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## **The Impact of the Trump Doctrine on U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq**

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## **Abstract:**

Under the Trump administration, U.S. foreign policy has focused on curbing Iran's influence and the role and maintaining counter-terrorism operations in Iraq. President Trump's focus in Iraq has been through smart power, an approach that stresses the need for a robust military presence and invests in political relationships to expand influence and establish its legitimacy. Trump's focus is pursuing U.S. interests in Iraq while curbing Iran, which, in the Trump administration's perspective, is counter to the previous administration's actions of engagement by the Bush administration and disengagement by the Obama administration that deteriorated U.S. interests in Iraq at the expense of the United States. At its core, Trump's policies can be defined as Transactional Realism. Therefore, it can be argued that, despite focusing on U.S. troop withdrawal, Trump will maintain U.S. involvement in Iraq and contain and deter threats to U.S. interests in Iraq.

**Keywords;** Trump Doctrine, Iraqi crisis, War on Terror, Iranian intervention,

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## **Introduction**

Every state pursues its national interest by exchanging relations with others at the regional and international levels. The foreign policy of each state oriented towards achieving the national and security interest of that state. Foreign policy can be prepared under the individual or group of decision-makers. Therefore, the United States' foreign policy became one of the significant parts of international relations study. The role of the U.S. president in conducting foreign policy is apparent according to the constitution. In the different administrations under the different U.S. doctrine of presidents, the United States pursues its long-term and short-term strategies. For many decades, the United States' foreign policy was to shape a world where it can pursue its national and security interests under Western values like democratic promotion, liberty, and international liberal order. Making the world more secure for their best achievement has been the U.S. foreign policy for many decades.

However, the foreign policy of the United States could be illustrated under the U.S. president's capacity. The President's role has been regarded as a significant part of the U.S. foreign policy toward the world. Each administration with different doctrines conducted U.S. foreign policy.

For decades, Iraq has been central to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and each U.S. president has maintained unique foreign policy doctrines in the region. In this paper, we demonstrate the U.S. foreign policy within the framework of the Trump

doctrine. During President Trump's administration, U.S. foreign policy in the area has exhibited a character of Transactional Realism despite, just as his predecessors, continued counter-terrorism efforts in cooperation with other powers. In contrast to his predecessors, however, President Trump does not seek concessions from other actors in controlling Iraq. Trump has criticized the previous administrations for wasting U.S. lives and money for others' benefits, which endangered the U.S. interests. Core to Trump's foreign policy is the pursuit of deterrence and retaliation to any threat towards U.S. interests in the region. The Trump Doctrine is demonstrated through two focal points—the attempt to draw widespread support from the American public through his goals to "Make America Great Again" and maintaining U.S. primacy on the global stage.

The research significance is to show how President Trump deals with Iraqi affairs under the business morality and within the framework of transactional Realism. Moreover, in his perspective, America is not bound to stay in a place where it is not in the U.S. interests. Trump's business language has brought a new era to the U.S. foreign policy.

However, the research aims are to show the U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq under the Trump administration. A president with business rhetoric and transactional behaviour could impact the Kurdistan Region, which is part of the Iraqi federal state. This paper could serve individuals who are interested in pursuing U.S. foreign policy in Iraq. Moreover, the paper presents academic information for decision-makers who can draw the US/KRI relations policy.

The problem of research is, "How does the Trump doctrine impact U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq? The Hypothesis covers the Trump doctrine to pursue U.S. foreign policy in Iraq within the Transactional Realist approach framework. He does not seek to deepen military engagement or spend more lives and money. Under such a perspective, president Trump maintains the U.S. foreign policy in counter radical Islam, counter Iranian affiliates, and curbing Iranian influences in Iraq. Furthermore, he relies on the local Iraqi power to maintain his policy and act to strengthen the U.S. position in Iraq.

The methodology applied in this research will focus on the implications of the Trump Doctrine on Iraq. Furthermore, through the hermeneutic analysis of Trump's incoherent and inconsistent policy statements, poses that the U.S. will continue counter-terrorism operations against the radical Islamists and curb Iran and its affiliates through the use of local sub-state actors such as the Kurds and Iraqi protestors. Moreover, the qualitative method has been used for analyzing research data.

The research structure combines four chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusions. The first chapter illustrates the U.S. foreign policy in the framework of U.S. doctrine and the Trump doctrine's theoretical background. In the second chapter, we demonstrate Iraq as a dependent variable after the Baath collapse and the U.S. engagement. The third chapter highlights the relations between two variables in the Trump era and how Trump supports a unified Iraq. Moreover, the fourth chapter analyzes Trump and U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq. It could demonstrate under the transactional realist approach with applying smart and soft powers.

## **1. U.S. foreign policy within the framework of Doctrine**

To illustrate the U.S. Foreign policy here, we return to the U.S. president's legal framework and their capacity to conduct foreign policy. Besides, we look at the doctrines which impact U.S. foreign policy toward world affairs. Like his predecessors, President Trump holds his own policy regarding world affairs, and he wants to maintain the U.S. interest under his Doctrine.

### **1.1. The legal framework of the U.S. president capacity**

Even though there is no exact term for foreign policy in the United States of America's constitution, the power vested in the U.S. president as executive power has been mentioned in the constitution. (Henkin, 1987) The power of executive vested in the President was mentioned in "*Article II (Article 2 - Executive) Section1: The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same term, be elected, as follows*". The President has a commander-in-chief title and has been authorized to make treaties and nominate ambassadors in condition by two-thirds senate consent. The President has given the responsibility of deploying forces in any hostile situation that faces the United States of America by requiring the Senate's consent. (U.S. Constitution, article 2)

A system of checks and balances has been practised by the constitution to check the President's power by the Senate authority. They are American representatives in Congress who can control and even have a role in shaping foreign policy. The role of the President in conducting foreign policy must be compatible with the

principle of American in the declaration of independence, and also the political power must thrive from the people and must be the will of the American people. (Auth, 2011, pp. 9-12)

In conducting foreign policy through these branches that we see under emergencies and crises, the U.S. presidents took action without returning to Congress, even though they should have congressional approval. However, they bring the excuse of the situation being an emergency, and the President needs to protect the United States in a hostile situation and any threat coming by adversaries. (Masters, 2017)

The agencies of the executive branch could be created, eliminated, or restructured by congressional Authorization. "National Security Act" was established in 1947, by which Congress accepted the role of the President as a sole organ and initiator in foreign affairs; Senator Fulbright called this as "*the arrogance of power*" and the President as "*Caesarism*." (Meier, 2010, p. 255) Moreover, Congress established homeland security as well. (Masters, 2017) However, we have seen through the history of the United States' foreign relations, Congress supported the President, but Congress seeks to change the policy on some occasions. On August 2, 1990, when President George H. W. Bush responded to Kuwait's Iraqi invasion by applying economic sanctions against Iraq and deploying armed forces to defend Saudi Arabia against Iraq's possible attack. In October, Congress supported the President's action through the United Nations. They later enacted economic sanctions. Congress authorized the use of the U.S. armed forces to implement the U.N. Security Council resolution. In the Bosnian conflict, President Clinton supported the U.N. Action for deploying combat troops and ground troops

without congressional approval in 1995-1996 (CRS Report, June 1, 1999)

The legal authority to both Congress and the executive branch in shaping foreign relations; Congress has been authorized to declare war and emerging support for the army and navy. Congress has a responsibility to regulate commerce. Following, the foreign affairs, a joint resolution by both Congress and the presidential Office all the time included in the framework of the strong foreign policy of the United States. For instance, the Marshall Plan by Secretary of State George Marshall on June 5, 1947, proposed U.S. assistance for the European recovery after the First World War; this was under President Truman's request for this interim aid and later in December 1948, was passed by Congress. (Sparkman, 1977)

