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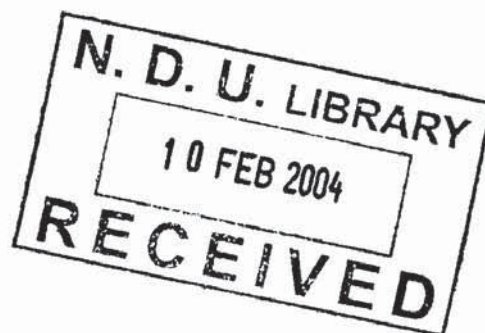
**Faculty of Political Science, Public Administration  
& Diplomacy**

## **Variables Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East in the Post-WWII Period**

**M.A. Thesis**

**By**

**Seza Z. Metrebian**



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in the Post-WWII Period**

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**Submitted to the Faculty of Political Science, Public Administration  
& Diplomacy**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs & Diplomacy**

**NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY- LEBANON  
2003- 2004**

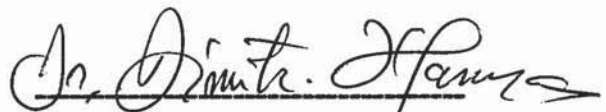
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My warmest thanks to the members of the thesis committee, Dr. Edward Sayah, Dr. Dimitri Hanna and to my advisor, Dr. Naim Salem, for their precious assistance, patience and encouragement. My sincere gratitude goes to the Chairman of the Department Dr. Chahine Ghais, for his constant encouragement and understanding, during the difficult period I was passing through while working on this thesis.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family, my father, mother and sisters for their help, support and patience throughout my Master's Degree study, and my work on this thesis.

I finally thank all my friends for their continuous moral support and for being there when I needed them.

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**Metrebian, Seza Z., *Variables Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East in the Post WWII Period***

**Master of Arts International Affairs and Diplomacy, January 2004.**

## **ABSTRACT**

The United States has direct interests in the Middle East due to the region's strategic and economic importance in the world. Following the end of World War II, with the newly acquired American supremacy in the Middle East, several principle concerns made the region crucial to the US<sup>1</sup>. First, beginning in the 1950s there was a bipolar competition between the U.S. and the USSR and the threat of confrontation in the Middle East. The US was threatened by the Soviet Union, a nuclear power, perceived as having expansionist goals, which, if not contained, would lead to serious consequences. Since World War II, U.S intervention in the region became obvious, its priorities in the Middle East have focused primarily on insuring access to oil and, after 1948, the defense of Israel.

Knowing that the variables shaping foreign policy are numerous, the focus in this research will be on three factors that I consider of major importance in the context of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The three factors are: Israel, oil, and the geo-strategic importance of the region. Therefore, this research analyzes these factors and their implications on U.S. foreign policy in the Post WWII Period.

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<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth analysis of U.S. interests in the Middle East, see William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) and Henry Kissinger, *The Necessity For Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy*. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960)

# CHAPTER I

## A. Introduction

The Middle East has been a constant focus of U.S. attention since WWII. Foreign policy makers and the Congress have struggled extensively with the unignorable tension in the region. At the core of this tension is the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Although the U.S. has a central role in managing the conflict, for it is the only country that can exert sufficient influence over all actors, it has never applied the required assets to resolve this conflict once and for all. Hence, the stability under the framework of hegemony was the key focus of the United States to ensure its strategic interests in the region.<sup>1</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union has even thrust more the U.S. into the Middle East. Thus, the U.S. was compelled to ponder new rationalizations for future interventions.<sup>2</sup>

The end of the Cold War meant that the Middle East was no longer a theater for US-USSR power politics. The emergence of the U.S. as the world's lone superpower, however, has had major ramifications in the Middle East.

In many respects, U.S. strategy revolves around the defense of Israel, which depends on continuing U.S. economic aid and unswerving political support. In turn, the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Tillman, Seth, P. 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.50

counts on Israel to act as a reliable collaborator on strategic, political and economic issues both within and beyond the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

Given its self-proclaimed role as a guarantor of Middle East oil for the West, the U.S. has alternated from Soviet containment in the region, to Iran's containment under Khomeini, to dual containment of both Iran and Iraq to prevent their emergence as independent regional power centers, and most recently to its direct occupation of Iraq.

The U.S. has solidified strategic interests in the region by influencing the region's oil production, trade, and consumption, notably military sales, for its own ends, continuing its support for Israel, and further marginalizing states such as Iran and Iraq. It has pursued a policy of heavy militarization of those countries in the Middle East with expendable oil wealth and those who depend on US aid and security, such as Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup> This policy has greatly increased the profits of the U.S. defense industry and the influence of American intelligence and corporations in those countries.

Recognizing that there is variance in weapons capability among Middle Eastern states, the U.S. has nonetheless provided weapons supplies, including in some cases Weapons of Mass Destruction, to Israel, and more limited conventional weapons supplies to Jordan and Egypt as well as to former allies now "enemies" such as Iraq and Iran.

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States", *Foreign Affairs* 73/2, March/ April 1994. p.7

<sup>3</sup> Chomsky, Noam. 1983. *The Faithful Triangle*. Cambridge M.A: Southend Press. pp.17-23



During the second half of the twentieth century, U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East centered on protecting oil flow, supporting Israel and the region's pro-Western governments and maintaining political stability – not just to keep the status quo, but largely to deter, contain and, if necessary, confront communism. Active support for Jews began after WWII when the Truman administration guided the U.N. into endorsing a plan on Palestine, leading to the emergence of the state of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Today this list has expanded to include other declared objectives, such as combating terrorism, and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction<sup>6</sup>. In the pursuit of these objectives, the United States has relied on the use of force, covert intervention, economic and military assistance, arms sales, military presence and diplomacy.

In order to find the answers to all these policies adopted by the U.S, I will try in this thesis to evaluate the interests of the U.S. in the Middle East, and to what extent these interests have shaped U.S. intervention into the region.

Why the United States is so much interested in this region? And why it is investing huge amounts of money either by economic or military aid or even by military attacks against some states? To what extent have these vast sums served American interests?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tillman, Seth, P. 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.51

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, calling for the establishment of Jewish and Arab States in Palestine. Alvin Rubinshtein, ed. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Perspectives*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. 225

<sup>6</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H., 1996. U.S. Strategic Interests in the Middle East and the Process of Regional Change. *Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies*.

<sup>7</sup> Scott Lasensky. 2002. *Foreign Policy and the Limits of Economic Inducements*. MERIA. Vol. 6 No.

This research will evaluate the factors I considered as vital to U.S. policy in the Middle East, and will try to explore the validity of these factors in U.S. foreign policy.

## **B. Approach / Methods**

The methodology followed in this thesis is the exploratory research method based on historical descriptive analysis of U.S. interests since WWII. An analysis will be undertaken in order to explore the factors behind U.S. policy-making in the Middle East, and to understand how the U.S. reacts when faced with threats that represent a danger to the factors that are considered of utmost importance to its objectives.

In order to define the factors involved in the formation of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, several books and articles were consulted. The source of data collected for this thesis, which deals with U.S. interests in the Middle East and their implications on foreign policy in the region, are books and articles by historians, area specialists, and journalists.

In this research U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East in the post WWII period is studied in order to find out the factors behind this policy. Oil, Israel, and the geostrategic importance of the Middle East, are highlighted as a result of this exploratory research on the factors shaping U.S. foreign policy. I will try to demonstrate why these factors are considered major variables, by proving with collected facts and data their importance and effect on U.S. Middle East policy.

In order to understand better the motives behind the U.S. intervention in the Middle East, an analysis and comparison of the different American interests is necessary. The importance of these interests will be highlighted, with emphasis on the most important ones.

Information was gathered through books, journal, and sites that offered a wider scope for this exploratory study and analysis. The journals include *Foreign Policy*, *Middle East Review of international Affairs (MERIA)*, and *Gulf News*. The electronic journals include *Questia*, *Jstore*, and others, which were very helpful, as sources for general or specific information, designed to access the most important foreign policy issues.<sup>8</sup>

In the first place, the books that discuss the topic thoroughly were selected, then by following the footnotes included in these readings the research was further expanded. The most objective sources and sites were chosen to shape the course of this research.

The sources of data collected can be classified as follows:

- Books
- Journals
- Internet
- Reports
- Forums

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<sup>8</sup> Nara Research Room. Guide to Federal Records. Retrieved on July 2003 from [www.archive.gov](http://www.archive.gov)  
Reuters. Retrieved on June 2003 from [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)

This thesis is an analysis of the way U.S. foreign policy is shaped and practiced, knowing that the most important factors shaping this policy are very strongly tied to the U.S. interests.

### **C. Thesis Organization**

The themes of the thesis will be discussed and organized as follows:

#### **I. Introduction**

The first part in the introduction prescribes the context of the topic and the reason why it was chosen. The introduction explains the importance of the Middle East in the international arena, especially for the U.S, and the policies adopted by the American governments to dominate this region. It covers briefly the U.S. policies and the reason they were adopted by different U.S. administrations. The second part is an explanation of the methodology used. The third part explains briefly the organization of the thesis. The fourth and last part provides a literature review of relevant books, articles, how they support my research and why they were selected.

## **II. Oil: A Prime Economic Factor Shaping U.S. Middle East Policy**

The oil factor represents a central objective to the U.S. In this part an analysis of U.S. involvement in the region is presented as well as the causes of U.S. intervention to ensure access to cheap oil.<sup>9</sup> Since WWII, ensuring the supply of oil from the region has been a consistent policy for the successive U.S. administrations.

### **III. Israel: The Increasingly Dominant Variable in American Policy in the Middle East.**

Another factor explored is Israel. The strong ties between Israel and the U.S. and the latter's interest in maintaining Israel's dominance in the region, is arguably obvious and aims at insuring bases in the region which would facilitate U.S. dominance.

