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# **Biden Administration's Approach to the Middle East**

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## Introduction

The inherent desire to withdraw from the Middle East has been present in the American political imagination since it became clear that the wars against terrorism had failed to achieve stability or protect American interests in the region.

Added to this in the past decade was the idea of moving towards Asia, put forward by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but former President Donald Trump ignored it by canceling the negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which included a group of countries surrounding China.

Moreover, during the Trump era, the so-called "shale revolution" and the United States' attainment of oil sufficiency and export contributed to a further reversal of the Middle East's foreign policy priorities. Added to this is the current and projected future decline in oil use as well as investment in drilling and excavating globally.

But the rise of the issue of addressing climate change and global warming on the US agenda as a strategic goal, to the point of forming a team in the Biden administration specialized in managing it, made maintaining the stability of energy markets, especially in the Middle East, along with pushing for a global shift towards clean energy a major US interest. That's why the United States has launched the "Rebuilding a Better World" (B3W) plan to invest in clean energy around the world.

Israeli security remains an American priority in the region, but it may be of the lowest importance historically, due to the decline of regional threats to Israel thanks to the normalization agreements and the trend towards normalization that accompanied it during the presidency of Trump, especially in the last year, although this sense of security was shaken after the tremendous popular reaction regionally and globally against the Israeli war in Gaza in May 2021.



The decline in American "interest in Israel" has also been contributed by the emergence of a popular and political backlash criticizing with unprecedented intensity Israel's practices against Palestinians in the occupied territories, especially among the Democratic Party in general, and in the progressive democratic left in particular.

Finally, the Middle East remains a major market for American weapons, which have begun to be competed with by several States, the most important of which are China and Russia. Although some arms deals have stalled because of the tense relationship between Washington and some capitals in the region, due to human rights files, the purchase of Russian weapons and other reasons, there are American voices calling for the need to create a sustainable framework for these relations that will put a minimum halt to tensions in some controversial files

## First: Determinants of Biden's policy towards the Middle East

### 1 The state of the Middle East with the advent of the Biden administration

The COVID-19 pandemic, and its accompanying economic effects, as well as the energy price crisis, have had negative effects on economic and political stability in the Middle East region. However, these factors are only part of deeper dynamos of instability in the region, which includes four failed states, namely Yemen, Libya, Syria and Sudan, a number of fragile states on the brink of political and economic failure, such as Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan, and dozens of armed non-State actors, including terrorist-labelled organizations.

Much of the turmoil in the region is due to deeper factors dating back years and decades, from the Arab Spring, whose effects continue to unfold since its inception in 2011, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, which continues to witness the resulting aftershocks, the "Islamic revolution" in Iran in 1979, and the military mobilization against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s, which produced networks of armed groups that have only increased in complexity since then.

Amid this turmoil, Iran is caught in one of the largest systems of conflict in the region, stretching in different proportions from Afghanistan to Yemen, and bears the character of a rivalry with the United States and its regional partners. The turmoil exacerbates the conflict in the so-called "Sunni world" between Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain on the one hand, and Türkiye and Qatar on the other. This conflict is represented by regional tensions over political Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, and extends to all countries of the region in varying proportions. Coinciding with this was the intervention of third parties such as Russia to exploit the situation to undermine American interests and offer an alternative to partnership with the United States.



Over the past decade, threats emanating from Iran's expansion in the Middle East have prompted the United States to increase its military presence in the region more than once. If the Obama administration has somehow turned a blind eye to all of these threats in exchange for signing the nuclear deal, the Trump administration's exiting from the deal and exerting maximum pressure has not been met by concrete concessions from the Iranian side. In sum, the balance of power in the region continues to tilt in Iran's favor even after the COVID-19 pandemic has receded. While economic pressures due to COVID-19 and low energy prices have reduced the willingness or ability of Gulf countries to invest in or provide aid to countries with weaker economies such as Egypt and Jordan, or to support Iran's resistance in Iraq and Lebanon, Iran has gained experience in extending its influence in the region at the lowest costs despite the imposition of the harshest sanctions.

While tension between Israel and its Arab and Islamic neighbors has been the largest source of tension in the past decades, normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, and talk about the possibility of larger Arab countries signing such agreements have suggested that the tension is irreversible, but this belief has been shaken to a large extent after the escalation of displacements in the "Sheikh Jarrah" neighborhood in Jerusalem and the Israeli campaign against Gaza in 2021, which faced one of the largest waves of rejection in the history of the Palestinian issue, and led to a reconsideration of the grim evaluation of the situation of the issue.



## 2 US Interest in the Middle East

As it entered the White House, the new U.S. administration faced pressing domestic challenges and a complex foreign agenda likely to overwhelm American interest in the Middle East.

Locally, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been at the top of the US administration's priorities, although the administration has been able to implement its plan to deliver 100 million vaccines in record time and the pandemic is on the decline, but the ensuing economic crisis is likely to continue throughout the four years of the administration. At the international level, the Department would have to restore the confidence of its allies in Europe and Asia, which had been shaken by the previous administration, and regulate the relationship with China.

If we take the previous effects out of the equation, the new administration inherited the former administrations' endeavors to reduce US intervention in the Middle East, which was represented by the policy of shifting to Asia for the Obama administration, and disengaging from the US foreign burdens of the Trump administration. These global and regional transformations have reinforced America's desire to place the Middle East lower in its global strategy<sup>(1)</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are still more stable American interests and investments in the region, whether politically, economically, diplomatically or militarily, in the form of energy security, the security of sea lanes, combating terrorism, the promotion of good governance and democracy, stability in the Gulf, Israel and its vicinity, an end to eternal warfare, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The following is a brief review of<sup>(2)</sup> these interests:

### A. Energy Security

The US remains interested in global energy security despite its shift from importer to exporter, because its allies in Europe and Asia still rely on oil and gas imports from the Middle East. It is therefore in the American interest to protect the flow of energy from the region and to prevent its opponents from taking control of it in the international arena.

