain flaws, of course, developed a two-dimensional strategy grounded essentially on the core-periphery distinction. This distinction has covered both regional and functional aspects. In this regard, the administration, seeking to assure international stability and to improve America's global image, opted for the preservation and deepening of the liberal international order -that is, the core. For the Obama White House, multilateralism was a means to regulate and check hubris that had set the ground for the overstretch of American forces and resources, as well as the deterioration of its standing at the international level. Therefore, diplomacy and negotiation have become the essential tools of U.S. foreign policy for most of the Obama period. The other aspect of the administration's strategy was characterized by retrenchment that encouraged the abstentionist impulses. In search of putting its house in order, the United States, under the presidency of Barack Obama, hoped to reduce its overseas commitments, especially in the Middle East, to extract resources to respond to multiple domestic challenges, as well as to those that have emerged in Asia where the president perceived a significant threat to vital American interests. Although, for some, "Obama's primary and overarching emphasis on strategic retrenchment, international accommodation, and domestic priorities has allowed multiple security threats to germinate overseas in ways that already hold very dangerous consequences for American interests,"[741] his foreign policy approach has unarguably changed America's image at the international level and reduced the impact of his predecessor's unilateralist and conflictual legacy.

Furthermore, although the implementation of this vision was hampered by the unexpected developments in the Middle East, the Obama administration put forward, within the realm of foreign policy, a positive image based on the uniquely American combination of idealism and realism embellished by pragmatic insights. Combining a Wilsonian belief in the international community with the realism of the elder Bush, on the one hand, President Obama, despite certain setbacks and unsuccessful initiations,

[741] Dueck, **The Obama Doctrine…** p.102.

has achieved to reduce American military presence in the Middle East and minimize the impact of the global financial crisis on the American economy. In this sense, the administration's approach to foreign affairs was essentially inspired by the Jeffersonian insights, which were based on the idea of the perfection of democracy at home for it is to take root abroad. This exemplarist vision was also reflected in America's insistence, under the presidency of Barack Obama, on abiding by the rules of the liberal international order -broadly speaking, multilateralism, in order to encourage other actors to preserve its core elements. In the face of the Arab Spring, on the other hand, the administration's approach was initially shaped by bewilderment and hesitation, but in time, it developed *ad hoc* policies that could, to a considerable degree, advance American principles and achieve the national interests. Thus, Washington has responded hesitantly, to some extent, to the challenges posed by the popular uprisings in the Arab world. The principal reason behind this seeming inconsistency was not only the inherent foreign policy dilemma of the United States but also the impetus that the great power rivalry has gained after direct Russian involvement in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Obama administration's strategy in the region, seeking to strike a balance between values and interests, can be evaluated neither as a complete success nor a total disaster.

PART II- THE ARAB SPRING AND THE OSCILLATION OF THE U.S. APPROACH

"[Now] we face a historic opportunity. We have the chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator… America must use all [its] influence to encourage reform in the region. Even as we acknowledge that each country is different, we need to speak honestly about the principles that we believe in, with friend and foe alike."[742]

Barack Obama

The Arab Spring was the second transformative event -after the 9/11 attacks- that changed the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, and that considerably affected the attitude of global powers toward the region. Organized mostly via social networking platforms, the Arab Spring basically refers to huge mass demonstrations spread in a domino-like way from one Arab country to another, seeking to obtain fundamental democratic and human rights from the long-established brutal and oppressive regimes. Unprecedented in the region's history, the Arab Spring uprisings constituted the first massive democratization movement since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which paved the way for democracy in Eastern Europe. As the epicenter of the upheavals was the region where the economic and geopolitical interests of great powers intersect, it was not surprising that their (non)interference has played a key role in determining the fate of the uprisings.

As is well known, the United States has been tied to the Middle East by geopolitical interests –including energy, the requirements of a re-intensifying rivalry with Russia, and perhaps most importantly, the relations with its allies in the region, especially Israel. Apart from these factors, the Arab Spring has also had an ideational aspect that required a favorable U.S. stance in the name of principles Washington has long advocated. As pointed out by James Gelvin, "…during the uprisings, protesters throughout the Arab world went out on the streets demanding human and democratic

[742] "Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa," May 19, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa (Access: 22.01. 2020).

rights -two values the United States had been promoting- sometimes cynically, sometimes sincerely- in every international venue for close to four decades. And…the only formula for economic recovery in the Arab world currently on the table is neoliberalism, which might as well come with the label 'made in America.'"[743] Combined with the harsh realities of international politics, these immaterial aspects of the Arab Spring have made a decisive U.S. stance toward the upheavals -in one way or another- inevitable. As they generated an inextricable foreign policy dilemma -i.e. interest vs. principles- the revolts across the Arab world put the Middle East, once again, at the heart of Washington's policy agenda in the middle of a period when "pivot to Asia" seemed to constitute its main preoccupation within the realm of foreign policy.

[743] James L. Gelvin, **The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know,** Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, p. 166.

III- The Arab Spring and the United States

The term "spring," when used to describe a popular uprising, has always been controversial if the result of the revolt turns out to be less promising and optimistic than what the term indicates. The fact that the People's Spring of 1848 across Europe against the monarchies did not immediately bring the utmost level of moderation to the imperial state structure or that the Prague Spring of 1968 was crushed by the Soviet tanks has not changed their label "spring," as both events carried hope and constituted the seeds of the upcoming change in the desired direction. Today, this is the case for the Arab Spring as many observers avoid using the term spring, considering it "controversial" or even "a misnomer,"[744] and prefer words like "uprising," "awakening," or "revolt." Just because the region was later chilled by the winter breeze, the underlying spring cannot, and should not, be disregarded. Independently from its overall -and immediate- outcome, the Arab Spring heralded the sparking of a long-awaited awakening in the Middle East, and it is likely to be saluted, in the medium term, as the process where the origins of the moderation and liberalization are found.

In a way that puts forward the pace of the events and the prevailing perception of the West with regard to the ongoing uprisings, one Western diplomat stated that "[They] assumed that the Middle Eastern dominoes were falling very fast. [They] thought that it would be like 1989 in Europe."[745] Marking an unprecedented incident in the annals of Arab history, the tumultuous events of the Arab Spring that swept across the Middle East caught many actors, regional or external, by surprise. As far as the United States is concerned, however, this assumption does not seem to be wholly accurate. Indeed, in a memorandum entitled "Political Reform in the Middle East and North Africa" sent to his top advisers on August 12, 2010, President Obama had highlighted the present "evidence of growing citizen discontent with the region's regimes" and added that in the face of a possible uprising, American allies in the Middle East would probably "opt for repression rather than reform to manage domestic discontent." Then, for the formation of U.S. foreign policy, he noted that "[America's] regional and international credibility [would] be undermined if [it is] seen or perceived

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[744] Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch, "Introduction," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East,** West View Press, Boulder, 2013, p. 2.
[745] Jeremy Bowen, **The Arab Uprisings: The People Want the Fall of the Regime,** Simon & Schuster, New York, 2012, p. 136.

to be backing repressive regimes and ignoring the rights and aspirations of citizens."[746] As stated by Samantha Power, "the logic behind President Obama's guidance was that the United States needed to act while [it] still had time to support political evolution in the Middle East. Otherwise, [it] would find [itself] figuring out how to respond to revolution."[747]

Thus, a popular movement targeting the foundations of the entrenched autocratic regimes in the Middle East was not totally unexpected for Washington, but its response to the uprisings remained, in the end, far from being consistent and sufficiently effective in supporting the demands of change. Within this context, America's strategic assessment inspired by a country-by-country approach triggered not only many debates at the domestic and international level but also revealed the accelerated oscillation of its inherent foreign policy pendulum.

A- The Wave of Change in the Middle East: "People Want the Fall of the Regime"

The Middle East has had a relatively short history of independence as the region has been, for the last centuries, either under the rule of non-Arab Muslim rulers, namely the Ottomans, or the domination of European powers. As the regional actors have gained their independence, the autocratic regimes have gradually started to lay their hands on political authority and consolidated their power through brutal and oppressive methods. It was, indeed, in the aftermath of the Cold War that the Arabs have begun to take control of their fate in their own hands. Freed from their ideological ties and alliances, the regional powers seemed, toward the end of the twentieth century, in a position to shape the future of the region in their own image. In other words, as the region seemingly ceased to be the chessboard of the superpower rivalry, some experts hopefully thought that "Arab governments and, to a limited but growing extent, the Arab peoples were at last able to confront their own problems and compelled to accept responsibility for dealing with them."[748]

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[746] Lizza, **op. cit.** 2011.
[747] Samantha Power, **The Education of an Idealist: A Memoir,** Harper Collins, 2019, EPUB e-book, p.453.
[748] Bernard Lewis, "Free at Last? The Arab World in the Twenty-first Century," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 88, No. 2, (March/April 2009), p. 77.

This structural transformation has not led, however, to openness, freedom, transparency, and democracy in the Middle East. On the contrary, the Middle Eastern regimes have incrementally become more oppressive and dictatorial as the region's perceived significance has relatively decreased in the eyes of the global powers in the post-Cold War period. As pointed out by Bernard Lewis, the regimes in the region could be divided into two categories: "those that depend on the people's loyalty and those that depend on their obedience…These regimes have little or no claim to the loyalty of their people and depend for survival on diversion and repression…In those Arab countries where the government depends on force rather than loyalty, there is clear evidence of deep and widespread discontent, directed primarily against the regime and then inevitably against those who are seen to support it."[749] It was, in the end, the resentment and discontent of the societies oppressed under brutal regimes that ignited the revolts in late 2010. Started in Tunisia with the self-immolation of a young street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, the uprisings spread like wildfire across the Middle East in a way that was reminiscent of "the decolonisation process where one country gets independence and everybody else wants it."[750]

Indeed, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region appeared to constitute an exemption to what Samuel Huntington called "the third wave of democratization," characterized by the replacement of autocratic regimes by democratic ones "in approximately thirty countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia" in the aftermath of the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974.[751] More precisely, the region was "the only major world region that has not been substantially affected by any of the major waves of democratization in the twentieth century."[752] In other words, there have been neither strong political institutions favoring freedom nor a democratic political culture firmly established in any country of the region. Assessed from a progressive perspective, the revolts in the Arab world demanding democratic and human rights were, therefore, not unexpected. What was surprising, in turn, was the

[749] **Ibid.** pp. 76-77.
[750] Alec Russell, "Kofi Annan Interview," **Financial Times,** May 16, 2011, https://www.ft.com/content/c2d31f14-7caa-11e0-b9e3-00144feabdc0 (Access: 19.01.2020).
[751] Samuel P. Huntington, **The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century,** University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991, pp. 21-22.
[752] Martin Beck, "The Arab Spring as a Challenge to Political Science," in. Robert Mason (Ed.), **The International Politics of the Arab Spring: Popular Unrest and Foreign Policy,** Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 10.

fact that the Arab Spring was initiated by secular groups consisting of young individuals with autocratic leaders as their targets.

In retrospect, there were two landmark events in the Middle East, which paved the way for the unfolding of uprisings initiated in late 2010. First, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, in 2005, proved the success of peaceful demonstrations as they assured the withdrawal of Syrian forces in the aftermath of the assassination of the country's former prime minister, Rafiq al-Hariri. "Young people across the Arab world watched and cheered as they witnessed military forces retreating before the peaceful, unarmed demonstrators."[753] In the words of Robert Fisk, "revolutions don't start with a single dramatic event, such as the destruction of a church or a man's self-immolation [and] in reality, the 'Arab awakening' began not in Tunisia this year, but in Lebanon in 2005…"[754] The second turning point was the trial of Saddam Hussein (2005-2006), the Iraqi dictator overthrown and captured by American forces. "In contrast to the vociferous condemnation of the [Iraq] war, the reaction to the trial in the Arab world was subdued… It was the first time that an Arab ruler had been asked to account for his misdeeds before his own people and that some of them were able to testify against him, freely, before a court of law and without fear of retaliation."[755] Having proved the possibility of ousting a dictator and calling him to account for all the brutalities he had committed against his own people, the unpopular American intervention in Iraq, despite all its flaws, had thus played a role in the mobilization of the young people across the Arab world. The first row of dominos had fallen in Iraq, and then, "aroused by the Iraqi example, a wave of democratization seemed to sweep across the Middle East,"[756] leading to the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings.

Inspired by those events, it was the first time in the history of the Middle East that large mass protests against not external powers but internal actors occurred in a bottom-up way. The Arab Spring is the third upheaval that the Arab world has witnessed throughout the last hundred years. The first one occurred, as put by Kumaraswamy, in the early twentieth century when Arabs revolted against their

[753] Mary-Jane Debb, "The Arab Spring: Libya's Second Revolution," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2013, p. 70.
[754] Robert Fisk, " The 'Arab Awakening' Began not in Tunisia This Year, but in Lebanon in 2005," **The Independent,** April 15, 2011, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-the-arab-awakening-began-not-in-tunisia-this-year-but-in-lebanon-in-2005-2268002.html (Access: 25.01.2020).
[755] Debb, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 70.
[756] Oren, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 590.

Western colonialists. The second stage of upheavals appeared, under the leadership of the military, in the aftermath of the defeat against Israel in 1948, and generated the emergence of military-led republics which would later become autocratic like the regimes they replaced.[757] In this sense, the first wave of upheavals was a mass movement targeting external actors, whereas the second one was characterized by military-led uprisings –mostly with indirect Soviet backing- against the incumbent Arab leaders whose performance was unsatisfactory. The third wave of upheavals -the Arab Spring- in this sense, had significant differences compared with the previous two waves. It was, indeed, shaped by a combination of their main characteristics. "Like the first wave, there has been a large public participation and, like the second one, it has been directed not against external powers but against their own rulers. Unlike both of the previous occasions, this time there has not been a recognizable leader, ideology or platform."[758] What thus unified the young masses in the streets of multiple Arab countries was a common demand illustrated by two ubiquitous slogans of the protests: *Ash-shab yurid isqat an-nizam* (the people want the fall of the regime) and *Irhal!* (Go!)

This shared desire to change the *status quo* was the main, if not the only, common point in every Arab uprising. The method used or the extent of change demanded have varied from one country to another. From a boarder perspective, the explanation for the Arab Spring could be found in the combination of the economic and political problems deeply rooted in the social life of these countries. Lack of social justice, freedom, political participation, and the high unemployment rates appeared as the principal factors that ignited the revolts. Beyond these factors, each country's specific characteristics have played a central role in determining the shape and orientation of the protests. Depending on the political structure -republican or monarchic- the economic realities -oil-rich or not, high or low rent revenue- and the historical experiences of each country dramatically affected the path taken by the Arab Spring in a given country. As written by Lisa Anderson with regard to the revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, "although they shared a common call for personal dignity and responsive government, the revolutions across these three countries reflected

[757] P. R. Kumaraswamy, "The Arab Spring," **India International Center Quarterly,** Vol. 38, No. 1. (Summer 2011), pp. 54-55.
[758] **Ibid.** p.56.

divergent economic grievances and social dynamics -legacies of their diverse encounters with modern Europe and decades under unique regimes."[759]

This assumption holds true for the uprisings in the other Arab countries as well. The complex nature of the Arab Spring has not allowed it to be responded through a single conceptual doctrine. "…Muammar al-Qaddafi's Libya, with its near total absence of state institutions, differed completely from Bahrain, with its Sunni-Shiite sectarian issues, which differed again from Yemen with its long history of regionalism, which bore no resemblance to Syria under the minority rule of its Alawite community."[760] Added to these internal dynamics, the (un)willingness of international and regional actors to intervene in the uprisings determined the path they have taken and their outcomes. In this sense, a specific approach for each country was indispensable not only for the observers but also for the international actors that had to develop policies in response. Treating all revolts as a monolithic structure, a cohesive Arab revolt would eventually undermine one's understanding of the events as well as the strategies of global and regional actors. "The notion that all Arab states were homogeneous and that one revolutionary template would fit them all proved the fallacy of the Arab Spring."[761]

Within this context, the categorization proposed by James Gelvin seems to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the uprisings. For him, the revolutionary movements in the Arab world can be categorized into four different clusters. Tunisia and Egypt constituted the first cluster. The most significant feature of these two countries, "where militaries, siding with protesters and not with autocrats, eased the ouster of the latter from power," was that they "have long histories as autonomous, developmentally oriented states with "functioning institutions autonomous from the government's executive branch" and "a functioning military." The "weak states," Libya and Yemen, were in the second cluster as they "lack strong national identities" and avoided "establishing strong institutions in favor of a personalistic style of rule." Another shared characteristic of both countries was the fragmentation of their regimes. The inexistence of "institutions that might maintain regime cohesion" explains the brutal crackdown of the regime forces on protesters and the violent turn the upheavals

[759] Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 90, No. 3 (May/June 2011), pp. 2-3.
[760] Rogan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 624
[761] **Ibid.**

have taken. In the third cluster were found the regimes that resist revolutionary change, namely Algeria, Syria, and Bahrain. While the strong identification of National Liberation Front (FLN) with every aspect of the state apparatus determined the fate of the uprisings in Algeria, in Syria and Bahrain the structure established by rulers who have exploited "ties of sect and kinship to build a close-knit, interdependent ruling group." The Alawite minority and Assad family in Syria, the Sunni community and the ruling Khalifa family in Bahrain knew that they could not survive a radical change in the established order. To preserve their privileged places, they needed to prevent the fall of their regimes, and they tried everything in their power to prevent the success of the uprisings. In the final cluster, Gelvin placed five monarchies, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. Putting aside the exception of Bahrain, in Arab monarchies the uprisings were more moderate, "limited in scope, and they have demanded reform of the *nizam,* not its overthrow."[762]

Furthermore, perhaps the most significant development that paved the way for the most sweeping awakening in the history of the Arab world was the communication revolution that influenced almost every individual from different fractions of Arab societies, especially the youth. It was the technological developments that ended the autocrats' quasi-monopoly on the information. "To some extent, modern Middle Eastern governments had learned how to manipulate information, but that control is rapidly diminishing as modern communicating technology…has made people… keenly aware of the contrasts between different groups in their own countries and, more important, of the striking differences between the situations in their countries and those in other parts of the world."[763] This has inevitably generated an increase in the discontent of citizens in Arab countries, especially the new generation, and contributed to the emergence of popular movements striving for democratic reform. "The new age of information technology both informed Arab youth of the ills of society and gave them the tools with which to address those ills."[764] What the peoples have seen was that all the problems they have had and every failure their society has been experiencing for years could not be attributed to Western imperialists and Zionists as they have been taught by their oppressive regimes through manipulated information. They also recognized that they have the will and capability to bring a

[762] James Gelvin, "Conclusion: The Arab World and the Intersection of the National and Transnational," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2013, pp. 247-251.
[763] Lewis, **op. cit.** 2009, pp. 83-84.
[764] Debb, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 71.

dramatic and lasting change to the present order. Moreover, the developed communication technologies and the power of social media have played a central role in organizing large demonstrations and the spread of the revolutionary wave from one country to another.

Gradually, however, the initial optimism created by the ouster of dictators in Tunisia and Egypt was replaced by the harsh realities that had been experienced by almost every revolution in human history. Each of the copycat movements that were inspired by the developments in these two countries and the ouster of their dictators in a relatively short while has taken different paths leading to different -and discouraging- outcomes. What started as a liberation and democratization movement turned into a chaotic nightmare, one of the gravest humanitarian crises in recent history. "The peaceful demonstrations… that were supposed to bring democracy have instead given way to bloodshed and chaos, with the forces of tyranny trying to turn back the clock."[765] Thus, unlike what was observed in Tunisia and Egypt, in countries like Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, the forces of the *ancien régime* initiated a brutal and violent counterrevolution and turned the Arab Spring into a bloody conflict. As wisely stated by Eugene Rogan, "if the Arab Spring was about citizens losing their fear of governments, the counterrevolution was all about the use of violence to restore fear."[766] Dragging the given country into a protracted civil war or endless chaos, these counterrevolutionary forces have unfortunately caused bloodbaths.

Another significant factor that undermined the prospect of the leaderless and loosely organized revolutions in the Middle East was that they were, in certain countries, hijacked by groups other than those who started them. The discontented protesters in the streets of Arab cities "…had no clear common ideas of what they stood for. The Arab Spring revolts were not organized around democracy, or Islam, or any other single and central cause… [they] were *against* regimes and not *for* principles."[767] As the uprisings were essentially spontaneous and reactionary, lacking a significant political or philosophical foundation, it was, in this sense, not surprising that once the structure and institutions of the *ancien régime* are sufficiently eroded,

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[765] Daniel L. Byman, "After the Hope of the Arab Spring, the Chill of an Arab Winter," **Brookings,** December 4, 2011, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/after-the-hope-of-the-arab-spring-the-chill-of-an-arab-winter/ (Access: 25.01.2020).
[766] Rogan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 629.
[767] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 100.

those who control a higher institutional capacity and have larger capabilities in political organizational terms would prevail. This group might not be the one that launched the revolutionary movement as was the case within the framework of the Arab Spring. Islamists with a considerable influence on the Arab peoples were the prevailing groups despite the initial secular tone of the uprisings. Not necessarily pro-democracy, the Islamist groups were the most organized opposition factions during the pre-Arab Spring period in many countries. It was, thus, not totally unexpected that they would grow their influence after the weakening of the autocratic regimes. For Walid Phares, "the irony of the Arab Spring was its mutation from blooming popular movements in the first month of 2011 to a full Islamist winter in 2013."[768] Moreover, the Islamists also had the sympathy of the Arab peoples as they seemed to have shared -religious- sensitivities and to be the victim of the same oppressive leader. "Disciplined by years underground, Islamist groups have popular support because of the social services they proved and the repression they suffered."[769] Moreover, they have had a massive communication network under their control through mosques. All these factors, combined with the unorganized structure of secular groups that initiated the upheavals, the Islamists appeared to be the most realistic, if not only, governing alternative in many Middle Eastern countries affected by the Arab Spring.

Consequently, the reason for the lack of democracy, freedom, and human rights in the Middle East was not the unwillingness of the Arab peoples, their incapacity, or any inherent feature of the dominant religion, Islam. It stemmed from the repression of the entrenched dictators who have shown no mercy to dissenters and who has not allowed the development of civil society in Arab countries. As the realities of the twenty-first century drastically changed the political and social dynamics in the region, the old methods of dictators fell short of being effective in distracting and intimidating their citizens. This change eventually facilitated the emergence of the Arab Spring as "the culmination of a decades-long struggle for human dignity in the region."[770] Seen through this lens, every uprising in the Arab world has different characteristics depending on the historical experiences of the given country, as well as on its present economic, political, and social dynamics. In this sense, analyzing our case studies -Egypt, Libya, and Syria- separately seems indispensable in order to better grasp the

[768] Walid Phares, **The Lost Spring: U.S. Policy in the Middle East and Catastrophes to Avoid,** Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 3.
[769] Byman, **op. cit.** 2011.
[770] Gelvin, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 241.

essence of the events in these countries and develop a better understanding of the changing U.S. attitude toward the Arab Spring.

1- Egypt

In 2009, when Nora Younis, an Egyptian blogger and a human rights activist, described the April 6 strike organized by a youth movement as "a rehearsal for a bigger thing," a practice where they were "just testing the power of each other,"[771] it was relatively hard to imagine that the revolutionary impulses of this young Egyptian would lead to the ouster of Mubarak and the end of his repressive and deeply corrupt regime.

The cultural center of gravity of the Arab world and the most populous Arab country, Egypt, has been under the rule of military leaders since the coup in 1952 led by the Free Officers Movement. An air-force general and then vice-president, Hosni Mubarak was right next to Anwar Sadat when he was assassinated by Islamist extremists in 1981 in reaction to the signature of the Camp David peace treaty with Israel. Assuming power since then, Mubarak has governed the country with an iron fist like a pharaoh. Nepotism, corruption, and the privileged place of the ruling elite and the military were the features of the regime, and these were what intensified the discontentment of the Egyptians, along with economic grievances. For decades, the foundations of Mubarak's regime have been eroding and this process was even accelerated since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Tarek Masoud pointed out that one can locate "the beginnings of the Mubarak regime's final act in the 2004 founding of the Egyptian Movement for Change. This organization -whose unofficial moniker of Kifaya (Enough!) deftly encapsulated the national mood- gathered political activists and thinkers from across the [political] spectrum to declare that Egyptians were fed up with the Mubarak regime and would not stand for Gamal's inheritance of the presidency."[772] Thus, the ills of the regime, the health problems of the octogenarian ruler, and his clumsy attempt to present his son Gamal as his successor turned out to be the last straw.

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[771] Samantha M. Shapiro, "Revolution, Facebook-Style," **The New York Times Magazine,** January 22, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/magazine/25bloggers-t.html (Access: 27.01.2020).
[772] Tarek Masoud, "The Road to (and from) Liberation Square," **Journal of Democracy,** Vol. 22, No. 3, July 2011, p. 23.

The system established by Mubarak, along with his security apparatus and the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt, was considered, right before the Arab Spring revolts, a relatively durable and stable form of authoritarianism by most of the experts. "Mubarak's ideology," argued Jeremy Bowen, "was stability, as measured by his friends in the United States. He fought political Islam and Egypt's jihadists, upheld the unpopular peace treaty with Israel, and made sure that the armed forces kept their position as Egypt's most dominant institution."[773] The popularity in the Western capitals, Tel Aviv, and the Middle East, has come with a price, which is the tight control over the domestic political arena. Combined with economic stagnation, this repressive approach has set the ground for Mubarak's overthrown. Furthermore, the origins of Mubarak's regime, as indicated above, can be found "in the revolution begun by Gamal Abd al-Nasser in 1952, which created a political order based on an informal social contract: citizens cede the political arena to Nasser and the ruling party; in exchange, the regime would provide material prosperity and security."[774] While the security part of this contract was, to a certain extent, assured through constant – and massive, at around $1 billion a year - U.S. aid obtained after the conclusion of the peace treaty with Israel, the provision of material prosperity, despite the establishment of a massive public sector and excessive subsidies, has gradually weakened. Accelerated by the measures imposed by the IMF seeking the neo-liberalization of the Egyptian economy at the beginning of the 1990s, the living standards of citizens have sharply fallen. In 2011, "nearly 44 percent of Egyptians [were] 'extremely poor' (unable to meet minimum food needs), 'poor' (unable to meet basic food needs), and 'near-poor' (able to meet basic food needs, but not much more)."[775] All these factors caused the alienation of large masses in Egypt from a system that has been functioning, for years, in favor of a small elite while making the poor even poorer and allowed inevitably the fervor of the Arab Spring to capture the streets of Cairo.

Inspired by the revolutionary success in Tunisia where the demonstrators forced the dictator, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, to flee the country, large masses of Egyptians took to the streets in Cairo on January 25, 2011. The immense size of the

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[773] Jeremy Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, pp. 47-48.
[774] Bruce K. Rutherford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of January 25 Uprising," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2013, p. 35.
[775] Joel Beinin, "The Working Class and the Popular Movement in Egypt," in. Jeannie Sowers, Chris Toensing (Eds.), **The Journey to Tahrir,** Verso, New York, 2012, p. 105.

demonstrating crowd across the city moving toward the center was signaling to watchful observers that this time, something different was about to happen. The crowd in the streets represented a "strange mix" composed of "the young activists who had linked up with Facebook…trade unionists and Islamists, and football fans known as 'ultras'…"[776] Despite the brutal crackdown of the regime and violent efforts of the security forces, they seized Tahrir Square in no more than three days, on January 28. On the same day, the Egyptian government resigned. Throughout the next two weeks, until the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, Cairo witnessed numerous confrontations between the demonstrators and the regime forces. Nonetheless, the size and determination of the masses forced the military to refrain from using force on civilians and undermined U.S. support for Mubarak, leading to his ouster on February 11.

According to Bruce Rutherford, there were four distinctive factors that made the January 25 uprising different than the previous attempts, helping to bring change into Egypt's political landscape: (1) "the online communities" that built "a shared identity and purpose" among dissenters and that "helped to overcome [the] feelings of isolation and provided many thousands of Egyptians with a sense of connection to the noble cause of their country"; (2) the Tunisian experience that "altered the cost-benefit assessment of participating in demonstrations" and that had "an inspirational impact"; (3) "satellite television" that enabled the uprising to reach a wide audience in Egypt; (4) "the organizational skill of the youth movement" that explains the size of the crowds in the streets, their creativity, and their will to endure the brutality of the security forces.[777]

Moreover, regardless of its motives, the military's decision not to side with the regime against the demonstrators in the streets was essential to the success of the revolution in Egypt. One of the essential factors shaping this choice was the Obama administration's secret outreach, "making clear that a military-sanctioned crackdown on the protesters would have severe consequences on any future U.S.-Egyptian relationship… [and that] U.S.-Egyptian cooperation, and the aid that came with it, wasn't dependent on Mubarak's staying in power…"[778] It was, thus, probably the fear of losing its dominant position in the Egyptian political and economic life that pushed

[776] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p.54.
[777] Rutherford, **op. cit.** 2013, pp. 40-41.
[778] Barack Obama, **Promised Land,** New York, Crown, 2020, p.650.

the military in this direction. "The military asserted itself once it decided that its own position in the country was in jeopardy, giving Mubarak the final push off the throne to protect its own prerogatives."[779] Tarek Masoud claimed that the reasons for the military's refusal to support the regime and its subsequent insistence on not to return to the barracks, except the period under Morsi in 2012, the only elected leader of Egypt's more than five thousand years of history, can be categorized in three different clusters. The first cluster includes political motives arguing that a transition to democracy would hamper the preservation of the privileges and the sort of impunity that the military has enjoyed in Egyptian political life. Secondly, the economic motives have played a significant role in shaping the military's attitude as it has been an important manufacturer of everything holding an important share of the Egyptian economy. In the case of a democratic change, any politician could be in a position to redistribute this wealth to the people in order to respond to popular demands, and this constituted a risk that the military was not willing to take. The third group covers the military's geopolitical concerns. For the Egyptian Army, close relations with the United States and the maintenance of the Camp David peace have long been indispensable as its technological development and modernization has been strongly tied to U.S. aid. Given the fact that these were relatively unpopular matters within the society, in a democratic Egypt, any elected leader can take steps to undermine these relations and, therefore, the military's capacity.[780] In the end, the military has achieved its objective to remain central in Egyptian politics, and going even further, a junta led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has been governing the country since the 2013 coup that deposed the leader of the Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Morsi.

Overthrowing an entrenched dictator is one thing, establishing a new and democratic political order is another. The Egyptian experience illustrated a clear example in this regard. The capability of young secular Egyptians with regard to political mobilization, culminated in a successful revolution, was not enough to be translated in a substantial political movement that would offer a viable governing alternative. As stated by Samuel Tadros, "people were trained [on] how to protest and challenge autocracy; no one was trained on how to politically organize, formulate programs, and compromise."[781] Likewise, in her memoirs, then-Secretary of State,

[779] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 72.
[780] Masoud, **op. cit.** 2011, pp. 25-26.
[781] Samuel Tadros, "Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt," **Hudson Institute,** June 13, 2014, https://www.hudson.org/research/10363-reflections-on-the-revolution-in-egypt (Access: 28.01.2020).

Hillary Clinton, clearly explained the situation based on her observations in her meeting with several activists who had played a central role in the revolutions:

> *"I was curious to hear about their plans to move from protests to politics and how they planned to influence the writing of a new Constitution and contest the upcoming elections. I found a disorganized group not prepared to contest or influence anything. They had no experience in politics, no understanding about how to organize parties, run candidates, or conduct campaigns. They didn't have platforms and showed little interest in forming them… 'Have you considered forming a political coalition and joining together on behalf of candidates and programs?' I asked. They just looked at me blankly. I came away worried that they would end up handing the country to the Muslim Brotherhood or the military by default, which in the end is exactly what happened."*[782]

Far from being a coherent opposition movement, the demonstrators were not only leaderless but also unprepared for responding to the requirements of a transition period and democratization. Their lack of political organization was, in fact, the product of Mubarak's oppressive policies against existing secular pro-democracy opposition groups. His strategy, within this context, was founded on the efforts to "weaken the center and allow the Islamists some space, and then use the latter's comparative strength to argue to Egyptians and especially to the United States that he and his dictatorship were the only bulwark against political Islam."[783] Leaving the Islamists more public space and facilitating the expansion of their influence, to some extent, within the society, Mubarak's strategy ultimately made them the principal actors of the political life in Egypt in the aftermath of his deposal. In post-Mubarak Egypt, Islamists, composed of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, liberals, and the military have appeared to be the dominant political groups with varying capacities to affect the political future of the country. Given the fact that the liberal youth was not capable of presenting a coherent worldview to the Egyptians, the political

[782] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014 p. 346.
[783] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 99.

competition in the aftermath of the revolution would take place between the Islamists groups and the military.

The Muslim Brotherhood, in this regard, appeared as "the only group sufficiently well organized to grasp power…"[784] In fact, the Brotherhood's rise to a prominent position in the post-Arab Spring Middle East, and particularly in Egypt, has not come as a big surprise. Founded in 1928, by Hasan al-Banna, in this country, the group was one of the first Islamic organizations in modern times. "The rise of nationalisms, the disruptions of World War I, the very formation of the new state system and resistance to secularization had produced a context in which more widespread social and political movements could, and did, emerge."[785] It was, thus, the product of a reaction against the prevailing secular nationalist political approach in the region. As it was initially more a social organization rather than a political entity, "the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood were first confined to teaching and preaching…"[786] Focusing mainly on Islamic charity, the group has started to gain the sympathy of the Egyptians. As the political turmoil has been aggravated in the country throughout the 1930s, the Brotherhood has moved toward the political sphere. The resilience demonstrated by the members of the organization in organizing the Egyptians' support for the Palestinian cause in the mid-1930s "… both strengthened the Brotherhood's self-confidence and alerted the traditional Egyptian political parties and the monarchy to the fact that a new popular force was emerging."[787] In the following decades, the Brotherhood confronted repression, and the group was banned from political life, first by the monarchy (1948), and then by the regime under President Nasser (1954). "In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Islamic politics were driven underground across the Arab world, and Islamic values were undermined by secular states…Yet, repression only strengthened the will of the Muslim Brothers to fight secularism and promote their own vision of Islamic values."[788] Then, emerged in the 1960s, a more radical view within the Brotherhood, inspired by the writings of Egyptian thinker

[784] **Ibid.** p. 104.
[785] Fred Halliday, **The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology,** Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. 89.
[786] Basheer M. Nafi, **The Islamists: A Contextual History of Political Islam,** Afro-Middle East Center, Johannesburg, 2017, p. 35.
[787] **Ibid.**
[788] Rogan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 503.

Sayyid Qutb, and this nascent current shifted the struggle of the Islamists to a more conflictual and well-organized path.

Since then, *the Ikhwan* has acted as a significant political actor in Egypt and its set up branches across the Middle East. While their charity work, including building mosques, schools, and healthcare centers, especially in poor neighborhoods, has provided the organization with substantial popular support in these countries, their anti-Western vision based on Islamic values has appeared as one of the main sources of political instability and conflict in the region. In Egypt, during the Mubarak era, the Brotherhood was granted a relative -and controlled- political freedom as it constituted the "necessary evil" against which the non-democratic regime "protected" the most influential country of the Arab world. This room for maneuver, nevertheless, provided the group with the chance to expand their long-established network not only within the Egyptian public but also on a regional scale. By the time the Arab Spring erupted, the Muslim Brotherhood was Egypt's longest-running opposition party with a significant organizational structure, numerous members and representatives in almost every town and village of the country. Combined with the demonstrators' lack of institutional base and a coherent political vision, the removal of Mubarak offered the Muslim Brothers the unique opportunity they have been waiting for almost a century. The country was, again, "threatened" by secular, Western ideas, but this time, there was not any dominant non-Islamist figure or power center on the political stage, at least until the military intervention in 2013.

In post-Mubarak Egypt, the Brotherhood was, thus, substantially influential on the Egyptians and enjoyed considerable sympathy stemming from the social services they provided. Benefitting their "strange status of illegal yet tolerated,"[789] their leaders were not exiled or imprisoned at the time of the revolution. In other words, Mubarak's perception of them as leverage to be used in the face of the West and the Egyptians, and his view of his "fight" against them as a source of the regime's legitimacy opened the way to power for the Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. In the parliamentary elections for the lower and upper houses, held in late 2011 and early 2012, respectively, the Brotherhood won most of the seats. Added to this, the impressive result of the Salafis demonstrated the increased weight of political Islam

[789] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 79

within Egypt's political life.[790] In this regard, two rounds of the presidential elections held in May and June 2012 came as no surprise, and the Muslim Brotherhood's leader, Mohamed Morsi, became the first elected leader of Egypt in history. Thus, the Islamists who did not play a significant role in launching the revolution and who did not jump on to its bandwagon, waited until Mubarak was gone. Then, they took to the stage and, in a sense, reaped what sowed the young secular Egyptians who initiated the revolution.

Therefore, after more than one year without Mubarak in power, there were two main political actors in Egypt: the Muslim Brotherhood and the military. Starting in late 2011-early 2012, Egypt has witnessed a growing tension between these forces as the former enjoyed considerable popular support, and the latter was seeking to preserve its substantial interests that might be threatened by democratic change. The vacuum left by Hosni Mubarak in Egypt was rapidly filled by the Islamists and in a short while, they managed to alienate millions of Egyptians by their vision and practices that were incompatible with the rhetoric and hopes of the revolution, especially regarding the rights and place of women and the Christian minority -the Copts- in the country's social and economic life.