Domestic factors in the United States, like Congress, have affected directly or indirectly in shaping U.S. foreign policy. This role is based on the constitutional powers and these factors affecting presidential decision making. In the security policy framework, Congress takes oversight like arms export, troop deployment, and treaty obligation, and how to use armed forces. (Kronlund, Anna & Teemu Makinen, 2015) Despite the initiative president role, Congressional opinion must be taken into consideration and must seek their approval. (European Parliament, 2017, pp. 4-7)

Concerning the diplomatic role, the State Department takes the President's role, chief diplomat, but the implementing government policy and conducting diplomacy has been taken by the President Principal foreign policy advisers. (Del Monte, 2017)

The substantial reasons that are providing the new power to the executive branch are mentioned as emerging of national growth, the expansion of economic power, and the possibilities of the time of the crisis after the world war II. Since that time, the role of Congress has been as a modifier, legitimate to those proposals initiated by the executive branch (Meier, 2010, pp. 252-253) In the case of a sole executive agreement, the President will not return to Congress, and he has the authority to conclude the treaties under his power without submit them to the Senate for approval.<sup>i</sup> (European Parliament, 2017)

In addition to the legal reasons, there are other reasons for the presidential supremacy:

1. The rise of the modern President in the twentieth century included the government's growth during World War I and the time of the great depression.
2. The United States became a superpower after World War II, and the federal government took more action to deal with the crisis. The presidential role grew to a quick response to the foreign threat, such as the expansion of communism by the Soviet Union, the role of President during the Cold War.
3. Congress's role decreased to conduct foreign policy, and it puts the initial role in the hand of the President and executive power to deal with the counter-threat. (Meier, 2010, p. 276).

In summary, the U.S. president's role is legally included in response to international events, taking the role of administrating proposals for legislation; they have the power of negotiations for international agreements. The President of the United States will

have the authority policy statement as well as policy implementation. Above all, we have seen through the U.S. historical background, and the U.S. president could apply independent actions on some special occasions. (Sparkman, 1977)

## 1.2. The concept of U.S. Doctrine

The origin of Doctrine is from Latin *doctrina*, and it has the "*denotation of teaching and instruction; it has the connotation of the declaration of principle. It creates a binding strategic assertive, bakes by the use of force.*" Cecil Crabb identified Doctrine through three elements, legal, religious, and social, and the last element is American ideology. Through legal elements, U.S. laws tend to be internationally applied. In the spiritual aspect promoting the highest level of American morals and belief. Finally, the religious aspect of Doctrine indicates, "*Believe in peace and faith in self-government.*" It shows the national security and the foreign policy that tending America to be both "*superpower and world power.*" (Colucci, 2012, pp. 3-4) The doctrines will consist of details representing the general principles and instructions used as a controlling tool in a time of crisis. Like goals that can be applied in foreign affairs of the military, political and economic issues. Jeffrey H. Michael said the Doctrine comprises three parts "*First, the statement contains a strategic argument. Second, the threat for which the strategy is being developed is cast in emotive language; otherwise, it will not capture attention. Finally, most doctrines are "couched in the language of idealism and high principle," since strategic arguments by themselves are not sufficient to win over public opinion.*" (Michael, 2011, pp. 467-470)

Doctrine is not just a kind of rhetoric but is a statement by U.S. presidents to specify the "*highest policy*," especially in times of

chaos and crisis. (Colucci, 2012, p. 4) It is a kind of communication language of presidents with entangled policy to deliver to the audience, either domestic, abroad, or adversaries and allies alike. This kind of style might be misleading statements, but for more clarifying to the audience, it needed to be detailed conduct and outlined, later applied in the government's foreign policy. However, the significance of the Doctrine is observed when it became a very productive mechanism for foreign policy rather than shaping agitation and malignity. (Michael, 2011, p. 492)

### **1.3. The theoretical background of the Trump Doctrine**

During Trump's presidential campaign, the basis for Trump's Strategy and foreign policy is clearly defined in his perception of American weakness in international affairs. Further to the point, Trump stated:

*"The United States has been disrespected, mocked, and ripped off for many years by people who were smarter, shrewder, tougher ... we were a big bully, but we were not smartly led. And we were... The big stupid bully and we were systematically ripped off by everybody."* (Trump, 2016)

We are aware that many international relations scholars have discussed U.S. foreign policy under different thought theories, such as theories of Liberalism, neoliberalism, Realism, neorealism, and Neoconservatism. Therefore, there has been much argument of the U.S. foreign policy behaviours towards the world's affairs under the different U.S. presidents in each U.S. administration. The Bush administration pursued U.S. foreign policy under the influence of neoconservatism. President Obama, under the neo-realism school of thought, maintained the U.S. foreign policy in the world.

However, in the Trump era, he did not agree with his predecessor and sought to pursue a policy that he thought would bring back America's greatness, which deteriorated by the wrong policy.

Trump has little concerns about the neoconservatives and liberal interventionists, and he called that their beliefs blind them for American interests and power. He put a short time for multilateralism diplomats; they came for their benefit and reaching to compromise and *"trading away American interest in exchange for platitudes about friendship and cooperation."* Little time for long-standing U.S. alliances, Trump sees them as U.S. business partners in real estate transactions. Moreover, always asked to be, *"what have you done for me lately?"*

Trump's vision of the world is *"realist, transactional, and Machiavellian- it demands a serious, thoughtful, and non--defensive response."* (Brooks, 2016)

This transactional policy towards world affairs departs from Trump's predecessors and demands equitable recompense for what he believes has been an unequal and unfair relationship. Trump does not want the U.S. *"to be taken advantage [of] anymore by countries that use [the U.S.] and use our incredible military to protect them."* His statement further cements this: *"[other countries] do not pay for it, and they are going to have to. I'm talking about all over the world. Wealthy countries cannot expect the United States to pay for the vast majority of its military. They can pay for us. They can reimburse us."* (Trump, 2018)

The Trump doctrine could be the combination of Realism with a business perspective, emphasizing military capabilities, and zero-sum achievement through economic gains. Moreover, as he omitted

some of the value-based rhetoric, he could not involve deeply and could not abandon international affairs. (Sinkkonen, 2018, pp. 4-12)

Trump's transactional approach clearly defines foreign relations in terms of what countries can provide in return for a relationship with the United States instead of sacrificing immediate gains for long-term interests. Trump's realist approach of the transaction is a short-term tactic aimed at removing or preventing U.S. engagement in areas where the U.S. does not make a profit. However, this transactional approach cannot be considered the primary tenant of the U.S. grand strategy because it is a short-term tactic in dealing with foreign policy. Trump's policies mix a traditional realist approach with elements of isolationism and pro-business policies. Trump's stance does "not involve itself in terms of values." (Frantzman, 2019b)

#### **1.4. Trump's National Security Strategy (NSS)**

The National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) of the Trump administration mentioned the decline of the United States' Strategy globally, and the international is out of order. There are competitions among states and the rise of Russia and China's military power in the world that challenge the United States' military capacity. The United States must get world leadership again through its military strength. What the United States must focus on is to work on decreasing Russia and China's military capabilities in the world. The other task is to eliminate the presence of terrorism and diminish Iran's role in the Middle East, stopping the North Korea nuclear program. (Sach, 2018, pp. 115-119) Trump, in his NSS, mentioned returning to the principled Realism and said: "*We don't seek to impose our way of life on*

anyone" and will "celebrate American greatness as a shining example to the world" (Trump, 2017a). The strategies covered the realism perspective of interests, competitions, conflicts, and promoting American ideals and promoting peace by conducting sufficient military power. (Guillot, 2018, p. 22)

The world is a place for competition among many nation-states, which among them the most powerful states, are considered very significant. They struggle for their winning and dominate most of the world, and competitions have taken in the domains of air, land, oceans, and cyber. So, through the military, economic and diplomatic tools, they could get reach their goals. Moreover, the NDS is concerned with the "revisionist powers" such as Russia and China. (Sinkkonen, 2018, p. 11) Both strategies are less containing American values like liberty, human rights, or have limited consideration in the Trump administration. What we notice in the policy is based on interest more than values. (Larres, 2017)

## **2. Iraq and the U.S. engagement**

For many decades, Iraq has remained a central part of the U.S. engagement in the Middle East. However, the U.S. first engagement started after September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, and President Bush sought revenge by eliminating the terrorist groups. Since 2003 the U.S. role has emerged in Iraq under the name of democracy promotion and nation-building.

