



# The strategic options of the United States of America in the Middle East during the Trump administration

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Despite the geostrategic importance of the Middle East and the active participation of US forces in the Second Gulf War (Desert Storm). But the administration did not increase its military operations in the region until after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Consistent with the idea of not losing the gains made to the United States after the occupation Iraq and trying to limit Iranian influence in Iraq and Syria, there was a need to redeploy US forces in Iraq and place them in strong and fortified bases in different parts of the country. This behavior was contrary to Obama's isolationist strategy. And boosted Trump's idea of maximizing US gains in the region, as well as restricting free rider access to any potential future gains in the region. The opposite direction that complicates the American options is the new Russian role in the region and the need to deal with Moscow to fight ISIS, especially at the intersection of interests between the two superpowers. As well as the growing Iranian influence on both the Iraqi and Syrian fronts, which Washington must strengthen its strategic objectives in cooperation with the regional allies. Despite the relatively realistic approach in his foreign policy, President Trump raised the slogan "make America great again".

على الرغم من الأهمية الجيوستراتيجية لمنطقة الشرق الأوسط، والمشاركة الفاعلة للقوات الأمريكية في حرب الخليج الثانية (عاصفة الصحراء)، ولكن لم ترد الإدارة الأمريكية فعاليتها العسكرية في المنطقة، إلا بعد غزو العراق عام 2003، واتساقاً مع فكرة عدم فقدان المكاسب المتحققة للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية بعد احتلال العراق، ومحاولة تخفيف النفوذ الإيراني في العراق وسوريا، ظهرت الحاجة إلى إعادة انتشار القوات الأمريكية في العراق وتوضيحها داخل قواعد محصنة وقوية في مناطق مختلفة من البلاد، وجاء هذا السلوك مخالفاً لاستراتيجية أوباما الانعزالي، ومعزراً لفكرة ترمب في تعظيم مكاسب الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في المنطقة، إلى جانب تقييد فرص استغارة الراكب المجاني Free Rider من أي مكاسب مستقبلية محتملة في المنطقة؛ وإن الاتجاه المعاكس الذي يعقد خيارات الأمريكية، هو الدور الروسي الجديد في المنطقة، والحاجة للتعامل مع موسكو طارئة داعش، لاسيما في ظل تقاطع المصالح بين القوتين العظيمين، فضلاً عن النفوذ الإيراني المتصاعد، سواء على الساحة العراقية أم السورية، لذلك يتختم على واشنطن تعزيز أهدافها الاستراتيجية بالتعاون مع الإقليميين، وبالرغم من النهج الواقعي النسبي في سياسته أكارجيت، رفع الرئيس ترمب شعار "جعل أمريكا عظيمة مرة أخرى"، إلا أنه لم يخرج عن استراتيجية سلفه أوباما في التقليل من المشاركة العسكرية في الشرق الأوسط باستثناء أكره ضد داعش، بمعنى تحديد العمل العسكري فقط عند الضرورة، واستخدام الدبلوماسية كحل لاستعادة الاستقرار في المنطقة، وهذا العمل أدى إلى حدوث فراغ استراتيجي فتح الباب أمام القوى الفاعلة الإقليمية الأخرى ملته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستراتيجية، ترمب، الشرق الأوسط، إعادة الانتشار، العراق، سوريا.





## **Introdection**

The Middle East region has always been a source of concern and interest for America, as the region has a strategic focal point and huge reserves of energy sources, is matched by serious risks to the security and stability of the region resulting from sectarian and intertwined cultural and intractable conflicts, as well as the spread of terrorism and the dangers of nuclear proliferation which was negatively reflected in the structure of the regional security system in particular, leading to fundamental security transformations in the region.

Perhaps we do not openly take the truth if we assume that the security of this region is somehow linked to international peace and security; It is a region of mutual influence and affect, therefore it is natural for the major powers to try to impose control and influence, each according to their abilities and capabilities, and here we believe that the American actor has gradually expanded its domination and influence over the region in a large and clear way, especially during the cold war period and after it; but within the framework of shaping foreign policy, we find that every American president has his own policy and strategy, which may sometimes be compatible or differ with his predecessor, which is closely related to the personal character of each and the nature of internal and external environments of the United States of America. The problem of the study comes through the difficulty of defining a clear strategy for the new US administration led by President Trump, there is fogginess and ambiguity in its foreign policy, especially toward the Middle East region. Based on this, we assume the following question: Is the principle of "America firstly" introduced by Trump mean a kind of new isolationism, or direct intervention, or a mixture between this and that?





## **Section one: post-World war II strategies**

We will look at some examples of strategies of former presidents who managed to govern the United States, specifically after the end of the Second World War, during and after the cold war, and make it a starting point for analysis and comparison, in this study we will focus on deepening the strategy of President Trump in foreign policy toward the Middle East in particular.