(1) Tamara Cofman Wittes, What to do-and what not to do-in the Middle East, Brookings, 25 January 2021: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-to-do-and-what-not-to-do-in-the-middle-east/>

(2) The Biden Administration and the Middle East - Policy Recommendations for a Sustainable Way Forward, Middle East Institute, March 2021: p7



## **B. Waterways Protection**

The most important international trade corridors between East and West pass through the Middle East, namely the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Bab al-Mandab, and the Suez Canal, and stopping traffic in one of these corridors means strangling international trade. The United States therefore has an interest in keeping these corridors open and safe in order to prevent international rival parties from controlling them.

## **C. Countering terrorism:**

Working with regional and international actors to deter, disrupt, and defeat groups on terrorism lists is a key current and future U.S. security interest, until assessments of U.S. security institutions come to another conclusion.

## **D. Promotion of good governance**

A decade after the Arab Spring, there are still serious questions about the viability of state institutions in the Middle East, and there are fears of monopolizing power and stifling human rights and civil liberties. To maintain its relations with the region, the United States needs to constantly pressure its governments to move away from these behaviors and address the reasons for these concerns.

## **E. Stability in the Gulf**

The United States has a vested interest in reducing tensions in the Gulf region, which may attract other international forces and escalate tensions, conflicts, and rivalries already existing in the region, which may worsen to affect global stability.

## **F. End eternal warfare**

The withdrawal of a large part of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria is a U.S. interest, but a small number of troops must be retained to train on counterterrorism operations, and to form security relationships that ensure relative stability in these areas. This cannot be achieved without efforts to end the ongoing wars in Yemen, Syria and Libya; and to restore stability in Iraq.



## **G. Non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons**

These are at the forefront of American interests in the region and in the world, and they are represented in the region by preventing the proliferation of these weapons to new States.

But these interests should be seen in the context of a decline in US foreign policy interest in the Middle East in favor of a move toward Asia or other international issues, such as confronting the COVID-19 pandemic, rebuilding international organizations, and addressing climate change. Attention should also be paid to the fatigue hitting American foreign policymakers and public opinion at the same time with costly engagement in the region, which has proved to be counterproductive <sup>(3)</sup>.

(3) Paul Salem, United States General Middle East Enterprises & Policy Priorities, Middle East Institute, March 2021: <https://bit.ly/3g24Ryx>



### 3 Broadlines of Biden's policy in the Middle East

In its “Interim National Security Strategic Directive” released in March 2021, the U.S. Administration stated that:

It will maintain its commitment to Israel's security, while continuing to seek to improve its relationship with surrounding countries and resume the U.S. role in promoting a viable two-state solution.

It will work with its partners in the Middle East to deter Iranian aggression and threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, disrupt Al-Qaida and associated “terrorist” networks and prevent the return of ISIL/Da 'esh, address humanitarian crises, and redouble its efforts to resolve complex armed conflicts that threaten regional stability.

It does not intend to give a plain check to its partners in the region regarding policies that conflict with U.S. interests and values. It had therefore withdrawn its support for military operations in Yemen and supported United Nations efforts to end the war there. Its aim was to reduce regional tensions and create a space that would enable the peoples of the region to realize their aspirations.

It believes that military power is not the most effective solution to the challenges facing the region, but it has asserted that it will maintain its military presence to the extent required to disrupt international “terrorist” networks, deter Iranian “aggression”, and protect other vital U.S. interests. That is with the assurance that they should not, and will not, engage in "eternal wars" that have claimed thousands of lives and trillions of dollars. In this spirit, it will "responsibly" end the longest American wars in Afghanistan, while ensuring that they do not again become a safe corridor for terrorist attacks against the United States <sup>(4)</sup>.

(4) International Security Group, WhiteHouse.gov, March 2021, p. 11, p.15: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/03/2021/NSC1-v2.pdf>.



## Second: The Biden administration's policy towards the Middle East

### 1 American regional relations

#### A. The Iranian Gulf Dialogue Roadmap to Bridge the Diplomatic Gap

Within the layers of its policies, the Trump administration has carried a number of contradictions; especially between the conviction of the need to get out of the Middle East and the desire to impose the maximum possible pressure on Iran. At a time when Trump was talking again about withdrawing from the region, he sent 20,000 troops there. The result was an American combination of military activity, diplomatic negativity and giving U.S. partners in the region a blank cheque to continue their behaviors. As a result, instability in the region has mounted.

In the midst of all this, there have been calls in American thinking and decision-making circles to control American ambitions in the region, by adopting a policy with more modest ambitions regarding military objectives and efforts to rebuild countries from within, and with greater ambitions regarding the use of influence and diplomacy to pressure with the aim of easing tensions and reaching temporary settlements between the main countries in the region. One advocate for this is the current US national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who made a detailed proposal <sup>(5)</sup> before taking office, to use diplomacy more comprehensively and go beyond the Iranian dossier to establish a regional dialogue with the support of other UN Security Council members, that would ease tensions and find ways to calm down and manage disagreements.

The proposal begins with exploiting the humanitarian crisis in the region to bring the two poles: the Saudi and Iranian closer together, take measures to restore confidence between the two countries, and reach an explicit pledge from them not to interfere in each other's affairs.

(5) Jake Sullivan and Daniel Benaim, America's Opportunity in the Middle East, Foreign Affairs, 22 May 2020: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/22-05-2020/americas-opportunity-middle-east>



If international circumstances help, there may be space to discuss larger topics such as Yemen, Syria, and waterway security. Even if this proposal is unsuccessful, it may serve as a model for further attempts to end Iran's mobilization beyond its borders in the future.

The importance of such proposals stems from the need to fill the diplomatic vacuum in the region that the United States used to fill, especially since the Middle East is one of the least institutionally organized regions in the world, after the repeated failure of the Arab League to play an active role in resolving conflicts and managing disputes, and the weakness of other initiatives in this regard, such as the concept of "Arab NATO" put forward by the Trump administration and was designed to manage a specific regional conflict and define American obligations without paying attention to the interests of Member States. The proposed "Gulf-Iranian" dialogue does not need to establish new institutions or conclude new agreements, but rather a comprehensive framework, a flexible mechanism and an agenda for dialogue that is conducted with the support of the United States, and in a compatible bilateral nature, so that the American presence is not required.

