

## **Strategic Differences between the US and Saudi Arabia in Arab World (2010-2017)**

**Asghar Jafari Valdani\*** - Full Professor of International Relations, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

**Hormoz Jafari**-Ph.D Student of International Relations, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

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### **Abstract**

Historically, Saudi Arabia and USA relationship have been based on oil-for-security in which Saudi Arabia supports global energy market stability through its production-export policies and the US guarantees Saudi Arabia security in facing with regional threats. Yet, there were some changes in second decade of the new century. As a matter of fact, USA and Saudi's relationship in Arab world experienced some rifts during Barak Obama era. In this regard, the two country strategy for coping with revolutionary upheavals in the Arab world which is called "Arab Spring", especially in Egypt, was among their central divergence causing several challenges between the two countries. Hence, Using Explaining method, in this research, it is aimed to inspect that what factors are resulted in the US and Saudi Arabia strategic differences in Arab World through 2010-2017? The US attempts to adapt with geopolitical changes in international system have been resulted in the US and Saudi Arabia strategic differences in Arab World.

**Keywords:** Strategy, US, Saudi Arabia, War, Muslim brotherhood.

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\*E-mail: [Ajv1392@yahoo.com](mailto:Ajv1392@yahoo.com)

### **Introduction**

The US and Saudi Arabia relations have always been based on oil-for-security in which Saudi Arabia provides global energy market stability through its production policies and the US guarantees Saudi Arabia security in facing with regional threats. But, current evidences show that this policy has been changed from 2011.

In March 2011, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates with the supports of Kahlifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Bahrain prime minister invaded Bahrain to nullify the US project on constitutional monarchy and the public protests. Rather, after 2011 revolution and dethrone of Hosni Mubarak, Saudi Arabia tried to confront with Obama administration cooperative policies with the new Government of Egypt and to manage and overthrow Egypt Muslim Brotherhood Government. In Syria, the US has focused on attacks on ISIS and in spite of Saudi Arabia demands, the US has avoided to attack Bashar Al-Assad forces. Moreover, the US has criticized Saudi Arabia policies against Yemen and has not interested in military attacks on Houthi, although the US has focused on Al-Qaeda in Arab Peninsula and has attacked on them using unmanned aerial vehicle.

From view point of Turki Al-Faisal, the president of Saudi Arabia intelligence service, the changes in the US policies in the region show that this state has backed out its policies to the detriment of Saudi's national security threats, and the US behavior in relation with regional crises show that the state revised its national threats in relation with the states of Persian Gulf region.

### **The Research Method**

Regarding the nature of the research, the secondary references like books, articles, bulletins and the reports of active institutions and authors have been used. The research is based on Explaining method.

### **The Research Question**

What factors are resulted in the US and Saudi Arabia strategic differences in Arab World from 2010 to 2017?

### **The Research Hypothesis**

The US attempts to adapt with geopolitical changes in international system have been resulted in the US and Saudi Arabia strategic disagreements in Arab World.

### **Literature Review**

There are different works about the US and Saudi Arabia relations and the two states policies in the region and Arab World. Hussein Deheshiar (2013) in his Article entitled “Saudi Arabia: Regional Actor in the Perspective of Special Relations” emphasized on Saudi Arabia maneuver power development considering the end of the Arab and International Cold War and the US supports. Ana Echague (2015) in his book entitled “Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East” believes that in spite of promotion of geopolitical situation of Saudi Arabia, its bravely approach in recent years roots in the sense of vulnerability. Madawi Al-rashid (2015) in her book entitled “New Intervention Policies of the Arab States of Persian Gulf Region” put that Saudi authorities oppose any political evolution which democratize monarchy systems of the region, because they fear from spilling over these experiences to Saudi Arabia territory. Masoud Hamiani (2015) in his article entitled “Change in Saudi Arabia Foreign Policy: from Strategy of Balance to the Leadership of the Coalition” believes that Saudi Arabia has been changed from classic policy of balancing with a state which threaten political system of Saudi Arabia to coalition building and taking the leadership of a coalition. Jacob Shapiro (2017) in his article entitled “the Best Plan for Russia and Saudi Arabia” addressed cooperation between Russia and Saudi Arabia in energy sector and in particular to confront with the American new rivals to promote and stabilize global oil price. Tube Matthiesen (2015) in the project of “Internal Resources of Saudi Foreign Policy: Islamists and the State in Arab Uprisings” emphasized on three effective factors in Saudi foreign policy as follows: Islamist Group of Al Sheikh, Al-sahwa Movement and Salafi Jihadists.

