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Continuity and Change in the American foreign Policy towards the Middle East: (Trump and Biden Administrations 2018-2024) ⁽¹⁾

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the aspects of continuity and change in the American foreign policy between Trump and Biden administrations towards the Middle East region issues. It also tries to analyze the reasons behind the aspects of continuity and the aspects of change. The study depends on the continuity and change approach to analyze the American foreign policy towards the Middle East under Trump and Biden administrations, and mainly on the assumptions put by Kjell Goldmann and Charles Hermann, who are considered pioneers in the studies of the continuity and change approach. The study finds that, despite the different partisan backgrounds for Trump (Republican) and Biden (Democrat), the aspects of continuity towards the main issues in the Middle East are more than the aspects of change towards the way of dealing with the Iranian nuclear and non-nuclear issues, the relations with Saudi Arabia and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although both of them criticized their previous predecessors' policies towards these three issues and pledged to change these policies, both of them ended, to a great extent, taking the same decisions after reaching the office officially. The importance of this paper resides in the analysis of the American foreign policy towards the most important issues in the Middle East through two different administrations, this could be useful for making predictions about future American scenarios concerning three of the most important regional powers in the region.

Keywords: American Foreign Policy, Continuity, Change, Trump administration, Biden administration.

الاستمرارية والتغير في السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية تجاه الشرق الأوسط خلال إدارتي

ترامب وبايدن من عام 2008 إلى عام 2024

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل جوانب الاستمرارية والتغير في السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية بين إدارتي ترامب وبايدن تجاه قضايا منطقة الشرق الأوسط. تعتمد الدراسة على منهج الاستمرارية والتغير لتحليل السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية تجاه الشرق الأوسط في ظل إدارتي ترامب وبايدن، وتعتمد بشكل رئيسي على الافتراضات التي وضعها كلا من "جيل جولدمان" و"تشارلز هيرمان"، اللذان يعتبران من رواد دراسات الاستمرارية والتغير. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أنه على الرغم من اختلاف الخلفيات الحزبية

لترامب (الجمهوري) وبايدن (الديمقراطي)، إلا أن جوانب الاستمرارية تجاه القضايا الأساسية في الشرق الأوسط أكثر من مظاهر التغير فيما يتعلق بالتعامل مع الملف النووي الإيراني والقضايا غير النووية، والعلاقات مع المملكة العربية السعودية، والصراع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني. ورغم أن كليهما انتقد سياسات أسلافه السابقين تجاه هذه القضايا الثلاث وتعهدها بتغيير هذه السياسات، إلا أنهما، إلى حد كبير، اتخذا نفس القرارات بعد وصولهما إلى السلطة رسميًا. وتكمن أهمية هذه الورقة في تحليل السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية تجاه أهم القضايا في الشرق الأوسط من خلال دراسة إدارتين مختلفتين، وهو ما قد يكون مفيدًا للتنبؤ بالسيناريوهات الأمريكية المستقبلية فيما يتعلق بثلاث من أهم القوى الإقليمية في المنطقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، الاستمرارية، التغير، إدارة ترامب، إدارة بايدن.

Introduction:

The Middle East region is considered one of the most important regions to the United States as it possesses a lot of interests in it. The Middle East is considered a region for opportunities and threats to the United States. There are many problems that exist within this region like the Iranian threat, the regional rivalries, the jihadist ideology, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, these problems always make it difficult for different American administrations to turn their face from the Middle East and neglect its burning issues, which are affecting directly or indirectly the American national interest ([National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2017, P.48](#)).

The American interest in the Middle East rests on three main pillars: Security, Economics and Values. Concerning Security, the United States always seeks to protect its national security, its international and regional allies from terrorist threats that originate from the Middle East like ISIS and Al-Qaida, for instance, in addition to the security threats imposed by Iran and the civil wars that exist in Syria, Libya and Yemen. As a result, the United States, the world policeman, should actively be involved in the region to counter these security threats. Concerning Economics, The Middle East region is considered one of the most important sources of energy to the global economy in general and to the United States and its allies in particular. Concerning Values, many Middle Eastern countries are suffering from lack of basic human rights and democratic values like freedom of expression and women's right. The United States, as it propagates for the support of these values, tries

to spread them among the region's people to undermine the dictatorial regimes and establish democratic ones to cope with the American values (Katulis & Juul, 2021).

The United States has strategic interests in the Middle East, and to keep these interests, it has to balance between the rival powers in the region like Saudi Arabia and Iran for example, in order to guarantee the stabilization of the region. Based on these strategic interests, the American administrations always try to sustain certain policies and to change others and also to create new strategic alliances and keep the old ones to strengthen its situation in the Middle East region. Israel, for example, is the closest strategic allies for the United States in the Middle East, that's why Washington always gives full political, economic and military support for it, not only concerning the Palestinian case but in all its conflicts in the region (Dekhakhena, 2021, P. 165).

The American foreign policy towards the Middle East witnessed continuity and change among different American administrations, for example, The Trump administration policy towards the Middle East had been characterized by supporting the regional agendas of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, UAE and Bahrain in accordance to the United States interests. However, the Biden administration criticized most of the region authoritarian leaders like Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen and its violations of human rights, and pledged to put the democratic values and human rights as a top priority to the American agenda in the region (Hoffman, 2020). Like Trump's administration, Biden's administration also has considered the regional problems of the Middle East that intersect with the American interests and calculated the benefits and costs of its policies towards the region, that's why many political analysts described Biden's policy towards the Middle East as "ruthless pragmatism" (Cook, 2022).

This paper will tackle the continuity and change aspects in the American foreign policy towards the Middle East under the Trump Administration and Biden Administration (2018-2024), and the focus will be on the American relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel as case studies. The main question of the research is: ***Why are there aspects of continuity and change between Biden and Trump administrations' policies towards the Middle East.*** The study is divided in to three parts: the first part tackles the American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump

(Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel), the second part tackles the American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Joe Biden (Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel), and the third part concludes the aspects of continuity and change between both administrations towards the Middle East.