Within this context, the only viable alternative to an Islamist president was, obviously, the army. On July 3, 2013, a *coup d'état* took place. The military seized power and suspended the constitution that took effect after the revolution in 2012. After drafting a new constitution approved by referendum in January 2014, General Sisi was elected as the president of Egypt in May 2014. "The May 2014 presidential election was the fifth time that the Egyptian population [had] been called to the polls *en masse* since the Mubarak regime was toppled in early 2011. In that time, they have approved of two constitutions, as well as ushered into office two presidents and a two-house legislature."[791] The 2014 constitution was, indeed, relatively compatible with the requirements of a democratic transition period with its approval of a reasonable term limit for the president, gender equality, absolute freedom of belief, even though Islam was emphasized as the religion of the state and the principles of Islamic Sharia

[790] The Muslim Brotherhood won 45% and 58% of the seats in the People's Assembly (the lower house) in the Shura Council (the upper house), respectively, while its closest competitor, the Salafis' al-Nur Party won 25 percent of the seats in both houses.
[791] Nicolas Heliotis, "A Textual Analysis of Presidential Power under the 2014 Egyptian Constitution," **The International Lawyer,** Vol. 48, No. 2, (Fall, 2014), p. 127.

were placed as the principal source of legislation.[792] This was, however, not the end of the dynamism, if not turmoil, that has dominated the country's political arena since early 2011. The amendments to the 2014 constitution were approved by a referendum in April 2019. Extending a presidential term from four to six years and allowing the president to seek one additional term, the most significant aspect of these amendments was that they made it possible for President Sisi to remain in power until 2030.[793] With other implications amplifying the authority of the president and the military, the 2019 constitutional amendments created a political atmosphere that seems very similar to that of the Mubarak era.

Consequently, what Elliot Abrams stated in 2017 still seems accurate in 2020: "…Egypt is back where it started under Hosni Mubarak. The country simply lacked the parties, groups, individuals, democratic political patterns, institutions, and experiences to build a powerful political center fast enough."[794] The only difference today is that the current generation of Egyptians have the enlightening experience of a revolution, and this experience might hopefully be the seed of a future democratic change. On the other hand, they have also learned, through the brief reign of the Muslim Brotherhood that, no matter how democratically elected, Islamist parties were not necessarily more democratic in the exercise of power. The Egyptian case, thus, illustrated a guiding example in different ways. It first demonstrated that no matter how entrenched and brutal the regime is, it does not have to and cannot last forever. The will and determination of the people would be enough to get rid of tyrants. In this sense, the Egyptian experience was inspirational for everyone, particularly the Arab world. In turn, the developments in post-revolution Egypt proved that the transition to democracy would be gradual and evolutionary at best and would result from an arduous process. Given the fact that all Arab states that were affected by this wave of change have, to some extent, lacked the necessary institutional setting and political culture for democratic change, this is of a high probability that similar problems, or even worse, would occur in different places. Indeed, this was what happened in Libya in March 2011.

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[792] "The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2014" https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt_2014.pdf (Access: 28.01.2020).
[793] "TIMEP Brief: 2019 Constitutional Amendments," **The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy,** April 17, 2019, https://timep.org/reports-briefings/timep-brief-2019-constitutional-amendments/ (Access: 27.01.2020).
[794] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 211.

2- Libya

Following the encouraging and inspirational developments in Tunisia and Egypt, the revolutionary wave reached Libyan shores, where the most eccentric and unique Middle Eastern autocrat, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, had been in power since 1969. As the longest-serving leader of the region, Qaddafi's rule was based on repression rather than popular consent. Marking a bloody new page in the Arab Spring, the uprising in Libya has dramatically changed the promising atmosphere surrounding the events across the Arab world. Colonel Qaddafi, who emulated Nasser's worldview and approach, had seized power in 1969 as a result of a coup staged against the country's monarch, King Idris Sanussi. Then, he formed "…a third-world brand of socialism, tying it to Islam."[795] His rule was characterized by "a mix of new-age socialism, fascism, and personality cult."[796]

Initially, the protests that began on February 15, in Benghazi, were not different from those in neighboring Tunisia or Egypt. Disenchanted under a regime that has not offered a viable future and alienated by the leader's cruelly repressive attitude, the Libyans rose in rebellion, hoping to rid themselves of Qaddafi. However, he was no Mubarak or Ben Ali, and Libya was not Egypt or Tunisia. The regime's response to the protests was to be different. Ordering the use of live ammunition on the demonstrators, Colonel Qaddafi revealed that he had no intention to leave the office and explicitly threatened his people with a massacre -which was quite credible and likely, given his 40-year record of sheer brutality. In turn, determined to achieve their liberal and democratic objectives, the Libyans in the streets organized, via the internet, larger demonstrations, and in two days, on February 17, the uprising spread throughout eastern Libya. Thus, "rather than putting an end to the protests, the government actions created more anger and led to a rebel takeover of Benghazi on February 20."[797] This radically changed the fate of the revolution in Libya as it has rapidly become an armed struggle. In other words, "unlike the mostly nonviolent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, what began as a peaceful protest in Libya quickly turned into a widespread shooting war between the government and the rebels and the casualties mounted."[798]

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[795] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p.56.
[796] Hillary Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 297.
[797] Debb, **op. cit.** 2013, opp.64.
[798] Robert M. Gates, **Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War,** Vintage Books, New York, 2014, p. 510.

The principal reason for the difference between the path that the Arab Spring took in Libya and the course of events in Tunisia and Egypt was, aside from the self-styled autocrat in Tripoli, the country's structural characteristics that fundamentally shaped its social and political life. The society in Libya was profoundly fragmented by local and tribal identities, and this fragmentation has also affected its institutional setting. To the extent that their disillusionment and distrust in the regime grew, the Libyans' attachment to their local identities has become stronger. Moreover, there was not a political system -no formal president of parliament- civil society, and economic institutions in the conventional sense. In this regard, Libya had more in common with Yemen -another country where the uprisings turned into a protracted civil war- than it had with Tunisia or Egypt. Thus, "Libyan society has been fractured, and every national institution, including the military, [was] divided by the cleavages of kinship and region."[799] The most significant impact of this social and institutional fragmentation was that there was no army that could place itself between the regime and the demonstrators, and that would force Qaddafi to defer to legitimate popular demands. This image was, essentially, what encouraged Qaddafi to use the militias under the control of his son, and presumed successor, Saif al-Islam, against the protesters.

As has been the case in many other Arab countries over the last decade, the main elements of the opposition in Libya were the liberal and Islamist groups. Within this context, the assumption that the division between the visions of both these groups could be an advantage for the regime was what shaped Qaddafi's strategy in his counterrevolution. This strategy was crystallized by the release of jihadists from jails. He hoped that they would fight against secular revolutionaries as he retained his grip on power. "The logic was that the Islamists would prefer Islamic dictators with anti-Israel rhetoric over reformers and liberal with a secular narrative."[800] His assumption, however, was not accurate as it appeared that the primary objective of all the opposing groups in Libya, like those in almost all the other Arab countries, was to overthrow their leader. Hence, the Islamists released from Qaddafi's jails by his order opted for siding with the secular revolutionaries in the streets.

[799] Anderson, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 6.
[800] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 57.

Furthermore, as the events in Libya have unfolded quickly and the uprising has taken the shape of a civil war, the international community rapidly grew more sensitive to the developments. Nevertheless, until the vote of the League of Arab States on March 12, calling the U.N. Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over the country, there had been no substantial step in this regard. Proving that Qaddafi did not have any friends even in the Arab world –since the League of Arab States supported the resolution, this vote and the rapid advance of the regime forces toward the rebel-controlled territory were the main factors that "sealed Qaddafi's doom."[801] Moreover, his and his son's bloodthirsty rhetoric has done nothing but to push the international community to act quickly and decisively. A few weeks earlier, on February 20, Saif al-Islam Qaddafi had appeared on TV, openly threatening the protesters: "Instead of crying over eighty-four deaths,' he said with contempt, wagging his finger at the camera, 'you will be crying over hundreds of thousands of deaths. There will be rivers of blood.' He spoke of Libya as if it were his family's private property. 'This country belongs to us."[802] Later in March, as his forces approached Benghazi, Qaddafi used the same threatening tone against the rebels -the "rats" in his words- by emphasizing that "there will be no mercy" and urging his supporters to "…track them down, and search for them, alley by alley, road by road."[803]

Such a dangerous approach has done nothing but to increase worries at the international level. The first concrete international step was the recognition of the National Transitional Council (NTC), founded on February 27, in Benghazi, as the legitimate representative of Libya. Then came the vote within the League of Arab States, calling the U.N. to intervene. All these steps pushed the U.N. to act decisively. "Although Russia and China opposed the notion of military action by NATO in Libya [- nevertheless, abstaining at the UNSC vote -], the vicious violence by Qaddafi against the Libyans, aired on television, brought significant pressure on the United Nations."[804] Within this context, the U.N. Security Council, with reference to the Chapter VII of the Charter, approved Resolution 1973, on March 17, imposing a no-fly zone over the country, and authorizing "all necessary measures" in order to protect

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[801] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 137.
[802] Quoted in. Hisham Matar, **The Return: Fathers, Sons, and the Land in Between,** Penguin, London, 2016, p. 235.
[803] "No Let-up in Gaddafi Offensive," **Al Jazeera,** March 17, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/03/2011317645549498.html (Access: 01.02.2020).
[804] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 60.

the civilians in Libya.[805] Subsequently, on March 19, began a military intervention under NATO auspices, the first preventative humanitarian intervention undertaken by this organization under prevailingly French leadership, in accordance with this country's traditional policy of R2P,[806] and baptized Operation Unified Protector. Halting the advance of the pro-regime forces first, the air campaign then allowed the revolutionaries to expand their control. Within a few months, the major cities controlled by the regime fell to the insurgents. The gruesome killing of Qaddafi in his hometown Sirte, on October 20, marked the end of the first phase of the Libyan revolution.

In post-Qaddafi Libya, the struggle for power between the liberal and Islamists elements appeared as the new challenge. Moreover, in the hope of benefitting from the power vacuum that emerged after the fall of the regime, tribes turned their focus on their fight against other local units. The most important problem for the new Libya with no coherent national identity was the lack of substantial structural and institutional foundations upon which a stable and viable political system could be built. More precisely, what Libya confronted after the revolution was "…the complexity not of democratization but of state formation."[807] Nevertheless, Libya had a relative advantage compared to its neighbors affected by the Arab Spring. It was a relatively new political entity as it was politically unified in 1934, and the Libyans, not surprisingly, held no old habits or rooted expectations that could constitute an obstacle to the formation of a democratic country. Furthermore, the determination and eagerness of the Libyan youth, despite many problems, to establish a political system inspired by secular liberal principles were, indeed, impressive. Hillary Clinton, who met them shortly after the fall of the regime, observed their attitude and stated that "these young people desperately wanted to live in a 'normal country,' with access to the global economy and all the rights they knew people in America and around the world had enjoyed for so long. And, in contrast to some of the young people I had met

[805] "The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973", March 17, 2011, https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1973%20(2011) (Access: 31.01.2020).
[806] Eglantine Staunton, **France, Humanitarian Intervention, and the Responsibility to Protect,** Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2020; Tim Allen, David Styan, "A Right to Interfere? Bernard Kouchner and the New Humanitarianism," **Journal of International Development,** Vol.12, Issue. 6, 2000, pp 825-842.
[807] Anderson, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 7.

next door in Egypt, they were eager to put aside their differences, learn lessons from the outside, and get involved in the political process."[808]

As of today, since the elections in 2014, Libya has witnessed an armed struggle between different factions seeking control of the Libyan territory and to impose their sovereignty. The rivalry is mainly between the House of Representatives, located in Tobruk and supported by the Libyan National Army headed by Khalifa Haftar, and the Government of National Accord, based in Tripoli under the leadership of Fayez al-Sarraj. While most of the country is controlled by the former, the latter has the authority within the western coastal region of the country. Additionally, the local tribal forces hold control over a significant part of the territory, notably in southern Libya. The situation worsened as some international actors, supporting one of the two rival groups, began to get involved in the Libyan affairs. Thus, the formation of a political structure in the way that the revolutionaries had initially desired is not in sight, at least, in the short term.

The Libyan revolution was, unfortunately, not the only one that led to a bloody civil war generating a huge human misery within the framework of the Arab Spring. Nor was it the worst experience despite tens of thousands of casualties. The events in Syria later demonstrated the danger of an autocracy supported by a minority group, fearing to lose its grip over power and controlling a well-trained and well-equipped army. Combined with the explicit support of one of the global powers and an important regional actor, namely Russia and Iran, the Assad regime's counterrevolution has rapidly turned into a bloodbath, affecting not only regional dynamics but also the international equilibrium.

3- Syria

The most tragic and violent chapter of the Arab Spring has unfolded in Syria, in spring 2011. The popular uprising against four decades of authoritarian rule by the Assad 'dynasty' turned, in a few months, into a full-scale civil war, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of displaced Syrians.

As was the case in many Arab countries, Syria witnessed successive coups in the 1960s. The first of these coups in 1963, which carried the secular Ba'ath Party to

[808] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 311.

power, set the ground for the pre-Arab Spring Syria, a security state ruled by a clique. The last coup, what would later be labeled as "the correctional movement," took place in 1970, and it was led by Hafez al-Assad. Assuming presidential privileges in a short while, "he constructed an airtight but stultifying array of family, tribal, and sectarian-based patronage systems that produced loyalty and stability, but little else."[809] This "…quintessential autocratic regime, of which he controlled every detail, with assistance from security force, Syrian army, and Ba'ath Party members who were directly bound and loyal to him"[810] was what eventually caused the resentment and anger of the Syrian people over time and led to a popular awakening following the Tunisian, Egyptian, and Libyan examples.

After the death of his father, Hafez, Bashar al-Assad took charge of ruling the country in 2000. As a Western-educated young leader, his initial period was characterized by the hopes of reform and liberalization. President Bashar's inaugural speech delivered on July 17, 2000, was, as put by David Lesch, "a remarkably enlightened speech… [that] confirmed the hopes among many in and outside Syria that indeed Bashar was a breath of fresh air who would lead the country in a new direction."[811] In retrospect, the beginning of his rule was marked by a reformist attitude favoring a secular approach relatively open to liberalization in comparison with other Arab countries. "During the first few years of Bashar's rule, Syria witnessed some openness and liberalization compared to his father. This period of liberalization was called the Damascus Spring…"[812] Nevertheless, as many incidents would later demonstrate, this hopeful period was ephemeral. Bashar al-Assad has followed a path suitable to what he inherited from his father and continued arbitrary arrests and prosecutions of dissidents and relied heavily on the brutality of the security forces and intelligence services, the awesome *mohabberat*. According to a common assumption, the latter has been the real depositary of state power, dominating and leading the young Assad on his father's steps, shattering the hopes for democratic change.

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[809] David W. Lesch, "The Uprising That Wasn't Supposed to Happen: Syria and the Arab Spring," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2013, p. 93.
[810] Hassan Abbas, "The Dynamics of the Uprising in Syria," **Jadaliyya,** October 19, 2011, https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a228/27d5d806cbc5e21cd16c0ef20e25213d6a66.pdf (Access: 18.02.2020).
[811] David W. Lesch, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 79.
[812] Obaida Fares, "The Arab Spring Comes to Syria: Internal Mobilization for Democratic Change, Militarization, and Internationalization," in. Larbi Sadiki (Ed.), **Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization,** Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 146.

Within this framework, in 2011, not only the authoritarian nature of the regime but also the political, economic, and social landscape in Syria was no different from those of other Arab countries faced with popular uprisings calling for democratic and liberal reforms. The problems like social and economic injustice, corruption, high rate of unemployment, especially within the Syrian youth, had become chronic and primary concerns for most of the Syrian public, while the Assad regime was preoccupied with preserving its power and privilege through oppression. Notwithstanding all these dynamics, what, indeed, "set [Bashar Assad] apart from other Arab autocrats" was the fact that he "enjoyed a degree of legitimacy and public support."[813] Until at least the arrest and torture of several schoolchildren in Deraa -the authors of the dissident graffiti that triggered the uprising in Syria- he had a reputation of a reformer. In this sense, "it was never the Assad regime against all of the people. He had genuine support from some of Syria's minority communities, not just the Alawites."[814] In other words, the heterogeneous demographic structure of the country, with a considerable Sunni majority, served the interest of the regime, until at least the increase in the regime's brutality and violence. Fearing an Islamist takeover of the country, the minority communities, particularly Druzes and Christians, threw their support behind the Alawite Assad family.

Within this context, in March 2011, the uprising was launched in Deraa, where the treatment of the teenagers who wrote an anti-regime slogan on the school wall ignited the protests. The crowds in some rural provinces followed suit, and a few weeks later, the Syrian people were in the streets in all major cities. What started as local unrest thus, turned into a nationwide uprising. In fact, the Syrian state was not unfamiliar with similar local uprisings, and the gravest internal threat, in this sense, was seen as a Sunni-led revolt. This had, indeed, been the case in Hama in 1982, when the *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood) organized a large-scale uprising, an attempted revolution against Hafez al-Assad's rule. The response of the regime was harsh and violent as the revolt was severely quelled through a massacre in Hama -including impaling people alive- that remained under the siege of the Syrian army for almost a month. However, this time, the situation was not the same. It was not just a city or a region that revolted against the regime. In almost every major city across Syria, demonstrations were calling for the change of *nizam*. "[T]he Arab Spring was of

[813] Rogan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 636.
[814] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 202.

different nature. This time, as of mid-2011, it was evident that the Assad regime would never again rule Syria entirely, if at all, as the masses surged."[815] The Assad regime, in turn, did not seem to capture the difference. The president opted for the approach he inherited from his father, which was based on "the realization that keeping power means showing no weakness and killing anyone who poses a threat."[816] Therefore, his decision to spill blood and use excessive force on the protesters was a typical Assad-family reaction.

The most significant development with regard to the Syrian uprising, causing its transformation into an all-out civil war, was its militarization. Within the opposition ranks, the emergence of a military flank composed of numerous defected Syrian soldiers, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), on July 29, 2011, shifted the protests to another level. What started as a nonviolent, secular revolt then turned into an armed struggle against the regime forces, which was embellished with sectarian motives. The process of militarization and transformation into a civil war was accelerated by the increase in the number of foreign elements in Syria, fighting either for the regime or opposition forces. Linked to this development, appeared another central element of the Syrian civil war: extremist organizations. Groups with fundamentalist Islamist motives, such as Al-Qaeda, Jabhat Al-Nusrah have emerged as important players on the ground. In April 2013, with the foundation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), these extremist groups have turned out to be the strongest opposition force fighting against the Assad regime while constituting a major threat to regional and international peace and stability. Moreover, their inhumane tactics and executions by beheading increased the degree of violence within the Syrian territory. Until an international coalition was formed to fight against ISIS, it acquired vast lands in Syria, in addition to the territory that it had been controlling in Iraq, and shifted the militarization of the Syrian uprising to a higher level.

As the violence in Syria mounted following the emergence of extremist elements in the country, the concern related to sectarian issues has become one of the central aspects of the civil war. Indeed, the "sectarianization" of the conflict in Syria was directly linked to the country's heterogeneous structure under the rule of a family from a sectarian minority community, Alawite. From a broader perspective, "when a state's

[815] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 61.
[816] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 217.

military largely comprises ethnic and/or religious minorities…there is an increased likelihood that military personnel will remain loyal to the regime, even if this loyalty requires firing on fellow citizens engaged in political protests."[817] This was the case in Syria. Through the patronage systems established by the Assad family's regime, at least a considerable faction of the Alawite community had been enjoying certain privileges and wealth, which they feared to lose in case of a change. This fear pushed them to support and preserve the *status quo*. This approach also explains, to a certain extent, the use of live ammunition on the protesters and the loyalty of most of the Syrian army to the regime. However, the Alawites were not the only minority community that supported President Assad, especially during the initial phase of the uprising. "Many in the minority communities," asserted Rogan, "believe Bashar al-Assad, with his Alawite-dominated government, stands as a bulwark against a conservative Sunni Muslim order that would discriminate against them."[818] In other words, "the minority elements of the regime and the population as a whole (Alawites and Christians in particular) believed their fate rested with that of the regime; therefore, they would vigorously support the status quo."[819] Thus, the minority-state relations have played a decisive role in shaping the direction of the Syrian uprising, at least for its first years. While the regime's violent response to the events cost it the non-Alawite minorities' support, the core Alawite support to the regime remained and became even more consolidated as the influence of the Sunni extremist groups grew, and the sectarian motive became more and more central to their anti-regime fight.

Furthermore, the Syrian crisis had significant direct ties with critical regional and international dynamics, along with the country's close relations with certain regional and global actors, namely Iran and Russia. In contrast to Libya, the Syrian uprising was not politically and geographically isolated. "It was inextricably linked to the big issues of war and peace in the Middle East by a network of political and religious fault lines."[820] Moreover, unlike Libya, Syria was situated at the crossroads of the interests of many regional and international actors, and the stakes were high for each. "Syria is at the center of the small and politically complex central core of the Middle East that over the years has probably generated more blood-soaked headlines

[817] Haas, Lesch, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 4.
[818] Rogan, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 638.
[819] Lesch, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 83.
[820] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, pp. 279-280.

than anywhere else on the planet."[821] This explains why the uprising in the country turned into a protracted civil war and why the response of the international community was different from its reaction to the Libyan case as an intervention in Syria was daunting even for powerful actors on the international scene. The diplomatic support provided by Russia and China at the U.N. Security Council was also a crucial factor that has placed Syria out of reach for an international intervention. Thus, its central place within the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and its long-developed ties with important actors have played a decisive role over the fate of the Syrian uprising and its transformation into a complex, violent, and seemingly unresolvable problem.

By the first months of 2011, the general belief among the observers interested in Syrian affairs was that "the country was extremely stable. The regime's media fed this belief, constantly reiterating the assertion that Syria was the most secure and stable country in the world."[822] The demonstrations initiated in the spring of the same year proved that it was nothing but a mirage. The protests that spread rapidly across the country were nurtured by a secular discourse. The principal demands of the demonstrators were then, "…the release of all political detainees, the removal of the state of emergency, and the opening of the political arena through constitutional changes that would terminate the monopoly of the Ba'ath Party in the institutions of government…"[823] Thus, initially, the Syrians in the streets were calling for a political change and openness that would allow them to participate in the political process and provide them fundamental freedoms. "Protesters did not mobilize around religious identity and initially showed a fundamental respect for the diversity of Syria."[824] Notwithstanding, in reaction to the regime's harsh response, along with the increased Sunni extremist influence on the ground, the uprising has assumed a nature characterized by a considerable degree of religiosity nurtured by sectarian concerns. Although a viable end to the crisis is far from being sighted on the horizon, the Syrians' "civic engagement defied the collective distrust that the authoritarian state had actively fostered in order to control society."[825] They tore down the wall of fear built by the

[821] **Ibid.**
[822] Abbas, **op. cit.** 2011.
[823] Salwa Ismail, "The Syrian Uprising: Imagining and Performing the Nation," **Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism,** Vol. 11, No. 3, December 2011, p. 539.
[824] Mohja Kalf, "The Syrian Revolution, Then and Now," **Peace Review,** Vol. 26, No. 4, December 12, 2014, p. 556.
[825] Wendy Pearlman, "How the Syrian Uprising Began and Why It Matters," **The Conversation**, March 14, 2019, http://theconversation.com/how-the-syrian-uprising-began-and-why-it-matters-112801 (Access: 20.02.2020).

Assad regime to inhibit any collective action and any political engagement against its rule. Therefore, the only thing that is certain for Syria and the Assad regime, the last Ba'athist power in the Middle East after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, is that the country would never be what it had been at the beginning of 2011.

It is, therefore, undeniable that the Arab Spring uprisings, regardless of their outcome in different countries, brought about radical changes in the socio-political life of those countries. A tragic act of a young street vendor in Tunisia, creating a "butterfly effect," has dramatically changed the political landscape across the region. "The uprisings mark a watershed event, with the Arab world irrevocably changed. Essentially, the social contract governing the relationship between Arab ruling regimes and their populations is in tatters."[826] Having difficulties in fulfilling their side of the contract, the autocratic Arab regimes' vulnerability in the face of collective action was evidenced by the uprisings calling for political openness, stability, and freedom. Even though a regime-change in this direction and the creation of a stable political order could not be immediately assured in certain countries, the Arab Spring and these protests might be the first trigger for a future moment of a genuine change in the region with the need of a new social contract to govern the relations between the public and the government. The most frequently referred analogy for understanding and analyzing the Arab Spring has been that of the democratization wave within the ex-Soviet countries, which took place toward the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the circumstances were hardly the same or even similar. As put by Magen, "quite unlike in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, there [was] no effective liberal opposition ready to succeed the old regimes…Decades of modern autocracy in the Arab world have all but decimated middle-class, liberal constituencies in most Arab countries."[827]

No less importantly, however, after its initial success in Tunis and Cairo, "…the barrier of fear of the repressive apparatus of the state had been broken across the Arab world."[828] Given the fact that it represents not a moment but a process that would last relatively long, the destruction of this barrier would be one of the most substantial gains of the uprisings that have swept through the Middle East over the last decade.

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[826] Mona Yacoubian, "Impact of Arab Uprisings," **United States Institute of Peace,** April 18, 2011, https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/04/impact-arab-uprisings (Access: 21.02.2020).
[827] Amichai Magen, "On Political Order and the Arab Spring," **Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs,** Vol.6, No.1, 2012, p. 14.
[828] Lesch, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 81.

Transition periods are inherently fraught with challenges and threats. Democratization, the implementation of substantial political reforms, and the establishment of stability after such periods are not easy to undertake and cannot be assured in a short while. "What seems to be an indicator for reauthoritarianism at the moment may [in] years to come turn out to be only temporary setback on the path to democratization."[829] In this sense, the Arab Spring process, sometimes with aftershocks or drawbacks, would likely to continue -hopefully- until it reaches a viable and stable end that satisfies the enlightened demands of the Arab peoples. Thus, the long-term ramifications of the Arab Spring might be considerably positive, although the socio-political and historical background of the region seems to indicate otherwise. "In time, their legacy may be eventually more positive than expected because they will have 'liberated' many ordinary citizens from apathy, encouraging them to seek out a greater role and say in how society should be governed."[830] Within this context, the primary threat to a future founded on the demands of the peoples of the region seems to come from the Islamist groups who tried -successfully, in some countries- to steal the revolution. The essential source of this threat is the fact that the secular, liberal Arab youth, who courageously launched the uprisings and defied their autocrats, has lacked the organizational and structural capabilities supported by a degree of influence over their society to contend with the Islamists. As a result of long years of oppression under brutal autocratic regimes, "it is only the organized Islamists who are truly positioned to exploit opportunities for acquisition of power."[831] Thus, this extremist danger is -and would be, at least, for a while- the sword of Damocles hanging over the post-Arab Spring Middle East in need of stability and peace.

In every country affected by the wave of change in the region, the impact, duration, and outcome of this process would, not surprisingly, be different. As was illustrated through three case studies tackled above, while the concept of Arab Spring refers fundamentally to a demand for change in the political order in certain autocratic Arab countries, the internal characteristics of the given country, along with its place within the regional and international dynamics, have appeared as central factors affecting the shape and direction of the uprisings. In other words, the interactions between domestic and international factors have been key to analyze the revolts. This

[829] Beck, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 29.
[830] Francesco Cavatorta, "Domestic and International Dynamics Before and After the Arab Uprisings," **Cambridge Review of International Affairs,** Vol. 30, No. 4, 2018, p. 427.
[831] Magen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 14.

country-specific nature of the Arab Spring explains why each uprising required a distinct approach and why the relevant regional and international actors could not deal with it through a holistic, a one-size-fits-all strategy. Moreover, the change in the regional and international balance of power, as well as the diverging interests of external actors within the countries affected by the popular demonstrations, has naturally played a decisive role in shaping not only the course of the Arab Spring but also the United States' response toward the uprisings in the Middle East. In this sense, the domestic political dynamics of the United States intervened as a principal factor affecting the outcome. Thus, an analysis of the change in the inter-state dynamics at both regional and global levels would shed light on many aspects of the Arab Spring, particularly the policy choices of the external actors in the face of the sweeping regional events.

B- The Changing Regional and International Dynamics

The Arab Spring, as it goes without saying, was not an isolated revolutionary wave that emerged in a vacuum. Rather, it was notably the product of the changes in the global and regional equilibrium, and it ultimately altered those dynamics in an irrevocable way. Thus, the international and regional dynamics and the Arab uprisings have had a mutually formative relation. The Arab Spring, in this sense, "…has completely transformed the sociopolitical structure of the Middle East and reconfigured its international relations. While the revolutionary processes in the Arab Spring are significant within the region, the beginning of the Arab Spring also has implications for many states beyond the Middle East."[832] Within this framework, an analysis of the significant transformation at both levels before and during the Arab Spring will be helpful in developing a better understanding of this transformative process, as well as the reaction of the United States in the face of it.

As for the systemic factors, a significant change with regard to international politics appeared almost one decade prior to the outbreak of the Arab Spring. The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent American interventions in the Middle East triggered this transformation, placing the Arab world and the threat posed by Islamic terrorism and extremism at the heart of international affairs in the twenty-first century. It then

[832] Nikolay Kozhanov, "Russia and the Middle East: Adjusting to a New Political Vista," in. Robert Mason (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2014, p. 82.

became obvious that the region would preserve its central position in international politics for at least the first few decades of the century. Moreover, this tragedy, creating a "butterfly effect," led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the toppling of Saddam Hussein. From a broad perspective, the peoples in the Middle East, through what experienced Iraq, saw the possibility of holding a ruthless dictator accountable for the brutalities he had committed against his own citizens for years. "[T]he almost decade-long US invasion of Iraq that resulted from the post-9/11 momentum has…served as a precedent for the subsequent toppling of Arab dictators."[833] In other words, with all its controversial and flawed features, the American intervention in Iraq engendered, to a considerable degree, an awakening across the region, setting the ground for the subsequent popular unrests, limited though, in various countries and eventually, the Arab Spring.

No less importantly, another significant dimension of the change in the international environment appeared toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Aside from the perception of a decline in U.S. power, the essence of this dimension was based on the "return" of Moscow to the game as a prominent player. In this regard, President Putin's famous speech, delivered during the Munich Security Conference in 2007, appeared as a critical milestone, in which he bluntly emphasized Russia's disappointment with the West's attitude throughout the post-Cold War period. Having labeled the idea of a unipolar world as "not only unacceptable but also impossible," the Russian president denounced "uncontained hyper use of [military] force," and insisted on the importance of multipolarity.[834] The subsequent period was characterized by a growing assertiveness in Russia's international behavior and the increase of tension between Moscow and NATO. The Kremlin later proved its determination to challenge the unipolar *status quo* under Washington's dominance in Georgia, Ukraine, Crimea, and lastly, in Syria. Therefore, the most salient characteristic of international politics at the beginning of the 2010s was the return of the great power rivalry to the scene.

The Arab Spring, within this context, has had a drastic effect at the regional and global levels. The most powerful actors in the international arena were directly or

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[833] Türkmen, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 8.
[834] Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," February 10, 2007, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034 (Access:28.02.2020).

indirectly involved in the uprisings. Moreover, the Arab revolts "… have helped fuel the contradictions between Russia and the West…"[835] In other words, the Arab Spring has turned the Middle East, once again, into the chessboard of the confrontation between Moscow and its Western rivals, notably the United States. This struggle for power and influence shaped their respective responses to the dramatic events unfolding in the region. Likewise, the reason why the global powers, namely Russia and the U.S., reacted to the uprisings according to their country-by-country assessments instead of a single coherent approach was, indeed, the calculation of national interests they sought to achieve. The bipolarity of the Cold War years was replaced, with regard to the Arab Spring, by "a growing diversity of national and transnational interests and voices, which [made] negotiated or imposed solutions much more difficult."[836] Thus, common or diverging interests of Russia and the United States were central elements that have shaped not only the course of the Arab Spring in a given country but also the struggle between two giants and the global equilibrium.

Furthermore, both Moscow's and the West's perception of the Arab Spring and its potential impact on the global dynamics constituted one of the main factors that affected the formation of their stances. While, for the West, the uprisings seemed to present a substantial opportunity to advance its long-advocated liberal democratic values, the pragmatist nature of Western policies toward the region appeared as the source of trouble as it shaped their relations with certain Arab autocrats. Thus, from a general perspective, the Western countries, particularly the United States, were, as will be tackled later, stuck between the values they espoused and their good relations with non-democratic regimes that have long served as a means to advance their geopolitical interests. At its initial phase, the Arab Spring was perceived by the Kremlin "… as the result of a planned Western intervention specifically designed to decrease Moscow's hold on the region…[It] saw in the protests an echo of the 'color revolutions'…"[837] Going even further, Kozhanov argued that "Moscow interpreted the beginning of the Arab Spring as another limited period of turmoil that would be unable to bring about any structural change."[838] The dilemma faced by the United States -and the West- and

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[835] Alexey Malashenko, "Russia and the Arab Spring," **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,** Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, 2013, p. 3.
[836] David Held, Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Arab Spring and the Changing Balance of Global Power," **Open Democracy,** February 26, 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/arab-spring-and-changing-balance-of-global-power/ (Access: 27.02.2020).
[837] Malashenko, **op.cit.** 2013, p. 8.
[838] Kozhanov, **op.cit.** 2014, p. 94.

the misjudgment of the Kremlin with regard to the events explains the prevailing reluctance toward the revolution in Egypt from both sides. Later, in Libya, the U.S.-led Western countries opted to seize the opportunity to get rid of an anti-Western ruler, Qaddafi, while Moscow was still unable to fully grasp the essence of the uprisings. Subsequently, in Syria, where their key interests diverged considerably, direct involvement of the U.S. and Russia, with many other factors, rendered the situation excessively complex, and eventually unresolvable.

Linked to this renewed great power rivalry, another critical international factor that heavily affected the fate of the Arab Spring was the growing tendency toward multilateralism, led by the Obama administration. Combined with the Obama administration's intention to avoid the unilateral approach of the Bush years, this global trend favoring a multilateral order dramatically influenced the reactions in the face of the events in the Middle East. The concept, with its emphasis on inter-state cooperation, the institutional norms, and reconciliation, has, in effect, seemed to be a positive factor in settling international crises. However, within an environment characterized by the opposing priorities and diverging interests of predominant actors, especially those among the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the multilateral means can easily turn into a source of inaction in the face of tools used by perpetrators to strengthen their position. The gridlock within the multilateral venues, in other words, becomes an obstacle to an effective and normative response to crises by the international community. This was the case for certain crises triggered by the Arab Spring after the Libyan experience, notably in Syria.

For many, multilateralism, within the framework of the Arab Spring, turned out to be counterproductive since a Cold War-like atmosphere blocking any necessary and effective international action prevailed within the UN Security Council as a result of the re-intensification of the Washington-Moscow rivalry. "The Arab Spring has contributed to a clear identification of the parameters, cross-purposes, and institutional weaknesses of multilateralism, particularly within the UN Security Council (UNSC), as members of the international community struggle to implement effective responses."[839] Especially after the experience in Libya, it was true that every necessary international action was blocked by power struggles at the global or regional level.

[839] Robert Mason, "Conclusion: Conceptualizing the International Community's Approach to the MENA Region," in. Robert Mason (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2014, pp. 193-194.

The protracted civil wars in countries like Syria and Yemen were the result of this international political landscape. Particularly in Syria, the American-Russian competition for power and influence that has hampered a decisive UN action was the main reason for the violence ravaging the country for almost a decade. Reflecting this deadlock at the international level, as a result of the sour memories of Resolution 1973 that paved the way for a NATO-led intervention and regime-change in Libya, has emerged the Sino-Russian diplomatic block within the UN Security Council opposing any proposed resolution that would condemn the actions of the Assad regime. This attitude was, indeed, "… a statement that Russia and China had their own agenda in the Middle East. Russia wanted to rebuild its position as a great power, exploit any commercial opportunities that came along as a result…The Chinese had a tactical alliance with Russia in the security council and were also applying the formulation in the Middle East that had worked so well in Africa south of the Sahara. Their favourite way to project power is to do deals, securing the raw materials needed for their economy at home…"[840]

Therefore, the world has been witnessing, since then, a renewed competition between the erstwhile superpowers, the United States and Russia, trying to shape international politics through a prism of power projection and influence. The accuracy of this assumption was officially affirmed when Dmitry Medvedev, then Prime Minister of Russia, stated that the world had entered "a new cold war."[841] This renewed confrontation is, however, not the only international transformation that has affected the course of the Arab Spring and the way it was responded by global and regional actors. The realities of the twenty-first century are substantially different and more complex than those of the previous century. Thus, "big geopolitical shifts, including the rise of Asia and the growing influence of the Gulf countries, are blunting the reach of traditional 'great powers' and making it harder to reach consensus on critical global challenges."[842] Benefitting from the post-Cold War international environment that has left more room to maneuver for middle powers, the regional actors have tended to play a growing role in the affairs of the Middle East. From Washington's perspective, "the Middle East was not a major priority for Obama's foreign policy, with the 'pivot' to the Asia-Pacific region evidently the most important objective for both the President

[840] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 155.
[841] "Russian PM Medvedev Says New Cold War is On," **BBC,** February 13, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35569094 (Access: 29.02.2020).
[842] Held, Ulrichsen **op. cit.** 2014.

and his Secretary of State."[843] In this respect, this secondary place of the region in the Obama administration's foreign policy agenda and its search for a military withdrawal from the Middle East, combined with Russia's initial ambivalence and reluctance, allowed regional powers like Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf countries to assume a more effective role. From a broader perspective, the pre-Arab Spring crises, such as the global financial Crisis of 2008, the military troubles in Iraq and Afghanistan, "illuminated a shift in distribution of global power, politics, and policy-making. These crises simultaneously exacerbated the decline of US and European dominance in the global order, and hastened the appearance of a more multipolar world, which in the Middle East signaled a growing role for regional powers."[844]

The Arab Spring was "a serious blow to the *status quo* in the Middle East, which was already outdated in a changing international environment," and in this regard, it has constituted a "part of a larger transformation, which is not likely to end without a re-orientation of the political landscapes of the countries" in the region.[845] Its impact on the regional dynamics was, thus, not limited to the increasing destabilization and political turmoil. One of the most significant regional implications of the Arab Spring was that it has ultimately unveiled the major socio-political fault lines across the Middle East. Opening the Pandora's box, the uprisings revealed and fueled conflictual relations between Sunnis and Shiites or Arabs and Iranians. Moreover, their attitude toward the West and their view of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis have necessarily constituted the other principal cleavages affecting, along with their responses to the uprisings, the reciprocal relations of the regional actors. The events in countries like Syria, Bahrein, and Yemen have clearly reflected these major splits in the region. Combined with the growing opportunity presented by the Arab Spring to the regional actors, the uprisings have turned the region into a battleground delimited according to these lines of conflicts. The regional actors have, based on the above-mentioned distinctions, picked sides in almost every country affected by the Arab Spring, and this, in turn, has done nothing but escalate the competition between them and destabilize the region even further.

