Arab Perception of US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

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Arab Perception of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East

By

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To my Parents
Acknowledgment

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Glossary:

ADL: Anti-Defamation League
AEI: American Enterprise Institute
AIPAC: American Israel Public Affairs Committee
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
CPA: Coalition Provisional Authority
DOD: Department of Defense
GAO: United States Government Accountability Office
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
HAMAS: Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah
IDF: Israeli Defense Forces
INC: Iraqi National Congress
ISAF: International Security Assistance Force
ISG: Iraq Study Group
JINSA: Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs
NPT: The Non-Proliferation Treaty
OPEC: The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSP: Office of Special Plans
PLO: The Palestinian Liberation Organization
TRADOC: Training and Doctrine Command
UAE: United Arab Emirates
UN: United Nations
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
WINEP: Washington Institute for Near East Policy
ZOA: Zionist Organization of America
Chapter 1: Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, the United States of America has since taken the leading role in Global politics. Being the sole super power, it is able to have unrivalled influence over the rest of the global system through its foreign policy. According to Fraser Harbutt, he says that American foreign policy,

"is the course set at given times determining the relationships, policies, and actions of the United States with or toward other states and international entities. Its legitimacy derives ultimately from popular will, but formally and immediately from the Constitution, which divides authority among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. In practice it is mostly formulated in the White House and the Departments of State and Defense and executed by diverse diplomatic, economic, and military agencies." (Harbutt, 2003, p. 1)

Since the 1950's, the United States has been a major force in Middle Eastern Politics. And its foreign policy in the Middle East has had direct relation to its negative image by Arabs. Seeing that it had attained its Uni-Power status after the end of the Cold War, Washington became the Middle East's major power broker, and emerged as influential as the regional states themselves when it came to local decision making. The Middle East's geo-strategic importance, its energy reserves and its unstable political climate supported Washington's willingness to exert its political and military will in the region. But America's constant presence in the Middle East has caused a lot of backlash, most notably after the September 11 attacks. Although the George W. Bush Administration
had assured the public that America's War on Terrorism was not against Muslims, it was fought exclusively in the Muslim Middle East. These key contradictions in US foreign policy towards the Middle East have lead to further deterioration of the US' image among Arabs in general and their perceptions towards the US. Therefore this thesis will explore why and how the US has created a bad image of itself, how Arabs have reacted towards the US' foreign policies concerning the Middle East, and how (if possible) can the US create a better image of itself in the Middle East. According to Andrew Kohut from the Pew Research Center Publications (an American think tank organization based in Washington, D.C.), improving the US' image in the Middle East is a difficult one and that the US faces a lot of challenges when it comes to it's public image in the Arab world. Anti-Americanism in the Middle East is caused mainly by the US war in Iraq, the war on terrorism, US' support for Israel, as well the general perception that the United States does not take other countries' interests into consideration. (Kohut, 2005, p. 1)

Will Obama's "Change" also include a review of America's foreign policy towards the Middle East as well as improving its image there? Although some scholars consider that Anti-Americanism boomed during the last two decades, this thesis will focus on US foreign policy in the Middle East starting from the 1940s (Chapter 4). What is it that went wrong so that Arab states would have a bad perception about the U.S.?

Using previous research and surveys conducted by different scholars, which have been pointed out in Chapter 2, this thesis will discuss the importance of the dynamic nature of US decision making, and how US national interest steered its foreign policy towards the
Middle East (Chapter 3). In addition to this, this thesis will show how the US defined its foreign policies during the different eras (Chapter 4). Also to be discussed is how America's foreign policy is directed towards the Middle East (Chapter 5) and the intricate political issues that take place before such decisions are taken. It is also important to note that any decisions the United States takes internally, can somehow have an impact on the lives of people around the world.

This thesis will also focus on America's relationship with Israel and how the Bush administration performed in Iraq (Chapter 6 and 7). Has America's relationship with Arab countries take a turn for the worse or better? And finally how has its foreign policy had an impact on the US' image in the Middle East?

The third part of this thesis will discuss how Obama's policies towards the Middle East may affect America's already strained relationship in the Middle East. Obama has showed hope that these problems will be solved by taking proper action and reviewing America's policies towards these countries. But this begs the question, is Obama really capable of solving these issues, especially the chronic problem between Israelis and Palestinians? His words may come across as naïve and idealistic but only time will tell whether his administration is capable of solving this jigsaw puzzle. What are the obstacles Obama faces both internally and externally?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many scholars have written extensive research about how the U.S. has modified its foreign policy over the different eras, especially when it comes to the Middle East. It is important to understand how these changes came about and how it has affected the United States’ image in the Middle East in order to come up with a concrete answer whether the US is capable of turning the tide.

In *US Image Problem Rooted in History, Not Media* (2008), Ramzy Baroud, a noted Arab Journalist examines why the US’ bad image has been rooted in history, taking the place of European countries as the dominant “colonial” power in the region. Although it was not considered as a colonial power by the Arabs, the US actions within the region quickly changed that view and anti-Americanism was taking root. He also discusses the US’ underlying interests during the different eras which include stopping communism, fossil fuels and combating terrorism.

In *US. Foreign Policy and the Islamist Politics* (2008), Ahmad S. Moussalli, a scholar on US foreign policy in the Middle East, studies extensively how America’s foreign policy in Islamic Arab countries has spawned anti-Americanism in both extreme and moderate forms. America’s agenda in the region (be it to combat communism, terrorism or the access to fossil fuels) has always led it down a path were Arabs viewed it as arrogant in nature. Also US support for Israel can be pinpointed as one of the main causes of anti-Americanism in the region.
Baxter and Akbarzadeh (2008) also discuss anti-Americanism by systematically reviewing the US' foreign policy actions within the region. They give detailed accounts on how the US viewed its relationship with Israel, why it supported it in the first place and how the relationship evolved over the decades. They also study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, US support of Israel during war times, US relationship with dictatorships within the region and how constant demand for fossil fuels has deteriorated the US image in the Middle East.

As for studying how the Jewish community affected US foreign policy in the Middle East, Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) give an extensive explanation on how the Jewish lobby and pro-Israeli individuals have systematically steered US foreign policy in order to satisfy Israel’s interest. Their research is key in understanding why Arabs – both moderate and extremist – are frustrated by the fact that they are unable to do anything to change US actions in the Middle East. Jewish organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) have been notoriously powerful and have used both its wealth and expertise in order to steer US foreign policy. Their influence has penetrated all aspects of American government affecting Congress, the House of Representatives and even the presidency. They also give an interesting perspective on how the neoconservatives were able to steer foreign policy.

Janice J. Terry (2005) also discusses how the Jewish community although not being a major minority in the United States, are able to get things done through better organizational skills, dedication to their cause and wealth. Terry also discusses in detail
how the media in the United States has been giving less coverage about Arab issues in recent years and Arab lobbies – which are much weaker than Jewish lobbies – have been finding very tough competition when it comes to steering US foreign policy.

As for America’s recent performance in Iraq, Paul Rogers (2006) gives an excellent account on how America’s inexperience in peace keeping has caused major backlash from Arabs and the international community. Not only has American involvement with Israel scarred the US image but it has also showed the US’ inability to create a stable democracy in the early stages of the Iraq invasion. Although the situation has improved over the recent years in Iraq, scandals such as the Abu Ghraib incident have tamished the American image and will be very difficult to forget by the Arab community.

So can anything be done to improve the US image in the Middle East? Obama has shown promise during his candidacy as president to change this image. But is that really the case? James Petras (2009) gives a detailed overview of how Obama has changed his policies over the past two years as well as pinpointing the changes in his support for US action in the Middle East. Philip Giraldi (2009) also shows us how Obama has interacted with the Jewish community during his candidacy and presidency. Can his ideology for change beat the reality of American politics?

This thesis, relying on all the literature mentioned above, will try to prove whether the US, under the Obama administration, would be capable of improving the US image in the Middle East. This thesis will give a broader explanation on how the US has created its
image and give a prediction on what will happen in the near future. Although the Obama administration claims that it will improve US image in the Middle East, this thesis will bring the realities of what really affects US foreign policy, and how set prerequisites in the US political system hampers the ability for change in global policy making, especially when it comes to the Middle East. This thesis will also show that these set of realities affects all administrations (Republican or Democrat) and that change can only be achieved when the whole US political system is capable of changing itself. Seeing that the US is a superpower that prefers the status quo, this change will be extremely difficult to materialize under current political conditions.
Chapter 3: US Foreign Policy: Steering towards the Middle East

In order to understand how the United States started steering its foreign policy towards the Middle East, we need to take internal aspects into consideration. As a superpower, the United States is intricately connected to every other state and its foreign policy can affect the lives of both Americans and people abroad. But why should people care about US foreign policy in the first place? The answer is very simple: Because United States Foreign Policy “matters”.

But Americans have taken for granted how much internal American decisions can profoundly affect the international community. This is due to the decline of international news coverage by US media over the past twenty years. In 1987, for example, Time Magazine had only eleven cover stories were related to international issues. This causes American citizens to be unaware or ignorant to events outside their own borders, (Terry, 2005, p. 16)

Although US citizens may be oblivious to what happens outside their borders, US foreign policy can also affect issues that are much closer to home, such as economics and standards of living. Rosati and Scott explain by pointing out that Americans import more than $1.4 trillion a year from abroad and yearly foreign investment is approaching $8 billion. The US also imports over 60 percent of its domestic oil consumption, much of it from the Middle East. (Rosati & Scott, 2007, p. 3)
So where does the Middle East come in? Obviously, the US has a petroleum based economy which has become increasingly dependent on foreign oil. In the 1960s, the United States imported 25 percent of its fossil fuels from abroad, compared to 67.8 percent in the 2000s. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)

As shown above the US relies on a variety of countries in order to satisfy its need for oil. Most of these countries are located in the third world and is led by Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia. The United States today consumes over 25 percent of the world’s energy, and that is a key issue in making the Middle East of great strategic importance. But seeing that the United States is the most powerful country in the world, with limitless technological and industrial strength; why can’t it seem to orient itself to an economy that is less fossil fuel dependant? David Halberstam says that this problem is difficult to solve because Americans have gotten used to the “squandering of oil” and are completely unprepared for change, because they have gotten used to their easy luxuries and this habit would not easily be changed. (Halberstam, 1986, p-70-72)

Let’s not forget that the US also spends over $400 billion on its military and security both internally and externally. But this beckons the question, why does the United States have to focus so much on it security even after the Cold war? Well, by reading what Rosati and Scott said above, the answer shouldn’t be difficult: Assets and investments, both political and economical, should be protected in order to ensure continuity of the status quo and this pivotally includes the safe transfer of fossil fuels towards US shores.
Taking all the above into consideration, it is also important to understand that the process of decision making in American foreign policy isn’t a simple, and straightforward one. When a country acts or intervenes, it is usually done by many individuals, representing that state and of course, how capable lobbies are in steering decision making in order to benefit their cause. According to Rosati and Scott, two very important points must be understood about the dynamic nature of the foreign policy process:

1. US foreign policy process is complex and includes many other individuals (other than the US president) and institutions are involved within the government and throughout society in the foreign policy process.

2. The foreign policy process in the United States is also a political process. US foreign policy (and the so called national interest) tends to reflect the goals and priorities of those individuals and groups who are the most successful in influencing the political process within the government and throughout society. (Rosati & Scott, 2007, p. 4-5)

So who actually formulates foreign policy in the United States? This question is extremely difficult to determine. Although when it comes to foreign policy decisions pertaining to the Middle East, this thesis will show that the Jewish lobbies have a lot of say in them, especially when it comes to the US’ relationship with Israel, which in turn, has a major role in creating negative Arab perceptions towards the United States.

Some individuals may have much more influence in deciding what goes or not, but as Janice J. Terry explains, these exclusivities may change over different administrations by pointing out that “presidents and their advisers have come to consider foreign policy as their exclusive purview. They also largely determine who has access to the decision making process.” (Terry, 2005, p. 4-5)
But before this thesis goes into how the foreign policy process is directed towards the Middle East, it is very important to explain how global developments have changed US foreign policy after the end of the Cold War, and how it also helped steer America’s gaze towards the Middle East. Scholars agree that two global trends appeared to be the most important for directing US foreign policy:

- The collapse of Communism;
- The continuation of global crises, which include wars and conflicts.

The second point is more relevant when it comes to US foreign policy in the Middle East. Some might assume that the end of the Cold War would have been the end of proxy wars and conflicts. But apparently the opposite happened and a complex system immersed where global issues proliferated and power was diffused. This in itself produced more conflict and crises around the world. Rosati & Scott explain how these conflicts may need American intervention in the Middle East, especially “issues that revolve around terrorism and disputes arising from traditional rivalries and state boundaries.” (Rosati & Scott, 2007, p. 51)

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq can be attributed to the above reasons for intervention. Of course, The US invasion of Iraq wasn’t sanctioned by the United Nations, therefore making the US seem unjust,
irresponsible, and arrogant in the eyes of not only Arabs, but the international community as well.