### **First: Cold War Strategies**

In order to serve the supreme interests of the United States, the American intervention either direct or indirect in the Middle East during the Cold War era was successful and effective; for example, the Mossadegh Revolution in 1953 was aborted by CIA, and the Shah of Iran was an obedient follower of America, as well as the diplomatic initiative to manage the Arab-Israeli conflict by sponsoring the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1978, also the Soviet expansion was effectively contained even in the times of escalation during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and on the other hand, the American foreign policy failed to manage many issues, including the issue of the United States involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the failure to take firm positions to resolve it, and the decision of banning oil exportation in 1973-1974, imposed by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries on the countries that supported Israel during the war of 1973, as well as the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1978-1979 and the fall of Shah's rule, which fully reflected the gains of the overthrow of Mosaddegh, with the possibility that the Soviet army will control the Khuzestan oil fields in revolutionary Iran, in addition to supporting Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war and supporting the Mujahideen in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it is ultimately an extension of the strategy of indirect intervention, accordingly, it can be said that during the Cold War era, especially in the period between the seventies and





eighties of the last century, the Middle East region experienced a regional system characterized by a fragile balance of power, and the United States of America formed a factor of balance and imbalance at the same time (Kissinger, 2002; Zenko, 2018).

Since 1980, former US President Jimmy Carter noted that US interests in the Middle East would be rejected by any necessary means, therefore the United States maintained its permanent and important military presence in the region, and thus established its military doctrine, which stated: "Any attempt by any external force to control the Arab Gulf region will be considered a direct attack on the vital interests of the US, and this challenge will be met in any way, including the use of military force." This is a blatant and clear announcement by the American administration of the importance of this region in strategic direction and its readiness for direct military intervention when it is needed (the American Presidency Project, 1980).

However and at the same time, the United States did not have sufficient advanced operational bases in the region, and a weak understanding of the cultural and political context of the Governments of the states of the region. The second official in the Pentagon Robert Kumar in Carter's administration declared that "the continuation of this military policy depends largely on our access to the vital facilities in the region ... We do not seek to establish permanent garrisons or sovereign areas as they existed in the colonial past... While we seek cooperation with friendly countries" (Zenko, 2018).

Since then, The United States Central Command CENTCOM has grown significantly, overseeing a vast range of military activities and subsequent combat operations in the Middle East, including operations that fall under the dual containment strategy of former US President Bill Clinton targeted Iran and Iraq (US Government Accountability Office, 2014).





At the end, the United States of America intervened in the Middle East differently, that direct intervention was a reflection in favor of strategic options that urged more physical presence of the United States in the region, where the main turning points were: -

1-The second Gulf War in 1991, and the large US military presence that followed especially in the Arab Gulf region under the umbrella of international legitimacy.

2-The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the shift toward unipolarity and the dominance of the United States of America on the international level.

3- The attacks of September 11th and the legitimacy of the so-called war on terror, which led to the beginning of the long war in Afghanistan and the occupation of Iraq.

As a result, there is a global concern that is reflected in the unrestrained nature of the United States, and therefore its intervention in the Middle East can be said to have dramatically escalated from an indirect to direct form, as this level of escalation based on wrong strategic estimations by Washington. The most harmful in trying to review the overall strategic framework for global engagement in the early 1990s under the doctrine of George W. Bush's Preventive War (Walt, M. 2005).

At the level of systemic analysis, this shift in strategy from indirect to direct participation can be seen as an incidental result of the global shift in power distribution and spread that occurred after the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the shift towards a unipolar system. The decision to "go alone" adopted by the US administration facilitated many dilemmas for the remaining great powers that prevailed during the Cold War, however; The seriousness of these expansionist decisions would weaken national power in the long run (Waltz, N. 2000). However, during the Cold War period, the United States of America was the





most powerful country in the world, whether at the level of hard power or soft power (Nye, S. Jr. 2002).

## **Second: Preventive War Strategy**

The Middle East is a region of outstanding geostrategic value; the US administration's quest to maintain its influence to serve its goal in leading the world system, a long-term strategic interest with all security and economic standards, a strategy adopted by President George W. Bush to confront terrorism and its sponsors.

There were vital reasons for the United States to retain its role in the Middle East after the end of the Cold War, and these major long-term American interests focused on:-

- 1- The ease of the flow of oil and gas to the western markets.
- 2- Dealing with the emerging threat of Islamic terrorism.
- 3- Discouraging the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- 4- Regime change in Iraq and aspiration to establish democracy in the region.

A fragile balance in a region subject to violence and a feverish race for power can be maintained only through wise management of military and moderate diplomatic options, and despite the fact that the United States was the most powerful player in the region, coinciding with an active military presence and a regional influence for decades, they have always been largely dependent on others to preserve its interests, however increasing available and potential capabilities has been reflected negatively; the decision to launch two long-term wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has been a major step in the process. introduced in the context of the hegemonic strategy, has become a major turning point in a two-decade race of strategic expansion, and Stephen Walt predicted in 2005 a shift toward unipolarity and hegemony over the world order as a strategic alternative to it, which was evident during George W. Bush's presidency; It will endanger the United States position and international standing in the long run (WALT, M. 2005).





### **Third: Leading from Behind Strategy**

Barack Obama has formulated a corrective strategy for the Middle East designed to repair the damage caused by the strategy of his predecessor George W. Bush, as the United States needed to withdraw its troops from Iraq, rehabilitate and organize the army, avoid new levels of military intervention on a large scale, and ask allies to take on more of the responsibilities to maintain regional security, work hard on renewing its soft power, draw up an suitable policy to face long-term challenges, and seek to tackle problems through diplomacy, and this strategy appears to have succeeded to some extent, especially in convicting Iran to halt its nuclear program to enrich uranium, It also sought to mediate peace between Israelis and Palestinians along the lines endorsed by the international community, including a two-state solution, flexibility on the status of East Jerusalem, and halt the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territories, as well as encourage democratic reforms in the countries of the region. Without provoking panic among allies like Saudi Arabia, despite their inconsistency and success, avoiding alignment in favor of either side of the Sunni-Shiite divide, it seems that Obama was promoting the creation of a bloc led by Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, seeking to contain Iran and maintain the status quo in the face of democratic reform and the spread of political Islam (Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs ([CCEIA], 2017).