The investigation of the works in the domain of Saudi Arabia and the US relations shows that The US attempts to adapt with geopolitical changes in the international system and its effects in the disagreements between the two states have not been scrutinized. So, the research is intended to focus on this issue.

### **The Research Findings**

The research findings are categorized into four sections: the first section addresses the US policies regarding international geopolitical Changes; the second section addresses the impact of geopolitical changes in international crude oil production. Then there would be two dependent variables; the strategy of surrogate war in the US Middle East policy as the third section and the Obama administration's strategy to cooperate with the moderate Islamist groups as the fourth section.

#### **1. Pivot to Assai; a Response to international geopolitical Changes**

The US foreign policy toward Saudi Arabia is subordinated to its macro strategy in regional and international levels. For this reason, investigation of the US main policies and the importance of the Middle East region in its policies are required to know the US foreign policy toward Saudi Arabia. In this relation, in fall of 2011 Barak Obama declared the US macro policies and put that the US center of gravity of foreign policy, national security and economic interests is being shifted to Asia-Pacific region. This strategy is called "pivot to Asia" or "rebalance" (Chen, 2013: 1). In his speech in Australian parliament in 2011 he put that:

"For the united states this shows a great change. After two decades in which we were engaged in two wars, now the US has shifted its focus on Asia-Pacific region... Asia-Pacific as one of rapidly growing regions is determinative for my first priority which is employment and opportunity for the US people" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014).

Pivot to Asia or rebalance that is proposed during current years in the US foreign policy is based on the accept of this claim that the US center of gravity of foreign policy, national security and economic interests is being shifted to Asia-Pacific region, and the main part of 21<sup>st</sup> century political and economic history will be written in this region (Kurt & Brian, 2013: 2). So, the US establishes diplomatic, economic, security and bilateral relations with the region so that can benefit from the change in geopolitical dynamisms and economic growth (Masroor and Khani, 2018: 183-186). However, the US emphasis on Asia's importance which has been consented by the two parties is not a new issue, but becoming Asia a priority in the US foreign policy shows a change in her foreign policy goals priorities (Kay, 2013: 10).

### **1.1. Theoretical Foundation of Rebalance Strategy**

This macro strategy in the US foreign policy has some foundations and propulsions as follows:

- Realist evaluation of international environment and the emergence of China; a benignant environment, which makes the US to disclaim its responsibilities in some of the regions and to prioritize Asia.
- The logic of profit-cost is the states' foreign policy foundation. After ineffective Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the US has tried to change its worldview and perceptive.
- The third foundation of the change is tolerance and maintaining power for future challengers (Kay, 2013: 9).

So, regarding the growing economic importance of Asia-Pacific region and in particular China for the US economic future, China increasing military potentialities, China claims on disputed sea territories and its requirements for freedom of navigation and the US ability to exercise power in the region in particular south China Sea, the US is intended to keep its hegemony in the region that can be threatened by China emerge (Manyin & et.al, 2012: 1).

In fact, these changes are resulted from changes in evaluation of threats. In current situation, it is inferred that China is a bigger threat and the level of threat in the Middle East is low. Although, the opponents of this strategy emphasize on continuation of terrorist threats in the Middle East, but it is accepted that China is the most important emerging threat and enemy. The signs of the change in approach are seen in the US national security documents. In 2007 document of National Intelligence Estimate of the US, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups were characterized as the threats against the US national security, but in 2013 document of National Intelligence Estimate of the US, Al-Qaeda threats were replaced by cyber-attacks and cyber intelligence by China as the most important threat (Etzioni, 2014: 2-4).

### **1.2. Asia- Pacific and Persian Gulf**

Senator John Kerry, then serving as the US secretary of the state, emphasized that “the US will fulfill its obligations in the Middle East, and expressed his hope that what we do in Asia-Pacific is not and would not be to the detriment of our activities in Europe and the Middle East”. Rather, the

Middle East along with Asia-Pacific was mentioned as the US priorities in 2013 annual budget of the US Defense Ministry (Naofumi , 2013).