In The Rise and Fall of World Orders, Torbjorn L. Knutsen emphasizes on this point because the prestige and legitimacy of a hegemonic country may affect how the global community reacts to it. Not only should the United States be just and trustworthy, it should also understand the dynamics and cultures of other international communities, which the US takes for granted. The US should understand that its own political mythology is not necessarily universally accepted. (Knutsen, 1999, p. 67)

Internal Constraints on US Foreign Policy

Seeing that the US started creating a bad image of itself, why haven’t US presidents rectified this issue? The truth is that the US president faces a number of limitations and constraints within the US political system, some certain and other uncertain, and these are (with explanation of some of the important points):

- Short presidential term.
- Taking decisions using limited information.

- **The Bureaucracy:** Although the president exercises great power, the bureaucracy has become so large that it is sometimes unresponsive to the president’s desires. There are a number of advantages that allow these bureaucracies to have some autonomy from the president:
1. Each bureaucratic organization develops its own goals, sub-culture and tasks that may be conflicting with the president's goals.

2. The bureaucracy determines the quantity and quality of information delivered to the president.

3. Bureaucrats stay in office much longer than the president does, as some stay in office for 30 years.

4. Bureaucrats often have close relationships with the members of congress, who take decisions and approve programs and funding for the executive branch bureaucracy.

5. Some bureaucracies enjoy independence from presidential authority. Under law, they have the legal right to ignore presidential requests.

- **Congress:** Congress shares (in some way) all the constitutional powers provided to the president, and can be a major constraint on the exercise of presidential power. There is always a power struggle between Congress and the president and factors such as the international threat environment, party control, the issue agenda and the role of moderates in the Congress all have an effect on the nature of this relationship. But according to Rosati and Scott, the president does enjoy a “brief honeymoon with Congress, during which members are more likely to be responsive to presidential requests in light of the of the president’s recent victory. However, the honeymoon rarely lasts more than a few months, and then it is back
to business as usual in presidential-congressional relations.” (Rosati & Scott, 2007, p. 75)

- **Political Parties:** In the US political system, political parties are weak, and the president being the leader of his party does not automatically mean that he has great influence in governing and electoral politics. Presidents cannot force members of their own parties to support them in Congress because as said before, Congressional members have independent power bases.

- **Interest Groups and Social Movements:** This is another important constraint the president faces because the United States contains thousands of interest groups who constantly promote their own goals and interests within the political system, even if these goals are not compatible with the president’s set goals. These groups utilize all available means in order to promote their interests, and these include influencing Congress, members of the executive branch bureaucracy, the media and the American public. Not only do these interests groups have influence in American domestic issues, but they are also quite involved in directing foreign policy as well. This will be discussed in more detail as I will discuss how Jewish interest groups have successfully promoted their goals within the American political system, especially when Israel is involved.

- **Public Opinion:** This is a very important point to be discussed because public approval can be very important source of presidential power. According to the
Gallup Opinion Index taken from the Gallup report of 2006, presidents usually enjoy the same honeymoon period and support from the general public. But as the report shows, public approval tends to decline over time. During times of crises, the public tends to support their president's policies but as the crises extends or lingers, these approval rates tend to take a nose dive. (The Gallup Report, 2006) A very good example can be shown during the term of George W. Bush. According to the Washington Post and ABC news polls, Bush had a 55 percent approval rate when the September 11 attacks took place, and by the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, Bush had an impressive 90 percent approval rate from the American Public. But as the crises went on, his approval rates plummeted to a staggering 29 percent, thanks to problems in Iraq, Afghanistan and the economic recession at the end of his presidency.

So can this trend be shown with the start of the Obama presidency? According to the Gallup Poll shown below, public approval is already declining at a steady rate. If Obama should see any rise in his approval rates, results must come through when it comes to the most pressing issues America deals with today on the domestic and foreign levels.
Gallup Daily: Obama Job Approval
Each result is based on a three-day rolling average

On Jan. 21, Gallup began tracking daily the percentage of Americans who approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president.

(Source: The Gallup Report, 2009, p. 1)

Other polls conducted on June 8, 2009, shows that the majority of Americans currently approve of how President Barack Obama is handling foreign affairs with a 59 percent approval rate, the economy with a 55 percent approval rate, terrorism with a 55 percent approval rate, and the situation in the Middle East with a 55 percent approval rate.

- **The Media**: As said before, different individuals and interest groups try to influence the media in order to gain control over government and to influence domestic politics as well as foreign affairs. It can be a great asset in promoting a president during his presidential nomination and it could have a very negative effect if interest groups and individuals do not approve presidential policies.
Media can also be a very important source of information to the president as well as the general public in dealing with foreign issues, but as Janice J. Terry shows, some loopholes and problems can be found when dealing with American media by saying that even though there are over a 1000 specialists on Middle Eastern issues, they are rarely ever invited to discuss these issues in conferences to avoid any conflict of interest. (Terry, 2005, p. 15)

After taking a brief view of what affects policy making (which includes foreign policy making) in the United States, it is important to understand how foreign Policy was directed toward Middle Eastern countries in the Post Cold War era. Why does the US have such a keen interest in the Middle East? What has affected its decisions? And how do Arabs perceive US actions within their countries?
Chapter 4: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East and U.S. Image

The relationship between the United States and the Middle East has been a dynamic one over the past century. Through this relationship, the US image was forged by past events way before the September 11 attacks and the war on Terrorism.

But in order to understand Arab perception towards US foreign policy in the Middle East, we have to find the roots and reasons behind the US’ bad image. According to Cameron Barr, a writer for the Christian Science Monitor, the US’ status as sole super power has had a negative effect and has automatically made some people unhappy because of its status. (Barr, 2001, p. 1)

William Quandt, a Middle East expert and a former staff member on the National Security Council, also shows that part of Arab resentment towards the US derives from its dominant role in the world, and that Middle Easterners would look at the United States with suspicion, simply because the United States was the sole super power. (Quandt, 2001, p. 1)

On Arab perceptions towards the US, Shibley Telhami writes, “This is not about the objective reality of where the blame lies; it is about entrenched perceptions. The public in the Middle East blames the powers that be, and sees Israel as the most powerful state in the region, an occupier of Arab lands, and the United States as the anchor of that order.” (Telhami, 2001, 417)
Another reason for the US’ bad image in the Middle East involves America’s call for democracy and pluralism while supporting Arab regimes that have a bad record in human rights. This support is usually justified by the need to preserve the status quo in the region, retain its military bases in some Arab countries, the smooth flow of oil to US shores, and to get rid of any fundamentalist Islamic movements.

But the two main reasons for America’s bad image in the Middle East lie in US foreign policy in the region: America’s handling of Iraq and America’s position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to polls conducted by Shibley Telhami, and other study groups, these two issues are the main cause of Arab resentment towards the US and that US foreign policy is bias and geared towards benefiting the Israeli government.

But let us go back in time. Ramzy Baroud, a veteran Arab American journalist explains that up until the second half of the twentieth century, much of the Middle East fell under Western exploitation, degradation, and brutal violence and that even after these Arab nations gained independence, little was done to cure this hatred towards the west. In the second half the twentieth century, the Western countries, led by the US used alternative methods such as installing Western-sponsored local elites in order to safeguard their economic investments in the region. Baroud notes that these interventions (direct or indirect) were the main cause of the deterioration of relations between Est and West. (Baroud, 2005, p.1)
Although the United States was not involved in direct colonialism, Baroud talks about how the United States was not viewed as a menace at first, but its colonialist status was eventually shaped after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, when the US started supporting Israel politically and financially. This created an increasingly negative perception for the Arabs towards the US. Anti-Israel was the same as Anti-Americanism for the Islamic and Arab groups that considered them both a common enemy of the Arab people. (Baroud, 2005, p.1)

US Foreign Policy between the 1940s and 1950s

In the first part of the twentieth century, the United States supported self determination and was against colonialism. But by the 1940s, containing the Soviet threat was high on the US foreign policy agenda. The security of pro-Western governments in the Middle East was important to the United States, as well as containing Soviet expansionism. Ahmad S. Moussalli, a noted scholar on US foreign policy in the Middle East, identifies the first real movement of Anti-Americanism when America intervened in Iran. The Americans helped the Shah overthrow the Mossadegh Government in Iran. With the installment of the Shah, and constant American support for his repressive regime (by arming and training of the oppressive intelligence services), there was much hatred towards the US and anti-Americanism was rampant. This anti-Americanism continued even after the Shah was overthrown. (Moussalli, 2008, p. 15)
Another colossal event happened on the 14th of May 1948, when the Zionist leadership drawing on the legitimacy offered by the UN partition plan, declared independence in the form of Israel. But Baxter and Akbarzadeh note a very interesting point: “The Israeli declaration, although citing the new state’s desire for peace, did not stipulate borders, an omission that has been seen as a clear indication of the leadership’s awareness of the inevitability of conflict.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 37)

So how did the United States react to this declaration? Baxter and Akbarzadeh explain how the United States, although not a key player in the creation of Israel, found Israel to be an immediate ally in the Middle East. When Israel declared its independence, both the US and the Soviet Union immediately recognized the new state. The dynamics of the early Cold War period may well have prompted recognition by the superpowers as Baxter and Akbarzadeh explain below:

“Concerns regarding the new state’s Soviet leanings were intensified by the traditional socialist underpinnings of the Zionist movement. In the context of a rapidly developing Cold War, Washington was worried about the possibility of a pro-Soviet state in the region.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 37)

The Cold War, Israel’s independence, declining British and French power in the Middle East, and the United State’s increasing dependency on fossil fuels can be singled out as the main reasons for the United States to exert its influence in the region as well as stopping Soviet expansion in the region.
US Foreign Policy between the 1960s and 1980s

Between the 1960s and 1980s, US foreign policy was framed in opposition to secular Arab nationalism. The US also built alliances with Arab states (although authoritarian in nature) that had some leverage in combating communism. Also, the US built a stronger relationship with Israel especially after the 1967 and 1973 wars. Also, the Arab fuel embargo, the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis that followed generated a negative view of Islam, and the US considered it to be a threat towards Western interests. The OPEC oil boycott triggered escalating oil prices and affected the lives of every American. By the 1980s, Arab nationalists had become corrupt, old and had given in to compromise. In addition, the Libyan president Qaddafi began employing Islamic symbolism in order to legitimize his rule and the fall of the Iranian Shah’s government in the 1979 Iranian Revolution started generating great concern for American policy makers. The Iranian Revolution had stirred up US foreign policy makers and changed the way Islam was viewed by the American public. Ayatollah Khomeini called the United States the “Great Satan” and inflicted humiliation on the US when he held fifty three American hostages for 444 days. Islamism had replaced secular nationalism as the new security threat to the US. By the early 1980s, these Islamic movements had caused instability in countries like Saudi Arabia (with the two week takeover of the Grand mosque by Islamists), Egypt (with the assassination of president Anwar al-Sadat), as well as attacks against US personnel in Lebanon and Kuwait. The exportation of Iranian Islamism was the US’ main
concern in the region. But the Carter Administration considered this Islamic threat secondary in comparison to the Soviet danger. Both the Carter and Reagan Administrations were ready to work with Islamists in order to counter communist threats. One example would be when in 1979, the US helped train Islamic groups combat the Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan. In the mid-1980s, the US supported Iraq in its war with Iran and there was a growing concern about the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

America had dully underestimated the long term problems of this issue and this would eventually come back to haunt them. Now we know that the roots of one of today’s most notorious terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda, who’s sole purpose is to end foreign influence in Muslim countries originated thanks to US funding to anti-communist Islamist groups. According to John Cooley, the terrorists that bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, used manuals that were written by the CIA on how to make bombs and explosives. (Cooley, 2003, p. 45)

**US Foreign Policy from the 1989 to Present**

By the end of the Cold War, the US emerged as the sole super power, and as said before the world became a much more complex place with the rise globalization and the US being more capable in intervening in other countries affairs. When it came to the Middle East, the US always favored the Jewish side for a number of reasons: Jewish
lobbies were extremely active inside US politics, the proliferation of Islamist and anti-
American movements were endangering US interests in the region, as well as Israel being a very strong US ally. The Jewish community were able to promote a strong relationship between the US and Israel. Leading Jewish lobbies such as the AIPAC has won US support when it comes to many issues concerning Israel. Israel also had effect on the US’ view on Islamic movements at the time, as Moussalli explains that “to a great extent, Israel’s view of Islamism influences US perceptions of Islamic movements.” So much so that officials in the US government (Congress, House of Representatives) are very much concerned with Israel’s safety and security in the Middle East; especially when it comes to terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region (Moussalli, 2008, p. 19).

It can be argued that the peak of anti-Americanism and rise of Islamist movements can be traced to this era, culminating in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. America had drastically underestimated Islamic movements such as Al-Qaeda and their counterparts. The war on terrorism was accepted and supported by the international community but a year after there was much dissatisfaction with how the United States was running things in the Middle East, especially that no weapons of mass destruction were ever found in Iraq. The US image in the Middle East was becoming more and more tarnished due to its unfavorable results. Janice J. Terry also points out a contradiction in US foreign policy in the Middle East during this era:

"The inherent contradictions between fulsome US support for Israel and its attempts to placate Arab demands for self determination for the Palestinians
remain a source of ongoing tension.” (Terry, 2005, p. 23)

Can we identify a certain trend in US foreign Policy when it comes to dealing with the Arab issue? Obviously, lobbyists have a huge role in controlling and selling their ideas in US politics. Seeing that the pro-Israeli lobbies have always been very aggressive and active in getting their policies through, it is clear to see why Israel has the upper hand when it comes to decisions taken by the US in the Middle East, which is one of the leading causes of resentment and frustrated for Arab lobbyists in the US.