Theoretical Framework:

The study will depend on the continuity and change approach to analyze the American foreign policy towards the Middle East under Trump and Biden administrations. Kjell Goldmann is considered one of the pioneers who developed the studies of continuity and change in foreign policy through his book "Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Dentente" in 1988. This book addressed the pressures which affect the change and continuity in the foreign policy of any country. Goldmann identified three main reasons for change in foreign policy: a change in the surrounding environment requires a change in foreign policy, the feedback effect, which means that if the foreign policy followed by a country brings negative reactions, this means that it must change, but if it produces positive results, it must continue to be followed, and finally a change in internal policies entails a change in foreign policy, meaning that changing the decision maker and replacing him with another with new ideas and beliefs requires a change in foreign policy. However, there are factors that push for the continuation of foreign policy and reduce the impact of the factors driving change, such as: administrative, political, and international factors (Goldmann, 1988, P. 3).

Charles Hermann defined foreign policy as "a program (plan) designed to address some problems or pursue some goals that entail action towards foreign entities". He believes that analyzing the positions of decision makers is an important aspect in order to know the extent of continuity and change in the foreign policy followed by a country. Herman explained four graduated levels of change in foreign policy: A) Adjustment Changes, which means a change in the level of attention directed to a particular issue while the policy continues to remain within the same framework of its goals. B) Program Changes, which refers to a change in foreign policy tools, such as achieving goals through negotiation and other diplomatic means and not through military force, while keeping the main purpose unchanged. C) Problem/Goal changes, which refers to the change in the objectives of foreign policy itself, not just the tools. D) International Orientation Changes, it is the

most extreme form of change, as it refers to changing the general direction of foreign policy, including changing tools, strategies, and goals (Hermann, 1990, P. 5).

Jacob Gustavsson believes that the theoretical study of change and continuity is considered an important intellectual path to enhance the understanding of the foreign policy of countries and international relations. There are many contributions that have studied change in foreign policy by formulating analytical models that facilitate empirical investigation, and among these models are: “checklist models”, “structural constraints models” and “cyclical models”. checklist models provide analytical tools used in conducting empirical studies, and assume that theory can be deduced through the generalizations reached by empirical studies. Structural constraints models focus on identifying factors that can help in stabilizing existing foreign policies, and prevent pressures that work to create actual changes in foreign policy. Cyclical models support the study of long time periods to discover the reasons that lead to changes in foreign policy (Gustavsson, 1998, PP. 18-20).

By applying the continuity and change approach on the American foreign policy towards the Middle East from 2018 till 2024, it would be able to analyze the policies that had been adopted by Trump and Biden administrations amid the changing environments internally and externally, in order to know the reasons behind the continuity in some policies and the changes in others towards the same issues and players like Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Israeli-Palestinian cause as case studies to be applied on.

Literature Review

The literature review is divided in to two main categories: the first category composed of studies related to the American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel, the second category composed of studies related to the American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Joe Biden in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

First: The American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump

A study entitled “**Mixed Legacy of Trump Administration in the Middle East**” by Oil, N. (2021), focuses on analyzing Trump's administration policy towards critical issues in the Middle East, from these issues: The American relation with Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni crisis, JCPOA

and Iran, Israel-Palestine conflict, the Syrian crisis and other issues. This study is useful in giving a comprehensive view to many important issues in the Middle East and in tackling how the American administration under Trump dealt with them, however, there was no sufficient analysis to the motives behind any policy taken by Trump administration in dealing with these issues, and this would be taken in to consideration in the current study.

Another study entitled **“The Trump Foreign Policy Legacy in the Middle East” by Jeffrey, J. (2021)**, compared Trump's approach towards the Middle East to his predecessor Obama, and concentrated on the Iranian issue, which was a priority to Trump who opposed the JCPOA nuclear deal and described it as insufficient, as a result, Trump withdrew the US from that deal. Also, this study tackled the American partnerships and allies in the region and focused on Israel as a vital ally against Iran. This study started by mentioning that Trump followed new approaches in his rule, especially towards the Middle East, compared to his predecessors, but it did not mention the outcomes of these approaches compared to previous administrations in order to reach the aspects of continuity and change.

A study entitled **“The Foreign Policy of the United States towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the 21st Century” by Tokar, C. (2022)** which analyzes the American foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran as two important regional powers in the Middle East under George Walker Bush (2001-2009), Barack Hussein Obama (2009- 2017), and Donald John Trump (2017-2021). The study aimed to trace the development in the relations between the United States in one hand and the two countries in the other hand, based on different leadership styles. From the points of weaknesses of this study, is that it focused on the aspects of change among the three administrations and neglected the aspects of continuity, despite of the existence of two administrations from the same partisan background.

Another study entitled **“Trump’s Legacy in the Middle East: Strategic Shift and the Geopolitics of American Foreign Policy in the Region” by Kriaa, B. (2021)** focused on Trump administration legacy on the Middle East. It tackled the normalization process between four Arab states on one hand and Israel on other hand, which was considered as a major breakthrough for the American foreign policy and leadership in the Middle East. Also, the study analyzed the strategic shift in the American foreign policy under Trump concerning the Iranian issue and his contribution in

solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study would support the current research in offering a comprehensive insight to the Trump administration policies towards two crucial issues in the Middle East, and the current study will offer a comprehensive insight to Biden administration in comparison to Trump administration to reach the aspects of continuity and change and to evaluate the outcomes of both administration's policies.

Second: The American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Joe Biden

A study entitled "**President Biden's Middle East Policy**" by **Kuperwasser, Y. (2021)** analyzes the overall Biden administration's vision towards the Middle East at the beginning of his rule based on his campaign, and his tendency to pivot away from the Middle East and to use different tools to deal with the crucial issues of the Middle East unlike his predecessor Trump. It also tackles Biden's policy towards Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel based on his campaign. The study focused on Biden's statements and promises towards the Middle East during his presidential campaign, without mentioning the contradictions between his statements during his campaign and his actions after reaching office.

Another study entitled "**Treading Cautiously on Shifting Sands: An Assessment of Biden's Middle East Policy Approach, 2021-2023**" by **Katulis, B. (2023)**, offers a comprehensive evaluation to Biden administration policies towards the Middle East, this evaluation is classified in to 3 phases: the first phase is the "Attempted Rebalance" from January 2021 to June 2022, the second phase is the "Limited Strategic Re-Engagement" from July 2022 to April 2023 and the third phase is the "Reaching for a More Proactive Strategy" from May 2023 to September 2023. It also compares between Biden's strategy at the beginning of his rule and how it developed after that to cope with the crucial issues of the Middle East. From the points of strength of this study, is that it goes through different phases in Biden's strategy towards the Middle East and did not rely on one phase to describe the whole policies of Biden administration.

