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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Egyptian-American Relations Under Obama's Presidency: A Defensive Realist Analysis

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Political Science

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Karim Abdoun

Under the supervision of

Dr. Riham Bahi

March 2015

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This work is dedicated to parents: Ismail Abdoun and Maha El Ashram who have supported me over the years with love, motivation and encouragement. Their world of support helped guide me through long hours of research and writing on a topic that took me so much time away from them.

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Introduction

A Pattern of Continuity

For the past few decades, Egyptian-American relations had been established on the cornerstone that is the Camp David Accords. It codified a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the first Arab country to recognize Israel's existence officially. This Egyptian-American relationship had started a long time after Nasser had broken ties with the Americans and backed the Soviet Union. Since then, all Egyptian Presidents since Sadat's peace negotiations with Israel had maintained a steady relationship with the United States.

The United States maintained a consistent steady relationship with Egypt despite the latter being under the leadership of autocratic authoritarian leaders. Whether it is Hosni Mubarak's over thirty years of authoritarian rule, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' iron-fist on anti-army protestors, Mohamed Morsi's exclusion of political forces in Egyptian governance, increased economic inequality, governmental regulations, authoritarian rule, autocratic regimes, crackdown on dissenters and protestors, jail for political opponents, heavy police activity that suffocated a lot of the political atmosphere in the country which limited political participation in elections that have always been called into question, and other examples of these "American values" being violated to name a few, the United States maintained the same policy aims from its relationship with Egypt.

The research problem is that Egyptian regimes are projecting "anti-American values" and still there was US continuity in foreign relations between Egypt and the United States. Even when comparing two American Presidents from different political factions of the United States political arena, Republican George Bush and Democrat Barack Obama, the resulting foreign

policy always seem to carry the same core aim of stabilizing and securing US interests *vis-à-vis* Egypt. The question here is why the US would support such regimes that were clearly against what the US would regard as human rights, or American values, or dignified democratic ideals that the world should abide by? The United States has long been an advocate for increased democratic activity in the world and has numerous held the slogan of promoting democracy for many of its wars, so why is Egypt different than Iraq? Why hasn't the US relationship with Egypt been affected much when it is clear that the Arab country is riddled and full of autocratic, non-democratic mechanisms in its state apparatus? Why is there continuity in US-Egyptian relations in that it doesn't seem to be affected much by external or internal factors?

From examining the history, *I will be showing that one can deduce that the American-Egyptian relationship is related to security of US interests above all else.* It seems that values and democratic ideals were not the guiding principles of the American relationship with Egypt. It can be argued that strategic interests in Egypt and what the Arab country can provide in terms of the security of what the US would be interested in in the Middle East is what the US aims for in terms of its relationship with Egypt.

For that we need to elaborate more on US interests in the region in the first place. But what is so important for the United States in the Middle East that requires it to go past its goals from promotion of democracy and liberal ideals?

My answer is that the relationship between Egypt and America is a stable continuous relationship because of two main reasons:

- The American need to re-focus on growing challengers in the international arena such as the rise of Chinese influence in Asia, the rise of Russia as a global power player and the threat of terrorism.
- The triumph of security of American interests in the Middle East over the projection of US values in the region for the sake of stability.

To explore this hypothesis, I shall begin by expressing the foundations that I view as essential for the Americans to have an interest in the Middle East in general and how important Egypt is in particular and how the US managed to secure these interests vis-à-vis relationship with Egypt. Secondly I will talk about the rise of the Chinese influence in Asia, especially in the Northeast where the Koreas and Japan are and why the US needs to refocus its foreign policy towards Asia.

The argument of the thesis is based on 2 levels of analysis: the international and the individual. On an international level, the argument is that the pressures of the international structure led the United States to naturally pursue a foreign policy that is more aligned with a focus on a rising power in the structure in Asia. This is because the United States as a hegemon in the international structure, the state does not want to consolidate power with any other competition or rising power. Using elements of *structural realism*, and namely the theory of *Defensive Realism*, I will argue that the United States was engaged in a structural pressure in order to deal with its decline in influence in Asia which China has been exploiting for years in order to further increase its own influence in the region. China is a rising power and Russia is a

power player on the global stage, and the hegemon that is the United States needed to address that in accordance with the thought of securing interests in the region, that is being a check on Chinese and Russian influence to stop it from being a regional power. That means a refocus of US foreign policy is needed towards China, since the majority of US foreign policy has targeted resources of US power into forays of anti-terror operations, and democracy promotion in the Middle East. Furthermore, a key structural influencer is elite perception, which is in the form of the US President's understanding and perception of the world around him.

On an individual level, Obama has expressed numerous times in his writings and in his speeches, and in his actions that he acts in a way that the national interest of the United States is what he cares about the most and several analysts and scholars have dubbed him to be a man of realist tendencies and acts in a way a realist would agree with. His speeches about foreign policy all were targeting a re-focus on the Asian continent and China, while stabilizing the Middle East. These will be well documented and supported in the coming chapters.

Defensive Realism:

Examining the 2 major events of the past 4 years in Egyptian politics and the US reaction to them shows the kind of reactionary but calculated decisions that were made in my view point. The hypothesis of this thesis is that the decisions that were made were done in order to maintain and sustain US-Egyptian relations under *any circumstances* without regards to the type of rulers of Egypt who all have been labeled by numerous human rights organizations as authoritarian, not completely democratic and not in line with what the US values represents as it will be elaborated upon over the next coming chapters. Corruption, police brutality,

oppression and aggressive treatment of demonstrations have been what Egypt is characterized of the past few years. The Obama administration's policy of not interfering with allies' affairs – especially Middle Eastern ones- and focus on Asia for the American foreign policy seem to make the events in the Middle East a surprise for the American administration and it seemed to force Obama to re-approach the matter of the Middle East with care. Yet indeed he still wanted to have a shift towards Asia to deal with a rising China¹. The administration sought stability in the Middle East in general and Egypt in particular, without involving itself too much as the policy is titled. *That, in my argument, is the crux of defensive realism.*

Defensive Neo-Realism is a structural theory in International Relations of the school of thought that is Realism. Kenneth Waltz, an American political scientist who was a member of the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley and Columbia University and one of the most prominent scholars in the field of international relations, is considered to be a founder of Defensive Realism in his work *Theory of International Politics*. The author argues in his book that the anarchical structure of the international system encourages states to maintain moderate and reserved policies in order to attain security.

As with all thought and assumptions that are basic in a Realist's point of view, Defensive Realism agrees with the assumptions that are outlined by neorealist scholar John Mearsheimer in *The False Promise of International Institutions* which are²:

1. The international system is anarchic.
2. States possess the capabilities necessary to hurt and possibly destroy each other.
3. Basic goal and aim of states is survival.
4. States think strategically about how to survive in the international system.

¹ MM, SD, BD, SL, MM, RR, BV. "Pivot to the Pacific: The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia". *Congressional Research Service*. 28th March 2012.

² John J. Mearsheimer. "The False Promise of International Institutions" *International Security* 19:3. 1994-1995.

5. States can never be certain about other states' intentions.

These five assumptions are attained through the process of “self-help” and that anarchy in the international system is what drives international politics.

Principle and power, morality and statecraft essentially do not mix. Hans J. Morgenthau argues that there is a tension between moral command and requirements of successful political action. That a state actor must think and act in terms of *power*³. Anarchy (the lack of a single central government in the international system) means that in a political system, there is no supreme power. Therefore states are constantly in a *state of war*: that is that the *ultima ratio* is force. This does not however entail that states are on the brink of war, about to fight each other with armed forces, but it qualifies the natural environment in which the international system operates is in a heightened state of war because of the knowledge that force is the *ultimate arbitrator* of disputes. Coupled with no supreme force, every country can only truly rely on itself. An old British statesman perfectly illustrates the notion, Peter Palmerston once said: “Great Britain has no permanent enemies or permanent friends, she has only permanent interests”.

Unlike domestic politics, international politics has no central government. There is one single overwhelming force that hangs around to officially be the world's premier legislator or policeman on which there is an official obligation to intervene in states' affairs if they go awry from international norms.

Anarchy allows states to be their own final judge of their interests, but requires that each provide the means to attain them. Realism argues that a state's primary goal is survival. To

³ Robert Art. Robert Jervis. “International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues”. *Pearson Education Inc.* 2007.

achieve that co-operation in anarchy is difficult because states are often more concerned with relative advantages rather than absolute gains, short-term objectives rather than long term goals, immediate selfish benefits over overt general aims. There is a fear that others won't live up to their agreements.

In that light, defensive realists argue that the anarchic nature of the international system encourages states to undertake defensive and moderate policies. States are not intrinsically aggressive and that the "first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system"⁴. The argument here comes from the assertion that states which strive to attain hegemony in the international system will be counterbalanced by other states seeking to maintain the status-quo. Aggression is therefore argued to be self-defeating in achieving the aim of security, the primary objective of states.

There is no mention of the concept of absolute gains in realist theory. It is a common misconception about realism. The realities of the political scene and the theories of political science are one of the reasons why a lot of neutral observers argue against political scientists trying to explain structure and order of the international system and what should be done and what shouldn't be done, and this is a prime example. The reality is that a zero-sum world that realistically is what a realist describes (consciously or unconsciously) when talking about the international relations of states in the global political sphere. Saying anarchy is what is overcasting its shadow over the international system (or rather there is nothing that is overcasting its shadow on the international system) does not mean there is no international structure. Because in assuming a state is a rational actor, then the concept of cost-benefit

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz. "Theory of International Politics". New York: McGraw Hill. 1979.

analysis prevails in the decision-making process of the decision-maker of the state. A state does not normally take a decision without taking into account its effects on the international system. Why hasn't China invaded Taiwan and asserted its territorial sovereignty as she claims Taiwan to be part of it? Why hasn't the US struck Iran already despite numerous calls from Israel to act more directly with the Iran? A series of chain reactions could occur because every country measures its place in the international structure according to the relative gains of each transaction and interaction it embarks on. What leads to conflict or sources of friction is what defensive realists assert that is elite perception.

Defensive realists assert that elite perceptions are key to the outbreak of conflict between states. Elite perception is a structural modifier of the international system⁵. It can upset the balance of power as elites –political leaders, *de facto arbitrators of power*- can inflate threats in order to mobilize resources and promote expansion, or inhibit elites from recognizing or rectifying their declining power in the international system. Although this example is usually described when talking about rapidly expanding states in terms of territorial gains, it applies as well on pursuing policies that are aggressive and expansionist in nature.

Kenneth Waltz also asserts that the international structure is defined by two things: the ordering principle of the international structure that is anarchy and the distribution of capabilities among states. Hence, the importance of the idea of power-balance in the structure.

The idea of balancing the status-quo by less powerful states is strong in its effects for this sub-theory of neo-realism because it postulates that states which strive to attain hegemony in the international system will be counterbalanced by other states seeking to maintain the

⁵ R.L. Schweller. "Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power". *Princeton University Press*. 2006.

status quo. It's most relevant aspects in explaining the thesis' research question lies in correlation to the basic concept of the second-strike capability of a nuclear war. Defensive realists assert that the second-strike capability afforded by a state's nuclear arsenal inhibits the ability of the aggressor state to strike another. Rather, it is better manifested in spirit in the context of security dilemma. Security dilemma is when actions by a state intended to heighten its security, such as increasing its military strength or making alliances, can lead other states to respond with similar measures, producing increased tensions that create conflict, even when no side really desires it.

Mearsheimer's Aggressive policies, namely its most extreme –conquest, rarely outweigh its negatives when compared to Walt's defensive realism. Forcing policies that might not be viewed as attaining maximum security for one state could push states further apart from each other, increasing each other's security dilemma.

Research Question

The main research question here is what is the possible explanation for the continuity of the Egyptian-American relationship under Obama's Presidency?

The keys to answer this main question lie in addressing the pressures that the United States had to deal with in order to be able to address several concerns that are important to face as the United States is arguably the most powerful state in the international structure, at least enough to be considered a hegemonic power seeking to reduce the influence of other potential hegemonic rivals since the Cold War.

Hypothesis

From the available research, I will hypothesize that the US stance is that of maintaining Egyptian-American relations in order to protect US Middle Eastern interests though stabilization of the situation in that region in order to address growing concerns on an international level for the United States. A normal continuation of the overall general aim of the USFP in the Middle East.

The thesis will show that Obama's post-revolution strategy was developed (and is developing) according to events unfolding in Egypt on the ground. From that, we can extract the explanation of why the US officially was "late" in expressing its support to the Egyptian population gathering *en masse* in Egyptian squares.

The Russian annexation of Crimea in the midst of the Ukrainian crisis, while the continued decline of US influence in Northeast Asia, the rise of China's political and economic ties and the increased threat of terrorism in the world has meant an increased systematic international structure pressure on United States foreign policy. The resources and capabilities that are available in the United States has been stretched and the United States sought stabilization in the Middle East as a way to begin a grand strategy of refocusing foreign policy onto a rising China primarily and to deal with the escalating situation in Ukraine as Russia increases its influence in the Middle East via Syria and in Europe via Ukraine.

The decision to slash military aid to Egypt has created the potential for adverse consequences for the Egyptian-American relations. Egypt and Russia are due to meet to sign military contracts and if any military agreements are signed, it will be a change in the normal

relationship between Cairo and Washington. It will hardly be an actual direct hit to American interests in the region, but it will be categorized as threat.

In essence, neo-realism will be used to explain the nature of the relationship of the two nations with Obama as President with a view that Stephen Walt's *defensive realism* is what the US had been using to develop its policies towards Egypt starting with the events of the January Revolution as opposed to Mersheimer's *offensive realism*.

Chapter Categorization:

In chapter one, I will be exploring the historical background of the relationship between Egypt and the United States. This will help in the establishment of the foundations of the Egyptian-American relationship to better understand the effects that had in the contemporary politics of America and Egypt when it comes to securing US interests in the Middle East region.

In chapter two, I will be exploring the international structure pressures the United States is under. The rise of China in Asia, the rise of Russia's influence in Europe and Middle East and the increased threat of terrorism have all had structural effects on the United States. Exploring each situation's effect on the relationship of Russia, China and the US will help elaborate more on the kinds of international pressure the United States is having to deal with and how these actions have led the United States to take on a more conservative take on the events of Egypt in order to achieve the grand strategy aim of refocusing foreign policy on China.

In Chapter three, I mention the Arab Spring and the Egyptian coup. These two events showcased the way the United States have reacted to the events on the ground in Egypt. By characterizing the United States response and elaborating on its threats to US interests, I

present an argument for why defensive realism is most appropriate explanation for the understanding of these reactions, with a grand view on the grand strategy of the United States to deal with international structural pressures.

In Chapter three, I discuss the issue of elite perception and how it is a structural modifier in the defensive realism theory. From which I depart to discuss Obama's perception of the world and of US foreign policy which he analyzed in his book and his campaign for Presidency of the United States.

In the last chapter, I will discuss how the cutting of aid was a mistake. It went against all what a realist would recommend a foreign policy of the United States would be, and in such empowered a challenger to US hegemony and gave it more influence in the region and marginally declined the United States'. This in that sense helps confirm, or at least pushed the argument towards defensive realism theory.

Chapter 1: History of US Interests in the Middle East

This chapter aims at giving background information about the US-Egyptian relationship, and how it began after the rapprochement that happened in 1979 in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973. This is important because the Camp David Accords are essentially the foundations of US interests in the Egypt and in the Middle East.

It also aims at giving the context in which Egyptian-American relations are set in when Obama came to office in order to help manifest the situation Obama was in and how his perception of the international structure pressures have been on him. Those latter points shall be elaborated upon further in the coming chapters.

It provides an analysis of why the US wanted a strategic alliance with Egypt, and the challenges of the Obama administration that was provided by the Bush legacy. This was manifested further by Obama's actions as President, but as I will later on explain to no avail because of events in the Middle East. This is important given that the foreign policy objectives of candidate Obama gave a big indication of a refocus on China and stability in the Middle East.

