

Chapter 7

The United States' Interests in the Middle East During the Obama Administration: Jordan – A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to analyze the US's foreign policy priorities toward Jordan in the communications of Obama, through the period from 2009 to 2017. It answers the questions: what were the US's priorities in Jordan during the Obama administration? And how Jordan was described by Obama's communications. This work is a creative one, it uses qualitative and quantitative to investigate Obama's activities toward Jordan. In order to classify the US interests in Jordan, we use Byman and Molle's classification of the US's foreign policy interests in the Middle East: counterterrorism, security of Israel, democratization, nuclear proliferation, and oil. This chapter finds that Obama's foreign strategy and approach had been driven by the maxim of 'multilateral retrenchment', which designed to achieve the United States foreign commitments, reshape its standing among the world powers, and transfer burdens onto foreign partners. The United States of America under the Obama administration substantially depended on Jordan to solve many regional complex issues and crisis.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9566-3.ch007

INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has a long history in the Middle East, and its role has grown since the Cold War. The energy supply from the Middle East to US during the Cold War rendered it as the United States-Soviet Union chessboard (Byman & Moller, 2016). In the 1990s the United States continued its presence in the Middle East with its concern about Saddam Hussein and Iran regime ambition to play a role in the region. The efforts of Arab-Israel peace were unsuccessful, that has made the US intensify its presence in the region. After the shock of 11 September attacks, the US involvement in the Middle East has grown once again. In order to curtail terrorism in the Middle East, it deepened on cooperation with allies like Jordan.

BACKGROUND

In 2009 Barack Obama was elected as the first African-American president and he had the highest winning percentage (79%) among all presidents in the twenty years before his election, and in 2012 he was reelected for the second time, he served as the U.S. president from 2009 to 2017 (Al-Sarhan, 2016). President Obama inherited a complex situation in the Middle East; the war in Iraq, Palestine-Israel conflict, Iran's nuclear ambition, Gulf's oil, democratizing of the dictatorship systems and later Arab Spring. All of these hot issues were crucial for Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East. Obama administration put a large-scale of military commitment in the Middle East after terrorist groups started showing up in Iraq and Syria, and it stepped up a lot of efforts to work with allies in the region, Obama asked his partners in the region to participate in a coalition against terrorist militias, the main reason of that coalition was to keep the region security and protect the U.S.'s interests. Jordan was a main player in the coalition and it contributed along with the US in many air strikes in the region. Many politicians considered Obama foreign policy totally different from Bush foreign policy; during the Bush administration, the US believed it could solve all the overseas issues unilaterally. But Obama foreign policy appeared non-interventionist and he focused more on the domestic issues (Lindsay, 2011). In general, the US interests in the Middle East can be broken down into five fields: counterterrorism, keeping Israel security, prohibiting nuclear spread, democratizing of the region and ensuring the flow of oil from the Middle East (Byman & Moller, 2016).

Jordan is a small country in the heart of the Middle East; poor in its sources, surrounded by Syria in the north, Iraq in the east, Saudi Arabia in the south and Israel-Palestine in the west. Due to its Geographic Location, it has enabled Jordan to play an important role in its region and has made it an attractive partner for the

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