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Research Paper

The Drivers of Change in the Middle East Security Environment and the Future of Iran's Security

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Abstract

The surrounding environment of the region has a fluid and changing nature, and thus the national security of each of the states in the Middle East depends on understanding the dynamics and reliability of the regional security environment. In recent years, especially after the Arab Spring, the Middle East has seen rapid changes and emerging trends that have influenced regional security, patterns of coalition building, and regional security architecture. The speed, depth and scope of the transformation in the security environment of the Middle East are to such an extent that identifying the effective *drivers* and understanding the upcoming trends has become one of the significant research topics in political and international studies. Accordingly, the main objectives of the present study are to identify and analyze national, regional, and international drivers of change within the theoretical framework of Buzan's regional security complex (RSC), and find appropriate answers to the following questions: a) What are the drivers of transformation in the security environment of the Middle East; and b) How do these developments influence the future of Iran's security?

Remarkable transformation is taking place at three national, regional and international levels. Thus, in the research hypothesis, the authors postulate that the drivers of change in the security environment of the Middle East have a significant impact on Iran's security. The drivers include the fundamental forces which influence the security environment of the Middle East, and in turn have implications for Iran's security. The drivers which

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influence regional and national security include the growth of unstable governments, the multiplicity and severity of regional security challenges which had been triggering dangerous competitions between adversaries and rivals (e.g., the escalation of tension in Iran-Saudi relations), the success and failures of coalition building in the Israel-Arab axis with repercussions for Iran's security policies and strategic stability, the redefinition of the roles and interests of the Great Powers in the region which had been leading to the intensification of their rivalries and changes in their military-security doctrines. Trend analysis of qualitative data is used to identify and explain key developments in the Middle East and to understand what the future will look like for Iran's security. Trends are gradual forces, factors or patterns that cause changes in the desired phenomenon. Macro trends are important and dominant trends that have significant impact on the transformation of the phenomenon in question. *Pishrān* refers to the major forces that shape the future and consists of several processes that cause changes in the desired phenomenon.

The authors organize their analyses and discussions in four parts. In the first section, the research objectives, main concepts and research method are described. In the second part, the concepts of regional security complex (RSC), extraterritorial security environment and regional security are explained. Moreover, they review recent work in security studies which examine the question of how socio-economic and political developments will ultimately affect regional and national security. The third part is dedicated to explaining the national, regional and international drivers and trends that have the ability to transform Iran's security environment. In the final part, they discuss the transformation of the security environment, particularly the transformation in the patterns of regional order and the change in the patterns of confrontation and cooperation among regional states. They also draw attention to the security threats arising from this transformation that affect the security of the region. The findings of the research indicate that the transformation of the regional security system with its new order will lead to the intensification of security threats for Iran. The results might be helpful for the policymakers who are enthusiastic about the task of developing forward-looking strategies to confront the current and future security threats.

Keywords: Iran, Middle East, Regional Order, Regional Security Complex, Trend Analysis

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Research Paper

A Comparative Study of the Alliance Strategies of States in the International System

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Abstract

Alliance strategies are considered as part of the grand strategy of each state. These strategies represent different ways of political interactions of a state with other international actors in order to safeguard and promote its national interests. As a result, alliances are one of the most important features of international politics and play an influential role in the foreign policy decision-making of any state. The origin and theoretical basis of alliance theories can be found in the literature on realism and realist theories of international relations. The realist theories, regardless of the power differences between the states, consider them as similar units and similar actors which are security seekers (defensive realism) or power seekers (offensive realism). Thus, no distinction is made between different types of alliance strategies of different states in the international system. The main purpose of this paper is to compare different types of alliance strategies of the states in the international system in a manner conforming with their relative power and position in the world system.

The primary research question is that, “what are the most important points of difference and similarities between the alliance strategies of states?” In the research hypothesis, the author claims that the relative power position of states will influence the types of alliance strategies which they formulate and adopt. For hypothesis-testing, qualitative data are collected for a comparative analysis of the theoretical assumptions, viewpoints and research findings presented by the prominent theorists in this field. Using the method of conceptual analysis of data, the author attempts to answer the research question. The comparative method is useful because it increases the researcher’s understanding of different political systems or political

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phenomena and prevents undue generalizations in the research. In this method, a political phenomenon is compared in different countries or institutions, and therefore it is different from the case study method. By comparing the alliance strategies of superpowers, great powers, middle powers and small states, the author finds that there are the greatest similarities between the alliance strategies of two sets of states: a) the satisfied great powers and the satisfied middle powers; b) the dissatisfied great powers and dissatisfied middle powers.