Another study related to this category, entitled "**Biden's Middle East Policy: Inheritance and Changes to Trump's Middle East Policy**" by **Jiang, Z. (2021)** analyzes Biden administration policies towards the Middle East in comparison to that of Trump administration. It used the comparative method in order to analyze the overall similarities and differences between

both administrations' approach towards the Middle East in general and the Iranian issue and the relationship with the allies in the region in particular. The study reaches a conclusion that there are similar aspects between Biden and Trump administrations as well as different aspects, but the changing aspects are more than the continuing ones. The current study would focus on some issues that both administrations have dealt with in order to test if the changing aspects are more than continuing ones or the other way around.

First: The American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Donald Trump

The American foreign policy towards the Middle East under Trump administration was characterized by aspects of continuity and change. The Trump administration inherited old crises in addition to the new ones which appeared during his term. The National Security Strategy document for the Trump administration stated that the US wanted a Middle East “that is not a safe haven or breeding ground for jihadist terrorist, not dominated by any power hostile to the United States, and that contributes to a stable global energy market” ([The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. December 2017](#)).

The US Policy towards the Middle East under Trump administration was characterized by its efforts to improve relations with pro-US partners such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, which witnessed deterioration during the Obama administration, and to contain Iran. The Trump administration believed that if these two goals were met, besides its desire to withdraw the American troops from the Middle East, this would enhance the security and the stability of the region. After taking office in May 2017, Trump had chosen the Middle East as his first destination to travel to, through his trip he agreed to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia by \$110 billion, he also visited Jewish holy site of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. In May 2018, the Trump administration announced the withdrawal of the US from the Iranian nuclear agreement and in the next year, it announced a bundle of sanctions on Iran inconsistency with its objective of containing Iran ([The Middle East, 2019](#)).

The bilateral relations between the US and Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran are three of the most important countries in the Middle East for the American interest. Concerning Saudi Arabia, it is considered a strategic partner to the US particularly in terms of trade, Trump decided to continue the smooth relations between Saudi Arabia and the US, he had decided that

his first trip abroad would be to Saudi Arabia to emphasize on the strong bond between both countries. Concerning Israel, Trump was very supportive to it and that appeared clearly when he announced the recognition of the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, regardless of the opposition of many Arab states in the region like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Concerning Iran, Trump had always preferred to use coercive methods with Iran rather than peaceful ones, as he always depicted Iran as the leading sponsor of terrorism. After his first year in office, Trump announced the withdrawal of the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (Tokar, 2022, PP. 148-151).

One of the policies of Trump that was announced in the beginning of his rule, that any country, including the Middle Eastern countries, must pay a fair price in return for the United States security and defense for its interest, and that the US would not be responsible for huge costs caused by any country, for example, Trump announced at the end of 2018 that Saudi Arabia would bear a large part of the reconstruction in Syria. This policy was criticized by many analysts, who emphasized that this way of thinking was unrealistic and it neglected that securing the Middle East and defending the American allies there, is considering one of the top priorities of the American interest concerning the military, economic and political aspects (Mohammed, 2018, P. 5).

The American foreign policy towards the Middle East had been affected by Trump's perspective and his world view, as he was clear about which countries are considered to be among the US allies and which countries that needed to be encountered. His actions and policies witnessed continuing aspects and changing aspects in accordance to his assumption to American national interest. The following part will tackle the American foreign policy towards Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel under Trump administration.

1) The American foreign policy towards Iran under Trump administration

Iran has been always perceived as an adversary to the US and its national interest in the Middle East. There are several internal and external factors that American policy makers put in their consideration when formulating their policies towards Iran. From the internal factors: Iran's geostrategic location, energy, its theocratic regime, and its nuclear ambitions.

From the external factors: the adversary relation to the American allies Saudi Arabia and Israel, its ambition of being a regional power in the Middle East and its role in the proxy wars in Syria and Yemen. As a result, the United States always strives to create an American network of allies in the Middle East consists of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states in order to contain Iran. When Trump reached power, he justified his containing policies towards Iran on the basis of standing against a state which supports terrorism and terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Al-Qaeda (Czornik, 2022, PP. 3-5).

The Trump administration's policies towards Iran had witnessed a great change compared to Obama administration's policies. Obama tried to ease the relation, to some extent, with Iran using international agreements and organizations instead of imposing more sanctions. But for Trump, he had always depicted Iran as a state posing threats regionally and internationally, and that's why the US must counter it firmly (Dennis & Markon, 2017). The Trump administration had always criticized the Obama administration approach in dealing with the rising influence of Tehran in the Middle East, as a result, Trump formulated a new strategy in dealing with Iran based on "peace through strength" approach, this strategy was announced on October 13, 2017 to meet the US objectives in curbing the Iranian influence in the region, from these objectives: strengthening the regional alliances to balance Iran, curbing the Iranian funds to the terrorist organizations, protecting the US and its allies from the threats imposed by the Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles "ICBM", condemning human rights violations through the international community, and above all, to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons (Kriaa, 2021, PP. 50-51).

The most obvious aspect of change followed by Trump administration towards Iran appeared in dealing with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was signed in April 2015 by Iran, the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany (the so-called "P5 + 1"), this agreement was signed during Obama administration to put restrictions on the nuclear program of Iran in return for relieving some sanctions that were imposed on it by the US, the EU and the UN. This deal was considered a breakthrough for the Obama administration, as it put initial steps for building formal diplomatic relations with Iran. But for Trump, the JCPOA was considered a big failure in dealing with a hostile state like Iran

as it ignored non-nuclear challenges to the American interests, such as its ambition for regional hegemony and its support for terrorist groups. As a result, the Secretary of State under Trump administration, “Mike Pompeo” stated that the US would restore its diplomatic and economic relations with Iran based on certain conditions: complete denuclearization, stopping the ballistic missile program, to release all prisoners from the US and its allied states, put an end to cyberattacks and to end Iran’s ambition for regional hegemony (Thompson, 2018, P. 2).

For Trump and other supporters to him from the conservatives argued that this deal acquired Iran more powerful position, as the lifting of some sanctions would lead to improving the Iranian economy at the expense of the United States pressure power on Tehran. This went against the slogan raised by Trump during his campaign “America First”, as a result, the Trump administration announced the withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018. Moreover, Trump announced two sets of sanctions, that were previously applied before the deal, would be reinstated on Iran’s aircraft imports and petroleum exports (Trump’s Foreign Policy Moments, 2017-2021). Many senior figures in the Trump administration like former Secretary of State “Rex Tillerson”, Secretary of Defense “James Mattis”, and National Security Advisor “H.R. McMaster” warned Trump from the negative consequences of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, but Mike Pompeo, who replaced Rex Tillerson as secretary of state, supported the withdrawal decision as he was known for his opposition to the nuclear deal (Barnes & Barron, 2018).

