**3. What are the Reasons behind the American Double Standards**

**in the Middle East?**

To start with a general perspective. It is very typical for the great powers to act in a selfish way. The attraction grows even bigger when you all of a sudden have become the only superpower of the world, as it happened to the U.S.A. in 1991. It was how unrivaled and unchecked and also careless and arrogant.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Secondly, with his neoconservative advisors and colleagues Bush administration literally boasted of its rejection of treaties, International public opinion (which for example, was strongly against the war in Iraq in 2003), and international organizations.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Simply, [American Interests in the Middle East](http://mdsolar.blogspot.com/2007/01/american-interests-in-middle-east.html) are the Reasons behind the Double Standard Policy. Consequently, we can claim that the double standards are the best examples to support the Realism Theory in International Relations: everything happens because of the real benefits of states. Just like President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said about Somoza Garcia, dictator of Nicaragua that “He is a bastard, but he is our bastard.”

American vital interests in the Middle East, cited in the President Bush’s speech on [January 10, 2007](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/us/11ptext.html) was really twofold. The first is that uninterrupted oil supplies will be available and the second that theocratic states will not become so powerful that they pose a challenge to the American position as the only superpower or may threat the American allies.[[3]](#footnote-4)

American military presence in the region is related to the first interest while its support of Israel (despite its actions against the Palestinians and some neighboring countries such as Syria and Lebanon), Saudi Arabia (even if women rights are still violated), Egypt (in spite of its Human Rights violations), Jordan (with all its corruption) and a number of smaller Arab states is related to the second.

They are also intertwined in the sense thattheUS support of those states enables American military presence in the region through bases and ports which support logistics. So, there are several reasons for such a policy, Materialistic (Oil), Economic, Strategic, Stability and the influence of the lobbies (particularly Israel Lobby) inside the US.

**3.1. Material Sources (Oil)**

While American interests in the region are not motivated by the pursuit of fossil fuels alone, the historically complicated U.S. relationships with Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf states have often revolved around oil -- specifically, ensuring an adequate supply at a reasonable cost.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Since Standard Oil's 1936 discovery of massive oil deposits in Saudi Arabia, ensuring access to the region's fossil fuels has been on America's foreign policy agenda.[[5]](#footnote-6) The 1973-1974 [OPEC](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/glossary/term/opec.html) oil boycotts and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 are both dramatic examples of how regional forces have challenged U.S. access to fuel. The 1973 boycott was particularly powerful; at the time, Arab nations supplied 37 percent of the oil consumed by the non-communist world. To this day, ensuring the supply of oil from the region factors heavily in the development of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East regardless what kind of regimes these countries have.

**3.2. Geo-strategic Concerns and Regional Stability**

The Middle East region is very important in the geo-strategic dimension, because it is existent in the heart of the world map, it controls important sea narrows, and is also very rich in natural resources, especially oil. The United States maintains an ongoing military presence in the Middle East, including longstanding military bases in Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, and now in Iraq, and strong naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean, Arabian Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The establishments of U.S. military bases are always used to promote the economic and political objectives of U.S. capitalism and should not of course be seen simply in terms of direct military presence. For example, U.S. corporations and the U.S. government have been eager for some time to build a secure corridor for US controlled oil and natural gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea in Central Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. This region has more than 6 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and almost 40 percent of its gas reserves. The war in Afghanistan and the creation of U.S. military Bases in Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East in general are viewed as a key opportunity to make such pipelines a well protected in reality.

Since 9/11, the U.S. geo-strategic interests in the Middle East are largely defined by the U.S-led ‘war on terror” A number of other concerns are very much intertwined with the terrorism issue.These include the U.S. occupation of Iraq, containment of Iran, and the establishment of peace between Israel and its Arab adversaries. To support these interests, roughly 200,000 American troops are stationed in the Middle East. The strategic picture changes substantially if US interests change.

**3.3. Business and Economy**

The ability of theocrats to imagine a strategically significant state is enabled by the presence of ready cash available through the sale of oil at prices much higher than the cost of production. Saudi oil income is easily diverted to theocratic ally minded organizations while Iranian oil income is already attached to such a system. In Iraq, oil revenues, such as they are, are also available to those who are sympathetic to the theocratic movement both legitimately and through massive corruption. In short, the theocratic movement is well funded because there is such a large cash flow to skim.   
  