However, this proposal carries within it a problem that the countries of the region are afraid of, which is the call not to link the nuclear agreement with other macro issues in the region, as Sullivan believes that the mistake of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in linking the nuclear deal to the "exit of every Iranian soldier" from Syria should not be repeated. Instead, progress should be made on the nuclear agreement and then allow a parallel path to dialogue on other issues supported by the United States and its partners in the nuclear agreement. This idea does not appeal at all to US partners in the region such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, which called for the opportunity to use the maximum pressure imposed by Trump to come up with regional concessions from Iran.

Moreover, it should be noted that many parties have invested in "Saudi-Iranian" hostility since 1979, when Iran became an adversary of the United States, and Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini began to compete with Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Islamic world. This relationship has gradually become part of the "American-Iranian" hostility, in which Saudi Arabia balances Iran regionally. This balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran has become part of Saudi Arabia's position as a major ally of the United States in the region, so this Saudi

status has been linked to a large extent to the continuation of the regime in Tehran's hostile position to Washington, and thus any American-Iranian rapprochement may come at the expense of Saudi Arabia's preferred position with the United States, and the existence of this hostile relationship to ensure the continuation of the US presence to protect the Gulf states, the Iranian regime similarly exploits this presence as one of its sources of legitimacy<sup>(6)</sup>.

Despite these concerns, there seems to be more opportunity than ever to launch this diplomatic initiative. On the Saudi side, the hawks of successive US administrations from George W. Bush to Trump were unable to eliminate the Iranian regime, and it seemed clear that the United States was not prepared to fight a war in order to protect the Gulf countries that are exposed to Iranian attacks. The UAE, for example, has opened backdoor diplomatic channels with Tehran, and sources have suggested that Saudi Arabia has taken such a step more conservatively. While the Trump administration was opposed to this diplomatic approach, the new administration does not take the same hardline stance as the previous one.



(6) Kim Ghattas, The painful truth for Saudi Arabia: it needs the Iranian system to survive, The Guardian, 29 January 2020: <https://bit.ly/3g2wgAy>

## B. The Palestinian issue: a shift in the American political landscape

The Biden administration succeeded one of the most favorable American administrations to Israel. The Trump administration has taken a number of decisions that have tilted the balance in Israel's favor unprecedentedly, from relocating its embassy to Jerusalem, withdrawing from the nuclear agreement with Iran, imposing <sup>(7)</sup> sanctions on the International Criminal Court, which has decided to open investigations into Israeli repression of Palestinians, halting <sup>(8)</sup> support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA <sup>(9)</sup>), recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, to recognizing the legitimacy of Israeli settlements, which implies recognition of Israel's annexation of parts of the <sup>(10)</sup> West Bank, and finally mediating in normalization agreements with four Arab states away from the terms of the Arab initiative, to which Israel has long <sup>(11)</sup> held reservations. But this landscape changed in the early months of Biden's presidency.

The recent round of conflict that broke out in May 2021 between Hamas and Israel represented a development in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the American scene, with the emergence of new political and cultural trends in American politics that are believed to change Washington's handling of any future developments in this file, despite President Biden's approach similar to that of former US presidents, when he announced at the beginning of the conflict the administration's position in favor of Israel's right to self-defense, rather than imposing pressure on it that would have reduced human and material losses.

(7) Why Trump's Jewish supporters say he's been a 'dream come true' on Israel, The Times of Israel, 30 October 2020: <https://bit.ly/3pVp6Ap>

(8) Trump targets ICC with sanctions after court opens war crimes investigation, The Guardian, 11 June 2020: <https://bit.ly/3hSP2d9>

(9) In one move, Trump eliminated US funding for UNRWA and the US role as Mideast Peacemaker, Brookings, 7 September 2018: <https://brook.gs/3noBoj4>

(10) Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo shift on Israeli settlements is U.S. foreign policy at its worst, USA Today, 21 November 2019: <https://bit.ly/396XpOf>

(11) Trump announces Morocco and Israel will normalize relations, Arab News, 10 December 2020: <https://bit.ly/3pSG2aM>



But, far from the White House, the scene in Congress - namely, the Democratic MPs - was quite different and out of the familiar context of the issue. Deputies from the rising progressive left in the Democratic Party have openly criticized Israeli policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and -like never before- did not hesitate to speak of Palestinian rights. These were led by Senator and former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, Senator Alexandria Okasio Cortez, and the first Palestinian female member of the United States House of Representatives <sup>(12)</sup> Rashida Taleb, whom Biden met with a gathering of Palestinian American activists and praised for <sup>(13)</sup> her persistence.

This trend was not unique to the left of the Democratic Party, as central and pro-Israeli democratic legislators, such as Senators Chuck Schumer and Robert Menendez and Representative Jerry Nadler, expressed support for Israel in its battle with Hamas, but signed statements sharply criticizing Israel's treatment of Palestinians in an unprecedented move <sup>(14)</sup>.

On the other side, the right renewed the position it inherited from President Trump in favor of Israeli settlement and opposition to the Palestinians, especially with the rise of a segment of Christian evangelicals and a religious Jewish minority in the Republican Party that supports the creation of a "Greater" Israel and opposes the establishment of any independent Palestinian state <sup>(15)</sup>. This has contributed to former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's standing alongside the Republicans for the past decade since the tension between him and former United States President Barack Obama, turning the Palestinian issue into a point of contention between the right and the left in the American political landscape <sup>(16)</sup>.