From historical point of view, Persian Gulf region is one of the main US priorities. But, economic and political problems and economic limitations of the US caused changes in the relations of the US and the region. It is obvious that Obama administration intended to decrease in dependence on the Middle East political processes to allocate more resources to East Asia. For this reason, the US strategy is “to try hardly to less engage in this region”. This is clear not only in the US foreign policy in Syria and Egypt, but also in the US policies against ISIS and Washington strategy to stabilize Iran and Persian Gulf states relation and to form a new form of relation with Israel (Akhmetov, 2014: 2-3).

In fact, Barak Obama saw himself as antithesis of strategy of Bush administration which intended to combine hard unilateralism and charity mission to develop American democracy in the Middle East. The distinguished facet of Obama foreign policy was evolutionary modification of the presence in the Middle East where the US was engaged extremely and ineffectively and shift to Asia where emerging and growing economies are forming global order<sup>1</sup>. In fact, Barak Obama who grew up in Indonesia and Hawaii perceived that unlike the Middle East which has anti-American emotions, East Asia with a realist approach is interested in working with the US, and is committed to develop trade, education and building structures. For this reason, an Asian-Pacific president in white House took the strategy of leaving anarchic region of the Middle East and shift to emerging Asia and this was his most important inheritance (Heydarian, 2016). In fact, pivot shows a rapid turn in two issues: first, leaving the Middle East and ignoring

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1- It should be noted that beside of the US, Saudi Arabia and other Arab States of Persian Gulf region were among the first states that perceived change in power gravity to Asia. In fact, East Asian states abilities to manage 2008 economic crisis caused other Arab States of Persian Gulf to focus on this region and develop their relations with the regional states. In 2009, Emir of Qatar announced that “China will come, India will come and Russia is intended to come to the region, and I do not know will the US and Europe be able to keep their hegemony or not”. In fact, from view point of Arab States of Persian Gulf, the US strategic power has been reduced regarding increase in the East Asian states and Russia power and their presence in Persian Gulf (Kapila, 2012).

what the US has done in this region; second, rebalance which shows the logic and consistency of this new approach (Hass, 2013: 5).

Although the pivot to Asia is not meant the abandonment of the Middle East by the US, but the management method of Obama administration was criticized strongly by Saudi authorities. Saudi criticized Iran and the US relations and also JCPOA, and from view point of Saudis, the US policies in Egypt and lack of support from Hosni Mubarak and finally the US unwillingness to military intervention in Syria threatened Saudi national security. Muhammad Bin Navaf bin Abd Al-aziz Bin Saud, Saudi ambassador in the UK, in an article published in New York Times put that the US and Saudi disagreements has not remained for Saudi a way other than taking a decisive role in international level (Watanabe, 2014).

From view point of Saudi authorities like Turki Al-faisal, the US has backed out her policies to the detriment of Saudi's national security threats, and the US behavior in relation with regional crises show that the state revised her national obligations in relation with the states of Persian Gulf region (Mason, 2014: 36). He strongly criticized Obama tendency toward Iran, and put that the US people are still our friend, but the US president is no longer our friend. From the other side, based on the Atlantic Journal interview, when Malcolm Turnbull, Australian prime minster asked Obama that "do you know Saudi as a friend state?" he avoided to give a clear answer and said that this is complicated (Gause III, 2016).

## **2. Decrease in the US dependency on the Middle East Crude Oil**

Attempts to decrease in dependency to imported energy and reach at energy independency back to the 1970<sup>th</sup> evolutions of the Middle East. In 1973 Richard Nixon, in response to the first oil shock and oil sanctions by Arab States proposed a project called "great project" that its goal was energy independency by the end of 1970. This policy was followed by George W. Bush and some agendas were established to execute these initiatives, and the Energy Policy Act in 2005 and the Security and Energy Independency Act in 2007 were ratified in this relation (Mitchell, 2013: 2).