In the discussion of the conceptual framework, the unequal structure of power distribution in the international system and the positional rank of each state in this system are discussed. Then, the existing power structure in the international system are examined. One of the important features of the structure of the current international system that should be taken into account is the unequal distribution of power among states, which has led to the classification of states into superpowers, great powers, middle or secondary powers, regional powers, and small states. In the theoretical literature in this field, it can be seen that superpowers and great powers are system-determining states. In sum, some key findings of the research are as follows: 1. The difference in the states' relative power and positional rank in the international system is the most significant explanatory variable in the adoption of different alliance strategies by all types of states. 2. In the alliance strategies of the middle powers, the structure of the region and the type of patterns governing the region in which the middle powers are located are very important. 3. The power structure of the international system (e.g., the polarity of the system) is an important variable for determining the types of alliance strategies of each state. In the unipolar structure, for instance, the issue of which state is the superpower or what policies it follows will greatly affect types of alliance strategies of other states.

Keywords: Alliance Strategies, Great Powers, Middle Powers, Small States, Superpower

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Research Paper

Causes of Corruption: An Economic Approach

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Abstract

Corruption and the fight against its various forms have constantly been a concern of theorists and policymakers because corruption is one of the important obstacles to socio-economic development. Economists have issued warnings about the devastating consequences of financial corruption and have argued that financial corruption increases transaction costs, reduces investment incentives, and ultimately reduces economic growth. Political scientists have pointed out the political costs of corruption for societies and claimed that an increase in corruption leads to a decrease in public trust in the political system and the destruction of the government's legitimacy, and could have a negative impact on democracy and political development. The manner in which this phenomenon influences growth and development is that it typically leads to more inequality and loss of public trust in government. By reducing political accountability, it undermines democracy and good governance. The economic approach is useful to study the causes of financial corruption because the researchers will be able to pay close attention to the underlying motivations and rationality to explain this problem of corruption. The researchers will be able to explain and understand why some individuals make choices based on their preferences that results in financial corruption. Some individuals are more corruption-prone and willing to engage in corruption when the opportunity arises to maximize financial gains for their own personal use or act as agents of corruption in their institutional roles for collective gains. Equally important

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is the task of discussing the anti-corruption efforts to deter future corruption behaviors of individuals and to combat state-sponsored institutional corrupt practices. In order to formulate effective strategies and policies to win the fight against corruption, it is necessary to first identify and understand the causes of corruption.

With a qualitative approach and within the framework of public choice theory, the authors analyze a collection of the most important empirical and theoretical work on the causes of corruption with the goal of finding suitable answers to the following research questions: 1. What are the prominent differences between economic and non-economic approaches to explain the causes of financial corruption? 2. Does the economic approach used to explain the causes of financial corruption have more explanatory power than the non-economic approaches? The research hypothesis assumes that the use of economic approaches (general choice theory) to study financial corruption is more effective in analyzing the financial corruption-development association. The essence of the general choice theory to explain the behaviors of individuals and political elites is that these individuals seek to maximize their own personal gains and/or the collective benefits of a particular group, party, class and family with no or little regard for the maximization of the accrued benefits for the society at large. A key question is, to what extent the corrupt individuals are rational actors, given that they make choices which are generally perceived as irrational by other individuals—who do not get involved in corrupt practices. A multitude of reasons might influence an individual to make a 'rational' decision to engage in financial corruption practices. Theoretically, he makes a rational choice, because his calculations indicate that the expected benefit of financial corruption exceeds the expected cost including the cost of being detected, arrested and punished for his illicit acts.