Background

The United States has long had interests in the Middle East, especially since the end of World War II. An examination of the past few decades shows that one of the important points is that the US has long been a constant export point for Arab oil. The dependence of the US on Middle Eastern oil is one of the drivers for the Camp David Accords and the attempts for peace in the region after the Yom Kippur War caused the oil embargo by Arab countries of their Western customers. US Petroleum net imports from Saudi Arabia alone had reached 21% of

total imports of the US, second behind Canada's 42%⁶. Historically, the US had made a deal with Saudi Arabia that enabled a "special" relationship with the Middle Eastern country. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt met Saudi King Abd Al Aziz on board the USS Quincy in the Great Bitter Lake in the Suez Canal in 1945, and both cemented a deal for securing oil resources for the long-term⁷. In the aftermath of the WWII, the victorious US had established a position of predominance in the Middle East with access to cheap oil in perpetuity in exchange for a guarantee to maintain the rule of a single family on the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula⁸. Additionally, the Israeli state had been established in 1948 with the Arab neighbors' anger and fury. Israel had long been a US strategic importance due to historical and religious reasons back home along with issues dealing with WWII and the holocaust caused by the Nazis in Germany. The US had been an advocate of the Israeli state ever since it existed in 1948, and maintained its support throughout the years. Bilateral relations have evolved from an initial US policy of sympathy and support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in 1948 to an unusual partnership that links a small but militarily powerful Israel, dependent on the United States for its economic and military strength, with the American superpower trying to balance other competing interests in the region. Others maintain that Israel is a strategic ally, and that US relations with Israel strengthen the US presence in the Middle East⁹.

⁶ "How much petroleum does the United States import and from where?". *US Energy Information Administration*. 4th December 2014.

⁷ Colin S Cavell. "America's Dependency on Middle East Oil, Part II". *Global Research*. 11th April 2012.

⁸ Colin S Cavell. "America's Dependency on Middle East Oil, Part II". *Global Research*. 11th April 2012.

⁹ Clyde R. Mark. "Israeli-United States Relations". *Congressional Research Service*. October 17, 2002.

Securing Interest and Forming Allies:

Securing US interests over the years entitled creating alliances in the region. By the 1970's, Israel had been through 2 wars with its Arab neighbors - including one in which it controlled sovereign Arab territories it occupied in the 1967 Six Day War-, leaving a huge legacy of discontent among the Arabs with relations to Israel, Saudi Arabia had established a months-long oil embargo on the US for its efforts during the Yum Kippur War in 1973, Nasser had already established socialism and backed the Soviet Union and the Middle East in general was being a hot zone. All that was done in the midst of the Suez Canal being one of the most important water passages in the world as it connected Asia with Europe, halving the route around Africa through the Cape of Good Hope and having on average 2.4 million barrels of oil passing through the canal each day, or around 2.5% of the world's output along with the 2.5 million barrels the SuMed Pipeline transports each day. 1973 presented an opportunity for the US for seeking stability in the region.

In light with securing its interests in the region, and to understand the purpose of the cornerstone of Egyptian-American relations, there is an identifiable need to examine the Camp David Accords. The goals of the US to secure this relationship with Egypt can be traced back to the Carter administration's ambition to secure a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel after the hostilities of 1973.

The Camp David Accords had been mediated by the US in a bid to secure its interests in the Middle East region. Israel, as an important strategic partner to the US because of numerous historical, political and religious reasons, has been a constant in declared US interests in the region. It's the one of the main reasons why Israel is the largest recipient of aid from the US.

Strategists worried that continued turmoil would allow the Soviet Union to make trouble with the West's energy supplies. As a result, the US had a strategic interest in the Middle East and securing peace between Egypt and Israel. Indeed, by securing the peace, Israel was allowed to survive living among its neighbors that have been engaged in conflict with ever since 1948 and in the future the treaty allowed Israel to "pursue aggressive policies without having to worry about the Arab world's largest military"¹⁰.

It had been argued at the time of the Carter administration that peace in the Middle East would mean less turmoil in the mainland of the United States. American reliance on Arab oil was a major factor to consider when dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict especially since the global oil prices hiked as a result of the Arab oil embargo in the aftermath of the 1973 *Yom Kippur* War. The American market was particularly hit due to the reliance and Washington had been frightened by the 1973 war. In response to American aid to Israel during the war, on October 16th, 1973, OPEC raised the posted price of oil by 70%, to \$5.11 a barrel from around \$3. A cut in production by 5% from September's output and to continue to cut production in 5% increments until their economic and political objectives were met¹¹. Saudi Arabia and the other Arab oil-producing states joined the embargo on October 20, 1973 which curbed exports to various countries and blocked all oil deliveries to the US as it described the country as a "principal hostile country"¹². By March 1974, market prices rose from \$3 per barrel to \$12 per barrel.

¹⁰ Scott McDonnell. "The history of the Camp David Accords reveals that even a sympathetic president could not stand up for the Palestinians". *Mondoweiss.net*. March 6th, 2011.

¹¹ Daniel Yergin. "The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power". *New York: Simon and Schuster*. 2008.

¹² George Lenczowski. "American Presidents and the Middle East". *Duke University Press*. 1990.

US interests were as follows:

1. Israeli security: Key to internal American politics.
2. Oil reserves security: Key to American economic interests.

If the goals of the United States from maintaining relations with Egypt are clear though, why has the US expressed hesitance and caution from the events of January 2011 and June 30th 2013 in the Egyptian political scene? The responses to the Egyptian revolution of 25th of January had been labeled “cautious”¹³, “hesitant”¹⁴, and even “suspicious”¹⁵ and that goes the same with the June 30th protests^{16 17}. Why has the US stopped and stuttered in supporting people’s protests for more political inclusion, economic stability and growth, removal of corrupted governmental officials and a better life in general?

In explaining the research problem that gives rise to the peculiarity of the thesis, we need to set up the events that create the research problem. For that we need to describe the initial Obama policies towards Egypt before the eruption of 25th of January Revolution.

The Bush Legacy and Obama’s “Non-Intervention”

In 2009, Obama wanted to come to Egypt to address the Muslim world to announce a new way of dealing with American interests while taking into account Muslim views, asserting that the US is not at war with Islam and he chose Cairo University as his podium. The administration first had to deal with the challenges of the Bush campaign in the Middle East and the post 9/11 world which gave growing influences for anti-American groups in the Middle

¹³ Haroon Siddique, Paul Owen and Richard Adams. “Mubarak Resigns- Friday 11 February”. *The Guardian*. 11th February 2011.

¹⁴ Alexandra Robinson. “Will Egypt’s military hear the vote of the people?”. *Freedom Forward*. 28th November 2011.

¹⁵ Steven Cook. “Foreign Policy: US Can't Hijack Egypt's Revolution”. *NPR*. 10th March 2011.

¹⁶ Dan Rogers. “US in bind over Egypt after supporting Morsi but encouraging protesters”. *The Guardian*. 3rd July 2013.

¹⁷ Michael Crowley. “With Egypt in Crisis, Is Obama Playing it too Safe?”. *Time Magazine*. 2nd July 2013.

East, especially terrorist groups, while pushing for his own agenda for foreign policy which would help the US better its image and work to advance policies towards Asia, specifically China.

The negative remnants of the George W. Bush era made Obama's campaign turn to reversing those policies that Bush had advocated for, but the events in Egypt pulled Obama back into the Middle East and become more involved in its politics than what he might have campaigned for.

George W. Bush's administrations (particularly in the second term of his Presidency) created problems in the Middle East that were numerous and damaged the United States position as the hegemon of the international system and affected the overall influence strength of the country on top of the international structure. These policies characterized the United States in the region as an arrogant superpower. The democracy promotion campaign was Bush administration's attempt to battle terrorism by spreading democracy in the Middle East, but it only showed the level of hypocrisy between George Bush's actions and his rhetoric, despite accounts of George W. Bush genuinely believing that he can democratize the Muslim world but he was met with laughter¹⁸.

An example comes from Egypt, where in 2004 and 2005 Bush had pushed for a democratization effort in the country. Hosni Mubarak responded by allowing multi-candidate elections for the office of President and holding a Presidential election and a relatively reasonably free Parliamentary election with judicial supervision. The trouble is in the autocrats of the ME, who helped blunt the implementation of these democratic efforts in an effort to

¹⁸Jan Fleischhauer. "Democracy and the Middle East: George Bush's Liberal Legacy". *Spiegel Online*. 7th February 2011.

please the United States with the look/illusion of free choice while still maintaining a grip on power and not risk losing US support. In Egypt, the regime had made a law making it extremely difficult for a candidate to credibly challenge Mubarak and shades were cast over the remaining of the 2005 Parliamentary election rounds. The US had objected to these actions but at the same time other interests in the region (Iraq and Palestine) were looming¹⁹.

Bush's problems were:

- *Half-hearted efforts to spread democracy in the region:* These were situations like the Egypt case in which the administration would push for democratic and liberal reforms to the political and economic system of a state but because of interests more important/urgent than the democracy programs the effort was cut short.
- *Guantanamo legal limbo and the lawful debate about the criminal pursuit and use of torture against terror suspects:* This presented a domestic issue that arguably was bigger than the global issue with treating terror suspects and accordance to international law. This only helped intensify the next point.
- *Unilateralism and tensions with allies:* ... around the world. Europeans and Middle Eastern allies had become tense over a variety of issues pertaining to the Iraq War particularly for the former, and the democratic program efforts particularly for the later. Operation *Iraqi Freedom* included the US, UK and Australian militaries in its initial part. Operation *Desert Storm* included the US and 9 other militaries, including Arab ones²⁰.
- *The rise of Anti-American feelings:* An accumulation of the previous points gives a summation that has resulted in an increased antagonized response towards the US from different groups in the ME, particularly the radical fundamentalists such as Hamas and Hizb Allah who grew in terms of influence by portraying the actions that the US have made as anti-Islamic and a war against Muslims in the ME rather than the US just having a war in the ME²¹, which in of itself is a compelling argument.

¹⁹ Bruce Rutherford. "Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam and Democracy in the Arab World". Princeton University Press. 2008.

²⁰ "Persian Gulf". Georgetown University Library. 1989.

²¹ Fawaz Gerjes. "Obama and the Middle East". Palgrave Macmillan. 2012.

From a realist perspective, Bush had failed to identify the key ways in which he would use American power in order to secure his homeland and the United States interests in the Middle East as the end product of his policies only put more danger to American interests. In a 2002 survey by Pew, between 40-60% of non-Americans around the world think the United States is waging war on terrorism not just for security concerns, but also for “oil”, “protect Israel”, “target Muslim governments” “or “dominate the world”²². The image of the US is also bleak in the Arab world as fewer than 10% of people surveyed by Zohby International Poll in 2004 in Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan approved US policy on Arabs, Iraq and Palestine. Pew reported that in one survey of Muslim countries, population expressed their concerns that US military power may ultimately target them. If the United States is a force of good, then why do even its allies have concerns about its influence?

George W. Bush’s main problem, and challenge to Obama was in his approach to democratize the Middle East with his unilateral decision to attack Afghanistan and particularly Iraq. The later campaign under the name of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* was particularly criticized for being anywhere from illegal to unneeded depending on your point of view. The war was conducted with little co-operation with the international community as the US had moved its troops despite international observers not providing any evidence for the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as previously claimed by the US administration and absence of a UN Security Council resolution approving the assault on Iraqi soil prior to the entrance of the US troops in Iraq. Bush had embraced unilateralism with open arms.

²² Stephen Walt. “Taming American Power”. *Pearson International*. 2007.

To help remedy the problems of the Bush reign, the objectives of the foreign policy of the United States under Obama in the Middle East²³: (no particular order)

- 1- Broad co-operation with Israel and commitment to its security.
- 2- Achievement of Palestine's aspirations for statehood.
- 3- Unity and Security of Iraq.
- 4- Non-proliferation and counter terrorism co-operation.
- 5- Access to energy reserves.
- 6- Integration of region into the global market.

The Obama administration's foreign policy goals in the Middle East focused on strengthening US-ME countries' alliances, nuclear proliferation to ensure the protection of US interests in the region were built on the belief/assumption that the autocratic governments are stable enough not to risk losing their alliance by promoting democracy too much in their countries. Contrary to the policies of his predecessor, Obama's administration had not been too pushy for change in his allies in the Middle East –or around the world for that matter-, adopting what is called a “subtle none-interventionist approach”²⁴ towards promoting democracy. While the aggressiveness of Bush's policy and his military efforts in the Middle East had resulted in two major wars and countless military and civilian casualties that helped tarnish the Americans' image and stature in the Middle East and the world, and did not help promote American interests but rather risked US interests. This approach had to be dialed down after Bush, but it was soon to be rendered implausible as the Arab Spring forced him to bring democracy promotion on top of USFP agenda again.

At the end of the Bush administration's time, countries –including allies- realized vividly that The United States' power could threaten their own interest. This realization was

²³ Jeremy Sharp. "Egypt: The January 25th Revolution and Implications for US Foreign Policy". *Congressional Research Center*. 11 February 2011.

²⁴ Fawaz Gerges. "Obama and the Middle East". *Palgrave Macmillan*. 2012.

particularly because of Bush's aggressive policies which forced smaller, less powerful countries to view the United States in a more negative light as the smaller countries looked to give more security to their interests which they feared can be trembled upon by the power of the hegemon in the international structure. As Stephen Walt said once " Even those... that do not fear a US attack are still aware that the United States' position as the world's lone superpower makes it easier for Washington to get its way"²⁵. Other states are wary, or at least have become so.

The goals of George Bush, Barack Obama and Jimmy Carter are all similar to one another when it comes to the region in general and Egypt in particular. Despite differences in Presidents, the US's interests stayed the same and relations with Egypt were maintained despite Egypt going through its own version of the democratic process in action. The protection of Israel, the security of oil reserves and transport and nuclear non-proliferation are key recurring elements in the Egyptian-American relationship.

The American-Egyptian relations can be explained in terms of its continuity. Despite various rulers, many of whom are violators of US values, but not US interests, the US has provided significant military and economic assistance to Egypt since the late 1970's with the conclusion of the Camp David Accords. Middle Eastern Affairs specialist in the US Congressional Research Services group Jeremy Sharp says that US policy makers routinely justify Egypt's enormous \$1.3 billion aid as an "investment in regional stability, built primarily on long-running cooperation with the Egyptian military and on sustaining the [peace] treaty with Israel" as the Egyptian government has been "generally influencing developments in the Middle East in line

²⁵ Stephen Walt. "Taming American Power". *Pearson International*. 2007.

with US interests”²⁶. Indeed he acknowledges that the current Egypt military-back government assembled by former Defense Minister and current Egyptian President Abd El Fatah El Sisi has been attempting to establish political order that “some describe as a partial revival of authoritarian rule”, but that the interim government has restored a modicum of order with the exception of violence and disorder persisting in the Sinai Peninsula and some areas of mainland Egypt. However, he also describes that numerous US officials see Egypt as an “anchor state” in the words of US Central Command, part of the US military’s command posts. Moreover, numerous US allies have sought greater US support for the Egyptian government, including Israel and the Gulf states to fight the Islamists attacks in the Sinai and continuing to combat the Muslim Brotherhood.

The United States saw the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat before the results of the Parliamentary and Presidential elections of 2012. The MB were seen as a threat being an Islamist organization, and yet when they came to power democratically in Egypt they were not attacked, Egypt was not sanctioned and the US was not hostile to the reality of the situation. Seeing the MB who were directly hostile to the West in general ever since their 80 years of existence and the US and Israel in particular the last few decades in official and unofficial political opposition places in the Egyptian political sphere (particularly the Camp David Accords), and yet when they became official holders of power in Egypt they arguably did not perform any hostile acts towards the US or Israel and even reassured the world that they will be upholding the Camp David Accords which were hated by the Brotherhood when they were not in power. Contradictions to observers, but sensible decisions as seen by realists in general.

²⁶ Jeremy M. Sharp. “Egypt: Background and US Relations”. *Congressional Research Service*. 5th June, 2014.

The argument here is that for the US to maintain its interests, for instance, the diplomatic influence of Egypt in the region for peace, it needed to work with a perceived hostile organization. The MB in government, to guarantee its own survival in power, kept the status quo (at least for the short-term future) in order to maximize on their electoral victory.

The uprisings in Egypt presented a challenge to the United States' policy and his approach of implementation. The events tested the US' ability to cope with immediate events that could potentially have an altering effect on foreign policy for the foreseeable future regarding security in the region along with the security of interests of the US giving Obama his first major Middle Eastern problem to cope with. The US was in a situation of having "to choose friends and make enemies as a result"²⁷.

More importantly, it presented Obama with an obstacle to his foreign policy goals, the main being refocus on China's growing influence. The stability in the Middle East can achieve its purpose by having a stable Egypt, which is the main reason why the US sought Egypt as a strategic ally. If Egypt is unstable, the security of US interests is not stable to a large degree. China's military might, economic growth and interdependency in Asian countries and flexing its diplomatic muscles will make the Chinese influence harder to contain if the United States does not do something about it and for that it needs to stabilize the Egyptian situation.