### **2.1. Nation-building and democracy promotion**

In the efforts to spread democracy and the United States' primary intention, it was planned to start from Iraq as the main centre for freedom in the Middle East. In his address of union on

January 20, 2004, Bush said: "*America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs.*" (Bush, 2004) He claimed that America does not intend to dominate or to establish any empire sphere. Just the main goal is to initiate the route for freedom and liberty, so America went to Iraq to liberate it from dictatorship and to provide them with the opportunity to get free from that tyrant. There is not any intention for the United States to being as a territorial occupier. (Daalder, 2004) He addressed they will stay in Iraq until the stability and democratic values are fulfilled. And later "*will leave behind a free Iraq*" (Moon, 2004, p. 115)

After failing to find the Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq, the democracy rationale became U.S. foreign policy in the region. The promotion of democracy value in the U.S. foreign policy, especially in the Bush administration, was reiterated, and democracy promotion became the centre of the strategy of war on terror. In his rhetoric, Bush emphasized spreading the democratic values, by which it was frame worked in the ideal perspective. The "*freedom agenda*" in the Bush rhetoric, especially in the second Inaugural address, reiterated and focused on maintaining the policy in the greater Middle East. The root of terrorism will be undercut. Moreover, it will erode any threats toward the U.S. national security. (Carathers, 2007, pp. 1-4) After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush urged to deepen military involvement to eliminate terror. He wanted to make the process of regime change that was initiated during the Clinton administration. In the second round, President Bush managed to the democratic promotion logic by continuing the war on terror and could eliminate the terror ideology by the "Freedom Agenda" project for the Middle East like the *Greater Middle East initiative*.

## 2.2. The U.S. met obstacles after 2003 for democratic promotions in Iraq:

After the Bush administration's preemptive action toward Iraq, the United States, with the aim of nation-building and spreading democracy, faced obstacles. The war aftermaths were like damaging the state infrastructure, providing a vacuum for insurgency and militias to fill it. The aim of establishing a permanent government with the participation of all Iraqi parties was failed by falling under the authority of one man-rule by Nuri al-Maliki. He used the armed forces to impose "*competitive authoritarianism*" and control over all government institutions. The United States has ignored the sociology of Iraq and aimed to entrench democratic values over there. In the aim of nation-building, subsequently, spreading democracy, the United States had spent US\$24.49 billion by 2011 to rebuild the armed forces in Iraq. (Dodge, 2013, pp. 255-256) The reality is the democratic process for the free national election in 2005, led to the wining of the United Iraqi Alliance, which was Shia, but the Ahmad Chalabi's INC, which was the American preferred candidate, failed in the election, and later the road was opened to the "*Islamic Observance at the heart of the state*" (Markakis, 2016, p. 135)

When establishing a new permanent government, the crisis, sectarian tensions, and terrorism threats brought pessimism to Iraq's lives. Maliki controlled all governmental sectors and gained control of the Iraqi security forces (ISF and ISOF) by removing Sunnis and Kurds and replacing them with Shi'a loyalists. The ministry of defence and ministry of interior, which was trained and equipped by the U.S. with billions of dollars of investment to provide security and stability in Iraq, became "*Maliki's Private Militia*" (Shultz, 2018, pp. 111-112).

Malaki's actions were criticized by many people, including Ayad Allawi, the Head of the Iraqi coalition. Ayad Allawi went on to say that "*The country is slipping back into the clutches of dangerous new one-man rule,*" and he believed that this was leading to full dictatorship (Sullivan, 2012). In April 2012, Masoud Barzani, former President of the Kurdistan Region-(KRI), sent a message to Washington, and the message was, "*Iraq is facing a serious crisis... it is coming towards one-man rule.*" (Dodge, 2013, p. 242).

Chaos and instability emerged, the United States failed to fulfil its plan of democracy promotion and stability, could be outlined by the following factors;

*First*, the U.S. disability to create a stable and secure state led to the reduction of ambition from democratization toward the consensual system to implement Iraq's stability. From the U.S. perspective, the consensual system of governance would have to provide stability in Iraq. Later in the U.S. long-term strategy was to stay as hegemonic in the Region through Iraq, the *second* factor is failing in entrenching the political process with transitional power and with the image of the United States' CPA as "*quasi-imperialist*" in the mind of Iraqi society, and it decides what it wants, so the insurgency emerged. Therefore, "*transferring sovereignty to Iraqis in June 2004, the strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq ended*". (ibid: 136-137) *The third* factor, Iranian hegemony, increased as a result of the U.S.-Iraq withdrawal agreement in 2011.

Instead of spreading democracy and intensifying western values, it was replaced by the Iranian political and social influence in Iraq. Moreover, its impacts on Iraq's political decisions have

undermined what the United States calls for promoting democratic values in Iraq. Day after day, the chaos, instability, division, and sectarianism were increasing, and the Iraqi citizens protested against the government's disability to respond to their needs.

Despite all these problems facing the U.S. strategy to promote democratic values, the approach of democracy promotion has been in U.S. foreign policy for three decades before Bush took power in 2003. This policy of the United States and both parties agreed on this strategy, and it became a long-standing U.S. strategy that needs to be implemented. (Markakis, 2016, pp. 77-80) Moreover, it has remained as one of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East since ever.

### **2.3. U.S. withdrawal and expansion of Iranian role**

The collapse of the Ba'ath regime was advantageous for the Iranian regime because it removed a long-time adversary in the region and provided an opportunity to expand Iranian influence and power in the region. After the collapse of the Ba'ath regime, Iraqis started new diplomatic and substantial economic ties with Iran. At the same time, Iran subsidizes Iraqi militia groups to support those on the Iranian side. Iran sees Iraq as a strategic location to pursue its ambition in the region. Despite U.S. accusations of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs, the U.S. has allocated a billion dollars to the post-war Iraqi recovery (Mehkri, 2005, pp. 39-40).

The Iranian government's underlying intention has been to covertly influence the region by spreading its "revolutionary" ideology outside its country to expand its political hegemony in the Middle East. To support this ambition in the Region, Iran needs to support the Shi'a elite, because the domination of Iraq by Sunnis is

a direct threat to Iran's interests in the region. The empowerment of Shi'a groups by Iranian support in Iraq may guarantee their ambitions in Iraq and the region. (Takeyh, 2008, pp. 13-14).

To deal with such a reality, the United States sought to find a way to bring back stability to Iraq and make the neighbouring countries not subsidize the extremists in Iraq. Therefore, the United States planned to withdraw from Iraq. The Baker and Hamilton report in 2006 mentioned the "New Diplomatic Offensive," which to be implemented between the United States and the neighbouring Iraqi countries. The report aims to bring the United States and the neighbouring countries to restore stability to Iraq and stay away from supplying the militias or radicals with ammunition and weapons. In that time, the U.S. met Iranian higher officials in Iraq and got an agreement on U.S. withdrawal and let Iran have a role in bringing stability in Iraq. (James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, 2006) As a result of this agreement and U.S. withdrawal in 2011, Iraq fell under Iranian control by establishing Shi'a militia groups. Iranian influences increased more as it filled the vacuum and impacted Iraqis' political, social, and economic life.

Iran has supported Iraq since the establishment of a Shi'a led government. The influence of Iran concerns western nations as something that cannot be neglected. Since the ISIS threat in Iraq and Syria, Iran has intervened through military assistance and its campaign against ISIS. This has positioned Iran to influence the Iraqi government. (Arosoaie, 2015, p. 65).