The critics of the economic approach to explain financial corruption emphasize a score of economic and non-economic factors such as weak economic development, low levels of education, poor quality of the bureaucracy, reduced transparency in laws and tax regulations, misconduct of community leaders, and religious composition of the total population. The existence of ethnic-linguistic subgroups in a country, the low degree of democracy (indicated particularly by the lack of freedom of speech and the freedom of the press), and political instability have been emphasized in the non-economic approach to the study of financial corruption. However, the effects of the non-economic causes of financial corruption are indirectly through economic factors. The individuals generally base their decision-making on their cost-benefit analyses and if the gains exceed the cost, they get engaged in corruption. In other words, the improved quality of bureaucracy and transparency do not necessarily prevent a person from committing acts of financial corruption, but the high quality of bureaucracy and the high degree of democracy (particularly freedom of the press and transparency) reduce financial corruption by increasing the cost of corruption behaviors. The results suggest that non-economic approaches have been useful in explaining causes and consequences of corruption to a certain degree, but economic approach is more effective for understanding

the motivations of corruption and its consequences for economic and political development. These research findings are important for planning and implementing anti-corruption programs such as enforceable ethical code of conduct, and regulations to increase transparency and accountability for public officials.

Keywords: Anti-corruption, Financial Corruption, Democracy, Development, Government Size, Rational Choice Theory.

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Research Paper

The Entanglement of Aristotle's Ethics and Politics as the Metaphysics of Human Affairs

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Abstract

There is a tradition within Islamic philosophy which distinguishes theoretical philosophy from practical philosophy based on the core of Aristotle's writings. This tradition thus far has had a pivotal role in the Islamic political philosophy. A succinct and simplified description is that philosophers such as Abu Nasr al-Farabi followed Aristotle, and divided philosophy into two aforementioned subdivisions. However, they needed a theoretical framework for their practical philosophy, and built a cosmological and metaphysical system based on the emanationist theory of Plotinus. Nevertheless, they followed closely behind Aristotle in theoretical philosophy. To elucidate more clearly, the purpose of using neo-platonic ideas in political philosophy was to conceal Aristotelian teachings. In political philosophy, the main objective is not essentially to understand "human affairs", but rather to establish a rational hierarchical society. In spite of this traditional interpretation, strictly speaking Aristotle's philosophy forms a coherent whole. To recognize this coherence, one should speak about the theoretical foundations of Aristotle's philosophy concerning human affairs. The philosophy of human affairs refers to all philosophical writings on ethics, law-making (*νομοθεσία*), and political regimes.

The primary research question is whether it is possible to establish a connection between ethics and politics based on a metaphysical foundation. The authors use the method of qualitative text analysis to examine important

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works of Aristotle and his critics to answer this question. In the research hypothesis, it is suggested that there is a significant relationship between

ethics and politics based on metaphysical foundation. With the goal of exploring Aristotle's philosophical insights, the authors examine his most significant work which include *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul (De Anima)*, *the Poetics*, and *the Politics*. By demonstrating the 'coherence of Aristotle's philosophy', the researchers attempt to raise awareness about the possibility of a connection between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. When, for instance, Aristotle speaks about soul in "*Ethics*", we can illuminate it with his claims in "*On the Soul*". When he discusses 'the good', we can seek it in the ninth book of "*Metaphysics*". We can shed light on what is not exact in *Politics and Ethics*. In other words, his political and ethical claims can be read in terms of the metaphysical, psychological and physical principles of his philosophy of human affairs. Aristotle's theory of rational thought is concerned with practical matters, and the role of rationality in leading humans to good and bad forms of reasoning. In Aristotle's view, God is perfect and immortal. Life of God is indeed the happiest, and humans could be happy by becoming more God-like. For Islamic thinkers and philosophers, Aristotle's theory of rational thought, and more specifically Aristotle's theory of God was the greatest obstacle to understanding his philosophy.

In this paper, one of the objectives of the authors is to examine the very foundation of ethics and politics. According to Aristotle, a person is independent if he or she exists for himself or herself and not for another. Being God-like means becoming independent and free in life. What is important in this process is the form of thinking which is based on Aristotle's analysis of reality and must be taken to the zone of episteme or theological thinking. Some scholars have claimed that there is no connection between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. According to Abenque, 'the true Aristotle' must be pursued by keeping away from Islamic and Christian interpretation of Aristotle. Nonetheless, Moslem philosophers have come to the conclusion that in practical philosophy we seek 'analogies of truth'— this kind of truth is explained not by the philosophers whose knowledge originate in *logos*, but by the jurists whose knowledge originate in revelation. This explains partly the eventual collapse of political philosophy and philosophic inquiry in the Islamic world.