<sup>(12)</sup> Abby Seitz, How Progressives Are Changing the Conversation on Israel-Palestine, Progressive, 20 May 2021: <https://progressive.org/latest/progressives-conversation-israel-palestine-seitz210520-/>

<sup>(13)</sup> Alana Wise, Rep. Tlaib Pushes Biden To Protect At-Risk Palestinians In Middle East Conflict, NPR, 18 May 2021: <https://n.pr/37DENVR>

<sup>(14)</sup> Jack Brewster, Schumer Signs On To Bipartisan Statement Calling For Israel-Hamas Ceasefire, Forbes, 17 May 2021: <https://bit.ly/3m4i7GG>

<sup>(15)</sup> Max Boot, Republicans are far more radical than Democrats on Israel, The Washington Post, 24 May 2021: <https://wapo.st/37CqDUW>

<sup>(16)</sup> Marc Caputo, 'Netanyahu is essentially an Israeli Republican', Politico, 15 August 2019: <https://www.politico.com/story/15/08/2019/israel-trump-netanyahu1465917->

Polarization around the Palestinian issue was reflected in polarization in the American political landscape. Among the youth of the Democratic Party, the analogies of Palestinians with African Americans and South African Africans who were once governed by apartheid laws were widespread, and the slogan "Palestinian Lives Matter" appeared along the lines of "Black Lives Matter". Spiritual discourse about the eternal American Israeli relationship has become an accusation among young liberal Americans<sup>(17)</sup>.

Nevertheless, President Biden was supportive of the Israeli side of the war in Gaza, especially in its early stages. Congress did not seriously consider reducing military support to Israel. On the contrary, American politicians expressed their intention to compensate Israel for the lost munitions. So far, no practical steps have been taken to restore American support to the Palestinians, which would enable them to restore funding for UNRWA and reopen a representative office of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Washington.

But there remains room for potential change in the U.S. administration's approach to the issue, especially with statements by President Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, and White House spokeswoman that Palestinians and Israelis deserve “equal measures” and equal rights. This language suggests that the administration's agenda towards the dossier will focus on the human rights aspect that will guarantee at least the Palestinians who are demanded the right to a first-class citizenship and fundamental rights that will enable them to determine their own destiny<sup>(18)</sup>.



(17) Hansi Lo Wang, The Complicated History Behind BLM's Solidarity with The Pro-Palestinian Movement, NPR, 12 June 2021: <https://n.pr/3sepjRx>

(18) Hussein Ibish, America's attitude to Palestine and Israel has subtly shifted, The National News, 24 May 2021: <https://bit.ly/3yJr5MV>

## C. Türkiye

Reading the international scene in Washington is different from that in Ankara; while Washington sees China's rise as a threat, Ankara sees it as an opportunity. This stems from Ankara's belief in the emergence of regional and international signs of a multipolar international order, in which Ankara can be one of these poles, even trying to change some of the dynamics of international and regional relations, a vision contrary to the American reading, which sees in these poles as competitors. With this in mind, Türkiye sought a Russian S-400 missile system, and Washington imposed sanctions on it in return.

If Turkish-American relations are seen as a strategic alliance formed by Türkiye's accession to NATO, this view is no longer valid because the relationship is no longer governed by military determinants alone. The strategic security and military partnership with the United States is no longer sufficient to contain the changes that have occurred in the relationship since the end of the Cold War. Türkiye, at the same time, is not an adversary of the United States. Hence, there can be no sharp separation between the areas of agreement and disagreement between the two countries, but the escalation of disagreements may affect the common areas of cooperation. Part of the foundations on which the military alliance relationship between the two countries was built from the outset must be preserved, ensuring in advance the expectation of solidarity and trust from each other<sup>(19)</sup>.

The relationship between Washington and Ankara has been further complicated over the past decade by the threat that Ankara saw on the Syrian side of its border, which was the establishment of the People's Protection Units (YPG) as an autonomous entity that shares the goals of the anti-Turkish PKK. The US Department of Defense has made this entity a partner in the war against ISIS in Syria<sup>(20)</sup>. President Trump; however, stressed that he does not intend to maintain the American commitment in northeastern Syria indefinitely by announcing his intention to withdraw troops. He procrastinated in dealing with the US Department of Defense's warnings about the Turkish government's purchase of the Russian

(19) Sinan Ulgen, Redefining the U.S.-Türkiye Relationship, Carnegie, 26 July 2021: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/26/07/2021/redefining-u.s.-turkey-relationship-pub85016->

(20) Türkiye: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief, Congressional Research Service, 9 November 2020: <https://bit.ly/3neMEyA>

missile system S-400, but in the end imposed sanctions on Ankara for purchasing this system <sup>(21)</sup>.

The Biden administration has also inherited American-Turkish disagreements over the J&D government's policy toward Iran and Israel. With regard to Iran, economic actors close to the Turkish government have exploited a loophole in the US sanctions imposed on Tehran during the past two decades, providing Tehran with financial liquidity, which has upset Israel and the United States. The legacy of this process continues to this day through the case against Halk bank, the Turkish bank, for which the Trump administration has found a legal way out by paying a fine and acknowledging certain irregularities <sup>(22)</sup>. With regard to Israel, the Turkish Government has taken a hardline stance towards Israeli settlement policies, relocating the American Embassy to Jerusalem, and the conflict over energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean have fueled disagreement with Israel <sup>(23)</sup>.

Today, however, the Biden administration is trying to reset the relationship with Israel in order to serve its interests and the balance of the region.

### **Clean slate?**

Despite inherited tensions, the U.S.-Turkish relationship has not experienced any crisis since Biden assumed the presidency until July 2021. Biden maintained a calm rhetoric toward Türkiye and focused on human rights and trying to find a new approach to the relationship that would ensure Washington's supreme hand, but called the events of 1915 "extermination", which aroused Ankara's <sup>(24)</sup> enthusiasm.

<sup>(21)</sup> Trump Administration Sanctions Türkiye's Military Procurement Agency for 2017 Purchase of Russian Missile System, Gibson Dunn, 18 December 2020:  
<https://bit.ly/2JQqpRP>

<sup>(22)</sup> Turkish Bank Case Showed Erdogan's Influence with Trump, The New York Times, 29 October 2020:  
<https://nyti.ms/38inNFG>

<sup>(23)</sup> What could a new ambassador mean for Türkiye-Israel relations? Aljazeera, 16 December 2020:  
<https://bit.ly/39bgpeH>

<sup>(24)</sup> US 'Biden issues controversial statement on 1915 events, Anadolu Ajansi, 24 April 2021:  
<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-biden-issues-controversial-statement-on-1915-events/2219528>



The two presidents; however, seem to agree to maintain this calm and balanced approach to the relationship. This was evident in their meeting on the sidelines of the NATO summit on 14 June 2021 <sup>(25)</sup>, in which both sides ignored the sensitive points of contention between the two countries. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan spoke of opening the door to a new era in the relationship with the United States on a "positive and constructive" basis <sup>(26)</sup>.