This policy was also followed by Obama administration. Tom E. Donilon, National Security Advisor in Obama administration declared that "by the leadership of the president we will convert energy situation of the US from a mandatory commitment and responsibility to a property which

guarantee the US power at home and her hegemony in the world". Howbeit, when Obama inaugurated in 2009, many of energy specialists expected increase in the US dependency on energy import, but a few years later the situation changed completely and Shale revolution and decrease in domestic consumption transformed the US economy (Howald, Mildner & Westphal, 2013: 1).

### **2.1. Shale Revolution and Increase in Crude Oil and Gas Production in the US**

Rapid and consistent technological evolutions have been reflected in the increase in crude oil and gas production in the US. Combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fraction have paved the way to extract oil and gas which are in shale and clod forms in a places which thickness of the rocks prevent hydrocarbons move to normal oil and gas. This technology was used for the first time by Mitchell Energy Corporation in 1991 and then developed to other regions like North and West Dakota and Marcellus fields in Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup> (Mitchell, 2013: 3).

Affected by using shale technology and increasing in oil production, the US oil production in 2013 was more than her imports (Bennion and Mead, 2013: 1). Based on the EIA reports, crude oil production is reached to 10.38 million barrels per day in 2018 which shows 1.2 million barrels' growth in comparison with 2017 and is 5 million barrels more than 2006. Domestic need of the US is about 20 million barrels per day which is equal with domestic need in 2006 (Raiper, 2018). Based on the EIA reports, increase in the US crude oil production will continue and will reach to 11.8 million barrels per day in 2019<sup>2</sup> (EIA SHORT Term Outlook, 2018). Based on the predictions of EIA, the US oil production will precede Saudi production in

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1-Gas production has been increased in the US from 2006 and reached from 18 trillion ft<sup>3</sup> in 2005 to 24 trillion ft<sup>3</sup> in 2012 which caused to decrease in the US import by two third and reached to 1.6 trillion ft<sup>3</sup>, namely 6 percent of total consumption of the US (Mitchell, 2013: 3).

2- IEA reports certify EIA outlooks. Based on the IEA reports, the total production of liquid oil in the US will reach to 17 million barrels per day which makes the US as the biggest producer of oil in the world and the US production level and domestic need will be equal (IEA Oil, 2018).



2020 and the US will be the biggest crude oil producer in the world(Bennion and Mead, 2013: 1).

## **2.2. Promotion of Energy Efficiency**

During the last 30-40 years the US economy dependence on oil has been decreased, significantly. In fact, unlike 1970 and 1980 decades, the US transportation sector will endure possible problems in supplying needed crude oil (Chains, 2012, 23). In 2007, total consumption of the US was 14.3 million barrels per day and transportation sector consumption shared of 9.1 million barrels per day to produce gasoline (BLS, 2013: 3). Due to promotion of environmental standards of car fuel consumption by United States Environmental Protection Agency, gasoline consumption was reduced 6.6 percent by 2012 and reached to 8.5 million barrels per day(Mitchell, 2013: 2).

Investigation of statistical data trends show that during May 2004 and 2016 CO<sub>2</sub> emission and also energy efficiency was promoted in 10 years from 12 years. Based on the United States Environmental Protection Agency report (2018), cars and also trucks reached to the considered criterion in fuel economy in 2016. The average of energy efficiency in riding cars reached to 28.5 miles for gallon which shows 0.3% improvement in comparison with 2015 (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2018). In fact, by using new technologies in transportation sector, the US demand for crude oil has been revised, completely. This caused growth in domestic consumption of crude oil in the US to be predicted for the years of 2013-2025 about 450 thousand barrels per day by EIA (Emerson and Winner, 2014: 24).

## **2.3. Import and Export**

Shale revolution and promotion of efficiency have affected energy export and import by the US. During the last 4 years, the US crude oil export has reached from 0 barrels to 1.5 million barrels per day. Rather, end products like gasoline and diesel fuel are exported by the US. For the first time after 1949 the US has been converted to the exporter of gasoline and diesel fuels. Based on EIA reports, with combination of crude oil export and products like gasoline and diesel fuels the US trade deficit in this relation is reached to 2.6 million barrels per day. Energy outlook of EIA (2017) claimed that in

coming decade the US will be a complete crude oil and petroleum products exporter (Raiper, 2018).

