

**The Development of
the United States
Policy Towards The
Arabian Gulf: From
Truman to Clinton**

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ABSTRACT

This study has unfolded the development of the United States policy towards the Arabian Gulf since the end of the Second World War to the collapse of the Cold War order in 1990. It has uncovered the reality that in recent decades, the U.S. policy in the region was shaped by a combination of factors with various degrees of intensity and importance. U.S. policy in the Arabian Gulf depends on the bases of strategic considerations and access to energy. At a more specific level, however, U.S. policy in the region over the past several decades, from the Truman Administration to the Clinton Administration were to keep the region under control so that U.S. interests can be served. The development of the U.S. policy in the region throughout different stages was carried out to further secure its national interests in the region. In fact the U.S. has significantly achieved these goals.

Introduction:

The Arabian Gulf region's prominence in U.S. global strategy is a fairly recent phenomenon. In recent decades, U.S. awareness and concern regarding the Gulf region has significantly increased. It has been accepted that the establishment of the Soviet Union as a global power, the strategic location of the region, the creation of the state of Israel, and the oil resources of the region are factors contributed to the critical importance of the region, to the United States and its allies in Western Europe and Japan's interests. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Gulf region was seen as an increasingly important cockpit of super power rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, especially since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. The U.S. concern for the Gulf's satiability, the possibility of the Soviet threats, and the need for the regions oil, have led to several major statements on part of the U.S. presidents. Such statements or doctrines have been advanced with varying degrees of clarity and effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study:

However this study seeks to explore the development of the U.S. policy towards the Arabian Gulf from Truman Administration to Clinton Administration. This study will first explain the setting of the Arabian Gulf, and then it will analyze the development of the United States policy

towards the Arabian Gulf since Truman Administration until Clinton Administration.

Research Questions:

While it is an exploratory study, with regard to the purpose of the study, the following research questions will be addressed.

1- What was the background of the U.S policy in the region?

2- What was the motive of the U.S involvement in the region?

3- What were the primary factors that influenced and shaped the U.S policy towards the region?

-Which factor contributed the most to the U.S policy towards the region?

-Was it an economic factor?

-Was it the Gulf as a source of energy?

-Was it a strategic factor, so that the balance of power could be carried out during the cold war era?

-Was it aimed to keep the Soviet out of the region or was it aimed to prevent a regional power from threatening U.S interests there?

4- Was the U.S policy conducted in a manner to pursue certain foreign policy objectives?

Research Methodology

In order to give a theoretical framework this study will apply Rosenau's model of multiple factor analogy in determining the U.S foreign policy as opposed to a dramatic single factor analogy. Specifically Rosenau's model will be applied in explaining the development of the U.S policy towards the region. More specifically, this study will examine whether Rosenau's theory is applicable in understanding the U.S policy towards the Gulf region. For this purpose it is important to discuss this theory and its applicability in understanding the U.S policy towards the Gulf. In this regard I will discuss Rosenau's model in brief to provide an overview of his theory. Rosenau has argued, that no single dramatic factor is responsible for foreign policy decision-making. In fact, a set of multiple factors is capable of explaining foreign policy decisions. He has also argued, that five main sources do exist in determining U.S foreign policies. Which are as follows: External sources, Societal sources, Governmental sources, Role sources, and individual sources.

He has claimed that if we put these various pieces together, then we can analyze the multiple sources of U.S foreign policy. But he has also recognized the fact that at times, some factors are more important in understanding and analyzing foreign policy decisions, while at other times, other factors may be important. However the main

argument of his theory is that multiple factors as sources of American foreign policy have greater credibility than dramatic single factors.¹

The Setting of the Arabian Gulf:

Although it is somehow impossible to isolate the Gulf from the rest of the whole region, politically, economically, or strategically, the geo-political characteristics of the Gulf can be examined separately. The countries under discussion are of course, three relatively large ones (Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia) and five small ones (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman). Seven of the eight are Arab while the eighth (Iran), which is by far the largest, is non-Arab state.