Washington's efforts to contain both China and Russia, with the help of its Western allies, are believed to give Türkiye added importance. There is also cooperation between the two countries to stabilize Afghanistan after the withdrawal of American forces, which adds to the importance of the relationship between the two countries.

<sup>(25)</sup> Nicholas Danforth, A cool, cautious calm: US- Türkiye relations six months into the Biden administration, Brookings, July 2021: <https://brook.gs/3sqL4xX>

<sup>(26)</sup> Yahya Bostan, What are the two key topics in Türkiye -US relations? Daily Sabah, 23 June 2021: <https://bit.ly/3iL6aDN>

## 2 Relationship with Russia

The United States can no longer ignore Russia in its foreign policy. Federal Russia is no longer as preoccupied with its internal affairs as it was in the first 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia has regained its ability to influence beyond its near and distant borders. This ability has increased steadily, especially since 2014, as it intervened in Georgia, Ukraine, Syria, and Libya; and the entire world witnessed news of the impact of its interference in the US presidential elections, which was proven by US intelligence reports themselves.

The December 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy noted that Russia challenges American power, <sup>(27)</sup> influence, and interests. It tries to reduce U.S. security and welfare, in addition to creating conflicts between the U.S. and its international partners. Russia also views NATO and the EU as sources of threat. This was confirmed by the US Defense Strategy of 2018, <sup>(28)</sup> which described Türkiye as a strategic competitor who, as described in the report, seeks to shape the world in line with his dictatorial model. But the 2018 defense strategy stated that Russia is seeking to “destroy NATO and change the security and economic structures in Europe and the Middle East to its advantage.”

Although America's foreign policy circles try not to underestimate Russian capabilities, nor overestimate them, Russia's federal resources are a small fraction of those of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Therefore, Russia seeks at the lowest cost to build relations of international mutual benefit and opportunities that can be exploited to build its influence and undermine both American influence and the Western system. Therefore, Russia's relations in the region are not alliances based on strategic interests, but on mutual benefit and deals, but there are some exceptions. Russian support for the Syrian regime, North Korea and Iran remains one of Russia's most anti-American policies around the world <sup>(29)</sup>.

<sup>(27)</sup> National Security Strategy of the United State of America, Trump White House Archive website, December 2017: <https://bit.ly/3CN9I5L>

<sup>(28)</sup> Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States, Department of Defense website, 2018: <https://bit.ly/2VP7yNc>

<sup>(29)</sup> Bruce McClintock et al., Russia's Global Interests and Actions, Rand, June 2021, p.3: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE327.html>



## A. Russia in the Middle East

As part of its effort to revive its previous relations, and to exploit its influence to resist changing political systems in some countries, and to reduce American influence and intervention, Russia intervened in the Middle East and North Africa in the past decade, as it seeks to form a security and economic landscape that apparently promises a state of stability shaken by the United States, despite the fact that Russia's intervention has had devastating effects in Syria. The Arab Spring has raised fears in Moscow's mind of a resurgence of rebellions against Russia in its Muslim neighborhood.

## B. Russian Intervention in Syria

With the intensification of the conflict in Syria between the opposition, the armed opposition factions and the Syrian regime, Russia intervened in 2013 as a guarantor for the Assad regime in the process of handing over chemical weapons, and then intervened militarily in 2015 with the aim of protecting its almost toppled ally, and worked to preserve a foothold in the Mediterranean through the naval base "Tartus" used by the Soviet Navy since 1971 and overlooking deep waters, which enables it to serve nuclear submarines, especially since the Russian ships' passage to it is surrounded by US allies, the most important of which is Türkiye. Moscow has signed an agreement with the Assad regime that will ensure that it expands the base of Tartus and use it for the next 49 years.

The Russian intervention led to tremendous human and material losses, and through it Syria has witnessed one of the worst human disasters since the Second World War, but Moscow has been able at the strategic level to establish the "Hmeimim" base, which is the only air base outside its country that enables it to demonstrate its regional strength. For such a base, Russia obtained from the Syrian regime a permit to use always. Russia in Syria also provided an example of what its wars against regime change could be like. Such an act is described by Russia as instability, and colorful revolutions like those in Eastern Europe and elsewhere <sup>(30)</sup>.

As the Russian intervention in Syria was initially aimed at supporting an allied regime, it turned into a catalyst for greater military, economic and diplomatic expansion that rivals American influence. Although the prospects for United States-Russian cooperation in combating terrorism

(30) Jamie Dettmer, Russia Expands Military Facilities in Syria, VOA, 12 May 2021: <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/russia-expands-military-facilities-syria>

in Syria still holds, Russian behavior in Syria greatly increases the difficulty for such cooperation.

### **C. Indirect Russian intervention in the region**

Russia's diplomatic, political, and informal interference is most evident in Russia's relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Egypt.

Despite the historical mistrust between the two countries, Russian-Iranian relations appear to be the closest to the strategic nature of Moscow's relations in the region in the short and medium term, as both parties share a strategic interest in undermining American influence in the Middle East. Although these relations may sometimes seem flimsy, especially on the Syrian scene, they have improved thanks to the US sanctions on Tehran, and are focused on the situation in Syria, energy and trade. In Syria, Russia is aware that the Iranian role assists it in its military intervention, as it coordinates its operations with it continuously, and has used Iranian airspace to launch long-range missiles from Russia at Syrian targets <sup>(31)</sup>.

### **D. End of honeymoon**

The Biden administration inherited from the Trump administration relations tainted by a lot of mystery and collusion with Russia, which President Trump chose several times to stand by its side at the expense of the United States and sometimes its security services, in conjunction with several Russian provocations to Washington, starting with the proven intervention in the 2016 presidential elections and not ending with the largest cyber-piracy attack against 18 thousand US targets in the presidential transition period. At the first meeting between the American and Russian presidents, it seemed clear that the reform of relations between the two countries was not on the agenda for both strategic and ideological reasons, and that the reform of relations seemed outdated.