### **IV. U.S. Geostrategic Interests in the Middle East**

The chapter is about the U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. Many issues are discussed in this chapter, like the U.S. military presence in the Middle East

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<sup>9</sup> Tillman, Seth, P. 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.70

in general and the Gulf, in particular. The trade and investment interests, as well as the economic and strategic value of arms exports to the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

## **V. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter recounts how this exploratory research assessed the various factors and the extent that they determine U.S. Middle East policy. An analysis of the factors is conducted, and some recommendations are suggested that seek to highlight future prospects.<sup>11</sup>

## **D. Literature Review**

In recent decades, considerable attention has been devoted to the Middle East, which has fascinated scholars and observers and has been the focal point of great power attention. Therefore, the amount of writings about this region is very extensive and continues to grow substantially. The literature covered focused on the U.S. interests in the region and the fact that these interests shape U.S. foreign policy. The selection of literature includes, among others, books by known authors in the field like Seth Tillman, David Lesh, and Anthony Cordesman.

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<sup>10</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. 1998. U.S. Strategy and Middle Eastern Trends. *Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies*. p.4

Some samples of subjects addressed in these books are as follows:

- U.S. strategic, political, and defense interests in the Middle East are reviewed by David Lesch. In his book *Middle East and the United States*<sup>12</sup>, he describes the changing U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, which is manipulated by U.S. interests. He gives examples on the series of events leading to and following the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait, and the subsequent liberation by the U.S.-led international coalition. While previously U.S. policy towards the Middle East was based primarily on maintaining stability in the region, in order to ensure easy access and transport of oil, during the Cold War U.S. intervention had focused on keeping the Soviets away.

David Lesch also describes how after the Musaddiq coup the U.S. had supported the Shah of Iran as a “policeman” of the Gulf. This support was a part of the 1969 Nixon’s doctrine, which sought to secure U.S. surrogates to represent U.S. global strategic interests. Also Israel was prepared to play that role in the Middle East.

- *The United States in the Middle East*<sup>13</sup> by Seth, P. Tillman discusses the four U.S. fundamental interests in the Middle East, which he considers as follows:

- 1- Oil of the Arabian Peninsula
- 2- The survival and security of the state of Israel.
- 3- The avoidance of confrontation and advancement of cooperation

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<sup>11</sup> Fandy, Mamoun. 1996. U.S. Oil Policy in the Middle East. *Worldviews*. January March 1996, Volume 2, Number 4 January 1997

<sup>12</sup> Lesch, David W., 1999. *The Middle East and the United States*. U.K.: Westview Press.

<sup>13</sup> Tillman, Seth, P. 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

with the Soviet Union

#### 4- Peaceful settlement of international disputes

Tillman thinks that each of these interests taken alone gives the United States a vital concern with the future of the Middle East. Economically, he considers this region very vital for the economic health of the world. Politically, the Arab-Israeli unresolved conflict makes the Middle East for the U.S. interests, the most important and the most dangerous, single region in the world.

Tillman urges that the United States does not have a foreign policy just for the sake of having one, but it conducts foreign policy for the purpose of securing democratic values to the country. But the experience of the two World Wars showed that freedom cannot be assured in isolation. More recent experience has shown that political influence, access to resources and the promotion of American commerce are required for an overall conception of national interests. The United States remains heavily dependent on foreign energy sources, of which the most important is Saudi Arabia, with 20 percent of world oil reserves.

- *America's confrontation with revolutionary challenge in the Middle East*,<sup>14</sup> is a book in which William Strivers discusses many issues such as America's interest in the Middle Eastern oil, and move into the region, and the Soviet threat. Stivers believes that by the year 1980, the U.S. foreign policy had reached a decisive turn. For the first time in American history, Washington policy makers proclaimed their

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<sup>14</sup> Strivers, William. 1986. *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Challenge in the Middle East 1948- 83*. New York: St. Martin's Press.



determination to fight a war for economic reason alone: To go to war for the Middle Eastern oil.<sup>15</sup>

In this book Strivers remarks that there was never much debate in the United States over why the U.S. is going to war against Iraq. Still less were questions raised about why America is so deeply involved in the politics of the region. Most Americans were not even aware of the depth of U.S. ties to Middle Eastern dictators or the history of American interference in regional affairs. Surveying US policy from 1948 to 1983. Strivers makes clear with a meticulously documented but concise history, that American policy has frequently been dressed in the same rhetoric of nobility that the leaders are now using, but has always been motivated by the interests. During the Cold War, American policymakers above all sought to maintain the status quo they inherited, what they called the "maintenance of the special political, military and economic interests comprising the Western position in the area". Doing so meant excluding external powers like the USSR from the region, suppressing the growth of independent regional powers that might challenge American dominance: like Nasser's Egypt, and Khomeini's Iran, and maintaining access to oil, on reasonable terms.

Cheap oil was always what made the Middle East important to the U.S., because the continued operation of the global economic order would have been impossible without it. As Britain relinquished its power in the region, though, Western control over the region's resources came increasingly under nationalist attack

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid p.37

by Middle Easterners who often looked to the Soviet Union for support in reducing US influence. Some American officials sought accommodation with these nationalist currents; others believed uncontrolled violence was a better option. But the goal of the nationalists, self-determination in political and economic affairs, was incompatible with America's desire to control the region's oil and its need for reliable allies who would guarantee that control. Strivers noticed that even the most accommodationist administrations eventually turned to policies of repression and militarism to preserve their position in the region. And in the early Reagan administration, he saw that the US government's fundamental aims in the region have not changed: the US used Iraq to contain Iranian power in the 1980s. [Then the successor administrations used the horrific sanctions to contain Iraqi power in the 1990s, all while establishing permanent military positions in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states and continuing the flow of weapons and aid to those willing to obey its commands.]

He described the new administrations, as coming with the tradition that sees violence as the most efficacious means of consolidating and expanding American power, to further control Middle Eastern oil, to strengthen its position of hegemony in the region, and to protect the inequality of the global economy.

- *The Oil Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy*,<sup>16</sup> by Melvin Conant, illustrates the dependence of the U.S. on oil imports, especially Middle Eastern oil, and the obtaining of oil permeates the foreign political, economic, and security interests of the United States and its allies. He argues in this book that oil is not just a commercial commodity, but it is the highest strategic interests of nations. It represents a key factor in the overall power balance between the superpowers and a vital need for all industrial states of the developing world. That is why the U.S. needs clearer access to oil for itself and its allies and any obstacle or uncertain supply of oil can lead to serious conflict.

-The different reports written by Anthony Cordesman who is the co-director of the Middle East Program at the center for Strategic and International Studies, focus on the broad US strategic interests in the region. He illustrates the American strategic trends in the Gulf and the U.S. strategic perceptions and goals with its Gulf allies.

- The *U.S. Strategic Interests in the Middle East and the Process of Regional Change*<sup>17</sup>, a report written by Anthony H. Cordesman, finds that U.S.-Arab military relations are ultimately founded on the perception of common strategic interests. However, there are 22 countries in the Arab world, and the United States has never had common strategic interests with all of these countries.

Cordesman sees the United States as the most important international player in the Middle East since WWII, and argues that Washington's policy in the region is

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<sup>16</sup> Conant, A., Melvin. 1992. *The Oil Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy 1980- 1990*. Lexington, M.A.: Heat and Company.

<sup>17</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. 1996. *U.S. Strategic Interest in the Middle East and the Process of Change*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

dominated by the American interest in the existence of the State of Israel, the free flow of Middle Eastern oil, and the overall security and stability of the Arab-Arabian Gulf. Additional determinants have to be considered, e.g., the effect of the Cold War on American Middle East policy, the role of regional parties, and the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the US. In this report Cordesman examines the most important phases of American Middle East policy since 1945, its domestic and regional determinants and its underlying goals.

In the book *Politics in the Middle East*<sup>18</sup> James Bill explains oil politics, and how it is interrelated with international issues. He describes the Middle Eastern enormous wealth in petroleum and natural gas resources which gives this region a unique role in world politics. Thus, this enormous oil wealth expands the importance of every political conflict in the region, and it is this wealth also that tends to transform these conflicts into truly international issues.<sup>19</sup> Bill James gave the examples of the 1973 oil embargo which was associated with the October 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict. The second oil shock accompanied the Iranian revolution.<sup>20</sup> Therefore he agrees that oil has a huge impact on the economic and political aspects of the region.

- Other articles and reports such as "*10 Things to know about U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East*" by Stephen Zunes, illustrates the interest of the U.S. starting

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<sup>18</sup> Bill, James and Springborg, Robert. 1994. *Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.374

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p.400

from the military presence and its militarization of the region, to its support of Israel through military assistance or veto power in the Security Council, and its support of autocratic regimes.

- In documentary and historical sites such as *Global Connections* I also noticed the same comments about the U.S. foreign policy, and the important factors shaping it, that are of major interest for the U.S.
- Another article that added to the study useful information was the “Containment Myth”<sup>21</sup> by Stephen Hubbell editor of the magazine *Middle East Report* and former Cairo correspondent for *The Nation*. He noticed that when the containment of communism came to an end, the U.S. started to ponder new justifications for its new policies of clash with the Muslim World. He believes that the sole purpose behind the U.S. military mobilization in the Middle East is to maintain the flow of oil at prices favorable to U.S. interests.

The above written literature provided this research with very valuable information on the factors shaping U.S. - Middle East policy.

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<sup>21</sup> Hubbell, Stephen. Fall 1998. The Containment Myth. Retrieved May 2003, from *Middle East Report*. Access: <http://www.merip.org>

## **Chapter II**

### **Oil: A Prime Economic Factor Shaping U.S. Middle East Policy**

In order to understand the motives behind U.S. intervention in the Middle East, an analysis of American interests and foreign policy objectives is necessary.

After WWII, Britain and France gave up control over much of the Middle East, as they could no longer afford to continue their imperialist strategies, either politically or economically. But a new world leader, the United States increased its presence in the region as American demands for oil were rapidly growing and exceeding domestic supply.

#### **i- Importance of Middle Eastern oil resources**

Given the vast energy resources that form the backbone of Western economies, influence and involvement in the Middle East have been of ultimate importance for the former and current imperial powers, including France, Britain, USA and the former Soviet Union.