The American withdrawal from the JCPOA was a first step in Trump’s policy towards containing Iran, the second step was consolidating the American relationship with Israel and Saudi Arabia, the two strategic allies to the US in the region and fierce enemies to Iran. Trump wished to form “Arab NATO” in the Middle East consisted of the Gulf countries, Egypt and Jordan, but this had not taken place because of many reasons such as the disagreement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia over the Syrian civil war (Kaya, 2023, P. 284).

After the withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA, the sanctions that were lifted, returned back again, and their implications, besides new sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, affected the Iranian economy and its trade badly. The relationship between Washington and Tehran heated once

again when Qasem Soleimani, one of the most prominent figures in Iran after the Islamic revolution, was assassinated by the U.S. through a drone strike (Tokar, 2022, P. 188). The Trump administration followed “Maximum Pressure Policy” towards Iran to gain a full control on it, through increasing the US sanctions. Despite the practiced pressures on Iran, it did not surrender to the US and to counter its escalating pressure, Tehran intensified its relation with the US traditional opposers, China and Russia, and strengthened its ties with its regional allies the Syrian Bashar al-Assad government, the Iraqi Shia militias, the Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen’s Houthis (Rouhi, 2023, PP. 163-172).

2) The American foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia under Trump administration

Saudi Arabia has always played a strategic role for the American interest in the Middle East; however, this relationship witnessed a mixture of tensions and cooperation through different American administrations. Concerning the Trump administration, the US-Saudi relations improved to a great extent in comparison to the previous administration. By returning back to Trump campaign, his perspective towards Saudi Arabia was hostile, he described it as “freeloader” who exploit the American protection without paying for it, and in case of winning the election, he would make Saudi Arabia pay a fair share in return for the American protection, as he stressed that the Saudi regime would collapse without the American defense, in addition to that, he criticized the previous administrations for not possessing business skills in dealing with this issue (Rogin, 2017, P. 3). But what Trump did after winning elections contradicted his campaign rhetoric, as he changed his perspective towards Saudi Arabia completely and maintained a strong relationship with the Saud’s dynasty, he supported them among different crises such as the alleged murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the violations committed by the regime in Yemen (Oli, 2021).

The strong US-Saudi relations under Trump administration were crystallized by the symbolic visit of Trump on May 20, 2017 to Saudi Arabia, to attend the Riyadh Summit, also known as Arab-Islamic-American Summit. During this summit, there were several meetings between Trump and Prince Mohammed bin Salman to maintain the relations between both countries and to discuss several bargains and agreements. The Saudi side described these steps as a “historical turning point” in the convergence between Washington

and Riyadh after eight years of divergence under the Obama administration. Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced that “Trump is a true friend of Muslims” and that the agreements negotiated during several meetings on the sideline of the Summit, were considered a breakthrough in the partnership between the two countries across all fields. This meeting contradicted the controversial statements announced by Trump during his campaign concerning the Muslim world and the executive order issued by him during his first days at office concerning “Muslim Ban” or “Travel Ban”. During his speech at the Summit, Trump emphasized on the historical partnership that was founded by King Abdulaziz and Franklin Roosevelt on the basis of friendship and hope. This relationship was reflected on maintaining peace and security in the Middle East in commensurate with US national interest (Tokar, 2022, P. 154).

Trump announced during his speech in Riyadh Summit, that there would be a great deal with Saudi Kingdom for arms and military technology. After that Trump and King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz signed a series of agreements concerning arms deals in May 2017, the deal was allowing Saudi Arabia to purchase arms with \$350 billion during 10 years whereas, there would be an immediate purchase of arms by \$110 billion. This arms deals included tanks, combat ships, radars, missile defense system, communications and cyber security technology. There was a huge impact for this deal, on one hand, it consolidated the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US and on the other hand, it was considered a strategy to counterbalance Iran in the region (Bhattarai, 2023, PP. 300-301). Iran and Israel were not pleased by the new arms deal. For Israel, it created some tension in its relation with the US as this deal gave strategic advantage to Saudi Arabia that could threat Israel’s military superiority in the region, but a senior US official declared that the deal would not hurt the Israeli security by any means (Opall-Rome, 2017).

After setting the roadmap for the relation between the US and Saudi Arabia under Trump administration, the United States showed support to the Saudi regime in many incidences, for example in October 2019, Saudi oil fields were exposed to attacks from the Houthi armed forces, and in reaction to these attacks, the United States increased its military assistance to Saudi Arabia and sent two fighter squadrons, an air expeditionary wing, two air defense systems, and an antimissile system. The American support to Saudi

Arabia was part of the Trump administration's strategy in the Middle East to consolidate the US interest in the region (Jiang, 2021, P. 90).

Saudi Arabia also has interests in strengthening its relation with the US to gain its support to its policies. The US encouraged the reforms that were undertaken by Prince Mohammed bin Salman and his unprecedented initiatives such as the Saudi vision 2030 plan that reflects the Saudi vision domestically and internationally especially towards Yemen and Iran. There are common interests between Washington and Riyadh such as sharing the same enemies, the United States under Trump administration sought to escalate the pressure on Iran to curb its influence which is threatening the US importance in the region, on the other hand, the Saudis wanted to curb the Shiite tide against its Sunni regime. Despite this good partnership between the two states, there were times and issues which brought tensions in both sides such as the intervention in Yemen, the Syrian war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In spite of the existence of times of tension, the dominant feature in this relation was characterized by being close and intimate compared to the previous administration (Martinez, 2020, PP. 224-225).

3) The American foreign policy towards Israel under Trump administration

The relationship between the United States and Israel has always been special throughout different American administrations with different partisan backgrounds. This relation went extra miles under the Trump administration, who gave unconditional support to Israel and this made Netanyahu said that "Trump is Israel's greatest friend", this cordial relationship appeared in the support of two officials in their elections. The Republican party in 2016 described the American support to Israel as "an expression of Americanism" and that their policies must not leave "no daylight" between the two states. Trump adopted the beliefs of the Republican party as principles for dealing with Israel. Trump took unprecedented decision towards Israel by moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a decision that was voted for in the General Assembly as null and void with 128 for and 9 against. In addition to that decision, Trump announced that the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington would be closed, and all the funds provided to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees would be abolished. Also, the Trump administration had cut its bilateral aid, around 200 million dollar) to the West Bank and Gaza. These decisions brought tension between the

Arab states from one side and the United States from the other side as the Arab states were not pleased by such moves, which brought to question the ability of the US to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Trump promised during his election campaign (Thompson, 2018).