Physically, the Gulf countries spread across an area of over 1.8 million square miles and include a population of over 60 million people, with exception of Iran.² The area is bordered by Afghanistan in the east, the former Soviet Union in the north, the red sea in the west, and the Arabian sea and Indian ocean in the south. The region is mostly desert, with oil as the main natural resource. Indeed, it is because of oil that this region has gained its international significance. Of the eight countries only Iran and Iraq are potentially self sufficient in agriculture. However, the entire region suffers from limited water resources. Aside from Iraq and Iran, which have relative

abundance of arable land and water resources and potentially self-supporting in agricultural products, the other states in the region possess mainly desert lands with an arid climate and a poor agricultural sector. These countries import practically all of their agricultural needs. Among the Arab countries Iraq is at a comparatively advanced stage of industrial development particularly in terms of experience, trained manpower, long term planning and availability of resources and manpower, while the other states are in the initial stages of industrialization. Another social factor of significance in the Arabian Gulf is, in fact, religion. Although all Gulf States adhere to Islamic faith and although all of them, other than Iran, are ruled by Sunni Muslims, their perception of the role of Islam in the affairs of the state varies significantly from state to state. Saudi Arabia and Iran are ranked as the top of the scale of adherence to Islam as a guide to government. Secularism in this context is only a matter of degree, and in no way conveys the meaning associated with the term in the western political system. While on this scale, Iraq appears to be more secular than its Gulf neighbors. Although all states in the region are ruled by authoritarian regimes, Iraq, however, differs from the others in the sources of its authoritarianism. The Iraqi socialist regime derives its authority to rule from the Bath party in the form of the

revolutionary command council headed by Saddam Hussein, who at the same time use to be the president of Iraq. The political culture of the Iraqi regime party is measured by the teachings of the Bath party. The other smaller states, while different in actual exercise of power, are solidly based on tribalism as expressed in family centered rule. Kuwait, the first of the Gulf Emirates, is ruled by Al-Sabah family in the authoritarian, but semi-open fashion, rules Kuwait, the first of the Arab Emirates. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) established it's own form of federal structure in the early 1970's. The six original Emirates (Abu-Dhabi, Dubai, Sharja, Umal-Qaywan, Ajman, and Fugaira) were joined in 1972 by Ra'sal Khayma. The federation is still ruled by Sheikh Zayed of Abu-dhabi, which is the richest and most popular among the Emirates.

The UAE operates under the provisional constitution through a federal machinery based on three key components: 1- the supreme council 2- the cabinet 3-the federal national council. The supreme council is composed of the rulers of the seven Emirates. The cabinet has been composed of technocrats. The federal national council is composed of 40 members, mostly from the smaller Emirates divided as follows: eight each from Abu-Dhabi and Dubai six each from Sharji and ra'sal-Khayma, four each from Umal Qaywan, Ajman

and Fujara. Extremes in wealth and poverty exist in every Arabian Gulf country. Wealth is largely retained in the hands of the ruling class and entrepreneurial elites, while the middle class barely emerging. An economic system of state capitalism permeates most of the countries of the region, with the ruling families, particularly in the oil countries, receiving the largest share.³

Development of the United States interests in the Arabian Gulf:

The evolution of the United States policy in the Gulf may be divided into two distinct stages: One started after World War II to the early 1970's and the second was from the mid 1970's to the present. In the pre-1970 period, Washington's Gulf policy was part of a general Middle East policy. The Gulf regions prominence in the United States global strategy is a fairly recent phenomenon. Unlike the major European power, the United States did not at any stage have a colonial presence in the region. Before the 1970's the United States treated the gulf as a British domain and relayed much on the British military and political presence to maintain the region "East of Suez" relatively stable and free of soviet influence.⁴ Much of the early United States involvement in the region was in trade and /or the activities of non-governmental

American missions in education and health.⁵ However, during the inter-war period, United States oil companies introduced the first major element of United States interest in the region by 1939 with half ownership of a concession in Kuwait and exclusive concession in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In fact the oil companies were instrumental in bringing the region to the notice of the United States. Still the Gulf was far from becoming a strategically important region for it because the world had not fully shifted to oil as a primary source of energy. Although, the Gulf was producing only about 8% of the total world oil output and the United States was almost self sufficient in meeting its oil requirements. The long-term strategic value of the regions oil resources was recognized for the first time during World War II. The war brought into focus the critical importance of petroleum and its by-product as foundation of the ability to fight an advanced war. The immediate post-war era marked the evolution of two other United States interests in the region: containment of soviet influence and the preservation of the conservative local regimes.⁶

The second stage of the United States involvement in the region became after the British decision to withdraw from the region.⁷ It was therefore natural that the British decision to end its presence "East of Suez" by the early 1970's would force the