During President Obama's rule, the US strategy in the Middle East changed in the direction of less "hawkish" policies, a response consistent with the unfavorable consequences of his predecessor's previous arrogance, as the strategic option of direct engagement was abandoned and attempting to impose a pattern of dominance over relations with the countries of the region was attempted,. to reduce the price and costs of that hegemony, culminating in the almost





complete withdrawal of US military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Obama administration's partial rapprochement with Iran and its focus on the emergence of "safe havens" for terrorists that led to the outbreak of the August 2014 war against ISIS (US Government Accountability Office, 2014);" but since its long-term interests remain unchanged, the United States cannot completely give up this region because of its great strategic importance, so the US administration remains committed to a wiser strategic approach than indirect intervention(Simon & Stevenson, 2015) contributes to maintaining control of the balance of power in the Middle East. From a strategic point of view, this was possible due to Washington avoiding direct military intervention. A strategy (balance from abroad) designed to support regional allies against the Russians' ambition to expand or regional hegemony was preferred consequently, the United States will not directly deploy its forces unless it directly threatens its strategic interests and its local allies cannot control it. (Mearsheimer, J. & Walt, M.2016).

Soon a new wave of American intervention appeared in the region with NATO, interspersed with intervention in Libya in 2011, and the launching of combat operations by the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria against the so-called ISIS in 2014 with the authorization of the United Nations, regardless on the air operations of the US armed forces, Washington has trained small groups that cooperate with friendly armies, as well as supporting local forces, that is, it defined and reduced its obligations to friends without boots on the ground; contrary to his predecessor's unilateral and strict policy towards enemies (Simcox, 2014), however; this does not reflect the path of indirect participation and limited intervention, as the Obama administration adopted the leading from behind as a mechanism to achieve its major interests (Lizza, 2011).







## Section 2 :Tramp Strategy in the region

Despite the uncertainty, lack of clarity, and volatility in decision-making process of President Trump his strategy in the Middle East does not look much different from that of his predecessor Barack Obama. It is fragmented rather than coherent, pursuing a long-term policy within the framework of continuing to support Israel and Saudi Arabia and isolating Iran, as the policy of withdrawal and lack of direct indulgence in the issues of the region adopted by the administration of his predecessor Obama for almost the duration of his rule has created a vacuum in power opening the door to players and new policies and tools to fill this vacuum (Barron, 2018)), which necessitated reviewing the issue of redeployment and finding a new formula for localization in some areas.

### First:The personal character of the President

There is no clear or specific approach or belief of Trump's personality that we can attribute to him, neither he is a conservative or a neo-conservative, nor idealistic, nor realistic, nor even a neo-isolator, and he is the first American ruler who never served in the government or the army, and thus lacks Political experience and professional background that qualifies him to lead a country such as the USA (Kitfield,2016).

Evidence so far clearly and unambiguously indicates that Trump is determined to fuel the populist nationalist fire that brought him to power, and he absolutely believes in the superiority of the white man WASP, as well as being pragmatic with trade instinct and boundless confidence in his ability to negotiate and contract trade deals that place "America first",. It is also likely to be more aggressive in targeting Islamic terrorist groups, stopping the flow of illegal immigrants, and almost undocumented , it is almost certain that his approach to allies and opponents alike will be governed on the basis of achieving the supreme interests of the United States, regardless of





the nature of the political systems ruling the friend or the enemy, since the image shown is the image of a supreme leader who was not linked to Orthodoxy in the post-World War II period it is a liberal order built by the United States, indicates the possibility of existing one of the most turbulent presidents in modern history (Kitfield, 2016).

Taking into consideration that President Trump seems to have decided to abandon the foreign policy pursued after the world War II that defended the national interests of the United States (security and economy) on a global scale, either by strengthening support of friendly governments and regimes such as the doctrine of all from that of Truman and Eisenhower or by following the policy of intervening in other countries internal affairs when necessary, as the doctrine of Johnson and George W. Bush (Kissinger, 2002).

On another point, Trump made an interesting review, whose disagreement with Wilson's ideal doctrine that ruled the beliefs of most of the presidents of the United States in the post-Cold War era, as he made it clear in his words "We will ask for friendship and good faith with the countries of the world. But we do this while understanding that all countries have the right to put their own interests first, we do not seek to impose our lifestyle on anyone; but we should be an example to everyone."(Trump's full Speech, (CNN 2017).

In his first opening speech, Trump gave few references that could be used to define his foreign policy framework. However, it seems likely that he will try to reduce US international obligations in the context of a semi-isolationist foreign policy characterized by the slogan "America First", because of the disappointment of several decades due to the failed policies, which negatively affected the overall strength of America and is represented by the following: -

- 1-Technology diffusion and enriching foreign industry at the expense of the American industry.





2- Supporting the armies of other countries, while permitting the depletion of the human and material capabilities of the army, as well as defending the borders of other countries, while we failed to defend our rights.

3- Spending trillions of dollars on foreign activities. In exchange to the extinction and decay of American infrastructure On April 3, President Trump surprised many, including his military commanders, when he announced his new policy in Syria, saying, "I want to get out, and I want to bring our troops home," adding in his speech; The United States has received nothing out of the \$ 7 trillion that it has spent in the Middle East over the past 17 years, and it has already done so and put the brakes on \$ 200 million to finance stability in Syria (DeYoung & Ryan, 2018).