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[843] David Fitzgerald, David Ryan, **Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention,** Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 94

[844] **Ibid.**

[845] Bülent Aras, **Making Sense of Turkish-Eu Relations in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring,** SAM Papers, Center for Strategic Research, April 2013, No.5, Ankara, p. 7.

Throughout the first years of the Arab Spring, the "rivalry between the two rising non-Arab actors in the region -Turkey and Iran-…"[846] was accelerated and intensified. Seeking more influence and a larger role in the affairs of the Middle East, two neighbors were hoping to offer a model to be emulated by the revolutionary masses risen up against their autocrats. Following the recognition of the fact that the Arab Spring has represented more than a mere revolutionary period and that it has pointed a long conflictual process between opposing forces, they oriented their efforts, especially in Syria, to support their preferred groups -or, proxies-. While Iran, fearing to lose its last friend in the region, has fought for the Assad regime with the active support of the Hezbollah militias and the establishment of a "Shiite crescent" expanding from Tehran to Damascus, Turkey, on the contrary, has given its backing to the anti-regime groups in Syria in order to create stability in the country with which it has its longest territorial border. Nevertheless, aside from all geopolitical and strategic objectives that have guided the actions of these two countries in the face of the Arab Spring, the central motives of Tehran and Ankara were to assert themselves, amid prevailing belief in the decline of the West's influence within the region, as dominant actors with the will and capacity to shape the future of the Middle East. Although the subsequent developments have demonstrated that their regional intentions were overambitious and the assumption of the Western decline was premature, if not inaccurate, the struggle between Ankara and Tehran has not seemed to fade – despite some cooperation through Russia within the so-called Astana process, at least in the short term, without a viable solution to the Syrian crisis.

Within the framework of the Arab Spring uprisings' impact on the regional dynamics, the attitude assumed by the Gulf states that were almost immune to popular uprisings, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), appeared as a central element in forming a new political landscape in the region. First of all, the resources provided by the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have effectively nurtured the regional trend evolving toward a reaffirmation of authoritarianism in the region. "While Qatar reaffirmed its role as the region's maverick by throwing its support behind the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its offshoots elsewhere…the other Gulf States cracked down on any possible dissent

[846] Shlomo Brom, "The Regional Ramifications of the Arab Spring," in. Yoel Guzansky, Mark A. Heller (Eds.), **One Year After the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications,** The Institute for National Security Studies, Memorandum 113, March 2012, p. 40.

domestically before spreading their influence regionally."[847] From a broad perspective, the Qataris have come to see the Arab Spring as an opportunity to increase their international reputation and image in the eyes of the Middle Eastern youth, even at the expense of friendly relations with its neighbors and some other Arab states. The other Gulf states led by Riyadh, except Oman, have prioritized to preserve the *status quo*, contain the revolutionary fervor, and perhaps most importantly, prevent the rise of Iran as a major regional player. Concerned that a possible "cooperation of Iraq, Iran, and Syria could lead to the shift in power in the Middle East and jeopardize the interests of the USA and Saudi Arabia," the decision-makers in Riyadh have tended to "…weaken the position of Iran as the regional power and…to isolate the regime."[848]

Despite their clearly defined motives, such as counterbalancing Iran's influence and hampering a comprehensive revolutionary success across the region, and along with their internal disagreements over the issue of Muslim Brotherhood, the Gulf countries' inherent pragmatism has led them to an incoherent path though. While they did not hesitate to stifle the uprisings in Bahrein and they have used every tool to prevent any popular uprising within their own territory, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) unequivocally supported the opposition in Libya and promoted the idea of intervention against the Qaddafi regime. Likewise, in Syria, they have thrown their support behind the opposition groups fighting against the Assad forces. Thus, while they have had a clearly anti-democratic stance stemming from the fear of losing their privileged status and wealth, the guide to the Gulf monarchies' steps in the face of the uprisings in certain countries has been the calculation of pure self-interest without any ideological or moral concern. It is true that they have long held a central place in regional affairs given their rich natural resources and good relations with the United States. However, this time, after the initial shock of the uprisings, they have appeared as major regional actors on their own with their distinct political agendas and ambitions regarding the future of the region.

The decisive impact of the global and regional elements and their evolution on the direction and the outcome of each uprising was, to varying extents, visible. Although the focus had initially been on the influence of the internal dynamics of each country on the Arab Spring, a more rigorous analysis demonstrates that such a

[847] Held, Ulrichsen **op. cit.** 2014.
[848] Marcin Tarnawski, "Regional Implications of the Arab Spring," **Przeglad Strategiczny,** 2013, No.1, p. 133.

unidimensional approach is flawed in settings like Syria and Libya, where international actors are predominantly present. The influence of both global and regional factors cannot be sufficiently understood through a holistic perspective as they have affected the direction of the events in different ways, depending on the nature and the structure of the country under consideration. Thus, the nature of a given event requires a specific prism through which the analysis has to be filtered. In Egypt, for instance, under the influence of the initial inertia of the global powers –despite the subsequent indirect support of the Obama administration- accompanied by the intense revolutionary fervor that has prevailed within the Middle East and the inaction of regional actors, the uprising fed by the encouraging internal dynamics has rapidly turned into a revolution. Conversely, the protests in Libya and Syria have attained more international attention, and certain regional actors have played a more proactive role. However, these global and regional factors that have prevailed in both countries have led to two opposing outcomes. While they -different actors at each setting- facilitated the ousting of Colonel Qaddafi, they have constituted the principal source of support for the Assad regime's struggle against the opposition forces.

As far as the Arab Spring is concerned, the most significant aspect of the transformation was the nature of Moscow's foreign policy vision under President Vladimir Putin, "who tried to implement the Russian doctrine of a multipolar world by establishing close and friendly ties with non-European and non-Western countries."[849] This relapse into the Cold War pattern in Russian foreign policy has not only caused the re-emergence of the Russian-American rivalry but also altered Moscow's view of the Middle East, which has, once again, turned into the great powers' battleground for global influence and prestige, not to mention the revival of Russia's old imperial dream of descending to the warm waters of the Mediterranean. The trigger had been, within this particular context, the intensification of the intra-regional rivalries between multiple actors seeking to have more influence in Middle Eastern affairs while preserving and advancing their geopolitical and/or normative interests. Obviously, the United States prevailed among them.

U.S. foreign policy was, without doubt, not exempt from the influence of this complex background, and it was deeply affected by the transformation of the global distribution of power and the regional equilibrium. Indeed, within the context of the

[849] Kozhanov, **op.cit.** 2014, p. 88.

popular uprisings across the Arab world, the seemingly incoherent U.S. attitude characterized by an oscillation between moral concerns and pragmatic strategic calculations resulted directly from the changing dynamics that prevailed within the regional environment.

C- The U.S. Reaction in the Face of the Upheavals

The Arab Spring represented the gravest challenge faced by the Obama administration within the realm of foreign policy. While hoping to downsize the military and political U.S. commitment to the Middle East in accordance with his administration's priority of pivot to Asia, President Obama found himself, like many former American presidents, dragged into the Middle Eastern quagmire as a result of the unexpected events beyond control. "The military disengagement from the Middle East was predicated on desires to rebuild US economic strength after a decade of wasteful spending on expeditionary wars, while the Mubaraks, Ben Alis and Salehs of the region were bulwarks to protect US interests from Islamist threats."[850] It eventually turned out that these strongmen's regimes were not that stable and that they were not resilient enough to resist a transformative grassroots wave. The popular uprisings that swept across the region were, thus, the principal obstacle for the United States as it was, to some extent, forced to stay focused on the region and make difficult choices repeatedly. "For many in the Obama administration, the Arab Spring was a giant, unwanted crisis, distracting [them] from other objectives such as the 'Asia pivot,' management of the Iranian nuclear program, and even the Reset [with Moscow.]"[851]

Furthermore, perhaps the most striking feature of the Arab Spring was that it clearly illustrated the reflection of the inherent values-interest dilemma of U.S. foreign policy. The challenge for President Obama was to strike a difficult and delicate balance between the long-established American support for certain autocratic regimes in the region and the staunch embracement of the demonstrators' call for democratic reform. In other words, "the United States has had to tread a fine line between support for its values -and what it conceives as its long-term interests- represented by political reform in the region, and the protection of what it perceives as its core regional interests."[852]

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[850] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 94.
[851] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 209.
[852] Nicholas Kitchen, "The Contradictions of Hegemony: The United States and the Arab Spring," in. Nicholas Kitchen (Ed.), **After the Arab Spring: Power Shift in the Middle East?** Special Report 011, LSE IDEAS, May 2012, London, p. 57.

Given the complexity of the Arab revolts and the significance of the region for the strategic interests of many different actors, regional and global, such a balanced strategy was extremely difficult, if not impossible.

As candidly summarized by Hillary Clinton, this dilemma has marked, for many years, U.S. policies in the Middle East:

> *"Despite the best intentions of successive American administrations, the day-to-day reality of U.S. foreign policy prioritized urgent strategic and security imperatives such as counterterrorism, support for Israel, and blocking Iran's nuclear ambitions over the long-term goal of encouraging internal reforms in our Arab partners. To be sure, we did press leaders to reform, because we believed that would eventually provide greater long-term stability and inclusive prosperity. But we also worked with them on a wide range of security concerns and never seriously considered cutting off our military relationships with them. This was a dilemma that had confronted generations of American policymakers."*[853]

Echoing this dilemma, Washington's response to the uprisings across the Arab world was, from the start, characterized by ambiguity, haziness, and hesitance, if not inconsistency. Acting as a bystander in the face of the revolution in Egypt, the United States assumed a more active role in Libya by instigating, or rather, "leading from behind" the intervention under NATO auspices. In Syria, the risk of a direct confrontation with Russia, along with the administration's belief in the necessity of a collective action -which could not be organized through a UN mandate due to lack of consensus among the permanent members of the Security Council- has pushed Washington somewhat away from a central position, virtually leaving the solution in the hands of the Moscow-Tehran-Ankara trio. Thus, "with the exception of the anti-regime uprising in Libya, the Obama White House largely sat on the sidelines, neither actively promoting democracy nor firmly backing its allied dictatorships."[854] Despite this ambiguity toward the revolts in different countries, the United States had, indeed, little influence on the Arab Spring and the subsequent regional developments, with the

[853] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, pp. 276-277.
[854] Henriksen, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 20.

exception of Libya. Put differently, "in none of the uprisings in the Arab world was the role of the United States decisive –and only in Libya could it be called significant."[855]

Thus, a rigorous analysis of the American response to the Arab Spring, and its changing attitude depending on the country under consideration would demonstrate the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy and the impact of the inherent dilemma on its formation and implementation.

1- Response to the Uprisings Across the Middle East

In a 2008 poll conducted among American IR professors, the Middle East, holding the first place before East Asia, appeared as "the area of greatest strategic importance to the United States," as forty-six percent of them approved.[856] Similarly, for Mearsheimer, the region, especially the Persian Gulf, should be considered as one of the three regions outside the Western Hemisphere, with Europe and East Asia, which are "of vital strategic importance."[857] Seen from this perspective, the Arab Spring has constituted a major challenge to U.S. foreign policy stemming from its multidimensional character affecting the economic, strategic American interests, as well as the ideational ones. Although "the prevailing view [within the Obama administration] was that the United States had expanded far too much time and effort on Middle East issues during the administration of George W. Bush and far too little time and effort on Asia, which…would be the epicenter of global competition in the twenty-first century,"[858] the desired shift toward this region was hampered by the extent to which the Arab Spring affected the structure of international and regional politics. The essence of the challenge posed by the Arab uprisings to American foreign policy lay in the fact that it was enormously difficult "to work with autocratic regimes and promote universal values within them at the same time. [Because,] autocrats from Beijing to Moscow to Tehran, will never agree that democracy is a universal value..."[859]

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[855] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 338.
[856] Martin Kramer, "How Not to Fix the Middle East," **Middle East Papers,** No. 7, Middle East Strategy at Harvard, December 7, 2009, p. 1.
[857] Mearsheimer, **The Great Delusion…** p. 222.
[858] Gelvin, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 1
[859] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 109.

For the hopeful environment surrounding the U.S.-Middle East relations in the aftermath of Barack Obama's Cairo speech in 2009, in which he promised a new beginning for the United States' relations with the Muslim world, the Arab Spring was a critical test. At the initial phase of the revolts, notably regarding Egypt and Tunisia, the United States –and the West, in general- opted for caution and wariness. Some, like Walid Phares, considered this approach catastrophic as "… in the face of genuine (and long overdue) civil society uprisings, Western democracies have intervened late (if at all) and with the wrong partners."[860] For those who advocated such a view, the hijacking of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt by the Nahda Party and the Muslim Brotherhood, respectively, resulted from the inaction of the Western actors, particularly the United States. This interpretation might seem accurate when made retrospectively. However, at the height of both revolutions, the only reality was the pervasive uncertainty on the ground. Although the call for a more democratic, liberal, and open system was attractive for the long-standing American principles, no one knew exactly what the political identity of the protesters and their ultimate goal was. It was, thus, natural that the Obama administration, as well as the other Western actors, did not immediately throw their full support behind them without having a clear image of the probable outcome of the uprisings. Their support was limited in scope, at least until the prospect of ousting the two autocrats, Ben Ali and Mubarak, appeared on the horizon. "Hesitantly, Obama moved to support the demonstrators, uncertain as to who they were and how their success would affect American interests in the region."[861]

Another significant aspect of America's response to the Arab uprisings, especially in Libya and Syria, was the Obama administration's staunch conviction that such problems ought to be resolved by multilateral means. Seeking to break with his predecessor's legacy defined by unilateralism, President Obama tended to place, at the heart of international politics, multilateral diplomacy that would serve not only to diminish the cost of action for the U.S. by sharing the burden with other members of the international community but also improve America's image and reputation throughout the world. In other words, "the Obama administration felt justified to wash its hands of the policies pursued by the [Bush administration], because Americans had turned away from them. Instead, Washington looked to European[s] and others to pick

[860] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 4.
[861] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 337.

up the burden."[862] President Obama explained his vision regarding the necessity of collective action, in his speech before the U.N. General Assembly, in 2009. He emphasized his "…deeply held belief that in the year 2009 -more than at any point in human history- the interests of nations and peoples are shared," and he added: "We must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and our work must begin now."[863]

Closely linked to his multilateralist view, the president's belief in the unreliability of the imposition of a governmental system -democracy, in this case– on any country by external forces marked the U.S. stance *vis-à-vis* the revolts in the Middle East. "Between 2009 and 2011, there was a divorce between Washington and the democracy forces of the region, resulting in a chasm that ultimately set the stage for the Arab Spring."[864] Indeed, democracy was apparently not among the priorities of the administration's foreign policy agenda. "President Obama, while sometimes speaking out in favor of democracy…certainly did not make that theme the centerpiece of his foreign policy."[865] The first case that illustrated this view of the Obama administration came in 2009 in Iran. The Green Movement, initiated in the aftermath of a fraudulent election, was brutally repressed by the country's security forces, and the United States, seeking dialogue with Iran over its nuclear ambitions, opted for silence, except for some rhetorical support for pro-democracy demonstrators. Such an approach could also be observed in the face of the Arab Spring, especially during its first months.

"Unlike the Bush administration's missionary incantations about America's moral duty and divine right, Obama has been unapologetically pragmatic in terms of how he approaches foreign policy, scaling back grandiose rhetoric, and assuming a more reserved stance on the promotion of democracy in other countries."[866] In this sense, multilateralism was, for him, "a check on crusading exceptionalism."[867] Thus, the ideas of democracy promotion and ending tyranny in the world ceased to be seen, under the presidency of Barack Obama, as the defining purposes of U.S. foreign

[862] Henriksen, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 20.
[863] "Remarks of President Barack Obama: Responsibility for our Common Future," Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 64th Session, September 23. 2009, https://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/US_en.pdf (Access: 05.03.2020).
[864] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, pp. 10-11.
[865] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 54.
[866] **Ibid.** p. 59.
[867] **Ibid.** p. 155.

policy, and they were replaced by more pragmatic instincts. His pragmatism embellished with certain ideological insights and defined by the refusal of an imposed solution to international problems was bluntly summarized by Henry Nau:

> *"He has a coherent worldview that highlights 'shared' interests defined by interconnected material problems such as climate, energy, and nonproliferation and deemphasizes 'sovereign' interests that separate countries along political and moral lines. He tacks away from topics that he believes divide nations -democracy, defense, markets, and unilateral leadership- and toward topics that he believes integrate them -stability, disarmament, regulations, and diplomacy."*[868]

Thus, the "Freedom Agenda" of George W. Bush that had marked the last decade of U.S. foreign policy prior to Barack Obama's election, was conceived, by the Obama administration, "as an unrealistic and aggressive policy of promoting democracy"[869] and it was abandoned. His pragmatism and "realist idealism" were reflected in the Cairo speech, by his bold promise of welcoming, without any separation between seculars and Islamists, "all elected, peaceful governments -provided they govern with respect for all their people."[870] This approach sent, to some extent, dangerous signals to the Arab world, where the non-democratic Islamist opposition groups felt emboldened by the fact that they would not face a Western intervention if they seized the opportunity presented by the Arab Spring. In this sense, it might be argued that the Obama administration's relativist view offering almost unconditional respect for the peoples' choices paved the way, though unintentionally, for these groups to steal the revolutions launched by politically unorganized secular youth.

Within this framework, the American response to the Arab Spring has had certain distinctive characteristics, even though they could not be applied consistently to each uprising. These characteristics were "wariness, because governments friendly to the United States found themselves under siege; high hopes for the development of political systems committed to liberty and popular sovereignty; and uncertainty about

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[868] Henry R. Nau, "Obama's Foreign Policy," **Policy Review,** April & May 2010, https://www.hoover.org/research/obamas-foreign-policy (Access: 06.03.2020).
[869] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p.172.
[870] "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," **op. cit.** 2009.

how best to advance American values and interests…"[871] in a region that has incrementally become chaotic and unpredictable. The United States, thus, had to balance its commitments to its allies in the Middle East and its long-advocated principles that constituted the essential motivation for the revolutionary masses in Arab streets. Moreover, President Obama, in his Cairo speech, awakening enthusiasm within the Muslim world, put forward his conviction that

> *"…all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere."*[872]

The Arab uprisings, thus, offered a historic opportunity for the U.S. to fulfill this promise and prove its determination and sincerity in its advocacy of fundamental human rights. Nevertheless, it was easier said than done. Unconditional American support for the forces of democracy in the region, though it seemed morally right, would endanger the strategic interests of the United States, especially at a moment when the only certainty about the ultimate outcome of the events was uncertainty. Particularly "… when push came to shove in places like Egypt during the Arab Spring, Washington was reluctant to cut its ties with friendly autocrats and their military backers."[873] The administration was, therefore, "risk averse regarding supporting democratic change in states in which it is difficult to know how events will play out and which groups could be winners and which loser. Having seen Hamas rise to electoral victory, the Obama administration probably [preferred] the status quo in many states to uncertain transition and chaos."[874]

The most consistent aspect of Washington's response to the events in the region was its insistence on not taking a leading role, pushing the uprisings in a given direction. Instead, Washington, observing the trajectory of the revolts in each country, opted for adapting its strategies to the course of events. Thus, "whilst seeking to avoid

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[871] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 298.
[872] "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," **op. cit.** 2009.
[873] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 33
[874] Robert Mason, "The Obama Administration and the Arab Spring: Waiting for a Doctrine," in. Robert Mason (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2014, p. 51.

'getting ahead of the game' in public, the administration used its long-developed relationships in the region to attempt to shape developments."[875] This cautious attitude assumed by the U.S. stemmed, first and foremost, from its intention to prevent any radical alteration of the *status quo* in the Middle East, which would endanger not only the American geopolitical interests but also the security of its allies, notably Israel. The underlying assumption was that such a shift in the present regional order might open the gates to power for extremist groups and ideologies, and ultimately, aggravate the chaotic and unstable environment in the Middle East. Rather than a revolutionary change in the region, the United States advocated a peaceful reformation process that would both respond to the demonstrators' demands and trigger an orderly political transition. However, given the historical, traditional, and psycho-social characteristics of the societies in question, such a transition was not likely, if not impossible.

Furthermore, another crucial factor that induced the U.S. stance characterized by caution was the persistent "fear of worse," that is to say, the fear from the risk of an extremist Islamist takeover of governments in countries that have faced the revolutionary movements. This fear was the principal reason for the emergence of "friendly tyrants" throughout the Cold War around the globe, and similarly, marked the United States' reaction with regard to the developments in the Arab world. Communism, as the source of threat during the Cold War, was, in the post-9/11 world, replaced by the Islamist menace. The assumption that the Islamists were the most probable, if not the only, alternative to the autocratic regimes in the region, though not wholly inaccurate, has, in time, turned into a means for Arab dictators like Mubarak of Egypt to maintain their grip on power and obtain American support, or at least, overlooking. In fact, at the bottom of this Western fear of extremist alternatives was the acceptation of "…the rhetoric of the region's strongmen, according to which the alternative to authoritarian rule was either chaos or Islamism and jihadism -and that a continuation of the status quo was the only guarantee to seeing the West's interests at least partially served."[876] Some observers criticized Western actors for their failure "to understand that the Islamists were *not* the only alternative to the secular authoritarian regimes and that the secular liberals were the real alternative to the Islamists."[877] Moreover, as the Arab Spring erupted, claimed Phares, "the West could not distinguish

[875] Kitchen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 56.
[876] Roland Freudenstein, "The Arab Spring: What's in it for Us?" **European View,** Vol:10, Issue:1, June 2011, p. 68.
[877] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 30.

between the true freedom fighters and the usurpers of power on the streets of Arab cities."[878]

However, such a view skips the fundamental fact that the secular liberals and the demonstrators on the streets have not had a clearly-defined ideological umbrella and political agenda. Despite the shared desire to end autocracy in their countries, for what would come next, they offered neither a viable plan nor a political organization or platform. As wisely put by Shadi Hamid, "most Arab countries lack strong, coherent party structures, yet, during democratic openings, citizens are asked to practice politics through political parties, which are either weak or nonexistent. It can take years, if not decades, for new parties to build themselves up from scratch."[879] In this sense, the Islamists, whether they were organized within a party structure or not, were in a more favorable position compared to the secular liberals as they had a coherent ideological unity, a common understanding of political and social life, and most importantly, a well-defined plan for the future: a political order established on Islamic principles and rules. Within the post-autocracy Middle East, "Islamists had major institutional and organizational advantages -such as existing fund-raising and patronage networks, a brand name, and longtime members who were highly invested in the cause- in comparison with most liberal and secular groups, many of which have also been targeted by authoritarian regimes."[880] Therefore, Washington's caution and fear were not baseless, as some claimed. The developments in post-Arab Spring Egypt, Libya and the emergence of many extremist Islamist groups like ISIS in the region proved the accuracy of the West's initial assumption.

With regard to the Obama administration's response inspired by a mixture of pragmatism and principle, moral considerations and humanitarian concerns have had a significant but not central place. Doubtlessly, such concerns were not the primary factors guiding the administration's decisions. Nevertheless, moral and humanitarian motives have constituted the source of many criticisms from different angles toward President Obama's foreign policy team. Both the advocates of a pro-active, even interventionist human rights policy and the adherents of the belief in the primacy of strategic interests with regard to foreign policy issues accused the administration of

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[878] **Ibid.**
[879] Shadi Hamid, **Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World,** St. Martin's Press, New York, 2016, p. 196.
[880] Haas, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 14.

either overlooking such concerns or overcommitment to them. Indeed, even within the members of the administration, the disagreement about this matter generated a division. "On no issue was the debate more fraught than over the Arab Spring, as competing ideologies and worldviews within the administration wrestled with longstanding conflicts between American interests in region of vital strategic importance."[881] Therefore, emerged, within the administration, two competing camps composed of "…foreign policy realists such as Robert Gates and Tom Donilon…[and] hawkish liberal internationalists including Anne-Marie Slaughter, Susan Rice, Samantha Power."[882] Eventually, neither side won the debate or was proved a hundred percent right. Both approaches guided, with their weaknesses and strengths, U.S. foreign policy in different settings and caused nothing but an oscillation between humanitarian and strategic concerns, without presenting a viable solution to the given crisis. In accordance with his unwavering pragmatism, "President Obama's continued commitment to the promotion of US ideal interests in the region went hand in hand with the US president's well-documented commitment to the protection of traditional US strategic interests."[883] Without making any concessions regarding the United States' core national interests in the Middle East, the president aimed at promoting the American ideals by encouraging democratic reforms, by force if necessary, as was the case in Libya. In other words, he aspired to the impossible.

Furthermore, Washington's two-fold objective, crystallized by its close ties with certain Middle Eastern autocrats and its -rhetorical and concrete- support for democracy, gave birth to what was perceived as inconsistency in U.S. foreign policy toward the political tsunami in the region. However, this was, rather than inconsistency, the evidence of the administration's success in developing a nuanced understanding of the uprisings, each of which has presented different trajectories, risks, and opportunities, depending on the internal dynamics and characteristics of the country under consideration. To be able to achieve its objectives and preserve its interests, the United States has put forward a viable strategy based on the recognition of the fact that it must "distance itself from the idea that… [the] uprisings constitute a cohesive Arab revolt."[884] Rather, the inherently complex nature of the Arab Spring and its far-reaching ramifications have necessarily precluded the adaptation of a

[881] Kitchen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 55.
[882] **Ibid.**
[883] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 220.
[884] Anderson, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 3.

monolithic and doctrinaire U.S. strategy in dealing with emerging and/or growing threats. Thus, "in his response to the Arab Awakening, President Obama did not follow a single panoptic approach but, instead, his administration devised ad hoc policies to address the specific circumstances of each individual uprising."[885] Without doubt, many other factors, domestic and international, have considerably affected Washington's response, but in the end, this multidimensional vision has constituted the framework in which the Obama administration designed its foreign policy in the face of the Arab Spring.

Although the initial perception of the uprisings, leading Washington first to assume a cautious stance and then to implement a nuanced strategy adapted to the specific requirements of each case, seemed accurate, the following period raised doubts about this assumption and encouraged critical voices. Why, if the United States had followed the right policy path, the Arab Spring has not evolved toward democracy, liberty, and stability? While some have insisted on seeking an answer to this question by pointing out the flawed decisions made by the American decision-makers, they have mostly overlooked the transformation of the nature of the Arab Spring, as well as the international equilibrium. As for the latter, the increased assertiveness in Moscow's international undertakings has constituted, as would be tackled later, the main challenge limiting the United States' room for maneuver. As far as the Arab Spring is concerned, the year 2013 marked the turning point not only for the fate of the revolts in the Middle East but also the result produced by the American strategy in the region. The developments in this year triggered what was called "the Arab Spring's second explosion."[886] In Egypt, in July 2013, the coup led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi resulted in ousting the Islamist government presided by Mohamed Morsi, a prominent figure of the Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, in the fall of the same year, "…secessionists in Eastern Libya… declared their own government,"[887] paving the way for a renewed civil war that would be initiated a few months later. Lastly, in Syria, while ISIS reaffirmed itself as a bloodthirsty and central actor of the conflict in the same year, the country also witnessed the surge of the secular faction of opposition. Showing indications of turning into a widespread winter, the post-2013 Arab Spring

[885] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 220.
[886] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 185.
[887] Alan J. Kuperman, "Obama's Libyan Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 94, No. 2, (March/April 2015), p. 68.

further complicated the affairs in the region and posed new challenges to the United States.

All these developments, combined with the Russian intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014, signaled a significant decrease in America's relative power at the international level. The structure and the rules of the game, which were established after the fall of the Berlin Wall, were no more in place. Going even further, Mandelbaum claimed that "the year 2014 concluded…a particular era in American foreign policy, one in which, as never before, the effort to transform the internal politics and economics of other countries took precedence over the defense of the United States and its interests."[888] Within this context, America's capacity to affect the course of international events, especially the Arab Spring, has diminished considerably. As a result, it could not affect the evolution of the ultimate outcome of the uprisings in many countries in the desired direction defined by liberal principles. This, in turn, demonstrated that the core strategic interests would prevail over the ideal ones, and despite the sound decisions taken by Washington at the initial phase of the uprisings, U.S. foreign policy has ultimately remained far from producing the expected results in every respect. Put differently, when the international stimulus turns out to be the primary factor shaping the course of events, it outweighs the concerns inspired by moral principles. Meanwhile, as the credibility and capability of the United States have gradually become subject to criticisms and suspicion, the inherent oscillation of Washington's strategy in response to the Arab Spring appeared more problematic than ever before.

Therefore, President Obama who came to the White House with a clear intention to remove the traces of his predecessor's hard power policies within the Greater Middle East and shift the focus of U.S. foreign policy toward East Asia to counterbalance the rise of China, found himself preoccupied with a radical disruption of the *status quo* within the Arab world, which would, if not responded to as required, endanger the strategic and ideational interests of the United States. While Washington's response initially seemed hesitant and cautious, the Obama administration has, in time, put forward a pattern echoing the president's pragmatism and tendency to melt idealistic and strategic concerns in one pot. Although the administration was charged, by critics, of "reject[ing] the American foreign policy

[888] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 311.

tradition"[889] since it had not wholeheartedly and unconditionally supported the demonstrators, the U.S. attitude was, in fact, what was required by the harsh realities on the ground. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring has not followed a linear path. The dynamics in various countries have radically changed even after the first shock of the revolts or the success of the revolution, as was the case in Egypt. Moreover, the increasing complexity of the Syrian conflict and growing chaos in post-Qaddafi Libya, combined with a significant transformation within the international dynamics, raised questions about the efficiency of U.S. foreign policy. Further analysis of the United States' different responses to the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, respectively, puts forward a clear image of the ebbs and flows of its foreign policy and the factors that have affected it.

2- Ambivalence in Egypt

The eruption of the uprising in Egypt, triggering a significant quandary for U.S. foreign policy, pushed Washington to face "the Islamist dilemma -how can the United States promote democracy in the region without bringing Islamists to power?"[890] Resulting from the recognition of the fact that the Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, were the most potent political actor to seize power after Hosni Mubarak's resignation -or ouster- the United States was initially stuck between the calls for democracy and the support for its old friend who had acted as a bulwark between the Islamists and power for over three decades.

"Since Egypt had long been a key US ally, and arguably the leading Arab nation, developments in that country were of special significance."[891] Indeed, Egypt was not only central to the intra-regional affairs as an integral part of the fragile Camp David peace but also key to other U.S. strategic interests, despite its non-democratic regime. The country was "along with Saudi Arabia, one of America's most important allies in the Middle East, a second pillar to replace the shah of Iran after he fell."[892] Its status as a major strategic ally in the Middle East has even improved as "the Obama Administration…has elevated Egypt's importance to U.S. foreign policy in the region,

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[889] Pierce, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 21.
[890] Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists: How Islamists Will Change Politics, and Vice Versa," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 90, No.3, (May/June 2011), p. 40.
[891] Dueck, **The Obama Doctrine…** p. 75.
[892] Shadi Hamid, "Egypt: The Prize," in. Kenneth M. Pollack et. al. (Ed.), **The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East,** Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C. 2011, p. 102.

as U.S. policymakers work to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process."[893] Lastly, Egypt was the second-largest beneficiary, only after Israel, of U.S. foreign aid since 1979. Thus, "prior to 2011 there was little systemic pressure on the Mubarak regime to open up the political process in Egypt,"[894] and the country was seen as an ally in the struggle against extremist Islamism and as an element of moderation with regard to the Arab-Israeli question. All these factors contributed to putting the outbreak of the revolts in this country at the heart of the U.S. foreign policy agenda in early 2011.

Within this context, the experts and the American decision-makers often used the Iranian analogy as a historical example to guide the American response toward the Egyptian crisis. Emphasizing that "transitions from dictatorship to democracy are fraught with challenges and can easily go terribly wrong," then-Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton explained the similarities between Egypt and Iran, pointing out to the future risks: "In Iran in 1979, for example, extremists hijacked the broad-based popular revolution against the Shah and established a brutal theocracy. If something similar happened in Egypt, it would be a catastrophe, for the people of Egypt, as well as for Israeli and U.S. interests."[895] Mubarak had been an important ally to the United States as had been the Shah of Iran until his ouster by the Islamists who were, at the moment, indirectly threatening to overthrow the Egyptian autocrat. Within this analogy, President Obama's role was to avoid repeating Jimmy Carter's "mistakes." "President Carter, as champions of this analogy hinted, had been weak, too focused on human rights, and not worried enough about American security interests."[896] The suggested option by the advocates of this analogy was, therefore, to back Mubarak at the expense of the hopes of liberal democracy in Egypt.

The closest aides of President Obama and top figures within his administration were also divided, "almost entirely along generational lines,"[897] on how to respond to the unfolding events. Some of them "were swept up in the drama and idealism of the moment… [and] they identified with the democratic yearnings and technological savvy of the young Egyptian protesters."[898] In line with this view, Ben Rhodes, with

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[893] Jeremy Sharp, **Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,** Congressional Research Service Reports, September 2, 2009, p. 1.
[894] David P. Forsythe, "US Foreign Policy and Human Rights: Situating Obama," **Human Rights Quarterly,** Vol. 33, No.3, (August 2011), p. 785.
[895] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 285.
[896] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 207.
[897] Obama, **op.cit.** 2020, p.644.
[898] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 283.

regard to the prevailing disagreement within the administration, claimed that "the main driver of opinion seemed to be generational, with the younger staff pressing for change."[899] As later affirmed by Robert Gates, the administration's Secretary of Defense, "…NSS members Dennis McDonough, John Brennan, and Ben Rhodes had proposed 'very forward leaning' support of the protesters in Egypt and a change of leadership there."[900] In turn, the senior officials like Vice President Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, Mike Mullen, and Tom Donilon, pointing out the risks posed by abandoning a long-standing ally, counseled a "cautious" approach.[901] Echoing the intransigent character of Congress, with a Republican majority in the House of Representatives, which was shaped as a result of the mid-term election of 2010, this division within the administration has constituted a major source of the ambivalence of Washington's response to the Egyptian crisis. Thus, as the national political elites could not reach an agreement on how to deal with the uprisings and the U.S. role in the region, the formation of a coherent foreign policy has eventually become a difficult task, especially in such a turbulent and fragile environment.

Another significant aspect of the formation process of U.S. foreign policy in the face of the Egyptian uprising was the administration's view of the Mubarak regime as a powerful structure open to change. "Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people," said Clinton, on the first day of the protests.[902] Similarly, on January 28, President Obama insisted that "this moment of volatility has to be turned into a moment of promise… [and] there must be…political, social, and economic reforms that meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people."[903] However, it turned out that the regime in Egypt was extremely fragile, and the hopes and encouraging rhetoric seeking to lead to openness within the political realm were in vain. Eventually, the United States had to decide the nature of its strategy as Mubarak seemed unwilling to put

[899] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 101.
[900] Gates, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 504.
[901] **Ibid.**; Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 285.
[902] "US Urges Restraint in Egypt, Says Government Stable," **Reuters**, January 25, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/ozatp-egypt-protest-clinton-20110125-idAFJOE70O0KF20110125 (Access: 13.03.2020).
[903] Barack Obama, "All Governments Must Maintain Power through Consent, Not Coercion," January 28, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/01/28/president-obama-situation-egypt-all-governments-must-maintain-power-through-consent- (Access: 14.03.2020).

forward a substantial reform agenda and the demonstrators proved their resolve by not stepping back.