Keywords: the Beautiful, Ethics, the Good, Metaphysics, Politics

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Research Paper

Elections and Resource Mobilization: A Theoretical Model for Explanation of Electoral Competitions

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to present a theoretical model for explaining how one or more candidates or parties defeat their rivals and win in the national elections. Based on the framework of resource mobilization theory (RMT), different factors at different levels which determine the probability of the victory of a candidate in the presidential and parliamentary elections will be examined. The electoral resources—which are crucial to the success of candidates—include a collection of resource (e.g., explicit and hidden knowledge resources (KR), needs resources (NR), power resources (PR), influence and persuasion, moral resources (MR), facilitation resources (FR), and unforeseen resources (UR)). The relative importance and effectiveness of these six electoral resources are dissimilar. For instance, moral resources are the most sensitive and necessary requirements for entering an election race and remaining throughout the entire election cycle. Knowledge resources are second in importance, and their effectiveness primarily depend on a candidate's capabilities. The financial resources and social mobilization network are two of the facilitation resources which help to reduce a candidate's electoral expenses and/or increase his/her social and political capital. Among the unforeseen resources, the unfortunate events (e.g., wars, terror attacks, and economic crises) might provide opportunities for the conservative candidates, while the incidence of peace and favorable weather conditions often create opportunities for the reformist and change-seeking candidates.

The author attempts to find appropriate answers to the following primary and secondary research questions: 1. How do candidates win the elections against their competitors in electoral competitions? 2. What resources are

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needed to win the elections? 3. How should these resources be mobilized? In the hypothesis of the present study, it is claimed that the victory of a candidate in an election depends largely on a combination of factors, notably the resource mobilization, the degree of success in persuading the voters and other stakeholders in the elections to support their candidacy, and the amount of luck resulted from particular unforeseen events with positive consequences for the candidate, or negative consequences for the rival candidates. Within the theoretical framework of resource mobilization theory, the method of data collection and analysis is based on a careful review and qualitative content analysis of the available evidence and the arguments presented in earlier studies on the subject of presidential and parliamentary elections and voting behaviors. The findings of previous research have indicated that the probability of success of a candidate is higher than the other competitors, when a candidate or his/her political party use the best way to mobilize electoral resources to persuade the voters and other actors in different stages of the election process—ranging from registration, qualification, debates, nomination, voting, post-election acceptance—to support him/her instead of other candidates. The main conclusion of the research is that the availability of the electoral resources is important, but their timely mobilization and allocation in the optimal way by a candidate and his/her supporters are crucial in persuading the key actors (i.e., the electoral officials who must approve his/her credentials, the media and powerful political parties and factions who must nominate and publicize their support for him/her, and the voters who vote) to act in his/her favor. Persuasion is the result of prudent resource mobilization, and luck is increased by the occurrence of unanticipated events with repercussions for the outcome of the elections.

Keywords: Election Process, Electoral Resources, Persuasion, Resource Mobilization, Voting Behaviors

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Research Paper

Russian Theory of International Relations: A Debate on Identity, Security and Development

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Abstract

Russia has been a prominent European great power since the 18th century, and later a world power. In the context of great power competition, Russian foreign and security policies have been attractive topics for the international relations (IR) theorists who have developed concepts such as the "Great Game", "Heartland", "Class Transnationalism" and "Strategic Parity" mainly in relation to Russia's foreign policy. Over the last decades, significant efforts have been undertaken in Russia in order to understand European and international politics, and these efforts have reached a point that one can now speak of the evolution of the Russian international relations theory. Indeed, the main question of this article is as follows: How have the fundamental issues of the state been reflected in the Russian IR theory? In the research hypothesis, it is claimed that domestic politics play a determining role in the development of IR theories. The Russian approach to IR theory building is different from the western approaches to IR theory. While the current trend in the main debates of IR theories in the western academic and research institutions have been about the nature, method and philosophical foundations of these theories, in Russia there have been major debates around the issues of identity, security and development, which have led to conflicting views of internationalism, statism, civilizational and geopolitical approaches. The author discusses positivist approach to IR which is best described as one which advocates a unified view of science, and calls for the use of methodologies of the natural sciences—most often quantitative data analysis—to study IR. The author also explores the arguments of the critics of the positivist approach from the perspective of critical studies and sociology of science and discusses the likelihood of acceptability of indigenous theory of IR.