United States to fill the power vacuum created by the British withdrawal in order to find alternative ways to protect its interests in the region. Since the United States has committed itself to the defense of the region, the actual work of protecting the Gulf was assumed by the Shah of Iran under the arrangement worked out with the United States, in which later became to be known as the twin Pillar Policy adopted by Nixon's administration to serve the American objective at that time, by understanding the responsibility for the defense of the Gulf, the United States was able to secure several interests that were important to the preservation of its own national interests and those of western allies.⁸ The Nixon Doctrine clearly reflected the United States interests in the region which they include Oil, market for the United States goods, and services, Petro-Dollars investment in the United States, and Arms Sale to the region.⁹

The United States Policy Towards The Arabian Gulf:

1- The Truman Administration

The Cold War era remarked the beginning of the United States involvement in the region within the general policy of the containment of the Soviet influence in the whole Middle East. In his speech of March 12, 1947 before the congress, President Truman had formally

announced the United States readiness to meet the challenge of Soviet expansionism, in which became to be known as The Truman Doctrine. However, because of the British presence in the Gulf, the United States direct involvement in the region were limited to the security guarantee provided to specific states in the region. In this regard, President Truman, in October 1950, provided the first presidential security guarantee to Saudi Arabia by stating, "the United States is interested in the preservation of the independence of Saudi Arabia."¹⁰ In fact the United States was less interested in the direct involvement in the region within its containment policy. It was in the British responsibility to protect the region from any soviet threats. President Truman has formally announced, "because of United States commitments in other areas it is in the United States interest that the United Kingdom have primary responsibility for Israel and the Arab States."¹¹ However, in subsequent years, the policy makers in the United States increasingly perused the United States military establishment to play a more prominent role in the security of the region.

2- The Eisenhower administration:

The Eisenhower administration became more involved in the region. The Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 rose as an effort not only to provide assistance programs for the region, but also to protect the region from any aggression.

presumably the Soviet. By the announcement of the doctrine in 1957, the Eisenhower administration called for authorizing the use of armed forces if it's necessary to protect the territorial integrity of the region. Therefore, Eisenhower promoted the establishment of a security agreement known as The Baghdad Pact of 1957 among Britain, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. After Iraq's withdrawal from Baghdad Pact in 1958, the United States continued its commitment for the security of the region with the other partners of the Pact nations by establishing a successor organization known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) as an effort to secure the region.¹²

The Kennedy Administration:

The Gulf region in the Kennedy administration as part of the Middle East region was viewed within the containment of the Soviet influence in general. President Kennedy has been a strong critic of the Eisenhower policy regarding the Soviet influence and the security of the region, when he came into office in 1961. The Kennedy administration sought to play a more active role in the region by creating the "United States Strike Command" to utilize the newly enlarged U.S. based army forces for operations in the third world. The strike command took the responsibilities for the Middle East. It seems that the Kennedy administration clearly recognized the growing

soviet influence in the region, and became more convinced that it was a responsibility of the United States to create a balance of power in the region by increasing support to Israel as a strategic ally to the United States. He indicated that "the balance of power" would be a guiding principal of American- Middle East policy, and the United States will increase the military assistance to Israel.¹³ Although, in addition to its readiness to meet the soviet challenge and its commitment to the security of the region, The Kennedy Administration relies on states such as Iran and Israel against a state or a combination of states in the region that might threaten the United States interests.

The Johnson Administration:

The Johnson's administration policy towards the Gulf region was part of the containment policy. In fact the United States policy during this period became more concerned with a growing influence of the soviet either directly or by any states in the region especially Egypt. The growing power of president Nasser of Egypt with the Russians support became an issue of concern for the Johnson's administration in the belief that Nasser's influence in the Middle East was a threat to the more friendly regions of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Accordingly, the Johnson's administration decided to continue to maintain the balance of power policy in the

region by providing more support to Israel with the believe that a strong as well as a secure Israel might be in the best interests to the United States and it's allies in the region.¹⁴

The Nixon Administration:

The importance of the Arabian Gulf as an area of strategic interests to the United States became clearer during the Nixon era. In fact the British decision to withdraw from the region in the early 1970's made the United States much aware that the power vacuum created by the British withdrawal might and in fact will be used by the Soviet Union or by a regional state in which the United States interests at the time, and the security of the region in general and Israel in particular will be in danger. However, the Nixon administration's prime considerations during the 1970's were to protect United States and western interests in the region directly and more by a regional power.