Conclusion:

The United States established relations with Egypt in the aftermath of 1973 with intention of security. Israel and oil have been the defining features of the relationship the US

²⁷ Lawrence Freedman. "A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East". *Orion*. 2010.

has enjoyed with the Middle East and Egypt was identified to be its insurer. With Egypt strapped up in a peace deal with Israel, it was a complete stability pact for the region as the Arab world's most influential military power became tied politically to the Israeli state. The Israeli state's security was given an extra guarantee above US protection as the threat of Egypt entering a war with Israel diminished significantly with the Accords.

The terms and motivations for the deal defined the goals of the United States in having relations with Egypt after years of dispute. It established what the US wanted from Egypt and given context to the relationship between the two countries for our contemporary politics.

The Bush and Obama policies attempted at stabilizing the issues concerning US security in different ways, but all ended up with the same result. The continuation of US foreign policy towards Egypt is marked by the continuation of military and economic aid to Egypt, with increased cooperation between Egypt's military and the American military on counter terrorism and intelligence sharing. The Suez Canal continued to provide preferential treatment to US Navy vessels and the airspace was open for intrusion from the American warplanes.

The rise of anti-American feelings in the region though is significant. The appearance of the Muslim Brotherhood is of the utmost importance because of their role in the consequent January and June uprisings when they were both in power and out of power. The threat of an Islamist organization ruling a US ally is of utmost importance in our discussion, because even when they were in power, US foreign policy kept the same result going on and on. Aid resumed, support resumed and Egypt kept fulfilling its roles as US insurer of US interests in the region.

Chapter 2: The Need to Refocus on International Pressure Challenges

This chapter discusses two main topics: the rise of China in the Northeast Asian region and highlighting the decline in US hegemony in that region, and the rise of Russian influence in the Middle East and Europe via Syria and Ukraine.

The first part of the chapter focuses on the ways China is gaining influence in the region, while also reconciling with the fact that it is on a way of collision of interests with the US, something that US policymakers are starting to notice and react.

The second part focuses on the rise of Russian influence. The US has been engaged in a diplomatic and political struggle in order to be able to maintain the security of its allies in Europe and to maintain its image of protector against the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction. The Ukrainian and Syrian cases are of interests here since Russia had annexed Crimea from the Ukraine and Syrian forces –or Syrian rebels- have used Sarin gas in an attack that left hundreds of civilians dead despite the United States issuing a “red line” warning against the use of such weapons in Syria.

This is important to explain how the United States wants to maintain hegemony around the world and on the international structure, and how it is dealing with the increasing pressures of the structure.

American Influence in Asia

The United States had dominated for decades after WWII the Northeast Asian region of the globe. It gained its support there with trade, aid and military assurances. In his article, “The United States and East Asia: The Decline of Long-Distance Leadership”, Mark Beeson, Professor of International Politics at the University of Western Australia, argues that the US played an

extremely huge role in determining the consequences of WWII on Asian politics. Citing America's position coming out of the war as the biggest military in the world and with the largest most dynamic economy, he argues that it would play "a major role in determining the shape of the emerging international economic order". He noted that we as observers need to understand the importance of "recogniz[ing] the pervasive, enduring nature of its [America] influence" namely through "intitutorializ[ing] an international order that reflected and enhanced its dominance or turn structural potential into political agency"²⁸. The military power of the US had been demonstrated by its ability to conquer the Imperial Japanese forces during the war and the subsequent occupation of Japan. US hegemony was expressed via the degree of consent that Japan, and other Asian countries, expressed after the war by bandwaqqoning with their support of American policies. As for economic dominance in the world, in 1953 the US accounted for 45% of the global manufacturing output, GDP was almost at \$400 billion, one of the highest in the world, at least enough to help fund the reconstruction of Europe via the Marshall Plan.

The dominance of American politics in the region can be attributed to two things: Firstly, the multilateral institutional order associated with the Bretton Woods regime –which would later be known as the World Bank and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade held out the prospect of integration into what would eventually prove to be a highly effective and expansionary economic order which gave incentives to join the US side, the Asian developing countries would then be able to access the world's largest market and on favorable terms, *working for their interests*. Secondly is the American-centric security architecture done through

²⁸ *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 26th October 2009.

a series of bi-laterals. The US had been involved from the start by interventionist policies with an interventionist role in shaping Northeast Asia. This was most manifested in the role the US played in the reconstruction of Japan which helped Japan become a pivotal country in the politics of the region while still maintaining dependency and subordinate to the US, effectively preventing it from assuming or exercising regional leadership roles despite its economic rise.

Why is the United States involved in such relations in Northeast Asia? What are the reasons for the United States wanting to have an influence in the region while stifling the rise of any other regional power in Asia that would challenge US' influence?

Hegemony Projection and China's Rise

According to defensive realist assessment, the contest for power in the globe is the driving force of international relations as a whole. Under that note, the United States needed to stifle any rising power in any specific region because *it wanted to assert its hegemony and influence over the international structure*, and that means containing any new challengers to US influence in any region around the world. The *survival of a state in the international order is the most important goal*, and a state cannot pursue any other goal if it does not survive. As earlier discussed, the international structure has three main characteristics; the *world is in anarchy* where there is no one defined world government with authority, *states have the capabilities to hurt one another*, and *no one state can know the intentions* of another. It is impossible to know whether Germany, Japan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, South Africa will act in a certain way in 2025.

The structure itself forces states to be concerned about its own security because it cannot gauge the intentions of another state involved in actions that would increase its ability

to gain more power in the international order. *States tend to fear each other.* The fear is compounded because there is no higher authority that would guarantee the safety of states, and as such the best response for them is to be as powerful as possible relative to potential rivals. Canada and Mexico will not attack the United States anytime soon because neither of those countries have the capability to dominate the United States in war. Great powers strive to be a hegemon in the international order.

It is however impossible to be a global hegemon²⁹. According to Walt and Mearsheimer, to be able to be one is to exert so much pressure, and to project and sustain so much power around the globe and onto the territory of other distant powers that is almost impossible to be practical. In that light, *states that gain regional hegemony have a further aim: they seek to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat.* They want to keep other regions divided among several powers so that these states will be in eventual competition with each other that they cannot focus on challenging other powers in the international structure.

A great power's work is not done when it achieves regional hegemony. When the United States achieved enough power to practically declare the Western Hemisphere out of reach for European powers, it started the twentieth century with tasks to contain four rivals for their own regions' hegemony: Imperial Germany (1900-1918), Nazi Germany (1933-1945), Imperial Japan (1931-1945) and the Soviet Union (1945-1989). The United States entered WWI when Imperial Germany looked like it would win the war and rule Europe. In 1940, Roosevelt went to great lengths to make the US enter the war when Japan's ambitions were becoming bigger and Nazi Germany making huge gains in Europe. After 1945, the United States worked on preventing the

²⁹ John Mearsheimer. "China's Unpeaceful Rise". *Current History*. April 2006.

Soviets from increasing their influence globally, and hence the policy of containment was the hallmark of the early Cold War American foreign policy. In 1992, the results of the policies of the United States was highlighted in the results of the “Defense Guidance” which boldly stated that the United States would not tolerate a peer competitor as it declared that the United States was now the most powerful state in the world. This was echoed in Bush 2002’s National Security Strategy asserted that the United States should check rising powers.

Rise of China and Decline of the US

China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and its neighbor so powerful that no state in Asia has the guts to threaten it. It is more likely that China will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior acceptable behavior to neighboring countries, much the way the US has been doing regionally and globally. An increasingly powerful China is also likely to try to push American influence out of Asia. Indeed, much of the Chinese people will remember what happened when Japan was powerful and China was weak. The military cooperation between Japan and Korea with America will surely been seen as an increasing threat to Chinese interests and as China grows, it will seek that alliance be mitigated.

China is already building an impressive threat to US influence and power projection in the region. China had been one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with a huge manufacturing base. China’s economic rise means that an important lever of US influence in the Northeast Asia region has been “greatly weakened”³⁰ and that Washington DC cannot rely on its economic muscle as much anymore to persuade Asian allies to embrace American policies.

³⁰ Jon T. Shaplen and James Laney. “Washington’s Eastern Sunset: The Decline of US Power in Northeast Asia”. *Foreign Affairs*. 2007.

In 2007, China's trade with Japan surpassed that of the American one and earlier in 2004, China replaced America in being Seoul's largest trading partner.

In terms of military security and power projection, the Chinese armed forces active personnel numbered around 2,285,000 people, with around 1,000,000 people in reserves, with over 300,000,000 people fit for military service available to be called when absolutely needed. Recently, the army, air force, navy and artillery have undergone huge upgrades and have been equipped with new weapons of considerable capabilities. The air force has over 2000 aircraft, with around 1500 fighters such as the advanced Su-27 and brand new Russian Su-30 plus their Chinese equivalents and fighter bombers and between 70-90 H-6 strategic bombers, with plans to modernize the fleet in the coming decade aimed at power projection. In the navy, the Chinese government is on course to develop a blue water navy to challenge the lonely US Navy in that aspect, and it is a vital military endeavor in order to project power on a global scale a key sign of growing influence or rise of a power. Only the US manages to do so with incredible effect on a grand scale. Already, the Chinese government had commissioned its first ever Aircraft carrier the *Liaoning*, with plans to at least build one more supercarrier which will be nuclear-powered³¹, and has plans to build dozens of nuclear-powered attack and strategic submarines. As for the missile program, the Chinese military can call upon numerous types of intercontinental ballistic missiles, one of the few countries that can afford such a military luxury other than France, the United Kingdom, Russia and America. Additionally, the Chinese government is engaging in an anti-satellite program, with plans to fill the upper atmosphere with a number of spy satellites and developing anti-satellite missiles.

³¹ Andrew S. Erickson, "Asia Get Ready: Is This China's Vision of Future Aircraft Carrier Designs?" *The National Interest*. 8th December 2014.

This will upset the balance of power in the Northeast region of Asia, with China rising and the other powers seeking to balance that rise with increased security policies no doubt. The problem is that these countries relied so heavily on the United States because of the United States influence on them –as previously mentioned- since the end of WWII in particular and in the past in general. And, the United States influence has been declining steadily over the past decade in particular.

The Americans have lost first place in being the leading trading partner with Korea and Japan to China as already discussed, and that is only a culmination of a series of policies that have given way to a rise of Chinese influence in the region.

Additionally, the United States military presence in Korea and Japan has been decreasing steadily. By the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, American forces in Japan decreased by around 8000 soldiers to around 40,000 and in Korea from 39,000 in the 1990's till 25,000. Although there is an argument for the use of better military technology that will be more efficient and effective with less troops, it is still a sign of potential decline to the casual observer in military stance. The operations in Iraq and Afghanistan also have had their toll on the US military in terms of budget, spending loss of personnel in an all-volunteer army at a time of economic recession on a global stage in 2008.

It is argued within some political science circles that the decline started showing in the American reaction to the Asian financial crisis in the 1990's when the crisis proved to Asian countries how vulnerable they are. It was clear that that the region was heavily reliant on external countries for assistance and that the region had "little indigenous capacity to deal with

such crises” with hardly an effective leader amongst them³². China was the only country arguably to emerge from the crisis with its position improved, at least relative to all others. It evolved its role to become a participant in multilateral forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN +3, while the United States had started its own evolution into a unilateral beast.

Under Bush and Cheney, in the wake of September 11th, 2001, the United States foreign policy became so focused on security that it began to undermining to arguably the foundations of the most distinctive and enduring aspect of American hegemony and leadership the United States would like to portray itself in for the past decade post Cold War, multilateral institutionalization³³. The responses and attitudes turned towards the negative and the US became more questioned than before.

The United States’ Need to React to China

In terms of the international level of analysis, a growing rising power will almost certainly be checked by the more powerful state in the structure, especially true for a so-called hegemon. If not, then the challenging state is providing an incredible security risk to the more powerful one and as such committing such a mistake gravely endangers a state’s ultimate goal of survival in the world.

Accordingly, the assumption is that America wants to be the only hegemon in the world, at least not allow any other power to become as regionally influencing as itself is on the

³² Mark Beeson. “The United States ad East Asia: The Decline of Long-Distance Leadership”. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 26th October 2009.

³³ G.J. Ikenberry. “The End of the Neoconservative Moment”. *Third World Quarterly*. 2004.

Western hemisphere, unless checked by the United States itself. Similarly, an increasingly powerful China will not tolerate US influence in its region and will kick out the US from Asia much as the US managed to do with European powers from the Western Hemisphere.

These policies make good sound strategic sense for China. When Japan was stronger than China during the former's Imperial period, the Chinese people suffered from war crimes and rape by their Japanese conquerors and it still is a vivid painful moment that the both nations share as evident by the fight over the sovereignty of a group of small islands called Senkaku Islands, which is surrounded by oil reserves. It is better for China then to be string, rather than being weak. Professor Mearsheimer notes also that "Why would a powerful China accept US military forces operating in its backyard?". On the opposite end, historically, the US has never accepted or tolerates a peer competitor to its hegemony. America is likely to behave in a fashion similar to what it did with the Soviet Union.

The ultimate aim of any states is survival, and the security of such a goal in an anarchical world is security of that goal by securing interests that directly lead to such a goal. The more a state gains a capability to harm another state, it increases the chances that can hurt another state and as such other states are required to gain an upper hand relative to that rising power, or else risk its own security.

If unchecked, the United States influence in the region can be comprised and then the Chinese government will be able to expand its power to a global stage, as once a state reached regional hegemony, it is entailed to check other powers from rising in other regions in the world, much as the United States is trying to do for the years since the end of WWII.

The whole situation was analyzed in a well thought manner by the Australian government's Defense White Paper 2009. It postulates that the Asia-Pacific region will endure an order that will transform the distribution of strategic power of the region³⁴. The argument in the paper is that China is having a significant effect on the global balance of power, arguing that the power gap between China the US is shrinking and that any primary influence the US has over the Asian region will likely to decline relative to China's increased influence.

States can never be sure of each other's intentions. For example, Imperial Germany is still intensely debated amongst political scientists if it was a highly aggressive state that pursued aggressive policies that led to the eruption of the First World War, or whether Nasser was aggressive in his handling of the policies he pursued that led Israel to "pre-emptively" strike first in concern with its national security and survival and occupied Sinai from Egypt. The root of the problem is that unlike tangible issues, intentions are not quantifiable, and as such difficult to verify.

In terms of military capabilities, which can be quantifiably verified, it is hard to assume they are defensive or offensive capabilities. The Israelis, the Americans and the Chinese all claim their armed forces to be defensive forces acting when the security of their respective states is risked. In 1932 Disarmament Conference, the participants found themselves unable to draw a line between what military equipment constituted defensive or offensive capabilities as much of the military's equipment can have both. The capabilities that get developed to defend have enormous potential to be offensive weapons.

³⁴ "Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030". *Australian Defense Ministry*. 2009.

Like the Americans, the Chinese –as previously discussed- are employing a large amounts of power projection capabilities such as nuclear submarines and nuclear aircraft carriers along with a blue water navy. According to Robert Kaplan in an article in Foreign Affairs “China’s naval leaders are displaying the aggressive philosophy of ... US naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan who argued for sea control”³⁵; which is bound -along with the fact that states can’t verify other states intentions- to cause concern with China’s neighbors and the US by risking American influence in the region and as such the security of its interests.

The United States’ Impression in China

There is obviously no way China’s leaders know who will be in charge of the United States in the future, much less their intentions, but they know that the highest possibility is that like a majority of US Presidents have said, they want to secure US power world-wide. This means that the US might not want to allow China to rise as a regional power. The US spends as much as the next 15 states that come after her in terms of military spending, or spending on defense, and is designed to fight around the world. In addition, the Asia-Pacific region contains military presence in a lot of bases surrounding China. Anyone in China assessing the Americans is likely to see the US as an aggressive state that is trying to interfere with Chinese power and influence and therefore national security. It can even see the US as a war-like country and is therefore dangerous. After all, America has been at war for 14 of the 21 years since the Cold

³⁵ Robert Kaplan. “The Geography of Chinese Power”. Foreign Affairs. 2010.

War ended³⁶ and historically, the Chinese and the Americans fought each other in the Korean War in the 1950s. The recent talk about war with Iran does not help.

This tells us that the future of security in the region will revolve around China and the United States, both power seeking hegemony at least in the region, with significant offensive capabilities and unknowable intentions. The concept of anarchy sets in to ensure on every country to ensure its own survival.