But it is also important to review the United State’s relationship with Israel over the past century focusing on times of crises (wars and conflicts), because wars conducted by Israel have usually been controversial in nature, and US support for Israel have usually earned it a bad reputation with Arabs and Muslims in the region. Some scholars agree that the roots of anti-Americanism are for the most part concentrated in the past decade, especially during the Bush Jr. administration. But as above, anti-Americanism seems to be rooted in history for the most part. Some major points have been identified as the lead causes of anti-Americanism and fundamentalism in the Arab world. Three of the four points tend to be concentrated within the previous decade. Andrew Kohut, in his Arab and Muslim Perceptions of the United States testimony to U.S. House International Relations Committee, identifies fours major roots of anti-Americanism after conducting surveys in Arab countries.
• The US invasion of Iraq and the ongoing conflict in that region has been a main cause of anti-Americanism and still remains to be widely unpopular with most Arabs.

• The war on terrorism, although not directed towards Islam, has been fought in Muslim countries. This has been perceived negatively by Arabs.

• Anti-Americanism is also fueled by the perception that the US acts in a selfish, unjust and unilateral manner when dealing with global issues.

• The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a major cause of anti-Americanism in the region. A 2003 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center found that an average of 90% of those surveyed in Arab and Muslim countries believed the U.S. favors Israel too much. (Kohut, 2005, p. 1)

As shown in his fourth point, a huge portion of the Arabs surveyed agree that the US “favors Israel.” In the next section, this thesis will focus on how the US favored Israel during times of crisis.
Chapter 5: The US-Israeli Alliance: A Symbiotic Relationship

- The 1948 War

The day after Israel’s declaration of independence, the Arab nations, with their combined forces, invaded the new state. This was the beginning of the first major war between the Arabs and the Israelis. The Israelis called it “The Israeli War of Independence” while the Palestinians called it “The Catastrophe” or “Al-Nakba”. Palestinian civilians were the most affected by this conflict, as they found themselves lacking stable Palestinian leadership and fled the country fearing Zionist military action against them. Massacres and violence against civilians were perpetrated on both sides leading to many civilian deaths. The failure of the local Palestinian resistance against the Israelis forced the Arab states (that were bound by pan-Arab solidarity and their belief in their ability to defeat the Israelis) to declare war. The Arab armies suffered from poor leadership and coordination while the more organized, better armed Israeli Army was able to take advantage of the Arab army’s low morale. Ultimately, “this low morale differential in the field, the contrasts in degree of political will and military training, the impact of the apparent and public superpower support for the state of Israel, and the need for the new Arab states to hold back some of their forces to protect the status quo at home” were some of the main reasons why the Arabs were defeated in the 1948 war. (Khalidi, 2001, p. 29)
As a result, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced, ending up in refugee camps in Arab states like Egypt and Jordan. The Palestinians were victims on both sides of the borders. According to Baxter and Akbarzadeh, the creation of Israel in the heart of the Arab Middle East was “the culmination and commencement of a struggle between two peoples in one land. In the contemporary period, this conflict, which ebbed and flowed for nearly one hundred years, is one of the greatest factors in the formulation of US foreign policy in the region and the major contributing force to the dynamics of Arab anti-Americanism.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 47)

Although the US was not directly linked to the Israel’s independence, later events will help fortify their long standing relationship; one of the main reasons that helped worsen the US image in the region.

- **The Aftermath of the 1956 Suez War**

After Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, due to the United States’ and Britain’s withdrawal of a $250 million loan to Egypt for the construction of the Aswan Dam (this refusal was justified by the US because of Nasser’s increasing overtures to the Soviet Union), it deprived France and United Kingdom of profits. It also deprived Israel of waterway access. France, the United Kingdom and Israel were infuriated, and Operation Musketeer went under way, in which the canal was retaken by the combined military forces of the British, French and Israelis on the 29th of October 1956. But this would cause public out roar both in the Arab world and the international
community including the United States and the Soviet Union. The political tension caused by this invasion, forced the French, British and Israelis to withdraw from the canal. In a rare occasion, America was viewed by the Arabs as a defender of Arab self-determination, but Nasser frustrated with the lack of US support after the Suez Canal incident, turned to the Soviet Union and received large amounts of funding and military hardware. It was during this period that the relationship between Israel and the US warmed up. The Kennedy administration was the first to show U.S. commitment to Israel’s military security. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 25)

Kennedy authorized the first major sale of US weaponry (Hawk antiaircraft missiles) to Israel in 1963. Mearsheimer and Walt also give another angle on why Kennedy took this decision:

“This shift reflected a number of strategic considerations – such as to counter balance the Soviet grip in the region, dampen Israel’s nuclear ambitions, and encourage Israel’s leaders to respond favorably to US peace initiatives – but skillful Israeli diplomacy, the influence of several pro-Israel adviser, and Kennedy’s understandable desire to maintain support from Jewish voters and donors played a role in his decision as well.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 25)

• The 6 day War of 1967:

In the 1960s, Nasser became more involved in the Soviet Camp and the idea of pan-Arab Nationalism became more prominent in the Middle East. This was not welcomed
warmly by the United States as it was considered that the unification of the Arab world under the ideal of a shared Arab destiny had socialism written all over it. After many border clashes between Israel and its Arab neighbors (especially Syria), Nasser ordered the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Forces (which had been working as a buffer between the Egypt and Israel in the Sinai Peninsula since 1957) and declared that he would block Israeli goods from shipment through the straits of Tiran. Egypt also made defense pacts with Jordan and Iraq, which caused Israel to take preemptive measures. On the 5th of June 1967, Israel initiated the war with a preemptive strike, and after a mere six days later, Israel had accomplished a miraculous victory against the combined forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. By the end of the 6 day war, Israel had occupied the West Bank, the Sinai and the Golan Heights (which had more than one million Palestinians living in those regions). Territorially Israel had increased its size six fold. The west viewed this war as an act of self defense, while Arabs and Muslims viewed this war as an act of aggression. Nasser’s reputation was destroyed and the balance of power within the region had shifted dramatically. As a result, many Arab states, including Egypt, Syria and Iraq, cut formal ties with the United States, citing the US’ support of Israel but in reality, Washington retained diplomatic ties with Cairo and Damascus and intensified its relationship with Jordan. Moscow cut all ties with Israel, leaving the US as the sole external power in contact with both the Israeli and Arab camps. Baxter and Akbarzadeh explain how the US and Israel became closer after this war:

“Since this took place during the Cold War, the Soviet involvement led to Washington taking the position of Israel’s major supplier and thus assuring itself of the role of moderator in the regional
When it came to US aid, the Six Day War was a turning point as Mearsheimer and Walt point out that US aid to Israel has increased dramatically over the decades, which included economic and military assistance. This amount of aid increased from only $6.3 million in 1943 to a staggering $635 million during the Yom Kippur war in 1973. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 26)

On the 22nd of November 1967, as a response to the Six-Day War, the United Nations Security Council came up with Resolution 242, a resolution that has since been never implemented by Israel, due to the resolution not being clear. The English version of the resolution called for 'withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.' But this resolution did not specify the exact territories from which Israel was supposed to withdraw. This caused some confusion on how the Resolution was interpreted.

The resolution also called for the “termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force while affirming the need for just settlement for the refugee problem.” (United Nations Security Council, Resolution 242, 1967)
It was interpreted differently by both the Arabs and the Israelis. The resolution was initially accepted by Egypt, Jordan and Israel but not by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Due to different translations, the Arab interpretation was that the Resolution called for Israel to withdraw from all the territory it occupied during the Six-Day War prior to peace agreements. On the other hand, Israel interpreted the resolution as calling for withdrawal from territories as part of a negotiated peace and full diplomatic recognition.

As for the Israelis, who were backed by the United States, they asserted the right to their security. In a speech given by President Lyndon Johnson given on the 10th of September 1968, he affirmed United States’ position by saying:

“We are not the ones to say where other nations should draw lines between them that will assure each the greatest security. It is clear, however, that a return to the situation of 4 June 1967 will not bring peace. There must be secure and there must be recognized borders. Some such lines must be agreed to by the neighbors involved.” (Rostow, 1975, p. 284)

Another very interesting event that happened after the conflict was the refusal of Israel to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968.

“Washington demanded explanations for the refusal to sign the treaty, but was satisfied with the response that Israel would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the region.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2008, 56)
The Arabs saw that Israel was getting special treatment from the US, which further degraded the US image in the region. Recent examples such as Iraq and North Korea show how the United States was strict in implementing pressures in order to halt nuclear programs or at least get insurances that these states were not actively running nuclear programs for military purposes. So why was Israel spared from this? As said before, America saw Israel as a powerful ally in the Middle East, which is why President Lyndon Johnson was not willing to pull US support from Israel due to Soviet presence in the Middle East. Avner Cohen in his detailed history of Israel Nuclear program explains this oddity:

“Instead of inspections every six months, in practice Johnson settled for a quick visit once a year or so. And when the CIA Director Richard Helms came to the White House in 1968 to inform Johnson that US intelligence had concluded that Israel had in fact acquired a nuclear capability, Johnson told him to make sure that nobody else was shown the evidence, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.” (Cohen, 1999, p. 193)

- The Yom Kippur/Ramadan War of 1973

On Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, 6th of October 1973, a combined assault by Egypt and Syria, took Israel by surprise. This time around, the Arab forces, backed by the Soviet Union, were more organized and had planned out their attack. The Israeli army struggled at first to repel the invasion and had reached a critical state because of lack of ammunition and other military hardware. But the US, seeing that it could not allow its most significant regional ally to be defeated by a Soviet backed invasion, came
to the rescue on the 13th of October 1973 when the US president ordered a massive airlift of military hardware to support the Israeli army. Mearsheimer and Walt explain how the Americans took this decision to help Israel:

“As Kissinger recounts in his memoirs, ‘if Israel won overwhelmingly – as we first expected – we had to avoid becoming the focal point of all Arab resentments. We had to keep the Soviet Union from emerging as the Arabs’ savior … if the unexpected happened and Israel was in difficulty, we would have to do what was necessary to save it.’” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 43)

When Israel faced difficulties during this war, both American Presidents at the time (Kissinger and Nixon) supplied Israel with $2.2 billion worth of weaponry aid. Although the US tried to calculate how the Arab states would react, not everything went according to plan. The 1973 war led to the politicization of the oil trade in the Middle East. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) led by Saudi Arabia, placed a fuel embargo on Israel and Western countries, especially the United States. This led soaring fuel prices and imposed significant economic costs on the United States and its allies. For the first time, oil was used by the Arab States as geo-strategic tool. This embargo did put the United States under pressure, and caused Kissinger to start a mediation process between the Arabs and Israelis in order to break the stalemate that was caused by the 1967 war. But Israel was steadfast and was not willing to give up any land because of economic pressures and this actually backfired on the Arabs, as it brought the US and Israel even closer as allies:
“[The Oil Embargo] demonstrated to the US administration that the Arab states would go to political and economic extremes to pursue their objectives, a revelation that increasingly situated Israel as the leading rational player in the region. Thus the oil embargo designed and implemented to affect Israel’s regional behavior, merely brought Israel and the United States even closer.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 58)

Yet, this embargo helped remove the stalemate when Kissinger led a “step-by-step” mediation process between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Mearsheimer and Walt talk about diplomatic assistance the US gave the Israelis during the period after the 1973 war, including dealing with the Palestinian Liberation Organization:

“In addition to giving Israel increased military aid, the United States pledged to ‘concert action’ with Israel when preparing for a subsequent peace conference and give Israel a de facto veto over PLO participation in any future peace talks.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 44)

After the oil embargo, the United States was clearly aligned with Israel and was involved in almost all negotiations pertaining to creating peace in the Middle East. The 1978 Camp David Accord was one such example which led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979. Unfortunately, this peace treaty did not trigger other similar treaties with the rest of Israel’s neighbors, as there was still much resentment between the warring factions. The Egyptian President Anwar Sadat paid the ultimate price for taking part of these negotiations, when he was assassinated by the Islamist group Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Also, Egypt was considered a traitor by other Arab states. In the meantime, Israel and the United States strengthened their relationship even further: This bond between
Israel and the United States was officially formalized on the 30th of November 1981 with the first signing of an Israeli-US strategic cooperation agreement against Soviet Influence. It is worth noting that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo agreement with Israel in 1993. Jordan also followed suit in 1994 with the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty.