Within this framework, Washington moved toward a reactionary approach, instead of a pro-active one, based on observing the evolution of the events on the ground before throwing its support to any side. Meanwhile, the United States did not refrain from calling for reform publicly –through the tweets posted by the State Department's account, backing the demonstrators in Tahrir Square- even though it avoided taking concrete incentives in this regard. The apparent ambivalence of U.S. foreign policy stemmed from the influence of two factors pulling toward opposite directions. On the one hand, because of the commitment to the core American values, regardless of its extent, the administration had difficulties in not substantially supporting the demonstrators. On the other hand, given the long-established good relations with the pro-U.S. autocrat, Mubarak, and the security guarantee he has provided for Israel and the other American interests, rapidly abandoning him could be harmful not only for those interests but also for the credibility of Washington in the eyes of other non-democratic allies. In the end, while seeking to find the best answer in its quest for a viable foreign policy decision, "the Obama foreign policy establishment found themselves behind the events: from drifting with the repressive status quo they had been forced into calling for progressive change, nevertheless hoping for an outcome that did not upset Israel and undermine other US objectives such as fighting Islamic terrorists."[904]

Indeed, for the administration, the challenge was much more than only a mere values-interests dilemma. From a broader perspective, "the choice was not between keeping Mubarak in power or siding with the revolutionaries. The trade-off was between peaceful evolutionary change and violent revolutionary change."[905] In not much time, it became obvious that any meaningful reform would not be undertaken with Mubarak in power as he was offering nothing but cosmetic concessions, and his intention to maintain his grip on power increased the risk of an escalation in violence. On February 1st, a shift in the stance assumed by the United States occurred in a direction favoring the change of leadership in Egypt as President Obama publicly declared his "… belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be

[904] Forsythe, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 786.
[905] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 210.

peaceful, and it must begin now."[906] Thus, within a few days, Washington decided to push for Mubarak's removal from power. This dramatic change in the American attitude was considered inappropriate by some critics like Henry Kissinger, who believed that the United States should not have thrown Mubarak "…over the side as if relationships have no meaning… [and] that [the U.S.] owed him a graceful exit."[907] Similarly, some others argued that "…the abandonment of long-term US allies set a worrying precedent for other 'pro-US' autocrats who might encounter a similar popular fate."[908] Nevertheless, in an era of political turmoil and historic transformation, U.S. foreign policy and the Obama administration could not afford to be on the wrong side of history. Providing an entrenched autocrat with more time in power against the will of the youth of his country was not only morally unacceptable but also strategically unsound as such an approach would ultimately cause the American strategy to be labeled as the factor that impaired the momentum of a nascent democratic revolution. Thus, the administration surfed the tide and opted for hearing the voice of the young people on the streets of Cairo and Alexandria, even though there were justifiable worries within its members, about the aftermath of Mubarak's removal.

As mentioned above, "…the positions taken by the Obama administration gradually moved from supporting Mubarak, to calling for reform, to signaling that Mubarak's rule was over and that an orderly transition should begin 'now', to denying that Mubarak's presence was required to implement the desired reform."[909] By certain critics of the administration, this balanced approach was interpreted as U.S. hypocrisy. Jason Brownlee, for instance, in a passage defining U.S. policy regarding the uprisings in Egypt, stated that "amid the crisis, the administration would urge calm –and by implication a return to the undemocratic status quo– but if opposition forces forced the ruler out, U.S. officials would extol the victory as if they had been seeking democratic

[906] "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt," February 1, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/01/remarks-president-situation-egypt (Access: 14.03.2020).
[907] James Harding, "Henry Kissinger: My Friends and Enemies," **The Times,** May 14, 2011, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/henry-kissinger-my-friends-and-enemies-wt03mg7pwmc (Access: 14.03.2020).
[908] Robert Singh, **Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy: The Limits of Engagement,** Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2012, p. 124.
[909] Sergio Fabbrini, Amr Yossef, "Obama's Wavering: US Foreign Policy on the Egyptian Crisis, 2011-13," **Contemporary Arab Affairs,** Vol.8, No. 1, 2015 p. 67.

change all along."[910] This evolution of U.S. foreign policy was, in effect, the result of the concerns about the post-Mubarak era. Ousting Mubarak was just one phase of the process, and perhaps, the easiest one. Egypt would then be under the interim government of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) for eighteen months, and throughout this period, bilateral relations with the United States were not completely smooth but relatively calm and stable. What Washington sought was the transition to a democratic political order under a civilian government. Held in November 2011, the parliamentary elections in Egypt resulted in a landslide victory for the Islamists -the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis- gaining almost 70% of the votes. The presidential elections in May-June 2012 were not surprising, in this regard, as the Brotherhood's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, triumphed. Determined to keep his promise to welcome all elected governments, President Obama accepted the results and decided to encourage the establishment of democratic institutions and a liberal structure protecting the rights of all Egyptians under an Islamist government and president. In other words, "either as a result of no choice or as a calculated pragmatism for dealing with ascendant political Islam, the Obama administration came to rely on the view that 'engagement leads to moderation', which was also predicated by letting the Islamists change positions to cater to the US vital interests concerning relations with Israel and free-market economy."[911]

It soon appeared that the constructive and accommodationist approach assumed by the administration was nothing but wishful thinking. The idea of engagement and outreach to the Muslim Brotherhood was fruitless in terms of inciting a transition to a democratic system. Put differently, the hopes that democracy in Egypt would flourish under the Muslim Brotherhood government and Mohamed Morsi's presidency were in vain. Thus, this accommodationist U.S. approach did not effectively contribute to Egypt's transition to a functioning democracy. As it turned out, democracy was conceived, by the Muslim Brotherhood, as a means to take hold of power, and a concept to be abandoned once this objective is achieved. Indeed, the developments in Egypt throughout this period demonstrated that President Obama was right when he had cautioned the world about this danger two years earlier, in his Cairo speech, in which he underscored that "there are some who advocate for democracy only when

[910] Jason Brownlee, **Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012, p. 170.
[911] Fabbrini, Yossef, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 70.

they are out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others."[912] The discriminatory policies of the *Ikhwan* government favoring Sunni Muslims and downsizing women's rights, combined with the army's desire to restore its privileged position within the domestic political realm and maintain the long-established geostrategic equilibrium, have ultimately set the ground for the intervention of the Egyptian military.

Within this context, a *coup d'état* led by General Abdel al-Fatah Sisi ousted President Morsi on July 3, 2013. This intervention, which was insistently not called a coup by the Obama administration in order to preserve the legitimacy of the American aid to Egypt, caused another shift in the U.S. stance. In his statement on the same day, President Obama called publicly on the Egyptian army "…to move quickly and responsibly to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible through an inclusive and transparent process, and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsi and his supporters."[913] Thus, this time, Washington relied on the Egyptian military to re-establish political stability in the country and encourage the transition to democracy and the formation of a civilian government. While General Sisi has strengthened his position in power through two presidential elections, the bilateral U.S.-Egyptian relations remained cordial during this period. The American aid of around $1.4 billion each year has not ceased to flow to Egypt since then.[914] Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about a genuinely democratic and transparent system taking root in Cairo. The elections that resulted in comfortable victories for President Sisi, who got 96,7% and 97,08% of the votes in 2014 and 2018, respectively, have been the reminders of similar "democratic undertakings" initiated under the ousted dictator, Hosni Mubarak. Moreover, even though the country has witnessed, several times since 2013, large-scale anti-government protests, President Sisi seems to be firmly entrenched in power as indicated by the recent constitutional amendments allowing to extend his tenure until 2030.

The apparent inconsistency in the American response to the Arab Spring revolts in Egypt was, in fact, the ambivalence that stemmed from the desire to respect the

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[912] "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," **op. cit.** 2009.
[913] "Statement by President Barack Obama on Egypt," July 03, 2013, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/03/statement-president-barack-obama-egypt (Access: 15.03.2020).
[914] Jeremy M. Sharp, **Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,** Congressional Research Service Reports, November 21, 2019, p. 24.

choices of the Egyptian people. It was doubtlessly related to the security interests of the United States and its allies in the region, as well as *moralpolitik*. Indeed, on the one hand, standing against the call for a democratic change, despite certain foreseen obstacles, for preserving interests was seen incompatible with the long-standing American values and principles. Unconditional support for the demonstrators in the name of democracy and freedom, on the other hand, has constituted a grave risk that no administration could dare to take, given the significance of Egypt in many respects. In this sense, the approach preferred by Washington was an unequivocal illustration of the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy, which has long been at the source of pendulum-like swings in this realm. As opposed to what vocal critics claimed, the United States was, in the face of the Egyptian crisis, not "idle."[915] Nor was its vision "devoid of grand strategy, American democratic principles, and the humanitarian impulse."[916] Nevertheless, the American strategy was not flawless as its ambivalence paved the way to power for the extremist Islamists groups within the Egyptian political arena. This appeared to be an unintended and unwanted consequence of U.S. foreign policy oscillating between core principles and security interests. The United States' implicit welcoming of the 2013 coup and acceptance of the controversial results of the two elections in 2014 and 2018 evidenced its inherent unwillingness to work with an Islamist government with a non-democratic agenda. Washington, thus, opted for "the lesser of two evils" in order to avoid the worst scenario after Mubarak's fall.

In Egypt, the United States, thus, had to strike a viable balance not only between its values and interests but also its long-term and short-term interests, along with the stability in the region. The need to balance those interests was bluntly summarized by Hillary Clinton in her words to the president, at the beginning of the uprising in Egypt: "If Mubarak falls, it all may work out fine in twenty-five years, but I think the period between now and then will be quite rocky for the Egyptian people, for the region, and for us."[917] This double need for balancing was, indeed, what made the American response ambivalent as it increased the delicacy of the matter in hand. Having relied on the cooperation with the Mubarak regime, to a considerable extent for decades, the United States could not easily turn its back on him while, at the same time, its long-

[915] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 4.
[916] Pierce, **op. cit.** 2016, p.155.
[917] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 285.

advocated principles and traditional "…ideals were more naturally aligned with the young people calling for 'bread, freedom, and dignity'."[918]

Therefore, all these mutually affecting factors that required well-calculated balancing policies, combined with the complexities of the domestic political scene in Washington and the changing partisan equilibrium within Congress after 2010, have inevitably led to the implementation of an ambivalent strategy in the face of the political turmoil in Egypt. Heavily involved in the crisis because of its historical ties to the country and its commitment to regional stability, the United States appeared as the major external actor, though with cautious and hesitant attitude, in the Egyptian revolution. Notwithstanding the extent of its involvement, America's role within the crisis and the developments in its aftermath has remained far from being decisive as it has opted for following the events rather than shaping or leading them. A combination of certain domestic constraints and strategic concerns generated, ultimately, a policy of an ambivalent nature, fueling the suspicions regarding the effectiveness and the credibility of U.S. foreign policy toward the Arab Spring. In the next chapter of the uprisings, in Libya, where "as in Afghanistan, the tensions between realism and idealism, along with the ghosts of past wars haunted the decision-making process,"[919] the United States would assume a broader role with a leading posture. This would not, however, prevent the emergence of similar doubts derived from different concerns and reasons within the American political scene.

3- Military Intervention in Libya

"To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader and -more profoundly– our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are,"[920] said President Obama, in explaining his administration's choice of military intervention in the face of the uprising in Libya. Thus, the crisis in this country, triggered by the same desire to rid the country of its autocrat, like those in Tunisia and Egypt, presented a wholly different image, and accordingly, it was responded to by the United States through a more forward-leaning and coherent approach. Imbued with humanitarian concerns, the stance assumed by Washington in

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[918] **Ibid.** p. 283.
[919] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 92
[920] "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya," March 18, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/18/remarks-president-situation-libya (Access: 18.03.2020).

the face of the revolts against the Qaddafi regime was characterized by a multilateralist vision, and the core American values were placed as guiding principles without totally disregarding the strategic interests that, in this case, seemed to converge with the ideational ones.

What made the Libyan uprising so different compared to the two previous examples was, along with a weak state structure and a military with limited capacity, the bloodthirsty rhetoric of its dictator who chose brutal suppression and mercilessness as the only path to end the anti-regime protests in the country. Once the Arab Spring erupted in Libya in early 2011, "Qaddafi adopted a different response to the peaceful protesters than Ben Ali of Tunisia or Mubarak of Egypt. Qaddafi made clear his intention to use brutal force against his opponents."[921] Apart from his threatening attitude endangering not only innocent civilians in the country but also the stability in the region and the impetus of the Arab Spring revolts, another difference of the Libyan case, especially compared to the crisis in Egypt, was that the strategic American interests at stake were not too significant. In other words, "here, unlike with Mubarak, the United States would lose little from the toppling of the Libyan dictator."[922] Considering all these factors, combined with the long-standing anti-Western and mostly unpredictable attitude of its leader, the interventionist option in Libya appeared, starting from the early days of the unrest, as one of the viable alternatives within the realm of U.S. foreign policy.

"When a government is not friendly to the United States or the country in question does not much matter to American security interests, promoting human rights and democracy is a much easier policy option,"[923] argued Abrams, and Libya has come to meet both of these criteria. Moreover, the strategic interests that seemed to be at stake in Libya were not only unsubstantial but also compatible, in many respects, with the ideal American interests aiming at upholding liberal democratic principles. Both types of national interests could, thus, go hand in hand. Such a convergence was widely evident in three distinctive points:

> *First, US military participation together with many US allies, especially European allies, would serve the US strategic purpose of*

[921] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 221.
[922] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 96.
[923] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 220.

> *fostering transatlantic relations and preserving the NATO as a credible and functioning alliance in the twenty-first century. Second, the military intervention would prevent violence to spread to Libya's neighbors, especially Egypt, therefore reducing the likelihood of destabilizing spillover effects across the region at a very delicate time. Finally, US military backing of the Libyan uprising would have the potential to be an effective exercise in public relations insofar as it could be used by the USA to fend off criticisms about the US administration's quasi-silent response to contemporaneous events in Bahrain.*[924]

Thus, the Libyan crisis presented a significant opportunity for the United States to demonstrate its commitment to the human rights cause and save thousands of innocent civilians' lives while, at the same time, advancing its non-vital strategic interests.

Notwithstanding these circumstances permissive to a military intervention, the division within the Obama administration persisted as a factor complicating the issue. The disagreement between "the self-proclaimed realists in the administration, who worried about the potential damage to American interests that would be caused by a destabilized Middle East, and the idealists, who felt that Obama should not be on the wrong side of history in the region and should embrace and help drive democratic change came to the fore as a new crisis in Libya unfolded."[925] "The military," said Ben Rhodes, "made it clear that Libya wasn't a priority -they had two war to deal with and little desire for a third."[926] Therefore, in the realist side of the debate, characterized by the reluctance to the use of military force, the prevailing belief was that the non-vital interests at stake in Libya were not viable reasons for the military option, and the possible consequences of such an action would bring more harm to the country's interests than their contribution. Thus, the game, they believed, would not worth the candle. As for the idealists, in turn, what shaped their view was mainly the specter of the mistakes of the 1990s. The United States, they argued, should avoid repeating what it had done in Rwanda and Bosnia. Thus, for the non-interventionists like Biden, Gates, Donilon, and Brennan, "…the question was one of national interests, as it had been in Iraq –whether intervention in Libya would keep American interests safe or strengthen

[924] Lilli, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 171.
[925] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 95.
[926] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 111.

the US position in the world."[927] For the proponents of humanitarian intervention like Susan Rice, Ben Rhodes, and Samantha Power, "…the issue was not so much US national interests or even power, but American standing in the world and the importance of upholding the norms of a liberal international order."[928] In the end, with Hillary Clinton throwing her support for the interventionist camp, and heavily affected by Qaddafi's growing threats signaling a looming slaughter, the balance within the administration was tipped in favor of a military intervention.

Amid heated debates on the future of Libya and as a result of zealous diplomatic efforts mostly led by Western diplomats, the abstaining votes of China and Russia within the UNSC allowed, on March 17, 2011, the approval of Resolution 1973, authorizing the imposition of a "no-fly zone" and the use of "all necessary measures," "a euphemism for war,"[929] to prevent a looming humanitarian disaster.[930] This was also the first "legal" humanitarian intervention by NATO and as cautioned by the Security Council, Resolution 1973 was explicitly destined to "protect civilians." On March 18, President Obama explained the American stance by insisting that the moral concerns were the primary guides of Washington's efforts for the approval of such a U.N decision:

> *"Now, here is why this matters to us. Left unchecked, we have every reason to believe that Qaddafi would commit atrocities against his people. Many thousands could die. A humanitarian crisis would ensue. The entire region could be destabilized, endangering many of our allies and partners. The calls of the Libyan people for help would go unanswered. The democratic values that we stand for would be overrun. Moreover, the words of the international community would be rendered hollow."*[931]

Within this context, the United States, relying on the international mandate, was the major international actor who advocated for a military intervention against the regime in Libya. The rationale behind this interventionist approach was, as declared,

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[927] **Ibid.** p. 98
[928] **Ibid.** p. 99
[929] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 115.
[930] "The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973", March 17, 2011, https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1973%20(2011) (Access: 18.03.2020).
[931] "Remarks by the President on the Situation in Libya," **op. cit.** 2011.

purely humanitarian. The president, in his Address to the Nation, shared the American point of view with regard to the Libyan crisis: "Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And as President, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action."[932] As the first intervention based on the concept of R2P, the NATO intervention in Libya had many distinctive characteristics for U.S. foreign policy. As preventive and crusader as it might sound, like those undertaken under the presidency of G. W. Bush, this intervention was shaped by the features that also shaped the vision assumed by President Obama. It had, in turn, with the central place of the aerial strikes and without substantial forces on the ground, similarities with the previous NATO intervention in Kosovo, in the late 1990s, which prevented a second genocide after Bosnia and led to the withdrawal of the Serbian forces from the province.

First of all, the decision for an intervention in Libya was the product of multilateral diplomacy. Along with the UN and NATO, organizations like the League of Arab States and the EU were favorable to such an undertaking. Thus, its legitimacy was, in conformity with the Obama administration's commitment to the idea of collective action, provided by this solid basis. This was also crucial as it separated the intervention from those in Afghanistan and Iraq and served as evidence of the humanitarian motives that have guided the American action in the region. While the insistence on multilateralism mainly targeted the international community and the regional actors, the administration hoped to gain the support of the domestic audience, which was excessively exhausted by the costs of military ventures in the Middle East, through strict measures to limit the human and economic costs for the United States. In other words, Washington was determined not to shoulder the burden of the intervention alone. Emphasizing the importance of a broad coalition supporting the intervention, President Obama insisted that the United States' allies in this undertaking would "…bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all."[933] In this regard, the conviction was that "by leaving much of the heavy lifting to allies, the United States could avoid the specter of another Iraq, a quagmire that could take a decade to

[932] "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," March 28, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya (Access: 19.03.2020).
[933] **Ibid.**

exit."[934] Another significant feature of the Libyan intervention, from the American perspective, was the administration's resolve not to use ground forces to support the airstrikes. The military action, Operation Unified Protector, would, thus, be limited to the elimination of well-defined regime targets through bombardments without risking further engagement. The administration believed that "by focusing on air strikes against clearly defined targets along a narrow band of desert coastal roads, the United States could uphold its principles and protect civilian populations without having to get entangled in the messiness of the Libyan political landscape."[935] Labeled as "no boots on the ground," this principle was a clear illustration of the American desire to defend the human rights cause without getting excessively involved in post-intervention Libya. Linked to his determination of burden-sharing with other coalition forces, President Obama reaffirmed the administration's stance in this regard by underscoring that "America's role would be limited; that [it] would not put ground troops into Libya; that [it] would focus [its] unique capabilities on the front end of the operation and that [it] would transfer responsibility to our allies and partners."[936]

For some, "President Obama's handling of the Libyan crisis accentuated America's growing dissociation from its former leadership role among its allies."[937] It was, however, nothing but a pragmatic, or even realistic interpretation of the concept of leadership at the international level. The administration's understanding in this regard was essentially based on the lessons drawn from the last two Middle Eastern wars of the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Leading a war on terror or a worldwide struggle against tyranny are noble motivations insofar as their human, economic, and political costs remain bearable for an administration. Even if the burden is manageable, the public support appears as an indispensable condition for such undertakings. Likewise, as was learned from the experience in Iraq, toppling a dictator is one thing, shaping a post-conflict transition process and leading a nation-building effort is another. Branded as "leading from behind," the approach espoused by President Obama, was, indeed, what was required to convince the exhausted American public to a humanitarian intervention, which was already an unpopular path to follow. According to Forsythe and McMahon, "neither mass nor elite opinion supports a costly crusade to advance democracy or human rights abroad… [and]…Americans do not

[934] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 104.
[935] **Ibid.**
[936] "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," **op.cit.** 2011.
[937] Henriksen, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 20.

like to undertake the spending of blood and treasure in a cosmopolitan crusade to protect the well-being of foreigners."[938] Added bad memories of Kabul and Baghdad to this general view regarding military actions on humanitarian grounds, President Obama's model of limited intervention with international legitimacy and necessary assurances of a low-cost success was the reflection of his pragmatism, hoping to avoid any firm internal opposition, as well as to re-establish America's moral posture in the Middle East.

From a critical perspective, one might accuse the administration of its lack of a veritable post-intervention strategy to prevent Libya's plunge into a spiral of chaos. Emphasizing the inadequacy of its post-intervention effort, Dueck argued that the Obama administration "adopted a policy of regime change …followed by a de facto policy of US disengagement and nonintervention. The combination was strategically incoherent and risked whatever gains were made by Mu'ammar Qaddafi's overthrow."[939] As the self-imposed constraints have pushed the United States toward an intervention within a narrow framework, Libya was, inevitably, left to the struggle for power between different factions of the opposition. Moreover, the vacuum left by the regime had a destabilizing impact on the neighboring countries and other African states, such as Mali. From this perspective, Kuperman considered the intervention "an abject failure" as "Libya has not only failed to evolve into a democracy, it has developed into a failed state."[940] The attack by the Islamists on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, resulting in the death of American diplomats, including U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens, was a clear reflection of this failed state status of Libya and the threat posed by the prevailing chaotic atmosphere within the country to the United States. Nevertheless, avoiding any impulsive action that could trigger another Iraq-like crusade, the administration did not change its attitude and go beyond the delineated limits of the Libyan intervention. Libya would never be another Iraq. The U.S. and its allies had intervened to prevent a massacre and any form of regime atrocities against civilians, which was achieved by the toppling of Muammar Qaddafi. Regardless of the circumstances, the administration was unwilling to go any further. America's moral motivations were, thus, restrained by the sour memories of Afghanistan and Iraq, along with certain

[938] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, pp. 28, 36-37.
[939] Dueck, **The Obama Doctrine…** p. 83.
[940] Kuperman, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 67.

domestic political concerns. Although President Obama publicly underlined his regrets, three years later, by stating that the United States and its "European partners underestimated the need to come in full force… [and that] there has to be a much more aggressive effort to rebuild societies…"[941] the U.S. has never undertaken such a large-scale military action under his presidency, not in Libya or anywhere else.

At this point, the role played by the European U.S. allies, especially France, should not be underestimated. Rather, while Germany remained skeptical about military action in Libya and Washington demonstrated its resolve to a strictly limited military commitment, France, for various reasons, did not hesitate to assume the leading role in undertaking the operation Unified Protector. In this sense, France appeared as "much more than a contributor to a U.S.-led operation."[942] As the first country to start airstrikes even before the mission was officially initiated and grant diplomatic recognition to the Libyan NTC, its role turned out to be so decisive that some observers labeled the military action as "Nicolas Sarkozy's war," arguing that he "made the intervention in Libya a personal conflict."[943] Apart from humanitarian motives, to which France was generally favorable, at least rhetorically, the underlying reasons for this firm engagement were mostly determined by domestic political concerns. "With his popularity at a record low, and facing an election in 2012, the ongoing dispute over domestic policy, the rise of the right-wing opposition, and the failure in reacting appropriate[ly] to the development[s] in Egypt and Tunisia, Sarkozy urgently needed to demonstrate leadership."[944] Combined with Libya's critical geostrategic position with regard to the massive refugee flow to Europe and France's quest for influence in North Africa, all these factors rendered the Libyan case a perfect opportunity for Paris to assert its objectives. Moreover, "…it should be underlined that the pro-intervention stance of the French government in this case was more a product of political pragmatism than the country's traditional support for humanitarian intervention."[945] Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that, accompanied by U.S.

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[941] Thomas L. Friedman, "Obama on the World," **The New York Times,** August 8, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/opinion/president-obama-thomas-l-friedman-iraq-and-world-affairs.html (Access: 18.03.2020).
[942] Camille Grand, "The French Experience: Sarkozy's War?" in. Karl P. Mueller (Ed.), **Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War**, Rand Cooperation, Santa Monica, 2015, p. 183.
[943] Natalie Nougayrède, "La Guerre de Nicolas Sarkozy," **Le Monde,** August 23, 2011, https://www.lemonde.fr/libye/article/2011/08/23/libye-la-guerre-de-nicolas-sarkozy_1562377_1496980.html (Access: 27.05.2020).
[944] Stefan Hasler, "Explaining Humanitarian Intervention in Libya and Non-Intervention in Syria," Unpublished Master's Thesis, **Naval Postgraduate School**, Monterey, California, 2012. p. 126
[945] Türkmen, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 14.

willingness and diplomatic efforts without which a NATO operation of such a large scale would be very unlikely, if not impossible, France's commitment to lead the intervention in Libya became a central element in its realization.

Furthermore, one last important feature of the Libyan intervention was its unforeseen impact on the future of international cooperation regarding similar issues, most importantly, the Syrian crisis. Having felt deceived and exploited by the West about the language and the limits of Resolution 1973, Russia, along with China, would block every similar U.N. undertaking with humanitarian motives at its center, which they consider Western means to change unfriendly regimes. Yet, it should also be underlined that Russia's abstention vote was cast under Dmitri Medvedev's leadership, whereas as soon as Vladimir Putin took over, the Libya intervention started being criticized retrospectively by the Kremlin, to be condemned in very harsh terms. Leaving aside its significant impact on future initiatives, the intervention in the Libyan uprising has constituted a seemingly significant turning point with regard to the American response to the Arab Spring. Unlike in Egypt, the U.S. this time followed, with substantial international support, its moral priorities, demonstrating its commitment to human rights. Thus, it was conceived that, after the ambivalence in the face of the Egyptian crisis, Washington's foreign policy pendulum had swung toward the moral end of the spectrum.

Without initially uttering the concept of regime-change, the primary objective of the United States and its allies in the coalition built for this mission was to prevent human suffering and a looming slaughter. In this sense, the ousting of Qaddafi, as was perceived, was a byproduct of this humanitarian mission. Nevertheless, the intervention has also demonstrated the shortcomings of such an undertaking without any comprehensive long-term strategy. President Obama's determination to avoid new Iraqs, along with the domestic political dynamics, constituted a substantial obstacle for such a strategy, which, in the end, started to be seen as the source of the chaos and civil war in the aftermath of the international intervention. Thus, within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, any undertaking guided by moral concerns were, as was observed, limited by certain constraints, domestic or international. Particularly, when the scene for such a policy choice was a region like the Middle East, where the substantial strategic and economic interests of many regional and global powers converge, such obstacles might become even more insurmountable. In other words, even when the

push of moral considerations and humanitarian impulses were considerably strong, the pull of domestic and international political concerns could inevitably impose narrow limits to neutralize, or at least decrease, the impact of these noble intentions.

Therefore, with all its flaws and strengths, the U.S. response to the uprisings in the Arab world was shifted to another level through its reaction inspired by moral and human rights concerns in Libya. The real question, however, was whether this shift would stop the oscillation of the pendulum and become a pattern to be followed by the American policy-makers in responding to the events in other countries. The answer would be found in Syria, where the issue became even more complex with the deep involvement of other global powers and important regional actors. On December 10, 2009, in his speech delivered for the acceptance of the Nobel Prize, which he was awarded for his contributions to the strengthening of international diplomacy and cooperation, President Obama underscored the importance and the legitimacy of military action on humanitarian grounds and added: "Inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to more costly intervention later."[946] This was, indeed, what happened in Syria.

4- Hesitation and Retrenchment in Syria

The crisis in Syria, which quickly turned into a protracted and violent civil war, posed a wrenching dilemma for the foreign policy of the Obama administration. The encouraging experience in Libya had created optimism regarding a similar military initiative on humanitarian grounds whereas, the peculiar dynamics of Syria, along with the intermingling of multiple factors at both regional and international levels in this setting, incited a strong pull toward a non-interventionist approach. This dilemma, in the end, has marked the American response to the Syrian crisis and drastically affected the global balance of power, as well as the interstate relations within the Middle East.

In its response to the unfolding events in Syria, Washington initially put forward a moderate approach, seeking dialogue and mediation through various channels to enable a peaceful reform process that would eventually be culminated in a smooth transition. This optimist view, however, turned out to be nothing but mere wishful

[946] "Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize," December 10, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize (Access: 21.03.2020).

thinking. The Assad regime's uncompromising attitude in the face of the popular demands caused not only the escalation in violence but also a shift in the vision advocated by Washington. Thus, the Obama administration "pursued an initial policy of engagement and accommodation, followed after August 2011 by a stated American goal of regime change."[947] As a result of the increase in atrocities committed by the regime forces without any distinction, peaceful street demonstrations in Syria have turned into an armed struggle, endangering the lives of civilians. Unable to trigger a peaceful transition, Washington, in August 2011, changed its attitude and drew a clear line, insisting on the removal of Bashar Assad from power. The transition to a system based on the demands of the Syrian people, for the United States, had to be established, and such a process could not be created under his leadership. Echoing this regime-change vision, President Obama underlined that "the future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way… For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside."[948] Needless to say, such an approach raised the question of intervention in Syria.

Assessed from a narrow perspective, ignoring multiple other factors that would -and should- affect the decision of the United States, the necessity of a U.S.-led intervention in Syria seemed, in geopolitical and moral terms, more palpable than it was in Libya. Put differently, "the administration…had more compelling humanitarian and strategic reasons to intervene in Syria than in Libya."[949] In fact, the extent to which strategic and ideal U.S. interests converged has hardly been, over the last decades, as appealing and substantial as it was in Syria. "[T]here was the prospect of bringing down a brutal dictatorship, giving democracy a chance, and delivering a body blow to Iran's regional influence, while strengthening the security of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other friendly Sunni regimes."[950] Nevertheless, for a decision to undertake a military operation, compelling reasons were not enough. This was, indeed, the main source of the Obama administration's reluctance and hesitation in this regard. This decision could be taken only after a rigorous evaluation of multiple other conditions, such as the estimated duration of the operation, the need for ground forces to achieve the

[947] Dueck, **The Obama Doctrine…** p. 84.
[948] Macon Phillips, "President Obama: 'The future of Syria Must Be Determined by its People, but President Bashar al-Assad is Standing in Their Way," August 18, 2011, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/08/18/president-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-president-bashar-al-assad (Access:21.03.2020).
[949] Mandelbaum, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 306.
[950] Hudson, **op. cit.** 2016, 375.

ultimate objective, and perhaps most importantly, the ability to extract domestic, local, and international support for the intervention. In this respect, the circumstances in Syria were doubtlessly more challenging than those in Libya. From a broad perspective, the internal dynamics of both countries, their state structures, their military capabilities, and their alliance relationships were excessively different, making any comparison untenable and unreliable. As pointed out by Hillary Clinton, "the Assad regime was much more entrenched than Qaddafi, with more support among key segments of the population, more allies in the region, a real Army, and far more robust air defenses. Unlike in Libya… the opposition in Syria was disorganized and diffuse… And, of course, there was one other crucial difference: Russia was blocking any move at the UN on Syria, in large measure to prevent a replay of Libya."[951] In this sense, "where Libya was a 'do-able' operation, Syria represented a much more formidable opponent."[952] Thus, Syria was likely to become another Iraq, requiring an eventual American occupation to achieve the ultimate goal with little local and international support. The risk of direct confrontation with Russia, in this regard, appeared as a factor aggravating the potential danger of an intervention for the United States.

Aside from all these factors making the interventionist option in Syria perilous and less feasible, the division that had emerged within the administration regarding both the Egyptian and Libyan cases became even more apparent. Let alone the issue of direct involvement, even the question of providing the rebels with lethal weapons caused disagreement within the inner circle of the Obama foreign policy team. While, along with Hillary Clinton, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Martin Dempsey supported the "plan developed by the then CIA Director, David Petraeus to arm the Syrian opposition… [President] Obama, his Vice President, Joe Biden, and the NSA Thomas Donilon opposed on the basis that it would draw the United States further into direct conflict."[953] The camp opposing the idea of further involvement in Syria would later be strengthened, in 2013, by the appointment of Chuck Hagel as Defense Secretary of the new Obama administration. Within this context, unlike Libya, the administration was more favorable to a non-interventionist path, without disregarding humanitarian and nonlethal aid to the anti-regime forces.

[951] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, pp. 388-389.
[952] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 109.
[953] **Ibid.** pp. 117-118.

This inclination was also strengthened by the decrease in the number and the impact of the liberal internationalist voices within the new administration.

The disagreement within the administration and the non-interventionist view was not the only domestic dynamic that has favored limited American involvement in the Syrian crisis. Similarly, within the American public as well, the issue of intervention in Syria was highly unpopular. According to a Pew Research Center poll, while the public support for using military force in Syria if the regime used chemical weapons remained modest (45%), 64% of the Americans even believed that the U.S. had no "…responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria between government forces and anti-government groups."[954] Similarly, in August 2013, as found out by a Reuters/Ipsos poll, nearly 60% of the Americans opposed an intervention in Syria, and even in the case of the use of chemical weapons, the interventionist option was approved only by 25% of them, while 46% of the American public maintained its anti-interventionist position.[955] Therefore, upon this domestic background, the prospect of a military undertaking in Syria, on no matter what grounds, was not probable, if not impossible. Nevertheless, if the internal factors made U.S. foreign policy reticent in Syria, it was the international dynamics that have pushed it further toward retrenchment.

Shortly after the outbreak of the uprisings, Syria has become the scene where the geopolitical ambitions of global powers surfaced. The multidimensional nature of the Arab Spring was, thus, crystallized in this setting in the Middle East. Within this context, the events in Syria could hardly be considered a purely internal affair; rather, "the struggle for Syria [was] a struggle for Eurasia with different characters."[956] The international nature of the crisis has inevitably created more room for external involvement and further complicated the issue. It was, in the end, not just a violent civil war but a geopolitical struggle with the United States and its allies on one side, and Russia, China, and Iran on the other. Moreover, this "globalization" of the Syrian

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[954] Pew Research Center, "Americans Express Little Interest in Syrian Conflict: Modest Support for Military Force if Syria Used Chemical Weapons," April 29, 2013, pp. 1, 7, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/legacy-pdf/4-29-13-Syria-Release.pdf (Access: 22.03.2020).

[955] Lesley Wroughton, "As Syria War Escalates, Americans Cool to U.S. Intervention: Reuters/Ipsos Poll," August 25, 2013, **Reuters,** https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-usa-poll/as-syria-war-escalates-americans-cool-to-u-s-intervention-reuters-ipsos-poll-idUSBRE97O00E20130825 (Access: 22.03.2020).

[956] Camille H. Habib, "The Struggle for Syria is a Struggle for Eurasia with Different Characters," Quoted in Malashenko, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 14.

crisis has emboldened certain other regional actors, such as Turkey and the Gulf countries to engage, each seeking to advance its self-interest. This complex environment, combined with President Obama's inclination toward multilateralism and retrenchment, contributed to the emergence of a foreign policy path for Washington, which was characterized by restraint.

What heavily affected Washington's calculation in deciding whether to intervene in Syria was, thus, Moscow's excessive engagement and its unwavering support for the Assad regime. "Keeping Assad in power [was] Moscow's way of ensuring that it [would] maintain some influence in the Middle East."[957] Additionally, from a broader perspective, Moscow, concerned with its internal fault lines, considered the unfolding events, and particularly the ascending Islamist tide in the Middle East strongly linked to a potential threat from its Muslim minority. In this sense, "the Russian government sincerely believe[d] that Assad's removal from power would trigger the expansion of jihadism and instability in the Caucasus and southern Russia."[958] Moreover, the conflict in Syria, in a Cold War-like fashion, has rapidly turned into a struggle for prestige, especially for Russia. All these factors affirmed Russia's "return" to the Middle East after almost two decades of distancing, if not overlooking, in terms of foreign policy. It would be, however, different and much more substantial than the earlier pattern of diplomacy and proxy wars, as this time military troops were to be massively deployed by Moscow, along with the expansion of new military bases across Syrian territory.

Increasing the complexity of the issue, this Russian stance, supported diplomatically by China and militarily by Iran, left the Obama administration with a hard choice to make. Indeed, the Arab Spring in Syria has turned out to be "the catalyst for a renewed confrontation between Washington and Moscow, causing a polarization unseen since the early 1960s."[959] The escalation in tension between the two erstwhile superpowers was also fueled by the Libyan experience that created disillusionment and a sense of deception in Moscow with regard to what it considered to be the West's underlying imperial ambitions -in Putin's logic. According to a Western official, quoted Bowen, "the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, [who] had been

[957] Malashenko, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 13.
[958] Kozhanov, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 100.
[959] Antonio Perra, "From the Arab Spring to the Damascus Winter: The United States, Russia, and the New Cold War," **Contemporary Review of the Middle East,** Vol. 3, No. 4, 2016, p. 2.

ambassador at UN when the Security Council passed a resolution on Kosovo in 1999 that looked in retrospect like a victory for a Western agenda. Resolution 1973 seemed… 'to have made a fool of him again on Libya [and] he wouldn't let it happen again in Syria.'"[960] This position has, throughout the process, been illustrated by multiple Russian and Chinese vetoes of the proposed Security Council resolutions condemning the Assad's regime's actions and seeking to push the international community to take concrete steps to stop them. For Russia -and its allies- "…NATO's intervention in Libya had been just another American "regime change" operation under the disguise of humanitarian protection, and that this time countries shouldn't be fooled about what would happen in Syria."[961]

Within this context, Washington opted for retrenchment in Syria, where it has given limited support to the opposition forces. In this sense, "the de facto US policy remained largely one of nonintervention, and the various components of the administration's approach did not add up to a successful combination."[962] This approach, based on the idea of limited involvement, has inevitably led to the increased engagement of various regional actors. While the actors that were hostile to the Assad regime hoped to fill the vacuum created by Washington's reticence, some others, namely Iran and Hezbollah, were emboldened, by the Russian support and the absence of a counterbalancing power on the ground, to pursue what they perceived their self-interest. Therefore, "the combination of the ongoing slaughter within Syria, irresolution at the international level, and Washington's hesitancy created political and military space for forces that worked both against Damascus and Washington."[963] Moreover, the United States' non-interventionism has also encouraged the further radicalization of certain opposition groups seeking to maintain the struggle against a brutal regime supported by a great power and Shiite militias. Fueling the sectarianization of the conflict, this shift has eventually created a favorable atmosphere for extremist groups, especially ISIS, to play a larger role.