Trump wanted to establish a new approach for peaceful relationship between Israel and the Arab states to maintain peace and security in the Middle East. He tried to normalize the relations among them through concluding several agreements that previous administrations could not reach. Trump was able to mediate in normalizing the relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, it was considered the first agreement between Israel and a major Arab country since Israel-Jordan peace treaty which was signed on October 26, 1994 and it put the base for enhancing regional peace. The agreement was considered a historic breakthrough concerning sustaining peace in the Middle East in 25 years. The US believed that this agreement would put a base for diplomatic exchanges between both countries and open the door for cooperation in different sectors such as health, education, and most importantly in the business and financial sectors which would improve the economic growth in both countries and across the Middle East in general. Trump was so enthusiastic about the concluded agreement between Israel and the UAE, as according to his vision, it could be a step forward to achieve peace and stability between Israel and Palestine too (The White House, 2020).

During Trump election campaign, he tackled the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli cause, and that the US would be neutral and play a limited role as a mediator in the negotiations between the two states. Trump criticized the role of the United Nations in dealing with this cause and trying to impose certain solutions on both sides, as a result he stated that the US would use its veto power against any solution that would be reached by the security council, as the solution should come out from the negotiations between Israel and Palestine not imposed by the United States. Trump pledged to solve this conflict, unlike the previous administrations who failed to reach a solution to that case. After Trump won the election, he changed his words and stated that the two-state solution was not the only way for ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, also the US was biased, not neutral as Trump promised during his election campaign, as it moved the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and showed unconditional support for Israel at the expense of Palestine. Moreover, Trump refused to put pressure on Israel

to adhere to any resolutions, on the other hand, he put political, economic and financial pressures on Palestine in favor of the Israeli side. By adopting these policies, the Trump administration proved to be stricter and more radical towards the Israeli-Palestinian cause compared to his predecessors (Dekhakhena, 2021, P. 175).

Trump had pledged to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the “Deal of the Century”, this deal had been prepared by untraditional group of American decision makers chosen by Trump, this group comprised Trump’s son in law “Jared Kushner”, U.S. Ambassador to Israel “David Friedman” and U.S. Envoy to the Middle East “Jason Greenblatt”. According to Trump’s team, the provisions of the deal were not easy to be implemented as it would benefit the Israeli side at the expense of the Palestinian side. In order to solve this tension, Trump sought to present economic temptations to the Palestinian side to accept the deal, as a result, he offered 50 billion dollars for investment and infrastructure in Palestine and additional 28 billion dollars support to Palestine through 10 years. Moreover, Trump pledged to give additional fund to Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon in the form of investment to support regional development in different sectors (Bremmer, 2020). The Trump administration tried to solve the conflict economically rather than politically based on the two-state solution. This deal was rejected by the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who stated that the US is completely biased to Israel (Wedeman, 2017). “The Deal of the Century” was considered to be a clear recognition from the Trump administration to the Israeli claims about its rights in the Palestinian land against the rights of the Palestinians, and that exactly what several Israeli governments sought for in many years (Berger, 2020, P. 80).

Second: The American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under Joe Biden

During Joe Biden’s presidential election campaign, he stated that as a president, he would not give the priority to the Middle East, like his predecessors, and would end the American wars in the region by withdrawing most of the American troops from many states in the Middle East region such as Afghanistan. Biden also mentioned that despite his intention of declining the US involvement in the region, his administration would stand against the Iranian threat that destabilizes the security of the region (Chilton, 2022, P. 23). Biden focused on pivoting the US attention to towards more critical

issues such as the Corona virus consequences, **threats imposed on the US from Russia and China. He referred to both countries in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance as “antagonistic authoritarian powers”, those powers tried to change the liberal order with its democratic values which had been settled by the US (Jacopo & et. al, 2022).**

Biden expressed that he would prefer to use peaceful and cooperative methods to achieve the US interest instead of coercive methods and use of force. Biden announced that he would exert effort to get rid of Trump's legacy, but after winning the election, it was hard for his administration to make vital changes concerning what Trump had done in the Middle East, like the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the US support to the normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states, known as “Abraham Accords”. However, Biden administration wished to expand the normalization agreements, started by Trump, by trying to convince Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords, which would be considered a great step towards stabilizing the security of the region in general and Israel in particular and above all the US interest in the region (Kuperwasser, 2021).

There are five principles which guide the US policy towards the Middle East during Biden administration which are partnership, deterrence, diplomacy, integration, and values. Concerning Partnerships, the US would strengthen its relationship with the countries of the region who will commit to the international order rules set by it. Concerning Deterrence, the US would deter any regional or international power who would try to dominate the region through any means. Concerning Diplomacy, the US would try to solve conflicts in the region through using diplomatic means rather than coercive means. Concerning Integration, the US would strengthen its political, economic and security relationship with its partners in the region based on respecting the principles of sovereignty and independence. Concerning Values, the US would stand for human rights and all the rights advocated in the UN Charter (The White House, 2022).

Some scholars divided the approach of Biden's administration towards the Middle East in to three phases. The first phase was an attempt to rebalance, this phase was followed by the administration from January 2021 till June 2022, in this phase Biden gave little attention to the Middle East and decided to focus on the challenges that faced the US when he entered the

office, mainly the consequences of the Covid-19. The Biden administration announced that the US policy would return back to basics by not exaggerating the US promises to the countries of the region, unlike the previous administrations. The second phase in the Biden administration towards the Middle East was applied from July 2022 till April 2023, and it was in the form of limited strategic re-engagement, this phase was considered a shift from the initial strategy of Biden administration, it started by Biden's visit to the Israel and Saudi Arabia, the reason behind this shift was the Russian-Ukrainian war and its impact on the international prices of energy and food. The US under Biden administration conducted bilateral agreements with both Israel and Saudi Arabia, this step represented an important engagement for the US in the region, contrary to Biden primary approach of neglecting the Middle East. The third phase took place from May 2023 till 2024, this stage was characterized by a more proactive strategy followed by Biden in reaction to China's increasing engagement in the region and its normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia. This made Biden restructure his vision towards the Middle East by trying to follow a more engaged strategy in order to face the Chinese ambitions and its economic aspirations for the Belt and Road Initiative and other economic projects in the region (Katulis, 2023, PP. 1-13). The following part will tackle the American foreign policy towards Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel under Biden administration.