The interests that the West (primarily Britain and France during European colonial times and now the U.S.) has had due to the energy and resource interests led to battle against the Ottoman Empire. As a result, Western populations have been adapted to a type of propaganda against the Arab people of the Middle East, and

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Islam in general, as being the bad guys or terrorists.<sup>22</sup> This was especially so during the European colonial times, as so vividly examined by Edward Said, in his book, *Orientalism*.<sup>23</sup> Both before and after the Ottoman Empire, this negative stereotyping has served to provide justifications for involvement and to ensure "stability" for the powers that wanted to be involved in the region. Recently this strategy is used by the U.S. to intervene in the region and overthrow regimes that they consider as a threat to their national interest.<sup>24</sup>

The Arabian Gulf contains around 674 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, representing approximately two-thirds of proven world reserves, and 1,923 Tcf of natural gas reserves which is 35% of the world total. At the end of 2002, Arabian Gulf countries maintained about 22.3 million bbl/d of oil production capacity, or 32% of the world total.<sup>25</sup>

In 2002, Arabian Gulf countries had estimated net oil exports of 15.5 million bbl/d of oil. Saudi Arabia exported the most oil of any Arabian Gulf country in 2002, with an estimated 7.0 million bbl/d (45% of the total). Also in 2002, Iran had an estimated net export of around 2.3 million bbl/d (15%), followed by the United Arab Emirates (2.1 million bbl/d -- 13%), Kuwait (1.7 million bbl/d -- 11%), Iraq (1.6

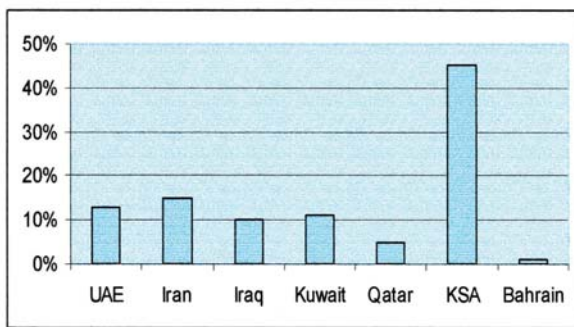
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<sup>22</sup> Shah, Anup. 2001. The Middle East. Retrieved on June 2003, form *Global Issues*. Access: [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org)

<sup>23</sup> Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House

<sup>24</sup> Shah, Anup. 2001. The Middle East. Retrieved on June 2003, form *Global Issues*. Access: [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org)

<sup>25</sup> Arabian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet. *Country Analysis Brief*. Access: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)



**Figure 1 – 2.** Arabian Gulf Exports by country. Source: National Energy Information Center 2002. Access: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)

million bbl/d -- 10%), Qatar (0.8 million bbl/d -- 5%), and Bahrain (0.01 million bbl/d-- 0.1%).<sup>26</sup> (see figure 1 – 2).

According to the Energy Information Administration's *International Energy Outlook 2002*, Arabian Gulf oil production is expected to reach about 30.7 million bbl/d by 2010, and 42.9 million bbl/d by 2020, compared to about 21.7 million bbl/d in 2000. This would increase Arabian Gulf oil production capacity to 35% of the world total by 2020, up from 28% in 2000 (see figure 3 – 2).

As we can see the production of oil is very remarkable in the region. Two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves are in the Middle East (see figure 2 – 2) which is also the cheapest place in the world to extract the product. In 2000, 26% of U.S. crude oil imports came from the Arabian Gulf area (see figure 3 – 2). The U.S. consumed 25% of the world's oil production in 2002 (see figure 4 – 2).

<sup>26</sup> Arabian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet. *Country Analysis Brief*. Access: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)



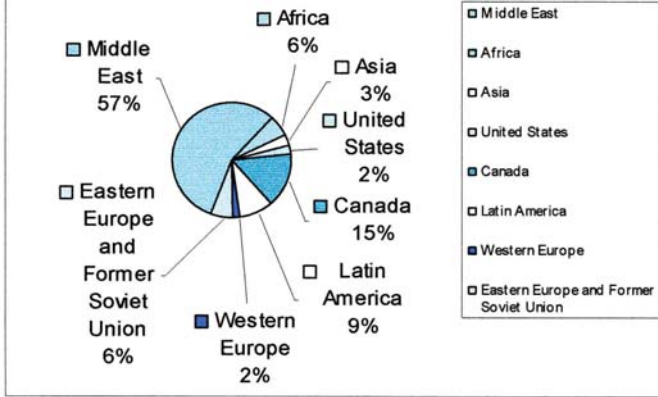
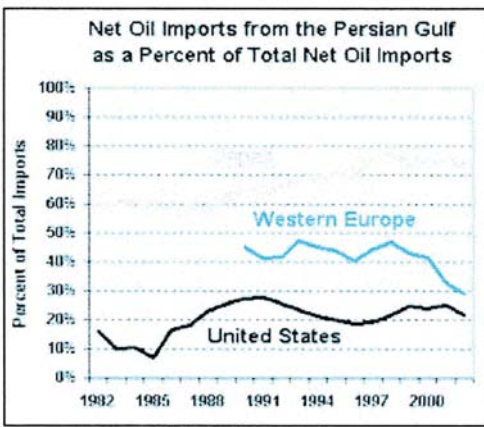


Figure 2-2. World Crude Oil Reserves. Source: Energy Information Administration. Washington D.C. U.S. Department of Energy 2003.

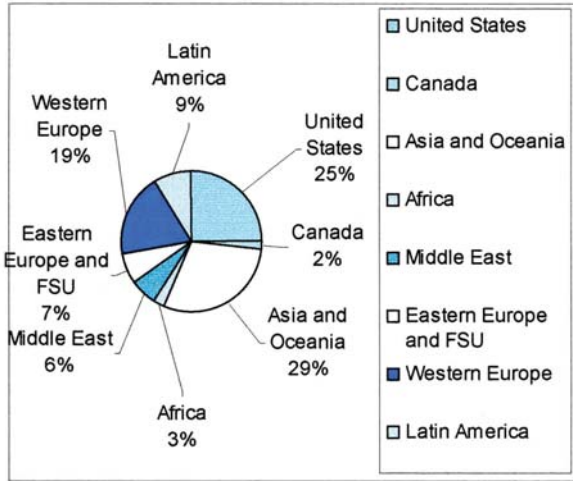
The importance of Middle Eastern oil came into sharp focus when oil prices climbed from \$10 a barrel in mid-1998 to \$35 a barrel in mid-2000. This tripling of the price of oil caused a jump in the price of gasoline and home heating costs in the U.S and other markets.<sup>27</sup> In Europe, it caused strikes and protests. Both the oil-producing countries and the oil-consuming countries accept that wildly volatile oil prices can undermine economic growth and even political stability.

Petroleum, being the sole item produced and exported by several Middle East countries, in the early years of oil production, the operating companies generally determined production and price levels.

<sup>27</sup> Arabian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet. *Country Analysis Brief*. Access: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)



**Figure 3 – 2.** Net Oil Imports from the Arabian Gulf. Source: Energy Information Administration, Washington D.C: Department of Energy, 2000



**Figure 4 – 2.** World Oil Consumption. Source: World Petroleum Consumption, Energy Information Administration, Washington, D.C. Department of Energy 2002.

However, in the 1960s, when various factors caused a reduction in prices, the governments of major producing countries met in Baghdad and created the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Since then OPEC strove to set the oil prices and production quotas for individual member countries.<sup>28</sup>

## **ii- Oil and U.S. foreign policy**

The fact that the Middle East contains an enormous wealth in petroleum and natural gas resources gives this region a unique role in world politics. This enormous oil wealth expands the importance of every political conflict in the region, and it is this wealth also that tends to transform these conflicts into truly international issues.<sup>29</sup> This fact can be noticed in the 1973 oil embargo which was associated with the October 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict. The second oil shock accompanied the Iranian revolution.<sup>30</sup>

To maintain superiority, control and influence over the region, the West has placed corrupt Arab leaders into positions of power (such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq and The Shah in Iran) and supported the overthrow of those that are not seen as favorable.<sup>31</sup> This has served to also keep their populations at bay, in return for

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<sup>28</sup> Long, David E., and Reich, Bernard. 1995. *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*. U.K: Westview Press. P.3

<sup>29</sup> Bill, James and Springborg, Robert. 1994. *Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. p.374

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.400

<sup>31</sup> Shah, Anup. 2001. The Middle East. Retrieved on June 2003, from *Global Issues*. Access: [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org)

militarization, power and personal wealth of the elite. Sometimes this has been done in the name of fighting communism. Nowadays, the same thing is being done in the name of fighting terrorism. The common theme underlying it though, has been the struggle to control access to important resources such as oil.<sup>32</sup> This fact was made very obvious when in 1982, the United States removed Iraq from its list of countries considered supportive of international terrorism. High level American officials began to visit Baghdad in late 1983, and the United States subsequently extended to Baghdad over \$2 billion in commodity credits. In 1984, it became widely known that Iraq was benefiting from intelligence supplied through American sources.<sup>33</sup> In return, the U.S. was benefiting from the oil supplies.

Oil penetrates the foreign political, economic, and security interests of the United States and its allies. The U.S. dependence on oil imports is a fact.

A succession of wars and economic crisis involving oil have demonstrated clearly that international supply is now entrapped in relations between states. The Iraq-Iran war and the U.S. invasion of Iraq can be good examples.

Oil is no longer a commercial commodity; oil is now vested in the highest strategic interests of nations. It is a key factor in the power balance between superpowers.<sup>34</sup>

In an interview with Harry Kreisler, Shibley Telhami assures that the oil is one of the U.S. interests in the region. Oil, in American calculation, historically has

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<sup>32</sup> Bill, James and Springborg, Robert. 1994. *Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. p.380

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 387.

been a factor that has influenced the American strategy since 1949. The U.S. concern to control Middle Eastern oil is not only about the fear of being cut off or not getting oil at reasonable prices, but it was the fear that if a powerful enemy controls so much of the world's oil, they would be even more powerful and in that sense, they would be more threatening.

According to Telhami, that strategy began with Truman, in relation to the Soviet Union. Truman put a policy in place that was called a "denial policy." The policy stipulated blowing up the Arabian oil fields if a Soviet invasion were about to happen, and the logic being was not to empower the Soviets further by controlling them.

President Eisenhower in the mid-1950s after the Suez Crisis, broadened that doctrine to include not only threats from the Soviet Union, but from what he considered to be threatening regimes in the Middle East. So the U.S. has had a strategy all along that was built on the assumption that it is not right allowing powerful and unfriendly states to control so much of the world's oil because it will empower and make them potentially threatening.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Conant, Melvin A. 1982. *The Oil Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy*. Massachusetts: Heath and Company.