More than 100,000 Iranian-backed Shi'a fighters were involved in the conflict with the ISIS threat due to the vacuum left by the collapse of the Iraqi government in March 2014 and the invasion of ISIS advancing in the country in June 2014. The Popular

Mobilization Force or (PMF), which has been comprised of the Shi'a militant groups like Asaib al-Haq, the Badr Brigade, and Katiab Hezbollah, which are the prominent groups are the Iranian backed. Iran provided them with vast financial and military support, even though they are under the Iraqi prime minister's role. So, Iran uses them as *"Proxies to undercut and marginalize groups that challenged Iran's authority."* Famously, Qasem Suleimani was Head of Iran's military unit, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps called the Quds Force, which coordinated these militias in fighting with ISIS since July 2014. The Shi'a of Iraq sees PMF as *"Integral to Survival"* so they could push back the ISIS from Tikrit, Diyala, Baiji, and Anbar governorates. (Alaaldin, 2016) (Arosoaie, 2015, p. 65).

#### **2.4. The threat of ISIS and the U.S.Method in the "War on Terror**

Obama administration, with a non-intervention policy and retrenchment strategy, pursued its foreign policy in the Middle East. Still, when the terrorist threat advanced to Baghdad, in 2014, the administration started to send personnel and troops under the justification of training and providing logistics for the local ground forces. In late September of 2014, the United States, with the anti-ISIS led-coalition forces, launched the airstrikes. The U.S. deployed the personnel and advisors to Syria to train and provide support for the groups who fought against the terrorist organization. This kind of act by the Obama administration involving U.S. military forces; he claimed that they would not there for group fighting, but training and support the military and humanitarian relief. Therefore, he claimed the U.S. military forces for the War on Terror under the U.S. Authorization by which the President has the power to deploy troops. Like the Authorization for the Use of

Military forces (AUMF) to fight against Al Qaeda and the war on terror in 2001. The United States considered ISIS a threat to their homeland, and then-President Obama authorized deploying U.S. troops to Iraq and Syria in 2014. (Epps, 2015)

However, the military involvement in the Obama administration was the strategy of letting others fight on the ground. In the national security of the 2015 Obama administration released its policy, "*The threshold for military action is higher when our interests are not directly threatened. In such cases, we will seek to mobilize allies and partners to share the burden and achieve lasting outcomes.*" (The White House, 2015, p. 8) President Obama has left the ground for others, proxies to sustain their strategy in the region regarding any conflict and crisis. Moreover, what his administration called for a "*Leading from behind*" Strategy. (Karademir, 2019, p. 33)

### **3. Iraq in the Trump era**

During Donald Trump's presidential campaign, his rhetoric criticized the previous administrations for their foreign policy toward the world under the banner of promoting democracy and human rights. Trump called President George W. Bush's involvement in Iraq in the "War on Terror," a "*terrible thing.*" However, Trump's campaign also argued that the vacuum left in Iraq due to the withdrawal of U.S. troops under the Obama administration was a far worse decision that led to the strengthening of terrorist groups. (Stocker, 2018, p. 261)

The situation in Iraq did not become the way the previous administration sought to build, like promoting democracy and stability. President Trump does not seek to withdraw from Iraq

when the United States has lost many lives and money in the process of Iraqi freedom. He tries to fulfill his policy and Strategy in Iraq and further in the region by involving local, regional, and international powers.

### **3.1. Corruption and instability**

When President Trump came to power, Iraq had not only fallen under Iranian control, but the new elites could not bring stability and prosperity to Iraq. According to Transparency International's corruption perception Index, Iraq registered at 175 out of 182 countries in 2011, placing Iraq as one of the most corrupt countries globally (Dodge, 2013, p. 252). For 2018, Transparency International registered Iraq at 168 out of 180 countries with a score of 18 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2018).

When Haidar al-Abadi took office, he inherited the crises from Maliki's cabinet. Al-Abadi focused on reform, starting by bringing security to Iraq by expanding Iraqi National Guard leadership to include Sunni tribal leaders and ceasing Sunni territories' military bombardment that contained civilians (Arosoaie, 2015, p. 65).

Abadi's efforts towards reform contributed to the United States guaranteeing \$1.5 billion to train Iraqi forces and selling the F-16 fighter jet, which has been halted and inactivated since 2003 (Almaliky, 2015). In domestic affairs, Abadi promised reform and to eliminate corruption in the country, but as a result of his failure, Muqtada al-Sadr led protesters to shatter the "Green Zone" and disrupt the Parliament in April 2016 (Jaffe, 2016).

According to the World Bank, despite 65 billion U.S. Dollars of oil export revenue in 2018, unemployment has reached 8% (IMF, 2019 and W.B., 2019). Furthermore, access to essential natural resources like clean water in Basra, the loss of essential services, government corruption, absence of civil rights have emboldened civilians to continue their protest of the government, calling for reformation and removing all political parties currently participating in the rule of Iraq.

Since the start of protesting in October 2019, more than 669 civilians were killed, more than 25000 injured, and 2800 arrested. This is one of the most significant Iraqi people's actions against the government and Iranian affiliates (Al-Arabiya, 2020). In response to this crisis, Adil Abdul Mahdi, the 49<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Iraq, resigned on November 29, 2019. (Mansour, 2019) Later, the Iraqi new Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi took the prime minister's office on May 7, 2020 (pmo.iq, 2020) neither the crisis resolved under the new Iraqi government. Still, it met the new challenge of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has impacted the daily life of Iraqi citizens.

### **3.2. U.S. military presence in Iraq**

Despite all Trump's criticizing his predecessors over the U.S. military engagement in Iraq, Trump's rhetoric differs from his practice. Currently, the involvement and spending budget for military defence required for 2020 is higher than the previous year. The U.S. maintains 800 military bases in the world compared to China's 12 and Russia's eight military bases and the most significant military budget (Wadan, 2019). The United States is the leader of global affairs. Consequently, the Trump administration will continue emphasizing strengthening its military presence as a

deterrent through modernization to counter U.S. adversaries in the world. The point of his rhetoric is to gain the people's consent to justify U.S. policy on the global stage morally.

In Iraq, there have been twelve military bases. Five of them were established in Kurdistan Region after an agreement in July 2016 between the KRG Peshmerga ministry and the U.S. defence secretary for establishing five bases in (KRI). In the exchange United States committed to supporting Peshmerga financially for ten years.<sup>ii</sup> (global research, 2016) This has been continued in the Trump administration as U.S. military involvement in the region. After the announcement of the ISIS defeat, the U.S. was still required to stay in Iraq as Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State (I.S.), said; "*We walked away from Iraq a few years ago...So, I would propose that we try to find a different solution... My recommendation will be that we should stay here*" (Townsend, 2017)

Trump administration does not intend to withdraw from Iraq and Kurdistan region even after the defeat of ISIS. However, the U.S. involvement in pursuing the long Term in Iraq and Kurdistan Region is now approximately recorded as 6000 U.S. troops in Iraq. (Mattis, 2017)

President Trump believes that remaining in the heart of the Middle East (Iraq) will aid in curbing Iran and controlling Syria (Trump, 2018). This belief echoes previous administrations' beliefs that Iraq is a strategic area in the Middle East for the U.S. to pursue its strategy in the region. So, in the Trump administration, this perspective toward Iraq will not change, and the U.S. will not withdraw from Iraq (Esper, 2020c). Moreover, "*he saw a*

*continuing U.S. presence in Iraq as being "Lynchpin" for a number reason."* (Bolton, 2020, p. 185)

After Iraqi Shi'a members of Parliament voted to expel U.S. troops from Iraq, the United States under the Trump administration has continued to seek to strengthen its position in Iraq.