So from now on, America will be first, and every decision on: Trade, taxes, immigration, or foreign affairs will be in the interest of American workers and families and the prosperity of America (Trump's full Speech, CNN 2017).

Consistent with reality, it appears at first sight to be a clear contradiction between the words and the actions of President Trump's foreign policy, he cannot exit the trade and lose transcend the mentality of profit and loss but he remained committed to his principles of fighting Islamic jihadist terrorism through the gate of diplomatic and military initiatives, by reinforcing old alliances and forming new ones uniting the civilized world against Islamic extremists, this contrasts with his semi-isolationist orientation of foreign policy; this need will determine the political outcomes regarding external commitments and describe the limits Washington will face when deciding to engage and indulge in the region, as this strategy will highlight President Trump's options and potential limitations in this troubled region (CCEIA, 2017).





## **Second : Decision to withdraw US military from Syria**

If we go back a little to the stage of the electoral promises that President Trump put forward during his election campaign, we find that two years after his won and receiving the reins of government he has committed to most of them, which made the link between them and the decision to withdraw seems inappropriate to explain the decision-making process, after a short period of receiving Trump authority In mid-April, the US administration in Syria engaged by carrying out a military retaliatory strike jointly with France and the United Kingdom because Assad used chemical weapons in Douma again, as happened in 2017.

He wanted to make it clear that contrary to the fluctuations and hesitation of his predecessor, Obama, in 2013, he had not taken any deterrent measures against the Assad regime; The use of chemical weapons, which is a flagrant violation of an international legal rule, would lead the Trump administration to respond with the force of (Parello, 2018), but the retaliatory strikes in 2017 and 2018 were not part of a broader strategy against targeting Assad personally, which explains why Trumpis in good faith twitting "mission accomplished"<sup>1\*</sup>.

Regardless of our opinion of President Trump, he is a master of the game of observers and media, and his latest foreign policy sloagn is the decision to withdraw American forces from Syria, which came a

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<sup>1\*</sup> Trump's approach to Syria is consistent with his worldview, and he believes that the United States has wasted money in the Middle East because of the failed state building; And that regional partners pay very little, and early in 2013 during the debate about Obama's military retaliation that was expected at the time for Assad's use of chemical weapons, Trump tweeted that "Do not attack Syria, reform the United States", and "why these Arab countries The rich do not pay us, "Trump does not want and the constituency does not want to see the United States in another ground war in the Middle East or anywhere, and he wants to repair American infrastructure, and not bear the burdens of rebuilding other countries with American taxpayer money (Fandos, 2017) .





few days after John Bolton was appointed as a National Security Advisor and Mike Pompeo as the new Secretary of State, and these two figures are not known about their defense of a conservative approach to foreign policy, on the contrary, is quite the opposite, as the two men fiercely defend US national interests and, if necessary, military intervention (DW Chanel, 2018). The question here is: How does their appointment fit with the idea of withdrawing American troops and military advisers from Syria?

### **1-The objective reasons for withdrawal**

We believe there are three factors behind this withdrawal decision, which can be summarized in the following basic aspects:

A- Turkish escalation, against the adoption of the United States of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which constitute the “People's Protection Units” and the “Women Protection Units” of the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish), its backbone, with great military support for these forces from the equipment and heavy weapons what Ankara regards as a threat to Turkish national security because of the national background of these forces and the political project that to be implemented, and its reflection on the Kurdish issue in Turkey, and the announcement by Turkish President Erdogan of his intention to launch a military operation east of the Euphrates and Manbij, to eliminate this danger, the flow of Turkish forces start on the borders in facing the Syrian cities controlled by (SDF), the American administration found itself torn between two allies, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and forces that played a balanced role in eliminating the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria, and matters became worse as (SDF) refused the compromise proposed by the administration to soften the stance of its distance from the border and the deployment of Kurdish forces (Peshmerga Rojava) and other Arab forces in their positions (nedaa Syria Site, 2018).





On its part, the US administration tried to ease the Turkish tension and contain the expected explosion by working on the situation in eastern Euphrates, by reformulating the "self-administration" formed by the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish) by expanding the participation of the other components in the administration and decision-making, and the correction of the demographic change carried out by the units in Arab, Assyrian and Syriac towns and villages, the arrangement of eastern Euphrates to match the composition of local councils with their communities ; a balance in SDF by involving more Arabs and Turkmen, and by assigning them leadership positions, so that their participation in decision-making is real and concrete (nedaa Syria Site, 2018).

B-The modest military and financial contributions of the allies of the members of the international coalition to fight ISIS, accompanied by the weak military participation represented by several hundreds of British, French, Italian and Norwegian special forces, along with a poor Saudi and Emirati financial contribution that did not exceed one hundred million dollars, bearing in mind that the US President previously linked the survival of the forces in Syria by contributing to cover its financing in a position consistent with its structure as a real estate dealer and an investor that measures matters by the scale of profit and loss, and on the other hand the United Nations can gradually do more and practice activity in keeping peace and security; But it will need approval from both Damascus and Moscow (Parello, 2018).