The awareness of the United States for the security and stability of the region were the driving force behind the Nixon administration policy. That is because, as the critics said, without the British presence, the Gulf might become an area of persistent unrest in which local conflicts between rival Arab states and subversive movements as well as regional tension between Arabs and Iranians and the growing Arab nationalism could erupt

and be exploited by the Soviet imperiling western interests in the Gulf mainly oil.¹⁵ Such risks certainly cannot be ignored. Historically the Gulf has usually been an area of division rather than of unity and stability, partly because it lacks any indigenous focus for its small and scattered Arab communities. Although the long-standing cultural and political disputes in the region comprise a formidable list, ranging from general sense of territorial rivalry between Iran on one side and the Arabs on the other, and between the Arabs themselves. Between Iraq and Iran there are conflicting claims to navigation rights in the Shatt Al-Arab waterway in the south, and the Kurds in the north. On the other hand, further conflict arises between the position of Iraq as the leading Shiite Muslim country in the Arab world and the position of Iran as the largest Shiite non-Arab Muslim country in the region. Between Iran, Iraq and Kuwait there was a long history of border disputes left over by the British.¹⁶

In fact, the United States attitude to the British decision to withdraw from the region were indicated by the policy makers' statements that measures were being taken to fill the vacuum created by the British withdrawal, in which local state or states like Iran and Saudi Arabia might be considered to take the security responsibility of the region.¹⁷ Since then, the United States policy has centered on supporting the two largest pro-western states

on either side of the Gulf, Iran and Saudi Arabia, in order that they might play key strategic and regional security roles.¹⁸ This policy came to be known as the twin-pillar policy adopted by the Nixon administration. With the adoption of this policy, the United States arm sales to Iran and Saudi Arabia dramatically increased as an effort to build up local powers, which would be expected to assume increasing responsibility for collective security with the increasing amount of arms, but without direct participation of United States forces.¹⁹ However, in the 1970's United States policy in the region was focused on its efforts to promote Iran as the prime regional power defending western interests in the Gulf. Actually, this policy has been affected by several factors, the most important among them being the shape of the United States global strategic posture in the wake of the Vietnam War.²⁰ Therefore, the United States turned to Iran during the Nixon Administration to play the role in the region as an alternative to the British. By arming Iran the United States security concern in the region will be served. Apart from this, Iran and Saudi Arabia became the twin-pillars of the United States policy announced in 1972 by the Nixon Administration, of placing reliance on two states in the region to provide for local and regional security and stability.²¹ In this regard, the United States military sales to Iran dramatically increased during the 1970's under of

what it has been known as "weapons for oil" policy used by the Nixon Administration to convince the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, those who were aware of the increasing amount of arm sales to Iran for one reason only that the balance of power in the region and the security of Israel. However, the United States officials still believes that Iran is and will remain an extremely important country to the United States because of its geographical location and oil. Iran, therefore, places great importance on its relationship with the United States, in which president Nixon in May 1972, and then his National Security Advisor Kissinger, agreed for the first time to sell Iran almost any conventional and maybe some of the most sophisticated equipment in the United States inventory in order to increase the ability of Iran to play the role in the Gulf.²² In a staff report to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations present that "Iran is the largest single purchaser of United States military equipment. Government-to-Government military sales to Iran increased over sevenfold from \$ 524 million in Fiscal Years (FY) 1972 to \$3.91 billion in FY 1974, slackening off a little to \$2.6 billion in FY 1975. The preliminary sales estimate for FY 1976 is \$1.3 billion. Sales in the 1972-1976 period totaled \$10.4 billion. The number of official and private American citizens in Iran, a large percentage of whom are involved in military

programs, has also increased from 16,000 in 1972 to 24,000 in 1976, and it could easily reach 50,000 to 60,000 by 1980."²³

The policy of reliance on Iran during the Shah regime until the Iranian revolution in 1979, combined with the Nixon Doctrine, was considered to be a major United States foreign policy success in the post-Vietnam era. The Shah was seen to be regionally strong and his policy was deemed to be both responsible and fully compatible with United States interests in the region. Therefore, his quest for military power was viewed to be worthy of American support.