<sup>35</sup> Telhami, Shibley. February 2003. [Interview with Harry Keisler]. Retrieved on April 10, 2003 from *Conversation with History*. Access: [www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu](http://www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu)

### iii- The oil weapon

As Melvin Conant states “Unlike guns, which have no other purpose, resources are weapons only if they are used as weapons.”<sup>36</sup> The huge resources of “petrodollars” at the disposal of Middle Eastern States, and mainly Saudi Arabia and its associates in OPEC, unquestionably represent great power in the hands of their possessors. Whether they represent a threat to the United States and other countries, a weapon aimed against their interest, is a question that increasingly troubled American policy after 1973, when the oil embargo was imposed during the October War.

Middle Eastern nations have learned over the years to manipulate their production of oil as an international strategy. In 1973 an OPEC oil embargo by Arab nations demonstrated a new way to influence European and American policy. Oil prices quadrupled from \$3 a barrel in 1972 to \$14 a barrel in 1974.<sup>37</sup> The era of cheap gas came to an end then. The 1973 OPEC oil boycott and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 are both dramatic examples of how regional forces have challenged U.S. access to fuel. The threat of the use of oil weapon to secure political objectives became familiar to the U.S. when oil producers began using political factors such as oil to secure political objectives. Thus, the fact of the U.S. dependence on oil imports largely makes energy a factor in foreign policy. This reliance on foreign supply puts the obtaining of oil in a context in which the basic interests of the U.S. are affected directly.

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<sup>36</sup> Conant, Melvin A. 1982. *The Oil Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy*. Massachusetts: Heath and Company. p. 63

Because of this dependence on oil and its volatile price, The Bush administration lately has made the establishment of a new comprehensive energy policy for the U.S., including the opening of new domestic oil and gas fields, a top priority.

#### **iv- The Middle East at the center for struggle over control of resources**

As we saw above, the Middle East has been quite important, geopolitically, due to the resources, and oil in particular. Because this has formed a backbone to the wealth of many nations today, maintaining control of those resources has been paramount. Hence, presence in the Middle East is for "stability" of oil flows:

“Saudi Arabia remains the cornerstone, producing 50 percent of the whole world's oil supply. So in order to keep this economic spot rising, to keep the status quo stable and the balance sheets of the major oil companies high, the U.S. installed a military base as a kind of mega police force in the region. Its official reason for being there is to ensure "stability," one of the great slogan in the history of business, but this is nothing more than spin – the military is in the Middle East to guarantee that whatever comes out of the ground is exploitable and controlled by American multinationals.”<sup>38</sup>

Three of the top five U.S. corporations were giant oil companies involved in the Middle East. Top officials of those companies filled key posts in the State Department and Pentagon. They were committed to see that the U.S. controlled the post- World War II Middle East and its vital oil supplies. In the 1930s, Britain had dominated Middle Eastern oil; American companies controlled less than 10% of the known oil reserves. The discovery of vast new reserves in Saudi Arabia at the

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<sup>37</sup> Hunter, Robert E. 1973. *Energy Crisis and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Foreign Policy Association. p.13

<sup>38</sup> Johnny Angel, It's the Oil, Stupid, *LA Weekly*, September 26, 2001.

outbreak of WWII increased U.S. interests there. Therefore, the U.S. increased its presence in the region as American demands for oil were rapidly growing.<sup>39</sup>

Following the end of World War II, with the newly acquired American supremacy in the Middle East, several principle concerns made the security of the region imperative to the U.S.<sup>40</sup> First, beginning in the 1950s there was a bipolar competition between the U.S. and the USSR, and the threat of the superpowers' confrontation in the ME. The US was threatened by the Soviet Union which was perceived as having expansionist goals, which if not contained, would lead to serious consequences.

Containing "Communist aggression" was the most important objective in American foreign policy, so much so that Presidents Truman, Nixon, Carter and Reagan formulated specific policies primarily for this reason.<sup>41</sup>

The first U.S. interest in the region which was adopted at the beginning of the 1960s had to do with oil—the region's strategic commodity. The continuation of the flow of this resource was imperative for both the European and American economies. The U.S. therefore, had to ensure both its own access to oil and that of its allies.

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<sup>39</sup> The Roles and Effects of U.S. Foreign Policies and Actions in the Middle East. Retrieved May 20, 2003 from *Global Connections*. Access: <http://www.pbs.org>

<sup>40</sup> For an in-depth analysis of U.S. interests in the Middle East, see William B. Quandt. 1997. *Decade of Decisions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, and Henry Kissinger. 1960. *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

<sup>41</sup> Analysis of the various U.S. Presidents and their policies toward the Middle East is presented by George Lenczowski in *American Presidents and the Middle East*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990.



World War II had transformed America's power and position in the world. Even though the U.S. had paid a high price in soldiers' blood, it had escaped the physical, economic and social destruction the War created in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

It was America's turn to become the global super-power, and with the fact that American corporations had boomed during the war-time economy; they needed global markets and resources to keep growing after the war.

By the end of the war, U.S. oil companies controlled 42% of the known oil reserves in the region. The huge Marshall Plan<sup>43</sup> aid project for Europe created a new market for newly acquired U.S. oil. Oil replaced coal as the key fuel in Europe, and U.S. control of the vital petroleum consolidated its power; Washington became a self-proclaimed guarantor of European and Japanese access to oil.

It was then that Arab and other Middle Eastern nationalists began to oppose U.S. presence. Strikes broke out among the Iranian oil workers followed by Iraq's, demanding more control of their own countries' resources. President Truman had in mind at that time, the oil and strategic interests, as much as support for Zionism, which was much more trustworthy than other undependable Arab governments. Israel could serve as a junior partner in carrying out U.S. interests; it could provide key-on-the-ground logistical or even military facilities should U.S. military involvement in

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<sup>42</sup> Bennis, Phyllis. 2001. *The Zionists, Oil companies and Washington*. Retrieved from *Middle East Reports J-Store*.

<sup>43</sup> Announced by the US Secretary of State George C. Marshall on 5 June 1947. Sixteen states—Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eire, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom—became the beneficiaries of American grants. The United States provided \$17 billion in assistance between 1948 and 1952 through the European Recovery Program.

the area be required. It could help defend U.S., and more broadly, Western control of the Middle East oil; and it could help make sure that the Suez Canal and other key routes were protected and kept open for Western shipping.<sup>44</sup>

It is worth citing here some statements made by journalists and government officials who define objectives and strategies applied by the U.S. some of those reports written prior to the Iraq War in 2003 are cited below:

A 1999 Clinton White House report spelled out corporate America's designs on foreign energy resources: "The United States will continue to have a vital interest in ensuring access to foreign oil supplies. We must continue to be mindful of the need for regional stability in producing areas to insure our access to, and the free flow of these resources."<sup>45</sup>

Two years later the Bush White House issued a National Energy Policy report echoing Clinton's report: "By any estimation, Middle East oil producers will remain central to world oil security" and remain "a primary focus of U.S. international energy policy". The report explained that imported oil made up half of U.S. current consumption and was expected to rise to two-thirds in no more than 20 years.

Much earlier President Jimmy Carter proclaimed the Carter Doctrine, holding that Arabian Gulf oil was a vital U.S. interest and threats to that interest would

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<sup>44</sup> Bennis, Phyllis. 2001. *The Zionists, Oil Companies and Washington*. Retrieved from *Middle East Reports. J-Store*. p.2

<sup>45</sup> Mattingly, Bob. 2002. *From Cold War to Oil War*. Retrieved on 16, May 2003, from *Socialist Action*. Access: [www.socialistaction.com](http://www.socialistaction.com)

be “repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”<sup>46</sup>

As some reporters commented that, the U.S. governments are relentlessly securing oil resources. But no area compares the vast oil supplies that underlie the Middle East. And no part of the Middle East seems to be worth for takeover as is Iraq.<sup>47</sup> As they predicted, things happened as we saw in the war against Iraq in 2003.

### Conclusion

American military power and domestic lifestyle depend on available access to Middle Eastern oil with low prices. Thus, U.S. foreign policy initiatives work to support the stability of pro- U.S. governments and prevent anti-U.S. powers from forming.

Saudis mistrust their government’s close relationship with the U.S. and resent American policies in the region, such as U.S. support for Israel and the U.S. led bombing of Iraq, and the U.S. armed troops presence in Saudi Arabia.<sup>48</sup>

The reliance of the U.S. on foreign oil by 55% of its consumption leaves the country vulnerable to unilateral political and economic acts by oil producing countries. Despite the U.S. government’s attempt to mask its grab on Iraqi oil with tough talk about terrorism, and its declaration that a war against Iraq would be a battle between good and evil, there are both mainstream and liberal observers, as well as

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<sup>46</sup> Mattingly, Bob. 2002. From Cold War to Oil War. Retrieved on 16, May 2003, from *Socialist Action*. Access: [www.socialistaction.com](http://www.socialistaction.com)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> American Dependence on Middle Eastern Oil. Retrieved May 20, 2003 from *Global Connections*. Access: [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)

analysts in the press, who declared that it's going to be an oil war, and there's no two ways about it.<sup>49</sup>

To this day, ensuring the supply of oil from the region factors heavily in the development of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.<sup>50</sup> U.S. interests in the Middle East will continue to include access to oil, given that the world oil demand is expected to double over the next 30 years as the use of automobiles proliferates throughout the developing world. Even though hydrogen has been considered the energy source of the future for decades, but it's still hardly used. Other technologies such as solar and geothermal power have not been perfected and are expensive.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, Middle Eastern oil is expected to be central not just to American economic growth, but also to global stability.

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<sup>49</sup> Mattingly, Bob. November 2002. From Cold War to Oil War. Retrieved May 16, 2003 from *Socialist Action*. Access: <http://www.socialistaction.org>

<sup>50</sup> The U.S. and oil. Retrieved May 2003 from *Global Connections* Access: [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org).