C-Impact of internal factors on the US external decision-making process, as well as the president's lack of experience and weariness of disciplined institutional work and his dissatisfaction with the pressure of American institutions on him, in order to abide by its standards, estimates, perceptions and plans, which are represented in the following: -





- Investigations of Special Investigator Robert Mueller and his expansion in the investigation of the campaign of the American President and his family, up to his person, with the expected release of Muller final report.
- The clash with Congress over refusal to provide five billion dollars to finance the border wall (border barrier) project on the border with Mexico, (he agreed to provide one and a half billion dollars).
- The dispute with the Pentagon over its objection to sending the army to the borders with Mexico to repel the immigrants.
- New appointments default to most vacant positions.
- The market continued to decline rapidly and successively, amid expectations that the economy will enter a cycle of stagnation.
- The growing disagreements on foreign policy between the White House and Congress, which are expected to become more complicated in light of the president's intention to withdraw half of the US forces from Afghanistan, especially after the Democrats won the mid-term elections of the House of Representatives with a clear majority that led to the victory of the Representative Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House of Representatives (CNN, 2019). He deeply dismarts the Pentagon's comment on the Turkish President's statement about the content of his phone call to him: "He found an understanding of the military operation in the east of the Euphrates."

These factors played a decisive role in the speedy formulation of the decision (complete and immediate withdrawal within a period not exceeding one hundred days) (nedaa Syria Site, 2018).

## **2-The implications of the US withdrawal on the inside**

Not only was the decision to withdraw US forces from Syria surprised by the countries; rather, this decision received local reactions, perhaps more than external reactions, as the Pentagon stopped commenting, and the State Department remained silent and



canceled its daily press conference two hours before its date, to avoid embarrassing questions about the decision, and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Bob Crocker asked, for an appointment with the president, to be informed of the reasons that led him to take his decision, and then the White House decided to cancel the meeting at the last minute; which aggravated the objection in the Congress and reinforced doubts about the motives behind it, Senators and deputies criticized the decision, demanding hearings to discuss its reasons and circumstances, as well as criticism of many American experts and media , highlighting its negative aspects on the American strategy and the American role in general, and the solution in Syria in particular (nedaa Syria Site, 2018), the highest objections were the resignation of Defense Secretary James Mattis and the US envoy to the international coalition Brett McGurk, as the resignation message included a tough criticism of Trump's policy, in addition to European and Israeli criticisms.

### **3- The impact of the withdrawal process on (Israel)**

Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria has received negative repercussions at the Israeli public and official levels, as was evident in the statement of intelligence affairs commentator Ronen Bergman, in a comment broadcast by Israeli channel- the tenth on December 21, 2018: "It is inconceivable to envision the volume of anger and frustration that currently beset senior military leaders. And Israeli intelligence following the American decision, warning them of its repercussions, the resolution could lead to the dissipation of Israel's achievements during the three years, through its direct military intervention to foil the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah and hinder Iran's pursuit of military status in Syria, and the military affairs commentator in Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, Ron Bin Yeshai, said: "The resolution threatens Israel's strategic environment, and the dismantling of the US military base in the Al-Tanf area, which is a







base for the American special units near the triangle of the Syrian-Jordanian- Israeli border, will represent a strong blow to Israel, as this base plays an important role in preventing Iran from transferring weapons and gears to Syria by land, along with its contribution to Preventing the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah fighters from stationing in southern Syria and the Golan region". For its part, the Israeli military and intelligence institutions described Trump's decision to withdraw, will cast Israel under the Russian train (nedaa Syria Site, 2018).

#### **4-Implications of the withdrawal on the region**

The withdrawal decision provoked discussions regarding its reflections on the two scenes, Syrian and regional, for the ensuing lifting of the political cover, military protection of (SDF), and opening the way for launching the race of filling the strategic void that will be caused by the withdrawal of the US forces from Syria, which puts Turkey in an inevitable confrontation with Russia and Iran on the background of conflicting interests and visions which prompt to seek with the United States for a gradual withdrawal, as President Trump said: "He agreed with the Turkish President on a slow and well-coordinated withdrawal, and this will sharpen the contradiction with Russia and Iran ... Russia is waiting for the resolution to be implimented; because it does not trust the American intentions, in order to push its partners aside and seize the spoil ... Iran is satisfied with the decision that sacrificed a sensitive position and role for the US, and gives them the chance to stay in Syria and abandon its besieged plan ", some powers also bet on internal, European, Gulf and Israeli pressure, especially if they offer to lift their field and financial participation, to push the US president to retreat from this decision, as the implementation will certainly open the door to conflict on east Euphrates to control the whole fate of Syria. (Sonne& Ryan,2018).





On the other hand, Ankara gave a clear view on the new conflict pattern in Syria following the US withdrawal from the Syrian territories; a conflict between all parties in the game, the role of the United States is limited to watching from a distance without direct immersion, with working on the end of its project in establishing the greater Middle East (Deal of the century), which resulted to the birth of a deformed, uncharacterized and unknown future figure, and thus (Israel) will be alone on the northern front, which is positive for it; because it would be free of any restrictions and can act freely as it wishes at a time of aerial and intelligence superiority, which is confirmed by the international military community but the negative side of the issue; the bombing will prompt Iran to continue and even increase its military activities in Syria and Lebanon (Watanabe, 2018).