1) The American foreign policy towards Iran under Biden administration

Biden administration put the Iranian issue at the top of the American agenda in the Middle East. During the campaign for election, Biden was against the American withdrawal from the JCPOA and promised to rejoin the agreement once again if Iran committed to the provisions of the deal. After winning the elections, Biden intended to discuss the nuclear deal in order to control the Iranian attempts to possess nuclear weapons. He criticized Trump's decision for making the US withdrew from the agreement and imposing more sanctions on Tehran, this made Iran more determined in developing its nuclear weapons in reaction to the American decision. Concerning the nuclear deal with Iran, Biden stated "As president, I will renew our commitment to arms control for a new era. The historic Iranian nuclear deal that the Obama-Biden administration negotiated blocked Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Yet Trump rashly cast the deal aside,

prompting Iran to restart its nuclear program and become more provocative, raising the risk of another disastrous war in the region... Tehran must return to strict compliance with the deal.” (Dagher, 2020). Other countries, like the United Kingdom, criticized Trump for withdrawing from the JCPOA, former UK foreign and defense ministers declared that this decision was considered a strategic fault and its consequences could be seen in increasing tons of enriched uranium produced by Iran since this withdrawal (Wintour, 2022).

Biden administration decided to make some modifications in the deal when negotiating with Iran, as he wanted to put restrictions on the Iranian regional behavior and on its development for ballistic missiles, Biden emphasized that these negotiations would be carried out in the presence of the allies of the US in the Middle East region. In spite of the Biden administration criticism to the Maximum Pressure policy imposed by Trump on Iran, it made use of its consequences on the Iranian regime in general and its economy in particular as it put them in great challenges, this opened the road for Biden to exploit the difficult Iranian situation and negotiate for a better deal than the JCPOA, which Iran strove to return back to rather than making a new deal as the JCPOA gave opportunity for Tehran to develop its nuclear weapons (Kuperwasser, 2021).

There has been talks between Washington and Tehran to rejoin the JCPOA and to lift some sanctions, but talks suspended due to a crisis with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as they were considered by the US as a foreign terrorist organization. There were pressures on the US to solve this crisis in order not to affect the negotiations for the revival of the JCPOA, but the US claimed the sanctions imposed on the IRGC were not related to the nuclear deal, but they are related to their terrorist actions in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon which existed for a long time (Myrvold, 2022, P. 60).

Biden administration depended on three main approaches in dealing with Iran. First, adopting multilateralism and institutionalism which reflect the principles of liberal hegemony, this means that Biden preferred not to react unilaterally, but emphasized on alliances, especially the European allies in dealing with Iran. Second, Biden administration relied on liberal institutionalism, which aims to use peaceful methods than coercive methods, that's why Biden did not want to resort to the military choice against Tehran, but if Tehran's action challenged the American interests, Biden administration would resort to force, with the consent of its European allies,

to stand against Iran, this shows that the military option is still valid but would be used in limited ways against certain actions related to nuclear, missile or regional threats. Third, the use of smart power with its tools like diplomacy and persuasion in dealing with Iran, during his election campaign, he criticized Trump for not being able to place smart power in dealing with Tehran and moving unilaterally preferring the coercive methods and making the US lost its credibility as being a main supporter to the non-proliferation issue, this appeared clearly when Trump administration decided to withdraw from the JCPOA. Biden administration decided that by relying on smart power, the US would return back to its place as a main support for the non-proliferation regime (Saniabadi, 2021, PP. 142-146).

After more than 3 years of Biden promise to negotiate a better deal with Iran, nothing happened. There was a survey conducted among congressional Democrats and Republicans, governmental officials and Iranian observers around Biden policy towards Iran, the result was that all the parties saw that Biden has no clear policy in dealing with the Iran in general and its nuclear program. During Biden administration, Tehran enriched uranium to 60% ignoring the JCPOA and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Biden privately told a woman in a rally in November 2022 that the Iranian deal was dead. Many US senators from both parties like Marco Rubio, Maggie Hassan, and over a dozen other senators sent a bipartisan letter at the beginning of 2024 called for renewing oil sanctions on Iran. They stated that Tehran has been gaining at least \$88 billion from their illicit oil exports, in which around two-thirds of these oil exports are to China. Iran witnessed economic growth by 4% and increased its foreign currency reserves by 45% from 2021 to 2023 as a result of breaking its economic sanctions and increasing its oil exports (Pletka, 2024).

Kurt Campbell, the National Security Council Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs in Biden administration, announced on December 7, 2023, that the JCPOA was over and it has been difficult to renegotiate around it amid the provocations of Iran to the US for example the “cash for hostages” deal that was met by great opposition from the Republicans. This deal stated that Washington and Tehran reached an agreement in which Iran would release five imprisoned dual Iranian-American citizens in exchange for the U.S. release of five Iranians, moreover, Tehran would restore \$6 billion of its frozen oil revenues. Campbell said that the US must use all its tools whether

diplomatic or military to stop the Iranian provocations. The US under Biden administration did not exert effective effort to return back to the JCPOA or to negotiate a better deal for the US interest and this opened the door for Iran to expand its nuclear developments and regional influence. On the other hand, the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, announced that Iran would not be forced to return back to the constrained provisions of the JCPOA as they are moving forward in achieving their interests (Mamedov, 2023).

2) The American foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia under Biden administration

During his campaign election, Biden showed a negative attitude towards Saudi Arabia, he described it as a “pariah” state, this was considered the strongest insult ever said by an American president against the Kingdom and its Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Biden also criticized Trump’s policy which embraced Saudi regime and its crown prince (Duss, 2023). Biden promised to punish Saudi Arabia if he won the election for several reasons like human rights violations that appeared clearly in the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by the Saudi regime, He announced in many interviews that the kingdom was responsible for this crime and have to be punished. Also, Biden condemned the American support to the Saudi war in Yemen, in which a lot of children were murdered and pledged to end this support once in office. Also, he announced during his campaign that the Saudi Kingdom always disables reaching an agreement with Iran concerning the nuclear deal because of the regional conflict between both of them (Cook & Indyk, 2022, PP. 13-14). As a result, Biden promised that he would reconsider the American policy towards Saudi Arabia if he won the election, mainly through stopping arms sales, which is considered a main pillar in the American-Saudi relationship, and by this the US would stop supporting Saudi Arabia and its foreign policy goals (Murphy, 2021, P.4).