The second partner of the Nixon twin-pillar policy was Saudi Arabia. With the adoption of this policy by the Nixon Administration, Saudi Arabia became the second largest state in the Gulf region, which would be expected to play a significant role for collective security with increasing United States arm sales. Accordingly, the United States military sales to Saudi Arabia worth over \$30 billion between 1971 and 1980 in which more than 60% of this military spending were representing the value of military use construction cities. Those cities have been built by the United States Army Corps of Engineers to be used later as military bases to serve the American objectives in the region.²⁴ Therefore, the Nixon Administration supported a plan to develop facilities to be

used by the United States as well as by the Saudi aircrafts or ships. No American flags flew at these facilities but military exercises were held for their use incase of a threat to United States interest in the region.²⁵ It is quite clear that the Nixon Administration policy toward the region represented the importance of the region to the United States. The Nixon policy toward the region was endorsed by the Ford and Carter administrations. However, the Nixon twin-pillar policy was in fact challenged by its own pillars. Saudi Arabia was the driving force behind the 1973 Arab oil embargo, followed the 1973 Arab-Israeli War against the west and the United States. The linkage between the Gulf oil and the Arab-Israeli Conflict changed the whole scenario of the United States policy in the Middle East in general and in the Gulf region in particular. This has lead the policy makers in the United States to be more concerned about the free flow of the region's oil in a reasonable price to the United States and its allies in the west. Protecting U.S interests in the region in all means necessary including military intervention were in fact the guiding principals of the United States policy since then.

The Ford Administration:

When Nixon stepped out of office as president of the United States in 1974 after the Water-Gate scandal, Gerald Ford became president. He endorsed the Nixon

Doctrine, but he also recognized that the linkage between the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Arabian Gulf oil, which is vital interest to the United States, must be fully considered by the policy makers in the United States. The connection between the Gulf security, as one of the United States objectives in the Middle East at large, and a just and lasting resolution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict came to be recognized both in the Gulf region and the United States. The Arab-Gulf States action lead by Saudi Arabia in 1973 was a stab in the back for the Nixon twin-pillar policy, and its basic goals, the free flow of the region oil. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in 1973 fully recognized that the United States had a unique ability to play a more affective role in the Middle East problem by increasing pressure on Israel to change its policy regarding the Arab's occupied territories. The action taken by the Gulf Arab States, despite the lack of their military power, became the principal financial support for the Arab States more directly involved in the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Accordingly, the Ford administration became more aware that the United States interests in the region will not be served by ignoring the fact that if the United States has to secure a settlement insuring "Israel's right to exist" which they believed a significant United States interest in the region, then it had to seek the cooperation of the, what so called Pro-Western Arab States.²⁶

The Carter Administration:

The United States continued its commitment to the security of Israel and the stability of the Gulf region and the gradually increasing linkage between the Arab-Israeli issues became quite clear during the Carter Administration. It has been directly stated by president Jimmy Carter in 1980 that his Camp David peace initiative between Egypt and Israel in 1978 was tied to the Arabian Gulf Stability. He said, "There is no way to separate these issues."²⁷

The increased importance of the region meant greater care and seriousness in devising policy options to advance United States interests in the region.

Therefore, the United States policy towards the Gulf under the Carter Administration may be divided into two distinctive phases from 1977 to 1978 period and from 1978 to 1980 period. During the first phase two United States policy innovations had direct relations with the Arabian Gulf. They were 1) A controlled arms policy 2) An idealistic human right campaign designed to push authoritarian regimes in a democratic direction.

1- Controlled Arms Policy:

Both during his 1976 presidential campaign and the early days of his administration, Jimmy Carter made clear his determination to alter the escalating arm sales

associated with the Nixon-Ford administration, though he endorsed their policy toward the region. Accordingly, in May 1977, Carter issued a presidential directive A-3, which set ~~guidelines~~ guidelines for United States arm sales.²⁸ Therefore, arms transfer would be regarded as an exceptional foreign policy implement. This arms transfer policy provided for restrictions on future arm transfers with exceptions such as: it can be used only where it can be clearly demonstrated that such transfer would contribute to the national security interests of the United States, and the United States would not be the first supplier to introduce into a region like the Gulf, "Newly developed advanced weapon system." Which would create significantly higher combat capability; here the intent was to discourage inter-regional arm competitions. Although the United States would not sell the newly developed weapons system until they had been operationally deployed with United States forces.²⁹