### **5-Reflection of the withdrawal on Russia**

The change in the strategic priorities of the United States of America in the Middle East has brought about several repercussions at the regional and international levels. The US military withdrawal from Iraq represented a vacuum in power that led to the redistribution of power in the region, represented by Turkey and Iran trying to impose regional domination through following a policy of increasing influence on local powers to extend their influence and control over the region (Barron, 2018; Bhalla, 2011). This encouraged Russia to intervene and increase its influence in the region, which Moscow considered an "absolute mandate" to move forward with deeper participation in the Middle East region, especially when this option became available after General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi overthrew former President Mohamed Morsi and his seizure of Egyptian rule, as the administration of Obama failed in dealing with the new regime in Egypt, in contrast, Moscow managed to contain the situation to replace Washington as Egypt's new and distinguished partner (Naumkin, 2015; Neriah, 2013), thanks to this, Moscow has recently managed to establish a new regional external balance in the eastern





Mediterranean (Fedyszyn, R. 2013). Even the emergence of ISIS can be partly attributed to the partial disengagement of the United States from the Middle East, as the US could have done something to deter this organization and prevent it from seizing the vast territories it had controlled by 2015 (Jeffrey, 2014; Scarborough, 2015).

Moscow has come to believe that military engagement in Syria is a reasonable choice, in exchange for the American complaint about the civil war in Syria with Washington's decision not to go ahead with a military strike against Assad regime in September 2014 despite the Syrian regime's accusation of using chemical weapons against civilians, which President Obama considered an abuse for the red lines at the time (Goldberg, 2016), it played an important role in the region through its direct military intervention in the Syrian crisis and the support of President Bashar al-Assad (Barrett, 2016)

### **Section Three: The real strategic choices for Trump in the region**

Trump's strategy in the Middle East is based on external balance, Proxy war, and spreading chaos (Gauvin,2017); his leadership style played a pivotal role in shaping the politics of the region governing interactively and instinctively, ignoring issues he finds ininteresting, and his tendency to prioritize loyalty over efficiency has marginalize his moderate aides and empower hawkish advisers such as Bolton, who has reinforced President Trump's emphasis on fighting Iran, and to take more (hawkish) positions on Syria.

But the biggest concern comes from the implications of this politics. What will be the consequences of abandoning support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? What would happen if the nuclear deal collapsed and Iran resumed its nuclear program? What if American influence in Iraq continues to shrink in exchange for increased Iranian influence? New security commitments and form of strategic alliances in the region if the actual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria takes place?



### **First: New security commitments on the Iraqi scene**

The opposite direction that complicates the American choices is the new Russian role in the region, the need to deal with Moscow to fight ISIS, especially in light of the intersection of interests between the two super powers (concerning Iran and controlling the energy resources), as well as the increasing Iranian influence on the Iraqi or Syrian scene. Washington should reinforce its strategic targets in cooperation with regional allies.

Despite the relative realistic approach in his foreign policy, President Trump raised the slogan "making America Great again", but he did not deviate from his predecessor Obama's strategy of reducing military participation in the Middle East except the war against ISIS, in the sense of defining military action only when necessary. Using diplomacy as a solution to restore stability in the region, this action has created a strategic vacuum that has opened the door for other regional actors to fill (Mearsheimer, J. 2016)

Although the huge financial expenses and thousands of lost lives, the US military presence in the Middle East maintains support for the two parties in the United States, in return for weak public support in the area of ongoing observation and debate, as the main activities of the United States in the region include arms sales to allied governments. Military training programs to the armies of those countries, anti-terrorism operations and long-term deployment of forces, which occasionally include some military exercises here and there, (Zenko, 2018), besides the active participation of the US forces in the second Gulf War (Desert Storm), the US administration did not increase its military activities in the region until after Iraq invasion in 2003, and the events of the so-called Arab Spring 2011. and this was confirmed by former CIA director John Deutch in an article wrote in The New York Times in 2005, that will allow the United States to





focus entirely on its security interests in the region through its diplomacy and economic strength (Deutch, 2005).

In Iraq, Trump imposed a no-state approach, as he did not provide the appropriate funds for reconstruction at the Iraqi Reconstruction Conference in February under the pretext of the Iraqi government's tendency and bias in favor of Tehran, in addition to the corruption that is rampant in the state institutions, and thus the fate of the aids may be misplaced. For the direct generous contribution of humanitarian aid and social stabilization, provided to some civic society organizations (Parello, 2018).

Cosistent with the idea of not losing the gains achieved by the United States after the occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the attempt to limit the Iranian influence in Iraq and Syria, the need to redeploy the US forces in Iraq and place inside strong and fortified bases in different areas of the country and this behavior came contrary to Obama's strategy Isolationism, reinforcing Trump's idea of maximizing the benefits of the United States of America in the region as well as limiting, the free chances for a free benefit from any potential future gains in the region, this was confirmed by the international coalition spokesman, colonel Sean Ryan, in a press conference in Abu Dhabi: "We will keep our presence, and that the US forces will remain in Iraq as long as they are needed to help excpel and eliminate ISIS and achieve stability in the areas controlled by the organization". He also added that "the number of US soldiers may retreat depending on when other NATO forces deploy to help in training the Iraqi army, adding that there are about 5200 US soldiers currently stationed in Iraq". The defense ministers of NATO also agreed in February on a larger mission in Iraq in terms of training and advice after a US call to the coalition to help stabilize the country after three years of war against the Islamic State, and the spokesman noted the actual cooperation between Syria's democratic forces SDF and Iraqi security forces ISF in fighting the last remnants of the





terrorist organization ISIS, especially on the Iraqi-Syrian border, which was credited to the coalition (Reuters Agency,2018).