There are common interests for the parties in re-signing the nuclear agreement with Iran, and in the Taliban not returning to the Afghan capital, Kabul, especially with the planned US withdrawal and Moscow's fear of a resurgence of rebellion against it in the region. These interests, however, are unlikely to change the Biden administration's position of rejecting any leniency towards Russia, which at the same time adopts a relationship with a "due adversary" as Biden described <sup>(32)</sup> his Russian counterpart.

(31) Samuel Ramani, Russian-Iranian relations under Raisi and possible post-Khamenei scenarios, the Middle East Institute, 7 July 2021: <https://bit.ly/3CNmewY>

(32) Dimitar Bechev, The era of US-Russia 'resets' is over, Aljazeera, 20 June 2021: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/20/6/2021/the-era-of-us-russia-resets-is-over>

### 3 Security and Defence Partnerships

The US administration's reference in the "Temporary Strategic Directive for National Security" to the need to modify its presence in the region "to the level required to disrupt terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other US interests" in the eyes of its regional partners - represents an American abandonment of the region, especially if added to the activation of the Biden administration of diplomatic channels with Tehran, and the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan.

It has therefore urged parties in the administration and U.S. policymaking think tanks in the Middle East to emphasize that a reduction in the U.S. military presence does not mean a reduction in U.S. influence or effectiveness in the region<sup>(33)</sup>. Among the most effective American means in this regard are the defense partnerships in the region, exemplified by military training and arms deals by the States of the region; which are considered a measure of the strength of their relations with Washington. In this regard, no State has been able to replace Washington as a major arms supplier to the region so far, despite continued attempts by European States and Russia to offer a competitive alternative.



(33) Grant Rumley and Kathryn Wheelbarger, Managing Middle East Defense Partnerships Amid Great Power Competition, 13 July 2021: <https://bit.ly/3jNqHXu>



## A. US military presence in the region

This presence is continually being reassessed in US military and foreign policy circles. Recently, several circles in the current and previous administrations of the United States have expressed a desire to redraw the map of this presence, which we will address briefly below before we analyze the proposals for repositioning.

The US military presence has been concentrated in the Arabian Gulf region since the 1990s with what is known as the US policy <sup>(34)</sup> of dual containment, through which the administration of US President Clinton sought to prevent Iran and Iraq from taking any steps that would harm the interests of the international community in general and the United States in particular. This policy coincided with the International Energy Agency's assessment in 1994 that increased oil production in the Middle East would solve the world's energy problems by 2010, and the United States therefore needed to invest in maintaining a presence in the Gulf region.

This military presence is managed through the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), one of the eleven commanders of the United States Department of Defense, and is currently based at Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base <sup>(35)</sup>.

US bases in the Gulf, however, are not the first in the region and are not the last. They extend from Ingerlik Air Force Base and Izmir Air Station in Türkiye , to the Maritime Research Unit in Egypt, and the Radar Facility and the Training Academy in Israel, in addition to a range of military bases in Iraq, Syria, and Camp Lemonier in Djibouti <sup>(36)</sup>.

<sup>(34)</sup> Harry L. Myers, The US Policy of Dual Contracting Toward Iran and Iraq IN theoretical and Protection, Air War College, Air University, April 1997: p.11: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA399045.pdf>

<sup>(35)</sup> CENTCOM website: <https://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/>

<sup>(36)</sup> U.S. Bases in the Middle East, American Security Project, 9 February 2021: <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/national-security-strategy/u-s-bases-in-the-middle-east/>





To these bases are added the fifth and sixth American fleets. Founded in 1944, the Fifth Fleet took part in World War I battles against Japan in the Pacific, then ceased operations until 1995, based in the Bahraini capital, Manama, and joined the International Coalition for the Security and Protection of Freedom of Navigation (IMSC) in 2019. The sixth fleet has been operating since 1950 in the Mediterranean, where it participated in the US intervention in Lebanon in 1958, and was part of the deterrence system against the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean, and participated in securing the Suez Canal in 1972, and in other operations ending with the US intervention in Libya in 2011.

One of the most important manifestations of the US military presence in the region is security and military cooperation, which is the main standard for US allies in the region to assess the entire relationship. This cooperation includes arms deals, army and special forces exercises, participation in military exercises and exercises such as the Eager Lion in Jordan, the Bright Star in Kuwait and the Bright Star in Egypt, which is one of the largest multinational exercises in the world.

Recently, the Pentagon shifted Israel from the jurisdiction of the US military command in Europe (EUCOM) to that of the central command, Centcom, in order to <sup>(37)</sup> take advantage of the signing of the "Brahimi Agreement" and the normalization agreements signed under President Trump, where the Pentagon stated that it was seeking this step to exploit "the strategic opportunity... To align key U.S. partners with common threats in the Middle East. This move is likely to give Israel opportunities for greater security integration with its new partners in the Arab world, but it is expected to maintain some of the logistical support it has enjoyed from the US leadership in Europe.

Finally, US forces moved the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier from the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the Middle East to support the US withdrawal from Afghanistan <sup>(38)</sup>. With the withdrawal of the USS Ronald Reagan, a new landscape is expected to take shape in the region, which is now being explored in American foreign policy circles.

<sup>(37)</sup> Assaf Orion and Mark Montgomery, Moving Israel to CENTCOM: Another Step Into the Light, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 January 2021: <https://bit.ly/3jTxXRO>

<sup>(38)</sup> Reagan Carrier Strike Group Now in Indian Ocean, Heading to Middle East, USNI News, 21 June 2021: <https://bit.ly/3m1PxFQ>

## B. Repositioning Proposals

The Ingerlik base in Türkiye has been the subject of a number of American reviews, especially the nuclear bombs located in it. Since the Turkish government's accusation of Washington's involvement in the failed July 2016 coup attempt, several debates have arisen about the possibility of moving US troops from<sup>(39)</sup> the base, but they have not reached the official level. Other suggestions were made about the possibility of transferring American nuclear bombs at the base,<sup>(40)</sup> especially because of their geographical proximity to the Turkish-Syrian border, which reduces their effectiveness as a deterrent as in the past and makes them a burden on the United States and Türkiye at the same time.