As a matter of fact, Washington's non-interventionist stance was essentially the product of two interrelated factors. Firstly, Moscow's staunch opposition to the use of military force in Syria had made this option costly, in political, human, and economic

[960] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, pp.151-152.
[961] Power, **op. cit.** 2019, p. 595.
[962] Colin Dueck, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 84.
[963] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 119.

terms. Secondly, the United States was "not prepared to [intervene] without UN Security Council backing."[964] Given the Obama administration's conviction in the importance of the liberal international order and the controversial rebound effect of the NATO intervention in Libya, Washington's insistence on a multilateralist path was neither surprising nor unreasonable. However, it eventually turned out, as the conflict has incrementally become violent and protracted, that the quest for cooperation with Russia, or an international collaboration in general, was nothing but a waste of time. Since the ultimate objectives of the two giants diverged extensively, a cooperative environment was, indeed, anything but possible. The only military action to which both parties gave consent was for eliminating the jihadist extremist threat in Syria. Thus, fighting against terrorism and defeating ISIS, in particular, was a shared objective for both Moscow and Washington, and through an international coalition, a military operation was conducted to that end. Apart from this, any other military action against the Assad regime, given the impossibility of securing an international mandate, was bound to fail from the start.

Within this context, the "red line" issue has constituted a critical turning point not only for U.S. foreign policy and the fate of the Syrian crisis but also for the future of international politics in general, representing a massive shift in the global distribution of power. When President Obama declared, in August 2012, that "seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized" represented a "red line" for him and "that would change [his] calculations significantly,"[965] he put forward a clear criterion for the use of military force against the Assad regime. Within a year, his criterion was met, as certain independent international agencies, the UN inspectors on the ground, and the U.S. intelligence services confirmed, with "high confidence assessment,"[966] the regime's use of chemical weapons on civilians. Even such violence, however, could not galvanize the international community, already prone to intervention-fatigue. Likewise, it did not engender a change in Russia's position or present President Obama an opportunity to gain congressional backing for a military response.

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[964] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 332.
[965] "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," August 20, 2012, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps (Access: 24.03.2020).
[966] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 216.

Under these circumstances, he had no other choice but to follow a diplomatic path, which he found at the margins of the G20 summit in Russia, in a private meeting with Putin. According to the deal reached by two leaders, Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons, through Russian mediation, would be removed and destroyed. From a critical point of view, President Obama's "handling of the 'redline' on Syria's use of chemical weapons -first casually announcing a major commitment, then dithering about living up to it, then frantically tossing the ball to Congress for a decision- was a case study in embarrassingly amateurish improvisation."[967] Putting his -and America's- credibility in question in the eyes of the world, this move was definitely flawed in terms of foreign policy-making. However, the source of this "erroneous" policy choice of the administration was its lack of political and military support, both at the international –except that of France as President Hollande was ready to support U.S. military action if ever undertaken- and domestic level, and particularly, the partisan gridlock in Washington. Put differently, in Syria, especially with regard to the red line issue, U.S. foreign policy has become the victim of the "convergence of two dysfunctions…: Congress and the international community. They both press for action but want to avoid any share of the responsibility."[968] Notwithstanding the reputational costs of backing down from his red line, the president, in the end, could find a way to steer clear of deep military engagement in the Syrian quagmire.

Within this framework, the American response in the face of the Syrian crisis has remained far from creating a distinctive impact or shaping its orientation. While humanitarian motives were constrained by the international dynamics and domestic political factors, along with the harsh realities within Syria, its will, and most importantly, its capability was limited by the relative decline in U.S. power. Under these circumstances, every alternative foreign policy path has seemed to be leading to an impasse. As pointed out by Hillary Clinton, there seemed to be no viable foreign policy option to end this crisis in a way that the U.S. desired. Branded the conflict in Syria "a wicked problem," she clearly explained the dead-end faced by Washington: "Do nothing, and a humanitarian disaster envelops the region. Intervene militarily, and risk opening Pandora's box and wading into another quagmire, like Iraq. Send aid to the rebels, and watch it end up in the hands of extremists. Continue with diplomacy, and run head-first into a Russian veto. None of these approaches offered much hope

[967] Rose, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 10.
[968] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 236.

of success."[969] Apparently, the United States did not possess enough policy tools either to prevent human suffering and, at the same time, to put an end to the brutal rule of the Assad family in Syria. Its proactive stance in Libya, thus, did not represent a permanent shift; rather, it was an opportunity seized by the U.S. to advance both its ideal and strategic interests.

Therefore, unlike in Egypt, where it adopted an ambivalent strategy following the course of events, and unlike in Libya, where it opted for a military intervention on humanitarian grounds, the United States assumed a lower profile in Syria. Although the humanitarian disaster faced by this country was much bigger than what Libya had faced, and the context involved, at least, as substantial geostrategic interests as in Egypt, different international and domestic circumstances generated this change in the U.S. posture. Washington's strategy in Syria was, thus, characterized by retrenchment and unceasing concerns with regard to the scale and scope of the support to the anti-regime forces on the ground. In retrospect, the Obama administration's hesitant and cautious approach was, given the complexity of the conflict, acceptable, and even justifiable. Essentially, "the United States focused its effort in Syria around a number of strategies, namely, demanding political transition, advocating the use of international diplomacy, providing humanitarian and nonlethal aid, coordinating intelligence, expanding sanctions and disrupting arms shipments."[970] However, the fact that the moderate opposition groups have lost ground, starting in late 2013, to radicals, and especially the rise of ISIS further complicated the Syrian conflict and undermined the American strategy.

The year 2013 was, in many respects, the turning point for the Syrian crisis. The fact that, in the following years, the country plunged into a spiral of violence was obvious in the statistical data demonstrating the excessive intensification of the humanitarian disaster. By the beginning of that year, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were around 340.000 Syrian refugees, but this number rose, by December 2013, to more than 2.3 million and has reached today 5.6 million.[971] A similar trend can also be observed through the death toll in this country, although the numerical data was based on the estimations of certain activist

[969] Clinton, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 389.
[970] Perra, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 13.
[971] "Syria Regional Refugee Response," **UNHCR**, May 8, 2020, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria (Access:27.05.2020).

groups and independent observers since the UN has stopped updating it in January 2014. In June 2013, the number of people killed in Syria was 93.000, including 6.561 minors, according to the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), and 27.000 of these killings were perpetrated since December 1st, 2012.[972] While an estimated 585.000 people were killed in Syria by January 2020, the number of civilian deaths, which was 23.893 at the beginning of 2013, reached 115.490 throughout seven years of conflict.[973] Similarly, the number of people in need of assistance in Syria went up from 6.8 million to 9.3 million between April and September 2013.[974] All these figures evidenced that most of the Western actors'-and Washington's- distant strategy in Syria, resulting from power politics at the international level, ultimately paved the way for one of the gravest humanitarian disasters in history.

These numbers also reaffirmed the criticism toward the Western attitude by Laurent Fabius, then French Foreign Minister, who, pointing out to the missing opportunity in Syria, stated that

> *"…in June 2012 Bashar al-Assad could have been easily replaced as neither Iran nor the Hezbollah was on the ground and the Russians were ready for a transition. A lot of time has been wasted because of the American elections where non-intervention became a domestic political issue. Today, the Hezbollah is in Syria, the Iranians are training the army, the Russians are exporting more arms than ever and terrorist groups have infiltrated the land..."*[975]

Thus, the domestic political concerns in Washington, combined with the international power play, have prevented the international community from putting an end to the gradually intensifying crisis in Syria, and the cost of this inaction proved to be very high in humanitarian terms even though it appeared to be the right call for their -and the United States'- self-interest.

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[972] "Nearly 93,000 People Killed in 'Vicious' Syria Conflict – Un Human Rights Chief," **UN News**, June 13, 2013, https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/06/442182-nearly-93000-people-killed-vicious-syria-conflict-un-human-rights-chief (Access: 27.05.2020).
[973] "Nearly 585,000 People Have Been Killed Since the Beginning of the Syrian Revolution," **The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights**, January 4, 2020, https://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=152189 (Access: 27.05.2020).
[974] "Protecting and Supporting the Displaced in Syria: UNHCR Syria End of Year Report 2015," **UNHCR**, 2015, p.9, https://www.unhcr.org/56cad5a99.pdf (Access: 27.05.2020).
[975] Quoted in Türkmen, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 24.

Furthermore, "the Obama administration's policy on Syria was built on the imperative not to get involved in another intervention and wishful thinking on the transition of the Assad regime."[976] Aiming at avoiding a deep engagement in this setting, the American foreign policy-makers have had hard times in balancing the national interests -ideal and strategic- at stake in Syria. The main difference of the Syrian crisis compared to Egypt and Libya was, without doubt, Russia's active involvement with the objective of preserving its long-standing ally, Assad. Particularly, the change in the global balance of power has pushed Washington toward restraint in Syria. Moreover, the change in the nature of the Arab Spring, especially after mid-2013, and the increased radicalization of the opposition movements within the region, including the players in Syria, contributed to the formation of such a hesitant U.S. approach toward the crisis. Within this framework, the signals sent by America's hesitance and restraint not only undermined its credibility and the confidence in its strength but also prevented Washington from projecting a distinctive vision and shaping the events.

As seen so far, the involvement in the Middle East has, for more than six decades, been a major priority in Washington's foreign policy agenda. Resulted from the region's geopolitical position at the crossroads of multiple interests of various nature, this deep involvement has led the U.S. to be highly sensitive to any crisis with the potential to alter the regional *status quo* and the global distribution of power. As he entered the White House, in spite of the two wars he took over from his predecessor, President Barack Obama was, indeed, determined to change this "privileged" place of the Middle East within America's foreign policy framework and highly dedicated to lead his country to respond to what he perceived the primary threat, rising China. In accordance with its Asia-oriented and multilateralist vision, the Obama administration, from the outset, assumed a distant and cautious approach with regard to the Middle East. The Arab Spring, in this sense, constituted an element of distraction, an undesired pull toward this region that, as perceived by the president, would cease to represent a major venue for U.S. foreign policy in the near future. Vali Nasr, a former member of the Foreign Affairs Policy Board in the State Department between 2009 and 2011, stated that

[976] Fitzgerald, Ryan, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 119.

> *[a]s the extraordinary events were unfolding, there was certitude of a sort in the White House. Obama remained intent upon leaving the Middle East, and he was not going to let himself be distanced from that mission by sudden eruptions of pro-democracy protests, teetering dictators, and looming civil wars. He did not know whether the Arab Spring would lead to ubiquitous democracy or a prolonged period of instability, but regardless, he was determined that America would not try to influence the outcome -not if that meant reversing course to get involved in the region.*[977]

However, the established ties with certain regimes within the Middle East and substantial national interests at stake, along with significant alliance relationships with some regional actors, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, appeared as impediments to the shift that the administration desired within U.S. foreign policy. With the recognition of the impossibility of U.S. withdrawal from the region, at least in the short term, Washington sought a viable response to the uprisings within the Arab world.

Therefore, refusing to adopt a single doctrinaire approach in the face of the revolts in different countries, namely in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, the Obama administration has opted for a more flexible and pragmatic vision shaped by *ad hoc* strategies in each setting. Put differently, instead of espousing a monolithic and holistic approach, the U.S. has seen the events in these three countries through different lenses, depending on the specific conditions presented by each case. While reluctantly siding with the pro-democracy demonstrators in Egypt, the United States followed its moral impulses in Libya, where it led -from behind- an international humanitarian intervention. Echoing the inherent limits to the moral concerns, Washington's strategy in Syria could be best described, from a broad perspective, as retrenchment. Notwithstanding this nuanced understanding that has served as basis for the American response to the uprisings, U.S. foreign policy could neither meet the expectations of various groups and actors nor bring a definitive end to the social, political, and humanitarian problems in the Middle East. Ultimately, the United States found itself faced with what was considered "the worst of both worlds: scorned by the forces of democracy because of its ties to dictators, but disdained by dictators -whose

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[977] Vali Nasr, **The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat,** Doubleday, New York, 2013, p. 164.

cooperation is vital to U.S. economic and security interests- for reaching out to democrats."[978]

Consequently, having oscillated across the spectrum of its perennial foreign policy dilemma, the U.S. could not shape or lead the events in the Middle East toward the desired direction. Likewise, its relative hesitance and apparent ambivalence undermined its image of strength and credibility, along with its long-advocated moral posture. The conditions that have shaped the American perspective toward the Arab Spring embraced, as hinted throughout the analysis, multiple factors of various nature, and they have appeared to be effective at different levels. Moreover, the underlying motives behind American actions have, as required by the multidimensional character of the Arab Spring, varied considerably. Some, among a broad range of variables with the capacity to affect the international actions of the United States, have shaped Washington's choice in the face of each Arab Spring uprising. Depending on the nature of the case under consideration, the influential dynamics and the extent to which they exert influence on U.S. foreign policy changed significantly. In other words, U.S. foreign policy has been shaped, throughout the Arab Spring, by numerous international and domestic dynamics, and inspired, to a significant extent, by substantial strategic and moral considerations.

[978] Byman, **op. cit.** 2011.

IV- Determinants of the American Response to the Arab Spring

"The behavior of any human system… results in part from the cumulative weight of past experience and in part from the impact of current stimuli,"[979] noted Rosenau, underscoring the influence of different variables that operate at various settings, affecting the actions of societies, and of course, states. In this sense, while the cultural background and traditions contribute to the formation of patterns of behavior, the transformation of and within the external environment acts as a major determinant of an actor's foreign policy choices. Indeed, this perspective suggests two distinctive trajectories for a state's foreign policy behavior in the face of an international phenomenon: the one that is inspired by its past experiences and by its cultural background; and the other that is shaped by the present international and domestic conjuncture, which can act either as constraint or stimulant for action. They, of course, interact. Thus, taking all these factors into account as driving forces of a state's foreign policy renders it relatively understandable, if not predictable.

In the case of the United States, these factors point out at various distinctive characteristics. While domestic concerns play, at least for most of the time, a relatively moderate role in determining its behavior abroad, the American political culture imbued with the Enlightenment values and principles occasionally leads to an increased role for humanitarian concerns. Yet, U.S. foreign policy has never been a mere product of the struggle between domestic and humanitarian considerations. As a prominent global actor, with a varying degree of importance throughout history, Washington's foreign policy choices have been heavily affected by the international stimulus. In fact, the pulls of these three sets of dynamics, with certain exceptions, have acted as driving forces behind the American attitude at the international level, determining its foreign policy. The force and the direction of the impact these factors exerted on U.S. foreign policy, depending on the given circumstances, have changed widely. On the one hand, the capacity of each set of factors affecting the American policy choices differs from one another. Occasionally, one or even two of them may appear ineffective, allowing the other cluster(s) of dynamics to shape U.S. foreign policy. At the time when all the effective factors guide American behavior abroad in the same direction, the inherent tension within the realm of foreign policy-making decreases. On the other hand, when they operate to pull U.S. foreign policy toward

[979] Rosenau, **op. cit.** 1980, p. 317.

different ends, as has been observed many times in recent history, the task of policy-making turns out to be a tough one and leads mostly to controversial decisions. In such cases, what determines the ultimate outcome is the extent to which each set of dynamics can be influential.

Indeed, the endless struggle between domestic political concerns, the considerations related to the international equilibrium, and humanitarian motives has been, and would likely be, the underlying reason for the almost-unceasing oscillation of the U.S. foreign policy, creating a pendular movement, across a policy spectrum ranging from *moralpolitik* to *realpolitik*. During the Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, U.S. foreign policy has followed, under the influence of these factors, a non-linear path, also stemming from its refusal of a monolithic approach toward the uprisings. While the degree of the impact of these three sets of factors in shaping U.S. foreign policy in each country has remarkably differed from one another, they have generally driven the U.S. toward different, if not contradictory, directions across the policy spectrum. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a seemingly ambivalent American approach in the face of the tumultuous events across the Middle East, making it debatable from many angles, regardless of the trajectory it opted for. Therefore, analyzing the force of the balance of power considerations, along with the re-emergence of the great power rivalry, the value-oriented aspect of the American foreign policy-making structure that has been empowered by the democratic and liberal demands of the demonstrators, and the domestic concerns, such as public opinion, would shed light upon the source of the pendular character of Washington's attitude throughout this process. Moreover, an analysis within this framework would also demonstrate how variables from different levels can be influential, in a mutually-reinforcing or mutually-exclusive way, regarding a given challenge in foreign policy.

A- Systemic Factors: The Return of the Great Power Rivalry

"Our well-being as a country depends on the structural conditions . . . of the international system that help determine whether we are fundamentally secure, whether the world economy is sound,"[980] argued the former Secretary of State, George

[980] George Shultz, "A Forward Look at Foreign Policy," **U.S. Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs**, October 19, 1984, Washington D. C. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d03577700z&view=1up&seq=3 (Access: 05. 04.2020).

Shultz, emphasizing the crucial role of systemic factors in shaping U.S. foreign policy and assuring its national security. With the intensifying globalization and interdependence, along with the changing security environment, the role of these factors has become even more central. From a similar perspective, "it's not that it's not worth it. It's that after a decade of war, you know, the United States has limits,"[981] acknowledged President Obama when asked about his administration's refusal to use military force in Syria. The chief among these limits was, without doubt, the international dynamics, and they have been influential by limiting the policy options available to the decision-makers in Washington not only on U.S. policy in Syria but also throughout the whole process of the Arab Spring.

Nevertheless, the international system has not been subject to a radical structural change since the United States -and its NATO allies- intervened, without a UN mandate, in Kosovo, in 1999, or the Bush administration unilaterally intervened in Iraq in 2003. This time, however, the United States refrained from undertaking a similar unilateral military action in Syria or building a coalition of the willing to act without UN authorization. Then, what did these systemic limits stem from, and how did they emerge? The answer lay in the striking transformation that occurred "within" the international system. Since the end of the Cold War, the liberal essence of the postwar system has remained almost intact, but the change of the wider bipolar context and the redistribution of power among international actors have gradually altered their roles within the system and their foreign policy considerations. This, in the final analysis, led to a changing external environment full of constraints in which the United States had to shape its foreign policy in the twenty-first century. A comprehensive understanding of this shift posing limits to U.S. foreign policy, especially with regard to the use of military force, requires an analysis of the evolution of the post-Cold War international system.

Throughout history, the world has witnessed, time and again, the rise and fall of major powers and as a corollary, the transformation of the inter-state system. Particularly, for more than two centuries, the world has been the scene of the realignment of cards and the formation of new structures reflecting the features of this newly shaped international order. As noted by F. H. Hinsley, "at the end of every war

[981] "Obama Says U.S. Military Strikes Could Not Have Stopped Syria Misery," **Reuters,** March 30, 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-obama/obama-says-u-s-military-strikes-could-not-have-stopped-syria-misery-idUSBREA2R21O20140329 (Access: 05.04.2020).

since the end of the eighteenth century…the leading states made a concerted effort, each one more radical than the last, to reconstruct the system on lines would enable them, or so they believed, to avoid a further war."[982] The Cold War, in this regard, could have followed a similar path leading to a reorganization of the rules and institutions of the international system. But it did not. Instead, the Western "victory" left the American-led liberal system unrivaled, and its essential characteristics, such as cooperation, openness, democracy, etc. remained intact. Nevertheless, the broader international context, characterized by bipolarity since the end of WWII, has come to an end, and it was replaced by this Western-dominated system. In other words, the inner order that has prevailed within the Western world has become the global order. Thus, unlike the other postwar moments, the collapse of the Soviet Union neither altered the central place of the United States and its Western allies within the international system nor undermined the dominance of the liberal international order they had built. "As such, the end of the Cold War was not the beginning of a new world order but the last gasp in the completion of an old one."[983]

The absence of a change of the system or the transformation of its core tenets, nevertheless, should not be perceived as a total systemic continuity. Rather, the end of the ideological struggle after almost half a century generated certain significant changes within the structure of the international order. Most importantly, with the collapse of the one power pole, the polarity of the system has undergone a radical change. As stated by Ikenberry, "the end of the Cold War has had the effect of sharply increasing American power. The collapse of bipolarity left the United States the world's dominant power, in terms of both economic and military capability."[984] Although the disappearance of the principal security threat, the U.S.S.R., has deeply undermined its position of the protector of the Western world, the United States has come to enjoy an almost unprecedented dominance on the international scene. Another significant transformation appeared, in the 1990s, through the erosion of the traditional Westphalian concept of sovereignty. At the core of this structural transformation undergone by the notion of sovereignty were found the growing conviction in the universal nature of the basic human rights and the idea that these rights "are no

[982] F. H. Hinsley, "The Rise and Fall of the Modern International System," **Review of International Studies,** Vol. 8, No. 1, (Jan. 1982), p. 4.
[983] John G. Ikenberry, **Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order,** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011, p. 222.
[984] Ikenberry, **op. cit.** 2001, p. 233.

respecters of political boundaries, and require a universalist politics to implement them, even when this means breaching the wall of state sovereignty."[985] Thus, while moving toward a post-Westphalian world, the term has come to concern not only the rights of states but also certain responsibilities toward their fellow citizens. Particularly, with the increase of humanitarian incentives throughout the post-Cold War era, this changing nature of sovereignty has gradually become problematic and heralded fundamental changes within the structure of the liberal international order.

With regard to the question of polarity in the wake of the Cold War, there was a heated debate. Some, like Mearsheimer, claimed that the bipolar postwar order was "replaced by a multipolar structure,"[986] whereas others, like Krauthammer, argued in favor of the emergence of a unipolar order as "the center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, United States, attended by its Western allies."[987] Perhaps, the most creative of these suggestions came from Samuel Huntington, who advocated that the old order would be replaced by "a strange hybrid, a *uni-multipolar* system with one superpower and several major powers."[988] Given the scope and purpose of this study, we do not intend to develop further the analysis of the polarity concept. Nevertheless, it is, in retrospect, undeniable that the collapse of the Soviet Union left a huge power gap between the United States and the other international actors. Combined with the ascendancy of liberal democracies all over the world, especially in the former Soviet republics, this disparity of power rendered the dominance of the United States unrivaled and unchallenged. **"**By the 1990s, this American-led order was at a zenith. Ideological and geopolitical rivals to American leadership had disappeared. The United States stood at the center of it all as the unipolar power. Its dynamic bundle of oversized capacities, interests, and ideals constituted a remarkable achievement in the unfolding drama of the liberal international project."[989]

American dominance was not only a mere product of an ideological victory over communism. It also stemmed from the highly rich power resources possessed by the

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[985] David Luban, "The Romance of the Nation-State," **Philosophy & Public Affairs**, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Summer, 1980), p. 392.
[986] John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," **International Security,** Vol. 15, No.1, (Summer, 1990), p. 6.
[987] Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 70, No. 1, America and the World, (1990-1991), p. 23.
[988] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 78, No. 2, (Mar.-Apr. 1999), p. 36.
[989] Ikenberry, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 3.

United States, and these included not only the traditional -military and economic- ones but also modern -cultural- power resources. As put by Joseph Nye, "the United States [was] the largest country in the international system in both hard and soft power resources…"[990] and its superiority, in a tripod-like fashion, stood upon three legs: military, economic, and soft power. In other words, the foundation of the U.S. preeminence was "…the fact that it [was] the only country with the military, diplomatic, political, and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it [chose] to involve itself."[991] Within this framework, a crucial aspect was the mutually reinforcing nature of the liberal international order and the dominance of the United States. Throughout the 1990s, while, as the sole superpower, America has been undertaking relatively far-reaching institution-building efforts, it has also engaged in humanitarian action in various parts of the world, such as Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans, throughout the ethno-confessional conflicts that broke out in the immediate post-Cold war era.

By the end of the 1990s, the United States had excessive material capacity accompanied by relatively well-diffused soft power and strengthened by a large network of liberal norms and institutions. Even though it was placed at the center of international affairs as the only power to act unilaterally, which it has done in some instances, Washington, overall, did not opt for disregarding its international engagements. Freed from the Cold War pressures and the inter-bloc tensions, the international community has seemed, throughout this decade, as effective as it was hoped to be in the face of multiple conflicts and crises. Within this context, the other actors have not attempted to seek a way out or to undertake serious balancing initiatives against the superpower. Yet, unipolarity at the international level was inherently ephemeral. For this, Kenneth Waltz pointed two major reasons: "One is that dominant powers take on too many tasks beyond their own borders, thus weakening themselves in the long run…The other reason …is that even if a dominant power behaves with moderation, restraint, and forbearance, weaker states will worry about its future behavior."[992]

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[990] Joseph S. Nye Jr., **Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power,** Basic Books, New York, 1990, p. xv.
[991] Krauthammer, **op. cit.** 1990-1991, p. 24.
[992] Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," **International Security,** Vol. 25, No. 1, (Summer, 2000), p. 28.

In the case of the United States, the turning point was the 9/11 attacks and the evolution of its foreign policy with the global war on terrorism at its center. The increased unilateralism of the Bush administration and its hostile stance toward international institutions, mostly built and long-advocated by the United States itself, generated concern among friends and foes alike. The use of U.S. military power with no strings attached triggered unease within the international arena as it was perceived, by many states, as a potential danger. In a sense, the unipolarity under American dominance, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, started to evolve toward an imperialistic direction, which undermined America's position as the global leader. In this sense, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the most extreme example of the United States' post-Cold War unilateralism. "Despite the reluctance, opposition, or active hostility of much of the world the United States was able to launch an unprovoked attack on a sovereign country and to enlist dozens of countries and international agencies to assist it during and after the invasion."[993] Notwithstanding the increasing concerns about U.S. unilateralism, the United States incontestably remained, in terms of economic and military power, as the superior actor. However, its unchecked unilateralism, as applied in Iraq, has rapidly undermined its soft power. As the country has lost its appeal, anti-Americanism has skyrocketed all over the world. "The detainment facilities at Guantánamo, the use of torture against suspected terrorists, and the widely condemned invasion of Iraq in 2003 have all tarnished the American 'brand' and put a dent in America's 'soft power' -its ability to attract others to its point of view."[994] It was, without a doubt, not the end of the United States' preeminence, but the decline in its soft power foreshadowed a significant transformation at the international level. A decrease in its soft power would primarily reduce "…the ability of the United States to achieve its goals without resorting to coercion or payment."[995] Thus, the other two legs of U.S. primacy -economic and military- have become even more crucial than they were a few years ago.

From this perspective, the self-defeating policies pursued by the Bush administration, taking advantage of the post-Westphalian world, alienated much of the

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[993] Fareed Zakaria, **The Post-American World: Release 2.0,** W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2011, p. 52.
[994] Robert Kagan, "Not Fade Away: The Myth of American Decline," **The New Republic,** January 11, 2012, https://newrepublic.com/article/99521/america-world-power-declinism (Access: 07.04.2020).
[995] Joseph S. Nye Jr. "The Decline of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 83, No. 3, (May-Jun. 2004), p. 16.

international actors. Indeed, "American behavior abroad during the Bush administration shattered the moral and political authority of the United States."[996] This was accompanied by an inevitable reconfiguration of the global balance of power, as well as a redefinition of America's role and purpose within the international system. The administration's foreign policy approach has turned the United States from a global leader, even a benevolent one for some, to a "global Leviathan."[997] What it signaled was not the emergence of a new international system with new rules and institutions; rather, it was the reorganization of the liberal postwar order and its adaptation to the emerging realities, that is, the eroding American-led unipolar order. At the height of the Cold War, in the 1960s, French President Charles de Gaulle stated that "the U.S…. as all countries that had overwhelming power, was coming to believe that force would solve everything but that was not the case and [the Americans] would soon realize it."[998] Similarly, another French statesman, Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine used, in not an endearing sense, the term "hyperpower" to describe the United States and added that the counterbalancing against this evolution of American power was only possible "through steady and persevering work in favor of real multilateralism against unilateralism, for balanced multipolarism against unipolarism, for cultural diversity against uniformity."[999] In parallel with the increased suspicions of its allies, the United States' capacity to wield influence has considerably diminished. This became clear as Washington increasingly had difficulties in obtaining the active support of its allies, like most of the Europeans. Despite its overwhelming military and political power, the United States was not omnipotent any longer. Nor had it the capacity to impose its will or to persuade other major powers, let alone its allies, to act in accordance with its foreign policy agenda.

It was true that the worldwide opposition to American unilateralism became more consolidated and vociferous in reaction to the Bush administration's policies and vision. While having difficulties in obtaining the diplomatic and/or military support of its allies in its undertakings, such as the invasion of Iraq, the image of the U.S. has also been deteriorated before the public in many countries, friends and foes alike. As

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[996] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 2019, p. 13.
[997] Ikenberry, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 269.
[998] Odd Arne Westad, **The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times,** Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, p. 152.
[999] "To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a 'Hyperpower'," **The New York Times,** February 5, 1999, https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/05/news/to-paris-us-looks-like-a-hyperpower.html (Access: 08.04.2020).

revealed by the surveys, between 2000 and 2003, the favorable opinions of the U.S. in Germany plummeted from 78% to 45% and in France, from 62% to 43%.[1000] A similar trend was also observed in non-European U.S. allies throughout the same period. For instance, the rate of Turkish citizens having favorable opinions about the U.S. fell to 15% from 52%, and the decrease was even sharper in Indonesia, where it fell from 75% to 15%.[1001] This was the case in more or less every country in the world, and the positive view of the United States has almost never reached the pre-Iraq level in any of these. This is also reflected by the increasingly visible resistance of these countries toward the unilateralist policies of the US.

However, as far as the source of this opposition was concerned, it was only the tip of the iceberg. If it were not for that, the Obama administration's manifest commitment to multilateralism and the liberal international order would have succeeded in reversing this anti-American trend and restoring its image in the eyes of the world. Likewise, it was not the refusal of the liberal order *per se,* rather, a demand for a structural reorganization and the determination of new rules for the game. The real source of these counterbalancing efforts lay deep inside the inherent features of the international system itself and the nature of a unipolar order. Such an order is, first and foremost, perceived by the dominant actor as permissive to any undertaking to shape the environment in its own image. This seeming permissiveness encourages interventionist intentions, and in the absence of a direct threat and substantial constraints, this dominant state sees no reason to hesitate in getting involved in any part of the world. Combined with the long-standing self-congratulatory view of the Americans of their global place – in other words, American exceptionalism, this external environment has pushed them to follow a foreign policy agenda beyond the objective limits of U.S. power. As put by Waltz, "the vice to which great powers easily succumb in a multipolar world is inattention; in a bipolar world, overreaction; in a unipolar world, overextension."[1002]

Furthermore, another reason for global opposition to America's dominance was directly linked to the anarchic character of the self-help system. The overbearing

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[1000] "America's Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project," **Pew Research Center,** March 14, 2007, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/ (Access: 12.06.2020).
[1001] **Ibid.**
[1002] Waltz, **op. cit.** 2000, p. 13.

power of an actor and its almost unchecked use inevitably triggers unease and resentment among others, even by those who do not feel directly threatened at the moment. The reason for their concern is simply the unpredictable nature of state behavior. The opposition to the U.S. was not a reaction solely to its values or the policies of the Bush administration; rather, it was against its approach to the international community and the methods it used within the realm of foreign policy. Its allies, like France and Germany, were not fighting to keep Saddam in power while they were opposing the American invasion of Iraq. Their fear was essentially about the future. They were worried "…because the United States [was] strong enough to act pretty much as it wishe[d], and [they could not] be sure that Washington will not use its immense power to threaten their own interests."[1003] Friendly states have manifested their opposition by limiting their support for American actions at the international level. However, it was not hard to imagine that the other great powers, such as Russia and China, would attempt to counterbalance unilateral U.S. initiatives in more pro-active ways.

This decline in soft power and global influence and lowering support of allies in international actions have reached another level as a result of the Grand Recession started in late 2007. This global financial crisis that lasted until 2010 undermined the second leg of America's dominance, its economic power, and it accelerated what Zakaria called "the rise of the rest,"[1004] that is to say, the relative decline of U.S. economic power on a significant scale. Therefore, although the U.S. has remained by far the most powerful actor in the world at the politico-military level, the decrease in the global attractiveness of its values and culture -i.e. soft power- was now followed by its economic power. In other words, "the larger structure of unipolarity -economic, financial, cultural- [was] weakening."[1005] The rise of certain developing G-20 countries, like India and Brazil, and especially another major power, China, has come to be seen as the introductory phase of a long story. Going even further, according to some observers, this transformation, characterized by the excessive increase in the number of major powers possessing capabilities to exert substantial influence on critical international issues, was the illustration of a more radical shift at the international level. In this sense, Richard Haass argued that "the paramount feature of

[1003] Walt, **op. cit.** 2005, p. 72.
[1004] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 2.
[1005] **Ibid.** p. 242.

international relations in the first half of the twenty-first century [was] nonpolarity."[1006] Although the nascent erosion of unipolarity was apparent during this period, the large power gap separating a few major actors, which has persisted since then, made such claims seem premature, if not overambitious. Nevertheless, it has increasingly become clear that the United States has had neither the required material resources nor the moral posture to maintain its leading post-WWII role. It could not safeguard and orchestrate the international order solely by itself. Unlike geopolitics, economics is not a zero-sum game, but by the early 2010s, it was obvious that this relative economic decline would have a significant impact in every other foreign policy area in the near future. The unipolar post-Cold War bargain within the liberal international order was no longer viable. In the words of Christophe Layne, "the Unipolar Era has ended up and the Unipolar Exit has begun."[1007]

A drastic shift in global power was not an exceptional phenomenon. Indeed, the tides of history, over decades, have created such transformations, allowing the reorganization of the established inter-state system. Moreover, such changes challenging the status of the dominant power have created fear and anxiety among its allies and seemed to present opportunities and incentives to other prominent powers that have strived to alter the *status quo*. In this sense, the one that emerged toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century would have inevitably significant ramifications within various realms. Pushing the international system toward what Zakaria called "the post-American world," it encouraged the other powers to increase their assertiveness.[1008] While threatened economically by the rise of the Chinese giant in Asia, the most significant challenge within the realm of geopolitics came from America's arch-rival, Russia. Its tendency to pursue more ambitious policies and to assert its interests forcefully has, in accordance with the zero-sum logic of the geopolitics, restricted the United States' once immense room for action. "Russia ended its post-Soviet accommodation and [became] more forceful, even aggressive."[1009] This, in effect, foreshadowed the return of the great power rivalry that seemed to be

[1006] Haass, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 15.
[1007] Christopher Layne, William Wohlforth, Stephen G. Brooks "US Decline or Primacy? A Debate" in. Michael Cox, Douglas Stokes (Eds.), **U.S. Foreign Policy,** Second Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, p. 412.
[1008] Zakaria, **op. cit.** 2011, p. 39.
[1009] **Ibid.** p.53.

eliminated as an international reality as a result of the Western victory at the end of the Cold War.

As a matter of fact, the source of this revival of Russian power and its return to the great power game has had multiple aspects. It was as linked to America's mishandling -for many, even abuse- of its dominant position as to certain miscalculated American foreign policy undertakings. Chief among them was the decision to enlarge NATO into the former Soviet sphere of influence, that is, Russia's "near abroad." "This policy has proved to be one of the most consequential and controversial of the post–Cold War era."[1010] As bluntly stated by Gaddis, creating a remarkable consensus among the American historians, this decision to enlarge NATO was seen "…as ill-conceived, ill-timed, above all ill-suited to the realities of the post-Cold War world."[1011] Thus, the United States' failure to draw lessons from history resulted in this ill-advised policy initiated by the Clinton administration and maintained by his successors, which provoked, in time, an assertive Russian reaction. As summarized by Cohen, "Moscow had been uneasy about Washington's unilateralism and Bush's doctrine of preventive war. Putin and his colleagues were profoundly displeased by the continued eastward expansion of NATO, questioning why NATO even needed to exist after the Cold War. They perceived American promotion of democracy in Ukraine and Georgia, American support of the Orange and Rose revolutions, respectively, in those countries, as an attempt to undermine Russia's influence in its 'near abroad.'"[1012]

From a broader perspective, this triggered a struggle between two contradicting world views. For Russia, the West has imposed its -liberal- vision, first to a significant part of the world, and then to the rest. Within this context, the changing perception of Russia regarding its national security and its place within the international system, along with the transformation of the nature of the Russian-American relations, was first crystallized, in 2008, by the Russian intervention in Georgia. Later, in 2014, Russia's involvement in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea left no room for doubt about the revival of a Cold-War-like great power struggle. Having felt betrayed by the

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[1010] Richard Haass, **A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order,** Penguin Press, New York, 2017, EPUB e-book, p. 88.
[1011] John Lewis Gaddis, "History, Grand Strategy and NATO Enlargement," **Survival,** Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring 1998, p. 145.
[1012] Cohen, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 328.