*"I will say this; the United States is not withdrawing from Iraq...The U.S. was "repositioning forces throughout the region."* (Esper, 2020b)

The presence of military bases and U.S. troops represents the Trump administration's maintenance of primacy policy and, with the military's modernization, deterrence to any threat to U.S. interests. Even though Trump claims that he does not want to use military force, his military strengthening will keep the U.S. safe. White House official website released remarks by president Trump on Iran On January 8, 2020, *"The American military has been completely rebuilt under my administration, at the cost of \$2.5 trillion. U.S. Armed Forces are stronger than ever before. Our missiles are big, powerful, accurate, lethal, and fast. Under construction are many hypersonic missiles"* (Trump, 2020a).

### **3.3. Iraqi integrity in the Trump perspective**

Unified Iraq has been the policy of different U.S. administrations. The Trump administration maintains the same policy of unified Iraq. We mentioned before the U.S. military presence, so in both Iraq and KRI, at the same time, the Trump administration opposed Kurdistan independence. The administration did not support this process by which people could decide on their future in Iraq. The United States tends to maintain

the policy of a strong Iraq with the participation of KRI. As long as Kurds were the U.S. main foot ground combat forces against ISIS, after they hold the independence referendum, they were left by the United States, during the military offensive of the Iraqi Central Government on the "Disputed Territories" to seize them by force, contrary to the Iraqi constitution, under the supervision of Iran and with support of Turkey. The Trump administration announced its opposition when former state secretary Rex Tillerson said: *"The vote and the results lack legitimacy, and we continue to support a united, federal, democratic, and prosperous Iraq,"* and for this excuse of emerging instability and even brought the excuse of ISIS threat that still existing, *"The fight against [I.S.] is not over, and extremist groups are seeking to exploit instability and discord. We urge our Iraqi partners to remain focused on defeating [I.S.],"* (Tillerson, 2017)

The Trump perspective for the Kurdish step toward independence was problems might arise in the region that would jeopardize U.S. interests in the Middle East and from which extrication would be difficult (Hiltermann, 2018). This view positioned the United States as not choosing a side, thereby opposing the referendum's process and leaving Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed Shi'a militia to fight Peshmerga and seize Kirkuk. Regarding the subsequent tension, President Trump said the *"U.S. was not 'taking sides' in the clash between Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces... We don't like the fact that they're clashing ... Let me tell you, we have had for many years an excellent relationship with the Kurds, as you know... and we have also been on the side of Iraq ... We should never have been there. But we're not taking sides in that battle."* (Trump, 2017b)

The Kurds were left on their own, but they did not concede to the central government's demand for the referendum to be invalidated. Consequently, Kurds again met embargo and aggression from the central government. To mitigate the tension and prevent further bloodshed between the central government forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga, the Kurdistan Regional Government released an announcement on October 24, 2017, calling for the *'Immediate ceasefire and halt all military operations in the Kurdistan Region. [to] Freeze the results of the referendum conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan ... [and] Start an open dialogue between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi Federal Government based on the Constitution'* ( KRG cabinet, 2017). The KRG began reestablishing new relations with the central government, supported by foreign countries ( PMO, 2019).

Tensions and problems in the disputed areas have escalated since Kurdistan's official representation left Kirkuk on October 16, 2017. The central government has taken advantage of this opportunity to gain control by appointing Rakan al-Juburi, an Arab Sunni, as governor to the Kurdish majority governorate of Kirkuk. Since then, Arabization has restarted and is forcing Kurdish citizens to leave their homeland. Despite the presence of ISIS threats in disputed areas, the Iraqi government violated the Kurdish population's rights. They set fire to Kurdish farmland. This action has led to an ever-increasing resentment from Kurdish leadership as this kind of suppressive operation against innocent Kurdish populations is intolerable. Massoud Barzani, former President of the Kurdistan Region and the leader of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), released a statement on May 30, 2019:

*"Attacks on Kurdish families, through burning down their farmland and crops, are a grave injustice committed against the*

*innocent Kurdish civilians living in the areas that fall under article 140 of the Iraqi constitution... What is taking place in these territories is a clear violation of the law, the constitution, and humanitarian values...Forcing this situation upon residents and farmers living in those areas is not acceptable. The international community and related stakeholders need to take action against this violation of basic human rights."* (Barzani, 2019)

During an interview with the BBC, Barzani said, "Those who said it was not a good time for the referendum never had an alternative date or time." Barzani further affirmed that "I have said it before, and I will say it again, I don't regret it." He believed that referendum is not the reason that brought the crisis on Kurdistan citizens but rather the cutting of the KRG's portion of the budget and salaries by the central government since 2014, the cost of the "War on Terror," and the embracing of 2 million refugees and IDPs (Barzani, 2018).

Despite this, the referendum result of 93 percent in the affirmative for Kurds' independence as an official record has cemented the Kurdish peoples' aspiration and will for independence.

#### **4. Trump and U.S. foreign policy in Iraq**

##### **4.1. U.S. Soft Power**

Since the Iranian proxies and Shia militia have controlled all Iraqi governmental institutions, the Trump administration, under the soft power of attracting the mind and heart of Iraqis, maintains the policy of strengthening the U.S. position in Iraq, weakening the Iranian influences.

#### 4.1.1 Trump's disagreement with Iraqi policy

The Trump administration has disagreed with Iraqi policy on several occasions. *First*, when the Trump administration imposed pressure and additional sanctions on Iran, the U.S. expected Iraq to cut bilateral trade agreements with Iran and stop payment for natural gas and electricity. The U.S. sought several agreements with Iraq regarding energy infrastructure, but the Iraqi government instead reached a 284-million-dollar agreement with Germany for electricity and continues buying electricity from Iran. *Second*, Iraq tried to buy S-400 missile systems from Russia. *Third*, Iraq reached an agreement with China for building "essential infrastructure in exchange for oil." *Fourth*, Adil Mahdi, Iraq's Prime Minister from October 2018 to May 2020, took the role of mediating between Iran and Saudi Arabia. *Finally*, the Trump administration asked the Iraqi government to dissolve the PMF after the defeat of ISIS but did not. The PMF was able to gain political power in government and parliamentary elections, similar to when the Fateh coalition became the second-largest coalition in Representative Council "Parliament". ( globalresearch, 2020).

The Trump administration believes that, after the billions of dollars of spending in Iraq since 2003, losing many American lives, and freeing Iraq from the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, Iraq still fell under another ideological hegemony of Iran. The Trump administration criticizes the U.S. waste of money and lives that ultimately benefited others and marked the previous administrations' policy defeat in Iraq. For these reasons, Trump seeks to reverse the previous policies by remaining involved in Iraq and curbing adversaries' influence while preventing the benefits of American involvement from going to countries like Iran, Russia, and China. Furthermore, the Trump Administration will stand with

the civilian's demands and target the Iranian interests in Iraq. Until Iraq is free from Iran and its affiliates' domination, Trump will concede. As Esper noted after the killing of Qasim Suleimany and PMF fighters in Iraq and Syria, the U.S. assured its partners and allies in the region that the United States "*will stand up and defend our interests.*" This stance amplifies the U.S. position in Iraq and the region, further reiterating that the U.S. will not let others benefit at the expense of U.S. interests and allies in the Region (Esper, 2020a).

#### **4.1.2 Supporting protestors**

The United States policy in the NSS and NDS of the Trump administration has not focused much on democratic values or, in general, American values, which have not been considered as central foreign policy. However, this does not reflect the U.S. isolation from American values in the world. As previously mentioned, under different circumstances, American values have been implemented where U.S. interests are not threatened. Where it is needed, they implement it and use it as a tool for achieving their goals. For example, Rex Tillerson, the former Secretary of State, in his speech to the State Department employees on May 3, 2017, said, "*America First*" refers to maintaining U.S. national security and the booming economy. But if we work on values like human rights and freedom, it will be like obstacles to achieve our national security and economic interests." So, Tillerson believed that it is hard to obtain the goals of protecting U.S. interests around the world through those values.