Rise of Russian Influence in the International Structure

After World War II, the United States found itself as the most powerful military in the world with one of the most stable economies in the world. For that, the Soviet Union was second best and aimed at limiting US' ability.

Joseph Stalin came out of WWII with the aim of “deter[ing] the US from utilizing its military strength” and he did so by capitalizing on his big army and utilizing the fear of Western Europe of being vulnerable to attack from his Red Army³⁷. His policies helped the USSR become an industrial and military superpower, but ultimately wreaked havoc on the domestic scene, with millions of deaths in the Soviet population.

Nikita Khrushchev guided the USSR towards improving areas of cooperation between the USSR and its republics in areas of conflict. He struck fear with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the construction of the Berlin Wall which both helped increase and highlight the Soviet's hegemonic power. He also viewed the “Third-World” as an arena where the Soviets could

³⁶ John Mearsheimer. “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to US Power in Asia”. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol 3. 2010.

³⁷ Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee. “The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests”. *New York: M.E. Sharp*. 2005.

compete with the West instead of the big arena that is the direct conflict between the superpowers. This entry to other states allowed for increased trade and influence³⁸.

Going through Gorbachev and Yeltsin, those characterized the relationship of the Soviets with the West in a more diluted way than their predecessors. Both aimed at more peaceful policies towards the West by aiming at decreased confrontation, although Gorbachev went as far as compelling the West to seek new policies and rethink in new terms, the Yeltsin administration failed to understand new international realities³⁹.

When it comes to Putin, the Russian rise in influence came to an important chapter. Putin made Russia the influential power player it is now, capitalizing on historical records that show Russia's intent on being a global player, because Putin put Russia's foreign policy decisions based on the best interest of his nation, security and survival in the mist of continued US global power projection. Putin went to forge new relationships with strategic partnerships such as a visit to North Korea and to Fidel Castro's Cuba in late 2000, part of his attempt at challenging US hegemony. Aiming at increasing the pressure on Islamist fundamentalism which Russia has been dealing with in Chechnya for decades, Putin was one of the first heads of state to offer George Bush support in the aftermath of 9/11, but that to live shortly due to the Iraq War. Russia developed relationships with Iran while maintaining their strategic alliance to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Russia is not interested in a nuclear Iran, but has sought to challenge the US that is trying to deal with Iran that is developing a nuclear program by offering to build Iran a number of nuclear plants.

³⁸ Mathew Saha. "The Rise of Russia and the National Security Implications for the United States". *Pepperdine University School of Public Policy*. 2010.

³⁹ Mathew Saha. "The Rise of Russia and the National Security Implications for the United States". *Pepperdine University School of Public Policy*. 2010.

Again, by using the elements of structural realism, the same elements and tenants used to analyze the rise of China previously, it is clear that Russia is acting in its own self-interest. Russia does not seem to desire to reside on the sidelines on the international order as evident by its actions. This can be also manifested by its capabilities, namely its oil power in Europe, and its growing military capabilities.

Russia is the eleventh largest exporter of oil to the United States and US allies in Western Europe rely heavily on Russian oil and gas. If Russia chooses to cut off these supplies to Europe, it will greatly affect Germany, Ukraine and France in particular. It is critical to ensure that Russia does not withhold these resources according to US and European interests. Additionally, the United States would operate in a less efficient manner if Middle Eastern countries, or other oil suppliers such as Venezuela, are affected by Russian decisions and influences into reducing supplies to the United States. The history of 1973 is very clear in that regard.

Militarily, the Russians are growing. Aircraft carriers are in the plans of the future Russian Navy, while the nuclear submarine force is being renovated and some have replaced by brand new Borei-class submarines. In total, the Russian Navy has around 50 submarines, 1 aircraft carrier with plans to build brand new amphibious assault ships, landing craft and expanding the type of power projection capabilities of the navy to become a true blue water navy to rival the US dominance of the seas. The ballistic missile program is still up and running and causing direct concerns to the Swedish and Norwegians as evident by the “Blue Spiral” of 200 and “Swedish hunt for the Russian ghost submarine” in 2014. The Russian Air Force is developing and purchasing brand new fighters and fighter bombers in the form of the highly

acrobatic and capable Su-35 and Su-34s while developing a new version of the famous Mig-29 to be named the MiG-35, while maintain its fleet of high-altitude interceptors MiG-31s. The strategic bombers are still in active service and capable to deliver nuclear missiles and bombs. All in all, the country is still developing power projection capabilities for the future with aircraft tankers ordered to increase the range of the Russian Air Force. As of today, the Russians have been constantly harassing the European allies of the United States and the United States itself by flying formations of fighters, fighter bombers and bombers on the shorelines of these countries testing the response time of American and European fighter planes. The Russian planes are sometimes armed and sometimes display aggressive maneuvers and are seen as “testing” the other states’ air force capabilities.

This does not mean that the US is not to blame for the deterioration of US-Russian relations. From Russia’s perspective, the US appears expansionary as it had built a coalition with countries in Eastern Europe that used to be in the Soviet Union, that Russia had influence over more than it comparably does now. From a Hobbesian point of view, Russia considers the US as a threat to its own autonomy and Russia accordingly will do what it can to fight and resist this American influence. This is especially important given the expansion of the European Union member states to include former Soviet republics and the NATO expansion to include former Soviet satellites, namely those sharing Russian borders like Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, all of which are now having NATO fighter jets circling the air near the Russian borders on patrol. A massive irritant for the Russian, and of course a source of security concern.

Crimea and Syria Raise Russia's Profile as a Global Player

Crimea and Ukraine in general has been seen as strategic partner to Russia's foreign policy advisors. Ukraine was part of the old Soviet empire and was in Russia sphere of influence, at least it was always being fought over in elections as the dominant domestic Ukrainian politics was a fight between Ukrainian nationals and Ukrainians of Russian decent. In the East of Ukraine and in Crimea, a large percentage of the population there are of Russian decent. With the size of the Russian population, and the presence of Russia's only warm water seaport in Crimea, Sevastopol, both those region, especially the Crimean Peninsula, are of utmost strategic importance to the Russian government.

When the events of Ukraine started, the Russians were quick to give the ousted Ukrainian President Yanukovich a place to stay and the rebels fighting against the Ukrainian forces in Crimea and the Eastern front were supported by Russian supplies and were seen flying the Russian flag. Indeed, in Crimea, the Russian government worked very hard to be able to give itself legitimacy. It witnessed the Crimean Parliament give a referendum option for the population of the Peninsula on whether to join Russia or not, which passed with incredible approval ratings. The Russian government moved forces and raised its flag, and annexed Crimea from the Ukrainian state. A direct assault and confrontation with US allies in the region.

The rise of Russian influence also manifests itself in the power Putin has when it comes to dealing with President Bashar Al Asad of Syria. The Syrian Civil War has been around since 2012 and the factions have been engaged in extreme conflict and assault, violating numerous human rights clauses and potentially committing war crimes. The belligerents of the conflict have been numerous, Iran, Hizb Allah, Syrian regular army, Al Qaeda, ISIS and numerous other

factions are at war which makes the mediation efforts almost entirely inept. The United States have tried for a long time to lessen the effects of the war and trying to broker a peace deal but the presence of the United States is actually a hindrance since a lot of the terrorist organizations that are at work in the Syrian crisis are actually formed partially because of the US hegemonic presence in the Middle East. The Russians have a vested interest as well but because they have not had an influential presence since the end of the Cold War. The warm water port of Tartu's is the only Middle Eastern presence of the Russian Navy in that region and in light of Russia's foreign policy is aimed at increasing its influence globally and countering US influence in the region around Russia, it is important for Russia to secure its interests. The relationship between Syria and Russia has been ongoing, Russia has been supplying the Syrians with Surface-to-Air missiles and air force fighter jets.

With the United States' image and rhetoric not heard or respected by most of the factions of the war, Russia is enjoying some influence with regards to the Syrian President and the Iranians. The Russians have more relative influence than the Americans in all cases and arguments.

Terrorism's Effect on the International Hegemon

To be able to talk about terrorism and its effects in the international order, we need to establish what it is. According to Hartmut Behr, Political Science Professor in the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, he describes the characteristics of transnational terrorism by:

- Trans-border coordination of attacks.
- Erection of an internationally networked infrastructure.
- International fundraising and financing.
- International trade in weapons.
- Recruitment and training of terrorists on a global scale.

The way the terrorist organisations that have emerged to strike the Western states' security is mostly based upon Middle Eastern policies of the United States and its allies in the region which are viewed as anti-Islamic and anti-Arab and anti-Middle Eastern in its effects and nature. The role of the US is one of the cases of the creation and evolution of groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Returning to foundations of the relationship with Egypt, the rise of anti-American feelings is directly related to the political stances of the US in favor of Israel, which the terrorist organization see in a dim light given that Israel has been occupying Palestinian territories, at least since the 1967 Un Resoultion 242. The Americans also support Israel financially and militarily.

The American projection of power and presence is also fueled by support for the Middle Eastern autocratic authoritarian regimes. It is argued that these corrupt, undemocratic, oppressive regimes such as the ones in Egypt, have squandered the resources of the region and are responsible for the poverty that ensued. The United States is seen as a supporter of that. This anti-American feelings are exploited for recruitment purposes in the terrorist cells in the Middle East.

The foundation of the structure of the conflct that terrorism have erected can be explained in terms of the opolitical and military involvement of the United States in the region in America's efforts to secure its own interests in the region, indeed numerous Arab leaders are seen as puppets serving the Americans' interests in the region above the interests of the oppressed population.

The United States acknowledges terrorism as a threat to its global hegemony. The National Security Strategy of 2002 refers to international terrorism and says that the US "Will

not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists”, thus the decision was made to use the military capabilities of Washington against terrorism and the War on Terror went into effect.

In fighting terrorism however, the United States only exacerbated the problem. For the past decade, attacks have been increasing. Empirically, the attacks that are categorized as terrorist have tripled in 2004 to 655 from 175 in 2003.

More importantly, fighting terrorism means stretched resources. Because terrorists don't believe in any of the current states, by their nature they are decentralized and the diffusion of power in them is completely different than a centralized state. Their presence transcends borders and is therefore hard to contain. This meant that the United States, in its campaigns to strike terrorist cells, have deployed military assets to different sides of the globe. Operations were present in the Philippines, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, with intelligence assets used for support in Africa, Europe, and Asia. This stretched and stressed the American military capability and as such the ability to use resources in an adequate way.

What does a Realist theory of international politics have to say about terrorists? John Mearsheimer offers an insight in talking about terrorism and Realist theory and the international structure. He argued that:

The answer is not a whole heck of a lot. Realism, as I said before, is really all about the relations among states, especially among great powers. In fact, al Qaeda is not a state, it's a non-state actor, which is sometimes called a transnational actor. My theory and virtually all Realist theories don't have much to say about transnational actors. However, there is no question that terrorism is a phenomenon that will play itself out in the context of the international system. So it will be played out in the state arena, and, therefore, all of the Realist logic about state behavior will have a significant effect on how the war on terrorism is fought. So Realism and terrorism are inextricably linked, although I do think that Realism does not have much to say about the causes of terrorism.

In responding the question of whether the Bush legacy has had a positive effect in the fight against terrorism, he said that :

My basic view, which may sound somewhat odd coming from a Realist, is that the Bush administration's policy is wrong-headed because it places too much emphasis on using military force to deal with the problem, and not enough emphasis on diplomacy. I think that if we hope to win the war on terrorism, or to put it in more modest terms, to ameliorate the problem, what we have to do is win hearts and minds in the Arab and Islamic world.... I don't believe that you can do that with military force.

The argument here, he continued, is that excessive force is not what is wanted. The Afghanistan mission seemed justified, as in a realist context, it was a state that is directly affecting the security of the United States of America by harboring terrorist AL Qaeda cells, however to rely heavily on the military might of the United States is the shortcoming.

Conclusion:

The Chinese rise is unquestionable. Economically, it has become one of the largest trading partners of Asian markets, sometimes replacing the United States directly. It is one of the largest economies in the world, and is becoming more accessible to world investors. The Chinese are also one of the largest manufacturing states in the world, which helps create and immense amount of jobs in the country cementing its growth predictions which is very close to the United States' economic size. The country is also growing politically by establishing bilateral relationships with a lot of the states in the world. The Chinese have namely been investing a lot in developing countries in Africa, building key infrastructure such as roads and bridges as well as stadiums in a number of these countries serving the example of a power that is experimenting with raising its influence around the world. The military is also becoming

stronger. The gap between the US and China is decreasing, and the military capability of the Chinese to project power is becoming ever more felt in the military sphere.

In terms of the Russian side of the equation, it has established itself as a player in power politics in different regions. This is key to highlight in order to suggest that Russia is also challenging the United States in the international structure hegemony. Although in no way shape or form is Russia a superpower, it is however a player in the international order and has recently becoming a challenger to US hegemony of the international structure by its increase in political and diplomatic influence around the world. The annexation of Crimea was the global milestone the Russian achieved in order to assert Russian influence in Europe. After decades of teasing by the Americans and the Europeans in terms of expanding influences of each bloc, the Russians finally saw a chance. When the crisis in Ukraine happened after EU expansion was blocked by the Ukrainian President, Putin acted in a swift was in order to establish security of Russian interest in Ukraine. The warm water port of Sevastopol needed to be guaranteed and after a referendum in Crimea, Russia took over the Peninsula. In Syria, Putin is the only global leader who has any sort of influence on Bashar Al Assad. Putin has a cooperation set with Iran and Syria which are based on military deals and political cooperation on achieving mutual interests.

Adding the complicating effects terrorism has on the international order, the United States found itself overstretched, combatting terrorism all over the globe in a “global war on terror”, involved in two wars in the Middle East, and a rising China in the midst of a global financial disaster. These issues had numerous effects on the United States position and perception of threat. Then international structure has been pressuring the United States

capabilities and that was a threat to its security. The Russian situation only complicated matters further. The United States had already begun a grand strategy to refocus its foreign policy on a rising China, in the middle of a global financial crisis and a huge campaign to fight terrorism around the world, when the Middle East destabilized through the Arab Spring and to complicate matters further the Russians annexed Crimea. Clearly the United States felt stretched, and as such part of the solution to the problem is to seek stability in the Middle East, which Egypt was key for as expressed upon in previous chapters.

Chapter 3: Dilemma in Egypt: Analysis of US Reaction to Egypt's Arab Spring

This chapter aims at showing that despite any concerns about the rulers of Egypt, the United States only aimed at securing its interests in the region. In an effort to stabilize the country and the region, the Obama administration aimed at stability in Egypt to focus on its grand scale hegemonic plan of refocusing its foreign policy towards a rising challenging China.

In it, I will be discussing how to judge US reactions to the January Revolution and the coup, on why the United States seemed hesitant to support protestors fighting for more democratic representation. The argument here is that because outcomes of both Egyptian uprisings were difficult to predict or anticipate, namely the first one, and the intentions of potential winners was never fully understood when it comes to these challengers coming of age into power, the United States employed defensive realist techniques to help overcome these small-scale versions of the international structure security dilemma scenario, where intentions of other actors are not fully understood or predicted or known. To be able to secure stability, secure region interest to refocus on China.

Bush's Policies and Obama's Policies

In the early days of the Obama presidency, there had been efforts to stabilize the relationship with Egypt under Mubarak after a period of unrest between America and its allies in general. The George W. Bush legacy left a dent in American international relations and Egypt was all but an example of that. The visit to Cairo on 4th of June 2009 was named "A New Beginning" and that Egypt was chosen because "it is a country that in many ways represents the heart of the Arab world" as then White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs told

reporters⁴⁰. This was intended to be the first step in amending relations with the Muslim world as the United States was not viewed in a positive light after the 8 years of the Bush foreign policy in the Middle East that had wreaked havoc in the region and severely damaged relations with the Muslim world.

Egyptians' view of the US by Gallup was not favorable. From a pure statistical point of view, it is surprising given the official statistics of military and economic ties the US and Egypt has had with each other. Gallup polled that the leadership approval ratings of the US in the World according to Egyptians in 2011 reached 19%, the same as in 2010 and worse than in 2009 which stood at 37%. Egyptian certainly didn't believe in 2008 that the US wanted to establish any sort of democratic systems in the region as an incredible 75% believed so. In contrast to 63% in 2005, there is a significant jump and continued disapproval of the US image in the region despite the levels of foreign assistance funding Egypt received from American agencies, including more than \$1.3 billion in military aid annually and more than \$5 billion in development aid between 2000 and 2008. Still, when asked if the United States is serious about improving the economic lot in this region, Egyptians have consistently disagreed.