After Biden reached office, he changed his opposing tone towards Saudi Arabia as he recognized that it would be difficult for the US to lose a regional power in the weight of the Kingdom. One of the main reasons that made Biden changed its attitude towards Saudi Arabia was the assistance of China to the Kingdom in producing ballistic missiles, so he considered this as a threat to the American interest in the region (Jacopo et al., 2022). When Biden visited Riyadh in July 2022, he bumped fists with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, this gesture marked an end to the tension between

both sides after the disagreement that happened because of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. This attitude surprised a lot of observers in the US as this position contradicted the principles of democracy and human rights that Biden advocated for in his campaign, as he sought to strengthen the American ties not only with Saudi Arabia but other dictators and violators of human rights like India and Vietnam (Carothers and Feldman, 2023).

During the visit of president Biden to Saudi Arabia, particularly in the “Jeddah Communiqué”, both countries agreed on shared strategic objectives: First, both countries emphasized on their longstanding vital partnerships in security and energy, as the Saudi Kingdom always gets security and military help from the US and the US and its allies depend on the Saudi oil for long years. Second, both countries stand together against aggression and terrorism as a result, both opposed the Iranian threat in the Middle East in order to create peace and stability in the region. Third, both countries agreed on the importance of strengthening the power of the Saudi Kingdom to face cyber, missile, drone, or maritime attacks against it, that’s why, both sought to form a regional multilateral security structure led by Saudi Arabia. Fourth, Washington and Riyadh shared the same vision concerning establishing peace in Yemen and ending its attack towards Saudi Arabia, both countries opposed the illicit weapon shipments to Yemen which are used to attack the Saudi Kingdom, the Yemeni crisis is not only affecting the Saudi security but also causing a humanitarian crisis in its territory as a result of the Saudi response to its attacks (Bowman et al., 2023, PP. 8-9).

Biden administration tried to take an unprecedented step towards the US-Saudi relations, as it played the role of mediator in pushing the Kingdom to normalize its relations with Israel, and the US would offer incentives to Riyadh in return for this, like extending the US security to the Kingdom and would support its development for civilian nuclear program. Saudi Arabia agreed on starting negotiations concerning normalizing relations with Israel in order to guarantee the security commitment of Washington towards Riyadh (Hoffman, 2023). The American diplomatic effort, towards achieving normalization in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, would enhance security and peace in the Arab-Israeli cause in particular and in the whole region in general. This initiative is considered to be one of the most courageous steps taken by Biden administration towards the Middle East (Byman, 2022).

According to some American officials, the negotiations concerning the mutual defense treaty with Riyadh are similar to the Japanese and South Korean military pacts. For the Saudi officials, they considered the defense treaty to be a strong deter against the Iranian strikes. Biden's effort to strengthen its ties with Saudi Arabia and to conclude a mutual defense treaty contradicts what he said during his election campaign, in which he promised to reconsider the American policy towards the Kingdom and to decrease the American presence in the Middle East and pivot to Asia in order to deter China. Other American Officials saw that Biden's policy towards Saudi Arabia would benefit the US interest in the region especially against China's effort to expand its influence in the Middle East region (Wong & Mazzetti, 2023).

3) The American foreign policy towards Israel under Biden administration

At the beginning of Biden presidency, the US did not show its support to Israel like the previous administration as Biden did not call the Israeli Prime Minister "Benjamin Netanyahu" except after 28 days of his inauguration, this period considered a long one in comparison to his predecessors. In this phone call, Biden pledged that the US would continue to support Israel and its security, he also discussed other issues with Netanyahu like the Iranian threat, the normalization issue with the Arab states and the Israeli-Palestinian cause (Sigler, 2021). Biden administration like Trump administration was not keen to be involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Biden's central focus was on the idea of normalizing the relations between Israel and more Arab states and specifically with Saudi Arabia. There was a strenuous effort from the American side to achieve a three-way deal with Saudi Arabia and Israel, in order to make the Saudi Kingdom recognize Israel and join the Abraham Accords (Carlstrom, 2023).

Before the 7th October events, Biden was publicly criticizing Netanyahu for his attempt to make judicial reforms that act against democracy and was accusing him of reaching power in an illegal way, but all this opposition changed after what happened in October 7, as Biden showed an unprecedented support and empathy towards Israeli people and government. There are several reasons that made Biden showed that tremendous support to Israel: first, he is considered from the old liberal school which considers Israel as an ideological ally to the US, second, he is the leader of the

democratic party which adheres to Israel, third, Biden did not want any criticism from the Republican side for not supporting Israel sufficiently (Alkassim, 2024).

The 7th October attacks retuned back the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the scene and made the US rethink about the importance of the Middle East and the American pledge to always support Israel's security in the region and to restore peace and stability to the region (Vinjamuri, 2023). For Biden, this attack was considered a crucial one, in which 1200 Israeli were killed and hundreds were kidnapped, also it was considered a humiliation to Israel in which it affected its image badly in the region as a powerful state with great deterrent system and a counterbalance state to Iran. This made Washington support it limitlessly by military weapons to deter Iran and its proxies in order to prevent the expansion of the conflict to a point that they did not want to reach (Mouton, 2023). American officials, starting from President Biden to the Secretary of State "Antony Blinken" and the Secretary of Defense "Lloyd Austin" emphasized on the Israeli right to self-defense and to get rid of Hamas (Usher & Zurcher, 2023).

Biden administration condemned the 7th October attacks by Hamas, and announced the American military and security support to Israel. Biden announced that Israel has the complete right to defend itself in accordance to the international humanitarian law. Biden emphasized that Israel should use all the possible means to get rid of Hamas, whom he described as a group of barbarians implementing inhuman operations similar to that of the Holocaust. Biden also traveled to Israel in the 18th of October to show additional support in its war against Hamas, on the same day, the US used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council against a draft for the conflict resolution. Moreover, there was a request sent to the congress on the 19th of October by Biden administration requesting a 14 billion dollars assistance for Israel (Zanotti et. al, 2023, P. 6).