Consequently, the U.S. can use value-based policy in conditions requiring it that otherwise cannot be applied in other situations (Larres, 2017). Even if these values could serve U.S.

interests, the Trump administration will support civilian through soft influences via electronic and social media, social communities, and cultural export. Today, people in countries that exercise the democratic process and freedom are in contact with the outside world. They can see the reality of discrimination, corruption, and the violation of human rights in Iraq. Today civilians have access to resources regarding the conduct of their government.

On November 18, 2019, Secretary of State Pompeo applied soft power in response to the Iraqi Central Government's aggressive actions towards the demand of protesters by declaring the Trump administration on the side of the people of Iraq and against the Iraqi government's harsh policy toward the civilian demands. Further, Pompeo said that the United States would apply sanctions on Iraqi individuals who killed the protesters since the start of demonstrations in October of 2019, and they were accused of corruption and the theft of Iraq's wealth. It was the largest protesting since the collapse of Saddam Hussien in 2003. He said, *"We will not stand idle while the corrupt officials make the Iraqi people suffer....The United States will use our legal authority to sanction corrupt individuals that are stealing Iraqis' wealth and those killing and wounding peaceful protesters"* (Pompeo, 2019a). On December 6, 2019, the U.S. sanctioned four high ranking Iraqi officials for their abuse of human rights and corruption (Mnuchin, 2019).

This kind of rhetoric returns to the American values of freedom, liberty, democracy, and human rights as universal values as a path to a prosperous society that can develop and prosper, which was not mentioned in the Trump administration policies. The Trump administration appeals to American ideals sometimes, *"And it's no coincidence that the most successful societies in the world*

*are indeed free societies because they're the only place – and I think we all know this – they're the only place that men and women can reach their true potential"* (Pompeo, 2019b).

As long as the Trump Doctrine's transactional framework is successful in the short term by dealing with U.S. interests, Trump will not oppose the pursuit of value-based policy centred on promoting democracy, and in fact, supports such universal values (Frantzman, 2019b). Like his predecessors, Trump must pursue this policy when it is necessary for an area like Iraq. Despite following transactional policy and principled Realism when dealing with world affairs, Trump will pursue American values in situations where they serve the pursuit of U.S. interests similar to former President Nixon and H.W. Bush in the Freedom Agenda (Nye, 2019, p. 69).

Trump has returned to the ideal principles of human rights, liberty, and universal values during Iraq's current crisis. The Trump administration has echoed similarity with his predecessors using value-based policies as a long-term U.S. strategy. Today, it is in the United States' interest to support human rights in Iraq and impose sanctions to force governments to change their behaviour. Should it prove unsuccessful, the United States will pursue actions that his predecessors did not protect U.S. national and strategic interests.

#### **4.2. U.S. Smart Power**

The United States will pursue its influences in the region, and to halt the reality of the domino effect of the Cold War era. With the strategy of the smart power of limited U.S. military engagement, the Trump administration pursues the strategy of counter-terrorism and counter Iranian influence.

#### 4.2.1 Counter-terrorism

In continuing its counter-terrorism strategy, the Trump administration allocated a budget in the National Defense Authorization Act of FY2018 for \$1,769,000,000 approved under the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Train and Equip Fund (CTEF). The amount required for Iraq was \$850 million ( NDAA FY2018, 2017, p. 1246). Congress approved the NDAA FY2019 for funding in Iraq and Syria for \$1,400,000,000, from which an amount of \$850 million would be allocated for Iraq, including the Kurdistan region Peshmerga forces ( NDAA FY2019, 2018, p. 759).

On December 20, 2019, Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2020 for \$745 million, with \$545 million allocated for CTEF. The remaining \$200 million was approved for "decreased program" and "Transfer to DSCA<sup>iii</sup> Security Cooperation" (NDAA FY2020, 2019, p. 3406). The amount of spending for Iraq has steadily decreased year-over-year from FY2018 for \$1,269.0 million to \$850.0 million in FY2019. ( Department of Defense, 2018, pp. 5-14). The amount decreased again to \$545 million in FY2020 (NDAA FY2020, 2019, p. 3406).

On September 10, 2019, the Trump administration announced in its National Strategy for counter-terrorism an executive order to modernize counter-terrorism sanctions targeting the financial resources and 400 affiliated individuals and entities in the world. Trump said, *"We must deny the terrorists safe haven, transit, funding, and any form of support for their vile and sinister ideology."* (Trump, 2019a). Since 2017, the Trump administration sanctioned more than 40 Hezbollah and 50 al-Qaida and ISIS-affiliated individuals and entities" (Ibid).

The Trump administration announced the end of ISIS, and on the eve of this announcement, Trump planned withdrawal from where the war has ended. However, the occasional attacks by ISIS indicate their presence. Even if not physically strong, they still exist ideologically, and the threat is still present. Trump announced the killing of Al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, as a success for the United States, so public opinion would positively sway toward his administration's promise of eliminating ISIS.

*"The United States has been searching for Baghdadi for many years. Capturing or killing Baghdadi has been the top national security priority of my administration...Baghdadi has been on the run for many years, long before I took office. But in my direction, as Commander-in-Chief of the United States, we obliterated his caliphate, 100 percent, in March of this year."*<sup>iv</sup> (Trump, 2019b)

This is what Trump has cited extensively as a success of his administration by implementing limited military engagement with limited casualties compared to the Bush administration's actions in Iraq.

Concerning counter-terrorism, Trump regained ISIS-controlled territories and killed their leader. This success was recorded like Obama's declaration of killing Osama Bin Laden as a success of his administration during the second round of presidential campaigning. The Trump administration can use its 'success' in much the same way. However, ISIS and terror threats have not been eliminated ideologically. Instead, the means of conflict have changed in style from *"semi-conventional combat to guerrilla warfare"* ( ICG, 2019). Recent unrest in Iraq may provide for the rise of a new insurgency. Whenever there is uncertainty or a vacuum, the threat of terrorism has an advantageous opportunity to reemerge and strengthen ideological ambition.

In general, the Trump war on terror can be identified within his Doctrine of transactional Realism. Despite the budget allocated for the war on terror, President Trump seeks to deal with the least financial cost and casualties. Furthermore, he instead prefers other power on the regional and international levels to participate in such operation. He intends to decrease the financial burden from the U.S. shoulder for counter-terrorism. Moreover, most of the operations have been done under the smart power with limited military engagement.

#### **4.2.2 Diminishing the PMF**

Under the previous administration, the U.S. followed a strategy stabilizing Iraq with a strong government. Once the U.S. withdrew from Iraq, a vacuum was formed Iran filled that.

In Trump's perspective, the PMF is an armed force that could endanger U.S. national interests and U.S. allies in the region. The Trump administration seeks to eliminate such a threat to U.S. interests. The fall of Iraq under Iranian hegemony and revolutionary ideology could, like a domino effect, undermine U.S. policy in the region. For this reason, even some of the Gulf States support U.S. efforts toward curbing Iranian influence. For example, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain supported the U.S. attack on Katiab Hezbollah ( middleeastmonitor, 2019).

The PMF is not just an armed militia. It also influences figures in Parliament, such as the Ameri party, which holds the largest number of parliamentary seats at 48 and the second-largest party after the Sadrist (followers of Muqtada Al Sadr). The Ameri party has power over the interior ministry. The bloc worked to appoint

the Iraqi prime minister and, consequently, holds a Powerful position in the Iraqi Parliament. (Frantzman, 2020).

The Trump administration's smart power strategy with limited military involvement and direct targeting of adversaries is expressed in the recent US-Iranian tension in December 2019-January 2020. The Trump administration took defensive and deterrent action towards Iran and its proxies in Iraq and Syria<sup>v</sup>

The U.S. sanctioned the Trump administration called the leaders of PMF<sup>vi</sup> terrorist and Iranian proxies. "*The attack today was orchestrated by terrorists – Abu Mahdi al Muhandis and Qays al-Khazali – and abetted by Iranian proxies – Hadi al Amari and Faleh al-Fayyad*" (Pompeo, 2020).