The main finding of this article is that we cannot identify a fully

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indigenous Russian theory of IR at present, but the attitudes in the four schools (i.e., internationalist, statist, civilizationist, geostrategist attitudes) are such that they provide important opportunities to build a truly indigenous Russian theory of IR. In fact, the main concern of Russian theorists during the 1991-2022 period had been the issues of identity, security and development, regardless of the schools of thoughts to which they belonged. In fact, there have been general debates about the identity of the Russian state, the expansion of Western institutions and their influence, and the need to overcome economic development problems. Internationalists define Russian identity within the Western world and advocate cooperation with Western institutions, and do not consider any security policies other than in connection with European and global institutions. Russian statist believe the identity of the Russian state is influenced by a combination of local and regional factors, which do not clash necessarily with the Western world except for issues related to survival. They argue that Russian security depends on the maintenance of a regional balance, increased comprehensive interactions with other countries (including the Western countries), and implementation of pragmatic development and modernization policies. Russian civilizationists emphasize the exclusive aspects of identity, security, preservation of local traditions and culture. In contrast, Russian scholars in the geopolitical school with its widespread security concerns and the feeling of being surrounded and threatened by the West, emphasize an anti-Western approach to the policy formulation for countering Western military-security threats. It is not surprising that they supported Moscow's policies in the war against Ukraine. The main problem in all four schools of thought is related to the debate about the best way to deal with foreign academic circles to enrich their concepts and theories. The intellectual space created during the 1985-1999 reform period facilitated Russian academic interactions and collaboration within the transnational space, but the escalation of tensions between Russia and NATO member states over the war in Ukraine gradually created a more restricted and state-oriented environment which have been widening the gap between Russian academic institutions and international teaching and research centers. However, given the globalization of communication and information technologies and capabilities, the intellectual space of IR studies in Russia will continue to grow and the intellectual fences of the Soviet era are unlikely to reappear to prevent Russian academic interactions with the outside world.

Keywords: Civilizationism, Eurasianist, Russia, Statism, International Relations Theory

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Research Paper

Analyzing Institutional Factors Influencing the Formation of the State and its Performance in Afghanistan, 2001-2014

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Abstract

Following the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan by the U.S. and its international allies, intense efforts aimed at peacemaking and conflict resolution were made at all levels to put an end to the instability and violence in this war-ravaged country. Accordingly, an attempt was made to create a new consolidated government with a focus on institutionalization in Afghanistan. An international conference was held in Bonn, Germany in 2001, in order to facilitate the consultation between Afghan political leaders and other stakeholders to discuss the establishment of the foundations of the new government in Afghanistan. The consequences of this conference included the establishment of a score of significant national organizations which constituted the foundations of the new government in Afghanistan, and the creation of a dominant coalition of diverse Afghan groups which became the ruling class. The new government received foreign aid from the U.S., its Western allies, regional states, international aid agencies, and other donors. However, the newly-established government did not last more than two decades.

One of the main objectives of this research is to investigate the institutional factors influencing the formation of the government and its performance in Afghanistan in the period of 2001-2014. The research questions are as follows: 1. What institutional factors have influenced the formation of the government in Afghanistan and its performance in 2001-

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2014 time period? 2. How have these institutional factors affected the formation and performance of the government in Kabul in 2001-2014 when Afghanistan benefited from "relative political stability"? In the research hypothesis, it is argued that the institutional factors led to the formation of a dominant coalition by the stakeholders among the institutions on the basis of the 2001 Bonn Agreement, and in turn the dominant coalition government was able to achieve relative political stability through *rentierism* and "limited access orders" to rent for the individuals and institutions outside the coalition. The method of institutional analysis—which was presented in the works of Douglas North and his associates—are used to collect and analyze data from various reports and statistical sources provided by reliable national and international centers. In addition, the authors gained insights by a careful investigation of the selected findings of the work of other scholars concerning the issue in question.