<sup>51</sup> Coal vs. Nuclear in an uncertain future. Retrieved December 5, 2003 from *The Ux Weekly*. January 2000 Issue. Access: [www.uxc.com](http://www.uxc.com)

## CHAPTER III

### **Israel: The Increasingly Dominant Variable in American Policy in the Middle East**

A second major interest in the region is Israel. Israel always needed the help, whether military, political, or economic, and the U.S. has always been there. In return Israel is said to perform a strategic service for the U.S., acting like a barrier to Soviet penetration of the Middle East.<sup>52</sup>

Active support for Jews began after WWII when the Truman Administration guided the U.N. into endorsing the plan for the settlement of the Palestinian issue, leading to the emergence of the state of Israel.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to being a faithful ally to the U.S., Israel has always been special to the U.S. to the point that President Carter in 1977 declared that American commitment to Israel is a special relationship.<sup>54</sup>

#### **i- Importance of Israel for the U.S.**

U.S.-Israeli relations are an important factor in U. S. policy in the Middle East, and Congress has placed considerable importance on the maintenance of a close and supportive relationship. The United States has invested huge amounts of financial

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<sup>52</sup> Tillman, Seth, P. 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.52

<sup>53</sup> Rubinstein, Alvin Z.,ed. 1991. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Perspectives*.2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Harper Collins Publishers. (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, calling for the establishment of Jewish and Arab States in Palestine). p.225

capital in the Middle East and has used “check-book” diplomacy as a key instrument for protecting its interests and promoting its policies in the region. Since 1973, U.S. aid to the Middle East has exceeded \$100 billion, from which a major portion goes to Israel. Over time, there were different principal reasons for this aid. After 1993, however this spending was used to play a major role in promoting an Israel-Palestinian political settlement.<sup>55</sup>

The main means for expressing support for Israel has been foreign aid; Israel currently receives about \$3 billion per year in economic and military grants, refugee settlement assistance, and other aid.<sup>56</sup> Since then U.S. support for Israel took form of economic, military and diplomatic assistance. Bill and Sprinborg gave an explicit account of the U.S. assistance granted to Israel.<sup>57</sup> From 1952 to 1965 U.S. economic and military assistance to Israel averaged \$60 million annually. Then from 1967 to 1973 it rose to an average of \$230 million. After the 1973 war. U.S. aid averaged \$2.32 billion per year, and since that time it has not dropped below \$3 billion annually. From 1978 to 1988 the U.S. government gave Israel \$29 billion in economic and military assistance, more than double the cost of the Marshall Plan for all Europe after WWII.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in *The Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, September 1977).

<sup>55</sup> Lasensky, Scott. March 2002. Underwriting Peace in the Middle East. Retrieved May 2002 from *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Volume 6, no.1.

<sup>56</sup> Clyde R. Mark. June 2002. Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance. Issue Brief for Congress. Congressional Research Service.

<sup>57</sup> Bill and Sprinborg, op. Cit., pp. 364-368

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Bill and Sprinborg, op. Cit., pp. 365

Shibley Telhami in an interview with Harry Kreisler said that after oil, the second U.S. interest in the region is Israel. He believes that it is a factor in the calculation of everyone in the background. He says the U.S. is committed to Israel, which means that if Israel needs help, whether it is military, political, or economic, the U.S. will be there. If Israel needs a resolution vetoed at the Security Council, the U.S. is prepared to go against fourteen members of the Security Council to veto that resolution. At the end of the conversation, Telhami comments by saying that “That is the price of that support.”<sup>59</sup>

U. S.-Israeli relations have evolved from an initial American policy of sympathy and support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in 1948 to an unusual partnership that links a small but militarily powerful Israel, dependent on the United States for its economic and military strength, with the U.S. superpower trying to balance competing interests in the region. Israel is a strategic ally, and U.S. relations with Israel strengthen the U. S. presence in the Middle East.<sup>60</sup> Even more important was the new recognition in Washington of the role that Israel could play. It was an acknowledgment of Israel as the regional "policeman" for U.S. regional interests.

Israel's role and standing in the region has been clearly transformed since WWII from a struggling ally deserving direct and indirect U.S. economic and military assistance to a strong regional power capable of serving U.S. interests in the Middle

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<sup>59</sup> Telhami, Shibley. February 2003. [Interview with Harry Keisler]. Retrieved on April 10, 2003 from *Conversation with History*. Access: [www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu](http://www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu)

<sup>60</sup> Tillman, Seth P., 1982. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Indiana: Library of Congress in Publication Data. p.52

East. The strategic cooperation between the two countries improved with time as Israeli and U.S. forces stationed in the Middle East increasingly faced the same set of potential threats: political and religious extremism, terrorism, and the proliferation of ballistic missiles and unconventional weapons.<sup>61</sup>

## **ii- Israel and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.**

U.S. aid to Israel rose gradually and continuously with time. Between 1978 and 1988, it reached \$29 billion in economic and military assistance, more than double the cost of the Marshall Plan for all Europe after WWII.<sup>62</sup> If added up all together it reaches to a current average of 43 percent of the total U.S. foreign assistance. Similarly, the U.S.-Israeli diplomatic relationship has been particularly through the United Nations. Bill and Springborg also found that the U.S. voted with Israel in the General Assembly more times than it did with any other country.<sup>63</sup>

As a result of the American commitment to Israel's independence, defense and security, consecutive U.S. administrations have naturally increased their attention and concern for the Arab-Israeli conflict, with Israel virtually the only ally in the

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<sup>61</sup> Colonel Cover, William W., U.S. Army Retired. 2002. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*.

<sup>62</sup> Bill, James and Springborg, Robert. 1994. *Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. p.365

<sup>63</sup> For Example, 91.5 percent of the time in 1986, compared with an average of 14 percent of the time between the U.S. and Egypt, Jordan, or Saudi Arabia. Bill and Springborg, p. 369



region. U.S. interests in the Middle East were therefore numerous, and the conflicts and risks involved were also numerous.

A State Department memo noted:

“Israel has probably done more for the U.S. in the Middle East in relation to money and effort invested than any of our so-called allies and friends elsewhere around the world since the end of the Second World War. In the Far East, we can get almost nobody to help us in Viet Nam. Here, the Israelis won the war single handedly, have taken us off the hook, and have served our interests as well as theirs.”<sup>64</sup>

The reward, for Israel, was a flood of sophisticated weapons, including advanced Phantom jets. In the four years after the 1967 war, Israel received \$1.5 billion in U.S. arms.

In 1951, the publisher of Ha'aretz, perhaps the most influential Israeli daily newspaper, had written that:

“Strengthening Israel helps the Western powers to maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog. There is no fear that Israel will undertake any aggressive policy toward the Arab states when this would explicitly contradict the wishes of the U.S. and Britain. But if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied on to punish one or several neighboring states whose discourtesy toward the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible.”<sup>65</sup>

This U.S. willingness to rely on Israel vastly expanded after 1967. Relations with the Arabs would be secondary to the emerging U.S.-Israeli alliance.<sup>66</sup>

After the 1990-91 Gulf War the U.S. launched a major set of diplomatic initiatives in the region; it is the main sponsor of the Israeli-Palestinian (and other

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<sup>64</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, 19 June 1967.

<sup>65</sup> *Ha'aretz*, 30 September 1951

Israeli-Arab) negotiations known as the Oslo peace process. Yet Washington's political and economic promises to the Palestinians remain largely unfulfilled; Israel has realized Oslo's major gains by normalizing relations with Turkey and most Arab countries and gaining an end to the Arab boycott. The U.S. remains actively engaged in attempting to keep the often-faltering Palestinian process alive.

By limiting its political efforts in this strategically important and volatile region to narrowly defined quest for stability, the U.S. has largely abandoned crucial issues of fundamental justice. The current neglect of important issues, such as illegal occupation of territory by force and the need to prevent human rights and national rights abuse committed by allies as well as opponents, sets the stage for continued instability and long-term reduction of U.S. influence in the region.<sup>67</sup>

When in 1996 the U.S. began providing Israel with new, advanced planes and missiles, describing the new U.S. strategy in the Middle East, James Feron wrote in the *New York Times* (11 June 1966), that "the United States has come to the conclusion that it must rely on a local power, the deterrence of a friendly power, as a first line to cover off America's direct involvement. Israel was the best who fits the definition."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Eugene Rostow, April 1971. *The Middle Eastern Crisis in the Perspective of World Affairs, International Affairs*.

<sup>67</sup> Philis, Bennis. Retrieved on September 2003, from *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East*. Access: [www.history.pomona.edu](http://www.history.pomona.edu)

<sup>68</sup> Claudia Wright, *New Statesman*, August 20, 1982, cited in Chomsky.

Therefore, the possibility of Israel reaping the economic and military benefits of becoming the U.S. watchdog in the region seemed like a win-win solution for both countries. After all, the enemies of the U.S. oil interests were also the enemies of the Israeli government. Israel would punish their acts against both American and Israeli interests, and Israel knew the U.S. government would show its appreciation. And in fact the U.S. acknowledged Israel as the regional “policeman” for U.S. regional interests.

Obviously like all countries, the United States, seek to make a foreign policy in accord with its interests. If the United States saved Kuwait from occupation by a radical secularist regime in Iraq in 1991 it is because of oil.

The close relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been one of the most salient features in U.S. foreign policy for nearly three decades.<sup>69</sup> The defense of Israel was rarely cited as justification for American interventionist policies in the Middle East in the past, but this clearly crucial motive is necessarily becoming obvious. Roosevelt reportedly had promised in writing that America would take no action in Palestine contrary to Arab interests. But President Truman, citing the influence of the Jewish community in America, swept any such assurances aside and crashed into the 1947 Palestine Partition Resolution through the UN General Assembly.

Over the following half-century American support for Israel has constantly gained momentum; the pose of American neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict has

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<sup>69</sup> Rubin, Barry. December 2001. The truth about U.S. Foreign Policy. *MERLA Journal*. Retrieved on 20, 6, 2003 Access: [www.gloria.idc.ac.il](http://www.gloria.idc.ac.il)

disappeared. The pattern of American-Israeli military alliance was successively formalized, in 1970 by a military exchange agreement, in 1981 by an agreement on strategic cooperation against any threat to Middle East peace and security from the Soviet Union or its allies, and in 1983 by Reagan's identification of strategic cooperation with Israel as a national priority.