The Obama administration numerously stated that it needed to address the growing influence of China in Asia. From a realist's perspective, the growing influence of a player in the international system needs to be addressed by the most powerful state of the structure that is the United States. A growing and influencing China can cause deep trouble for policy makers in the United States interests in Northeast Asia such as the securing of the borders of key Asian allies such as Japan and South Korea.

⁴⁰ Press Briefing by Robert Gibbs, May 8th 2009.

Egyptians did not like American politics, Obama needed to shift his foreign policy focus to Asia, George Bush had left a negative legacy in the Middle East, and yet there still continued an American-Egyptian relationship that has not changed much over decades. One after the other, American Presidents worked with Egyptian strongmen to execute US foreign policy and secure US interests in the region⁴¹.

Egypt itself was not the most credible evidence for the US to promote its legitimacy campaign on the basis of promoting democratic values. The Egyptian 25th January uprising was unprecedented in modern Egyptian history. Thirty years of Mubarak's reign has not been kind to the Egyptian economy, political scene and youth. Very low rates of savings, a persistent balance of trade deficit, and weak performance of the two main commodity sectors: agriculture and manufacturing can all explain the relatively low growth rate in the national output over the years of Mubarak's Presidency and high rates of unemployment⁴². Indeed, there is a laxity to private and foreign investment in the last two sectors, with the largest chunk of that going to the petroleum sector which has a low impact on the level of unemployment compared with other sectors. In addition, Egypt has been plagued with corruption since the establishment of the Republic in 1952. With big government socialist policies of Nasser which expanded the bureaucracy brought together with the Open Door economic policy of Sadat followed by Mubarak's soft approaches to combatting corruption led to an exuberance of such practices in Egyptian life.

As for June 30th, there had been multiple shortcomings the MB had done when in power that led to their decapitation from power. Rising food prices, long lines in gas stations, multiple

⁴¹ Joel Migdal. "Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East". *Columbia University Press*. 2014.

⁴² Galal Amin, "Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak". *AUC Press*. 2011.

daily electricity cuts in the middle of the Egyptian summer “have set Egyptians on the edge”⁴³ with clashes between pro-Morsi and anti-MB protestors a common theme in Egyptian daily news. Politically, the events of the constitutional assembly and the isolation of almost all political forces in Egypt from governing and participating in the political process led to the disillusionment of many. Morsi’s was pleasing the MB over the political forces in the country, expanding Brotherhood ministers. He granted himself total executive authority with no oversight and ramming an Islamist constitution through to ratification⁴⁴ drawing the ire of the opposition and then unleashing Brotherhood supporters on peaceful protestors on December 3rd around the Presidential Palace. The stage was being set for a confrontation between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood. Professor of Religion and International affair at Georgetown University John Esposito wrote in his article for Huffington Post “Egypt’s Coup: Is it Déjà vu All Over Again?” that the “Brotherhood simply did not have the ability to move quickly and effectively to garner sufficient popular support which enabled hard-line anti-governmental factions to mobilise diverse sections of society with legitimate concerns and grievances”⁴⁵.

The notion of creating allies in a realist world is not new or alien to realism. As it will be further referenced in this thesis, Stephen Walt, a prominent Defensive Realist, is an American professor of international affairs at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, concurs with the notion that states can have allies in the anarchic international structure *if making such alliances would serve to maximize a state’s own security but that the allies should be “strong, stable and don’t pose major strategic problems for them”*⁴⁶. Egypt

⁴³ Eric Trager. “Egypt will Erupt Again on June 30th”. *New Republic*. 24th June 2013.

⁴⁴ Eric Trager. “Witnessing a Coup in Egypt”. *The Washington Institute*. 3rd July 2013.

⁴⁵ John Esposito. “Egypt’s Coup: Is it Déjà vu All Over Again?”. 3rd September 2013.

⁴⁶ Stephen Walt. “A Realist Policy For Egypt”. *Foreign Policy*. 31st January 2011.

though was becoming one, but because *Egypt is vital to securing those US interests in the region, the US couldn't afford to lose Egypt especially if it wanted to create stability in the region, serving its bigger interest of focusing on the challenging rise of power of China.*

The Muslim Brotherhood As a Threat to US Interests

The January uprising came along to be a revolution that aimed at social justice and equality, removing corruption and instigating political reform, but because of the political oppression itself that was done by the US' ally Mubarak there had not been enough room for political parties to maneuver as well as they would do in more democratic environment. Political opposition groups lacked enough power and support from the public to be of any viable threat to the political establishment of Egypt and as such there were serious concerns about the aftermath of a post Mubarak away from power scenario. *The only viable political opposition* that was credible enough to be able to have enough popular support as well as the political will to rule *Egypt was the Muslim Brotherhood.*

The most organized group of people in Egyptian political opposition at the time of the January Revolution in Egypt was arguably the Muslim Brotherhood⁴⁷. Their Islamist tendencies and religious roots along with their branching and networking around the world, particularly in the Middle East has made them a worrisome subject for the US and the security of its interests in the region.⁴⁸ Bruce Rutherford in his 2009 book *Egypt after Mubarak* was an exploration into the future of the Egyptian political scene in a post-Mubarak era. The author focused on

⁴⁷ Jeremy Sharp. "Egypt: Background and US Relations". *Congressional Research Services*. 5th June 2014.

⁴⁸ Bruce Rutherford. "Egypt After Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World". *American University Press*. 2009. P: 78.

featuring a stable political future for the Egyptian people but explores how there are only two truly organized groups that are effective in Egyptian politics; the Judicial system and the Muslim Brotherhood. The later obviously the only the one having any sort of political will to hold power.

For some analysts, the Islamist group that is the *Muslim Brotherhood at the time was a threat to US interests if they were to seize power*. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) at the time was one of the most vocal anti-Israel and anti-US groups in the region. Prior to Mohamed Morsy winning the Egyptian Presidential elections in 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood were anti-Camp David Accords, anti-Israel with rhetoric that threatened Israel to be abolished and Jews to be killed, name-calling the United States in Egyptian Parliament and accusing the US to be behind almost any major upheaval that happens in the region. Former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guidance Counselor, the highest office in the MB hierarchy, Mahdi Akif once said that “We believe that Zionism, the United States, and England are gangs that kill children and women and men and destroy houses and fields. ... Zionism is a gang, not a country. So we will resist them until they don't have a country”⁴⁹. Indeed the Arabic language (but not the English language) website of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has displayed much anti-Semitic and anti-Israel content with articles engaging in Holocaust denial, condemning the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, calling for the destruction of Israel and defeating US “imperialism”.

In his assessment to the US Congress of the situation in Egypt, on February 11th, 2011 Middle East expert Jeremy Sharp talked about the Muslim Brotherhood’s apparent position in the Egyptian political scene along with US perceptions of the group in his research paper

⁴⁹ Eric Trager, "The Unbreakable Muslim Brotherhood", *Foreign Affairs*, September October 2011.

directed at the implications of the January 25th Revolution on US foreign policy. He describes the situation of the MB's reputation in the United States political arena as perplexing to policymakers, "particularly given the complex scenarios posed by regional Islamist groups". On the one hand, some policymakers see that "once in power, groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood will pursue policies counter to U.S. interests in the region or will transform states into theocracies like Iran" and on the other, the view was that they will be more timid, and that they will temper their rhetoric once indulged in a fully democratic system to appeal to a wider audience.

Their power lied in their popular support. This support rested on their superior organizational hierarchy compared to other political parties which stems to the conception of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hasan Al Bana. The group capitalized on government shortcomings since the English were administrating the country by *de facto* through the Egyptian monarchy by offering financial aid packages to disadvantaged people whom the government had not provided for. As the 1952 army coup/revolution erupted and Nasser's socialist big government policies could not cope with the growth in the population and the number of graduates from public universities, more and more people were unable to find much promised jobs and opportunities for social mobility and expanded wealth as the government had promised and as such the MB managed to take disadvantaged disfranchised youths and made them their followers by providing schools, religious education, health care and built hospitals for them, provided job opportunities and filled such unfilled promises by the government. This continued through Sadat and Mubarak's era. Any event that might lead to a power vacuum in the Egyptian political scene would see them as the most likely group to fill that void.

As such the Obama administration had to deal very carefully with the events turning out on the ground in Egyptian squares. The moves seemed to be calculated and wary.

Careful Calculations Suggest Defensive Realism

This suggested that the administration had been purposefully careful and modest in its policies. Before January 25th it had adopted a position that too much US foreign policy involvement went against the very spirit of what Obama wanted to achieve in the region. Indeed, involvement was going too far by Obama's standards when looking at Bush and by doing less -particularly during the Arab Spring- meant that the pre-Arab Spring policies of securing US interests via alliance with Egypt would remain largely intact⁵⁰.

This can be especially seen in the timings and order of statements made by the State Department and the President of the US as the 2 weeks of the January 25th Revolution unfolded.

On the very first days of the protests, the US administration was selective and wary of what was being said on its behalf in response to Egypt. On January 25th, 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the *Egyptian government is stable*⁵¹ and that "Our assessment is that the Egyptian government.... is *looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people*" in a response to question about the protestors. This was followed by American Vice President *Joe Biden not calling Mubarak a dictator* when asked about the protestors demands and how the Egyptian government should react. He said that Mubarak was "an ally" in an interview with PBS on January the 27th. During those first three

⁵⁰ Shadi Hamid, Peter Mandaville. "bringing The United States Back into the Middle East". *The Washington Quarterly*. 2014.

⁵¹ "US urges restraint in Egypt, says government stable". *Reuters*.

days, protestors' numbers increased significantly and members of the opposition became bolder in letting their presence be known amongst the Tahrir gatherers. Former Atomic Agency Director and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed El Baradei returned to Cairo, and the Muslim Brotherhood announced it will move its supporters with the masses protesting against the government after initially declining to join them early on. It was on that third day that the government ordered the shutdown of almost all mobile telecommunications that involved gaining internet access and twitter was blocked. The next day, mobile phone services were cut down as violence erupted in a broader scale across the country and especially in Cairo. Police retreated from the streets and numerous prisons were broken into with a number of high level political prisoners and terrorists escaping in addition to common criminals and thieves. Police stations were ransacked including a number of field officers of Egypt's infamous "State Security" secret police.

The United States took steps behind closed doors to try and deal with that. In other words, the US reacted in ways to try and find the best solution for stability in Egypt in order to secure its interests. In response to these first few days, Mubarak reacted with little improvement to the eyes of the protestors. He announced that he will remove his cabinet and form a new one and that he "was not willing to extend his Presidency beyond September". This, according to American reports, did not go well with Obama who had been in a meeting with national security advisors on January 31st who had been discussing whether to tell Obama to call Mubarak and whether Obama should make a public statement⁵². It was later revealed that President Obama called Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for 30 minutes after that late

⁵² Ryan Lizza. "The Consequentialist". *The New Yorker*. 2nd May 2011.

defying speech promising reforming the Egyptian government while still maintaining his authority as President. That phone call comprised the pledge for “a better democracy and greater economic opportunity,” Obama said in brief remarks at the White House following the call⁵³. “I told him he has a responsibility to give meaning to those words, to take concrete steps and actions that deliver on that promise”. Obama had started to have enough.

United States Finally Exerting Pressure on Mubarak’s Egypt

In a realist world, an ally is only as important as to whether that state can serve the purposes of another powerful one. Mubarak was being pressured to know his and Egypt’s place in the international structure and the hegemon has started to have enough in order to secure its own interests’ survival.

The signs of the more powerful state in the international structure trying to force Egypt to adapt became apparent at the same time the former Director of the General Intelligence Directorate Omar Suleiman was appointed the first Egyptian Vice-President since Hosni Mubarak himself was he Sadat’s deputy on January 29th 2011. Obama gave his first speech with regards to the situation in Egypt on January 30th. He called for an “orderly transition” of power. This was echoed by his State Secretary Hillary Clinton as she explained that "we [the United States] are not advocating any specific outcome.... but it needs to be done immediately, with a process that brings people to the table, and that the Egyptian people can see." Adding that "no one is satisfied" with the steps Mubarak has taken since the protests for political and economic

⁵³ “Obama Tells Mubarak He Must Stick to Pledge of Egyptian Reforms”. *Bloomberg News*. January 29th 2011.

freedom began, she said a transition process was needed "so that no one fills a void . . . what we don't want is chaos."

Egypt was to risk US support if not complying, but would the US survive having an unstable ally? And would it survive?

Over the next few days, Mubarak attempted to avoid succumbing to growing pressures domestically and internationally to step down. He pointed out that his removal from power will be followed by chaos and that he does not want to risk such an outcome. His message was echoed by his Vice President who in an interview with Christiana Amanpour of ABC News managed to strike a one-on-one interview with Omar Suleiman in the heart of Cairo. Omar Suleiman delivered the iconic phrase in his iconic accent "the Egyptian people should have democracy when they understand the culture of democracy". These were all signs of defiance from the Egyptian ruling authority while working in way to deal with the protestors and the United States. The ruling authority did not want to have a power void, and did not want the protests to go on forever. Meanwhile these were the times where the rhetoric of pressure to "transition power" and succumb to the Egyptian people's demands" were echoed through the media hosting US officials. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs went further saying that "now is yesterday" for Mubarak transition and the US President himself said that Mubarak should consider the greater good of Egypt and to take steps to reform the country democratically. On February 11th, Mubarak delegated his authorities to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and announced that he will resign his post. Celebrations erupted in Egypt's squares.

Defensive Realism Cascades Its Shadow

Prominent defensive realist analyst and political scientist Stephen Walt gave a noteworthy critique of how a realist would handle the Egyptian events on January 31st, 2011 on the well-known *Foreign Policy* website. In it, he wants “to offer a realist interpretation of what these events mean for the United States, along with the basic prescription that follows from that analysis”. On that basis, states want to maximize their own security and want allies that are “strong, stable, and that do not cause major strategic problems for them” and without having to worry about an ally’s internal stability. An ally who is internally divided, with a government that is corrupt or illegitimate is *ipso facto* less valuable than one whose population is unified, whose government is legitimate, and that enjoys lots of international support. “For this reason, even a staunch realist would prefer allies that were neither internally fragile nor international pariahs, while recognizing that sometimes you have to work with what you have”.

Returning to the chronology of events, January 31st is when Mubarak had started to form a new cabinet after days of police non-existence, military brought to calm the streets and a curfew set in the whole of the country for over 86 million people. “Even if Mubarak manages to cling to power, his regime has been fatally compromised” Walt exclaims. If the United States is seen as complicit in keeping Mubarak in power, that will certainly anger the Arab nations and the talk of US values and liberty and freedom spreading would be to no avail. On the other hand, if there is a change of power, the Muslim Brotherhood seizes it, it will be another form of threat to US interests as explained before. Indeed the interests and values of the United States clashed so vividly in the dealing with this turmoil in Egypt.

Walt continues to contemplate whether Egypt is a strategic partner or a strategic liability. Egypt is not a major oil producer like Saudi Arabia, is not as influential in the Arab world as it once was, in part due to the social and economic stagnation that has characterized the Mubarak era and U.S. support for dictators like Mubarak has been one of al Qaeda's major reasons for targeting the United States, as well as a useful recruiting tool. "The real reason the United States has backed Mubarak over the years is to preserve the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty"⁵⁴. He rests his assurance over the relations between Egypt and the US over that later part by further assuring that any future government of Egypt will most likely no risk tearing up the Camp David Accords because such a move would immediately put it at odds with both the United States and Europe and bring Cairo few tangible benefits.

On August 12th, 2010, Obama sent a five-page memorandum called "Middle East and North Africa" to Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, Deputy National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, and other seniors members of his foreign-policy. The memo started by illustrating the trends in the Middle East. "progress toward political reform..... has, in some cases, stalled" but that there was "evidence of growing citizen discontent with the region's regimes". Obama's analysis showed a desire to balance interests rather than ideals and morals as he continued that "increased repression could threaten the political and economic stability of some of our allies, leave us with fewer capable, credible partners who can support our regional priorities"⁵⁵.

In Obama's memorandum, the language of the President's memo is embedded with a balance towards interests rather than values. "Allies" get assessed according to their "support

⁵⁴ Stephen Walt. "A Realist Policy for Egypt". *Foreign Policy*. 31st January 2011.