In January 2021, USCENTCOM Commander General Kenneth McKenzie indicated that the Command was considering moving US bases in the Arabian Gulf further away from Iranian ballistic missiles<sup>(41)</sup>. But the relocation of bases is not the only option for U.S. forces that can instead bolster their defenses, especially air defenses against ballistic missiles, which could send the required message that a reduction in U.S. military presence does not mean a reduction in U.S. interest in being in the region. In January 2020, United States forces intensified their presence at Assad Air Base in Iraq, in particular their air defense capabilities, after being attacked by Iranian ballistic missiles.

## C. Volatility in Arms Deals

Levels of US arms deals to the countries of the region varied between previous administrations, which prompted some countries of the region to seek other alternatives, and China and Russia were the most prominent new suppliers. In recent years, sales of Chinese drones to the Middle East have<sup>(42)</sup> escalated, to name a few.

(39) Charles F. Wald, Get Ready to Walk Away from Incirlik, Defense One, 24 October 2016: <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/10/2016/get-ready-walk-away-incirlik/132585/>

(40) Tim Fernholz, The US is rethinking the -50plus nuclear weapons it keeps in Türkiye, QUARTZ, 13 October 2019: <https://qz.com/1727158/us-rethinking-the-50-plus-nuclear-weapons-it-keeps-in-turkey/>

(41) Gordon Lubold, U.S. Forces Expand Reach in Saudi Arabia, The Wall Street Journal, 25 January 2021: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-forces-expand-reach-in-saudi-arabia11611611393->

(42) International arms transfers level off after years of sharp growth; Middle Eastern arms imports grow most, says SIPRI, SIPRI, 15 March 2021: <https://bit.ly/2VQEXGL>



Although American policy in the region is concerned with protecting human rights as an American interest and value at the same time, the US defense view is that it is necessary to manage the damage that may be caused to some US military relations in the region, especially those that have provoked the reservation of the US Congress in previous years. Therefore, the Washington Institute called on the US administration to plan support in advance with the countries that will receive this support, as a guarantee to both parties that military cooperation will not be disrupted as administrations change.

According to the Institute, long-term military cooperation could be planned through the Department's cooperation with Congress to hold consultations with States that rely on United States external military funding in the region, such as Jordan, on projected future United States funding, and to urge parties intending to purchase United States weapons to focus on requests that do not excite Congress, such as ballistic missile defense systems.

#### **D. Katsa and Chinese and Russian weapons.**

One of the things that has contributed to the volatility of military relations in recent years is the Anti-Americanism through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), one of whose clauses requires the US government to impose at least five sanctions from a list of 12 sanctions against any country that buys weapons from Russia <sup>(43)</sup>. In the context of Katsa, the United States imposed sanctions on China for the purchase of Sukhoi-35 and S-400 missiles, and on Türkiye for the purchase of S-400 missiles, which were taken out of the F-35 programme <sup>(44)</sup>.

However, one year after Katsa's promulgation, the United States Congress passed legislation authorizing the President of the United States to exempt certain nations from Katsa if it was in the national interests of the United States to do so <sup>(45)</sup>. Candidates include India, which <sup>(46)</sup> has increased its purchases of U.S. weapons in recent years, but also

<sup>(43)</sup> Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act FAQs, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 11 February 2021: <https://bit.ly/2Ugh5Mf>

<sup>(44)</sup> US Enacts NDAA 2021 with Additional Sanctions against Türkiye, Russia, and China, Sanctions News, 25 January 2021: <https://bit.ly/3CNs01C>

<sup>(45)</sup> US Congress grants modified waiver for India from Russia sanctions, Observer Research Foundation, 26 July 2018: <https://bit.ly/3yQFze7>

<sup>(46)</sup> CAATSA on India for buying S400- will be victory for Moscow: Republican senator, mint, 13 April 2021: <https://bit.ly/3xQJpTc>



purchased S-400 missiles in 2016 and is expected to take delivery this year. But it is likely to be exempted from Katsa's responsibilities when it receives S-400 missiles as an important American ally against China, despite the fact that it is an old military partner of Russia at the same time. However, the most prominent discussion in the framework of "Katsa" in the <sup>(47)</sup> region is about Egypt, which announced its intention to buy "Sukhoi-35" aircraft from Russia because it is unable to obtain more effective military systems like other countries in the region, yet the US administration has not imposed sanctions in the framework of "Katsa" so far.

Finally, China has chosen Djibouti as the headquarters of its first extraterritorial base, kilometers away from the United States base of "Lemonier". According to United States Army estimates, as a report by the United States Naval Institute in April 2021 said, China provided its base in Djibouti with aircraft carrier maintenance capabilities <sup>(48)</sup>. It is also believed that Chinese investments in the Israeli port of Haifa and Chinese plans to build a 5G network in the UAE may pose a threat to U.S. interests in the region.

<sup>(47)</sup> Ali Dizboni and Karim El-Baz, Understanding the Egyptian Military's Perspective on the Su35- Deal, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 July 2021: <https://bit.ly/3CQGnSw>

<sup>(48)</sup> AFRICOM: Chinese Naval Base in Africa Set to Support Aircraft Carriers, USNI News, 20 April 2021: <https://news.usni.org/20/04/2021/africom-chinese-naval-base-in-africa-set-to-support-aircraft-carriers>



## 4 Energy

Although the new US administration is seeking to reposition itself in the Middle East, including by reducing military investment, the region remains important for both domestic and foreign energy goals in the short and long term. Energy and climate change issues are among the priorities of the administration, which established a climate change task force chaired by former US Secretary of State John Kerry and launched the "Building a Better World" (B3W) plan to invest in clean energy around <sup>(49)</sup> the world.

The decline of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for energy for travel, electricity generation and industrial production. Arguably, higher oil prices are directly proportional to the recovery of the global economy, and the resulting recovery could be used to finance a shift towards clean energy, but the United States Administration's attempt to keep oil markets stable is at the same time linked to Saudi Arabia's leadership of OPEC to control the increase in oil production while keeping oil prices below \$100.