The Trump administration applies smart power with limited U.S. engagement to take "*decisive defensive action*" against any threats that could undermine U.S. efforts towards counter-terrorism in the region. In the airstrike on December 29, 2019, the Trump administration announced its responsibility for the attack ( U.S. Department of Defense, 2020). Because of this attack, the angered PMF seized the U.S. embassy in Iraq. The Trump administration then revealed the faces of senior PMF leadership leading up to the protests around the U.S. embassy and called them terrorists and Iranian proxies.

After the escalation between Iran and the U.S. in Iraq, Iranian efforts to expel American forces, the attempt to force executive power to appoint an Iranian advocate, and the seizing of the U.S. embassy after the attacks on December 29, 2019, Trump ordered a "pre-emptive" strike on the Iraqi international airport and killed Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis alongside Qasim Soleimani, the Head of

Quds Group on January 2, 2020. The United States declared that the group had committed many aggressive actions toward U.S. personnel and U.S. allies. The Trump administration further declared that *"This strike was aimed at deterring future Iranian attack plans. The United States will continue to take all necessary action to protect our people and our interests wherever they are around the world"* (US Dept of Defense, 2020).

In killing such prominent figures, the U.S. claimed they were destroyers, terrorists, and Iranian proxies. However, in the eyes of Shi'a in Iraq and Iran, they were heroes, particularly Qasim Soleimani, who had a significant role in shaping Iranian revolutionary policy in the Middle East. For the United States, killing Suleimani is much more important than Osama bin Laden or Baghdadi because he has been accused of killing many U.S. personnel and engineering many destructive plots against the U.S.

In his address about killing Suleimani, President Trump stated that this action should have been done a long time ago, knowing that Suleimani had committed 20 years of aggressive action against the U.S.

*"What the United States did yesterday should have been done long ago,"* and this was a criticism of the previous administrations for being inactive and silent regarding the actions of such a person. Further, Trump said, *"We took action last night to stop the war. We did not take action to start the war"* (Trump, 2020b).

The Trump administration's pre-emptive strike in Iraq to curb and eliminate the threat against U.S. national interests was different from the military engagement taken by the Bush administration. Pre-emptive action is a kind of smart power the U.S. has pursued

for many years. Trump intends to wipe out all militias affiliated with Iran in Iraq and the region. He wants to 'fix' the messy situation in Iraq created by previous administrations. Trump's actions in Iraq are to ensure that the U.S. does not leave Iraq, leaving others to benefit at the expense of America's colossal spending. As Ayad Allawi stated, U.S. abandonment of Iraq handed Iraq to Iran when he won the majority seat in Parliament in 2010 but could not create a majority coalition resulting in an Iranian backed candidate coming to power. He said, "*They [the U.S.] handed the country to the Iranians. Iraq is a failed state now, an Iranian colony*" ( The New Yorker, 2013).

After killing two Shia prominent figures, the Shia elite's anger planned to expel U.S. troops, but Trump believes that U.S. prestige and respect must be restored. Consequently, when threats to U.S. national security are present in the Region, Trump props up U.S. greatness and "America First" ideals through a military presence in the region. Furthermore, the expenditures and lives lost in Iraq during previous administrations would become a total loss for the United States if the U.S. were to withdraw completely. Therefore, Trump has maintained that if Iraq wants America to leave, they should reimburse the United States or face sanctions.

*"The U.S. has an "extraordinarily expensive" airbase in Iraq that cost billions of dollars."... "We're not leaving unless they pay us back for it"* (VOA, 2020)

This is the kind of transactional policy from the Trump administration in dealing with world affairs, and the crisis will make sense when Iraq is in debt, and the U.S. seizes the funds being held in U.S. accounts. In his interview on FOX NEWS on

January 11, 2020, President Trump mentioned U.S. troop withdrawal:

"I said, 'If we leave, you got to pay us, ' If we leave ... you have to pay us for the money we put in... we have a lot of their money right now. We have a lot of their money. We have \$35 billion of their money right now sitting in an account. And I think they'll agree to pay. I think they'll agree to pay. Otherwise, we'll stay there.'" (Trump, 2020c)

If he achieves what he asked for, he believes that greatness will return to the United States.

Today, the Iranian backed, armed militias that make up the Axis of Resistance in Tehran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, which currently run Iraq, are what the Trump administration seeks to eliminate. By killing the Head of Quds Force, Trump maintains the policy of weakening the Iranian controlled PMF.

#### **4.2.3 Strengthening Kurdistan's position in Iraq**

Despite U.S. opposition to an independent Kurdistan, knowing the Kurdish aspiration for self-determination, and maintaining a unified Iraq, the USA (inclusive Trump administration) views Kurdistan as a key factor in the pursuit of U.S. policy in Iraq. The Trump administration does emphasize the significance of the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

On November 23, 2019, Mike Pence, U.S. vice president, travelled to Ain al –Issa in Iraq and visited U.S. troops celebrating Thanksgiving. Vice President Pence did not visit Iraqi Higher officials, but, instead, visited Erbil and was welcomed by the President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani and Prime

Minister of the Region Masrour Barzani. In his meeting with President Barzani, Vice President Pence reiterated the strategic relations with the Kurdistan Region and thanked the Kurdish Peshmerga, who fought terrorism alongside U.S. troops. He emphasized that the United States will never let any threat come to the Kurdistan region, and it will be preserved. In his tweet, Vice president Mike Pence said, "It was an honour to meet with President Barzani in Erbil on behalf of @realDonaldTrump today to reiterate the strong bonds forged in the fires of war between the United States and Kurdish people across this region" (Pence, 2019).

Despite the U.S. abandoning them in the referendum process in the middle of the chaos and crises that faced the Region, Kurdistan remains a crucial factor for the stability and balance in Iraq and the region for the United States policy. Even though there was global criticism over the Kurds' abandonment in Iraq and later in Syria by the United States, the United States did not retreat from its policy of maintaining Iraqi integrity despite Iranian dominance. Currently, the Trump administration is struggling to curb Iranian influence in Iraqis' political and economic life. Support from the United States for the Kurdistan Region in facing any threat is a clear signal to the Kurds to be resilient, tolerant, and maintain close relations with the United States instead of developing relations with U.S. adversaries in the region.

The United States' Strategy in Iraq and Syria, which reiterates U.S. support of its allies, mainly Kurds who fought terrorism along with them, will continue to be that the U.S. will remain in the region and support the Kurds. Kurds are not only allies, but also the Kurdistan region remains of strategic importance in U.S. foreign policy in the Region (Frantzman, 2019a). The United States, for now, supports a strong Kurdistan Region in contrast to the Iraqi

central government's Iranian influence. Since the Kurdistan region is not threatening U.S. national and security interests, it will remain a key factor for the Trump administration as a local power in Iraq on which to rely for counter-terror and maintaining the balance of power among neighbouring countries while countering Iran and its affiliates. However, after heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran in December 2019 and later in January 2020, the Kurdistan region declared that it would remain neutral in the conflict between the U.S. and Iran. This policy pursued by the Kurdistan Region came after the Iraqi Parliament voted to expel U.S. troops from Iraq. Kurds and Sunnis did not participate in the parliament sessions against the U.S. This signalled that they disagree with the Iraqi decision. Additionally, the KRG did not take Iran's side against the U.S., thereby declaring that they will not get involved in such conflict (France 24, 2020).

The Kurds maintain neutrality in the US-Iranian conflict and disagree with the Iraqi decision on expelling U.S. troops from Iraq because they believe that the threat of terrorism has not been eliminated. Iraq needs the help of coalition forces, in particular, the United States. President Barzani said on January 12, 2020:

*"We believe that the war against terrorism is not over. The Kurdistan region and all of Iraq, as always, need the help of the international coalition forces,...the threats are not directed at the region's security alone but to the security of the entire international community."* (Barzani, 2020)

When President Barzani met U.S. President Donald Trump in a bilateral meeting on January 22, 2020, in Davos, President Trump called Barzani the President of Kurdistan, giving Kurdistan more legitimacy and strengthening their position even more.