West and contained -again- by the U.S. and its allies, Moscow, as a revived power, was "clawing back its historic zones of control and, frankly there seem[ed] little that Washington [could] do…"[1013] Further, this was the case not only in Russia's near abroad but also in another strategically crucial region, the Middle East.

Not surprisingly, the increase in Russia's assertiveness has not remained limited to its near abroad. The Middle East, with its instability and turmoil, along with substantial long-established ties, has offered Moscow a significant and realistic opportunity to manifest its return to the great power struggle. In fact, the region, throughout the 1990s, had ceased to be among high priorities in Moscow's foreign policy agenda. Even in the first years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia had assumed a low profile in the region while making efforts to build constructive relations with the West and to restore its power. Nevertheless, President Putin has had, above everything else, an unwavering and unbending conviction in resurrecting Russia's great-power status, and the attitude of the United States and its allies, as was perceived by the Kremlin, would hamper his efforts. Aside from its immediate neighborhood, the Middle East was the most suitable region for him to show his strength as a major actor. A document published in 2007, entitled the Concept for Ensuring Security in the Region of the Persian Gulf, affirmed the orientation of its focus on the Middle East and "'the return' of the RF [Russian Federation] to the region."[1014] Followed Russia's efforts to shore up its influence within the region while demonstrating to the world that it has recovered itself, both economically and politically, almost three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "In part, Moscow's policy in the region reflected its continuing 'superpower' complex and the desire to be equal to -or at least comparable to and able to oppose- the West and, above all, the United States."[1015] The Arab Spring has, thus, become key for Russia to assert its opposition to America, as well as to prove the re-emergence of its great-power status to the whole world.

Within this context, even the Obama administration's initiative to launch a multi-dimensional and constructive initiative called "reset"[1016] with regard to the relations with Russia could not eventually succeed in precluding the escalation of the great

[1013] Paul Kennedy, "Back to Normalcy," **The New Republic,** December 21, 2010, https://newrepublic.com/article/79753/normalcy-american-decline-decadence (Access: 10.04.2020).
[1014] Kozhanov, **op. cit.** 2014, pp. 87-88.
[1015] Malashenko, **op. cit.** 2013, p. 6.
[1016] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, pp. 88-92.

power rivalry. The Arab Spring, demonstrating the incompatible natures of both countries' interests and objectives in multiple settings, has done nothing but to fuel the existing contradictions and sharpen the disagreements between Moscow and Washington. Therefore, the impact of the international dynamics, along with many other secondary ones, was ineluctably significant in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward the revolts in the Arab world. That is not to say, however, that the degree, relevance, and direction of their influence were identical in the American response to the events in different countries. Rather, they have had a multi-dimensional impact with varying degrees in each case. Egypt, in this regard, constituted the setting in which these systemic factors, and particularly the Russian-American rivalry, have played a considerably insignificant role, if any, in the formation of Washington's strategy. In Libya, the international factors have appeared as primary stimulants and affected the course of U.S. foreign policy in a way that encouraged an interventionist approach. Against the Assad regime in Syria, in turn, the great power rivalry has turned out to be the principal determinant of the United States' response but, this time, acting as an element of constraint, it pushed Washington to avoid any military undertaking despite the gravity of the crisis in both humanitarian and political terms.

Regarding the popular revolt in Egypt, the pervasive uncertainty about the potential impact of the manifestations and the capability of the protesters was at the source of the international community's inertia. Most of the international actors, including Russia, have seen the unfolding events as limited social unrest with a low probability of success. In this sense, the demonstrations in this country were viewed, by many, as no different from those previous protests occurred in the last decade against the Mubarak regime. Moreover, Moscow's inability to capture the essence of the revolts that had started to spread across the region has been a key factor in pushing the impact of the international dynamics -and the great power rivalry- toward a peripheral point. The Kremlin, in the beginning, considered the Arab Spring a Western plot to destabilize the region with no potential to bring about any fundamental change. This ill-conceived Russian position has inevitably led to a distant strategy in Egypt, as well as in countries like Tunisia, Bahrein, and Yemen. Indeed, "Russia 'woke up' only after the murder of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya…[T]rying to keep aside from the intra-Arab conflict and limiting its reaction to the events in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen by statements on the necessity of the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the Russian government suddenly found out that the new Middle East was no longer the

friendly place that the USSR had experienced decades before."[1017] Within this framework, the United States appeared as the only global power that was highly concerned with the developments in the country. Its long-standing ties to the Mubarak regime and Cairo's crucial position with regard to Israel's national security rendered a distant strategy like that of Russia or indifference unthinkable for Washington. Given Russia's stance, U.S. foreign policy remained free from the compelling international constraints, and, as a corollary, the American strategy was essentially inspired by other factors related to the domestic political dynamics and the commitment to its core values and principles. Thus, in shaping the U.S. response toward the uprisings in Egypt, the international dynamics were remarkably far from being among the main determinants, let alone being decisive.

Notwithstanding, this peripheral status of the systemic factors and the great power rivalry in affecting U.S. foreign policy has not remained unchanged in other settings. Rather, their influence has incrementally become more significant and reached a climax in Syria, where they acted as a significant curb curtailing any American military action. In the face of the uprising in Libya, in turn, the transformation in the international balance of power has had a two-fold effect on U.S. foreign policy. First, the changing American role within the international system, accompanied by a redefinition of the country's role at the global level, forced the United States to lean on multilateral means to respond to the crisis effectively. In this sense, the idea of "leading from behind" was the product of the radical shift within the global distribution of power and essentially stemmed from two implicit convictions: "that the relative power of the U.S. is declining…and that the U.S. [was] reviled in many parts of the world. Pursuing [its] interests and spreading [its] values require[ed] stealth and modesty as well as military strength."[1018] As a result of the rise of rival major powers and the end of the unipolar period, the United States had neither the will nor the political and economic power to act alone or with a unilaterally-built coalition of its allies in Libya. Moreover, trying to reverse the impact of the Bush administration's policies that had alienated the world, Washington desired to implement a new form of global leadership with fewer responsibilities.

[1017] Kozhanov, **op. cit.** 2014, p.94.
[1018] Lizza, **op. cit.** 2011.

Secondly, apart from Moscow's failure to grasp the gist of the Arab Spring revolts, in 2011, the Russian-American relations were strongly shaped by optimism induced by the Obama administration's "reset" initiative. Russia, then under the presidency of Dimitri Medvedev, seemed to believe the Western claims that Resolution 1973 would only be an international mandate to halt a looming slaughter in Libya and the possibility of building constructive relations with the United States, while, at the same time, improving international cooperation. What changed this hopeful environment was the intensive NATO bombings in Libya, which ended in the gruesome killing of an anti-Western leader, Qaddafi. The fact that the operation Unified Protector was not solely limited to the establishment of a no-fly zone over the country convinced the Kremlin that the Western actors –and the United States- had the "hidden agenda" of regime-change all along and they covered it by the language of the UNSC Resolution 1973. Affirming this view, Russian President Vladimir Putin later unequivocally underscored the striking impact of the Libyan case on Russia's perception of international affairs and the relations with the United States as he stated: "You know, it's not that [the reset] has ended now over Crimea. I think it ended even earlier, right after the events in Libya."[1019] Thus, the attitude of the Western actors in Libya reiterated the disillusionment of Russia, worrying Moscow about the emergence of a hostile -Western- group "manipulating," or even abusing the international mechanisms to achieve their objectives and expand their influence.

Therefore, the international arena appeared somewhat permissive to a military intervention in Libya. Nevertheless, the international factors were in supporting role in forming U.S. foreign policy as it was essentially shaped by humanitarian concerns. The international factors, that is, the absence of Russian and Chinese vetoes in the UN Security Council, have enabled a NATO intervention on humanitarian grounds. In other words, the systemic factors were not principal determinants of the decision, but the prevailing cooperative atmosphere at the international level paved the way for the application of the concept of R2P against the Qaddafi regime's atrocities. Yet, while entailing the toppling of Colonel Qaddafi, the hopeful nature of international affairs has become subject to an irreversible transformation. The period of relative accommodation has ended in Libya. The language of Resolution 1973, with the

[1019] "'Reset' with U.S. Ended with Libya, not Crimea, Putin Says," **The Moscow Times,** April 17, 2014, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/17/reset-with-us-ended-with-libya-not-crimea-putin-says-a34134 (Access: 12.04.2020).

wording "all necessary measures," turned out to be a cornerstone for the Russian-American relations, as well as the international cooperation. As stated by Robert Mason, "UNSC members Russia and China would become much more cautious in the following years to allow such language to be included in other resolutions."[1020] Moreover, Moscow has come to realize, after the developments in Libya, that its misjudgment could lead to the total disappearance of its influence in the Middle East. The fear that the region would be shaped in the West's, and particularly the United States' image triggered more assertive Russian moves in Syria, as the rebound effect of the Libyan intervention. Moscow, thus, did not hesitate to invest considerable political capital and military strength in Syria. In this sense, the escalating great power rivalry was remarkably fueled by the events related to the Libyan crisis and, limiting its available options, became a substantial constraint for U.S. foreign policy toward another Middle Eastern autocrat, Bashar al-Assad.

In office since 2004, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that, in Syria, Russia "would never allow the Security Council to authorize anything similar to what happened in Libya,"[1021] heralding two significant features of the crisis in this country. First, Russia has drawn lessons for itself from the latest experience in the Middle East and would form a diplomatic bloc, with China, to stop any assertive military undertaking by the United States and its allies hoping to facilitate the fall of the Assad regime. Secondly, underscoring the decisive impact of its veto power within the UN Security Council, this Russian stance highlighted another central reality: that the influence of systemic constraints would play a crucial role in determining U.S. foreign policy in Syria. Thus, the United States' limits that President Obama underlined, regarding the decision of intervention in Syria, were apparently imposed by the growing impact of the great power rivalry at the international level.

The nature and the impact of the Syrian crisis in terms of ramifications on international affairs were considerably different and more consequential than those of the Egyptian and Libyan cases. The Mubarak regime in Egypt was, in the final analysis, an American ally, a large recipient of U.S. aid, and none of the Russian interests at stake were high. Moreover, the possibility of a regime-change resulting

[1020] Robert Mason, "Introduction," in. Robert Mason (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2014, p. 2.
[1021] Sui-Lee Wee, "Russia, China Oppose 'Forced Regime Change' in Syria," **Reuters,** February 1, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-china-russia/russia-china-oppose-forced-regime-change-in-syria-idUSTRE81007L20120201 (Access: 14.04.2020).

from the street demonstrations seemed unrealistic to Moscow. In the end, even if the regime were to be fallen, the disappearance of an autocrat strongly tied to Washington would not create a significant disturbance for the Kremlin. In other words, Russia did not have much to lose in Egypt. Combined with the fact that the events in this country had never reached a civil-war-like point that would have required more attention from the international community, the other major powers, including Russia, remained indifferent toward the crisis. Such an external environment not only provided the United States with a wide margin for maneuver but also minimized the impact of the rivalry with Russia on its decision-making process. Thus, they acted neither as stimulants nor as constraints; rather, they presented a permissive framework for America to freely assume the desired position in the face of the demonstrations.

The Libyan uprising, as an international phenomenon, offered less compelling systemic pressures but more powerful humanitarian concerns compared to Egypt. This time, neither Russia nor the United States had substantial national interests in the country under consideration. Most importantly, the risk posed by the bloodthirsty Qaddafi regime to the innocent civilians has come to present, to some extent, a common ground on which the international community could -and should- cooperate. The Atlantic bloc's pledge to limit its actions by the objective of ending human suffering and protecting innocents from the regime's atrocities has persuaded the Russians and their Chinese ally not to use their vetoes and to allow Resolution 1973 to pass. Once the events reached, whether as planned or spontaneously, an unacceptable point for Moscow by the fall of the regime in Libya, the harmony and the accommodationist atmosphere that had prevailed at the international level rapidly disappeared.

At the time when the protests in Syria erupted, the international community's, and especially Russia's, perception of the Arab Spring had matured enough to acknowledge its difference from the previous similar experiences in the Middle East and its potential to bring about a radical shift within the regional balance. They started to see the unfolding events as a collective revolt that could destabilize the whole Arab world, rather than certain small-scale uprisings threatening only the incumbent leaders. More importantly, what distinguished Syria from Egypt and Libya was that both principal external powers, Russia and the United States, had substantial geopolitical and strategic interests closely linked to the result of the Arab Spring in this country.

From the Kremlin's perspective, Damascus was a long-standing ally since the Cold War years and offered a significant foothold in the Middle East whereas, for the United States, with its close ties to Moscow, its unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause, and the Alawite Assad family in power, Syria was a significant threat to America's Israeli and Sunni allies, as well as its strategic and economic interests.

Aside from the high stakes for both great powers, the weighty dynamic of the Syrian crisis that led to further complexity was the fact that Moscow and Washington would strive for two opposite ultimate outcomes. As pointed out by Michael McFaul, in Syria, their "interests diverged too widely…[The Obama administration] had a fundamental disagreement with the Russian government. The Russians wanted Assad to remain in power. The Americans were committed to Assad's removal."[1022] The counterterrorism initiatives, resulting from the emergence of the extremist opposition groups like ISIS, seemed to be the only common ground for the United States and Russia in Syria. Fueled by the Kremlin's concerns that any increase in jihadist influence in the Middle East would eventually have consequences on Russia's Muslim minority, Moscow's stance toward the U.S. calls for the fight against Islamic extremism has been favorable. Nevertheless, once the extremist jihadist threat was marginalized, their opposing geopolitical ambitions have resurfaced.

Furthermore, another important aspect of Russian foreign policy, not only in Syria but also in other settings like Georgia, Ukraine, and Crimea, was its underlying vision centered on the desire to restore the country's international great-power status. There has been, since the end of the Cold War, a significant gap between the international realities and where most of the Russians saw, or at least wanted to see, their country. Realizing that this gap was narrowing over the last decade, they viewed the Syrian crisis as an opportunity to prove themselves to the world as a leading power with a decisive impact on crucial international events. In this regard, "more than anything else, Russian policy seemed to be motivated by a desire to show that it remained a major power able to make a difference on the world stage."[1023] In this sense, any undertaking led by the United States and its allies on the ground, which could undermine the Assad regime's already fragile and vulnerable position and cause its removal was perceived by the Kremlin as a threat to its international image and

[1022] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, pp. 318-319.
[1023] Haass, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 156.

status, as well as its geopolitical interests. In other words, "Russian leaders would likely view the downfall of the regime as a serious blow to their diplomatic prestige and Middle Eastern/Mediterranean influence and military access."[1024]

This, in effect, turned the crisis into a Cold War-like struggle for influence between the United States and Russia. As claimed by Samuel Charap, "Russia's stance on international action on the Syria Crisis has more to do with anxieties about the implications of US power than it does with Syria itself."[1025] Moscow's obsession with international predominance, along with its strategic ambitions, has become an obstacle for any substantial international action to prevent the regime's atrocities, an obstacle that could only be overcome by the use of American power. However, the world in which the United States has enjoyed an incontestable primacy had long gone. The relative decline in America's power rendered such a confrontation too costly in every possible respect, not to mention the rebound effect of the Iraq war. The waning American superiority and the redistribution of power on the global scale were not the only realities revealed by these contradicting views toward the Arab Spring in Syria. This also unveiled a fundamental divergence of Moscow's view of humanitarian intervention and that of Washington's. While the former remained strongly committed to the notion of sovereignty in the traditional Westphalian sense, the latter put forward, through its advocacy of the concept of R2P, a firm belief in the idea that sovereignty should not be used as a shield to allow a government to eschew the fulfillment of its responsibilities toward its citizens.

Within this framework, the systemic pressures, imposed by the pervasive influence of the re-emerged great power rivalry on the American policy-making, have substantially limited Washington's foreign policy options. The diverging American and Russian objectives on the ground led to an inevitable stalemate, fueling the chaos and civil war in the country. Any humanitarian undertaking that could have ended the suffering of the Syrian people was countered -or vetoed- by Russia -and China- since Moscow could not "be convinced that US motives [were] purely driven by the humanitarian calamity that Assad has created. Instead, it [saw] sinister geopolitics: the United States moving to get rid of a government with a foreign policy that had long

[1024] Jeremy M. Sharp, Christopher M. Blanchard, **Syria: Unrest and U.S. Policy**, Congressional Research Service Reports, May 24, 2012, p. 5.
[1025] Samuel Charap, "Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention," **Survival,** Vol. 55, No. 1, February-March 2013, p. 37.

contradicted US interests, particularly by aligning with Iran."[1026] Within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, humanitarian intentions were not the only foreign policy actions blocked by the increasing Russian influence at the international level. Seen from an outcome-oriented perspective, the Syrian crisis has evolved in an undesired direction for the United States. The continuing rule of Bashar Assad in Syria has constituted a significant sign pointing the limited American capability to wield influence in the Middle East, even over a grave humanitarian and political crisis. As significant constraints, these international dynamics rendered any other humanitarian or domestic concern irrelevant and appeared as the main factors that could account for the U.S. retrenchment. The push of such an external environment was so overwhelming that the pulls of humanitarian considerations remained too weak to generate any decisive action to bring an end to the regime's brutality, let alone an international intervention.

Consequently, by the time the Arab Spring erupted, "the short-lived unipolar system in which the United States dominated international relations had come to an end."[1027] This radical shift in the international distribution of power stemmed in part from America's certain ill-tempered and miscalculated policies, and in part, from the rise of other prominent powers in the economic domain and their increased assertiveness in seeking to achieve their geopolitical interests. Faced with the tumultuous popular uprisings across the Arab world within such an external environment, Washington's foreign policy moves were inevitably affected, to varying degrees, by the implication of this radical reorganization of the international arena. Within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, the re-emerging great power rivalry in Egypt, Libya, and Syria has ultimately appeared as a peripheral element, a stimulant encouraging a humanitarian intervention, and a constraint curtailing any decisive action, respectively. Thus, neither their capacity to influence policy decisions nor the policy direction they imposed was identical in each case. Another important conclusion to be drawn from the analysis in this section is that the systemic factors alone cannot explain every relevant aspect of U.S. foreign policy, especially in the face of such a complex series of events in a strategically and economically crucial region. Therefore, one ought to look elsewhere to develop a comprehensive understanding. Given that the term Arab Spring refers to a popular call for democracy, freedom, and

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[1026] **Ibid.**

[1027] Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Obama Approach to the Middle East: The End of America's Moment?" **International Affairs,** Vol. 89, No. 2, 2013, p. 320.

human rights in countries under the rule of brutal autocrats, the humanitarian concerns as one of the guiding motives of U.S. foreign are, thus, worth leaning on.

B- The Influence of Humanitarian Concerns

In his well-known speech warning his fellow citizens on the involvement in the affairs of foreign countries to search for "monsters to destroy," John Quincy Adams also lay the foundations of the world vision of the United States. He stated that America "…proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature and the only lawful foundations of government…She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all… [America's] glory is not dominion, but liberty… the motto upon her shield is, Freedom, Independence, Peace."[1028] Nearly a century later, President Theodore Roosevelt illustrated, in the same vein, America's self-assigned role embellished with moral responsibilities in international relations: "until we put honor and duty first, and are willing to risk something in order to achieve righteousness both for ourselves and for others, we shall accomplish nothing…"[1029] Similarly, the standard-bearer of the idealist strand of American foreign policy thinking, Woodrow Wilson, who built his decision to enter WWI upon the objective of making the world safe for democracy, asked, "Just what is it that America stands for?" and replied: If she stands for one thing more than another it is for the sovereignty of self-governing people."[1030]

This value-centered vision and cultural background have been, and would likely be, guiding the United States' conduct of foreign affairs to a considerable extent. America's response to the Arab Spring, in this regard, was not an exception. "Humanitarianism," underlined Haass, "is… [a] contender for what should most guide U.S. efforts around the world, one that dominated much of the efforts of the Clinton administration… and more recently led to American support for and participation in the intervention in Libya. The same issue was at the core of the subsequent debate

[1028] John Quincy Adams, "Speech to the U.S. House of Representatives on Foreign Policy," July 4, 1821, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-4-1821-speech-us-house-representatives-foreign-policy (Access: 24.04.2020).
[1029] Theodore Roosevelt, **Fear God and Take Your Own Part,** George H. Doran Company, New York, 1916, p. 388 https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.273195/page/n1/mode/2up/search/shall+accomplish (Access: 26.04.2020).
[1030] **Addresses of President Woodrow Wilson, January 27-February 3, 1916,** Government Printing Office, Washington, 1916, p. 13.

about Syria."[1031] Along with other dynamics, the humanitarian impulses and the commitment to the human rights cause have considerably affected the U.S. reaction to the uprisings. The people's call on the Arab streets for a democratic form of government, fundamental rights, and human dignity has resonated within the American public, as well as the body politic.

"In politics," argued Hofstadter, "people not only seek their interests but also express and even in a measure define themselves."[1032] For the American people, this requires a foreign policy reflecting their long-advocated values and principles, which have shaped their identity over centuries. As an integral part of the country's political culture, such an expectation has affected, with varying degrees, its responses to international events. Along with the national security considerations and economic concerns, this ideational aspect of the American understanding of foreign affairs has generally been central in this regard. According to Robert Dallek, "in [the American] approach to foreign affairs, style and substance have always gone hand in hand."[1033] While, by the word "substance," he underscored the significance of substantial -material- interests, the word "style" was used to emphasize the impact of the domestic features, the self-defined political culture, and the national character of the United States on its behavior abroad. Ignoring the humanitarian motives in making decisions within the realm of foreign policy might cause disillusionment, or even frustration, within the American public, since most of the Americans inherently view themselves and their administration as the protector of their values and responsible for promoting them across the world. The prevalence of the moral concerns in shaping foreign policy might be shattered by the emergence of circumstances that entail a direct military engagement or a confrontation with a major power that could constitute a substantial threat to national security. Therefore, the extent to which such concerns would affect the making and implementation of Washington's policies has often been strongly tied to the nature of certain other factors in relation to a given incident. For the moral concerns to prevail among multiple factors inspiring policy choices, the domestic and international considerations have to either be irrelevant and/or neutral or exert very

[1031] Haass, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 91.
[1032] Richard Hofstadter, **The Paranoid Style in American Politics,** Vintage Books, New York, 2008, p. xxxiii.
[1033] Robert Dallek, **The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs,** Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1983, p. xiv.

limited impact in this respect. In other words, a foreign policy agenda driven purely or primarily by moral motives is nothing but a rare occurrence.

As far as the Obama administration is concerned, the first foreign policy test in this regard came before the Arab Spring. The post-electoral unrest in Iran, in mid-2009, constituted the first major incident that forced the administration to make a choice between following America's moral impulses and, given the intention to limit Tehran's nuclear ambitions, its middle-term strategic interests. Washington's support for the demonstrators in this country remained verbal, if any, letting the idealist strand in the society and the administration down. In this sense, the protests in Cairo pointed to the same dilemma for the administration within a little more than one year. Many Americans, and some members of the administration, were sympathetic to the demands of the demonstrators fighting boldly against a corrupt and an entrenched regime. For them, "what American foreign policy is minimally urged to accomplish [was] at least not to obstruct the natural aspirations freedom and democracy of the peoples of the Arab world and the Middle East."[1034] A more decisive moral position could also contribute to the struggle of the demonstrators across the region and in Egypt. Besides, the international environment was excessively favorable, as other global powers were not heavily involved in the process yet, allowing the United States to find a significant room for action. The only factor that could prevent Washington from giving wholehearted support to the pro-democracy masses on the streets was its long-established ties with the Mubarak regime. Moreover, the weight of the Islamic groups within the society and the country's political arena has also put forward a threatening image for the future post-Mubarak period.

Within this context, the insistence of the more liberal members of the administration on the necessity of encouraging the pro-democracy revolt in Egypt was counterbalanced by the hawks who were paralyzed by the fear of an extremist takeover in the country that would doubtlessly threaten Israel's security and regional stability and who advocated caution and restraint. In the final analysis, "it could never be right to replace a bad regime with a worse one -in the name of human rights."[1035] Creating a stalemate within the decision-making structure, this deadlock led to a U.S. strategy that could be defined as surfing the wave. Washington avoided that the moral insights

[1034] Phares, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 186.
[1035] Abrams, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 37.

prevail irrevocably in shaping its approach toward Egypt until the fall of the regime seemed inevitable. Thus, in the absence of pressing international considerations, the humanitarian factors were influential insofar as they did not wholly contradict the impositions of certain strategic concerns, such as the security of U.S. allies and economic interests. Consequently, U.S. foreign policy in Egypt was mainly the product of domestic and moral considerations as the international factors have not pulled it significantly in any direction. While the absence of an imminent humanitarian disaster has rendered the moral impulses relatively moderate, the course of events that made the inevitable fate of the Mubarak regime conceivable in a short while prevented strategic and domestic political constraints from neutralizing these impulses. Eventually, their struggle gave way to a balanced approach that has avoided leading the events throughout the uprising. Instead, U.S. foreign policy, perceived as ambivalent, was shaped basically according to the evolution of the process without discrediting concerns with both the domestic and moral aspects.

The challenge to U.S. foreign policy became even more vexing in Libya, where a humanitarian crisis seemed inescapable unless the external actors made a decisive move to halt the advance of the regime forces. What separated Libya from certain other countries affected by the Arab Spring, such as Syria, was the consensus that somehow emerged within the international community. Without Russian and Chinese vetoes at the UN Security Council, the United States and its Western allies found the opportunity to shape the move according to their perception. This consensus was, as proved soon after the Libyan intervention, not the evidence that the humanitarian motives were the main determinants of foreign policy for every permanent member of the Security Council, nor was it a constant condition that would endure throughout the Arab Spring. Later, this was evidenced by the changing attitude of Washington's European allies, particularly France, toward the Syrian crisis. Although it did not hesitate to play the leading role in the Libyan intervention, this country avoided any military involvement in Syria because of the missed "perfect timing," as indicated earlier. Thus, before fueling the gradually intensifying great power rivalry between Moscow and Washington, this international environment encouraged the United States to implement a strategy inspired essentially by the moral impulses. Moreover, the willingness and enthusiasm presented by France to take the leading role and carry much of the burden facilitated the implementation of this morality-centered U.S. strategy.

Another significant aspect of this shift in U.S. foreign policy toward the *moralpolitik* end of the spectrum was that Libya represented not much in terms of its substantial national interests. Despite the relative rapprochement between the Qaddafi regime and Washington in the 1990s, the dictator's political stance had long been shaped by anti-Western insights. The rapidly unfolding events led, in a short span of time, to the transformation of Libya for the United States, "from an ally in the war on terror to a pariah."[1036] Resulting from the country's relative insignificance for the American national interests, "the decision about intervention in Libya was an unusually clear choice between interests and values."[1037] This view was, following the initiation of the military operation, affirmed by President Obama, emphasizing that the question of vital interest "cannot be an argument for never acting on behalf of what's right."[1038] For the administration, the U.S. should not wait for the images of slaughter from Libya to use its resources, within a favorable international atmosphere, to prevent a looming humanitarian catastrophe.

Moreover, the country, with its weak structural organization, constituted no threat to the NATO allies in military terms. The high chance of a low-cost victory for a military intervention on humanitarian grounds was often key to defeat many other concerns in such instances. In this sense, "Libya looked to be a decent bet."[1039] Likewise, the potential worries about the human costs of such an intervention were eliminated by President Obama's assurance that there would be "no boots on the ground." As for the economic aspect of the operation, Washington's resolve for sharing the burden with its allies, shifting much of the burden to the European members of the coalition, prevented any opposition in that matter. Combined with the permissive international environment, all these factors facilitated the implementation of a foreign policy strategy elaborated on purely humanitarian grounds. In other words, in the face of the Libyan crisis, moral concerns appeared as the essential determinants of U.S. foreign policy since many other considerations were successfully countered, and the international community viewed the crisis through a shared prism.

Therefore, U.S. policy in the face of the uprising in Libya evidenced that the variables based on moral assumptions were not the only determinants. When

[1036] Bowen, **op. cit.** 2012, p. 133.
[1037] Lizza, **op. cit.** 2011.
[1038] "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," **op.cit.** 2011.
[1039] Haass, **op. cit.** 2014, p. 92.

Washington encounters a grave international crisis, for these instincts to take the driving seat, various factors at multiple levels should either exert a limited impact on decision-making or be neutral depending on the circumstances in hand. Put differently, the inherent limits to a humanitarian foreign policy appeared as obstacles that needed to be overcome before implementing a purely moral strategy. Nevertheless, from another perspective, what the Libyan experience also demonstrated was that it was not an insurmountable challenge, especially for a country with abundant diplomatic capital and military and economic resources, such as the United States.

The next episode of the Arab Spring, Syria, represented a wholly different and frustrating picture for U.S. foreign policy, compared to the two previous examples. First of all, its internal structure was far more threatening than that of Libya, and it had had close ties, for over decades, with Russia and its regional ally, Iran. Moreover, the country's chronic hostility toward Israel had nurtured deeply anti-American policies. Secondly, and most importantly, the power dynamics that have shaped the international political landscape have undergone a radical transformation after what happened in Libya. The new atmosphere was characterized by the revival of the U.S.-Russian rivalry, similar to what had marked the Cold War years. Not surprisingly, as Syria turned into the main battleground of this great power struggle, the considerations related to the global distribution of power appeared as the primary source of the decision within the realm of U.S. foreign policy. The growing influence of the international stimulus on foreign policy-making has, thus, downplayed the other factors, such as moral concerns, and dictated distinctive terms. Despite the fact that the humanitarian disaster generated by the atrocities committed by the Assad regime was fare worse than those had occurred in Libya, the international dynamics have impeded any decisive Western undertaking, let alone humanitarian intervention, to stop this massive human suffering.

Indeed, the humanitarian concerns were always present, especially after the increasing extremist presence in Syria and the regime's decision to cross the chemical "red line" drawn by President Obama. Nevertheless, they remained merely peripheral, as did any other domestic considerations, as a result of the rebound effect of the intervention in Libya and the strong pull by the international realities in a more realist direction. The impact of the unwanted outcome of the Libyan experience on the decision about Syria was explained by McFaul, who highlighted that the "military

intervention in Libya did not produce the desired result, making many in Washington, including Obama, skittish about getting involved in another civil war."[1040] Nevertheless, the sour memory of the latest humanitarian intervention was nothing more than a supporting element for the pressing international concerns making an interventionist approach excessively costly. The opposition of the idealist voices within the administration, though concerned as ever, was simply set aside by the dictates of the harsh realities of the great power rivalry.

The root of the problem lay, indeed, in the diverging views of Washington and Moscow regarding the idea of modernization, and as a corollary, democratization. From the American perspective, as indicated many times so far, promoting the "best" form of government abroad, by force if necessary, has been seen as a noble objective, even a duty, for the policy-makers. Russia, in turn, has been fiercely opposing this view, especially since the election of Vladimir Putin. This was as much a product of the Russian President's vision of democratization as the power considerations at the international level. "In [President] Putin's view, the only way to modernize traditional cultures like those in the Middle East was gradually and from the top. You needed strongmen in power who could steer their conservative societies slowly to greater openness, more tolerance of other ethnic and religious groups, and more freedom."[1041] Thus, any external intervention aiming at such objectives was seen, by the Kremlin not only futile but also illegitimate.

Within this framework, the strong involvement of Russia in Syria laid bare the limits of American intervention in the country. Therefore, the primacy of the international factors in shaping U.S. foreign policy has become even more palpable when inaction, or retrenchment, allowed, in time, the Russians to be the only prominent global power to decide the fate of Syria during and after its bloody civil war. The pendulum's swing was this time so radical that U.S. foreign policy was moved eventually to the other end of the spectrum compared to where it was in Libya. The political, military, and economic costs of a confrontation with Russia to put an end to human suffering in Syria were so high that no American administration could easily take such a risk.

[1040] McFaul, **op. cit.** 2018, p. 331.
[1041] **Ibid.** p. 335.

Our analysis reveals, so far, two essential insights with regard to the impact of a value-oriented view on U.S. foreign policy. First, the sphere of influence of the humanitarian considerations in this regard can be limited, to some extent, by the international and domestic concerns. Particularly the more the international dynamics are influential in a way that requires taking the balance of power into account, the less decisive the humanitarian motives become. Moreover, the economic and political constraints, as part of the domestic dynamics, could simply downplay the moral impulses. Second, the answer to the question of the means to be used in order to implement a foreign policy based on moral principles is key to the success or failure of this view in shaping the American strategy. With a high possibility of a humanitarian intervention, these factors generally find a low degree of support within the American public and the decision-makers. In other words, when the means short of military engagement seem reliable enough to implement a value-based foreign policy with a high probability of success, the impact of such a vision increases sharply. This is not to say, however, a humanitarian intervention on the horizon demolishes any support for a foreign policy decision based on the idealist beliefs. As was observed in Libya, under such circumstances, what becomes effective in shaping the decision is the probability of success assured by an acceptable degree of human and material costs.

Notwithstanding, the great power rivalry and moral principles were not, without doubt, the only intervening variables that inspired U.S. foreign policy throughout the Arab Spring. Although these were obviously the most influential ones, some other societal factors have also played a somewhat central role in affecting Washington's foreign policy agenda.

C- Domestic Constraints

In international relations, one of the most striking characteristics of the last several decades was -and still is- the blurred lines between external and internal, or high and low politics. Therefore, humanitarian concerns and the systemic stimulus were hardly the only variables that have, to a significant degree, played a role in shaping U.S. foreign policy during the Arab Spring. It has gradually become an axiomatic fact that the interplay of various domestic factors has been central in understanding and explaining the country's international actions in the face of crucial developments. The idea that decision-makers have the responsibility to act on two

different settings and satisfy the expectations at both levels lies at the heart of the domestic explanations of foreign policy actions. "That is, in explaining government choices in foreign affairs, leaders are viewed as coping simultaneously with the pressures and constraints of their own domestic political systems as well as with those of the international environment."[1042] Within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, the cluster of domestic concerns includes a wide range of issues, from public opinion to private economic interests and the activities of lobbies. Nevertheless, given the substantiality of the Arab Spring, which could have easily turned into a great power conflict or another protracted war in the Middle East for the United States, the most salient domestic sources of influence were the public opinion and Congress. While the public view seemed to be effective on the orientation of the idealist-realist divide within the administration, the skeptical, if not critical attitude of Congress has essentially limited the policy options available to the White House.

The Obama period was, as noted earlier, marked by the reassertion of the congressional voice over foreign policy issues, in conformity with the revival of Jeffersonianism. This tendency, stemming from the ill-advised venture in Iraq, has turned into a substantial source of constraint for the American response to the uprisings in the Middle East. Being assessed from a broader perspective, Congress's attitude toward foreign policy questions has long been shaped by, among other considerations, the threat perception of the Americans.

> *"When Americans believe they face few external threats— or think that international engagement could itself produce a threat— they see less merit in deferring to the White House on foreign policy and more merit to congressional activism. Debate and disagreement are not likely to pose significant costs; after all, the country is secure. But when Americans believe the country faces an external threat, they quickly convert to the need for strong presidential leadership. Congressional dissent that was previously acceptable suddenly looks to be unhelpful meddling at best and unpatriotic at worst."*[1043]

[1042] Joe D. Hagan, "Domestic Political Explanations in the Analysis of Foreign Policy," in. Laura Neack, Jeanne A. K. Hey, Patrick J. Haney (Eds.), **Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in its Second Generation,** Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1995, p. 117.
[1043] Lindsay, **op. cit.** 2018**,** p.233.

Combined with the apparent intention to return to its pre-9/11 position in foreign policy, the low level of direct threat posed by the Arab Spring to the national security of the U.S., or any other vital interests, pushed Congress toward a relatively reluctant direction. The main objective of the congressional undertakings throughout this process was to prevent a deep American engagement in the region. Within this context, the wait-and-see-approach assumed by the White House in Egypt did not encounter strong congressional opposition as the odds were high for military action or intensive American involvement. The opposition of Congress has become more vociferous in Libya as, this time, the circumstances were shaped entailing, or even pressuring for, a decisive intervention.

Indeed, the president faced strong voices against military action in Libya from various groups across a broad spectrum. The lawmaker leading the anti-intervention campaign was Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), who stated that this was "a grave decision that cannot be made by the President alone,"[1044] and who, going even further, claimed that the failure in seeking congressional approval could lead to President Barack Obama's "impeachment."[1045] Similarly, Republican Representative of Michigan, Candice Miller, demanded the President to pull U.S. troops from the coalition forces as he "failed to state a clear and convincing explanation of the vital national interest at stake… [and] a clearly defined mission for our military to defend that interest."[1046] Moreover, while some lawmakers accused the administration of not doing enough to get the country rid of its dictator, many another claimed that President Obama undertook an intervention of choice against a state that had not attacked the United States. In other words, he was, from the outset, caught between charges, blaming him for either not doing enough to topple the Libyan dictator or having done too much. Indeed, "in the spring of 2011, Obama was criticized more for acting *too slowly* to confront Qaddafi than for acting at all…[He] got hammered by critics who argued he was dithering and not doing enough to stop Qaddafi, or too passive and

[1044] "Everyone's A Critic: Obama's Growing List of Libya Dissenters," **The Week**, March 23, 2011, https://theweek.com/articles/486194/everyones-critic-obamas-growing-list-libya-dissenters (Access: 27.05.2020).
[1045] John P. Avlon, "Left's View on Libya: Is This Bush's Third Term?" **CNN,** March 23, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/03/23/avlon.left.obama/ (Access: 27.05.2020).
[1046] Jonathan Allen, "Miller to Obama: Pull Out of Coalition," **Politico,** March 23, 2011, https://www.politico.com/story/2011/03/miller-to-obama-pull-out-of-coalition-051818 (Access: 27.05.2020).

letting the Europeans take the lead."[1047] This incoherent nature of the criticisms toward the administration's policies led, in the end, to the prevalence of humanitarian factors with regard to the making and implementation of U.S. foreign policy in Libya.