⁵⁵ Lizza, Ryan. "The Consequentialist". *The New Yorker*. 2nd May 2011.

to our [American] regional priorities". In other words, to sustain the security of US interests in the region, and for Egypt to continue to be an ally, it needed to serve US interests and secure them. The US viewed, and still views (as Congressional research Services researcher and Middle East Expert Jeremy Sharp had noted) Egypt as an important part of its Middle East stability initiative, namely to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Aggressive policy decisions though could have proven to be fatal. The few calls that are calculated, slow and directed at instigating change that is looked upon as favorable by the Obama administration is better off. Power vacuum is what the US probably feared the most in Egypt. Evident by the rhetoric of "transition of power", calls for a "change" in leadership are all signs of wanting someone to be in charge while the power struggle is kept at a minimal and reserved for the democratic process of elections. Anarchy in Egypt would mean risking the stability of an ally that would mean the increased insecurity of US interests in the region by bringing the Muslim Brotherhood in power, who at the time was seen as a threat to US interests.

Instability in US Ally Again

In another challenge to the dilemma of the US securing its interests in the region while maintaining that it is the bastion of freedom and protector of liberty while promoting democracy around the world, Egypt threw yet another wrench in Obama's attempt to maintain the status quo of the Egyptian state. Obama wanted relations with the Middle East stable while making sure of Egypt's loyalty to secure US interests as it has been over the past few decades. On June 30th, 2013 thousands and arguably millions of Egyptian protestors filled the streets of

Egypt took to the streets against the ruling of President Mohammed Morsi in particular and the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood over Egypt in general.

Examining the internals, people were less than pleased with the state of the Egyptian governmental that was set up by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood had managed to seize power after the 2012 Egyptian Presidential elections. In the first Parliamentary elections after the January uprising of 2011, Islamist parties gained a majority of the elections for the first time in modern Egyptian political history with the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) winning 37.5% of the seats, followed by Al Nour party winning 27.8%. From that 2012 Parliament, it was going to decide and select the members of the Constituent Assembly of Egypt, which is going to be tasked to form the new Egyptian constitution. This assembly became a thorn in the bush of problems the MB's rule of Egypt had to go through.

The First Constituent Assembly had not been representative of the Egyptian people. It was criticized by many observers due to the predominance of Islamist members -66 out of 100- in it. 38 out of the 50 parliamentary members of the constituent assembly were members of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and of the Salafi Al Nour Party. There were only 6 women and only 5 Copts. Indeed in an April opinion by the state-run *Al Ahram* newspaper, 82.3 percent of the 1200 respondents said they wanted the constituent assembly reformed⁵⁶. A Second Constituent Assembly was formed after an agreement to form a more balanced assembly was reached on 7th June 2012. However, a number of parties called for a boycott of the Constituent Assembly as Islamist factions of the assembly were getting voted in

⁵⁶ "Opinion poll on presidential candidates shows Moussa on top". *Al Ahram*. 9 April 2012.

at a higher rate and again the parties and the people felt that the assembly was non representative of the different social groups of the Egyptian population. Indeed, the groups representing a number of backgrounds announced their withdrawal, namely the Copts, Christians, and liberal groups such as Bishop Paula of Tanta of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Bishop Yohana Qalta, who is the Assistant to the Catholic Patriarch in Egypt and Safwat al-Bayadi, who is the head of the Anglican Communion in Egypt, the New Wafd Party, Ahmed Maher, a member of the April 6 Youth Movement, Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat, the leader of the Reform and Development Party, former secretary of the Arab League Amr Moussa, the Journalists Syndicate Council and the representative of Farmers Syndicate, Mohamed Abdel-Qader, all withdrew. This was done at the same time of riots and protests in the streets.

The army was not pleased as well. Reasons for demanding Morsi's resignation included accusations of increasing authoritarianism and his pushing through an Islamist agenda disregarding the predominantly secular opposition or the rule of law. People did not favor the MB enough to limit the scope of demonstrations in the streets. Indeed, there had been several attempts at gathering large numbers of people in front of the Ittihadeya Presidential Palace in Heliopolis in order to force the MB to surrender power just as much as Mubarak did with the Tahrir protests. A namely example is the Egyptian Constitution of 2012 gave the President sweeping powers over the state's judicial system which has been notably relatively independent even under Mubarak's rule⁵⁷. At a conference on 15 June, Morsi called for foreign intervention in Syria. According to Yasser El-Shimy, an analyst with the International Crisis

⁵⁷ "Egypt at a Crossroads after Morsi Grants Himself Sweeping Powers". *Der Spiegel*. 26 November 2012.

Group, this statement crossed "a national security red line." The army rebuked this statement the next day by stating that its only role was to guard Egypt's borders.

The population and the Muslim Brotherhood were arguably at odds a lot during the Mb's rule of Egypt. Some of the issues that might have caused the protests and led to the later removal of Morsi include:

- *Morsi's Presidential Constitutional Declaration*: Morsi granted him the power of appointing the public prosecutor and makes all his [Morsi's] decisions final and binding and cannot be appealed by any way or to any entity until the constitution is approved and a new People's Assembly is elected. It was later abrogated due to multiple protests and public's anger^{58 59}.
- *The Constitution of 2012*: The Muslim Brotherhood and their ruling political party used their Islamist allies to pass a hotly disputed constitution. Even though it was approved by 64% of Egyptians who voted, it was noted only about 30% of Egyptians with voting rights participated in the referendum process⁶⁰.
- *Power and gas Crises*: Repeatedly, there had been a short supply of gas and an increased number of power outages throughout the country^{61 62}.
- *Security of the state worsened*: the most prominent story related to security under Morsi was the murder of 16 border guards in Sinai in an attack in Rafah.

These internal pressures led to the creation of the "Rebellion" Campaign which aimed at collecting signatures of Egyptian citizens to express in written format the dissatisfaction of the Egyptian people with the Morsi regime. It claims to have collected 15 million signatures⁶³.

As such over the course of 3 days, the people of Egypt rose up and protested in the streets. Tahrir Square was filled once again and the Ittihadeya Presidential Palace was

⁵⁸ Richard Spencer. "Violence breaks out across Egypt as protesters decry Mohammed Morsi's constitutional 'coup'". *Telegraph (London)*. 2012.

⁵⁹ "English text of President Morsi's new Egypt Constitutional Declaration - First 100 days". *Ahram Online*. 2012.

⁶⁰ "Anti-Morsi protests threaten to go even wider". *CBS News*. 2012.

⁶¹ David D. Kirkpatrick. "Short of Money, Egypt Sees Crisis on Fuel and Food". *New York Times*. March 30, 2013

⁶² "Diesel fuel crisis adds to Egypt's cocktail of political, economic woes". *Fox News*. 11th November 2013.

⁶³ Osman El Sharnoubi. "Egypt's Anti-Morsi 'Rebel' Campaign Says It Gathered 15 Million Signature". 20th June 2013.

surrounded with protestors. The Egyptian Armed Forces issuing a 48-hour ultimatum that gave the country's political parties until 3rd of July to meet “the demands of the Egyptian people”. The Egyptian military also threatened to intervene if the dispute was not resolved by then.

This instability in a US ally could have been troublesome for US interests' security. In another attempt to secure interests through stabilization of an ally in accordance to the defensive realist theory we have shown, with the Muslim Brotherhood in power, and in the midst of all that, US-Egyptian relations continued as normal. In one of the highlight moments of the MB's rule, protestors climbed the walls of the United States' embassy in protests to an anti-Islamic movie in the West. The New York Times reported that:

Mr. Morsi issued only a mild rebuke of the rioters — and on Facebook — while his movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, has called for a second day of protests against the lurid anti-Muslim video that set off the riots. And though the Egyptian police coordinated with American officials, Mr. Morsi waited 24 hours before issuing his statement against the militants who stormed the embassy; Libyan authorities issued immediate, unequivocal statements of regret for the bloodshed in Benghazi.

"I don't think that we would consider them an ally, but we don't consider them an enemy," Obama said during an interview with Telemundo channel in the US⁶⁴. This message was echoed when White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters traveling with Obama in Colorado that “'Ally' is a legal term of art," and that "the president, in diplomatic and legal terms, was speaking correctly, that we do not have an alliance treaty with Egypt”⁶⁵.

That is not to say that the relationship had been sour in any way facing this hindrance from Obama's administration. Mobility in the Suez Canal was kept the same, with ships of trade

⁶⁴ Molly Reilly. “Obama: Egyptian Government Not Considered An Ally, But Not Our Enemy”. *Huffington Post*. 13 September 2012.

⁶⁵ Margaret Chadbourn. “Obama: Egypt neither Enemy nor Ally”. *Reuters*. 13th September 2012.

and war going through. There were continued relations with Israel and evident by a particularly prominent Presidential letter leaked online from the Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi to his Israeli counterpart Shimon Perez, expressing him as Morsi's "Dear Friend", while there as continued military cooperation between the Egyptian and Israeli military.

Seeing that the MB had been directly hostile to the West in general ever since their 80 years of existence and the US and Israel in particular the last few decades in official and unofficial political opposition places in the Egyptian political sphere (particularly the Camp David Accords), when they became official holders of power in Egypt they generally did not perform any hostile acts towards the US or Israel and even reassured the world that they will be upholding the Camp David Accords, the ones that were so hated by them when they were not in power. Finally, the US aid package was continued and signed by Congress.

Even Clearer Manifestation of Interests vs. Values

In the aftermath of June 30th, the Obama administration had to balance its gains and losses from interacting with what had been termed a "populist coup"^{66 67 68}. Three days of reportedly millions of protestors that ended up with a celebration of these millions to a military ultimatum that was executed with the help of a majority of the political forces in the country meant that this was not an ordinary situation the US lawmakers are familiar with.

The Egyptian state had been put the US under a direct pressure in terms of balancing its values against its grand interest of balance in the Middle East to refocus on China. For the

⁶⁶ Mustafa Abbas. "Populist Military Coup Staged in Egypt". *PressTV*. 7th July 2013.

⁶⁷ Sherif Fouad. "Aftermath of Egypt's Populist Coup: Secular Awakening or Islamist Revival?". *International Political Science Association*. 2014.

⁶⁸ "The State of Egypt: Old Ways Return". *The Economist*. 7th September 2013.

United States, one of their closest allies in the region [the Egyptian military] has actually violated a US law. P.L. 113-76 Section 7008 prohibits foreign assistance to a country “whose elected head of government is deposed by military coup d’etat or decree”⁶⁹. This means putting on hold or even reducing the military and economic aid to the country which will not go well with either the military or the Egyptian people’s perception of American foreign policy. On the other hand, going against one of its own laws while also supporting an actual coup would severely damage US image in the world and undermine its promotion for democracy on the global theatre. It was an even clearer manifestation of the clash between the values that US domestic laws advocate and The US’ occasional contradictory interests.

Egypt was not officially sanctioned in general and the US was not hostile in its reaction to the reality of the situation. It begs the question of the purpose behind that.

For Egypt to secure its own survival in the international structure and the MB in government to guarantee its own survival in power, the MB was bound to keep the status quo (at least for the short-term future) in order to maximize on their electoral victory. This goes beyond the sort of “futile & deceptive” works of writing about motive and ideology looked upon by other theories that Morgenthau is critical of.

The White House issued a statement that attempted to be balanced and not to appear as if the United States is taking any particular sides. It called for

..... the Egyptian military to move quickly and responsibly to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible through an inclusive and transparent process, and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters. Given today’s developments, I have also directed the relevant departments and agencies to review the implications under U.S. law for our assistance to the Government of Egypt.

⁶⁹ Jeremy Sharp. “Egypt: Background and US Relations”. Congressional Research Services. July 2014.

The statement did not express any vivid support of the Muslim Brotherhood, insisting only on indiscriminate arrests like they would treat any political prisoner. It has no expressed opposition for the military beyond what has been illegal in US law. It called for a return to “a” democratically elected government not “the” government of Morsy. These are the attempts that can be extrapolated from the statement with regards to the US opinion on the coup in its immediate aftermath.

The problem of the statement is that it did not reflect the opinion of the Egyptian people on the coup, or its aftermath. The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research (Baseera) polled the President Abd El Fatah Al Sisi at 82% after 80 days of his Presidency and that 67% of people were happy with the dispersal of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in sit-ins by the state security with Mohamed Morsi already having his approval ratings going down before the coup and the faith in the army still at a high note.

In an article for Al Jazeera, Professor John Esposito claimed that the US was living in denial about what happened on June 30th, and that the US should “acknowledge that the overthrow of an elected government replaced by military-appointed official, is a coup”⁷⁰. The problem presents itself differently than January 25th. In January, there had been no official or apparent direct reasoning that could be argued in order for someone to label what happened in 2011 as a coup, at least the argument is not as strong as the counter-argument that it wasn’t. However, in June 2012, the military had been taking direct control over proceedings, issuing an ultimatum to the President, gathering political forces in the country to debate the next steps to be taken. “The US and Europe will be judged against their espoused principles and values, their

⁷⁰ John Esposito. “Living in Denial: US Policy & Egypt’s Military Coup”. *Al Jazeera*. 15 July 2013.

commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights. Thus far they are failing the test” argued Esposito. However, the US cares about one particular matter, it’s interests security in the region which Egypt provides.

In an article describing his advocacy for not cutting aid to Egypt, Robert Satloff, Executive Director of the Washington Institute, argues that Obama is wise “not to diminish US influence further by cutting ties with the Egyptian military”. As already discussed, Egyptian-American relations are very tight when it comes to the military. Indeed the Egyptian Air Force is the second largest operator of F-16s in the world, and the Egyptian Army has the most tanks in African and Arabia, namely American A1 Abrams tanks, plus a Navy which is almost exclusively made up of American-built ships. He argues that US aid to Egypt cemented a broader bilateral relationship that included security cooperation, counter terrorism operations and preferential treatment to US ships transiting through the Suez Canal and US planes flying over Egyptian airspace. Cutting aid would risk these privileges and cooperation points and that risks US interests in the region.

The White House decided to play both hands in the same round, trying to balance the interests and values, the problem is that the military viewed the confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood as an existential affair. Some labeled the reaction of the White House as “cold to the undemocratic nature of his [Morsi’s] ouster”⁷¹, but the military may have chosen the iron-fist approach precisely because Washington seemed more interested “in salvaging the Brotherhood as a political actor” rather than siding with many –perhaps a majority-⁷²of

⁷¹ Eric Trager. “President Obama Should Meet Sisi”. *The Washington Institute*. 22nd September 2014.

⁷² Eric Trager. “Obama Just Made a Terrible Mistake on Egypt”. 9th of October 2013.

Egyptians eager to remove the Brotherhood from power and even from the political scene entirely.

The opportunities that Obama had during terms as US President meant that he had the options on what school of thought his foreign policy would under. To be able to elaborate more on why Defensive Realism is the way to understand the policies of the United States with regards to Egypt, we need to understand more about the Obama foreign policy in his two terms.

For us to understand the basis for how Obama reached his decisions with regards to his foreign policy, we need to address Obama's perception of the world, and as the President of the United States, he is part of the *elite perception*. A key structural modifier in defensive realism.

Conclusion:

The importance of Egypt to the United States can be traced to the interests of US in the Middle East. The Arabian oil and the security of Israel are the most important feature of American influence in the region, because the United States wants the flow of energy and the survival of Israel for important domestic and historical reasons. Egyptian relations with America were titled on that.

The United States has long had interests in the Middle East, especially since the end of World War II. Securing US interests over the years entitled creating alliances in the region, Egypt became the ally of the United States and thus came an important point in American relations with the Arab world. Nowadays, Egypt's stability meant that It can serve diplomatic

relations with the region's states in an effort to serve US interests. With Egypt stable, it can affect the stability in the Middle East –or rather stabilize the unstable Middle East- via its diplomatic ties, namely in assisting and mediating the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. This will lead to a decrease in the usage of resources by the United States in the region in securing its own interests by having allies that serve those interests. This will lessen the stretch of the American forces and will mean the United States will be able to refocus more of its resources to address international structure pressures.

Chapter 4: Obama The Realist

In this chapter, I will elaborate more on the concept of elite perception of Obama. This will be followed by an explanation of Obama perception of the world via his writings, book, speeches and actions as President of the United States. The perception of Obama is important because he one of the driving forces of foreign policy making in his Presidency.

This chapter aims at delivering the point of Obama being a realist, arguing that his actions and perceptions of the world are proof that defensive realism is the best theory to be used in interpreting the results of the actions done by the Obama administration.