(Whitehouse.gov, 2020) This phase of foreign policy toward Iraq signalled the desire for greater consolidation of U.S.-KRI relations that may continue until such a time as Trump achieves his goals in Iraq.

## **Conclusion**

Despite concerns regarding the reality of U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from many global agreements and applying transactional policies and bargaining to achieve U.S. interests, the U.S. has been involved in Iraq for decades. Each U.S. administration has maintained its policies in the region. Trump criticized his predecessors, believing that they ruined the U.S. dignity through involvement and then withdrawal from Iraq.

After the previous administration sought to pursue the policy of stability in Iraq with an agreement with Iran, the Trump administration reversed the policy perceiving that American lives and spending were wasted efforts benefiting others at the expense of U.S. interests. Trump's disagreement with the previous administrations' policies on the one hand and the policies of the Iraqi government on the other led Trump to pursue a zero-sum game of deterrence, support of the protesters and the Kurdistan Region, and the use of soft and smart power to combat terrorism and Iran's influence in Iraq.

The killing of Qasim Soleimani signalled the Trump administration's staunch opposition to agreements with Iran. Rather, the Trump Doctrine seeks to curb Iran's influence in the region, especially in Iraq. Instead of overt military engagement,

Trump maintains his foreign policy through local powers and allies to counter any threat facing U.S. interests in Iraq, including protestors' support against an Iranian-backed Iraqi central government.

In general, president Trump continuously delivers a message on his intention to withdraw from Iraq or any part of the Middle East because he believes the U.S. fought ISIS when their rivals take advantage. However, in practice, under the Trump administration, the United States maintains a policy of strengthening the U.S. position in Iraq. His administration involved counter-terror and curbing Iranian role but under the Transactional realist approach with limited engagement and less financial costs.

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## Endnotes;

<sup>i</sup> For this agreement, we can look at the Yalta agreement of 1945, the Vietnam peace agreement of 1973, the Iranian Hostage Agreement of 1981, and the Afghanistan settlement Agreement of April 14/1988.

<sup>ii</sup> "One of the bases will be set up in Atroush region, two in Harir region and two large bases in Erbil and Duhok" (global research, 2016)

<sup>iii</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

<sup>iv</sup> "Remarks by President Trump on the Death of ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi" On October 27, 2019

<sup>v</sup>. Trump administration, in response to the attack of Kataib Hezbollah to K1 in Kirkuk, in which one of the U.S. contractor killed and four were wounded, on December 27, 2019 (VOA, 2019), launched the "*defensive strikes*" on five bases of Kataib Hezbollah three in Iraq and two in Syria on December 29, 2019, they were accused by not only a shortage of ammunition and arms but the locations uses as "*plan and execute attacks.*" (Frantzman, 2019c)

<sup>vi</sup> Katiab Hezbulla leader Abu Mahdi al Muhandis in 2009. An airstrike targeted its base in Albukamal in Syria in June 2018. The Katiab launched many attacks on U.S. facilities and Operation Inherent Resolve coalition forces present for counter-terrorism. Qais Khazali, the Head of Asaib Ahl al Haq, another PMF group, has been registered as terrorists, and the U.S. accused these groups of killing more than 500 Iraqi civilians in demonstrations since October 2019. (ibid)

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سیاسه‌تی دهره‌وه‌ی ئەمریکا له ئیداره‌ی سه‌رۆک ترامپ جه‌خت له‌سه‌ر نه‌ه‌یشتنی هه‌ژموون و پۆلی ئێران له عێراق و به‌رده‌وامبوون له‌سه‌ر ئۆپه‌راسیۆنه‌کانی به‌ره‌نگاربوونه‌وه‌ی تیرۆریزم ده‌کات.

ترامپ گرینگی به‌ به‌کاره‌ینانی هیزى زیره‌ک دا، ئەمه میتۆدیکه ته‌که‌ز له‌سه‌ر پێویستبوون به‌ ئاماده‌بوونیکی له‌شکری به‌هیز ده‌کات و له‌هه‌مان کاتدا به‌ره‌و به‌ په‌یوه‌ندیه‌کانی سیاسی ده‌دات له‌ پێناو فراوانکردنی هه‌ژموون و سه‌پاندنی په‌لایه‌تی کردار

ترامپ جه‌خت له‌سه‌ر ده‌سته‌به‌رکردنی به‌رژه‌وه‌ندیه‌کانی ئەمریکا له عێراق ده‌کات، له‌هه‌مان کاتدا هه‌ول بۆ پێگریکردن له‌ پۆلی ئێران له عێراق ده‌دات، چۆنکه دیدگای ئیداره‌ی ترامپ دژ به‌ کرداره‌کانی ئیداره‌کانی پێشووتره‌ سه‌باره‌ت به‌ تێوه‌کلانی ئەمریکا به‌ قۆلی له‌ سه‌رده‌می ئیداره‌ی سه‌رۆک بوش و پاشه‌کشه‌کردنی ئەمریکا له‌ سه‌رده‌می ئیداره‌ی سه‌رۆک ئوباما، که‌ بوونه‌ مایه‌ی تیکچوونی به‌رژه‌وه‌ندیه‌کانی ئەمریکا له عێراق له‌ سه‌ر حسابی ویلايه‌ته‌ یه‌کگرتووه‌کانی ئەمریکا.

له‌م سۆنگه‌یه‌وه‌ ده‌توانرێت سیاسه‌تی ترامپ به‌ ریاالیزی مامه‌له‌گه‌رایي پیناسه‌ بکری‌ت و ده‌توانرێت بگوترێت، له‌گه‌ڵ ئەوه‌ی سه‌رۆک ترامپ جه‌خت له‌سه‌ر کشانه‌وه‌ی هیزه‌کانی ئەمریکا ده‌کات، به‌لام له‌هه‌مان کاتدا به‌رده‌وام ده‌بی‌ت له‌ تێوه‌کلاندنی ولاته‌ یه‌کگرتووه‌کانی ئەمریکا له عێراق و رووبه‌رپووبوونه‌وه‌ و به‌رپه‌رچه‌دانه‌وه‌ی

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ھەرمەترسىيەك كە دەيىتە ماىيە ھەپەشە بۆ سەر بەرژدەۋەندىيەكانى  
ئەمريكا لە عىراق.

ووشە سەرەككەكان: دۆكتىرىنى ترامپ، قەيرانەكانى عىراق، دەست  
تىۋەردانى ئىران، ستراتىژى ترامپ.

## ملخص

ركزت السياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة في ظل إدارة الرئيس ترامب على الحد من نفوذ ودور إيران والإستمرار في عمليات محاربة الإرهاب.

في العراق ركز الرئيس ترامب على استخدام القوة الذكية ، وهو نهج يشدد على الحاجة إلى تواجد عسكري قوي ، لكن في الوقت نفسه يستثمر في العلاقات السياسية لتوسيع النفوذ وشرعنة العمل.

يؤكد ترامب على الحفاظ على المصالح الأمريكية في العراق وفي نفس الوقت يشدد على ضرورة كبح جماح إيران و تقليل دوره في العراق. وجهة نظر إدارة ترامب تتعارض مع كل من التدخل الأمريكي الشديد في زمن إدارة بوش و الانسحاب الأمريكي في زمن إدارة أوباما، اللذان أديا بنظره إلى تدهور المصالح الأمريكية في العراق.

في الجوهر يمكن تعريف سياسات ترامب بأنها واقعية في التعامل، لذلك يمكن القول، أنه رغم التأكيد على انسحاب القوات الأمريكية، فإن ترامب سوف يحافظ على تدخل الولايات المتحدة في العراق وسيقوم على بإحتواء و ردع التهديدات للمصالح الأمريكية في العراق.

**الكلمات الأساسية:** مبدأ ترامب ، أزمات العراق ، التدخل الإيراني، إستراتيجية ترامب