The Iraqi side is concerned with the lack of agreement and clear division between the parties to the political process<sup>1\*</sup>, whether at the official or popular level, regarding the US military presence in Iraq, especially after Trump's declaration that Washington will keep its soldiers in Iraq to observe Iran (anadolu agency, 2019), which provoked the dissatisfaction of local officials and figures. As well as its dissimilar positions and continuing legal controversy; there are Shiite factions that refuse this statement and promise the proper resistance and response if all political and parliamentary effort are exhausted, especially as some of these powers are preparing to pass a law that guarantee the removal of all foreign forces from Iraq. The Al-Nujaba movement, through its spokesman, Mr. Hashem Al-Mousowi, affirmed its rejection and denunciation of this irresponsible statement by the President of the most powerful country in the world, and this proposal was supported by the Asaib Ahl al-Haq movement, which considered the American presence for the purpose of securing and protecting (Israel) and not helping Iraq; meanwhile, the spokesperson of Hezbollah brigades Muhammed Muhiy considered Trump's statement as a reoccupation of Iraq and a

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<sup>1\*</sup> The nature of the political forces produced by the American occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the occupier contributed to its formation is a triangle formed by the three main forces which are (the Shiite bloc, the Sunni bloc, the Kurdish bloc), and on that basis adopted consensual democracy as a solution to form successive governments, which often it results in weak and fragile governments, a divided parliament, chaos, and instability, in which the United States holds the balance; Whenever a party is strengthened at the expense of the two parties, the American actor supports and strengthens another party at the expense of the dominant party, and so remains the role of the balance holder in trying to preserve the fragile balance to remain dominant and dominate the capabilities of the country, and strikingly, and the American administration did not want any strong government in Iraq For the three sides to remain in constant need of the American actor to control the fragile balance and control of the country.





new stage of confrontation (Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper, 2019). At the level of Parliament, the two largest blocs in it, the Alliance of Saeroon led by Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr, and the Alliance of Al-Fatah led by Hadi al-Amiri agreed to reject any foreign military presence on the territory of Iraq; the issue of the US forces stay needs to conclude a new agreement, and on the other hand, the speaker of the council of Representatives Mr. Mohamed al-Halbousi and the head of the Reform and Reconstruction Alliance, Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim, declared their refusal of the foreign forces presence in Iraq and working to support the government's attitude toward the need for such presence to help fighting terrorism and training the Iraqi forces (Baghdad Post, 2019).

The First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hassan Al-Kaabi also confirmed that Parliament would work on legislation that would include the termination of the security agreement with the United States of America. At the government level, which constitutes the official position of the country, the President of the Republic, Mr. Barham Salih, has declared that Iraq needs these forces; but has no right to monitor Iran or take any action that may offend the relation between Iraq and Iran, especially as Baghdad continues with the policy of keeping away from any focus or polarization that affects the neutrality and peace of Iraq's foreign policy, calling on Washington to clarify the tasks of these forces in a precise and detailed manner that should not exceed the scope of fighting terrorism and training and explained in the agreement body, which made the situation worse by the sudden visit of President Trump's to Iraq on 26 December 2018 and not to meet with any Iraqi official. This was considered by the local political powers as a violation of the sovereignty of the State and a violation of diplomatic norms, as the former Prime Minister, Mr. Adil Abdul - Mahdi, during his meeting with the acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan two weeks after Trump's statement, declared Baghdad's refusal of the presence of foreign military bases





on the Iraqi lands, and stressed in turn the necessity of abiding by the agreement items and the nature of the work of foreign forces (Baghdad Post, 2019).

To assess the nature of the division, we believe that most parties that reject the US military presence are either aware of the wishes of the Iranian ally rejecting any US military presence near its borders, media bids claiming patriotism and preserving sovereignty in appearance, and those who oppose it, or it is a real desire to get rid of any military presence threatening sovereignty. On the basis that ISIS is American making, and this is the recognition of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and therefore, fighting ISIS will be like fighting the American intervention in Iraq, as many deputies, along with political and social figures, have indicated that Iraq's security fate is not related to the mood of deputies or political blocs affiliated with this or that party, and those who denounce the foreign military presence should answer the following question: Can Iraq alone face terrorism in the western Iraqi regions of Badia, which comprise one-third of the area of Iraq, as well as other cities that still suffer from the presence of sleeper cells and incubators suitable for the growth and revival of armed groups at any time ?.

Moreover, in legal and practical terms, the draft law will face several obstacles within the agreement, as (article 30, paragraph b), of the agreement states: "A party may not terminate the agreement without the agree of the two parties, and a party wishing to withdraw must inform the other party of its request one year before of its wish, and the person entitled to request the cancellation is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces." In any case, the coming days are full of big events; It is not possible for Washington to leave its interests in Iraq without assured guarantees and guaranteed protection, especially since President Trump's directives are clear in this regard; It has made enormous financial and human losses in Iraq, and expects to reap the fruits of its work and will not give up easily.







## Second: The Fourth Wave Strategy

First of all, the military mission to defeat ISIS did not end, as Turkey's invasion from the north of Syria made the end of the game more difficult to resolve the battle, culminating in the redeployment of SDF, who valiantly fought ISIS; but, in the long run, the American allies and civilian advisers need the US military umbrella to continue the work of achieving stability, as General Joseph Votel, the Central Command Commander and the military campaign official against ISIS, US State Department envoy to the coalition forces, Brett McGurk, and US Agency for International Development official Mark Crane described the continuation of the US military presence in Syria, is a factor of building resilience to end the military mission, eliminate ISIS, stabilize Syria, and return displaced people to their homes (Parello,2018)); stability in Syria is not only a necessity for refugees returning to their homes, but also a fortress against the rapid return of ISIS. A rapid withdrawal would make the US weak in curbing Iran and affecting a political solution in Syria, with long-term consequences to be noted, as was the case for Obama when he withdrew from Iraq (Parello,2018).