- **The Lebanon War of 1982**

Out of all the conflicts Israel had with its neighbors, the war with Lebanon is considered to be the most controversial of them all. The civil war that had been raging in Lebanon since 1975 was a war heavily influenced by outside forces: Syria deploying its forces in Lebanon in the late 1970s and Israel’s willingness to arm Lebanese Maronites by spending $150 million between 1975 and 1977 can be cited as some examples. (Black and Morris, 1996, p. 581)

After the events of “Black September” in Jordan, the Palestinian Liberation Army moved to the South of Lebanon. Led by Yasser Arafat, the PLO continued pressuring the Israelis with continued armed incursions into Israel. This was a frequent occurrence during the 1970s. Israel didn’t have to wait long in order to get its reason for invading Lebanon. The attempted assassination of Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations by the Palestinian Abu Nidal faction (which had nothing to do with the PLO, and rejected Arafat’s leadership) was reason enough for Israel to plan its assault on the South of Lebanon in order to break Palestinian nationalism and secure Israel’s Northern borders. According to Baxter and Akbarzadeh, “in contrast to previous battles, the war in Lebanon
was seen as a war of choice rather than necessity, and it proved deeply unpopular with the Israeli public.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 61)

After the initial invasion, Israel continued on until it reached Beirut in order to flush out the remaining PLO supporters. Israel became more ambitious with its goals, as it intended to install a pro-Israeli government led by Gemayel. But Gemayel’s assassination thwarted the Israeli plan and Israel’s siege on Beirut was met with international condemnation. But on the other hand, this was the final nail in the coffin of pan-Arabic nationalism, due to the inaction of the Arab governments to help Lebanon in this time of crisis. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf states refused to give refuge for the PLO fighters, but they were eventually evacuated to Tunisia under a US brokered deal. Baxter and Akbarzadeh also talk about another event that would tarnish Israel’s reputation even further:

“Sabra and Shatila were two Palestinian refugee camps under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Defense Force. The departure of the armed PLO fighters left these communities vulnerable in a context marked by a desire for retribution. During the siege of Beirut, Israeli forces allowed the Phalange, a Lebanese Christian militia, into the camps, resulting in a massacre of Palestinian men, women and children. The death toll estimates range wildly, from several hundred to over 2,500.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 62)

So where was the United States in all of this? After the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the United States suddenly found itself drawn into the conflict. The US participation in the
war proved fatal as suicide bombers struck both the American embassy in April 1983 and the marine barracks in October of the same year, killing 63 people and 241 marines respectively. This eventually led to a complete US withdrawal the following year. But how did the US react to the Israeli conduct in the Lebanese war? Historian and diplomat Itamar Rabinovich says that “despite verbal protestations and other gestures and occasional genuine irritation, the United States lent Israel the Political support that enabled it to proceed with the war for an unusually long time.” (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 146)

The Secretary of the State at the time, George P. Shultz also confirms this when he says that, instead of sanctioning Israel for invading Lebanon, Congress actually went ahead and voted to give Israel an extra $250 million in additional military assistance in December 1982, even though he and President Reagan strongly objected to this. (Lerner, 2007, p. 1)

It is worth noting that Hezbollah was formed in order to resist Israeli occupation in the South of Lebanon.

- **The July War of 2006**

Although the IDF had withdrawn from the South of Lebanon in the year 2000, it was by no means the end of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, which continued to launch sporadic small-scale missile attacks against Israel’s Northern communities. But in the
early days of July 2006, Hezbollah launched a cross border raid in which two Israeli soldiers were captured, and a number of IDF soldiers were killed in a rescue attempt.

On the 12th of July 2006, Israel launched a 34 day conflict that would engulf Lebanon once again. The IDF attacked targets even before the Israeli Cabinet decided on a certain response. The Air Force bombed roads, bridges and the Lebanese international airport. On the 14th of July, a U.S.-French draft resolution was rejected by both the United States and Israel. The United States, with the support of its allies (the United Kingdom and Australia) linked this conflict to the war of terrorism and Israel's right to self defense. Efforts by the United States to stale the ceasefire were apparent when for example John Bolton, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations said that the idea of a ceasefire was not going to solve the problem and that it was too simplistic in nature. (Democracy Now, 2006, p. 1) Again, on the 15th of July, the US was the only member in the Security Council to refuse a ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel.

On the 14th of July, as the campaign in Lebanon began, The US supplied Israel with jet fuel worth around $210 million, in order for Israel sustain Israel's attack on Lebanese targets and maintain its security in the region. (Defense Security Cooperation Agency news release, 2006, p.1)

And on the 20th of July, the United States Congress voted in support of Israel's "right to defend itself" with 410 positive votes compared to only 8 negative votes. (Final Vote Results for Roll Call 391, 2006, p.1)
After the passing of the resolution by the US Congress, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) praised the results saying that: "Recent polls indicate that U.S. support for Israel is at an all-time high and the resolutions are a reflection of the American people's desire to stand by Israel in this time of crisis." (AIPAC applauds passage of congressional resolutions, 2006, p. 1)

Lebanese citizens accused the United States of delaying the ceasefire and of its support of Israel's attacks. According to Nicholas Blanford, "this was clear in a poll conducted two weeks into the conflict, when it showed that only 8 percent of the respondents felt that the US would support Lebanon, while 87 percent supported Hezbollah's fight against Israel." (Blanford, 2006, p. 1)

Ultimately, a UN endorsed ceasefire (UN Security Council Resolution 1701) went into effect on the 14th of August 2006 and Israel's naval blockage was lifted a few weeks after. Although both sides declared victory, there was no clear winner in this war. Israel did not succeed to eradicate Hezbollah and this added prestige and publicity to the Hezbollah's regional standing. In the rhetoric of the "war of terrorism", President George W. Bush blamed Syria and Iran for the suffering of the Lebanese people saying that both Iran and Syria armed and facilitated the access of weaponry to Hezbollah, as well as supporting Hezbollah's cause. (State Department, 2006, p. 1)
• The Gaza War of 2009

After a fragile six month truce between Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah, meaning "Islamic Resistance Movement" (Hamas) and Israel expired on the 19th of December 2008; it was difficult to find an easy solution in order to extend the truce between them. Both sides blamed each other for breaching the conditions of the truce. Hamas blamed Israel for not lifting the Gaza strip blockade which had caused a lot of difficulty for Hamas, as well as blaming Israel for raiding a tunnel crossing the border between Israel and Gaza on the 4th of November 2008. On the other hand, Israel accused Hamas of also violating the truce between them, due to the frequent rocket and mortar attacks in Israeli cities conducted by Hamas.

Israel began planning for this offensive six months prior to the invasion by collecting intelligence and potential targets. In a statement by Defense Minister Ehud Barak he stated that the offensive was the result of Israel’s “patience running out” over the rocket attacks. (Black, 2008, p. 1)

On the first day of the strikes, the Reuters reported that at least 229 Palestinians were killed and more than 700 were injured. Many civilians, including children, were among the casualties. (al-Mughrabi, 2008, p. 1) According to Amnesty international, the air raid started while children were leaving their schools. (Israel/OPT: Immediate access to humanitarian workers and observers essential, 2008, p. 1)
By the 3rd of January 2009, before Israel started the ground assault on Gaza, the Israeli Forces had conducted over 2000 bombings in Gaza, killing 400, of which an estimated 100 people were civilian casualties. we (Israel steps up offensive on Gaza, 2009, p. 1)

After a unilateral ceasefire was agreed by both sides, Israel pulled out of Gaza by the 21st of January 2009. But the damage had already been done according to a report conducted by the BBC:

“It is estimated that between 1,166 to 1,417 Palestinians, and 13 Israelis, died in the conflict. In the days following the ceasefire, the BBC reported that more than 400,000 Gazans were left without running water. Also, 4000 homes had been ruined, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless.” (Scale of Gaza destruction emerges, 2009, p. 1)

Taking a similar stance during July War, President George W. Bush initially blamed the conflict on Hamas, and he reasserted that the United States supported “Israel's right to protect itself. But the president also expressed concern for the people of Gaza and pledged millions of dollars of aid to the U.N. to help elevate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.” (Wolfson, 2009, p. 1)

The United States also supported “a cease-fire, but blocked a United Nations Security Council Resolution calling for one, stating that it will only support a plan that will end the rocket attacks into Israel, open the border crossings into Gaza, and deal with the network of smuggling tunnels leading into Gaza.” (Lander, 2009, p. 1)
On the 10th of January, the United States House of Representatives (once again) passed an AIPAC pushed resolution with 390 positive votes to 5 negative votes, “recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza.” (US congress votes to back Israel, 2009, p. 1)

All of the examples that have been given have shown how the United States has supported Israel meticulously through wartime incidents. Not only has the United States backed Israel on a domestic level by passing pro-Israeli resolutions in Congress and the House of Representatives, but it has also done so on the international level. According to Donald Neff, there have been 41 cases in which the US used its veto in order to protect Israel from Security Council resolutions that were in anyway against Israel's interests. (Neff, 2006, p.1)

One can only ask how frustrated the Arab people might be due to the US’ constant support for Israel. Would it be unjust to say that the US’ bad image can be linked to the lack of action made by the international community due to the United States’ constant vetoes against their basic human rights and their right to self determination? Can the US support for Israel be justified by saying it is beneficial to the US’ strategic interests in the Middle East region today? This will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 6: Why Israel?

As said before, the United State’s relationship with Israel got stronger as the United States saw Israel as an important ally over the many decades that passed. Today, the AIPAC, the most influential pro-Israeli lobbying organization in the United States declares that the United States and Israel have a “deep strategic partnership aimed at confronting the common threats of both nations” and says that the United States-Israel cooperation in relation to defense and homeland security “has proven to be a paramount and ever increasing importance.” (The US-Israeli Strategic partnership, 2007, p. 1)

Mearsheimer and Walt also clarify how the pro-Israelis see this partnership by saying that:

“The strategic rationale for extensive US support of the Jewish state portrays this policy not as an act of charity or a moral obligation, and certainly not as a consequence of domestic lobbying. Instead, steadfast support for Israel is said to be a reflection of America’s overreaching strategic interests: the United States backs Israel because doing so supposedly makes all Americans safer.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 49-50)

Also, The US saw Israel as a powerful ally during the Cold War in order to keep Soviet expansionism in the Middle East at bay. During this period, Israel’s strategic value might have been worth the effort on the US’ part. Israel helped the United States contain the Soviet threat by inflicting humiliating defeats to the Soviet’s Arab allies like Syria and
Egypt, making it clear that the Soviet Union had limited value as an effective patron, while enhancing US prestige. But has Israel really been such a useful strategic asset during the Cold War as the American put it? According to Mearsheimer and Walt, they give three reasons why this isn’t really the case:

1. Israel did help tame Soviet client states, but America’s support for Israel helped push those states into Moscow’s arms in the first place.

2. US support for Israel fueled the Arab-Israeli conflict and little progress was made towards a settlement.

3. US-Israeli relations in the 1960s and 1970s helped increase anti-Americanism across the Arabic and Islamic world. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 52-54)

Not only did it cause more Arab countries to create close ties with the Soviet Union but it also gave rise to Arab extremist groups who were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause to return home. Harry Shaw, an American analyst and former head of the Office of Management and Budget’s Military Assistant Branch, wrote about this phenomenon in 1986, when he explains that the inability for both Arabs and Israelis to reach a peace settlement has helped strengthen the cause of radical Islamist groups, which benefit from this lack of agreement between the two parties. (Shaw, 1986, p. 137)

A good example of how these Islamic groups were formed due to Israeli actions in the Middle East would be how the Invasion of Lebanon by Israel directly led to the formation of Hezbollah, which many believe conducted the suicide bombings on the US embassy and the US army barracks which took more than 250 American lives. This was the cost the United States had to pay by taking sides in the Lebanese war.
Can the same argument be made about Israel’s strategic value after the end of the Cold War? Bernard Reich, a political scientist of the George Washington University gives an answer to that question: “Israel is of limited military or economic importance to the United States ... it is not a strategically vital state.” (Reich, 2004, p. 149) But how is that so?

Mearsheimer and Walt give us a great example of how Israel’s strategic value was diminished during the first Gulf War:

“When Iraq fired Scud missiles into Israel in the hope of provoking an Israeli response that would fracture the coalition, Washington had to divert resources to defend Israel and to keep it on the sidelines. Israel was not to blame for this situation, of course, but it illustrates the extent to which it was becoming a liability more than an asset.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 58)

Also, the element of “Rogue States” such as Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya and terrorism were supposed to be the new rationale for keeping Israel as a strategic ally. But taking factual data into account, these states were too weak to even pose a serious threat to the United States. According to the CIA world factbook, the combined populations of these states would add up to around 40% of the US population and their combined GDP didn’t even total 5 percent of the US’s GDP. Not to mention that their combined military spending added up to only around 3 percent of the US annual military budget. (CIA Factbook, 2008, p. 1)
But let’s take the events of September 11 into account here. Can the US’ support of Israel justify its strategic value against the war on terrorism? The new rationale was that the US and Israel were fighting a common terrorist entity that threatened both nations. But is that really the case? Other than al-Qaeda, no other Islamic group or “terrorist organizations” have ever conducted operations inside US soil. The Israelis argued that US helping Israel had no role whatsoever in the US’ terrorism problem or the growing anti-Americanism in the Middle East and that the United States should continue helping Israel combat groups like Hezbollah and Hamas in order to have “common security.” But unlike al-Qaeda, Hezbollah does not pose any direct threat to the United States, therefore not creating any direct danger to the United States or its security. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 63)

Moshe Maoz, a Hebrew University Historian also shares the same argument when he says that “[Hezbollah] is mostly a threat against Israel. They did attack US targets when there were American troops in Lebanon, but they killed to oust foreign forces from Lebanon. I doubt very much whether Hezbollah will go out of its way to attack.” (Macz, 2004, p. 1) Patrick Seale, a Middle East expert also says: “Hezbollah is pure a local phenomenon directed purely at the Israelis.” (Seale, 2006, p. 1)

As pointed out before, the US support for Israel has been a major part in creating anti-Americanism in the Middle East, and most of what the US faces today from terrorist attacks and Islamic hatred is in part due its “unconditional” support for Israel, therefore
allowing fundamentalist groups to easily recruit new individuals who share the same hatred for the US and its policies in the Middle East.