### **3. Strategic Disagreements between the US and Saudi Arab in Arab World**

The US and Saudi Arabia relations history back to 1970 decade and the end of the war occurred in 1973 in the Middle East (Chains, 2012: 23). Currently, structural changes in international political economy and decrease in the US dependency on crude oil mean changes in the US policies toward the region (Mitchell, 2013: 2). In fact, the US defensive priorities and also economic and political limitations have been changed due to change in geopolitics of power and distribution of abilities in international level which the US commit her foreign obligations in that framework (Emerson and Winner, 2014: 22). In this relation, although growth in energy production is not by itself changer of the game in the US foreign policy, but it is a factor which strengthens the process of current changes and leaders of other states like Saudi Arabia have been prepared for future changes (Howald, Mildner and Westphal, 2013: 3-4).

One of the most important facets of the US foreign policy which is affected by changing situation of geopolitics of power in international system, is the method of management of regional disputes and interaction with active Islamists in Arab states of the region.

#### **1. Surrogate War Strategy**

The US foreign policy strategy in macro level and in particular in the Middle East in Obama administration was affected by Afghanistan and Iraq wars. In fact, Afghanistan and Iraq wars by 2013 costed out engaging 2 million personnel, death of 6 thousand, injury of 40 thousand people and 1.5 trillion dollars' financial cost for the US. This has caused the US public opinion oppose strongly the US engagement in the regional conflicts (Hass, 2013). For this reason, unlike former presidents of the US, Barak Obama developed “shadow wars” strategy with the lowest level of engagement and possibly under observation of public opinion and assigning operational and strategic responsibilities to the US supported native groups and persons (Krieg, 2016: 97).

By this approach in the US Middle East policy, this state has taken surrogate war strategy to manage the crises and civil wars in the Middle

East and in particular in Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Fighting a war by surrogate is a concept that lies at the intersection of the debates around proxy and compound warfare. Yet, it is neither one nor the other. Surrogate warfare exceeds the boundaries of the strategic debate about proxy warfare that emerged in the Cold War, while also going beyond the too operational debate on Huber's concept of compound warfare. The reason is that the means of substituting or externalizing the burden of warfare for taxpayers, policy makers and the military have become a lot more diverse in the information and automation age, allowing patrons to explore new routes to minimize their own burden of war while still achieving their objectives (Krieg and Rickli, 2017: 3).

Unlike compound war or proxy war, surrogate war is more than an umbrella support. Supporter and supported can be non-state actors. Non-state actors can be terrorist groups, rebel groups, infra-national movements, hireling groups, private militants and security corporations. Airpower, drones and cyber-weapons are employed by states in conjunction with local armed non-state actors. Cooperation, integration and coalition of the forces can be directly, indirectly or accidentally. Mediator actor can be a technologic base that can make able the supporter to reach its goals using effective, economic or secret tools and not by formal military forces. Mediator actors can benefit from regular, irregular and combined war tools which provide accurate and effective abilities for the supporter actor. Surrogate war existed before, but it has been developed from the Cold War. This strategy is developed in current situation resulted from the process of transformation to apolar nature of international system, change from threat pivot to risk pivot perception of security and finally significant change in operational environment (Krieg, 2016: 99-100).

In fact, in a post-Westphalian era characterized by non-state violence, globalized conflicts, a prioritization of risk management in a mediatized environment, the state has to explore new ways to remain relevant as the primary communal security provider. Thereby, the organization of violence has departed from the employment of the state's soldier as the primary bearer of the burden of warfare to a mode of war where technological and human surrogates enable the state to manage the risks of postmodern conflict remotely (Krieg and Rickli, 2017: 1).

So, in the globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized security environment in which states operate in the twenty-first century, the motivations to externalize the burden of warfare are complex. A patron's propensity to use surrogates depends on a variety of factors that for purely illustrative purposes can be put into a formula as follows:  $\text{deniability} + \text{legitimacy} + (\text{urgency} - \text{costs}) - \text{capability} = \text{propensity to use surrogates}$  (Krieg and Rickli, 2017:12). In fact, the supporter actor takes surrogate war strategy to reduce in political and operational costs, lack of immediate necessity, lack of required abilities and need to denial and keep of legitimacy (Krieg, 2016:102).