Trump insists that allies and partners pay more costs, as Saudi-Arabia led forces as well as European allies have not provided enough funding needed by the troops stationed there to support the military operations in Syria, and there is no equivalent alternative that could replace the US forces on the Syrian scene. The presence of the Saudi Arabia or Egyptian army may fuel, strong sectarian tensions among the warring factions in Syria rather than calm, in contrast, the current US military presence benefits from a friendly and welcoming domestic position in the self-defense-controlled areas, and General Votel warned that: "It will be difficult for anyone to intervene immediately to replace us," he added, although with time the U.S. military could hand over the joystick to other forces (BBC Arabic News, 2019).





Trump recently announced that his troops would go to Iraq once the last stronghold of ISIS was eliminated, and that part of it would eventually return home, Votel stressed that "it is easier to transport personnel than equipment; so what we are trying to do now is to transport the materials and equipment we do not need," he added; "We don't want people on the ground to stay, we don't need them and they don't have a real mission," he said. (Gulf Online, 2019).

Perhaps the most powerful argument for US forces staying in Syria consistent with Trump's logic is to avoid repeating Obama's mistakes, especially in his hasty departure from Iraq in 2011, which led to instability in Iraq and the subsequent growth of ISIS, with this pattern of thinking Trump may have been convinced to stay a little longer in Syria, supported by facts on the ground, if the military battle has not yet ended, as the Islamic State has shown with its recent message of strengthens the position of his followers and fighters to withstand and reorganize , the other argument is Iran. Without a US military presence in Syria, Iran will be given a greater opportunity to expand its influence, as Trump said during Macron's visit: "We don't want to give Iran an opening to the Mediterranean,"( Parello,2018).

Despite the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the US foreign policy specially directed to the Middle East, we can formulate the new US strategy according to the data of the current stage of the Syrian-Iraqi arena, which is considered two wars in one scene, as war in Iraq is a war of resources, and the war in Syria is a war of passages in which the spheres of influence between Russia and the United States of America have been settled, and the conflict in Syria has almost been resolved and the regions and targets divided, in exchange for remaining President Bashar al-Assad's and Russia maintaining its positions inside Syria and the Mediterranean (Israel) was released in the Golan, especially after the Trump





administration's recognition of the latter's takeover of this critical area (BBC Arabic News, 2019).

As for Iraq, it is clear that the US administration is pursuing a "fourth wave strategy"<sup>1\*</sup> for redeployment and positioning in order to resolve the conflict, re-establish control and re-contain Iran and trying to cut off its arms extending to Syria and Lebanon, the question that presents, how this goal will be achieved, is it a new war or a proxy war ?, and through our appreciation of the situation in line with historical events; every republican president brings a new war, and the new war of Trump does not stray far from the tactic of the economic blockade and provoking internal strife. Bear any human or material burdens or costs, relying on the principle of profit as a basis upon which to build its external relations.

### **Conclusion**

Two key schools for strategic thought that have ruled out the debate over the US presence in the Middle East namely: " offshore balance" and " Forward sharing",: the first seeks to avoid violent reaction against the United States by maintaining a proper strategic distance and not direct immersion in the region, the second; calls for the deployment of troops in "global commons," with the US military has an unparalleled superiority of power, ensuring a clear footprint in the region to ensure access to and control oil and gas markets and prevent the emergence of any regional power seeking hegemony, such as Iran. Most likely, the US administration will continue the indirect engagement approach in the Middle East, which was evident

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<sup>1\*</sup>These strategies were applied at the beginning of the new millennium, as the first wave was represented by the strategy (direct intervention) adopted by President George W. Bush and resulted in the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, while the second wave (Iraqinism) lies in the process of recalculating and confronting the armed resistance that confronted the occupation, and the third wave (Deflation), which resulted in the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, the adoption of a strategy of offshore balance, and leading from behind, adopted by President Obama.



during President Obama's term, as the foreign policy priorities of both presidents converge, and Trump is expected to try to combine his isolationist philosophy with a moderate intervention approach with his anti-terrorism priorities and file developments of Iran's nuclear file,(Hannah,2016) .

Trump's principle "America first" does not mean complete isolation and reduction of Washington's role in strategic and vital fields like the Arab Gulf region, especially in light of the new administration's focus on Iran and fighting terrorism. This result seems unlikely while Washington is still cautious of a dramatic event on its interests abroad or even on the American land, this matter coincides with its failure so far to find a decisive role, in each of Yemen, Iraq and Syria, in exchange for strengthening and improving the conditions of Russia, Iran, and Turkey in the region (Mossalanejad,2018).

Consistent with the moderate approach to foreign affairs, it seems unlikely that the United States of America will reduce its participation in the Middle East, particularly in the Arab Gulf region, as the military presence there is likely to increase and intensify, and this is what appeared and is repeated a long time ago, through a large spread for aircraft carriers and other marine military units, whether inside the Gulf, in the Sea of Oman, or in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the redeployment and large scale movements of American military sectors in Iraq.





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