A great example of how United States’ support for Israel inspired anti-Americanism can be found in Steve Cole’s book Ghost Wars. In his book, Cole talks about how Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 attacks on the World Trade Center, mailed letters to several New York Newspapers in which he took credit for the attacks and demanded that the United States terminate its aid to Israel. Cole also talks about how Yousef, following his arrest, felt guilty about causing US deaths. Cole continues by saying that Yousef’s remorse “was overridden by the strength of his desire to stop the killing of Arabs by Israeli troops and that bombing American targets was the only way to cause change. He truly believed that his actions had been rational and logical in pursuit of a change in US foreign policy toward Israel … [Yousef] mentioned no other issue in American foreign policy that concerned him.” (Cole, 2004, p. 250-251, 273)

Another example would be Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda’s sympathies towards the Palestinian cause. Ever since Osama was a young man he resented America for aiding Israel so strongly and not taking into consideration the Palestinian suffering. Osama condemned America for its actions in the Middle East and called for jihad against the US on many occasions prior to September 11. When CNN reporter Peter Arnett asked Bin laden why he had declared jihad against the United States, bin Laden replied: “We declared jihad against the United Sates government, because the US government is unjust, criminal, and tyrannical. It has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous,
and criminal whether directly or through its support of the Israeli occupation of the Land of the Prophet’s Night Journey [Palestine]. And we believe the US is directly responsible for those who were killed in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq.” (Lerner, 2007, p. 1)

Alan Dershowitz, an American lawyer, political commentator and Professor of Law at Harvard Law School argues differently by saying that,

“Bin Laden was primarily motivated by the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia. It was America’s ties to and defense of an Arab state – from which 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers originated – and not the Jewish state, that most clearly precipitated the events of 11 September 2001.” (Dershowitz, 2006, p. 1)

But in a 2009 survey conducted by Shibley Telhami, most Arabs that took the survey show similar views on what drives American foreign policy in the Middle East.
In a study conducted by Amnesty International, it estimated that between 1967 and 2003, Israel destroyed more than ten thousand homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (this is not including the four thousand homes destroyed during the 2009 Gaza War). (Amnesty International, 2003, p. 1) Due to Israel’s actions, it is no wonder that Arabs and Muslims that were angry at US actions in the Middle East showed sympathy for al-Qaeda’s causes. A poll conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Survey in 2002 showed that “public opinion about the United States in the Middle East/Conflict Area is overwhelmingly negative as much of this unpopularity stems from the Palestinian issue.” (What the World Thinks in 2002, 2002, p. 54)

According to its arguments, Israel was also fighting the same war the US was fighting in the post September 11 era. In April of 2002, Congress passed two identical resolutions by an overwhelming positive vote majority declaring that “the United States and Israel are now engaged in a common struggle against terrorism.” (House of Representatives Resolutions 247 and 392, 2002) AIPAC was also pushing for the same justification and campaigning for the US-Israeli common stance against terrorism. AIPAC theme for its 2002 annual conference was “America and Israel Standing Against Terror” and most of the presentations emphasized on the US’ and Israel’s common threat from the Taliban, Osama Bin Laden, Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria. (Hearn, 2002, p. 67 – 68)

How are these rogue states (especially the Iran, which the US and Israel consider to have a nuclear weapons program) even capable of threatening the United States? Mearsheimer and Walt provide a simple answer
“US concerns about Saddam’s WMD programs or Iran’s current nuclear ambitions derive largely from the threat they are said to pose to Israel ... Yet given that both Israel and the United States have powerful nuclear forces of their own, this danger is overstated. Attacking the United States or Israel directly is out of the question, because the perpetrator would immediately face a devastating retaliation.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 72-73)

In retrospect, would Israel come to the United State’s rescue or even help when a serious situation should come up? It would be difficult to imagine how this scenario would be even possible: Israel helping the United States. But let us think on more realistic terms. Has Israel gone against US interests in the past? According to some studies, the answer would be a resounding yes. Like any state, Israel takes its own interests into account over other interests, but its tactics have been shady in nature pertaining to its relationship with the US. For example, in 1954 Israel tried to bomb American offices in Egypt in order to cause tension between the US and Egypt. In 1979, Israel sold weapons to Iran while Americans were being held hostage by the Iranian government. Ironically, Israel was also Iran’s main weapon’s supplier during its war with Iraq, while on the other side US was supporting Saddam against Iran. Israel also sold American technology to third parties without the Unites States’ consent, which violated American interests. Also according to Dunkin L. Clarke, one of the most obvious reasons for tension between these allies is the aggressive industrial and military espionage Israel
conducts inside the United States. Acquiring secrets from the United States gives Israel the upper hand in the economic and military marketplace. (Clarke, 1998, p. 21)

It is odd to think that the US would not get a firm grasp on how its image was being viewed in the Middle East, and how most of the problem it faces today with terrorism today stems from the fact that it constantly supports Israel through thick and thin. A pew survey that was conducted in 2005 found that 39 percent of the American public said that America’s relationship with Israel was “a major source of global discontent.” On the other hand, 78 percent of the members of the news media, 72 percent of security experts, 69 percent of foreign affairs specialists and 72 percent of members of the media thought that America’s support of Israel was one of the lead causes of damaging the United States’ image around the world. (America’s place in the world 2005, 2005, p. 11-12)

How could American foreign policy makers be so blind to this discontent? In the next section, I will explain this phenomenon by focusing on how Israeli lobbies, especially the AIPAC, have come up with their own ways on order to secure pro-Israeli foreign policy in the United States.

The Israel Lobby and Neoconservatives

So why is there this disinclination for policy makers and members of Congress to condemn Israel’s policies openly? Mearsheimer and Walt explain:
“In addition to the obvious desire not to say anything that might aid Israel’s enemies, groups or individuals who criticize Israeli policy or the US-Israeli relationship are likely to find it harder to retain support and raise funds within the Jewish community. They also run the risk of being ostracized by the larger mainstream Jewish organizations.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 125)

The Jewish Lobby is broad network of different interest groups whose borders cannot be identified precisely. But the bulk of the lobby is comprised of Jewish Americans who are committed to steer United States foreign policy toward Israel’s interests. According to historian Melvin I. Urofsky, “no other ethnic group in American history has so extensive an involvement with a foreign nation.” (Urofsky, 1975, p. 54)

Some of the key organizations in this lobby include the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Israel Policy Forum, the American Jewish Community, the American Jewish Congress, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Americans for a Safe Israel, American Friends of Likud, Mercaz-USA, Hadassah and many others. Also the lobby includes think tanks like the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the Middle East Forum and Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP). According the American Jewish Yearbook of 2005, there were more than 90 Jewish organizations functioning in the United States. (American Jewish Yearbook, 2005, p. 1)

Out of all the Jewish Organization, AIPAC is by far the most powerful, the most successful, and the best known. AIPAC evolved out of American Zionist Council and
was founded in 1954 by I.L. "Sy" Kenen. Janice J. Terry explains in details the attributes of this organization:

“AIPAC’s mission is to ‘insure close and consistently strong US-Israeli relations.’ Leaders from a variety of Jewish organizations serve on the AIPAC board. By 1985, AIPAC has a staff of 75 with an annual budget of $5.7 million. Although AIPAC claims only 50,000 members who pay $50 dues per year, it has a $15 million budget, 150 employees and half a dozen full time registered lobbyists." (Terry, 2005, p. 71)

Michael Massing also shows how high ranking membership is earned inside AIPAC by showing that financial contributions to the Lobby are they easiest way to earn top ranking positions within AIPAC. (Massing, 2002, p. 1)

The Neoconservatives and Israel

Neo-conservatism praises the idea of American hegemony and that US power should be used to “encourage the spread of democracy and discourage potential rivals from even trying to even compete with the United States.” By spreading democracy and insuring the preservation of US dominance is the best solution for stability and peace in the international community. Neoconservatives believe that America would be viewed as “benign hegemony” by the international community because of its democratic system and would be welcomed with open arms (which is ironically, quite opposite from the Arab states view). On the Project for the New American Century website, Neoconservatives
firmly state that, their “aim is to remind Americans of these lessons and to draw their consequences for today. Here are the four consequences:

1. We need to increase defense spending significantly if we are to carry out our global responsibilities today and modernize our armed forces for the future;
2. We need to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values;
3. We need to promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad;
4. We need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.

It is necessary if the United States is to build on the successes of this past century and to ensure our security and our greatness in the next.” (Project for the New American Century, 1997, p. 1)

During the early stages of the George W. Bush Administration, there was no strong support for neoconservative principles. Bush was generally opposed to the nation-building concept and ignored neoconservative suggestions in how to deal with the Chinese during an early foreign policy encounter. Neoconservatives also criticized Bush for his insufficient support for Israel and that his foreign policies where similar to that of Clinton's. (Harnden & Philps, 2001, p. 1)

But after the September 11 attacks, Bush's policies took a dramatic turn, as neoconservatism was the blue print of his foreign policy.
In his State of the Union speech (which was written by neoconservative David Frum), Bush named Iraq, Iran and North Korea as “the Axis of Evil” and that these states posed a great danger to the United States. The Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive war was also warmly welcomed by the neoconservatives.

As for their relationship with Israel, Neoconservatives declare openly that they are strongly committed to Israel. Many neoconservatives are “linked with think tanks and committees, and publications whose agenda includes promoting the special relationship between the United States and Israel.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 130) And to point out how Neoconservatives are linked to Israel, Murray Friedman writes in his book, The Neoconservative Revolution, that neo-conservatism is an “American Jewish Conservatism.” (Friedman, 2005, p. 112)

Other factors helped the neoconservatives steer foreign policy towards helping Israel. Bush’s closest advisors which included Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Feith, Bolton and Libby were all pro-Israeli and had successfully steered the president towards this new policy.
The Lobby’s Influence

But why is it that the Israel lobby is so effective in steering foreign policy in America? Other than directing campaign contributions to help favored candidates get key policy-making positions, the Jewish lobby also uses many other tactics, as Mearsheimer and Walt point out:

“... there are numerous ways for interest groups to mold public opinion: by cultivating sympathetic journalists; writing books, articles, and op-ed; and working to discredit or marginalize anyone with different views. For a group that is highly motivated and has sufficient resources, there is no shortage of the way to influence public policy. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 140)

In addition to what has been said above, AIPAC also utilizes a reward system for those who support its agenda. Also, there are a number of Jewish senators and representatives who work very hard in order to steer US foreign policy to favor Israel’s interests. In 2006, according to Amiram Barkat, the number of Jewish senators and representatives was at a record high, with 13 out of 100 senators and 30 out of 435 representatives being Jewish. (Barkat, 2006, p. 1)

Does the Israel Lobby also have effect on the executive branch and electing pro-Israeli presidents? The Jewish community has a very high record in political participation compared to other communities in the United States (especially in key states like California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania). They also
contribute a large percentage of campaign donations for the presidential candidates. According to a column in the Washington Post, Democratic presidential candidates get as much as 60 percent of their donations from the Jewish community. (Edsall and Cooperman, 2003)

There have been counterarguments that the Jewish Lobby isn’t powerful enough to control US foreign policy. Dennis B. Ross, former U.S. ambassador and chief peace negotiator in the Middle East under Bill Clinton, who is now an official at WINEP, wrote:

"Never in the time that I led the American negotiations on the Middle East peace process did we take a step because 'the lobby' wanted us to. Nor did we shy away from one because 'the lobby' opposed it. That is not to say that AIPAC and others have no influence. They do. But they don't distort U.S. policy or undermine American interests." (Ross, 2006, p. 1)

So who is capable of countering the Israel lobby? What about the Arab Americans and the Pro-Arab organizations? This is highly unlikely to happen because American Jews are a prosperous people, well educated, highly motivated and have very high rates in political participation. On the contrary, although the American Arabs are considered to be a significant minority, they “are not as wealthy, well organized, numerous, or politically active as Jewish Americans.” As a group, Arab Americans have not been as successful in reaching prominent positions in academia, business, and the media, and they are also less
visible in politics.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, 141) Also Pro-Arab organizations are not as well funded, effective or as powerful as Pro-Israel organizations.