### **1.1. Withdrawal of the US Troops from Iraq**

The presence of the US military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan was in contradiction with the strategies of pivot to East and surrogate war which emphasized on reduced level of the US troops and use of native forces. Barak Obama in his speech in 2009 in Cairo put that "I come here to search a new beginning between the US and Islamic World... to do this, the US troops will leave Iraq after December 2011 and a military base will not be established in Iraq... the US will not follow the development of democracy"(Jervis, 2017: 32).

The project of the US troops' withdrawal from Iraq made Saudi worried of geopolitical changes in the region. Saudi knows the US troops' withdrawal from Iraq means leaving Iraq for Iran. None of the US allies in the region like Turkey can confront with Iran influence in Iraq. Rather, Shiite based state of Iraq will no longer be under influence of Saudi and its allies like Jordan. Besides, new Iraq can challenge Saudi hegemonic role. In the first facet, Saudi concerns that Iraq recognition in security order of the region will challenge military-political dominance of Saudi Arabia among Arab States of Persian Gulf. In the second facet, Saudi concerns promotion of Iraq role in oil policies of the region and OPEC (Yamani, 2011). Despite the concerns of Saudi, the US withdrew the troops from Iraq by December 2011. Even with the emerge of ISIS and the necessity of the US military presence in Iraq, the US sent only 5 thousand of the US forces to Iraq which was very few in comparison with 2009 (Jervis, 2017: 32).

## **2. The Strategy of Rapprochement with Muslim Brotherhood in Obama Administration**

Although the US has not had formal and harmonic policies toward Islamist groups and has not trusted these groups, but different administrations have taken different policies. In the new millennium, Bush and Obama administrations took completely different policies toward Islamist groups in the Middle East. While Bush administration kept its distance with Islamists, the Obama administration took conservative approach to interact with Islamist groups like Muslim Brotherhood (Vidino, 2013:8). Obama intended to decrease in anti-American emotions and also decrease in military-security costs of the US in the Middle East. The US new strategy can be tracked in different levels like in national military-security documents, use of the forces in White House and interaction with Ikhvanist<sup>1</sup> Islamist groups in operational and administrative domains.

**Military-Security Documents:** David Ignatius, Gayle Smith, Samantha Power and Michael McFaul prepared Presidential Study directive 11 which was collected in the Presidential Study directive 13 in late of summer 2010, a few months before the start of Arab spring in the Middle East. These documents which were opened for public access codified Obama agenda in relation with the Middle East uprisings. In this framework, Obama defined Muslim Brotherhood as a moderate political Islamist group and his administration took the policy of cooperation with Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Syria Muslim Brotherhood groups (Stingberg, 2015).

This strategy meets the terms of the US 2010 national security strategy. In accompany with the US 2010 national security strategy Obama administration limited its relation with Egypt to two interconnected areas as follows: regional security and in particular security of eastern borders bordering with Israel that Obama administration allocated about 1.55 Billion dollars to the “plans and activities of border security in Sinai Peninsula”; negotiations with Muslim Brotherhood and regeneration of the relations to guarantee her goals and in particular Israel security in the frame of peace and human rights treaty (Arafat, 2017: 65).

**Ikhvanist in Obama Administration:** The first attempt to interact with Muslims was invitation of Ingrid Mattson, the president of Islamic Society of North America, to hold pray the presidential inauguration. This group

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<sup>1</sup>. Muslim Brotherhood Members

was one of the proponents of Ikhvanist groups and Hamas. He also appointed Arif Alikhan, who called Hezbollah as a liberalist group, as Assistant Secretary for Policy Development at the department of Homeland Security. Arif Alikhan is one of the participators in Fundraising for the Muslim Public Affairs Council in the US which has close relation with Muslim Brotherhood (Spencer, 2011). Moreover, Appointing Rashid Hussain as the state representation in Organization for Islamic Cooperation was so important. He was senior member of Ikhvanist organizations and institutions like Council of Muslims in the US and Association of Muslim Students. He had the responsibly of advisory in the domain of national security and cooperation with Muslims in Obama administration. He was one of the persons who participated in setting up the famous speech of Obama in Cairo in 2009. He also was Obama representative to cooperate with Istanbul Process which was established to criminalize any criticism on Islam in international level (Lopez, 2013).