2- Human Rights Campaign:

The high priority initially assigned the Human Rights Campaign, reflected the tone of moral idealism, which typified much of Carter's foreign policy. During his administration, future requests from friendly countries for economic assistance or arms transfer would be weighed against their human rights records. However, the application of the human rights campaign to some

countries in the Gulf region where a vital United States interest occurred would be hard to be implemented. Iran, for example, during the Shah and the authoritarian character of his regime was well known. No serious attempt was made by the Carter administration to link Iran's alleged violation of human rights with a reduced scale of arm transfers to Iran. Instead President Carter himself was very much satisfied with Iran's claims of progress in human rights.³⁰

The second phase of the Carter's policy towards the Gulf was from 1978-1980, the new United States policy toward the region.

In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Carter administration took an immediate step to shape up its weakened position in the Gulf. At this point the United States was dropping its non-interventional stance of the past and was prepared to use its own military forces to protect its interests in the Gulf.³¹ Accordingly, the United States' readiness to direct intervention in the region was announced by Defense Secretary Brown stating that, "In the protection of those vital interests including the protection of the oil flow from the Middle east, we will take any action that is appropriate including the use of the military force."³² Not only exercising the United States military strength, but also encouraging military presence in the region if its necessary. Many

statements have been made by United States officials during the Carter administration period to get the United States army forces to protect American interests in the Gulf. Such statements have been fully encouraged by the president in which at the urging of his adviser Brezinski the pentagon began to lay the groundwork for the protection of an American Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) to meet future emergency situations in the region, although, after the fall of the Shah and the loss of United States interests in Iran, Carter administration gave special attention to reinvigorating its special relationship with Saudi Arabia. Saudi anxieties regarding United States policy had increased with the fall of the Shah of Iran, and the completion of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty supported by the Carter administration. In February 1979, Secretary Brown visited Saudi Arabia and promised a more active role in the region.

The United States Hostage Crisis and The Carter's Policy:

In response to the hostage crisis, President Carter, fearing that aggressive action against Iran could jeopardize the lives of the American hostages, initially adopted a policy of restraint. In a graduated series of non-military actions, Carter took the following steps:

- 1) Ordered a freeze of Iranian assets in the United States estimated at between eight and nine billion dollars.

- 2) Asked American companies to stop buying Iranian oil for the United States market, and exerted pressure on United States allies including Japan, to reduce their purchases from Iran.
- 3) Assigned two carrier task forces to the Arabian Sea.
- 4) Concealed over a half billion dollars in shipment of spare parts and terminated most of the training programs of Iranian personnel in the United States.³⁴

In addition, President Carter asked the United Nations to impose collective economic sanctions against Iran, which were vetoed by the Soviet Union. These, among other factors, led Carter to take a direct action, which he ordered the United States forces on April 28, 1980 to launch an ill-fated rescue mission to free the hostages. But the mission failed, and the United States prestige suffered another serious blow.

Carter's Policy Towards the Gulf and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan:

American proponents of the globalist school, pointing to earlier Soviet support for Marxist regimes in Angola and Ethiopia, argued that the invasion of Afghanistan was yet another installment in a grand Soviet design of imperial expansion. New Soviet base in Afghanistan would enable the Soviet to mount future challenges against neighboring Pakistan and Iran. Western

oil sources in the Gulf could now be more easily placed under siege.³⁵

The Carter administration clearly accepted this more negative interpretation of Soviet intent. The Soviet invasion was considered by the Carter administration the most ominous development since World War II. In fact, the strategic threat posed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been highly estimated by the United States. President Carter in his State of the Union address in January 1980 declared:

"Let our position be absolutely clear, any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the (Persian Gulf) region would be regarded as an assault on the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."³⁶

Carter's statement singled to the Soviet the willingness of the United States to use force in the Gulf to protect its vital interest. It sought to create the real expectation of United States military action if the Soviet attempted to siege the Gulf oil fields or cut off the west vital oil lifeline from the Gulf. Washington underscored the firmness of commitment by ordering an over flight of the Gulf by B-52 strategic bombers in January 1980 following Soviet troops movement near Iran.³⁷

It was within this context that the United States policy towards the Gulf during the Carter administration has been carried out. Many regional and international events were the motives behind the United States policy toward the Gulf region under the Carter's Administration.