The Israel lobby also works on controlling the media and public information through corporations and individuals that are sympathetic to the Israeli cause. Janice J. Terry explains this phenomenon:

“Some analysts have argued that corporate ownership of most media sources has made the media more conservative and prone to support the established and powerful elite. Debate on the Middle East in the media is increasingly limited to a small group of commentators, often from Washington based pro-Israeli think tanks, who perform as ‘talking heads’ and write high profile opinion and/or editorial pieces.” (Terry, 2005, p. 15)

So why is it that the lobby tries so hard to control the media and monitor what is said about Israel? The reason would be that if they not control the media, not enough coverage about pro-Israeli issues would be aired. In this spectrum, the pro-Israeli’s have a much bigger advantage than the pro-Arab groups. (Mearsheimer and Walt. 2007, p. 169)

In Interest Groups and the Foreign policy Process, Robert H. Trice says that “one of the most of the most serious political handicaps of pro-Arab groups during the 1966-1974 periods was their inability to gain support from any of the best known and nationally syndicated columnists. At virtually every level of media organization, pro-Israel groups
were more successful than pro-Arab groups at getting their side of the story transmitted to both the articulate and mass public.” (Trice, 1976, p. 63-65)

The same can be said about the American media today. In 2002, Eric Alterman, a media critic said that, “[the American media is] dominated by people who cannot imagine criticizing Israel. [56 columnists] and commentators can be counted upon to support Israel reflexively and without qualification.” (Alterman, 2002, p. 1)

Arabs seem to be frustrated with their inability of to change American foreign policy both in the Arab world and in US politics. Can acts of resistance by Arab organizations (considered to be acts of terrorism by the US) be their only “cry for help”? Not much change has happened when it came to America’s unquestioned support to Israel. But another question comes to mind when we view American foreign policy in the Middle East, especially during Bush Jr.’s time as president. Has the US done a good job in its campaign to combat what it considers to be “threats against the US” (or as this paper has shown a direct threat to Israel)? I will answer this question by taken the Iraq case into consideration.
Chapter 7: U.S. Performance in Iraq

On Sept. 15, 2001 according to Bob Woodward’s Bush at War, “Paul Wolfowitz put forth military arguments to justify a U.S. attack on Iraq rather than Afghanistan.” Why Iraq? Because, Wolfowitz argued that “attacking Afghanistan would be uncertain … Iraq was a brittle oppressive regime that might break easily. It was doable.” (Buchanan, 2009, p. 1)

According to BBC reporters, they had found a secret memo of a meeting that took place on January 31, 2003 between George W. Bush and Tony Blair in the White House, Bush said that he would invade Iraq even if the UN inspection did not find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and had said: “The start date for the military campaign was now pencilled in for 10 March. This was when the bombing would begin.” (BBC, 2006, p.1)

Since the war began, approximately 90,000 to 100,000 Iraqis have died (on average 3000 Iraqis are killed per month) because of foreign military intervention (Iraq Body Count, 2008). We can only assume that these casualties were not only caused by direct military intervention but also by insurgencies against the foreign military intervention, which are mainly the United States troops in Iraq.

According to the United States Department of Defense (DOD), the US allocated 470 billion US dollars to its military budget for the year 2006 (Fiscal Year 2006 Budget, 2006, p. 1). And to no surprise, the US is placed first when it comes to military budget spending although allocating only 4% of its budget compared to Saudi Arabia’s 10%
(Military expenditures percent of GDP, 2006, p. 1). We can also assume that intelligence gathering by the United States would be the most efficient for policy making and decision taking by the administration. Even if this intelligence was clear-cut and accurate, administrations may manipulate or use the intelligence for other means. Paul R. Pillar, who was in charge or coordinating all of the intelligence community’s assessments on Iraq, says:

"The Bush administration used intelligence not to inform decision-making, but to justify a decision already made. It went to war without requesting -- and evidently without being influenced by -- any strategic-level intelligence assessments on any aspect of Iraq." (Pillar, 2006, p. 1)

The Office of Special Plans (OSP) headed by Abram Shulsky (a neoconservative long associated with Paul Wolfowitz) was directed to find any information that would sell the war against Iraq. The OSP relied heavily on information given by Iraqi exiles (the most prominent being Ahmed Chalabi, who was part of the Iraqi National Congress) as well as having close connection to various Israeli sources. According to a report by the Guardian, “[the OSP] forged close ties to a parallel, ad hoc intelligence operation inside Ariel Sharon’s office in Israel specifically to bypass Mossad and provide the Bush administration with more alarmist reports on Saddam’s Iraq than Mossad was prepared to authorize.” (Borger, 2003, p. 1) It is also interesting to note why the neoconservatives relied on Ahmed Chalabi for information. According to Mearsheimer and Walt, Chalabi “had gone to considerable lengths to establish close ties with individuals and groups in the [Israel] lobby. He especially close links with the Jewish Institute for National Security
Affairs (JINSA), where he had been a frequent guest at board meetings, symposia and other events since 1997. Chalabi also cultivated close ties with pro-Israel organizations like AIPAC, American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Hudson Institute, and WINEP ... In return for the lobby’s support, Chalabi pledged to foster good relations with Israel once he gained power.” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007, p. 252)

It might also come across as ironic to think that such a highly budgeted US military with the most highly sophisticated equipment and weaponry would lack the skills to maintain peace and order after the invasion of Iraq. Well, according to Paul Rogers, there is a very clear explanation to this oddity, which includes military culture:

“US troops have very little experience of peacekeeping or even of post-conflict stabilization. The common view is that this kind of work is not proper soldiering and should be left to the Scandinavians and others of a similar bent. The United States has had minimal engagement in UN peacekeeping operations in the past 50 years...” (Rogers, 2006, p. 27)

Then why not get the United Nations involved? The Bush administration had been very clear and strict on not letting UN forces interfere with their War on Terrorism. This has also been the case in Afghanistan when the US only permitted 5000 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops from the 30,000 troops that were recommended by the UN. (Rogers, 2006, p. 28)
After the U.S.'s invasion on Iraq, it banned French, German, and Russian companies from reconstruction contracts. According to the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Department of Defense “lacked the capacity to provide effective oversight and manage risks, and that DOD, at times, improperly used interagency contracts and was not able to take advantage of full and open competition during the initial stages of reconstruction. As of August 2006, crude oil production was lower than pre-invasion production and for other sectors such as electricity and water; the DOD was not able to reach its projected goals.” (Rebuilding Iraq, 2006, p. 1) Reconstruction efforts have also been hampered by the lack of security in Iraq.

President Bush rejected Prime Minister Tony Blair’s efforts to give the United Nations “a central role in the mission. The United States chose to designate itself an occupying power, basing its continued military presence on the laws of armed conflict rather than the UN Charter.” (Dobbins, 2006, p. 1)

A survey conducted by Shibley Telhami in six Arab countries in February 2003 found that there was a majority of negative response against the United States as American troops massed outside Iraq: “Only 4 percent of respondents in Saudi Arabia, 6 percent in Jordan and Morocco, 10 percent in the united Arab Emirates, and 13 percent in Egypt expressed a favorable view of the United States. Even in Lebanon, where opinion was more positive, only 32 percent of respondents had a favorable view (see table 1). And when respondents were asked, in an open question, to name the world leader they most admired, the name mentioned most often was French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, who
confronted the Bush administration directly to try to stop the U.S. war effort.” (Telhami, 2003, p. 1) In the same survey, Telhami found that these negative views towards the US were based on American policy in the Middle East, not on their values as Arabs. Arab dissatisfaction with the US war in Iraq was apparent all across the Middle East even before the start of the war. When asked if the US-Iraq war would mean more terrorism in the Middle East, an overwhelming majority in Saudi Arabia (97 percent), Lebanon (82 percent) and Morocco (85 percent) said yes. (Telhami, 2003, p. 1) In another survey done by James Zogby in 2008, he found that there was still much resentment towards the United States due to the foreign policies in the Middle East as show below:

Opinion Of the United States

(Zoghby, 2008, p.1)
Strict Control

It was apparent that the US wanted to keep things under strict American control especially in Iraq. The tension between the Bush Administration and the UN was also apparent at Kofi Annan’s farewell speech when he scolded the US for its undiplomatic policies and harsh security strategies (In Farewell, 2006, p. 1). Clearly, the United States did not give a very good first impression to the international community and most importantly, the Iraqi people.

This inexperience was evident in the following weeks after the Iraqi war ended. The decision by the Americans to disband the Iraqi Republican Guard and causing the unemployment of over 350,000 Iraqis—who had access to weaponry—was one of the major factors that caused increased dissatisfaction and resentment towards the American troops (Rogers, 2006, p. 51). This fueled the common notion that the Americans were being considered more and more as occupiers rather than liberators. More signs of this increase in frustration were surfacing after the original American plan to amass several hundred Iraqi representatives from different religious and cultural backgrounds in order to create a political authority responsible for health and educational issues, was scrapped and replaced with an “Interim Advisory Political Council” who members were chosen by the US Forces. (Rogers, 2006, p. 53)

Iraqi frustration and dissatisfaction towards the US troops was slowly but surely building up. The appearance of sporadic resistance against the occupying troops increased at an alarming rate. Democratization was slow and inefficient at its early
from Iran. By motivation, essentially, and with the exception of the Al Qaeda in Iraq element who have endeavored to exploit the situation for their own ends, our opponents are Iraqi Nationalists, and are most concerned with their own needs — jobs, money, security — and the majority are not bad people.” (Dannatt, 2007, p. 1)

Another threat was also brewing up from the south in the form of a young radical Shiite cleric by the name of Muqtada al-Sadr. He took advantage of the Iraqi anger and convinced the unemployed and poorly educated Iraqi people to support him in his quest for power, thus creating the Mahdi Army. According to Larry Diamond, a senior adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Baghdad from January to June 2004; the CPA, under its chief administrator, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III — although hard working and intelligent in policy making — was inefficient in suppressing the Mahdi Army in the initial stages, which led to a full on confrontation during April and May of 2004 on two fronts: Sunnis is Falluja, Ramadi and Baghdad and Shiites in Bagdad and in southern cities. (Diamond, 2004, p. 2) Diamond also explains the criteria on how post-conflict policy should be based on:

“Any effort to rebuild a shattered, war-torn country should include four basic components: political reconstruction of a legitimate and capable state; economic reconstruction, including the rebuilding of the country’s physical infrastructure and the creation of rules and institutions that enable a market economy; social reconstruction, including the renewal (or in some cases, creation) of a civil society and political culture that foster voluntary cooperation and the limitation of state power; and the provision of general security, to establish a safe and orderly environment.” (Diamond, 2004, p. 1)
Unfortunately, the CPA was not efficient enough to control the security crisis it faced, and the excessive use of force in Falluja only fueled the insurgents’ hatred towards the Americans. Eventually, the Falluja incident reached the boiling during the era of the Iraqi Interim Government under Iyad Allawi, who supported the invasion of Falluja and Najaf, which ended on November 11, 2004 with the defeat of the insurgents. But this was by no means the end of the insurgency.

As with previous cases, the United State’s close relationship with Israel can be labeled as one of the major factors that fuels Arab fundamentalist hatred towards the Iraqi occupation. As said before, Israel’s history with its Arab neighbors, especially Palestine, hasn’t been a smooth ride to say the least and the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center is the culmination of terrorist retaliation against American foreign policy in the Middle East and its close relationship with Israel. This close relationship was also evident during the efforts to suppress the insurgency in Iraq. The US troops constantly relied on the experience of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the Palestinian occupied territories. According to Paul Rogers, there were two forms of cooperation:

“One was the application of Israeli tactics to counter-insurgency operations in Iraq, with regular exchanges of personnel between the IDF and the US Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The other was the increasing use of weapons and observation equipment brought from Israeli manufacturers for use in Iraq.” (Rogers, 2006, p. 126)
As part of the many recommendations given by the Iraq Study Group, the United States should show a renewed commitment in solving the Israeli-Arab conflict in the region in order to create better regional stability for Iraq and better cooperation between it and its direct neighbors (Syria and Iran) who are facilitating the movement on weapons and terrorists through its borders. For example, insurgents coming from Syria are usually pro-al-Qaeda militants transiting from the Gulf; and former Iraqi Ba'athists and other Iraqi Sunni elements.

As the Iraq Study Group (ISG) put it, "No American administration—Democratic or Republican—will ever abandon Israel." So as part of improving the situation in the region (especially Iraq) the United States should reinitiate and reinforce a diplomatic solution between Israel, Lebanon and Syria on the one hand, and Israel and Palestinians (who acknowledge Israel’s right to exist) on the other. (Iraq Study Group, 2006, p. 56)

We can also add that the Bush Administration has a controversial record with respect to human rights. After 9/11, the Bush administration has hunted down terrorists that were considered a threat, taking harsh measures against them and playing a zero-sum game. The Bush Administration sees that international human rights cripples its ability to fight terrorism around the world, so it wouldn’t come across as ironic that the US has refused to sign human rights conventions and treaties on multiple occasions. Before the Iraq War, the US detained suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay -mostly Arabs from Afghanistan and suspected Al Qaeda recruits- and placed them in a legal black hole, and detaining them for long periods of time (Roth, 2004, p. 116). The Abu Ghraib prison scandal in
Iraq was also a hard blow to US credibility on both sides. This loss of credibility did not help the image of the US troops in Iraq, and infuriated many Arabs, both inside and outside Iraq. A poll conducted in January 2006 shows this dissatisfaction towards the American troops, where an overall 47% of Iraqis approved attacks on US-led forces. (New WPO Poll, 2006, p. 1).