Therefore, the permissiveness of the international environment and the prevailing humanitarian concerns outweighed the opposing congressional voice. This low level of resistance shown by Congress also derived from the absence of any other rival great power in Libya and the likelihood of a relatively easy and low-cost victory. In contrast to Libya and Egypt, Syria presented a much more difficult challenge for the White House. Particularly following the use of chemical weapons by the regime forces, which triggered a process that could eventually lead to military intervention, the administration decided not to repeat the path it followed in Libya and tended to get congressional approval. As Russia's massive involvement rendered such a course of action considerably risky and costly, congressional approval appeared to be vital for the decision. Nonetheless, after a short period of closed-door meetings, it became crystal clear that the administration had no chance of getting the approval it sought. In the end, "[President] Obama avoided a major defeat on Capitol Hill only after Russia helped negotiate a deal under which the Syrian government agreed to get rid of its chemical weapons stockpile."[1048]

Furthermore, the intransigent stance of Congress was not the product of a mere struggle for authority with the White House over foreign policy issues. It also resulted from the 2010 mid-term elections that radically altered the balance between the two parties. In what was considered to be "one of the most dramatic midterm elections in American history," Republicans, by gaining 63 seats in the House of Representatives, took "…control of the chamber by a healthy margin. That figure represent[ed] the largest gain by an out-party in a midterm election since 1938. With 242 seats, Republicans [would] have a larger contingent in the House than they have had at any time since the 1946 elections."[1049] They have held, therefore, more than 55% percent of the seats in the House. Although the Democratic-majority Senate, which constitutionally has had more say in foreign affairs, provided the administration with

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[1047] Derek Chollet, **The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World,** Public Affairs, EPUB, New York, 2016, pp. 125-126.
[1048] **Ibid.** p. 230.
[1049] Andrew E. Busch, "The 2010 Midterm Elections: An Overview," **The Forum,** Vol. 8, No.4, 2010, https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/for/8/4/article-for.2011.8.4.1409.xml.xml (Access: 05.05.2020).

some room for action, this historic defeat of the Democrats tipped the executive-legislative balance in favor of the latter. "The Republican party's conquest of the majority of the House of Representatives in the mid-term election of 2010 (a majority that it kept afterwards) made the relationship with the Democratic President highly adversarial… [and the Senate] was not sufficient for neutralizing the permanent threat of a Republican filibustering against the administration's choices."[1050]

Combined with the growing partisanship in Washington, this political landscape has marked the presidency of Obama. In this sense, the "increasing partisan gridlock"[1051] was one of the main characteristics of the domestic political arena at the beginning of the president's second term in 2012. This apparent disagreement on substantial matters among the foreign policy elite has eventually led to political polarization in Washington, setting the ground for multiple controversial foreign policy decisions. In other words, politics did not seem to stop at the water's edge. Within this framework, one of the root causes for the oscillation or the seemingly incoherent nature of U.S. foreign policy throughout the popular uprisings across the Middle East was the divergence within elite opinion with regard to America's role in the region -and in the world. Thus, the increase in Republican voices in Congress and its inherent desire to regain what was practically transferred to the White House in the post-9/11 process -which gave way, to some extent, to the imperial presidency- has limited the options available to the administration in Egypt and Libya. The rally-around-the-flag effect generated by the 9/11 attacks had set the ground for substantial popular support behind the president's policies, downsizing, in practice, the effectivity of congressional influence on some crucial foreign policy decisions. The Arab Spring presented a perfect opportunity to reaffirm the authority of Congress within the constitutional framework. Nevertheless, in Egypt and Libya, these domestic dynamics –and the congressional voice- appeared unable to impose any specific course of action in the absence of a substantial threat and as a result of the pull of humanitarian motives. In turn, in the face of the Syrian crisis, these domestic political dynamics, strongly supported by the pressing international circumstances, have come to be relatively more influential in impeding the military involvement of the United States.

[1050] Fabbrini, Yossef, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 75.
[1051] Kaufman, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 164.

Another crucial domestic dynamic in shaping U.S. foreign policy during the Arab Spring was doubtlessly public opinion. The prevailing public mood in the United States after the venture in Iraq was similar, but of course not comparable, to that emerged in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Broadly, the Americans' view was characterized by what could be called world-weariness or engagement-weariness. As found out by a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, in May 2011, almost half of the society (46%) expressed that "the U.S. should mind its own business internationally."[1052] Thus, with only this data in hand, the public seemed divided over the U.S. role in the world. Nevertheless, when taken together with another poll result that only 13% of the society viewed promoting democracy abroad as a top priority and that this rate could only rise to 24% with regard to promoting human rights in foreign countries,[1053] the Americans' engagement-weariness has become one of the central determinants of the U.S. attitude toward the uprisings in the Arab world. Put differently, "when asked to rank American goals, narrow realist concerns associated with security were on top while cosmopolitan issues…were not."[1054] From this perspective, the reflection of the mass opinion on U.S. foreign policy, throughout this period, was essentially shaped in a way that favored limited engagement, if any.

The lack of a clear view of the mass protests in Egypt was the essential feature of the public view. The absence of a well-defined popular expectation has, indeed, facilitated the administration's strategy to follow, not to lead, the events. In February 2011, a majority (58%) believed that the events would not create much of an effect on the United States (36%), or gave no response (22%), while 57% of the Americans approved that "the Obama administration is handling the situation in Egypt about right."[1055] As there was no looming intervention or a costly venture over the horizon, the society has provided the administration, to some extent, with a free hand in shaping and implementing a cautious approach, to be determined by the developments on the ground.

[1052] Russell Heimlich, "U.S. Should 'Mind Its Own Business' Internationally," **Pew Research Center,** June 22, 2011, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2011/06/22/u-s-should-mind-its-own-business-internationally/ (Access: 06.05.2020).

[1053] "Views of Middle East Unchanged by Recent Events," **Pew Research Center**, June 10, 2011, https://www.people-press.org/2011/06/10/views-of-middle-east-unchanged-by-recent-events/ (Access: 06.05.2020).

[1054] Forsythe, McMahon, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 55.

[1055] "No Consensus on How Egypt Protests Will Affect U.S." **Pew Research Center,** February 9, 2011, https://www.people-press.org/2011/02/08/no-consensus-on-how-egypt-protests-will-affect-u-s/ (Access: 05.06.2020).

As for Libya, however, this atmosphere was altered significantly. The issue of humanitarian intervention, over which there has been no coherent mass or elite view in the U.S., increased the interest of the public toward the uprisings across the Arab world. Several days after the initiation of the intervention in Libya, 46% of the Americans stated that it was the right decision, and 36% argued that it was wrong. Two weeks later, these rates rose to 50 and 37, respectively.[1056] No less importantly, the same two surveys have found out that 39%, and later 37% of the society could not see a clear goal in the military action.[1057] This divided image of the public view should also be considered a supporting factor that has encouraged the opposition to the intervention in Congress. Compared to other recent humanitarian crises in the world, popular support for intervention in Libya was the lowest. Only 27% of the Americans stated that the U.S. had the responsibility to act in the country, whereas in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Darfur, the rate of pro-intervention Americans was 30%, 47%, and 51%, respectively. The primary reason for this low support for the use of force in Libya was the overcommitment of U.S. military forces (51%).[1058] The sour memories of the 2003 Iraq invasion also affected the American's view of U.S. military involvement in the country. Overall, in Egypt and Libya, the American public opinion largely favored the policy options that have required a limited degree of engagement. While encouraging the cautious and reluctant stance embraced by the Obama administration in Egypt, the public opinion strengthened congressional opposition in Libya and contributed to constrain the decision-makers to avoid a substantial commitment to military action.

Although the Syrian crisis posed a greater peril in humanitarian terms, the American public opinion did not only maintain its pro-retrenchment stance but also gradually consolidated the anti-interventionist tendency even further. The underlying conviction that has led to such an attitude was based on the acknowledgment of the unbearable burden that a military undertaking in Syria would place on the United States' shoulders. The opposition to risky and costly crusades has, indeed, been a point upon which both mass and elite opinion has long agreed. Syria, with its dynamics that would most probably entail a large-scale, lengthy conflict and confrontation with Iran

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[1056] "Goal of Libyan Operation Less Clear to Public," **Pew Research Center,** April 5, 2011, https://www.people-press.org/2011/04/05/goal-of-libyan-operation-less-clear-to-public/ (Access: 05.05.2020).
[1057] **Ibid.**
[1058] "Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya," **Pew Research Center,** March 14, 2011, https://www.people-press.org/2011/03/14/public-wary-of-military-intervention-in-libya/ (Access: 06.05.2020).

and Russia, seemed as costly as a humanitarian intervention could have been. Therefore, the public opinion, along with congressional opposition, has constituted a significant constraint that prevented the administration from embarking on a new Middle Eastern adventure.

The public opinion was, thus, shaped in parallel with the realities of the international environment, proving many old-school analysts wrong about its irrationality and unreliability. Even the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, crossing the red line drawn by the American President, did not drastically alter the public's attitude in this sense. While on May 31, 2013 -before the regime's chemical attack- a vast majority of the Americans (68%) was opposed to military action in Syria, on September 6 -after the chemical attack- the number fell only to 51, without radically shifting the public view in this regard.[1059] Thus, showing no emotional reactions and disregarding the concerns related to the United States' global reputation, the American public opinion has provided substantial support for Congress in preventing the administration from undertaking military action in Syria. What separated Syria from Libya, within this context, was the influence of the global geostrategic stakes upon framing the issue and calculating its costs.

Within this framework, the overall public view of U.S. foreign policy throughout the Arab Spring has evidenced two prevailing assumptions about the Americans' general view of interventionist policies in general, and humanitarian intervention, in particular. The first one was that "the use of military might to force change within other countries,"[1060] especially in those where no vital U.S. interests exist, has long been unpopular within the American society. The prevailing anti-interventionism within the society was, thus, the product of this characteristic of the American public opinion. The second assumption was based on the idea that the Americans are less supportive of humanitarian intervention when it appears to be costly, in economic and human terms.[1061] The firmness and decisiveness of the popular opposition to intervention in Syria compared to the relatively flexible and consensual stance

[1059] Frank Newport (Ed.), **The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 2013,** Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2015, pp. 209, 338.
[1060] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 257.
[1061] Graber, **op. cit.** 2002, p. 332.

demonstrated with regard to Libya directly stemmed from the shifting cost calculations in the eyes of the Americans.

Aside from Congress and public opinion, another significant domestic factor that has affected, though, to a very limited extent, U.S. foreign policy during the Arab Spring was the influence of lobbies in Washington, notably the Israeli lobby. Described as "the loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work to shape U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction,"[1062] this lobby, through the efforts of the pivotal organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), is a highly influential actor on Capitol Hill. Notwithstanding certain exceptions, "…many of the key organizations in the Lobby… [have been] run by hard-liners who generally support the Likud Party's expansionist policies..."[1063] Since, throughout the Arab Spring, the Likud Party has been in power in Israel, the actions promoted by the pro-Israel lobby in Washington were, naturally, the requirements of the Jewish State's foreign policy in the face of the regional turmoil.

From this perspective, to assess the objective and the impact of the lobby on U.S. foreign policy, one must first understand Israel's perception of the uprisings and its foreign policy strategy. The country's vision, in this regard, was shaped by a mixture of hope, hesitance, and anxiety. The pessimist posture assumed by Tel Aviv was unequivocally explained by an official: "When some people in the West see what's happening in Egypt, they see Europe 1989… We see it as Tehran 1979."[1064] By all accounts, Israel was a *status quo* power in the Middle East. Any possibility of structural change in the region, especially in the neighboring Arab countries, would trigger fears related to the national security issues. Thus, chief among Israel's concerns was the regional instability that could eventually lead to the replacement of pro-Western, secular regimes by extremist forces or Islamists. Given Libya's marginal impact, if any, on the country's national security, the most significant episodes of the uprisings for Israel were those unfolding in Egypt and Syria.

The response to the demonstrations in Cairo was the first issue on which the Israeli vision aiming at the maintenance of the Mubarak regime diverged considerably

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[1062] Mearsheimer, Walt, **op. cit.** 2007, p. 112.
[1063] John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," in. James McCormick (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2018, p. 75.
[1064] Daniel Byman, "Israel's Pessimistic View of the Arab Spring," **The Washington Quarterly,** Vol. 34**,** No. 3, 2011, p. 123.

from that of the U.S. In other words, "when the American administration decided not to support President Mubarak against the demonstrators, Israelis of all stripes saw that as a sign of U.S. unreliability and even untrustworthiness."[1065] Fearing an Islamist takeover in Egypt that would end up in the abrogation of the Camp David peace treaty, the efforts of Tel Aviv and the lobby in Washington, hoping to sway U.S. foreign policy in the desired direction, remained fruitless. Later, in the aftermath of the 2013 coup against President Morsi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, the lobbying efforts within Congress re-intensified. This time, the objective of the pro-Israel lobby, unequivocally explained in a letter by AIPAC to Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), was to oppose the amendment, proposed by Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky), who advocated the suspension of U.S. aid to Egypt.[1066] Thus, even though the lobby could not affect U.S. foreign policy in favor of its essential objective in Egypt -keeping Mubarak in power- by blocking Sen. Paul's amendment in Congress, it prevented probable isolation of Cairo, which could eventually lead to a rapprochement with Iran, seeking to exploit a void within the pro-Western camp in the region. Likewise, in Syria, the efforts of the Israeli lobby in Washington were not effective enough to shape U.S. foreign policy. Assuming, initially, a detached position with regard to the protests against the Assad regime, Israel appeared neutral, in accordance with its urge to preserve the existing order. Later, as a result of the increased tension in the border region and the rise of Islamist extremism in Syria, Tel Aviv began to push for the ouster of the Alawite autocrat. The relatively low profile assumed by Israel was later replaced by the quest for a regime-change in Damascus. "As the Syrian crisis escalated, Israel gradually switched from ambivalence to condemnation of the Syrian regime."[1067] Strongly supported by the lobby, this objective could not turn into a source of influence for U.S. foreign policy, and the United States has avoided any excessive involvement in Syria.

In light of this analysis, it is clear that the long-debated influence of the pro-Israel lobby on the foreign policy of the United States toward the Middle East was not

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[1065] Ilan Peleg, "Israel and the Arab Spring: The Victory of Anxiety," in. Mark L. Haas, David W. Lesch (Eds.), **op. cit.** 2013, p. 186.

[1066] "Whatever AIPAC Wants: Senators Debate Suspending U.S. Military Aid to Egypt," **Washington Report on Middle East Affairs,** October/November 2013, https://www.wrmea.org/013-october-november/what-they-said%EF%BB%BF-whatever-aipac-wants-senators-debate-suspending-u.s.-military-aid-to-egypt.html (Access: 10.07.2020).

[1067] Benedetta Berti, "Israel and the Arab Spring: Understanding Attitudes and Responses to the 'New Middle East'", in. Lorenzo Vidino (Ed.), **The West and the Muslim Brotherhood After the Arab Spring,** Al Mesbar Studies & Research Center and The Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2013, p. 136, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/162622/201303.west_and_the_muslim_brotherhood_after_the_arab_spring.pdf (Access: 09.07.2020).

in play during the Arab Spring. From an American perspective, Washington was caught between its commitment to Israel and the liberal democratic values. Combined with the systemic pressures, humanitarian concerns have shaped the American strategy in a direction opposed to the Israeli vision. For Israel, on the other hand, the Arab Spring has turned out to be a source of disappointment, as far as its special ties with Washington are concerned. The Jewish State has, in the end, found itself among other "deeply dismayed" U.S. allies in the Middle East, along with Saudi Arabia and certain other Gulf states.[1068] The lobby could, thus, not exert a considerable influence on the policy-makers' decisions in Washington with regard to the Arab Spring. The main reason for its ineffectiveness was that it had more access to the legislative rather than the executive, and the influence of Congress on U.S. foreign policy throughout this process, as was analyzed so far, has been outweighed by other factors, notably systemic constraints and humanitarian concerns.

Lastly, there are many other factors at the domestic level, which have affected the making of U.S. foreign policy to changing extents. One of the most crucial among them is, doubtlessly, the President's character profile, covering personality predispositions and leadership style, without ignoring numerous restraints that might limit the personal influence on decisions. "Every role allows some leeway for individual interpretation and it is in this area of the role that personality and background variables are operative."[1069] As a person advances within the decision-making structure, the influence of his/her inner traits on foreign affairs increases. Arguably, "any administration's foreign policy reflects the character of the person sitting in the innermost sanctum of power, the Oval Office."[1070] This assumption holds true for the impact of President Obama's personality traits on the American response to the Arab Spring. Barack Obama's persona, characterized by pragmatism, was best illustrated by the formation of his administration and the adviser team, which were composed of realist and liberal -idealist- figures. Assuming a "competitive model" encouraging "conflict and competition among advisers,"[1071] the president tended to reach the most plausible and advantageous decision without any ideological bias. Although his attitude based on the competition of different views in order to ensure the optimum outcome might seem to deserve credit, this also constituted the source of

[1068] Dueck, **op. cit.** 2015, p. 92.
[1069] Rosenau, **op. cit.** 1980, p. 179.
[1070] Wittkopf, Jones, Kegley Jr., **op. cit.** 2008, p. 523.
[1071] **Ibid.** p. 501.

the so-called ambivalence of the U.S. response to the uprisings, illustrated by its pendular move.

Pragmatism, however, was not President Obama's sole personal trait that marked his approach toward the Arab Spring. He was, indeed, caught between his pragmatist insights and his inherent commitment to the liberal values and principles. The constraints imposed by the domestic political dynamics, combined with the systemic pressures, pushed him, in the end, toward a more realistic direction, limiting the place of the values and principles espoused by the president himself within the administration's strategy. He also remembered President Jimmy Carter's failure as a human rights crusader and drew the right conclusion from it. In other words, under the influence of multiple factors, President Obama somehow became a realist, despite his contrary convictions. While some described him as a "reluctant realist,"[1072] a U.S. official put forward a novel assessment of the president's personality: "I think Obama is basically a realist -but he feels bad about it."[1073]

This dilemma was apparent in the U.S. response to the uprisings across the Arab world, especially in Syria. While the evolution of events in Egypt offered a favorable environment for Washington to support the demonstrators, in Libya, the gravity of the looming humanitarian catastrophe and the high possibility of a low-cost success justified a decisive action culminated in a NATO intervention. Nevertheless, the internal dynamics of the conflict in Syria, along with the domestic opposition within the U.S. to another large-scale military undertaking in the Middle East, forced President Obama to defer to the harsh realities of the real world. His eventual failure to enforce his red line threat in 2013 was the most palpable illustration of the dilemma he faced. Samantha Power, then the President's Special Assistant and Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the NSC, stated that "on no other issue did [she] see Obama so personally torn - convinced that even limited military action would mire the United States in another open-ended conflict, yet wracked by the human toll of the slaughter."[1074] His concerns related to the core principles were, in fact, outweighed by the calculations of material interests as he "was never convinced

[1072] Steven R. David, **Obama: The Reluctant Realist,** The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 113, Israel, 2015.
[1073] David Remnick, "Watching the Eclipse," **The New Yorker,** August 3, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/watching-eclipse (Access: 06.08.2020).
[1074] Power, **op. cit.** 2019, p. 795.

that the United States could use military force 'carefully and responsibly' in Syria."[1075] Therefore, to avoid the political, economic, and human costs of a dangerous adventure in Syria, the president had to put aside his principle-oriented view and humanitarian considerations.

Furthermore, the impact of the public opinion on the American response to the Arab Spring was shaped by the anti-engagement tendency generated by the 2003 Iraq War. Put differently, war fatigue that was resulted from the lengthy experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq has heavily affected the public's view of the mass protests in the region. "This [was] evidenced not only by Americans' relatively low level of support for U.S. intervention in Syria but also the less-than-majority post-intervention approval (47%) of the 2011 military action in Libya."[1076] The attitude of Congress was similar to that of the American public, though for various reasons, to some extent. While sharing most of the public's concerns, the lawmakers were also doing what was required by their check and balance role in foreign affairs. The degree of effectiveness of both factors, however, undeniably depended on the nature and orientations of the systemic stimulus. In the end, it was the absence of the international constraints that neutralized the influence of the domestic opposition to the intervention in Libya. Nevertheless, when they appeared in the form of the pressing geostrategic realities in Syria, the international dynamics contributed to the consolidation of the anti-interventionist domestic stance within both Congress and the public. Moreover, the influence of other elements at the domestic political setting, such as the pro-Israel lobby and President Obama's personality, has remained considerably limited in shaping the U.S. response to the Arab Spring because of the complexity of the issue and its multidimensional character, affecting the global power considerations and feeding moral concerns. In this sense, the impact of the domestic political factors on the policy-making process during the Arab Spring was largely moderate and limited, unless they were supported by one of the other two sets of variables, namely humanitarian and international.

Therefore, all three sets of factors -international, humanitarian, and domestic- have, to changing extents, affected U.S. foreign policy throughout the Arab Spring

[1075] **Ibid.**
[1076] Frank Newport (Ed.), **op. cit.** 2015, p. 339.

process. The interplay of these dynamics has constituted the main source of America's response to the eruption of the uprisings in each country and its alteration depending on the developments on the ground. Although the variety of influential variables appeared to be the product of the American approach, which has presciently avoided to view the protests as a monolithic and a single coherent wave of Arab revolts, this also derived from the changing nature of the foreign policy realm in the post-Cold War world, and especially in the twenty-first century. The gradual erosion of borders separating the domestic from the international has transformed the task of foreign policy-making into a more transparent process, which has incrementally become sensitive to the influence of various elements from different levels.

Table 4.1: U.S. Foreign Policy toward the Arab Spring

	Foreign Policy Characteristic	**Major Determinant(s)**	**Policy Decision**	**Regime-Change**	**Ultimate Outcome**
Egypt	Reactive and Ambivalent	Domestic and Humanitarian Concerns	Follow the Events	Yes	Relative Political Stability with Illusory Democracy
Libya	Proactive	Humanitarian Concerns	Intervention	Yes	Chaos and Civil War
Syria	Inertia and Retrenchment	International and Domestic Dynamics	Inactivity	No	Chaos and Civil War

Table Designed by Author

Nevertheless, this is not to say that all these three sets of variables were equally influential in shaping U.S. foreign policy. As was observed, the primary determinant of the U.S. actions abroad was, overall, the systemic stimulus. The Syrian experience demonstrated that when the international dynamics become rigid in dictating any course of action, the other factors could exert little influence, if not none, on the policy-making process. The increasing tension in great power relations, for instance, leaves a relatively narrow room for domestic and humanitarian concerns to inspire the framing

of the issue by decision-makers and the ultimate decision in foreign affairs. What gave other determinants a larger capacity of influence, as was the case in Egypt and Libya, was the absence of strong international pressures, pulling U.S. foreign policy powerfully in a specific direction.

From this perspective, in shaping the American strategy in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, different factors -or a combination of factors- have played the leading role. The Egyptian case witnessed the superiority of the domestic dynamics, partly supported by moral concerns, urging caution and limited engagement. The neutrality of the international environment was later replaced by a cooperative and permissive atmosphere in the aftermath of the eruption of the Libyan uprising. This favorable shift in the international system, though ephemeral, provided the United States with much larger room for action and set the ground for the domination of humanitarian motives, despite a certain degree of domestic opposition within the realm of foreign policy-making. Subsequently, in Syria, the international pressures characterized by the re-emergence of the great power rivalry, with the domestic political dynamics in a supportive role, prevailed within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, outweighing the idealist impulses and moral concerns.

Within this context, the oscillation of the foreign policy pendulum of the United States, which has become excessively conspicuous during the Arab Spring, resulted directly from the interplay of multiple dynamics, pushing, to varying extents, U.S. foreign policy toward a desired direction across the policy spectrum. In Egypt, the pendulum was, thus, in the middle of the pulls of the domestic and humanitarian concerns, relatively closer to the *moralpolitik* edge of the spectrum. U.S. foreign policy in Libya was, by the influence of decisive humanitarian motives, oscillated further in this direction, culminated in a military intervention on moral grounds. In the face of the Syrian crisis, the international dynamics pulled the pendulum drastically, with marginal support from the domestic factors, toward the opposite direction, the *realpolitik* end of the spectrum.

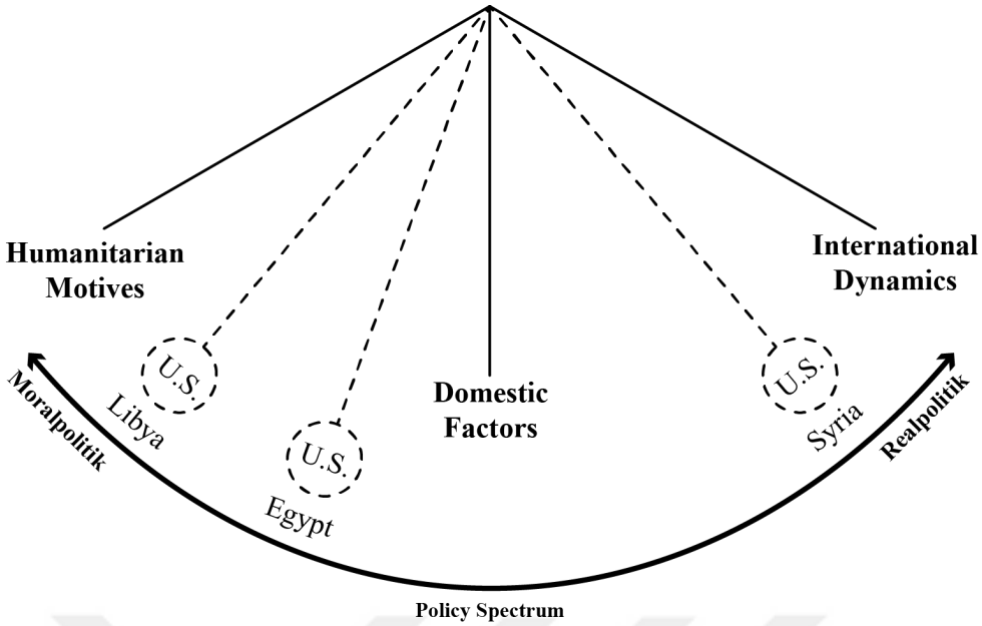


Figure 4.1: The U.S. Foreign Policy Pendulum in Egypt, Libya, and Syria

Consequently, the inherent pendulum of American foreign policy, fed by the influence of multiple factors, has not ceased to swing in the face of the Arab Spring uprisings. Rather, the oscillation was significantly accelerated as the protests spread rapidly from one country to another, and the course of events in each country has radically changed in a short span of time.

CONCLUSION

"It is the power of our ideas, even more than our size, our wealth, and our military might, that makes America a uniquely trusted nation."[1077]

William J. Clinton

One of the most prominent novelists of the twentieth century, Marcel Proust, in his seminal work, *In Search of Lost Times*, defines nations as the "assemblage of cellules," like living organisms, composed of mutually interacted individuals. Proust stresses that "… their life only repeats and amplifies the life of the composing cellules and he who is not capable of understanding the mystery, the reactions and the laws of those cellules, will only utter empty words when he talks about struggles between nations."[1078] The relevance of this assumption within the realm of foreign policy is two-dimensional. First, states, like any other living entities, can learn from their experiences and develop behavioral patterns in responding to specific circumstances, domestic or international. The inherent characteristics embedded in those individuals, like the DNA of cells, constitute, therefore, the source of these patterns, inspiring states' actions at home and abroad. Secondly, every living organism reflects in its actions the dominant particularities of each cell that composes it. This principle, when applied to states, leads to the deduction that the individuals gathered to constitute a nation expect their beliefs and values to guide the nation's behavior and inspire its policies. In this sense, the culture, within which those individuals have been raised, has a substantial impact on the given nation's actions in every setting.

The United States is, without a doubt, not exempt from this approach. Like every nation, the Americans want their values and principles to be reflected in the foreign policy of the United States. Moreover, the decision-makers, who have been raised in

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[1077] William J. Clinton, "Address to the Nation on Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina," November 27, 1995, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-implementation-the-peace-agreement-bosnia-herzegovina (Access: 23.05.2020).

[1078] Marcel Proust, **In Search of Lost Time, Vol. VII: Time Regained,** Feedbooks, EPUB, pp.114-115, https://www.feedbooks.com/book/1453/time-regained (Access: 23.05.2020).

and imbued with these values, have generally been willing to satisfy their fellow citizens' expectations. "From the beginning, Americans imagined that the country came into being to serve a larger purpose. The story of national origin contributed to this sense of providential cause."[1079] As a country built upon the liberal values and democratic principles, the promotion of those values in foreign countries has always been one of the main objectives of U.S. foreign policy. The belief in American exceptionalism and the -self-assigned- divine duty culminated in the concept of Manifest Destiny, which are hard-wired into America's political DNA, have, since the foundation of the Republic, either inspired the country's actions abroad or constituted the source of criticisms toward certain policies accused of disregarding the core principles espoused by the American public.

From this perspective, the roots of the behavioral pattern of U.S. foreign policy can be found in the country's political culture. While the lines drawn by the Founding Fathers have constituted the foundations of the American political thinking, the changes that occurred within the domestic realm and the international environment caused the reinterpretation of these limits and, to some extent, bend them. As far as the axis of this study is concerned, the realist and internationalist (Wilsonian) insights appear as the most crucial currents within the American strategic culture. The realists, offering a unique synthesis of the traditional -European- realism and the liberal values, which constituted the lynchpin of the country's political culture, advocate an interest-oriented foreign policy with limited morality, if any, involved. Conversely, the internationalists, underscoring the unique responsibilities attributed to the Americans -by Divine providence and the international circumstances, put emphasis on a value-based foreign policy that prioritizes immaterial and ideational interests without totally ignoring the material -strategic- ones. Thus, this divide is what has characterized the debate over U.S. foreign since the early days of the Republic and constituted the framework of America's behavioral pattern abroad.

Furthermore, not only this behavioral pattern need not be uni-directional, but also it cannot be accounted for solely by the inherent characteristics of the American political culture. While it has been characterized by a pendular movement -swinging between *moralpolitik* and *realpolitik*, internationalism and isolationism, engagement

[1079] Robert B. Zoellick, **America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy,** Twelve, New York, 2020, p. 459.

and disengagement, the crusader and exemplarist approach- the principal source of its unending oscillation has been nurtured by the disagreement within the American public and political elite over the definition of national interest and, as a corollary, the method to be applied for promoting the core values and principles in foreign countries. Indeed, the divergence of mass and elite opinion with regard to the definition of national interest has persisted since the Americans were divided on how to approach France throughout the revolutionary process and how to treat the Greeks fighting to gain their independence from the Ottomans. Building their arguments upon the same set of beliefs, convictions, and principles, some have advocated a more pro-active engagement in support of those who fought for liberal values in different countries whereas, many others have adhered to the idea of avoiding profound entanglements outside the American Continent and setting an example for other nations to emulate. Their struggle for dominance in shaping U.S. foreign policy has, heretofore, been at the root of the emergence of this pendulum. Having been adapted to the changing circumstances since the end of the eighteenth century, the clash of these two not completely opposing but considerably diverging visions has pulled U.S. behavior abroad toward different directions.

No less importantly, another significant aspect of this pendular movement is that it has been shaped not solely by the domestic dynamics. On the contrary, to the extent that it is sensitive to the internal characteristics of the United States, it has been affected, often primarily, by the features of the international environment. With the growing and deepening U.S. role and engagement at the international level in the late nineteenth century the impact of the international dynamics on the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy has mostly overridden that of domestic concerns. This transformation does not mean, however, the complete elimination of the influence of the value-based approach to foreign policy. Instead, accelerating the oscillation of the pendulum, it has pushed the United States to pursue policies that have filtered through various variables at different levels and resulted in a synthesis of the most relevant ones. Triggering an overall increase in the number of policy options available within the spectrum, across which the pendulum has not ceased to oscillate, the changing realities have done nothing but further complicate the task of policy-making in Washington.

At the heart of the pendular movement of U.S. foreign policy lies the question of national interest and morality. The debate pertaining to the possibility of an amoral,

rationally-defined, and objective national interest as a policy guide or the relevance of a value-oriented path has prevailed within the American political life since the foundation of the Republic. While the sense of a Divine duty has encouraged morality in foreign policy, the calculation of self-interest, commercial and/or geopolitical, underscored the "necessity" of amoral behavior abroad. Initially, assuming an isolationist stance on the hemispheric scale, the United States followed an exemplarist policy course until the end of the nineteenth century. This detached attitude, characterized by an inward-focus, was replaced, following the Spanish-American War of 1898, by a more pro-engagement vision. Stemming from the divergence of opinion on how to determine the best foreign policy trajectory for the United States, the oscillation was, until the end of WWII, between engagement and disengagement, or isolationism and internationalism. In this sense, the place of humanitarian concerns in shaping the country's international behavior has persistently been a principal source of debate. As if an approach inspired by the synthesis of moral and interest-based considerations were not possible, the American public and the policy-makers in Washington have kept this debate alive, nurturing the pendular nature of U.S. foreign policy. With the affirmation of America's superpower status, even more importantly, with the acknowledgment of the convergence of national interest and moral concerns within the context of the anti-communist fight, such a synthetic vision eventually prevailed. While this transformation put an end to the engagement-disengagement debate, recognizing that an isolationist stance was no longer a viable option for the U.S., it ignited a new debate on how to respond to the foreign policy issues and which one -realist or idealist concerns- must be seen as a priority when there is no convergence.

Without affecting the inherent pendular character of U.S. foreign policy, the transformed view within the Cold War context changed the policy spectrum that constituted the trajectory of the foreign policy pendulum. In other words, the debate shifted from the engagement-disengagement duality, and the realism-idealism binary has, since then, marked the foreign policy realm. In this sense, *realpolitik* and *moralpolitik* have appeared as the two concepts on both edges of the spectrum. The fight against communism has deaccelerated the oscillation as it has mostly carried insights from both of these visions in it. The tension arose, not surprisingly, in the face of the issues that entailed a choice between the two. More precisely, the dilemma became incontestably palpable when the United States had to choose either advancing

its realist interests or following the guidance of its idealist impulses and core values. Such constraints imposed by the international circumstances were best illustrated, throughout the Cold War, by the question of "friendly tyrants," demonstrating that the U.S. sometimes needed to support non-democratic but anti-communist regimes in various parts of the globe. This approach, which might be interpreted as the primacy of self-interest in the face of the idealist concerns, was essentially the product of the pressures exerted by the international environment over foreign policy. And paradoxically, the US needed the support of non-liberal actors to defend liberal values.

The Middle East, in this regard, as one of the crucial rings in the chain of containment and with its substantial strategic and economic significance, appeared to be the region where the United States devoted considerable energy and resources. Throughout the Cold War, the clash of ideational and material interests of the U.S. across the region was the primary factor in shaping the country's foreign policy. While struggling for the promotion of the liberal democratic principles in the Middle East, the United States also focused on advancing its material interests, such as providing Israel with a secure neighborhood, securing energy routes, and, most importantly, avoiding any significant Soviet presence through the containment strategy. As per the Middle East-related presidential doctrines, chasing these -often nonconciliatory- ends hindered the U.S. policies, intensifying the values-interests dilemma. Either by using proxies or by direct involvement, the United States, during the Cold War, aimed at achieving these objectives and, in the end, it had a mixed record fraught with controversial initiatives and partial successes. Moreover, aside from creating a sense of ambiguity, if not hypocrisy, with regard to the United States' Middle Eastern policies, this quandary constituted the source of Washington's strong ties with non-democratic regimes, like that of Mubarak in Egypt, which would, a few decades later, turn into nothing but liabilities for the U.S.

Furthermore, the change within the broader context, characterized by bipolarity and the East-West tension, has not altered the nature of the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy. In fact, the end of the superpower rivalry, the lack of a peer rival, provided Washington with more freedom to pursue a value-oriented foreign policy. As the sole superpower on the international scene, the United States found the opportunity, from Somalia to Bosnia and Kosovo, to play the role of leadership with a vigorous moral dimension. This relative freedom, however, has not ended the

realpolitik-moralpolitik debate within the policy elite and the American public. In other words, the drastic change that occurred within the liberal international order as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not halt the oscillation of the pendulum. Many dynamics from different levels have affected the making and implementation of U.S. foreign policy, undermining the moral foundations of the country's global leadership. From another perspective, the inherent dilemma of U.S. foreign policy has persisted even after the Cold War. In relation to the debate over how to define the American national interest in a world characterized by the uncontestable American supremacy, the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* pendulum has remained a central feature of U.S. foreign policy.

Then came another turning point, the Bush administration's "freedom agenda" in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. First concretized in Afghanistan, as the initial undertaking of "the war on terror," the unilateralism, the neoconservative insights, and the "hard Wilsonian" interventionism of the Bush Doctrine later, in Iraq, turned out to be self-defeating. As a matter of fact, the policies pursued to "import democracy to the Middle East" during the early 2000s set the ground for a deteriorated U.S. image across the world and undermined the country's global position. Consolidating the fears of foes and alienating worried friends, U.S. foreign policy under the Bush administration and the relative decline of the country's power compared to the other global powers, notably Russia and China, further accelerated the pendulum and deepened the dilemma. Costly humanitarian initiatives without any vital interest at stake started to be perceived as more "unnecessary" than ever. Likewise, the criticisms of the proponents of limited engagement and the primacy of self-interest became vociferous. In this sense, like the end of the Cold War, the gravest attack on U.S. soil and one of the most catastrophic military undertakings in American history in Iraq did not stop the centuries-old tide of U.S. foreign policy. Instead, they accelerated the oscillation of the pendulum.