Israel is the leading recipient of American financial aid worldwide. In five of the six Arab-Israeli wars, Israel has received crucial American political, financial, and logistical support. The Camp David Agreement of 1978 was a diplomatic success for Egypt (recovery of Sinai) and a strategic triumph for Israel, which won a free hand in the occupied territories. In the inevitable Palestinian uprisings of 1987-93 and 2000 to the present, the United States has generally favored the Israeli side of the argument. In the American political universe, Israeli security is so crucial that it uniformly receives the personal attention of the Presidents. At the UN, the United States has often voted with Israel against the vast majority of the members.

In the 1990s, terrorism, a phenomenon seen frequently in the Middle East since the 1940s, came at the United States from an unexpected quarter. A Sunni Islamist fundamentalist organization that fought beside the Afghan Mujahideen and directed by Saudi fanatic Usamah bin Ladin. Al Qa'idah, held responsible for costly attacks on American installations in Saudi Arabia's military quarters, embassies in Africa, the USS Cole in Aden, and in the United States. But its operations were

politically sustainable until the devastating Twin Towers demolition and the assault on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.<sup>70</sup>

An increasingly strong majority of Americans believes that U.S. Mideast policy played a significant role in prompting the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. In May 2002, a CBS News poll found that 73% said that when thinking about the terrorist attacks, 23% placed “a lot of the blame” or 50% “some of the blame” on “United States policies in the Middle East over the years.” Not surprisingly, therefore, the public feels it is particularly important to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem in order to win the war against terrorism.

The justification that Israel is a militarily strategic and necessary asset for the United States has gained even more weight and has been used more frequently since September 11. In fighting “global terror”, the U.S. needs global settlements, and in the Middle East, Israel is the major settlement to be established, in terms of military bases.

Bill and Springborg give evidence to support the claim that Anti-Americanism is a recent phenomenon fueled by American foreign policy. They believe that an appropriate and effective response to anti-Americanism among the Arabs is to alter U.S. policy in such a way that it reflects recognition of the equality and the humanity of both Israelis and Palestinians. In their minds if U.S. policy towards Israel /Palestine

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<sup>70</sup> Jones, Curtis. 2001. The American Burden of Hegemony in the Middle East. *American Diplomacy*. Retrieved on May 2003. Access: [www.unc.edu](http://www.unc.edu)

was partly to blame for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, changing policy is a logical action to take to prevent further manifestation of such anti-Americanism.<sup>71</sup>

Since WWII, Israel was viewed by U.S. administrations as an important military strategic base in the Middle East from which America could fight Soviet Communism. Although the Communist threat no longer exists the Islamic militant groups and the countries that harbor them filled that void. Thus, the justification for U.S. support to Israel still applies today.

### Conclusion

Despite the multitude of issues and diversity of tactics used by the United States in the Middle East, the basic definition of U.S. interests remained fairly constant. American policies were directed at limiting the spread of hostile forces in the region whether Soviet or local nationalist, leftist, or Islamist radicals. It defended allies, both Israel and relatively moderate Arab states, and sought to ensure that as much Middle East oil resources as possible remained in friendly hands. American policymakers sought to resolve regional disputes, notably the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to avoid confrontation wherever possible. But when American leaders concluded that force was necessary, they saw the region as a place of high enough priority to justify using it.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Moises, Naim. 2002. Anti Americanism: A Guide to Hating Uncle Sam. *Foreign Policy*. Issue January/ February 2002. p. 103-104.

<sup>72</sup> Rubin, Barry. An introduction to U.S. Middle East Policy. *MERIA Journal*. January 2003. Retrieved February 2003. Access: [www.gloria.idc.ac.il](http://www.gloria.idc.ac.il)

But this support to Israel and the policies adopted in the Middle East elevated the hatred of many Islamist fanatic organizations. As Saudi Prince Al- Waleed Bin Talal, pronounced during his visit to ground zero, he stated that “The government of the United States should re-examine its policies in the Middle East and adopt a more balanced attitude towards the Palestinian cause.” He said: “The Palestinians are being slaughtered at the hands of Israeli while the world turns the other cheek”.

In his analytical article Frederic Peters asserts that there are no Arab-Americans or Muslim-Americans in top positions of the administration to counterbalance the influence of pro-Israel officials. He says that this is a problem in the US political system. Elected officials in the executive and legislative branches of the government appoint more pro-Israel experts to senior positions than any other interest groups. This is a problem that indicates the lack of balance in the US government. That is why the US foreign policy in the Middle East is biased towards Israel, and that is why the whole world describes the US government as following double standard policies.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Peters, Frederic. 8/19/02. Whose interests are being served by U.S. attacks on Iraq? Retrieved on 9/8/03 from Al Jazeera. Access: [www.aljazeera.info/editorials](http://www.aljazeera.info/editorials)

## CHAPTER IV

### U.S. Geostrategic Interests in the Middle East

Another major American interest is the strategic location of the Middle East as the link between Europe and Asia. The security of the Middle East is vital in order to preserve the strategic bases both for commercial and military purposes. These bases were used to facilitate commercial trading and the passage of military forces from one area to the other.

The US is deeply involved in the Middle East. Discussions of U.S. strategic interest in the Middle East tend to focus on generalizations about broad strategic interests, oil, trade, friendship, and peace negotiations. In fact, the US has taken a relatively consistent approach to its strategic interests in the ME for more than a quarter of a century, although it has often changed its tactics and emphasis.<sup>74</sup>

As the distinguished U.S. naval strategist, Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, originated the term Middle East in 1902. He used the term to designate a strategic concept for the land bridge connecting the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe.

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<sup>74</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. 1996. U.S. Strategic Interest in the Middle East and the Process of Change. *Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies*. p.3



Geography and an essential natural resource, namely petroleum, constitute the strategic importance of the Middle East. The struggle for key geostrategic elements of the Middle East is recorded in history. This was also the situation during the cold war between the United States and Russia. The focus of the United States strategic interests in that area stems from these basic factors, oil and the critically important waterways of the region. Aside from strategic considerations, the United States has a huge economic investment in the Middle East petroleum industry.

The Middle East, spanning and connecting the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe has functioned as a tricontinental center for thousands of years. The physical location of the region explains why so many world trade routes, such as the Suez Canal route, pass through the Middle East. Also the central location and the region's vast oil reserves help explain the importance of this area.

The factors behind the U.S. policy towards this region have always been crucial for its interests. Being present in the region was necessary, to ensure its security in terms of access to oil and in terms of containing states representing threats to the U.S. such as Iraq and Iran. Noting the importance of oil, it is no wonder that nations fight bitterly to assure for themselves an adequate oil supply.

## **i- Bases**

The strategic interest of the U.S. is very real, and these interests ensure that the U.S. will remain deeply involved in Middle Eastern affairs, play a role in conflict negotiations and arms control efforts, and maintain strong military forces in the region.

Together, five Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, have oil reserves totaling more than 650 billion barrels. Controlling these states means controlling the world's supply of oil. In 1975, at the end of the energy crisis, the US had limited military connections in those states. Later, Washington forged close military ties with several of them. Following the 1991 Gulf War, and the 2001/2002 war in Afghanistan, those ties have been dramatically strengthened. Today, the US maintains a series of military bases that almost encircle the Arabian Gulf, and we can notice that those bases are very close to the oil fields, (see figure 1 – 4).

US military presence in the Gulf is significantly increasing with time. In 1996 the U.S. had over 120,000 men and women deployed in the Gulf countries and another 35,000 were installed prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The opportunity to achieve regional military dominance turned up when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The allied counterstrike against Iraq required an enormous military buildup in the region. The lasting result was a large and permanent U.S. military presence in the Gulf region.

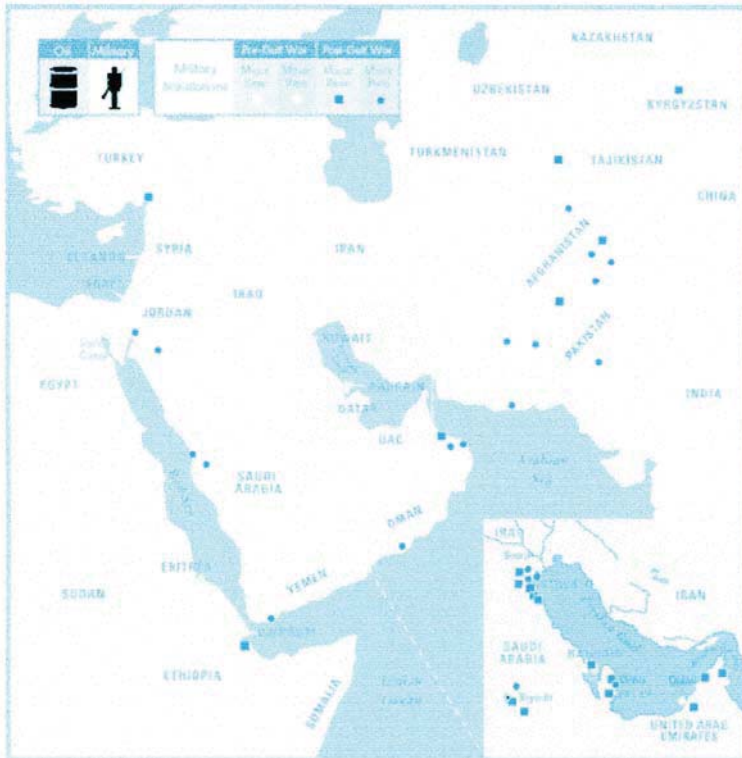


Fig 1 – 4. U.S. Military Installations in the Middle East. Access: [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)

**ii- Access to markets and open trade**

The U.S. exports over \$130 billion worth of merchandise to the region, and has over \$8 billion worth of investments in local industries. US oil imports increased from 7.3 million barrels in 1990 to 10.7 million barrels a day in 2000 and will be 12.3 million barrels in 2010. Noting the fact that the world oil consumption increased from

67.4 million barrels a day in the 1990s to 78.6 MB/D in 2000, and will reach 88.8 MB/D in 2010, it is very crucial for the U.S. to be present in the area militarily. So oil is a global commodity that literally fuels the global economy, and virtually all of the growth in oil supplies through the year 2010 will come from the Middle East and the Gulf.<sup>75</sup>

In 1998 about 7.3% of the U.S. GNP was directly dependent on exports and 9.5% on imports, and the real level of U.S. dependence on the global economy was much higher. However, U.S. trade with the Middle East makes up only a limited portion of this trade; still this region represents an important portion for the U.S. trade.<sup>76</sup>

U.S.-regional trade is growing with time. The balance, however, is uneven: U.S. exports to the Middle East exceed imports. The U.S. trade balance with the region in 1996 was a positive \$1.8 billion; in 1997 it was \$835 million; and in the first half of 1998 it was \$1.9 billion.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Cordesman, Anthony. 1996. U.S. Strategic Interest in the Middle East and the Process of Regional Change. *Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies*. p.5

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* p.8

### iii- Access to waterways

To protect its vital national interest the U.S. insists on the freedom of the seas, and the need to keep sea lanes open for the movement of crude oil. There are more geostrategic choke points affecting world security in the region than anywhere else on earth. A blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles, the Strait of Bab-al-mandab, or the Strait of Tiran would trigger an international crisis. Therefore the U.S. presence is necessary in order to ensure the openness of international sea lanes.