Although Arab insurgents are considered to make up a very small percentage of the Iraqi insurgency, they are a force to be reckoned with (Escobar, 2005, p. 1). Most of the suicide bombers are foreigners according to Kenneth Katzman, a Middle East expert with the Congressional Research Service, and suicide bombers always get the headline news (Quinn, 2005, p. 1). It is their blind hatred towards America that drives them to the new “field of Jihad” which is Iraq. Where better than to fight the American infidel? Another factor that attracts foreign insurgents to Iraq is the desire to install an Islamist state in place of the current Iraqi “client” regime (Miller, 2004, p. 1). Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is one such individual. He was the leader of the insurgent group Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad, a branch of Al Qaeda inside Iraq until his death on June 7, 2006. His mission was to cause all out civil war between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq on one hand, and to provoke an American attack on Iran in order to revitalize the insurgency in Iraq and weaken the American occupation (Soriano, 2006, p. 1). Random suicide bombs targeted US collaborators and US forces with no regard to innocent civilians. This has caused much dissatisfaction towards these foreign insurgents and has led to deeper sectarian divide within the Iraqi community, where we see previously allied Iraqi Sunni insurgents and Zarqawi-led foreign fighters targeting each other starting early 2006 (Poole, 2006, p. 1).
Syria and Iran also seem to be the part of this formula, facilitating the movement of insurgents and training extra recruits for the Shiite militias in the south, but as we will see later; these have caused some drawbacks, especially for Syria.

Also, it has been seen over the past years that the US has been putting its efforts into training and equipping a local Iraqi army and police. Unfortunately, Iraqis who have applied for these security positions and jobs have been repeatedly targeted by the insurgents. They are seen as traitors and collaborators in the American project to take over Iraq. According to the Iraq Study Group, the Iraqi army suffers from many drawbacks which include: 1) Lack of adequate equipment; 2) lack of personnel and; 3) lack of logistics and support. (Iraq Study Group, 2006, p. 9)

As for the Iraqi police, their situation is worse than the Iraqi army according to the ISG. Currently the Iraqi police consists of 135,000 members, and do not have adequate training or legal authority to conduct criminal investigations. The Al-Badr Brigade, who are affiliated with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, have infiltrated the police force and have conducted many atrocities and crimes towards Sunni civilians while in uniform. According to the ISG, “there is no clear Iraqi or U.S. agreement on the character and mission of the police. In addition, the police are organized under the Ministry of the Interior, which is plagued by corruption and mismanagement.” (Iraq Study Group, 2006, p. 10)

Even joint operations between the US military and the Iraqi police have not yielded any
tangible results. One example would be operation Together Forward II, in which both parties worked together in order to “clear, hold, and build” in Baghdad. The Iraqi police did not show any efficiency or commitment in trying to contain and decrease sectarian violence in Baghdad, causing additional casualties for US troops in the process. (Iraq Study Group, 2006, p. 11)

In December 2008, the US Defence Department said that the "overall level of violence in the country had dropped 80 percent since before the surge began in January 2007. Also, murder rate had dropped to pre-war levels and that casualty figures for U.S. forces in 2008 was 314 against a figure of 904 in 2007.” (Kruzel, 2009, p. 1)

According to statistics by the Brookings Institution:

“Iraqi civilian fatalities fell in November 2008 to 490 casualties from 3,500 casualties in January 2007. Also, attacks against the coalition fell to 200 and 300 per week in the latter half of 2008, from a peak of nearly 1,600 in summer 2007. Finally, the number of Iraqi security forces killed fell to 100 per month in the second half of 2008 from a high of 200 to 300 in summer 2007.” (Iraq Index, Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq, 2008, p. 1)

Although, the situation in Iraq is improving according the statistics shown, it is important to take into consideration the different perceptions of this war. In 2007, a poll conducted in Jordan showed that over half the population did believe the current US strategy was sincere and listed the desire to control Middle Eastern oil, world domination, a vendetta against Muslim states and an attempt to protect Israel as more likely motivating factors for the invasion. (Kohut, 2007, p. 1)
As said before, the Abu Ghraib scandal infuriated the Arab world and stands out as one of the most damaging in respect for the US image. Baxter and Akbarzadeh explain the impact of this incident:

“For many in the Arab world, the Abu Ghraib scandal will stand out as the representative and enduring memory of the US-led ‘liberation’ of Iraq. Inside one of Saddam’s most notorious prisons, the degradation and torture of Iraqi prisoners by US servicemen and women was captured on film. The photographs were viewed as reflective of a US tendency to disregard human security and dignity in the Arab world.” (Baxter and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 172)

**Iraqi Oil**

In the beginning of this thesis, it was shown that the United States was a fuel based economy, and its ever growing dependence on oil was one of the key reasons for US military presence in the Middle East, especially when it comes to defending its assets and the “flow of oil” from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Iraq is currently the world's second largest source of oil after Saudi Arabia, but the majority of subterranean oil reserves have never been tapped. Most anti-war slogans before and during the invasion of Iraq focused on the “No Blood for Oil” rhetoric. In his book, The Stakes, Shibley Tilhami, says that Arabs’ perceptions about the constant US military presence in the Middle East are of American imperialism, especially when it comes to the oil issue.

Although it would be too premature to say that Iraqi oil was one of the main reasons for the US invasion of Iraq, some scholars have argued that oil was a major factor citing that taking control of the vast oil reserves would give the United States enormous geopolitical
leverage over potential adversaries or that the oil companies in the US had a major role in pressuring the administration into waging a war with Iraq.

But these arguments have some weaknesses. Saddam Hussein was more than willing to sell his fuel to any interested customer, let alone the United States. And if the US wanted to invade a major oil producing country, it would have chosen to invade Saudi Arabia which contains the largest oil reserves in the world and a much lesser population. As for the oil companies, they were more interested in making money rather than war as Peter Beinard noted in the New Republic: “It isn’t war that the American oil industry has been lobbying for all these years; it’s the end of sanctions.” (Beinard, 2002, p. 1)

**Arab Perceptions**

Nevertheless, the overall perception was that the US war in Iraq was an unjust one, and the Bush Administration had only created more negative reactions towards US foreign policy in the Arab world. Shibley Telhami conducted a survey in 2009, asking if the Iraqi
people were better or worse off after the war:

![Bar Chart: Iraq](chart)

(Telhami, 2009, p. 19)

As the survey shows, the majority of Arabs questioned thought that Iraq was worse off after the war in Iraq. But this begs the question: Now that the Obama is in office, will the Arabs have a change of heart? According to Marc Lynch, Obama is personally giving hope to Arabs, but there is still skepticism about US foreign policy in the Middle East:

“Positive views of the U.S. increased from 15% to 18% (i.e. no real difference), but at least "very unfavorable" dropped from 64% to 46%. Only 3% express "a lot of confidence" in the U.S., and 66% none. But at the same time 45% expressed positive views of Barack Obama-- and 60% expressed positive views if the Egyptian sample is excluded -- and only 24% expressed negative views (15%
excluding Egypt). That's a pretty stunning gap between views of the President and views of the U.S. as a whole --- and a strong boost for the case for Presidential-led public diplomacy.” (Lynch, 2009, p. 1)

Shibley Telhami asked which issue was the most important for the new Obama administration to deal with. An overwhelming majority (as seen below), said that Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict were the most important factors that the new administration needed to deal with in order to create some positive feedback towards the United States.

( Telhami, 2009, p. 12)
When asked what two steps the US needed to take in order to improve Arab views towards it, the majority also chose withdrawal from Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict:

(Telhami, 2009, p. 16)

For the Obama administration, feedback from Arabs seems to be more positive and hopeful than what it was during the Bush administration. Will Obama be able to take this chance in order to create a better image for the US in the Middle East? This will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 8: Obama’s Change

“To the Muslim world, we seek a new forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ill on the west – know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history but we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.” (Obama’s Inaugural Address, 2009)

This chapter will start with a quotation of Obama’s speech for different reasons. The first reason is that when Obama gave his inaugural speech, there was a sense of hope in the Arab world that there was truly a change to come and that misperception would be broken on both sides. A black American President, whose middle name was Hussein, born to a Muslim Kenyan father and an American mother, had become President of the United States. Obama was a superstar even before he had won the elections, captivating his audiences with enthralling and powerful speeches. His oratory skills have earned him fandom and admiration all around the world. Many Palestinians see him as charismatic, down to earth and balanced in his demeanor.

The second reason is that in this quotation he invokes a very powerful message to Arab leaders by saying that America will help them if they give it the chance to. The Bush
administration has been known to ignore the Arab plight, using aggressive tactics rather than diplomacy or dialog. Will Obama stay true to his words?

The final reason is that although his words seem too good to be true and have a ring of hope in them. Is Obama really capable of creating change? As they always say, actions speak louder than words, and so far, prospects have been looking good for Obama in the early stages of his presidency. But like all presidents who get newly elected their ratings are usually high.

Before this thesis discusses how Obama is guiding foreign policy in the Middle East, here is a summary of some recommendations that Ahmad Moussalli, an expert on US foreign policy in Islamic countries, has given in order for the US to change Arab perceptions and to reduce radicalism in the Middle East:

1. It is in the interests of the US to stop postulating a cultural or religious threat or a global Islamic enemy, and instead to try to locate and solve problems within their immediate context, by initiating dialog and positive engagement with Islamic groups, understanding Islamic ideologies, and increasing funding for educational programs that bring Muslims to the United States.

2. Consistent and outspoken positions on the Implementation of human rights, pluralism, and democracy as well as on terrorism and armaments in order to prevent misconceptions about the US in the Islamic world.

3. Rethinking US strategic interests and to come up with new policies in the Middle East, in order not to cause long term damage.
4. The United States can work now on developing a consensus for a new Middle East taking into consideration existing regional balances of power and their economic interests and developments. (Moussalli, 2008, p. 167-169)

Taking the above recommendation into consideration, the next part will show a general review of Obama’s statements on issues such as Iran, Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout his career to see if there have been any inconsistencies in his rhetoric.

**Obama: Change or Changing Positions in the Middle East?**

The issue of Iraq in the Illinois State Senate: In October 2002, Obama who was an Illinois state senator said this about Saddam Hussein: "Saddam poses no imminent and direct threat to the United States, or to his neighbors." Obama called on the United States to "allow UN inspectors to do their work." He also recognized that "even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences" and that "an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda." (Zunes, 2008, p. 1) Although Obama, as a senator was not in an important position to convey his ideas about foreign policy issues, he did show a realistic take on how the US should deal with Iraq in the long run.

The issue of Iraq in the U.S. Senate: Oddly, when elected to the U.S. Senate, Obama supported funding of the Iraq War. Also, Obama voted to confirm Condoleezza Rice as
secretary of state during his first weeks in office. Pertaining to the US army in Iraq, he called for a reduction in the number of troops but did not specify a timetable for their withdrawal. In addition to this, he campaigned for pro-war incumbents during the 2006 Democratic congressional primaries. Again, although Obama showed a different point of view about the war in Iraq, we have to understand that the position of US senator has to be in favor of the party rather than the individual (this is assuming the general case). It would be unwise to use his position here for later reference during his presidency.

The Issue of Iraq as a presidential candidate: During his campaign, Obama called for a pragmatic solution to the war that was being waged in Iraq, and the importance of defeating the insurgency. Although most Americans wanted an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, Obama stated that it was important to keep American troops (although reduced in numbers) in order to maintain and insure proper transition of power to the Iraqis, respond to emergencies and get rid of the last pockets of terrorists in Iraq.

Iraq as a president: On the 27th of February 2009, Obama announced “that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would end by the 31st of August 2010.” He also congratulated the Iraqi people and government for their proud resilience “in not giving into the forces of disunion, and cautioned that Iraqis would have to remain vigilant against those who will insist that Iraq’s differences cannot be reconciled without more killing even after the U.S. drawdown in 2010 and withdrawal in 2011.” (Obama’s Speech at Camp Lejeune, 2009, p. 1)

This behavioral shift after being elected president can be explained by looking at the previous chapter of this thesis. Obama simply cannot afford losing the support of the
Jewish lobbies because of their strength in congress and in order for Obama to secure funding for his second presidential campaign, assuming that he is running for a second campaign.