Washington showed a great support to Israel from the political side and the military side. First, the political support appeared after five days from Al-Aqsa flood operation, when the Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken went to Israel to emphasize on the American solidarity toward Israel, and then started a tour to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Egypt, in order to stand against Hamas and to help in releasing the American hostages taken by Hamas. Although Blinken warned from the consequences of the attack on the

Israeli and American nationals, he ignored completely the humanitarian crisis that around half of the Palestinian people in the North are involved in, when Israel decided to cut off water, food, fuel and medicine. Moreover, the US stood against any official or unofficial request to cease fire and enter humanitarian aid to Gaza Strip. For instance, the US used its veto power in the Security Council against draft resolutions submitted by Russia and Brazil consequently, the US justified using veto power against these two resolutions by saying that they did not clarify the right of Israel to defend itself. The US did not stop at the point of refusing any resolution to solve the conflict and ceasefire, but it went far from that by submitting a draft to the Security Council on 21st October, emphasizing the Israeli right to defend itself and demanding Iran to stop exporting arms to terrorist groups across the Middle East. Second, from the military side, Biden supported Israel after the attack with emergency aid included ammunition and interceptor missiles for the Iron Dome. Washington sent two carrier strike groups, the first one carried more than 5000 Marines and US special forces directed to the eastern Mediterranean and the second one was directed to the Arabian Gulf to deter Iran. In addition to that, Biden requested 100 billion dollars to aid Ukraine, Taiwan and Israel, from them 14 billion dollars would be directed to Israel ([The Biden Administration's Response to the War on Gaza, 2023](#)).

Conclusion:

The Middle East is considered an important region for the United States for many reasons related to security, economy and values. Different American administrations, regardless of their partisan backgrounds, always paid a special attention to this region. There are aspects of continuity and aspects of change in their policies, but they all agreed on the same goal, which is protecting the American interests in such a vital area. This study focused on analyzing the aspects of continuity and change between Trump and Biden administrations towards three of the most important countries in the region: Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel. According to Herman model, in which program changes is one of its main pillars, it was found that there was a change in the foreign policy tools used by both administrations, as Trump preferred to depend on coercive tools most of the time especially with Iran, while Biden preferred to rely on diplomatic means like negotiations, but the same goals for both administrations were kept unchanged. Both of them also agreed on

decreasing the US involvement in the Middle East, while trying to enhance their relations with their strategic allies, mainly Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Concerning Iran, it is considered one of the main countries in the Middle East that the two administrations gave high priority in their agendas. From the aspects of continuity, is that Biden continues to review the Iranian nuclear issue, its development for missile technology and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as direct threats to the American interest, so both administrations share the same vision in defining the Iranian threats towards the US. However, there was a change in the policies used to deal with those threats. For Trump, he withdrew from the JCPOA, which he described it as a big failure for not being able to curb the Iranian nuclear expansion and for ignoring non-nuclear challenges, he also returned back the sanctions that were lifted before, he chose to practice what was known as “Maximum pressure policy” to have a full control on the Iranian cause. On the other hand, Biden criticized Trump for the American withdrawal from the JCPOA, and accused him for not being unable to solve the Iranian issue but made it more complicated by dealing with it unilaterally using coercive means that provoked Tehran and made it gone so far in its nuclear development. Biden administration preferred to rely on peaceful means using smart power and to act multilaterally with the support of the European allies. Biden pledged to negotiate a better deal than the JCPOA, but at the end, there was no clear policy by his administration towards Iran and there was no progress achieved. So, both Trump and Biden administration agreed on the same threats and reached the same results, which is failing to contain Iran, but the main change was through the tools used in dealing with Tehran.

Concerning Saudi Arabia, both Trump and Biden used tough tone against Saudi Arabia during their presidential election campaigns, and both of them changed their stances when reaching the Oval Office. For Trump, his historic visit to the Kingdom marked a turning point in the US-KSA relations and it opened the door for a historical partnership, Trump played the role of the Saudi protective guardian, this American support improved the Kingdom's position in the international community, moreover, Trump administration supported the Saudi war against Yemen and symbolized it as a war against terrorism, also Trump turned a blind eye towards the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. On the other hand, Biden adopted a negative stance towards Saudi Arabia, because of its human rights violations

in the Yemeni War and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. Biden was known for his support to human rights issues, that's why he criticized Trump for not punishing the Kingdom for committing such violations. Biden pledged to punish Saudi Arabia and to stop the blank check that was given to them by Trump, However, when reaching office, Biden was certain that it would be difficult to ignore a country like Saudi Arabia, and he took an unprecedented step, when the US played the role of mediator in the normalization process between the Kingdom and Israel. This step according to Biden administration was considered to be very important in consolidating the American interest in the region. So, concerning the American relation with Saudi Arabia under both Trump and Biden administrations, it was characterized by continuity in goals, policies and results and little changes in the tools used.

Concerning Israel, Trump administration took the close US-Israeli relations extra miles when decided to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moving the US embassy there, he also millions of dollars from its assistance to the Palestinian Authority and ended its aid to the UNRWA. Trump pledged to solve the conflict between Israel and Palestine and to seek a peaceful approach through normalizing relations between Israel and the Arab states. When Trump reached office, he announced what was known as "Deal of the Century" as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian cause, he relied on using economic means rather than political means based on the two-state solution. Trump was stricter and more radical towards that cause rather than his predecessor as he wanted to solve the conflict in favor of Israel and at the expense of the Palestinians. On the other hand, Biden administration did not show that support to Israel at the beginning of its role and it restored the American aid to Palestine and to the UNRWA, but it kept the rest of the decisions that had been taken by Trump untouched. Biden administration also built on the "Abraham Accords" started by Trump, this was clear in the effort exerted by the US to achieve normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The 7th October event was a real test to the US-Israeli relations, as it showed the complete, blind support of the US to Israel in all aspects with a blank check wrote by Biden administration to Netanyahu. All of these showed that the aspects of continuity between the two administrations towards Israel are more than the change, the aspects of change could be in the tone rather than the substance, although Biden was less hostile towards Palestine than Trump, but both of them put the support for Israel at their top priorities by any means.

Last but not least, the study finds that, despite the different partisan background between Trump and Biden, there have been a continuity more than change in the policies followed by them towards the three chosen countries in the Middle East. The reason behind this continuity is that they have the same vision towards the American interests in the region. Although, both of them criticized its predecessor's way of dealing with some issues and pledged to change their tools and approaches, but when reaching the Oval Office, things are seen from a realistic lens, and this led to seeing contradictions between what was said during the election campaign and what is being done during the official role.

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