Within this context, it was not surprising that President Obama entered the Oval Office by pledging to end the ongoing wars in the Middle East, to downsize U.S. presence in the region, and pivot to Asia. His vision with regard to the Middle East was essentially shaped by abstentionism and reluctance. However, the events that unfolded beyond his control prevented him from following the path he initially opted for. The outbreak of the uprisings across the Arab world and their multidimensional

ramifications on the strategies and relations of the US with its friends, as well as the global power considerations and the competition between the prominent international actors, have dragged the Obama administration into the Middle Eastern quagmire. In other words, not only he could not alter the focus and the direction of U.S. foreign policy as the emphasis was kept on the Middle East, but also the administration did not change the conventional behavioral pattern of the United States.

The main objective of this thesis was to explore the extent to which the persistent pendulum of U.S. foreign policy was apparent and influential with regard to the American response to the Arab Spring. As was observed in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, the long-existing foreign policy pendulum that has illustrated the inherent dilemma of the United States has played a central role in shaping the American reaction to the uprisings. The oscillation it caused is key in understanding the gist of U.S. foreign policy throughout this process and its evolution. Caught in the middle of supporting the pro-democracy demonstrators in those countries and safeguarding its strategic interests and long-established relations with some autocratic regimes, Washington espoused, overall, an ambivalent and controversial approach. The hesitant and balanced U.S. response to the uprisings in Egypt was later replaced by a more pro-active and value-based strategy that culminated in a humanitarian intervention in Libya. Subsequently, Syria turned into a debacle for the United States as it was forced by the international circumstances to assume a deferential tone in the face the external pressures and domestic constraints, and U.S. foreign policy shifted toward a more realist direction.

Egypt was the first real test for U.S. foreign policy within the context of the Arab Spring. Given the fact that it was the early days of the regionwide uprisings, in other words, before the international actors -including the U.S.- could fully conceive the gravity of the social movements in the Middle East, it was not surprising that Washington tried to balance moral concerns and strategic objectives in its response. This cautious approach, shaped by the evolution of the events on the ground, was at the roots of the criticisms from different angles. On the one hand, the administration was accused of idly watching the fall of an old friend, Hosni Mubarak. On the other hand, others blamed the country of hypocrisy in its commitment to the democratic values as it did not wholeheartedly throw its support behind the pro-democracy demonstrators. Indeed, what marked the American response in the face of the Egyptian

uprising was the "reluctant realism" and pragmatism of President Obama. To avoid being on the wrong side of history, the Obama administration opted for a cautious approach before taking decisive steps publicly. Another crucial factor that caused this ambivalent U.S. attitude was the lack of a credible and less threatening alternative for a post-Mubarak government.

In Libya, the U.S. response took a wholly different turn, with the foreign policy pendulum swinging toward a *moralpolitik*-oriented approach. Despite the absence of any vital U.S. interests and substantial relations at stake in this country, Washington, with the support of its NATO allies and the mandate given by the international community, chose to follow its humanitarian instincts in the face of the atrocities committed by the brutal Qaddafi regime. While the high probability of a low-cost success provided the necessary incentive for a humanitarian intervention, sharing the operation's military and economic burden with the Europeans, mainly France, facilitated the public approval and relative congressional indifference. In the end, the U.S. espoused a pro-active stance, prioritizing its moral concerns.

Furthermore, U.S. foreign policy took a radical turn in Syria, this time swinging toward the opposite end of the spectrum. An interventionist solution to the crisis in this country, like the one in Libya, was more complex, costlier, more threatening, and, therefore, less feasible for Washington. The profound involvement of Russia and Iran, along with firm resistance of the Assad regime against the opposition forces, pushed the U.S., not toward a military intervention but wishful thinking. Notably, after missing the perfect timing for the military option, Washington, inevitably, found itself assuming a secondary role, losing ground to another great power, Russia. Eventually, the restraint was what marked U.S. foreign policy in Syria, and Washington, assuming a more realist approach, remained on the sidelines.

As exposed throughout this thesis, there were two intrinsic characteristics of the policy pursued by the U.S. during the Arab Spring. First of all, from the outset of the uprisings, the Obama administration tried to avoid a holistic approach, developing a case-by-case perspective. This vision created, in turn, an impression of reluctance and inconsistency. Nevertheless, the non-doctrinaire U.S. reaction was the result of the quest for an approach that would lead to a more rational, pragmatic, less ideologically-biased response to the regionwide wave of change. No less importantly, the second core feature of U.S. foreign policy was the "fear of worse," based upon the

unpredictability and uncertainty that would prevail in the countries affected by the uprisings. As an integral part of the social and political landscape in the Middle East, the Islamist extremist groups were the primary contestants for power after the fall of the entrenched autocrats – that was, in fact, what happened in Egypt and what was "about" to occur in Syria. As part of its inherent foreign policy dilemma, this fear forced Washington to favor the *status-quo* as these groups gained ground, but its support to these regimes, given its long-standing commitment to liberal ideals, caused trouble at home and abroad. This quandary was actually no different than the one that occurred within the Cold War context that forced the U.S. to tolerate, if not to support, many non-Marxist autocracies. In the twenty-first century, notably after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Islamism replaced communism, but the fear has remained the same. Therefore, "the fear of worse" was what introduced caution and hesitance into U.S. foreign policy, causing it to appear, to many, as inconsistent or ambivalent.

Doubtlessly, these two characteristics of U.S. foreign policy can only superficially, if any, explain its perennial dilemma. Indeed, the roots of the unceasing oscillation of the pendulum can be found deep into the historical experiences that the country gained on the international scene, along with the social and political forces that have long guided its foreign policy preferences. This is a behavioral pattern built over the centuries, determined by a number of intervening variables. Those variables, acting as filters that help frame and process the input entering the funnel-like foreign policy-making mechanism, ultimately shape the outcome (See Figure 1.1). The key to fully understand the American policy-making mechanism, its long-standing dilemma, and the dynamics that cause the emergence and the oscillation of the foreign policy pendulum are the "filters" of societal and external variables. Those elements, combined with the domestic political factors, which have become incrementally significant in shaping the country's international actions since the lines that separate internal and external gets blurrier in time, lies at the root of the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* struggle.

The societal variables play a central role in inspiring U.S. foreign policy, trying to pull the pendulum toward *moralpolitik*. Those dynamics are, indeed, the product of a substantial difference between the United States and many other international actors. Unlike other major powers, America is a country built upon distinctive values and principles. The hope and desire of being the beacon of freedom and liberty, fed by the

Enlightenment values, has injected a strong sense of responsibility into the American political culture toward the other people. The Americans, divided on the method to be used for carrying the torch of civilization to foreign lands, share an unyielding conviction in their special moral mission to promote the core liberal values across the world. Either by exemplarist or crusader means, they want their core values to be reflected on the foreign policy of the United States, and this inherent desire provides U.S. foreign policy with a substantial moral aspect.

Initially, during the early years of the Republic, this self-assigned mission appeared as the product of religious insights. Starting in the post-Civil War era, the moralistic approach to the realm of foreign policy has gradually gained a more secular tone, and it began to be seen as an integral part of America's national interest. This secularization was later accelerated and institutionalized by the increase in the prevalence of internationalism (Wilsonianism) with regard to U.S. choices abroad. As the country's status of a dominant power was incontestably affirmed at the international level, the sense of responsibility toward other oppressed and abused peoples of the world has become one of the principal guiding principles of U.S. foreign policy. The increased moralism and humanitarianism in foreign policy was accompanied by an endless debate on how to define the national interests since the idealist and realist views often diverge widely.

At this point, one must remember that the existence, within the American public and foreign policy elite, of a desire to do what is morally right in foreign policy does not necessarily mean that the U.S. has always followed moral objectives. Rather, America's historical record in this regard is highly mixed. In fact, even in the face of the gravest of all atrocities, genocide, Washington, assuming a risk-averse attitude, opted for inaction despite the fact that "the personalities and geopolitical constraints influencing U.S. decision-making have shifted with time…"[1080] For instance, Washington chose to avoid any decisive undertaking to halt the brutalities of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia during the late 1970s and to turn a blind eye to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Likewise, in the face of the Serbian atrocities in Bosnia, the U.S. has remained, from 1992 to 1995, idle. Thus, the shift in the domestic or international political landscape alone could not dictate a value-based foreign policy. Even though

[1080] Samantha Power, **"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide,** Perennial, New York, 2003, p. 503.

humanitarianism has occupied a central place within the American political culture, the convergence of the moral concerns with the perceived requirements of vital national interests is decisive, if not indispensable, to allow these concerns to exert substantial influence in guiding U.S. foreign policy. This assessment, therefore, leads us to the conclusion that moral objectives are crucial, but not primary determinants of America's behavior abroad.

What is, then, the primary source of U.S. conduct on the international scene? The answer to this question lies in the traditional neo-realist approach to the international actors' actions. States, as units seeking security and survival within an anarchic environment, want to optimize their power to have a relative advantage. They do so through their actions at the international level, which are guided primarily by the national interest. Such an assumption holds, to some extent, for the United States. For decades, as one of the superpowers, and later the dominant power within the international system, the cardinal objective of the U.S., within the realm of foreign policy, has been to extend or to preserve its superior position. Thus, the dictates of systemic factors -the external variables- have played a central role in shaping America's foreign policy. This phenomenon is what lies at the source of the question of whether "vital national interests" are imperiled when the idealist instincts seem to prevail on a given foreign policy task. Signifying a pull toward *realpolitik*, the guidance of amoral national interest appears as the antidote, a counterbalance to the moralist vision of foreign policy, excessively limiting humanitarian undertakings. The power considerations, along with other pressing issues, such as great power rivalry or the decreasing American superiority, impose substantial limits and paths to be followed to U.S. foreign policy. All these factors, especially when they contradict the requirements of moral concerns, assume the primary role in inspiring Washington's decision and outweigh the influence of idealist instincts.

In addition to these two groups of dynamics, a third group, the domestic political factors, affect, to a considerable extent, the oscillation of U.S. foreign policy. In this regard, the public opinion and the congressional processes appear as significant constraints in shaping the ultimate decision. Although the role of the American Congress is larger with regard to foreign policy, it turns out to be rather ineffective or limited in the face of strong leadership. Nevertheless, its authority, especially regarding the authorization of a large-scale military undertaking, can impose strict

limits on any executive decision. In this sense, the inclination of the Congress to lean toward one edge of the policy spectrum significantly increases the momentum of the pendulum in that direction. The public opinion has a similar but less concrete impact on the formation of U.S. foreign policy. While its character that is open to manipulation makes its involvement somewhat controversial, the capacity of the public opinion to affect the perception and the decision of any elected policy-maker - as a result of the electoral calculations- renders its tendency a primary guideline for any given decision. Samantha Power puts forward a clear image of the leader-public nexus in the United States:

> *"American leaders have both a circular and a deliberate relationship to public opinion. It is circular because their constituencies are rarely if ever aroused by foreign crises…in the absence of political leadership, and yet at the same time U.S. officials continually cite the absence of public support as grounds for inaction. The relationship is deliberate because American leadership has not been absent in such circumstances: It has been present but devoted mainly to minimizing public outrage."*[1081]

Thus, both domestic factors, along with many other less substantial ones, have an unignorable but secondary role compared to that of societal and external dynamics. While the result of the clash between these two sets of variables determines the direction of the oscillation, the domestic factors could only push the pendulum further or hold it back. They might become decisive when the influence of societal and external dynamics appears more or less balanced and points to opposite directions. In such cases, the domestic political factors become the forces that swing the pendulum, putting an end to the deadlock in U.S. foreign policy.

Therefore, the interplay of these three sets of variables is what essentially constitutes the source of the perennial dilemma of U.S. foreign policy and its pendular movement. Combined with the relatively minor influence of many other factors, such as individual, governmental, and bureaucratic, etc., the endless struggle between external and societal elements gets even more complicated with the involvement of substantial domestic constraints. As analyzed so far, U.S. foreign policy during the

[1081] Power, **op. cit.** 2003, p. 511.

Arab Spring was shaped by this struggle, taking different forms in each setting, notably Egypt, Libya, and Syria (See Table 4.1). What was interpreted by many as ambivalence or inconsistency in U.S. foreign policy pursued in response to the uprisings in those countries was, indeed, the illustration of its pendular movement. While the influence of humanitarian concerns and the domestic factors have played a crucial role favoring a value-based approach in Egypt and Libya, the undeniable primacy of the systemic pressures over other dynamics was later proved by the evolution of the events in Syria, where the international realities pushed the United States toward a peripheral position. The Arab Spring was, thus, another international phenomenon to which the American response was considerably affected by the inescapable dilemma of U.S. foreign policy.

Furthermore, the prevalence of the behavioral pattern of the U.S. has not come to an end during the Arab Spring or after the end of Barack Obama's presidency. Rather, its relevance is evidenced by the Trump administration's vision in this regard. The foreign policy approach embraced by President Donald Trump, along with his view of the U.S. record, was first put forward in his Inaugural Address in 2017:

> *"For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military, we've defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own, and spent trillions of dollars overseas, while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country [have] disappeared over the horizon…From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it's going to be America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families."*[1082]

[1082] Donald J. Trump, "The Inaugural Address," January 20, 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/ (Access: 29.08.2020).

In time, nothing has apparently changed in Donald Trump's mind in terms of foreign policy. Toward the end of his first term, in June 2020, he reiterated his vision in his address to the cadets at West Point:

> *"We are restoring the fundamental principles that the job of the American soldier is not to rebuild foreign nations, but defend — and defend strongly –our nation from foreign enemies. We are ending the era of endless wars. In its place is a renewed, clear-eyed focus on defending America's vital interests. It is not the duty of U.S. troops to solve ancient conflicts in faraway lands that many people have never even heard of. We are not the policemen of the world."*[1083]

His heterodox foreign policy perspective is, thus, characterized by anti-globalist insights and inspired by a narrow interpretation of the national interest defined in economic and commercial terms and distinctively American popular nationalism. Representing the long-isolated voices that have advocated, especially since the end of the Cold War, that the globalization and the U.S.-led liberal international order serves not the interests of America but those of others, U.S. foreign policy under President Trump has seemed to sway toward a parochial nationalism imbued with populist insights. He clearly believes in the rules of power in determining the international actors' actions, not the power of rules. For some, "his policies… have set in motion a series of long-overdue corrections."[1084] For others, likes Haass, "the president and the frequently changing cast of officials around him have been much more interested in tearing things apart."[1085] Indeed, the Trumpist foreign policy has had traces of pre- and post-WWI isolationism. In this sense, as far as the post-1945 U.S. foreign policy is concerned, his approach appears, without doubt, as an aberration, a radical departure. Nevertheless, through a rigorous analysis of the evolution of America's foreign policy

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[1083] "Remarks by President Trump at the 2020 United States Military Academy at West Point Graduation Ceremony," June 13, 2020, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-2020-united-states-military-academy-west-point-graduation-ceremony/ (Access: 28.08.2020).
[1084] Nadia Schadlow, "The End of American Illusion: Trump and the World as It Is," **Foreign Affairs,** September/October 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/americas/2020-08-11/end-american-illusion (Access: 31.08.2020).
[1085] Haass, **op. cit.** 2020.

since the Founding Fathers, it is apparent that his unorthodox vision is the product of a long-established school of thought in this realm: the Jacksonian school.

Named after the seventh president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, who marked the nineteenth-century American politics by his unilateralist nationalism, the Jacksonian *weltanschauung*, noted Walter Russell Mead, "…is the least impressive in American politics. It is the most deplored abroad and the most denounced at home."[1086] Driven by fiery anger toward all the main institutional pillars of the U.S.-led liberal international order and the cosmopolitan elite, Jacksonians draw a picture of America as an ethnoreligious community composed of white Christians. "Jacksonian sentiment embraces a concept of the United States as a folk community and, over time, that folk community was generally construed as whites only."[1087] The Jacksonian tradition, which insists on "a pessimistic view of the political elite, and promotes a federalist system that seeks to prevent the concentration of power within a centralized government,"[1088] is built upon a "community of political feeling" that perceives notions like national pride, honor, and reputation as vital interests.[1089] Furthermore, while the Jacksonian school accounts for the basis of the Trump administration's foreign policy approach, an old, even archaic, ideology -paleoconservatism- which is "strongly linked to what is called the 'Old Right,'… places the Trumpist foreign policy considerably at the…limits of the Jacksonian thinking."[1090] Thus, the Jacksonian instincts supported by the apparent paleoconservative insights with their alt-right affinities have constituted the ideational basis of the Trump administration's foreign policy.

From this perspective, Donald Trump's ascendancy "…is embedded in the long history of political struggles between liberal internationalism of the intellectual elite in metropolitan areas and the Jacksonian tradition of common Americans in rural communities."[1091] The post-war liberal internationalist consensus -and Wilsonianism-

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[1086] Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Tradition: And American Foreign Policy," **The National Interest,** Winter (1999/2000), No. 58, p. 8.
[1087] Walter Russell Mead, "Andrew Jackson, Revenant," **Hudson Institute,** January 17, 2016, https://www.hudson.org/research/12125-andrew-jackson-revenant (Access: 30.08.2020).
[1088] Clarke, Ricketts, **op. cit.** 2017, p. 368.
[1089] Mead, **op. cit.** 1999/2000, p. 8, 21.
[1090] Can Donduran, "The 'Trumpist' Foreign Policy and the American Tradition," in. Mim Kemal Öke, Hanefi Yazıcı (Eds.), **Ultra-Nationalist Policies of Trump and Reflections in the World,** Peter Lang, Berlin, 2020, p. 175.
[1091] Taesuh Cha, "The Return of Jacksonianism: The International Implications of the Trump Phenomenon," **The Washington Quarterly,** Winter 2017, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 83.

are at the target of the Trump administration's tendencies within the realm of foreign policy. Without offering a viable and sustainable alternative, President Trump has tended to tarnish the existing international order, of which the United States is, indeed, the architect and primary beneficiary. As noted by Mead, "what energizes the Trump phenomenon is the very power of rejection…His supporters aren't united around a set of positive ideas, but they are united in opposition to the status quo."[1092] Seeking to mitigate what he sees as the downsides of globalization, President Trump has challenged the post-war vision and practices of U.S. foreign policy. Instead, he introduced, into Washington's foreign policy agenda, what Kohl and Brands called "amoral transactionalism," which is based on the idea that "the United States should be willing to cut deals with any actors that share American interests, regardless of how transactional that relationship is, and regardless of whether they share -or act in accordance with- American values."[1093]

Therefore, Donald Trump's election to the presidency was the product of a surge of the long-dormant Jacksonian tradition that strongly opposes the liberal American creed. The success of liberal internationalism throughout the Cold War and beyond caused the isolation of this school of thought in American politics. The developments in the post-9/11 era, especially the Iraq War and the Great Recession, have set the ground for the awakening of Jacksonianism in the United States. Similarly, the highly cosmopolitan view of President Obama, the first biracial U.S. president in history, and his policies that underscored a firm conviction in multilateralism, the liberal order, and international law was, from this perspective, the last straw. Reaching the highest office in the United States by vindicating the Jacksonian factions of the American society, President Trump opted for revisionist policies to dismantle the existing international order and to promote a vision that puts "America first," that is, above the international peace and stability. In other words, "the audacity of hope," injected into the American political life by the presidency of Barack Obama, "was superseded by a populist

[1092] Walter Russell Mead, "The Meaning of Mr. Trump," **The American Interest,** May 23, 2016, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/05/23/the-meaning-of-mr-trump/ (Access: 31.08.2016).
[1093] Colin Kahl, Hal Brands, "Trump's Grand Strategic Train Wreck," **Foreign Policy,** January 31, 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/31/trumps-grand-strategic-train-wreck/ (Access: 29.08.2020).

politics of resentment and retrenchment, an unapologetic nationalistic rejection of 'globalism' in favor of 'America First.'"[1094]

As for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, the Trump administration's self-centered Jacksonian view has had substantial repercussions, affecting its relationships with key regional actors. Initially, the U.S. allies in the region were worried because of "his campaign's blatant anti-Muslim rhetoric and calls for a ban on Muslims entering the United States."[1095] Despite a relative moderation in this regard after the election, President Trump espoused a considerably controversial stance regarding the Middle East-related foreign policy questions. In some significant respects, the Trumpist vision broke drastically with the Obama administration's policies. While the improved relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel and the withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) constituted significant signs of change in the American view of the region under the Trump administration, the transformation in Washington's attitude on a crucial issue, the promotion of democratic principles in the Middle East, was the most drastic turn. Indeed, the spread and institutionalization of democracy abroad were not among the foreign policy priorities of the administration. As underscored by Madeleine Albright, the U.S. "… [has] not had a chief executive in the modern era whose statements and actions are so at odds with democratic ideals…Instead of challenging anti-democratic forces, Trump is a comfort to them –a provider of excuses."[1096] This indifference toward democratization has inevitably had a substantial impact on Washington's vision pertaining to the Middle East, bolstering non-democratic regimes and illiberal forces.

Accordingly, President Trump "has shown no interest in promoting political reform or bolstering democratic norms" in the region.[1097] Neither the struggle against human rights abuses of the Middle Eastern autocracies nor any initiative to push them toward the path of democracy has not been among the administration's priorities.

[1094] Robert S. Singh, "The Obama Era: Retrenchment and the Challenge of a 'Post-American' World, 2009–2017," in. Christopher R. W. Dietrich (Ed.), **A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present,** Vol. I-II, Wiley Blackwell, New Jersey, 2020, p. 1101.
[1095] Aharon Klieman and Yoel Guzansky, "Reading Trump's Middle East Policy: Could Retrenchment Trigger Realignment?" **Foreign Affairs,** November 17, 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-11-17/reading-trumps-middle-east-policy (Access: 12.09.2020).
[1096] Madeleine Albright, **Fascism: A Warning,** William Collins, London, 2019, p. 5.
[1097] Jack Thompson, "Trump's Middle East Policy," **CSS Analyses in Security Policy,** No. 233, October 2018, https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse233-EN.pdf (Access: 11.09.2020).

Instead, President Trump did not hesitate to improve America's relations with the Saudi monarchy, updating it in accordance with his transactionalist view, and demonstrate unconditional support for Israel. His curious affinity for strongmen -to an unprecedented extent given America's recent history- with authoritarian inclinations even led him to develop the United States' ties with the UAE, setting the ground conducive regional environment for "the ascendancy of a Saudi-Israeli-UAE axis."[1098] These efforts were culminated in the signing of the Abraham Accords, initiating the normalization of Israel's relations with the UAE and Bahrain. Thus, the prevailing narrow interpretation of national interest, along with the growing skepticism toward long-advocated universal liberal values and principles, has inspired the administration's strategy in the region. The changing priorities and considerations have paved the way for a substantial reconfiguration of the regional dynamics, transforming the nature and the orientation of America's ties with its traditional Middle Eastern allies and Washington's stance toward its foes, such as Iran.

No matter how much the President's vision seems to break with the past, especially given the record of his predecessors since 1945, it is, in fact, an integral part of the long-established American foreign policy tradition. In this sense, the Trump administration's foreign policy represents nothing but a drastic move of the U.S. foreign policy pendulum, always across the same policy spectrum. The Trumpist vision is, thus, a mere aberration within the context of the post-WWII U.S. foreign policy as it firmly opposes the *status quo* at the international level. However, from a broader perspective, it is the reaction of a long-ignored source of a political force in American politics, hoping to preserve vital U.S. interests through nationalistic and unilateralist means. Therefore, the foreign policy perspective of the Trump administration is just an unexpected proposal regarding how the U.S. should involve in international affairs to advance its interests. The fact that it represents a radical departure from the post-1945 view in this regard does not make it unique or irrelevant. Indeed, it illustrates a clear example of the pendular behavioral pattern of U.S. foreign policy.

From this perspective, the assumption that the future of America's foreign policy would likely follow a similar path -a swing toward liberal internationalism- is far from being baseless. Indeed, the results of the 2020 presidential elections leading to the

[1098] **Ibid.**

defeat of incumbent President Donald Trump before the Democratic candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden, seems to confirm this assumption. The Biden administration would, after four years of unilateralist nationalism and anti-globalism, inherit a country deeply suspicious of the policy elite and the decades-long foreign policy undertakings, and an international system, which has constantly been undermined by its founder. Within this context, any initiative to put U.S. foreign policy back on track would require a considerable effort toward the reorganization of relations with its traditional allies and its international commitments. More fundamentally, the restoration of U.S. foreign policy after President Trump should, as noted by Ben Rhodes, concern the country's "post-Cold War image of itself as a virtuous hegemon," with a view to reviving "the United States' sense of its purpose in the world."[1099] Nevertheless, President-elect Biden's pledge to "place the United States back at the head of the table" and "have America lead the world,"[1100] underscoring the next administration's priority of re-assuming the global leadership role from which the Trump administration has abdicated, heralds a return to the liberal internationalist vision in foreign policy. Going even further, some observers claim that "his presidency may be the establishment's last best chance to demonstrate that liberal internationalism is a superior strategy to populist nationalism."[1101]

Although returning to the *status quo ante* in terms of America's global role will be among the priorities of the next administration, given the damage inflicted by Donald Trump's presidency to democratic principles and social harmony within the United States and the disruptive effects of the epidemic, such an initiative would -and should- begin with domestic action. The U.S. should get its own house in order for being able to "lead not only by the example of [its] power, but by the power of [its] example," as pledged by President-elect Joe Biden in his acceptance speech.[1102] Only after restoring the exemplar character of American democracy and social unity one can reclaim the international leadership position as "the country's credibility and ambition

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[1099] Ben Rhodes, "The Democratic Renewal: What Will It Take to Fix U.S. Foreign Policy," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 99, No. 5, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/democratic-renewal (Access: 12.09.2020).
[1100] Joseph R. Biden, Jr. "Why America Must Lead Again: Recusing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 99 No. 2, 2020, pp. 71, 65.
[1101] Thomas Wright, "The Fraught Politics Facing Biden's Foreign Policy," **Brookings,** November 22, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/11/23/the-fraught-politics-facing-bidens-foreign-policy/ (Access: 26.11.2020).
[1102] "President-Elect Joe Biden's Remarks," **CNN,** November 8, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/07/politics/joe-biden-president-elect-remarks/index.html (Access: 27.11.2020).

abroad will be tied entirely to its actions at home."[1103] By so doing, "the president can signal U.S. leadership with an international agenda that rests squarely on his domestic priorities."[1104] It bears underscoring that stabilizing the economy, putting an end to the protectionist measures in place -along with self-destructive trade wars- and rebuilding its partnerships based on shared values appear as other indispensable steps for Washington to reclaim the seat it had four years ago within the international system. These steps, representing a kind of transition, would assure the return of American global leadership to be built upon unshattered foundations and affect, doubtlessly, the country's vision with regard to the ongoing regional issues.

As to the Middle East, it seems that some elements of continuity, such as encouraging the Israeli-Arab normalization process, would mark U.S. foreign policy in the foreseeable future. Likewise, the incoming administration's view of U.S. military presence in the Middle East appeared only slightly different than that of the incumbent one. As opposed to the Trump administration's determination to withdraw all U.S. troops in the region, President-elect Biden shares the objective of ending "endless wars," along with a substantial decrease in U.S. presence, limiting America's regional engagement to "defeating al Qaeda and the Islamic State."[1105] However, a reassessment of the nature of America's ties with certain regional actors would create, to a considerable extent, a substantial change in Washington's regard toward the region, addressing their human rights and democracy records. In this sense, the reorganization of the relations with Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt and the UAE, would likely be a top item on the U.S. agenda. Moreover, the Iran nuclear issue, with the U.S. rejoining the JCPOA, would take a distinctively different shape than it has had for the last four years. Nonetheless, the most significant shift in U.S. Middle East policy would be the product of Washington's re-embracing its core democratic and liberal values as central elements of foreign policy, a substantial difference compared to the Trump administration's vision. With his unwavering belief that "more than anything, it is [America's] adherence to [its] values and [its] commitment to tolerance

[1103] Rhodes, **op. cit.** 2020.
[1104] Robert B. Zoellick, "Biden's Domestic Priorities Should Guide His Foreign Policy: The United States Needs a Plan That Starts at Home, But Looks Abroad," **Foreign Affairs**, September 8, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-america/2020-09-08/bidens-domestic-priorities-should-guide-his-foreign-policy (Access: 21.11.2020).
[1105] Biden, **op. cit.** 2020, p. 72.

that sets [the U.S.] apart from other great powers,"[1106] Joe Biden would re-introduce the advancement of these values at home and their promotion abroad into the heart of the country's foreign policy strategy. That, in turn, would definitely change the nature of U.S. relations in the Middle East with friends and foes alike, not to mention the increased possibility of the use of force, of course, as a last resort.

Therefore, it is not vain to expect U.S. foreign policy to be marked by a "return to normalcy" under the presidency of Joe Biden, "normal" being its post-war perspective shaped by liberal internationalism. Filling the vacuum left by his predecessors' unorthodox policies with regard to America's long-standing role, the Biden administration would seek to re-establish the country's global leadership while updating it in a way that could face the twenty-first-century challenges and threats. Contrary to what some observers propose, restoring, rather than "reimagining,"[1107] the liberal international order in conformity with contemporary global realities would be helpful in reaffirming America's central role in international affairs. Such a shift would inevitably affect the U.S. relations with its traditional allies in Europe and elsewhere, along with its standing in the Middle East. With democratic principles and liberal values as core tenets of the foreign policy agenda, the United States would be, in at least the next four years, in search of reorganizing its alliances in the region, while, in accordance with its reclaiming the global leadership position, expressing its view regarding substantive issues, such as Libya, Syria, and Iran, in a more assertive manner than the Trump administration.

Indeed, Joe Biden's secretary of state nominee, Antony Blinken -his former national security adviser and former Deputy Secretary of State under President Obama- illustrates his administration's intention to restore America's leadership on the world stage, as well as a sharp break with the incumbent administration. Seen as an ardent "defender of global alliances"[1108] and "an internationalist with a penchant

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[1106] Joseph R. Biden, Jr. "Building on Success: Opportunities for the Next Administration," **Foreign Affairs,** Vol. 95, No. 5, p. 47.
[1107] Rebecca Lissner, Mira Rapp-Hooper, "A Foreign Policy for the Day After Trump: Reimagining not Restoring -the Liberal International Order," **Foreign Affairs**, September 30, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-30/foreign-policy-day-after-trump (Access: 22.11.2020).
[1108] Lara Jakes, Michael Crowley, David E. Sanger, "Biden Chooses Antony Blinken, Defender of Global Alliances, as Secretary of State," **The New York Times,** November 22, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/22/us/politics/biden-antony-blinken-secretary-of-state.html (Access: 23.11.2020).

for intervention,"[1109] Blinken's nomination for the top foreign-policy job in the country would increase the reliance on multilateralism and the rules-based international order, with the U.S. in the driving seat. For him, the world needs, even more than ever, American engagement and American leadership. Similarly, he considers a cooperative international environment indispensable since the response to the gravest global threats today requires collective action. According to Blinken, even "a country as powerful as the United States can't handle them alone."[1110] Moreover, his firm conviction that "the strength of [America's] democracy at home is directly tied to [its] ability to be a force for progress, to mobilize collective action," combined with his belief that American "values should be at the center of foreign policy,"[1111] seems to indicate a foreign policy shift in a more liberal internationalist direction. Furthermore, his insistence on improving relations with democratic allies, especially with Europe, which he sees as "a partner [of] first resort, not last resort,"[1112] underscores the necessity of a reorganization of America's relations with its allies. His assessment that the U.S. must forge, to effectively respond to the current geopolitical threats, a balanced strategy in which "[military] force can be a necessary adjunct to effective diplomacy"[1113] heralds a quest for enhancing deterrence by assertive moves, which may lead, in some cases, to interventionist policies.

For Antony Blinken, the Middle East -a region he knows quite well- would appear as one of the greatest challenges. Even though he seems to acknowledge that the current geostrategic realities entail a more balanced allocation of resources in terms of foreign policy –a shift in America's focus toward certain other regions- he also makes clear that in the Middle East, there are constant key issues that require either U.S. effort to be dealt with or maintenance of U.S. commitment.[1114] Yet, if history is any guide, considerably diminishing America's engagement in the Middle East can

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[1109] Johannes Lang, "Biden, the Middle East, and the Restoration of the 'Blob,'" **Harvard Political Review,** November 25, 2020, https://harvardpolitics.com/biden-the-middle-east-and-the-restoration-of-the-blob/ (Access: 27.11.2020).
[1110] Walter Russell Mead, "Transcript: Dialogues on American Foreign Policy and World Affairs: A Conversation with Former Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken," **Hudson Institute,** July 9, 2020, https://www.hudson.org/research/16210-transcript-dialogues-on-american-foreign-policy-and-world-affairs-a-conversation-with-former-deputy-secretary-of-state-antony-blinken (Access: 23.11.2020).
[1111] **Ibid.**
[1112] **Ibid.**
[1113] Antony J. Blinken, Robert Kagan, "'America First' is Only Making the World Worse: Here's a Better Approach," **Brookings**, January 4, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/04/america-first-is-only-making-the-world-worse-heres-a-better-approach/ (Access: 23.11.2020).
[1114] Mead, **op. cit.** 2020.

hardly be an achievable objective for U.S. foreign policy. Besides, Blinken's view does not mean a total withdrawal or a large-scale retrenchment from the Middle East but an effort to lighten the U.S. footprint in the region. For Daniel Benaim and Jake Sullivan -Joe Biden's national security adviser nominee, "the risk of further conflagration is a major reason why the United States must remain engaged even as geopolitics and growth potential argue for a greater focus on Asia, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere."[1115] From this perspective, the most dramatic turn in the U.S. vision toward the Middle East would be the growing emphasis on a value-centered foreign policy perspective. A U.S. vision prioritizing democratic principles and human rights in dealing with Middle Eastern governments would eventually lead to a comprehensive reassessment of relations with certain actors, increasing pressure on non-democratic countries with countless misdeeds, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and ending U.S. support of Saudi campaign in Yemen.[1116] Moreover, the vision based on the claim that "America is back," which is likely to replace President Trump's "America first" under the incoming administration,[1117] signals a return to the pre-Trump period not only on a global scale but in the Middle East as well. In parallel with this view, the incoming foreign policy team, under Blinken's guidance, seems to promise "restoration, not transformation"[1118] in every respect, including America's Middle East policy.

Consequently, the United States is like a person who cannot decide whether to follow his mind or his heart in a Hobbesian world of greedy *animus dominandi,* characterized by *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all). When both point in the same direction, the tension within the decision-making mechanism significantly decreases. However, when they contradict, the centuries-old dilemma of U.S. foreign policy appears, putting forward the inherent difficulties of foreign policy-

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[1115] Daniel Benaim, Jake Sullivan, "America's Opportunity in the Middle East: Diplomacy Could Succeed Where Military Force Has Failed," **Foreign Affairs,** May 22, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-05-22/americas-opportunity-middle-east (Access: 27.11.2020).

[1116] "The New World Order That President Biden Will Inherit," **The New York Times,** November 15, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/15/opinion/biden-foreign-policy-international-relations.html (Access: 27.11.2020).

[1117] David Von Drehle, "Joe Biden Says America is Back. Back to What?" **The Washington Post,** November 28, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/joe-biden-says-america-is-back-back-to-what/2020/11/27/d94c0f1a-30d9-11eb-bae0-50bb17126614_story.html (Access:27.11.2020).

[1118] James Traub, "Biden Has the Team Obama Always Wanted," **Foreign Policy,** November 24, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/24/biden-has-the-team-obama-always-wanted/ (Access: 26.11.2020).

making in Washington. Moreover, the essential question is not only about what to follow at the international level but also about how the U.S. should -or can- follow the guidance of one of these factors. Such intermingled questions added other substantial dimensions to the dilemma, involving binaries such as isolationism-internationalism, engagement-disengagement, or exemplarist-crusader. While the schools of U.S. foreign policy -Jacksonian, Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, and Wilsonian- develop around these lines, its dichotomous nature results in the emergence of the behavioral pattern, offering hints of the U.S. reactions in the face of international affairs.

As we have seen in Libya, Egypt, and Syria throughout the Arab Spring, the pendular movement influenced by the interplay of various factors plays a central role in understanding and explaining the policies pursued by the United States. Although it seems unlikely, at least in the short term, to end this oscillation, what should be done for the U.S. to get optimal, if not the best, results in foreign policy is to develop a synthetic and balanced approach based on melting as many elements of both visions as possible into one pot. Thus, only a foreign policy guideline built upon the *moralpolitik-realpolitik* synthesis can, in the final analysis, lessen the inherent tension within the American policy-making mechanism and help the United States to obtain more and better results in its future undertakings at the international level. In this regard, the election of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States, according to whom "no country is better positioned than the United States to lead in the twenty-first century,"[1119] represents a drastic swing of the foreign policy pendulum toward an internationalist direction. Such a turn is likely to set the ground for a more successful foreign policy record. The emphasis on America's capacity to lead and mobilize collective international action in the face of -mostly new- global challenges would not only eliminate the existing tensions within the United States but also contribute to international peace and stability, especially in the Middle East.

[1119] Biden, **op. cit.** 2016, p. 48.

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