 Changing this situation by eliminating the American use of Middle Eastern oil can only help. Oil is a global market, so eliminating the US use of Middle Eastern oil really means eliminating their use of oil altogether. Taking the US demand for oil out of the market reduces the price of oil to much closer to its cost of production which is going up in the Middle East as more elaborate extraction methods are needed. The cartel structure for the Middle Eastern oil sales would have a hard time surviving a market with slim profit margins since production quotas would be difficult to allocate.[[6]](#footnote-7)

If America has no demand for oil, then its interests in maintaining the flow of Middle Eastern oil devolve to support of its allies' needs for such a flow. However, America’s most important allies are already committed to reducing their use of fossil fuels generally, so it is not so hard to envision a world where the free navigation of the waters near the Middle East are of little strategic importance.

**3.4. Israel Lobby and its influence on the US Foreign Policy**

In the wake of September eleven events, the American foreign policy was forced to pay closer attention on the Arab and Muslim worlds, especially in the Middle East. This was a very critical moment for Israel and its Lobby in the US.

"Why has the United States been willing to set aside its own security and that of many of its allies in order to advance the interests of another state?" ask authors John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

According to their paperwhich was published in Marchof 2006, then their book “ Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy “ was published in 2007 the answer is the Influence of pro-Israel Lobby. These groups include the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, and Christian Zionist organizations.[[7]](#footnote-8)

As much as the foreign aid to Israel by congress is helpful, important and valuable, still, the influence of the Israel Lobby is not limited to foreign aid only. The Lobby also works to influence different aspects of US foreign policy, especially on the Middle East. Based on sources that include Israeli scholars and journalists, international human rights organizations, and testimony from the lobby itself and politicians that support it, the study examines how the pro-Israel lobby built up its influence in Washington and says its intimidation of the press, think tanks and academia has led to a deceptive picture of Israel.[[8]](#footnote-9)

According to the study, pro-Israel lobby groups have exploited the sensitivities of major media outlets and of U.S. politicians to campaign contributions to maintain their sympathy for Israel regardless of what it does in the region. Inside the US, the lobby has worked hard to suppress its critics; something the authors say has not been good for democracy, especially one that now claims to be promoting freedom in the Arab world.

While the pro-Israel lobby has managed a number of successes for Israel, the cost for the United States is mounting, the study says.

"This situation is deeply worrisome, because the Lobby's influence causes trouble on several fronts," says the study. These include possible increases in the military danger that all states face - including Washington's European allies.

In the case of Israeli Palestinians conflict, the Lobby has to make sure that American power is used to support Israel and advance its interests in the Middle East region, especially when it comes to the security issue. That means; US must pack Israel in its conflict against the Palestinians and directing American power towards any other country (Iran, Syria) or organization (Hamas, Hezbollah) that might be an obstacle to Israel. By preventing theU.S. leaders from pressuring Israel to make peace, the lobby has also made it impossible to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which gives extremists a potent recruiting tool and enlarges the pool of potential militants, the authors say.[[9]](#footnote-10)

The Lobby pushed for disarming Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories, now they have a friendly government to Israel in Lebanon and unelected and undemocratic one in the West Bank, also friendly to Israel and isolated Gaza by putting it under siege. Since Hamas and Hezbollah are getting their support from Syria and Iran, the Lobby keeps pushing the US foreign policy makers to be more aggressive towards these two countries. New attempts by the lobby to "change regimes" in Iran and Syria could lead the United States to attack those countries, with potentially disastrous effects.[[10]](#footnote-11)

The Lobby played and still playing a very critical role in shaping the US foreign policy towards Iraq and Iran in particular and in the Middle East in general. The Lobby worked around the clock to convince the Americans that Israel was in the right during its war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 and during the war on Gaza in 08/09 to make sure that politicians from Democratic Party and Republican Party supported Israel entirely.

"It was clear to us that many people understood the problem that we describe in the piece but were afraid to talk about it... because the lobby would retaliate,"[[11]](#footnote-12) Mearsheimer said.

1. Fareed Zakaria, **The Post-American World**. Norton 2009, P. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Zakaria, P. 222-223. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60427/dennis-ross/the-middle-east-predicament>. Visited in 03-03-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/O-W/Oil-The-political-economy-of-foreign-oil-policy.html>.Visited in 01-03-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <http://www.auburn.edu/~thomph1/middleast.htm>. visited in 05-03-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby>**.** Visited in 05-03-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, **The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy**, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2007, p.199-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby>. Visited in 05-03-10.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-12)