**Iran:** According to Zunes, "Obama has harshly criticized Senator Clinton for supporting the bellicose Kyl-Lieberman amendment targeting Iran, which many saw as paving the way for the Bush administration to launch military action against that country." (Zunes, 2008, p. 1)

But in a speech prepared for AIPAC in March 2007, Senator Obama had referred to Iran as a "genuine threat ... Iranian nuclear weapons would destabilize the region and could set off a new arms race. [The US should use] sustained and aggressive diplomacy combined with tough sanctions should be our primary means to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons." Not once during his AIPAC speech did he mention the same anything negative about Israel. (White, 2009, p. 1)

**Israel and Palestinian Peace Process:** In the early days of his career, Obama publicly criticized the Clinton Administration for its unconditional support for Israel’s policies in the Middle East. Obama referred to the cycle of violence between the Palestinian and Israel, while the rest were justifying Israeli attacks as acts of self defense and response to Palestinian violence. But Zunes notes, that “during the past two years of his presidential campaign, however, Obama has largely taken positions in support of the hard-line Israeli government, making statements virtually indistinguishable from that of the Bush administration.” (Zunes, 2008, p. 1)
During a speech Obama gave to a small group of Democratic activists in Muscatine, Iowa, early in his presidential campaign, he said: "Nobody is suffering more than the Palestinian people" referring to the Palestinian suffering over the past decades. According to NBC News producer, Lawahez Jabari, this speech had a very positive response from the Palestinian people. But it also drew a lot of bad attention from AIPAC members. Soon after during his AIPAC speech, “Obama clarified in a presidential debate that his remark was actually an indictment of the Palestinian leadership that he believes has caused much of the Palestinians' suffering.” (Jabari, 2008, p. 1)

When Israel invaded Lebanon in July 2006, Obama fully supported the Israeli side and accusing that Hezbollah had used Lebanese citizens as human shields, although there were no proof of such atrocities. (Zunes, 2008, p. 1)

Can we explain this “change” of behavior? When Obama gave his AIPAC speech, most Palestinians were shocked when he took a pro-Israeli stance, after previously being sympathetic to the Palestinian struggle. But Nimer Hammad, spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, explains this change of mood when he said during an interview with Jabari. "Anyone participating in Jewish conferences in America tries to be more a Likud member than Likud members themselves.” (Jabari, 2008, p. 1)

It was mentioned before that an estimated 60 percent of Democrat candidate funding for their presidential campaigns came from Jewish donors. Was Obama just playing smart? Zunes answers this question by saying that:
“It's quite reasonable to suspect that pressure from well-funded right-wing American Zionist constituencies has influenced what Obama believes he can and cannot say. As an African-American whose father came from a Muslim family, he is under even more pressure than most candidates to avoid being labeled as "anti-Israel." Ironically, a strong case can be made that the right-wing militaristic policies he may feel forced to defend actually harm Israel's legitimate long-term security interests.” (Zunes, 2008, p. 1)

Zunes may be mistaken on this point. The OPENSECRETS website, which analyzes all funds given to presidential candidates notes that, Obama was the first presidential candidate to refuse public financing and the spending limits that came with it, which meant that he refused taxpayer’s money for the general election. When it came to Jewish funding, Ron Kampeas, a columnist for the Jewish Journal shows that Hillary Clinton was leading when it came to Jewish funding for the democratic presidential campaign but he goes on to say that, "the phenomenon that is Obama has certainly penetrated the Jewish community. Among small givers, first-time givers, rank-and-file supporters, there's tremendous interest in Obama." (Kampeas, 2007, p. 1)

But Zunes continues to say that, “Still, Obama has indicated greater interest in promoting a comprehensive peace settlement, acknowledging that the ‘Israeli government
must make difficult concessions for the peace process to restart.' And, unlike the Bush administration, which successfully pressured Israel not to resume peace negotiations with Syria, Obama has pledged never to block an Israeli prime minister from the negotiation table.” (Zunes, 2008, p. 1)

So what about fixing the US image in the Arab world? In Rebuilding the US Image, Abdus Sattar Ghazali gives us a general overview of what Obama faces and how his initial policies have been received:

“Despite election pledges to pull out from Iraq, the US now plans to retain its forces for at least a decade. Obama’s announcement to close the infamous Guantanamo Bay military prison is seen merely as a move that appeared to symbolically separate his administration from Bush’s. Tellingly, in a court filing, the Justice Department has argued that the president has the authority to detain terrorism suspects without criminal charges, much as the Bush administration asserted.” (Ghzali, 2009, p. 1)

In January 2009, when Obama officially took office, a Gallup poll about the US image was conducted in 143 countries. The US image at the end of the Bush administration was poorest in the Muslim middle East/North Africa region with only 15% approval.
**Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of the United States?**

Regional median approval

![Bar chart showing approval rates by region](chart)

Based on interviews in 143 countries between 2006 and 2008

*GALLUP POLL*

However, when asked what action made by the Obama regime were most important, opinions about the different actions vary within the region as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Top-rated action</th>
<th>Very significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq; Closing Guantanamo Bay prison</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Territories</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Greater technology transfer and exchange of business expertise</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Removing military bases from Saudi Arabia; more direct humanitarian aid to alleviate poverty</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>More direct humanitarian aid to alleviate poverty</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Pulling out of Iraq</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*GALLUP POLL*

According to the poll above, eight countries see that pulling out of Iraq would greatly increase the US image in their country. It is interesting to note that the questionnaire did not include questions about solving the Israeli-Palestinian issue or America toning down
its relationship with Israel. Could it be that the Gallop poll takers knew that the score for these questions would score overwhelmingly higher than the rest? Shibley Telhami fortunately answers this question for us in the previous polls this thesis has shown.

Obama’s Regime

So how is Obama’s regime compromised? According to The Jewish Telegraph Agency, the principle news agency of American Jewish-Zionist publications, pro-Israel Zionists occupy strategic Middle East positions in the Obama regime. These include: Dennis Ross, Richard Holbrooke George Mitchell, Dan Shapiro, Puneet Talwar, Eric Lynn, James Steinberg, Jacob 'Jack' Lew, Samantha Power, Cass Sunstein, Rand Beers, Lee Feinstein, Mara Rudman and Susan Rice. Obama can be given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to how much his advisors influence his foreign policy decisions in the Middle East. Obama might have his own agenda and vision when it comes to dealing with the Middle East. But one can only hope that Obama can make any real changes in the Middle East seeing that he has surrounded himself with these individuals or how Arabs would have any faith in such a regime. James Petras in his article, From Gaza to Tehran: Israel Asserting Middle East supremacy doesn’t show much enthusiasm when he says:

"[Obama’s] regime is neither by background, loyalties or commitments prepared to open serious negotiations with Iran, or to 'broker' an end of Israeli occupation of Palestine. On the contrary, their close ties with the Zionist Power Configuration and long-term commitment to Israeli militarism and expansionist policies ensure that the Obama regime will proceed toward collaboration
with the Jewish State in a military confrontation with Iran.” (Petras, 2009, p. 1)

Actions Taken so Far

On his second day in Office, Obama signed into law his executive order to close Guantanamo Bay. Within a year, Guantanamo Bay will be closed, but Obama still has to face the ugly reputation it has given America, especially in the Arab world and with Human Rights Groups. He also signed another executive order banning torture which ended “the Bush administration’s CIA program of enhanced interrogation methods.” Rep. John Murtha, D-Pennsylvania, an outspoken critic of the Bush administration, praised the action, calling it "a first key step in restoring America’s image and credibility in the world." (Obama signs order to close Guantanamo Bay facility, 2009, p. 1)

On the 4th of July 2009, Obama on a mission to improve the US image in the Middle East, gave a 55 minute speech in the University of Cairo in which he wanted to renew Arab hopes on American foreign policy in the region and that America had a common cause with Islam and never will be at war with the faith and the Islam and America “need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.” Obama also talked about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict knowing that it was the root cause of anti-Americanism in the region: “It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true,” he said. "Too many tears have flowed. Too much blood has been shed." He also called for a settlement freeze in the West Bank by Israel and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. This
speech was well received all over the Arab world, with exception of the Iranian leadership, Al-Qaeda and Hamas (which Obama refuses to open dialog with, seeing that it is still considered to be a terrorist group by the current administration). Although Israel also hoped for change, it ignored Obama’s calls for a settle freeze, something that Benjamin Netanyahu has been aggressively rejecting. (Loven, 2009, p. 1)

On the 11th of June 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu endorsed Palestinian independence as a way to restart peace talks and also called on Arab neighbors to join the discussion. But as said above, Netanyahu refused to freeze Israeli settlements in the West Bank and demanded that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state and for the Palestinians refugees to give up their goal of returning to Israel. Although Obama welcomed this endorsement, many difficulties still lie ahead, as Arabs still consider this words without any proof behind it. Furthermore, the exclusion of Hamas in future negotiations also poses another barrier to the peace process. (Obama says Netanyahu's speech an opening for Mideast dialogue, 2009, p. 1)

But wouldn’t Obama face staunch opposition from the Israeli Lobby who consider these policies blasphemous and opposite to Israel’s interest? Obama has certainly made a bold step in realizing that the US should hear both sides of the story. But surely there must be alarms blazing in congress. Philip Giraldi talks about this opposition:

"Republicans have a number of good reasons of their own to line up firmly with Israel and opposition Democrats. They see Obama’s support of an aggressive peace policy as likely to fail, leaving the president politically vulnerable. For the Democrats, the situation is more complex. Many Democrats recognize the wrongs that have been
inflicted on the Palestinians, but they have an emotional and financial attachment to Israeli interests.” (Giraldi, 2009, p. 1)

Giraldi states what most optimist Arabs in the Obama administration dread the most: the failure of his moderate foreign policy in the Middle East. But shouldn’t we assume certain leverage over Congress or outside influences on his decisions? That may be the case but Obama isn’t delivering. So far, Obama’s most important promise to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people hasn’t seen any fruition. Stephan Walt in his sarcastically named Blog post “Things to read if you’re suffering from misplaced optimism” refers to how the US failed in the Middle East by showing its failures with its negotiations in Israel to stop the expansion of Israeli settlements and how on November 1, 2009, Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton praised Netanyahu for his decision to expand, not halt, these settlements. This came as a huge shock to most Arab leaders and the Palestinians. (Walt, 2009, p. 1)

Will Obama stay steadfast and push through these policies and conquer ever increasing internal pressure against him? Will the Arabs once again be disappointed by the fruitless words of yet another American president? Unfortunately, there is a remote possibility of Obama being successful due to certain realities: the structure of congress, the structure of his regime, and the ability of the Israel Lobby to manipulate the masses, the legislative branch and the executive branch as well. So far, he has not taken the direct approach in order to deal with the problems pertaining to Iraq, Iran and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but rather has left it in the hands of his advisors for the most part. One can only hope that President Barack Hussein Obama, the first African American President of the United States of America, can materialize the “Change We Need” and for Americans and
Arabs alike to believe in the hope that resonated through his words: "This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time – to put our people back to work and open doors or opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth – that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can’t, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can." (CNN, 2008, p. 1)
Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that the US' bad image in the Middle East has been rooted in history: its relationship with Israel over the decades and the recent war on terrorism, as well as its performance in Iraq, and other bad choices the US has taken during the Bush Administration. The power of the Jewish Lobby inside the US government and its ability to manipulate mainstream media is uncontested in the US. Furthermore, Pro-Israeli lobbies have the upper hand on Pro-Arab lobbies due to higher budgets, more political participation, better organization and its ability to reward candidates who are sympathetic to the Israeli cause. Arabs have become frustrated in their ability to sway American foreign policy, through both violent and peaceful means. Arabs view the US and Israel's lapdog and not the other way around. America's constant support for Israel has been remarkable and unapologetic in nature. In addition to this, the international community and human right groups are unable to effectively prosecute the US for its actions in the Middle East to its immense global presence and political/economic power. If the US wants to change its image in the United States, it should take an immediate and serious stance in resolving the chronic problems that have plagued the Middle East through calculated action and not through rhetoric. With Obama, the success rate of his foreign policy campaign to enhance the US image in the Arab world is very slim due to the way the structure of the US political system. It seems to be a never-ending loop in which both moderate US presidents and Arabs seem to be stuck in. One can only hope that a change will happen during the Obama period, but from what this thesis has shown, changes are
likely to be cosmetic in nature. If Obama were to do some real changes in creating some positive feedback towards the US, he would have to do the following:

1- Acknowledge the rest of the Arab communities that are considered terrorists by the US (like HAMAS). In the past US support for unpopular regimes have been a major cause of dissatisfaction for Arabs. Democracy for Americans may not be compatible with Middle Eastern standards, so Obama has to take to the regional conditions into foresight and work on creating a compromise acceptable by all.

2- Obama has to show real commitment to the promises he has made. It has already been one year, and nothing has been done to improve the situation concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arabs are starting to lose faith and are considering Obama to be another Jewish lapdog.

3- Obama must have a more direct approach on foreign policy, rather than assigning third parties (such as the United Nations, Good offices, Neutral States, etc...) to do the job. This may show more faith in America’s direct willingness to improve the situation.

4- Obama should be less lenient with Israel. So far he has shown that he is no different than his predecessors when dealing with Israel.
Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has won every single battle against US pressure, and this is not a good start for Obama.

5- Obama is a charismatic leader, which is always a plus in creating chances and bridges between societies. But rhetoric talent isn’t enough, more action must be taken and fewer words must be spoken.

6- Arab Lobbies in the US should be taken more seriously. Although they are less funded, this does not mean that their opinions are less important. Obama should take advice from scholars and think tanks within these lobbies in order to have a better perspective in dealing with Arab issues.

7- As for the nuclear issue in Iran, Obama should be more realistic with his decisions and not be intimidated by Israel’s harassment over the issue. Iran would not be stupid enough to commit political suicide by actually firing a nuclear weapon. Lesser aggressive means should be used in dealing with Iran.

8- Iraq may be better off than it did in the past years, but Obama would be wise to train the local military as fast as possible and help create an uncorrupt government that would be independent in nature, thus eliminating the chance of Arabs calling it an American dummy state.
9. Obama should take more risks now rather than his second term if there should ever be one.

Taking these considerations into perspective, Obama should do fairly if not much better than he is currently doing now. If his administration continues as is, not much improvement will be done to improve the US image in the Middle East.


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