The theoretical framework was based on North's institutionalist theory and his concept of limited access orders. The theory is useful in describing and explaining the political and economic state of affairs in the post-conflict societies. In most developing countries, individuals and institutions actively use or threaten to use violence for the purpose of having access to resources and accumulate wealth, but development programs would not be successful unless violence is curbed. Reliable stability is the most important precondition for development in all dimensions, particularly in the process of state building. To achieve stability, it is necessary to end violence and eliminate the concealed threat of the use of violence. North's concept of the limited access orders refers to a type of institutional arrangement in which conflict-prone and conflict-ridden countries are able to curb violence by providing economic incentives to powerful groups to cooperate with each other in maintaining peace and stability. The authors compared the government performance of two previous Afghan leaders: 1) Hamid Karzai's government during 2001-2014 which coincided with the emergence of the new government and the period of relative stability in Afghanistan; and 2) Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's government during 2014-2021, which ended in the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country, and Taliban's return to power. The formation of a dominant coalition based on the logic of rent distribution, and on a kind of profitable interaction of rival individuals and institutions led to a period of stability. In other words, the behavior of the political elites in the government (dominant coalition) of Afghanistan was guided and limited by rent and this situation led to a period of relative political stability. The findings could help to gain a better and more accurate understanding of the reasons for the 2021 collapse of the regime against a background of unravelling western support in Afghanistan, and the return of Taliban to the seat of power in Kabul.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Dominant Coalition, Government, Limited Access System, Rent, State

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Transformation in the US Offshore Balancing and the Regional Rivalry between Iran and the GCC, 2001-2021

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Abstract

In contrast to the strategy of preponderance, the grand strategy of offshore balancing can be pursued to achieve the goals of isolation or hegemony. The U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has been changing from preponderance to offshore balancing, which has occasionally (and erroneously) been interpreted as the US isolationist tendency to begin the total withdrawal of its forces from the Middle East, followed by the decline of its influence in the region. The authors investigate why and how George W. Bush (2001-2009), Barack Obama (2009-2017), and Donald Trump (2017-2021) followed a similar strategy of offshore balancing, despite all their differences. The study intends to answer the following research questions: 1. To what extent were the US foreign policy strategies and its actions in the Persian Gulf different during the presidencies of Bush, Obama, and Trump? 2. Why did the three presidents follow the same grand strategy, despite the apparent differences, particularly in their worldview, leadership style and personality traits? In the research hypothesis, it is postulated that even though the U.S. pursued the strategy of offshore balancing during the presidencies of Bush, Obama, and Trump, differences in personality, policy-making style, and security threat assessments of these presidents have had an impact on the transformation of the U.S. foreign policy in the region. With a qualitative approach, the method of events and historical data analysis is used to test the hypothesis. The U.S. policies and reactions to the recent events

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such as the rivalries between Iran and the southern Persian Gulf countries, the political instability of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, the great powers competition in the region are examined.

International relations scholars have different ideas regarding what the strategy of offshore balancing represents, and whether a given U.S. president is an offshore balancer or not. The present study views these differences as an indication of the variations of this strategy. First, one needs to present an inclusive definition of offshore balancing, and for such a definition, one needs to identify the common elements of the various definitions given by different scholars. Different policy goals and means of implementation of offshore balancing have been discussed, but most scholars agree on two points: First, offshore balancing emphasizes the use of naval and air forces, while ground forces should be used only in very special circumstances and on a temporary basis. Second, offshore balancing assigns roles to regional actors, whether allies or competitors which must contribute to the cost of collective defense in the region on the basis of a burden and responsibility sharing formula. Variation in offshore balancing occurs at different levels; for instance, between defensive versus offensive realism, between pursuing a more offshore presence versus a more favorable balance of power.

In conclusion, the authors argue that offshore balancing has been the U.S. grand strategy in the Persian Gulf since 2006, but its goals have changed in response to the need to react to different circumstances. In the last two years of Bush presidency, he was under pressure to find a balance of power arrangement that would end the war in Iraq, while achieving the hegemonic goal of democratization. The cost of upholding the current liberal global order and providing American security guarantees for US allies have adversely affected the prosperity of American people, who expect their politicians to give priority to the economic national interest. Because of the slowdown in the U.S. economy as a consequence of the 2008 financial crisis and military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama followed the strategy of offshore balancing with the goal of reducing the costs of the U.S. foreign policy adventures, and finally ended up being more in favor of an 'offshore than balanced' strategy. During the Trump era, offshore balancing was more influenced by the idea of "make America great again," with its touch of realism. Bush had to deal with the security implications of the September 11 attacks, and acted on the basis of offensive realism and the logic of hegemonism. Obama sought isolationism based on defensive realism, while Trump returned to offensive realism.

Key Words: Grand Strategy, Hegemony, Offshore Balancing, Persian Gulf, U.S. Foreign Policy

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