Rather, In January 2011, Peter Mandaville as a political Islam specialist who had positive approach toward political Islamism joined the Council of National Security in the US department of the state. He represented senior Director for Global Engagement (Vidino, 2013: 26).

**USA-Ikhvanist in Arab world developments:** Following Obama Administration new strategy which was supposed to establish new relations with Islamic World and his speech in Cairo, the US foreign policy institutions also took interactive plans approaching to Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East. In April 4, 2012 some of the Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Jordan and morocco Muslim Brotherhood members travelled to the US so as to participate in a conference. One of the Itineraries of these people was meeting with William Burns, the US under Secretary of the State for Political affairs. In July 14, 2012, William Burns that is seems to be the leader of the US policies to renew relations with Muslim Brotherhood met Mohammad Savan, Libya Muslim Brotherhood leader. Also, the US embassy held some meetings with Libya Ikhvanist groups to provide security of East Libya (Stingberg, 2015).

The US policy on ceasefire between Israel and Muslim Brotherhood in 2014 was another criterion evaluating Obama administration tendency towards interaction with and support of Muslim Brotherhood. The US supported Turkey-Qatar plan as Muslim Brotherhood supporters instead of

Egypt-Israel plan which was supported by Saudi, Jordan, United Arab Emirates and Mahmud Abbas. In an unexpected action, John Kerry avoided to invite Egypt to Paris negotiations (Sandler, 2014).

### **2.1. Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the US-Saudi confrontation**

The history of emerge and collapse of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is an internal issue of Egypt, but Obama administration decision to interact with this group unconditionally paved the way for the decision of the group to take power in Egypt (Trager, Youssef and Dunne: 2016). Based on the reports, Barak Obama insisted that 10 persons from members of Muslim Brotherhood should be presented in his speech in Cairo (Ambinder, 2009). In fact, Obama administration policy was the first step to legitimize Muslim Brotherhood which was done despite discontents of Hosni Mubarak, former president of Egypt and unraveled Obama tendency to interact with political Islamist groups (Lumish, 2015).

In 2011, the US not only left its ally, Hosni Mubarak (Arafat, 2017: p. 64), but also supported Muslim Brotherhood candidates. Three days before the elections, Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of the State of the US “warned about recourse of a military regime”. This was in a situation that Ahmed Shafik, the rival of Muhammad Morsi was a senior military commander (Spencer, 2014).

The US formal support of Muslim Brotherhood, in particular Muhammad Al-Morsi in Egypt<sup>1</sup>, followed in a situation that Saudi considered the group as an existential threat (Idiz, 2018). So, in an evident opposition with USA MENA policy, Saudi Arabia along with Egypt, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates not only put Muslim Brotherhood in terrorist group list, but also recalled over their ambassadors from Doha who has supported Muslim

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1- While protesters collected 22 million signs to dismiss Muhammad Al-Morsi and establishment of transitional state in the frame of Movement of insurgency, Anne Peterson, the US ambassador opposed with street movements. After the military intervention of Egypt army against Muhammad Al-Morsi, Obama administration sentenced military intervention (Arafat, 2017: p. 66). In this relation, White House News Agency asked “the US army to intervene and back power to the elected government, rapidly” (Spencer, 2014). In October 2013, Obama administration put that the US suspended the delivery of some arms like F-16 fighting falcons, Apache helicopters and Harpoon missiles and M 1 I 135 Tanks to the Egypt (Arafat, 2017: 66).

Brotherhood and has accommodated its senior leaders like Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Freer, 2018). The causes of taking this policy against Muslim Brotherhood are as follows:

**In national level**, taking strict policy toward Muslim Brotherhood is rooted in Saudi concerns about spillover of revolutionary thoughts and movements to Saudi society. In fact, Ikhvanist thought and its elements have been one of the main pillars of protests and critical movements in 1970 and 1980 which engaged most of the Saudi universities (Berank, 2009:3), “Al-Sahwa movement” between 1990 and 1994 (Lacroix, 2014:15-18), reformists of the constitution in 2003-2004 and sporadic protests in 2011 (Valdani, Jafari, 2016:204-2011).