Elite Perception and Defensive Realism

Jeffery Taliaferro, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Tufts University, talks about the realization of security under anarchy while discussing defensive realism's attributes in achieving such an aim in his article "Security Seeking under Anarchy". One of his discussions of defensive realism included the talk about the importance of elite perception. Leaders weigh options and make decisions based on their strategic situations and "an assessment of relative power".

Elite perception is an international structure modifier. Leaders' perceptions of the risk of the world and their understanding of the position of their state in the international order will lead to adopting strategies and taking of decisions that are in the interests of the state. What dictates their mistake or level of correctness will depend on the elite's perceptions of the risks around them and whether they comply with the realist nature of the international structure or not.

It is the reason for the outbreak of conflicts essentially. Along with numerous other factors such as the security dilemma and geography, elite perception is an anomaly which can upset the balance of power rather than evidence of fundamental offensive realist assumption that states increase their relative power as a result of the anarchical structure of the international system. These perceptions act in ways such as inflating threats to mobilise resources and promote expansion, or inhibit elites from recognising their declining power in their international system due to prioritizing domestic concerns over international concerns for instance. It helps explain the reasons behind mistakes in the real world.

Realist Idealist

The opportunities that Obama had during terms as US President meant that he had the options on what school of thought his foreign policy would under. To be able to elaborate more on why Defensive Realism is the way to understand the policies of the United States with regards to Egypt, we need to understand more about the Obama foreign policy in his two terms. For us to understand the basis for how Obama reached his decisions with regards to his foreign policy, *we need to address Obama's perception of the world.*

Since 2009 when Obama assumed the office of President of the United States of America, he had his plate full. The negative remnants of the Bush legacy on the whole globe in terms of relations with international allies and partners and in particular the Middle East where the US had been going through 2 ongoing wars at the time of Obama assuming office, on the back of a huge \$800 Billion bailout of the banks in order to ease the suffering American economy which has been weighted down by a global financial crisis in 2008, dealing with anti-

American hostilities and the radicalization of Arab and Muslim youth spreading anti-Western and anti-American ideals, which was not helped by the fact that the efforts for democracy promotion by Bush had assumed a picture of distrust between America and its long time autocratic Arab leaders. Obama faced distrust by the international community, his allies, the youth in the Arab and Middle Eastern region and 2 active military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and was tasked to lead the nation in the midst of that turmoil.

To be able to counter all of the negatives that he inherited from Bush and to be able to perform any sort of progress that fell under his line of thought of what America's foreign policy should be, Obama adopted policies that observers called him a "Realist Idealist"^{73 74}.

Obama as a realist can be seen in his speech to the UN General Assembly in 2013. In a review of Obama's speech at the UN, Stewart M Patrick of the Council on Foreign Relations describes Obama's speech as a "high-profile occasion" to assert that the world cannot "remedy every evil" but that it should not accept the "cold logic of mass graves". He noted Obama's pragmatic tone in the speech and the President's recognition of the inherent limits of US power while assuring that Obama's ultimate vision for world order is liberal and internationalist. Obama notes that "The United States has a hard-earned humility when it comes to our ability to determine events inside other countries" and Patrick sees that these lessons learned from such actions helped guide the Obama administration's policies towards Egypt⁷⁵. It's the reason why the US government has avoided choosing between Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood and the military government that came after them in a coup and an uprising. The author thinks that

⁷³ Stewart Patrick. "The Realist Idealist: Obama's UN Speech". *The Internationalist*. 24th September 2013.

⁷⁴ Daniel Drezner. "You Say Idealist, I Say Realist... Let's Call the Whole Thing Off". *Foreign Policy*. 15th April 2010.

⁷⁵ Stewart Patrick. "The Realist Idealist: Obama's UN Speech". *The Internationalist*. 24th September 2013.

that is because Obama knows that the United States cannot determine events inside other countries freely, Egypt's future would be made by Egyptians themselves. "What the United States would continue to insist on, he [Obama] said, was movement toward an inclusive, democratic government.

While being a realist, he still instilled idealist points of view. Obama declares that "America is exceptional" because it repeatedly had shown its willingness to "stand up not only for our own narrow self-interest, but for the interests of all". Obama continued to say that the world we live in is "a world of imperfect choices", and as such observers note that it is often difficult for Obama to translate "universal" ideals into practical foreign policy doctrines. It seemed in the speech that Obama acknowledges that to preserve the United States' core interests, it needed to work with some unsavory regimes, like for instance the Mubarak government, or the Muslim Brotherhood, or the military in Egypt. Looking at his actions with Iran, Afghanistan and Egypt, we can see a pattern of giving diplomacy a chance despite his realist tendencies. Obama's speech at the UN had been paraphrased and summarized by John Cassidy, a reporter in the New Yorker⁷⁶, into the following:

The United States remains devoted to the values of liberty and democracy, but it is an increasingly reluctant global hegemon. In protecting its core interests, such as the supply of cheap energy and the defeat of anti-American terrorist groups, it will use all elements at its disposal, including military action. But, in general, it much prefers to seek a diplomatic solution. Obama had earmarked four main elements of "core interests" of the United States in the Middle East which were: protecting allies from foreign aggression, dismantling of terrorist networks, preventing the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and free flow of energy. But Obama also insisted the following:

⁷⁶ John Cassidy. "Obama' New Realism: Give Diplomacy A Chance". *New York Times*. 24th September 2013.

To say these are America's core interests is not to say these are our only interests... I also believe that we can rarely achieve these objectives through unilateral American action. Iraq shows us that democracy cannot be imposed by force.

Indeed he notes Egypt as to “reflect a larger point”⁷⁷, that the US government will work with governments that do not meet the highest of standards of the international community but that do work with the United States’ core interests, or secure US interests.

After two years in office, we can say with some certainty where Obama’s instincts lie. From his position with regards to the so called “war on terror” to the current unrest in Egypt, Obama’s foreign policy has shown that it was more in line with conservative *realpolitik* than to any left liberal vision of the international relations environment⁷⁸. Looking at Obama’s actions with regards to the January Revolution and it seems that the administration’s real goal had been to dispense with Mubarak while keeping the military subordinates very much still in charge of the transition period. These are the same military officers and political elite who have dominated Egyptian domestic politics and had the Egyptian political environment under a controlled climate. Indeed, it had been later reported that Omar Suleiman, a key US strategic friend as heading the Egyptian intelligence community that had been responsible for part of the CIA’s rendition program. Ross Douthat, a political writer in the New York Times says “This isn’t soft-headed peacenik dithering. It’s cold-blooded *realpolitik*”. He further cements these ideas by saying that the “situation [in Egypt is one] that calls for great caution, rather than grand idealistic gestures”.

⁷⁷ John Cassidy. “Obama’ New Realism: Give Diplomacy A Chance”. *New York Times*. 24th September 2013

⁷⁸ Ross Douthat. “Obama The Realist”. *New York Times*. 6th February 2011.

Obama supported Hosni Mubarak until the moment Mubarak needed the US the most. Obama abandoned him and supported the people in the streets, eventually. Then, just as many had warned, the Muslim Brotherhood rode into power. Recognizing the demands of the moment, Obama then supported Morsi and his ambassador Anne Patterson scolded protestors that went into the streets against Morsi calling for respect of the democratic process of elections. Then at the moment that Morsi needed the US the most, Obama abandoned him. Fareed Zakaria, a lead political analyst for CNN had labeled the US President as a “realist, by temperament, learning and instinct”. Stephen Walt even saluted the President’s efforts and even called him in a title for a piece for Foreign Policy magazine “Is Barack Obama More of a Realist than I?”.

Obama’s White House had countered numerous conservative and liberal advocates that tried to explain Obama’s policies as either realist or liberal by saying that the President is only interested in what works⁷⁹. Dr. Fawaz Gerges, a leading political scientist in the London School of Economics, remarks in his publication for the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding and the Duke Islamic Studies Center and ISLAMiCommentary, that the White House was explaining that Obama sees the world as more complex than what the Cold War had to offer and that specific approaches are needed and are to be tailored according to each situation. Obama didn’t consider himself a man with a foreign policy doctrine and “was not averse to revisiting previous decisions that he had made”. Although that all might be true, that does not negate the fact that the actions and decisions being taken by the Obama administration is completely on the money when it comes to explaining them in the terms of defensive realism.

⁷⁹ Fawaz Gerges. “The ‘Obama Doctrine’ in the Middle East”. *Institute for Social Policy and Understanding*. October 2012.

The structural changes in terms of outside international pressure escalated on Obama as well as Egypt. According to Stephen Walt's article The relationship between allies can only be maintained when the smaller state can still maintain the security of interests of the more powerful state in the international structure. Egypt went through phases where it could have been described as an ally that is unsafely unstable.

In his paper "Obama and the Arab Spring", Dr. Anthony Cleso of the Security Studies Department of the Angelo State University in Texas tries to describe vividly how Obama reacted to the Arab Spring revolutions and attempting at defining Obama's foreign policy views which he describes as a "merge [of] idealism with 'Post-American World' realism". The book was Obama's perception of the United States' role in international politics.

For that, he heavily depends on Obama's books *Audacity of Hope*. Obama critiques Bush's actions as a throwback to Reagan's evil empire and Theodor Roosevelt imperialism allowing the United States to move unilaterally provoking armed conflict against "governments not of our[US] liking". This, in Obama's eyes, was resurrecting Cold War dynamics that demonized Iraq War critics as "soft". Obama was sure that the war only helped raising the image of the United States being seen as an imperial nation that is engaged in permanent warfare which acts as a catalyst for anti-American sentiment across the world, not just the Middle East. Using the military as a tool of democracy promotion was criticized by Obama. Obama was more concerned with a refocus of foreign policy towards Asia.

In his chapter, *The World Beyond Our Borders*, Obama draws a complex vision of America's position in the world and the environment of the world we are living in where "international trade, law and norms are the key to stability and prosperity". Borrowing heavily

from Fareed Zakaria and Joseph Nye –two realist political analysts- Obama maintains that the US is in relative decline in terms of hard power and the that soft power and trade has become transcendent in the world. Obama writes that the military has become one of many tools that the United States has among many to formulate its foreign policy. Therefore, Obama sees that the US should be engaged in hardheaded analysis of the costs and benefits of the use of force compared to other tools available especially given the example of Bush’s second administration’s problems using unilateralism and military action as the arbitrator of foreign policy formulation. It showed the limits of US power⁸⁰. Obama sees that America needs to repair this damage by showing more restraint, and urging cooperation. The author thinks that is suggesting a humble and remorseful America that can be “a catalyst for international healing of US image”.

In his book, Obama maintains that he sees America as “exceptional”. He sees his country as special because it advocates for liberal democracy and free market and that pushing the international system towards more democracy and free markets will lead to greater equality, justice and prosperity and that the US should promote them as both American interests and the interests of the struggling world. Obama recognizes the urgency of America unilateral action in select cases, and that makes it apparent that the “Obama world view balances competing interests and refuses to adopt fast and hard rules and his ideas are contextually adjusted case by case”⁸¹. Obama descriptively says that the US has a right to take unilateral military action “to eliminate an imminent threat to our security”, a heavy dose of realism underscored here.

⁸⁰ Barack Obama. “The Audacity of Hope”. *Crown/Three Rivers Press*. 17th October 2006.

⁸¹ Anthony Celso. “Obama and the Arab Spring”. *Angelo State University*. March 2012.

In terms of human rights and democracy promotion and their role in US foreign policy, he argues that when the US seeks to impose democracy with force, the US “assert ourselves for failure”, yet Obama concludes that the US can inspire other people to assert their freedoms and that the US can talk on behalf of local leaders whose rights are violated in any way and to apply economic and diplomatic pressure who repeatedly violate these US norms. He is against using force for democracy promotion but does not rule out intervention in the case of genocide and ethnic cleansing provided that there is enough international support. Professor Celso describes that this complexity with regards to human rights, democracy and Obama’s realism may explain his actions with the Arab Spring movement.

In response to the January revolution, Obama had waffled his earlier support for Mubarak and wanted to pave the way to a democratic transition engineered by the military allies that the US had in Egypt. The administration was surprised by the protests and *feared jeopardizing the relations with Egypt as the US relied on Egypt for anti-terrorism operations and peace with Israel to stabilize the region*. As Professor Celso suggests, “the administration’s efforts to *balance strategic interests with humanitarian impulses outlined in [Obama’s book] proved difficult to implement in the Egyptian case*”⁸². Indeed, Obama’s policies are driven by “strategic core interests”, an outside example is for instance allowing repression of the Shia majority in Bahrain for instance with no real initiatives to press Gulf countries to democratize because it wished not to give Shia majority Iran any more influence in the Middle East and as such the Administration needs the Saudi support for its containment policies towards Iran.

⁸² Anthony Celso. “Obama and the Arab Spring”. *Angelo State University*. March 2012.

It is of great irony that Obama who had lobbied so much for a turn away from Bush policies that *he can be described as a continuation of US policies in the region. By strategic necessity* Obama's policies fell back to Bush administration's policies. Obama's anti-terror policies remained consistent with the Bush era, with Predator drones strikes and Guantanamo Bay prison complex still open. Democracy promotion had taken a reduced funding by repeated Obama administrations as for instance a proposal for a \$770 million Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund had been abandoned in favor of a much smaller MENA Initiative Fund that emphasizes development rather than political or economic reform⁸³.

Obama's perception of the United States' role in the world meant that he wanted the United States to continue its policy of promoting liberty and free market policies but not at the expense of the interests of the US. This included a stable Middle East, reliable Arab allies while containing to demand for a secure Israel and free flow of energy resources and a refocus on China. The refocus on China will entail that the economic and military constraints on the US needed to be addressed in order for the state to be able to reinstate its hegemonic powers over the regions that saw the rise of challengers to US influence in the world. China posed that threat, and with an unstable Middle East, lack of trust from allies, engagement in two wars, for Obama to meet his expectations with his with perceptions meant that there had to be stability in the Middle East and a reduction in the pressure and stress the American armed forces had been going through in order to be able to manifest any sort of proper increase in the influence of the American hegemon after the decline of such influence in Northeast Asia.

⁸³ "Back to Square One: The US in the Middle East- Analysis". *Eurasia Review*. 27 January 2015.

Conclusion:

Elite perception of Obama helps in maintains the view that the United States have been deploying defensive realism in its foreign policy. The notion that Obama has expressed in his assessment of world politics when he was a Senator, and then as a campaigner for US Presidency shows that elaboration. The Obama foreign policy focused on reassessing America' capabilities in light of global challenges. The Chinese are rising, and American influence has declined, as well as US image. The American foreign policy has been hampered by the US capabilities being overstretched across the globe and it is becoming less efficient to conduct operations to insure the United States' survival.

Obama advocated from the start to refocus American foreign policy on China. He was not deterred when the Arab Spring happened, not when the Egyptian coup happened, and not even when Russian annexed Crimea. His accounts of what he wanted, along with his decisions while President, and his actions as an acting US President are evidences that structural realism is sued in policy explanation. Defensive realism offers the best explanation for Obama's actions as President as he is consistent with it tenants and its rhetoric.

The fact that the Obama administration have cut aid though is a mistake that further cements the proposition that defensive realism is the way to explain the grand strategy of the United States. By characterizing the cutting of aid as a mistake, it mean it went array of the consistent theoretical framework the policies have been following, and as such a deviation means it will probably have adverse effects on the United States.

Chapter 5: The Potential Loss of a US Ally

In this chapter, I will examine the cutting of millions of dollars of US aid to Egypt, and the hold of attack helicopters and fighter jets that were on route to be delivered to Egypt. This was a grave mistake in a most realists' eyes.

The chapter aims to reinforce a few features of the Egyptian-American relationship. This relationship is based upon security cooperation, namely military cooperation, and intelligence sharing in the fight against terrorism. The Egyptian military has been set up with a huge amount of American military hardware over the years that a majority of the backbone of the Egyptian armed forces is trained on American equipment. The after effects of a halt in securing military equipment for Egypt while the latter is involved in anti-terror raids and operations gives off a bad signal to Egyptian political elites and the Obama administration could be dealing with losing degree of influence on the Egyptian state.

This chapter aims at presenting this cut of aid as an anomaly. This mistake cost the US a millions of dollars in potential defense contracts as Egypt has now been pushed towards buying more Russian and Chinese equipment to replace or at best augment the existing American military hardware it has. This is indeed an increase of influence for American challengers of its hegemony in the world.