The Reagan Administration:

As the 1970's closed with two major events, which oppose challenges to the United States policy in the Gulf as an area of vital interests to the United States, the soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the loss of Iran, the 1980's opened with another challenge in the Gulf region, the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran War. The United States found itself facing another threat to its interest in the region after the loss of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This new challenge comes with the fear of another oil shock and possible threat to the United States allies in the region by the spillover of the conflict. Yet, while the situation was very serious, the United States had little chance to directly influence the course of events. In fact, the Reagan administration's response to these events had two aspects, the first, related to the crisis management, presented short-term measures to deal with the current situation, and the second aspect was the adoption of a long-term military strategy to be the basic framework for United States policy in the region. This involved increasing demand for building a United States force protection capability to deal

with contingencies in the region. Accordingly, the Reagan Administration fully recognized the need to increase the ability and readiness of the (RDF) to deal with any future situation that might threaten the United States interests in the region. He adopted Carter's plans for a United States Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) for the Middle East, and in 1981, increased military assistance to Saudi Arabia by pushing an agreement through the congress to sell five Air Borne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia. According to Lester H. Brune, the Reagan Administration developed little-publicized plans to create facilities in Saudi Arabia and pre-position United States equipment "over the horizon" in order to react quickly to any Gulf crisis.³⁸

The Reagan Administration recognized that the United States and its western allies depend heavily on oil imported from the Gulf, and decided to support the continuing effort to build up military forces to be ready when it's needed in order to protect the United States interest in the region. As a result, the Reagan Administration publicly announced in June 1987 that the United States would re-flag Kuwaiti oil tanker shipping oil from the Gulf and provide them with United States naval and air force protection. This has been considered as an attempt made by the Reagan Administration to use

United States forces to protect its interests in the Gulf mainly oil.³⁹

The Nature of the Reagan Administration policy towards the Gulf during the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran War was influenced by the fact that at the time the United States had no diplomatic relations with neither Iraq nor Iran, which made cooperation with either sides almost impossible, first because of the American hostages in Iran, and the case of Iraq was also hostile. Actually, the case of being neutral in the conflict was not fully followed by the Reagan Administration. In fact, the United States policy objectives at the time were first, to insure the free flow of the regions oil, second, to seek a balance of power so that neither Iraq nor Iran achieved victory- a no winner war- third, to keep the Soviet out of the conflict, and finally, to insure the security of the more friendly regimes in the region.⁴⁰

However, a major shift in the Reagan's neutrality policy has been noticed during the Iraq-Iran War. The Reagan Administration increased its commitment to the security of Saudi Arabia and other states in the region such as Kuwait, and strengthening United States-Saudi military cooperation. The second shift in the Reagan's Neutrality policy was the beginning of the United States tilt towards Iraq, in an effort to keep the balance of power and to achieve the no-winner war equation intact.⁴¹

It's quite clear that the Reagan administration's main objective was in fact the continuation of the standard United States policy towards the region. It added new dimensions to the ways United States policies have been carried out, with its readiness to use force to protect United States interests, and its willingness to support, in all means necessary, states in the region whose aims are compatible with those of the United States.

The Bush Administration:

As mentioned before, the late 1970's events, the loss of Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the early 1980's events, the eight-year long war between Iraq and Iran, and the early 1990's event, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, all were major events that shocked the security and stability of the Gulf region, and in one way or another threaten the United States interest. However, the August 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait set in motion a crisis that would remain at the forefront of international agenda for several months. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait evoked a strong response from most of the world, especially the United States and its allies both in the west and in the Gulf region. In fact, the Bush Administration acted swiftly. President Bush responded to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait by building together an international coalition authorized by the United Nations Security Council to oppose Iraq while he, at the same time, prepared for war.

The fact is, Bush was going the extra miles for war. He even shows that he was working with the world leaders to convince Iraqis to withdraw from Kuwait. While he was still saying "Iraq's naked aggression could not stand, Saddam Hussein, said President Bush is an Adolph Hitler whose power would continue to expand if the United States did not act."⁴² President Bush and his advisors, defense secretary, and his joint chief of staff met on August 3, one day after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and decided to seek Saudi Arabia approval to deploy United States troops and heavy equipment in Saudi Arabia claiming that it was just to protect the Saudi from any further aggression by the Iraqis. He described the mission as "wholly defensive" giving the operation the title of Desert Shield. After having approved by King Fahad of Saudi Arabia to welcome Americans to defend the country, President Bush ordered the massive deployment of United States troops plus high-tech aircraft and other modern war machines in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf region, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and Turkey. Actually, Bush needs more time to guarantee that his troops and war machines would be capable and ready to move to an offensive stage in order to achieve his already sited aim of having the Iraqi forced out of Kuwait. Therefore, President Bush undoubtedly managed to get the time needed for his operation. Between August 2 and January