**In regional level**, regarding the strategy of “pivot to Asia” of Obama administration (Roberts, 2015), Egypt as a state with the biggest Arab army is one of the Arab States of Persian Gulf options to settle their security concerns (Haykel, 2017). Arab states of Persian Gulf see the US as supplier of advanced arms and also see Egypt as supplier of ground forces needed to provide Arab World security. This approach was promoted from 2005 and GCC members tried to keep Egypt in their front and benefited from Egypt to balance against Iran (Farouk, 2014). But, Egypt revolution, lack of support of the US from her ally and resign of Hosni Mubarak resulted in losing one of Saudi Arabia allies in the region and taking office of Ikhvanist state in Egypt which was a threat for Saudi authorities. For this reason, unlike the US, Qatar and Turkey, Saudi confronted with the revolutionists (Kaussler, 2015).

The result of taking this strategy was attempts to develop oppositions with Morsi administration and support of July 3, 2013 coup d'état. In its report on July 30, 2013, Washington Times announced that Saudi allocated 1 billion dollars to Egypt army to Coup d'état and sovereign transition state. Base on the news agency report, Abd Al-fattah Al-Sisi received the amount on July 3, 2013 (Chumley, 2013). In this reaction, David Hers put that: Egypt army coup d'état was done by tireless attempts of prince Bandar Bin Sultan. For this reason, when Aldy Mansour, the former president of Egypt Supreme Constitutional Court, swerved to take transition state, king Abdullah send a message to him and Egypt army who saved the state from “darkness tunnel”. A few days later in a speech he put that “let the entire world know that Saudi people and state support Egyptian people to fight



with terrorism and radicalism and who is intended to intervene in Egyptian internal affairs". This was irregular remarks from Saudi king, because not only radicalism and terrorism meant Ikhvanism, but also interventionists meant the US and Qatar (Hearst, 2013). Later on, Saudi Arabia that cut its financial supports from Muhammad Al-morsi, helped Abd Al-fattah Al-Sisi and allocated 5 billion dollars to promote and stabilize coup d'état government by economic supports (Farouk, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

In this research the effects of some geopolitical/structural changes in international system, namely shifting the epicenter of economic power from West to East and USA rising oil production, on the Country foreign policy towards Middle East was analyzed. In this regard, United State surrogate war strategy and cooperative tendencies to Muslim Brotherhood were considered as the main outputs of the new geopolitical environment. Mostly, regarding the debates proposed in this research, it can be said that:

Change in power structure of international relations is a reality that its economic facet is more prominent. This means that the center of gravity and concentration of economic activities and exchanges have been shifting from West to East and in particular to East Asia, a region that China as the US most important global rival is located at this region.

Other issue that is so important relates to change in geopolitics of energy production and consumption. From one hand, this means the US has been converted from a major oil and gas importer to a major oil and gas exporter, namely settling one of the US most important dependences on oil-rich monarchs of the Middle East, and from the other hand this means the main consumption market of oil and gas in international economy is shifted to East Asia and the main part of export of oil-rich states is exported to this region.

Macro level changes in international system have some consequences for the US foreign policy in the Middle East region and Arab World. The most important issue in this relation relates to Barak Obama approach to the region's political-security order that based on this approach the US in Obama era did not intend to save regional monarchy states at any cost, and the US supported democratic changes. The experimental case of this policy was seen in Egypt and lack of support of Hosni Mubarak.

The most important proof of change in the US strategy toward internal arrangements of Arab states is the US plan to interact with moderate Islamist groups and in particular Muslim Brotherhood as the most important opposition group. Due to Ikhvanism prominent position in most of Arab states, Obama administration strategy was seen a vital threat to monarchy political systems like Saudi Arabia. Hence, this kingdom not only opposed with it, but also confronted with it.

Changes in USA grand strategy resulted in change in priorities of the US foreign policy and strategy so as to lessen engagement in the Middle East and decrease in the US economic, military and political costs. The direct consequence of this policy is represented in the frame of using strategy of surrogate war in regional conflicts like fight with ISIS and Al-Qaeda in Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

Regarding the mentioned changes, the question that could be proposed here for a new research is that “how do changing international system structure from one hand and Saudi experiences of relation with the US in Obama presidency from other hand affect grand strategy of Saudi Arabia foreign policy?”.

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