In this equation lies the importance of Washington maintaining the relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has proven its willingness to use its political influence on other oil producers to reduce the impact of American shale production on the global oil market. This is accompanied by the Biden administration's lack of interest in producing the oil shale promoted by the Trump administration, which opens up more room for the oil market to rebound and gives Saudi Arabia more leverage. However, tensions within OPEC - such as between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over oil production - may affect some U.S. objectives in the region such as maintaining Gulf support for the recovery of weaker economies from the pandemic. This follows tension in the US-Saudi relationship following the suspension of some arms deals, and American reservations towards the human rights file in the Kingdom <sup>(50)</sup>.

<sup>(49)</sup> Mordechai Chaziza, The "Build Back Better World": An Alternative to China's BRI for the Middle East? Middle East Institute, 20 July 2021: <https://bit.ly/3ilundQ>

<sup>(50)</sup> Karen E. Young, The coming US and Middle East energy collision, Middle East Institute, 13 July 2021: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/coming-us-and-middle-east-energy-collision>



## A. Risks of Post-Pandemic Instability

The region and the world are also facing the risks of inflation associated with recovery from the pandemic, which could increase in the region due to the increase in oil prices, while some of the tensions that preceded the Arab Spring are also expected to return; from increasing prices in various sectors from food to basic services, all in addition to lack of employment opportunities.

These gestures serve as a warning to the US administration that the withdrawal approach from the entire region will not lead to greater stability. In order for the administration to meet its CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets, it needs to create political incentives to push for emission reduction legislation, and to provide funding for the transition to clean energy. Here, the Administration must choose to be a partner of oil-exporting countries to maintain the primacy of energy production and to be a source of clean energy investments, rather than being preceded by China <sup>(51)</sup>.

## B. Reduced global dependence on oil

A study at Harvard University recently suggested that the amount of energy needed to drive economic growth around the world is declining. In 1970, every thousand dollars of GDP growth required the production of a barrel of oil, while in 2015, a thousand dollars of growth required the production of only half a barrel of oil. This is due to increased energy efficiency and the emergence of alternative renewable energy sources. In these circumstances, United States dependence on Middle East oil has decreased, reducing the domestic American political will to return to previous commitments to the Middle East <sup>(52)</sup>.

Conversely, as the oil-producing Gulf States continue their economic growth efforts, they will need to consume more petroleum and petroleum products to achieve this, while at the same time benefiting from the recovery of oil markets to finance investment in the shift towards clean energy. But such a shift would be limited to a few countries in the region,

(51) Mick Mulroy Et al., COVID19- & Conflict in the Middle East, Middle East Institute, 21 January 2021: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/covid-19-conflict-middle-east>

(52) Christof Rühl and Tit Erker, Oil Intensity: The curious relationship between oil and GDP, Mosavvar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government-Harvard Kennedy School, 2021: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/publications/awp/awp164>



unlikely to reach non-oil-producing economies, and unlikely to be found in some oil-producing countries such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq, owing to political and economic instability that weakens partnership opportunities with international organizations and leading clean energy companies around the world.

Globally, oil exploration and investment in this sector in general fell sharply in 2021 to less than half of what it was in 2020, equivalent to almost \$400 billion. The American Petroleum Institute (API) reports that planned investments in oil, energy, and chemicals in the Middle East between 2021 and 2025 are less than \$300 billion, of which oil accounts for nearly 20%. This means that Libya, Iran and Iraq have little chance of finding surplus oil revenues to invest in clean energy.

This gap in the shift towards clean energy is not limited to the Middle East, where, although investment in renewable energy has risen globally, much of it does not reach emerging economies or Middle Eastern countries. Of the \$755 billion invested in clean energy in 2019, \$155 billion went to emerging markets, a small part of which reached the Middle East <sup>(53)</sup>.

Implementing the new Global Clean Energy Investment Management Plan (B3W) will be difficult, as it will require cooperation with Gulf countries and global investment institutions, and the near-term increase in oil prices may be an ideal opportunity to achieve this.

(53) John Calabrese, Middle East-Asia Pacific Oil Relations: From the Pandemic to Peak Oil, Middle East Institute, 11 May 2021: <https://bit.ly/2UiHB7V>

## Conclusion

The Biden administration's policy toward the Middle East region agreed with the Trump administration's policy that it did not put the region at the top of its international agenda but differs from it in its tendency to activate diplomatic channels and reactivate US State Department missions, especially towards Iran; and that it carries new files that were not on the table during the Trump period, such as the energy file.

The feeling inherited by the US administrations in the last two decades of the necessity of withdrawing from the Middle East region is still present, due to the burdens that the US investment in the region places on the US administration, in addition to the images that have been imprinted on the imagination of American citizens about the eternal wars in the region in which thousands of them were killed.

Recently, a deep and widespread economic crisis was added to this feeling after the coronavirus pandemic, which reached the top of the list of priorities of the new US administration, as it led to many individuals and companies stopping work on the one hand, and to an expected inflation after the US government inflated trillions of dollars in aid that threatens to delay the recovery of the economy.

In terms of foreign policy, the US administration is preoccupied with other issues that are more pressing than most of the Middle East issues, which are reforming the main US relations in the international arena that were damaged during the presidency of Donald Trump. The most important of these relationships is with the European Union, Japan and South Korea, in addition to putting the relationship papers with China in order.

However, all of this does not negate the existence of vital interests of the United States that are too permanently affected by temporary fluctuations, the most important of which are the security of the flow of energy from the region and the prevention of United States



opponents' control over it, the maintenance of vital waterways that are open and safe, stability in the Arabian Gulf region, the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the fight against terrorism and the protection of "Israel".

Indeed, until the middle of its first year, the new American administration seems to be consolidating a foreign policy approach that relies primarily on diplomacy, and on the fact that military power is not the most effective solution to the challenges in the Middle East and the world. This approach poses new challenges to key countries in the region, some of which are beginning to move in a more independent and cautious direction than American policy, such as building new partnerships with Russia, China, and European countries.



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