15, the president had achieved two necessary goals, one was to gain international support for his mission and the other was the time needed for a full-scale military operation against Iraq.⁴³

The Bush Administration policy towards the region was more aggressive and decisive than any other United States Administration. Once the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 678 had passed authorizing the use of military forces to enforce Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991, president Bush drew the line on the sand for the Iraqis and he acted swiftly by ordering the United States led forces to start a war against Iraq. The operation Desert Shield now became the operation Desert Storm.

However, the outcome of the war was an absolute victory of the United States-led forces, but the fact remains that the war represented a military victory of advanced countries over a developing one. On the other hand, an Iraqi strategy which imposed high battle field cost on coalition forces and led to a protracted campaign offered the Iraqis some prospects of a much more favorable case -fire as well as post-war reputation.

The victory of the United States-led coalition over Iraq in 1990-1991 Gulf War was less complete than it might otherwise have been. Saddam Hussein managed to retain power over Iraq despite what the war had brought

to his country. In fact, with Saddam still in power Bush's decision to end the war continued to be questioned. Even in defeat Saddam managed to create headaches to the United States and its allies in the region since the 1990-1991 war until the 2003 United States invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The Clinton Administration:

The analysts within the whole Middle East policy in fact, viewed the Clinton administration policy toward the region. The Clinton Administration remained committed to the United States policy in the Middle East in general, and the achievement of the United States stands in the Gulf region in particular. However, the Clinton foreign policy in several parts of the world was being sharply criticized by officials in the United States, the Middle East was preceded as an area of success for Clinton. Although, the American victory over Iraq, and the collapse of the Soviet Union provided more confident and relaxed mode to the Clinton Administration in the region. In fact, the Collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's ended fifty years of United States concerns for its vital interest in the region. Combined with gaining control over the region after the 1990-1991 Gulf War, the significance of the Gulf region to the Clinton Administration goes beyond the political and strategic location of the area to the world's political stability. The region as the world's

largest source of energy and rich market for investment became significantly important for the economic well-being of the industrial nations; therefore, economic interests are the most important factors which effected and directed the Clinton Administration Policy toward the region.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The Gulf region remains probably the most important region among all regions of the world for the United States. This reality is reflected in many statements made by U.S. officials since the end of the Second World War until today. For many reasons, historical, ideological, economical, and political, the U.S. has been influenced by the regional and international consequences of the events in the Gulf. In the recent years the nature of U.S.-Arabian Gulf relations has been critically influenced by events and crises in the region:

The power vacuum created by the British withdrawal from the region, the American hostage crisis in Iran in 1979, the Iran-Contra affairs, the Iraq-Iran War, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the 1990-1991 Gulf War and its aftermath, and finally the American invasion of Iraq.

U.S. involvement in the region has been far from smooth. However, the foreign policy of any state is based on real and changing national interests rather than unchangeable principles. The United States is no exception here, and therefore understanding its real policy in the region requires more than a single case study. The most important fact about U.S. policy in the Arabian Gulf is that it tends to pursue a number of economic, political, and strategic interests. The mix of these interests has

always effected and directed the U.S policy towards the region.

Once the U.S has dropped its no interventional stance of the past and prepared to use its own military forces to protect its interests in many parts of the world in general and in the Gulf in particular, the U.S policy towards the region has been determined and based on the following considerations:

- 1-The Gulf as a source of oil.
- 2-The Gulf as an extension of the Indian Ocean.
- 3-The Gulf as an extension of the traditional Middle East and Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the other hand the U.S primary national goal was to contain the former Soviet influence in the Gulf thereby ensuring the free flow of the region's oil, maintaining a pro-American balance of power in the region, preventing any threats by any regional power to the U.S interests, and to promote stability in the region so that U.S goals can be served.

Therefore, we can conclude that the development of U.S policy towards the Arabian Gulf during the past several decades to the present has been influenced by multiple factors rather than a single dramatic factor.

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