The absence of continental bases would place a premium on sea-going striking forces, on assault capabilities and on capacity to deploy forces rapidly from one area to the other without having to ask permission. For this reason the waterways were of major importance to the U.S.<sup>78</sup>

Another reason is that oil transported by sea generally follows a fixed set of maritime routes. Along the way, tankers encounter several geographic “chokepoints”, or narrow channels, such as the Strait of Hormuz leading out of the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Malacca linking the Indian Ocean, and oil coming from the Middle East, with the Pacific Ocean, and major consuming markets in Asia. Other important maritime “chokepoints” include the Panama Canal connecting the Pacific and

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<sup>77</sup> MacKinnon, Colin. Retrieved December 10 2003 from *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. Trade and Finance*. Access: [www.washington-report.org](http://www.washington-report.org)

<sup>78</sup> The geopolitics of Middle Eastern Water. 2002. Retrieved July 2002 from *Middle East Water*. Access: <http://www-geology.ucdavis.edu>

Atlantic Oceans, the Suez Canal connecting the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea, and the Bab el-Mandab passage from the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea.

“Chokepoints” are critically important to world oil trade because so much oil passes through them, yet they are narrow and theoretically could be blocked. In addition, “chokepoints” are susceptible to pirate attacks and shipping accidents in their narrow channels. Noting that these major chokepoints are located in the Middle East the U.S. is very cautious to control and making sure the stability of those waterways. Over 35 million barrels per day pass through the relatively narrow shipping lanes and pipelines, of which 12 million barrels through the strait of Hormuz. In 2002, the vast majority (around 88%) of oil exported from the Arabian Gulf transited by tanker through the Strait of Hormuz (see figure 2 – 4).

These routes are known as chokepoints due to their potential for closure. Disruption of oil flows through any of these export routes could have a significant impact on world oil prices, and therefore a direct impact on the U.S. Thus, it is to the interest of the U.S. to keep these points safe and under control.

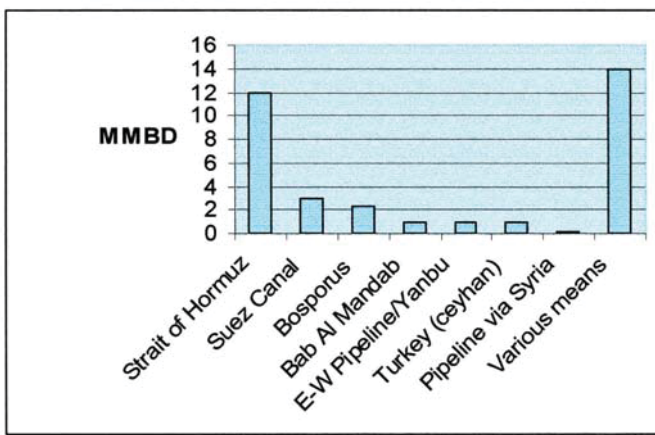


Figure 2 – 4. Arabian Gulf Oil Exports by Route – 2002. Source: National Energy Information Center 2002.

#### iv- Arms Sales

The Middle East remains the most militarized region in the world by virtually every measure. The economic and strategic value of arms exports to the Middle East is an important factor for the U.S. Military spending increased 1600 percent in the Middle East since the mid- 1960s.<sup>79</sup> The Middle East is the destination of the majority of American arms exports, creating enormous profits for weapons manufacturers and contributing greatly to the militarization of this already over-militarized region. The U.S. justifies its \$3 billion in annual military aid to Israel that it is for protecting that

<sup>79</sup> Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman from U.S. State Department, Bureau of Arms Control World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers. Access: [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org)

country from its Arab neighbors.<sup>80</sup> In the 1980s three quarter of all Third World arms agreements involved the Middle East. During that decade the region spent \$600 billion on the military. Saudi Arabia and Iraq alone accounted for 30 percent of the world's arms purchases.<sup>81</sup> The Middle Eastern countries spent more than 11 percent of their GNP on arms – compared with the 2.3 percent spent in Latin America and the 6.3 percent in Asian developing countries. Arms sales are also a means of supporting military industries faced with the declining demand in Western countries.

Supposedly committed to peace in the Middle East, the US is in fact the chief arms supplier to rival countries in this unstable region. An alarming report recently published, indicates that half of all US foreign aid in 1997 was military in nature. Egypt and Israel, the two largest recipients of US aid, are also America's best arms customers, having received 15 percent of all US arms shipments in 1997. Saudi Arabia, a leading arms buyer, has become a major US military base in recent years, angering many throughout the region and beyond, including Islamists armed by the US during the Cold War.<sup>82</sup>

The importance of the Middle East in terms of arms transfer, represents an economic and strategic value in terms of arms exports and an important aspect of the U.S. economy.

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<sup>80</sup> Zunes, Stephen. September 2001. 10 things to know about U.S. policy in the Middle East. Retrieved on August 17, 2003 from *Independent Media Institute*. Access: [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Bill, James and Springborg, Robert. 1994. *Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. p.233.

<sup>82</sup> Critical Assessments: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East. *Middle East Report*. Fall 1998. p.53



**v- Hegemony and exclusion of rival powers**

After the Second World War, with former Imperial Europe weakened, countries around the world had a chance to break for their freedom away from colonialism. This struggle for freedom and the Cold War had a geopolitical impact on the Middle East. Control of resources and access to oil became paramount, to the extent that dictators and human rights abusers were supported. Within this backdrop, we see a complex reason for the rise of terrorism and extremism. Involuntarily the United States has often supported policies that have helped produce such movements, including giving military, diplomatic and economic aid to augment decades of Israeli attacks and occupation policies, which have torn apart Palestinian. The U.S.-led the overthrow of the constitutional government in Iran in 1953 and subsequent support for the Shah's brutal dictatorship succeeded in crushing that country's democratic opposition, resulting in a 1979 revolution led by hard-line Islamic clerics. The United States actually backed extremist Islamic groups in Afghanistan when they were challenging the Soviet Union in the 1980s, including Osama bin Laden and many of his followers. Responding to terrorist threats through large-scale military action has been counter-productive.<sup>83</sup>

If we take the Iraq crisis for example, when Madeline Albright, US Secretary of State, was asked on US television if she thought that the death of half a million Iraqi children from sanctions in Iraq was a price worth paying, Albright replied: "This

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<sup>83</sup> Zunes, Stephen. 2001. 10 Things to Know about the U.S. foreign policy. Retrieved December 5 2003 from *Alternet*. Access: [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)

is a very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it.”<sup>84</sup> Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator whom the West supported until he overstepped his bounds and Kuwait's, has been unaffected by the UN sanctions that have been responsible for over one million deaths since the Gulf War ended.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is perhaps one of the most sensitive issues in the Middle East. From the religious backdrops (the region being centers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam) to the regional ally for the US that Israel is, the Palestinian people have been denied a right to their land. Recent events have destroyed the "peace" processes and extremist sentiments on both sides are on the rise again. And with reference to the Islamic threat, often when Islam is mentioned, negative impressions of fundamentalists, intolerance and terrorism prop up. Islamist movements and organizations are automatically linked with terrorism and are blamed for the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. Islam is stereotyped as a threat to democracy without distinguishing it from terrorism or corrupt leaders who use the ideals of Islam to their own ends.

The United States is following the policy of excluding the powers that represent a threat to its interests. Hegemony under the framework of fighting terrorism is being adopted by the United States. And this policy is leading to a complex reason for the rise of terrorism and extremism. Many believe that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and particularly towards Israel/Palestine was partly

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<sup>84</sup> Effects of Iraq Sanctions Retrieved on December 5, 2003 from TPF Fact Sheets Access: [www.home.swbell.net](http://www.home.swbell.net)

the blame for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, changing policy is a logical action to take to prevent further manifestation of such Anti- Americanism, others disagree with the idea that changing policy would repress Arab anti-Americanism. Thus, any challenge to U.S. hegemony has to be prevented or at least contained.

### Conclusion

Like all countries, the United States, seek to make foreign policy in accord with its interests. American interests therefore has been centralized around these basic issues:

1. To preserve hegemony over the region whose strategic importance to the defense of the West is of prime importance. The presence in the area to contain rival powers.
2. To ensure affordable access to Middle East oil through military bases in the Middle East, including longstanding military bases, a strong naval presence in the Eastern Mediteranean and Arabian Sea, as well as a large numbers of troops in the Arabian Peninsula.
3. To ensure the security of the state of Israel.
4. To ensure freedom of commerce, especially, available oil at a price not detrimental to the global economy.
5. To ensure the freedom of the seas in order to ensue safe transportation of oil, primarily, in addition to other commodities.

The strategic importance of the vast petroleum reserves in the Middle East, along with its vital sea lanes, require the United States to consider this region carefully in formulating its foreign policy decisions. These considerations must be coupled with an awareness of the continuous tendency for violence and fierce hatred of Western culture over generalization among the people living in the Middle East

On several occasions in the last thirty years the Middle East has exported trouble to the West: the oil shock and Palestinian terrorism in the 1970s, the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s, and lately the 11 September attacks.

Most people in the West and the Middle East are now educated and aware that nations go to war over strategic economic and political interests. Yet the media are avoiding any discussion of this issue in the current coverage of U.S. intention to attack Iraq. At the same time, CNN freely admits that few Americans know exactly why the US administration is so bent on going to war.

In an analysis made by Frederic Peters to Al-Jazeera, he states that “it would show that even if Mahatma Gandhi were leader of Iraq, America would still be threatening war, because this really isn't about Iraqi leadership or lack of democracy but it's about the balance of power in the Middle East.”<sup>85</sup> The administration has been avoiding any extended discussion in the media of exactly why it wants war because of the fear that the centrality of Israel's strategic interests would become too glaringly apparent. And with that would come an awareness in America at large of

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<sup>85</sup> Peters, Frederic. 8/19/2002. Whose interests are being served by a US attack on Iraq? Retrieved on 9/8/2003, from *Al-Jazeera*. Access: [www.aljazeera.info/editorials](http://www.aljazeera.info/editorials)

the extent to which U.S. policy has become connected to Israeli interests. Israel is perceived also to be a major beneficiary of any US attack on Iraq. In addition, such an attack will distract the world away from the war crimes, massacres, and atrocities the Israelis have committed against the Palestinian people. A US attack on Iraq that will also destroy the last Arab government that has not surrendered to the hegemonic Israeli power in the Middle East.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has explored the relationship between the factors shaping U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East following WWII, we can observe that U.S. foreign policy interests revolved around three main factors: Israel, oil, and the geostrategic importance of the region. For Washington, the aim was to preserve U.S. supremacy in the Middle East.

It is obvious that the U.S. as any other state shapes its foreign policy according to its vital interests. Those interests namely oil, Israel, and strategic importance of the region, as we assessed in the course of this research seem to be of major importance to the U.S. Therefore they are perceived to be the major factors behind the shaping of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Some scholars tried to rank them, such as Lenczowski, who states that the two persistent themes in American policy towards the Middle East, namely Israel and oil, competed with each other for priority throughout the eight presidencies.<sup>86</sup> During the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations they seemed to be balanced. Later, Israel appeared to gain greater weight.

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<sup>86</sup> Lenczowski, Georges. 1990. *American Presidents and the Middle East*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. p. 282

In this respect Johnson's presidency seemed to constitute a division. American assistance to Israel grew by leaps and bounds during the Johnson and Nixon eras, and remained at a high level during the Carter and Reagan terms.

Oil has been perceived by many as the principal reason for America's interest in the Middle East. Access to oil has been the successive administrations' main concern. It is for this reason that Washington favored political stability, generally of a conservative nature, in the producing states. The concern of the three persistent themes of American policy was the conviction that the Soviet threat should be contained more than anything else, survival of Israel and other independent states in the region and accessibility to oil supplies. A number of presidents have formulated basic policies known as doctrines, the object of these doctrines referred directly or indirectly to the Middle East.<sup>87</sup>

The fact that across the world, the demand for oil is growing. By 2015, China alone may have to import over 5 million barrels per day. Much of that oil will come from the Arabian Gulf, a region graced with unrivaled oil reserves — but overwhelmed with unresolved interstate conflicts, weapons proliferation, and worsening domestic political conditions. Clearly, the stability of the Arabian Gulf will remain an important focus of Western strategy for many years to come. As Operation Desert Storm demonstrated, any threat to the long-term supply of oil from

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<sup>87</sup> Lenczowski, Georges. 1990. *American Presidents and the Middle East*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. p. 53

the Gulf is likely to trigger a major intervention by the U.S. and other outside powers.<sup>88</sup>

There are many categories of threats that could disrupt Arabian Gulf oil supplies: the overt use of force by regional hegemony armed with weapons of mass destruction, domestic instability, and terrorism within the Gulf states themselves. The U.S. is looking continuously to contain these threats.

Moreover, in order to secure oil the U.S. has to be present, with strong military bases in the region, in order to face the threats challenging U.S. interests. For this reason the U.S. has always strengthened Israel one of its faithful allies in the region.

After discussing all these points we can come up with a conclusion that if there were no oil in the Middle East on which the U.S. heavily relies maybe the U.S. wouldn't continue its supportive relationship with Israel and would cease to care about this region as a whole. But since it is not the case the U.S. will continue to spend huge amounts in the region to protect these resources and strengthen Israel to play the role of the policemen in the area.

Some analysts say that "If the chief natural resource of the Middle East were bananas, or broccolis, the region would not have attracted the attention of U.S. policymakers as it has for decades."<sup>89</sup> During and after World War II, the region became a primary object of U.S. foreign policy. It was then that policymakers

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<sup>88</sup> Kemp, Geoffrey. April 2000. Retrieved December 10, 2003 from *Foreign Policy Research Institute*. Access: [www.fpri.org](http://www.fpri.org)

<sup>89</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945, vol.8. p. 43.



realized that the Middle East was "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history."<sup>90</sup>

At this point, if we want to give some recommendations toward a new U.S.

Policy in the Middle East it would be as follows:

Noting that currently the major problems facing the U.S. policy with regards to oil are

- Controlling oil access is a key issue of U.S. Middle East policy.
- U.S. reliance on imported oil is very high, especially Middle Eastern oil.
- Exclusion of rival powers, along with a broader military engagement policy, has been a key issue to U.S. strategy in assuring the flow of oil.

A change of these key problems can be as follows:

- In order for the U.S. to save huge amount of expenses, it can protect the Gulf oil by other means rather than military means. The U.S. should consider negotiation with states representing a threat.
- The U.S. should search for sources as alternatives to oil dependency.
- In order not to be dependent on Middle Eastern oil the U.S. should diversify its supply by developing new international sources and by increasing domestic production, for example from the Caspian Sea and Russia.

As Winston Churchill once noted that the United States should not be dependent on anyone:

"On no one quality, on no one process, on no one country, on no one route, and on no one field must we be dependent. Safety and certainty in oil lie in variety and variety alone."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945, vol.8. p. 45.

As for the U.S. - Israel relationship, some recommendations toward a new foreign policy could be as follows:

- Rather than spending billions of dollars preparing Israel for conflict, the U.S. should focus on addressing the causes of conflict.
- To restore confidence in negotiated peace, Washington must emphasize regional security and reject both Israel's illegal land occupations and the economic interests of the U.S. arms industry. The U.S. government is in fact being hated in most countries, even in Europe, because it is providing unconditional support of Israeli violations of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the precepts of all major religious faiths.
- America should re-examine its policies carefully, because terrorism almost always arises from deeply-felt grievances. If they can be eliminated or eased, terrorist passions are certain to subside.
- The US. should intensify its central role in advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process. Resolution of that conflict will help diffuse anti-Western sentiment among Muslims and undercut the influence and spoiler potential of the Islamist extremist groups throughout the region.

Traditionally, the US has opposed almost all UN Security Council resolutions that are critical of Israel. Israel is the premier US ally in the Middle East region. U.S. policies and practices in the Middle East have set the stage for instability, injustice,

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<sup>91</sup> Burns, Conrad. *Beyond the Middle East: In Search of Energy Security*. *The Heritage Foundation*. March 2003. p. 34

and violence, thus turning a blind eye to rising tensions in the region. For these reasons the U.S. should change its policies in the Middle East in order to stop the rise of terrorism in the world.

This study explored the motives behind U.S. intervention in the Middle East and the policies adopted by the U.S. in this region after WWII. The analysis of U.S. interests conducted in this research, has determined to what extent these factors affect the formulation of the U.S. foreign policy. The observations came to the conclusion that the factors assessed in this research and which are of major interest to the U.S. are useful variables in explaining this policy.

As many analysts defined during the second half of the twentieth century, U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East centered on protecting the oil flow, supporting Israel and the region's pro-Western governments and maintaining political stability, by expanding its military bases and interventions in the Middle East.

First, oil which is the most tangible and obvious remains a source that the U.S. is heavily dependent on. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter linked American security, "the vital interests of the United States", to the Arabian Gulf and its oil, and threatened military intervention.

The Iraq war for example, say analysts, is about power and oil. It is about control of the Gulf States, to give the U.S. more economic power over China and Russia throughout the control of oil.

From the middle of twentieth century Washington's foreign policy priority in the Middle East was to establish U.S. control over what the State Department

described as “a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the great material prizes in world history,”<sup>92</sup> namely the region's vast reserves of crude oil. Middle Eastern oil was regarded in Washington as “probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment,”<sup>93</sup> in what President Eisenhower described as the most “strategically important area in the world.”

The second variable, Israel, is assumingg the role of the policeman in the Middle East to secure U.S. interests and a ground for U.S. military presence in the area. For that reason Israel is the faithful ally of the U.S and the U.S. itself is committed to Israel. As George Kennan has suggested that the central goal of American foreign policy is to preserve America's disproportionate consumption of world resources. Oil would be the prime example.<sup>94</sup> With five percent of the world's population, America consumes a fourth of the world's oil production. The Pentagon has traditionally based its defense planning on the assumption of special access to Saudi oil. Through that control, Washington would enhance its drive to world leadership.

The U.S has always been driven by a desire to keep the vast oil reserves in hands friendly to the United States, and a wish to keep out potential rivals, such as the Soviet threat. The United States has compiled a record of conflicts in the Middle East. The most recent part of that record, which includes U.S. alliance with Iraq, to counter

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<sup>92</sup> Jones, Curtis. 2001. *The American Burden of Hegemony in the Middle East*. Retrieved on May 2003, from *American Diplomacy* Access: [www.unc.edu](http://www.unc.edu)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

Iran and then with Iran and Syria, to counter Iraq, illustrates a theme that has been played in Washington, and to justify its support to Israel, and the various interventions in the region.

As mentioned previously, if we are to evaluate the three variables assessed in this research, we can conclude that oil is of major importance and a vital variable for the U.S. Oil is, and will stay, a major factor as long as the U.S. market makes up a quarter of the world's demand for oil. In recent years, the US has imported over half of what it consumes. By 2020 oil imports will account for two-thirds of US consumption.

This factor will continue to shape U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East in the foreseeable future.

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