A Misunderstanding of the Egyptian Situation

Even if we stipulate that the cutting of aid was going to happen because of the domestic laws of the United States, it was still up to the United States represented by the Obama administration to acknowledge the coup and react to the events of the uprising in Egypt. By

choosing the path of cutting or suspending part of the aid package to Egypt, realists agree that it was a mistake⁸⁴ ⁸⁵, further confirming the path that the US had originally been taking since the January uprising had been in line with the thoughts of defensive realism.

In his article “Obama Just Made a Terrible Mistake in Egypt”, Eric Trager, an expert on Egyptian politics and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt who is a fellow at the Washington Institute, argues that cutting aid will cost the US influence over Egypt, however diminished it may have been, without attaining any noticeable gains for “either American geo strategy or democratic prospects within the country [Egypt]”. He believes that the call to cut off aid would reflect a misunderstanding of the events that transpired over the 2012 summer, and the MB’s Presidency. “By the time unprecedently mass protests against the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule commenced on June 30th, Mohammed Morsi was a president in name only” after his constitutional declaration which gave him unlimited powers with no oversight, ramming the Islamist constitution through ratification severely uncut his popular legitimacy and narrowed his support to the MB’s side of the political pool. The Mb’s violent removal of anti-Presidential protestors around the Presidential Palace also made the MB may be viewed as brutal and authoritarian. Rather than build consensus with other political factions, the MB chose to isolate themselves with the majority of political power undermining their own legitimacy with arguably a majority of Egyptians. Many “share the military’s fear of a resurgent Muslim Brotherhood, which is why they have broadly endorsed the military’s brutal crackdown on the organization. The author argues that Washington can only watch and cannot change the events going on as the army is engaged in an existential struggle. *Any form of discontinuity of relations between*

⁸⁴ Eric Trager. “Obama Just Made a Terrible Mistake on Egypt”. *Washington Institute* . 9th of October 2013.

⁸⁵ Michael Singh. “Egypt After the Election: Advancing the Strategic Relationship”. *Washington Institute*. 30th May 2014.

Egypt and the US would put at risk US interests as Egyptian-American military cooperation might be affected.

Fearing Egypt's Response

The cutting of aid presented a peculiar problem for the US in the light that it needs to seek stability in the region to refocus foreign policy objectives to China. *Security Cooperation* is one of the objectives of US-Egyptian relations that had been fundamentally based on the security of US interests in the Middle East. The military aid program has been largely unaffected over the years due to several factors; firstly, there was always fear of Cairo revoking Washington's US Navy preferential treatment in accessing the Suez Canal, secondly, American firms will suffer from cutting of military contracts, thirdly, foreign competitors gaining an additional hand and more influence in Egypt. Each can be debated on its own, but each can overwhelm the foundation for one of Washington's largest military assistance programs over the past few decades⁸⁶.

Egypt has been engaged in exhaustive military operations against non-state actors on its borders for a long time now. Several hundreds of security officers, soldiers, personnel and equipment have been lost to terrorist activities all over Egypt's map and ever since the removal of Mohamed Morsi from power and the country has been ravaged with numerous attacks and threats. From home-made amateur shrapnel bombs distributed all throughout Cairo and coordinated attacks on police and military checkpoints to grand scale attacks on military bases and positions in Sinai, the security forces in Egypt are being tested daily. Egypt sought

⁸⁶ Michael Singh. "Egypt After the Election: Advancing the Strategic Relationship". *Washington Institute*. 30th May 2014.

confirmations and acceptance from Israel with American moderation to allow the entry of a big number of army soldiers in Sinai as per the articles of the Camp David Accords, and the Egyptian Air Force fighter jets conducted strikes for the first time in Sinai since the 1973 War, armed drones, constant Apache strikes and coordinated military engagements have been hitting the headlines in Egyptian news outlets since 2013 coup. The calls of cutting the military aid in the midst of all that seems against US interests of securing a stable Egyptian ally.

Moreover, the cutting of aid will represent a major misunderstanding of the events in Egypt. To say that the military had removed a democratically elected president from office is to overlook a certain reality, that by the time the military removed Morsi from power, he had only been President in name only. The unprecedented mass protests were rumoured to rival the numbers of the people in the streets over the course of the 2 weeks that saw Mubarak removed from power. Morsi's actions that resulted in a rammed constitution made by an assembly that saw the resignation and self-withdrawal of almost all but the Islamist movements, constitutional declaration putting the President's decisions above judicial overview and the attacks on peaceful protestors on December 3rd 2012 at the Ittihadeya Palace severely undercut the Muslim Brotherhood's legitimacy in power comparing it to a fascist regime⁸⁷.

The Muslim Brotherhood also did not do much to help cement its position in the state by alienating state officials as well. The massive Egyptian bureaucracy catalyzed substantial resistance to his rule within the state itself⁸⁸. Morsi had appointed Brotherhood-affiliated

⁸⁷ Eric Trager. "Obama Just Made A Terrible Mistake on Egypt". *Washington Institute*. 9th October 2013.

⁸⁸ Eric Trager. "Obama Just Made A Terrible Mistake on Egypt". *Washington Institute*. 9th October 2013.

ministers who had tried to divert government resources to the group's organizational goals rather than build consensus with their respective governmental bodies. Morsi's ministers began resigning from his government and Morsi was starting to lose control.

A President of 85 million people, mostly impoverished, starting to lose control over his cabinet meant that there were no happy endings in sight. Protests started erupting.

The military –as previously discussed- was more liked by the Egyptian public. There was trust in them and the Brotherhood did nothing to decrease that level of trust the people had in the army, and did less to mitigate any anatomization of the army. The army generals saw the Brotherhood as a threat.

The Policy Implications

It is important for Washington to understand that it cannot change or exert influence actors who are engaged in an existential struggle. Numerous Islamist organizations are calling for President Sisi's death, and as such when Washington tries to exert an influence on the Egyptian military to reconcile with the Brotherhood, the administration is actually pressuring the generals of Egypt into their own suicide, or so they could think so. For instance, June 22nd 2013 saw US Secretary of State John Kerry visit Egypt, and his visit was focusing on enduring the bilateral relationship Egypt has with the US and ensure US commitment to "seeing Egypt succeed", but thorny issues remain such as the declarations that "Egypt is yet to meet the requirements for reinstatement [of military aid]"⁸⁹. This policy actually will and has increased

⁸⁹ David Schenker. "US Support to Counter Egypt's Insurgency (Still) On Hold". *Washington Institute*. 8th July 2014.

Egyptians' paranoid belief that the US desire the Brotherhood rule in Egypt which Egyptians see as a far more threatening issue than military rule.

The policy is a lose-lose proposition. The United States needs Egypt to secure its interests in the region in order to refocus its resources on the rising challenge of China to US hegemonic power in the world. Egypt secures America's preferential access to the Suez Canal, and increase the efficiency of counter-terrorism operations, while Egypt needs military hardware and international investment. Cutting of the aid, however it may be reasoned as, pushed Egypt to take action. By taking advantage of the security interests of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Egypt, the Gulf countries supplied Egypt with over \$18 billion in economic aid and it is expected that the military contracts that have been signed with France and Russia come from the Gulf countries⁹⁰. In terms of military hardware, Egypt have secured 24 Rafale 4th+ generation fighter jets from France, becoming its launch customer, which are more advanced and can carry more fuel and ammunition than the American F-16s. In addition, the Egyptian Navy has secured the acquisition of 4 brand new Gowind combat ships, with 3 to be built in Egypt, while also securing at least one FRIMM frigate in the beginning of 2015. The first of the hardware of this French-Egyptian arms deal will be delivered by the opening of the New Suez Canal. In addition, and more remarkably important is that Egypt is now enjoying better ties with Russia. Egypt secured one of the most feared Anti-Aircraft and anti-missile defense systems in the world, the S-300 long range Surface-to-Air Missile System and Egypt is expected to sign deals worth billions of dollars with Russian aircraft manufacturers and air

⁹⁰ Enad Hamed. "As Gulf Aid Dries Up, Egypt Struggles". *Egypt Pulse*. 30th December 2014.

defense systems companies in the coming few months. This is significant given the rise in Russian influence in the region, namely because of the Syrian conflict.

This approach to Egypt has been shortsighted for the US, and is a mistake. If a policy is adopted by the United States that does not fall under the national interest of securing American interests in the Middle East via Egypt then it is a failure. The United States have wanted stability in Egypt, to help stabilize the Middle East, in order to refocus foreign policy resources towards China. The cutting of aid has put the foundation of Egyptian-American relations at minimal risk, but still at risk of decreased influence for the US over Egypt with a cost towards American military contractors, that foundation is the Egyptian-American military cooperation. The cutting of aid will result in the loss of some influence over Egypt without achieving any of the goals the United States wants to be raised when it comes to its values, and it might put at risk the security of interests of the country in the region. "It is an unforced error in the extreme"⁹¹.

⁹¹ Eric Trager. "Obama Just Made A Terrible Mistake on Egypt". *Washington Institute*. 9th October 2013.

Conclusion

The United States has been the most powerful regional hegemon and some may argue it is the global hegemon. Being the hegemon –however grand that might sound even to the stature of the United States- brings consequences. It means that America needs to maintain its power in an anarchical international structure that is ruled by no grand authority. Survival is the most important aim of any state, and the security of interests that serve that grand aim is what states should do, most namely the ‘global hegemon’ or the most powerful state in the international order.

The Chinese have been and are rising. Increased military spending, an increasing population, a growing economy at one of the fastest paces ever by a modern state, an increasingly influential trading partner with many parts of the world and an even bigger role in engagements with Asian countries all are signs that China is becoming more and more of a pursuer of regional hegemony in Northeast Asia at least, if not the whole continent. At the same time, the United States has been in decline when it comes to its influence in the region.

The United States has been declining its military presence –albeit by relatively slim margins, the United States has been losing top spot trading partner positions with China in Korean and Japanese economies, and the United States has been engaged in other numerous global issues that have taken point of its foreign policy decision making, especially in the wake of 9/11.

The United States needed and continues to need checking China’s rise. Checking rising powers is how great powers respond to the rise of a challenger to the most powerful nation in the international order. The United States is bound by international pressure, but to deal with

the challenger it needs to allocate its resources in a better way. This is in order not to risk the rise of other new challenges to the hegemony on the global scale. With a global recession, a global financial crisis, the American economy in recession, the US military stretched into fighting two fields of operations since 2003, the distractions in Ukraine, the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2010 and the destabilization of a majority of Middle Eastern countries, namely Egypt and other allies, all meant that the US needed to re-organize its foreign policy in order to adapt towards a refocus on China while allocating resources more efficiently.

The taking over the world's superpower's most important public office presents plenty of challenges on a domestic and global scale. Of these challenges come across a pile of inherited problems the successor takes hold of from his predecessor; Obama though is different than any other US President.

The first black American President came across to the American public as the Democratic candidate with an intense energy and will to change the way the US handled its foreign affairs and better US image around the world. In addition, his domestic policies would resonate the same theme. The Bush administration's policies in the Middle East though were particularly troublesome in its aftermath.

George Bush's two ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, failed peace process, economic downturn legacy, the legal limbo of Guantanamo and the legality debate about the criminal pursuit and use of torture –or enhanced interrogation techniques- against terror suspects, tensions with allies, rise of anti-American feelings in the Middle East (ME) and the growing influence of “radical” organizations such as Hizb Allah and Iran in the region portrayed the US as anti-Islamic and in a war against Muslims of the Middle East rather than just in the

Middle East⁹². It was a sticky situation for the next President of the US to find himself pushed into.

Barack Obama's perception of world politics and the position that the United States must carry on with guided him to target a solution to the Bush-created problems and an evolution from there on, particularly to be away from the Middle East. He wanted to encourage multilateralism rather than Bush's unilateralism in foreign policy decision making and having a less militarized foreign policy, accommodating other nation's interests and concerns rather than antagonizing them via working with them not alienating them. He campaigned on the premise of ending the war in Iraq (the war of choice), slowing removing troops from Afghanistan (the war of necessity) and opening a dialogue with the Muslim world to insure that the US is *not in a war against Islam*, but with extremists, from all sides⁹³. The one focus he truly wanted was to be able to set aside his inherited problems in the Middle East to give *more focus towards America's foreign policy on the Asia Pacific* to handle the rise of China in the post-Cold War era⁹⁴.

The developments in the European stage were a sudden hindrance as well though. Russia had become a player in the Ukrainian crisis, and the annexation of Crimea while the United States and the EU stood watching meant that the Russian state is now a challenge to US hegemony over the international structure in general and American influence in Europe. Playing a role in the Syrian conflict that is more direct and official than the United States, while enjoying diplomatic, political and economic ties with the Iranians means the Russians have

⁹² Gerges, Fawaz. "Obama and the Middle East". *Palgrave Macmillan*. 2012. P: 15.

⁹³ Bruce Herschensohn. "Obama's Globe: A President's Abandonment of US Allies Around the World". *Beaufort Books*. 2012.

⁹⁴ MM, SD, BD, SL, MM, RR, BV. "Pivot to the Pacific: The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia". *Congressional Research Service*. 28th March 2012.

influence over Middle Eastern affairs and European ones as well. That can constitute a rise in power and affect the international structure that the US is supposedly dominating.

The Egyptian situation was a stumbling block. Threats to the United States Middle Eastern interests meant threat to the US' influence in the region in particular and on the global stage in general. The United States has committed itself since 1979 into a relationship with Egypt that has been founded on security guarantees and the stability of US interests in terms of securing the safe flow of cheap energy, preferential treatment of US assets in Egyptian airspace and waterways, and establishing a safe stable relationship for Israel in the region while safely befriending Egyptian diplomatic influence in the region in order to serve US interests. It is safe to say that the United States needed and still needs Egypt now in light of those particular US interests.

Continuation of US policies towards Egypt is because of the grand US interest in securing its own global survival as the global hegemon, growing above the challenges of a rising power like China in the international structure. Stretched resources of the United States, China rising and growing its influence in its region while the US continues its decline in Asia and in the world, the United States sought stability to refocus on China.

The best explanation for what is going on is that the United States is going through a patch of being in hegemonic power decline. In their article: "Russia, Ukraine and the Testing of American Hegemony", Robert Murray and Luke M. Herrington discuss the decline of US influence over the international structure by discussing its relative decline as opposed to Chinese and Russian rise. They identify three types of decline: Relative decline is when "states experience relative decline when they fail to compete with their neighbors, or otherwise fall

behind in important areas of competition”⁹⁵. For example, those who view China rising as an international power, and a resurging Russia would view the US as going to fall behind in terms of important sectors like science, technology and education to name a few. Like the fact that Chinese government-backed scientists are on the verge of overtaking US scientists in terms of scientific output because of the increase in quality and quantity of scientific publications each year by the Chinese. Similar statistics are abound when it comes to education and healthcare. Absolute decline is the utter collapse of government, like Yugoslavia. However, this is quite rare and examples are very few.

There is however, a third type of decline which the authors suggest, the Hegemonic Stability Theory. This is unique to hegemonic powers like the United States and is consistent with the tenants of structural realism theories such as defensive realism. In such a theory, it is said that world leaders can only maintain their leaderships for a limited amount of time. Aspects of absolute and relative decline accompany this process, but this theory certainly affects the military and economy. “Typically occurring in the leading state’s military and economic sectors, hegemonic decline frequently results from “imperial overstretch,” and ultimately entails a retreat from global commitments”⁹⁶.

By withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, hesitancy towards Iran, the limited operations scope of US Libya intervention which it sought to be under someone else’s control, and the waffling on Syria’s use of chemical weapons, it’s hard to wonder that many of the

⁹⁵ Robert W. Murray and Luke H. Herington. “Russian, Ukraine and the Testing of American Hegemony” *E-International Relations*. 2014.

⁹⁶ Robert W. Murray and Luke H. Herington. “Russian, Ukraine and the Testing of American Hegemony” *E-International Relations*. 2014.

United States' critics have been seeing the country as abdicating policies essential to the US influence in the Middle East and Asia. US resources have been minimized in Europe and Middle East as a result of the end of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and we can see why American interests are now becoming more limited.

The US grand strategy has been targeting the prevention of the rise of regional hegemon. It can be argued that the United States "chose" to be inactive when it came to supporting the Egyptian people in their quest for democracy in the January revolution to help sow instability in a regional power, and that the "choice" of not acting in Syria was calculated in order to maintain regional strife. Ultimately it may be difficult to argue against the fact that American hegemony has been in decline for the past decade, but this decline is not absolute in nature.

To be saying that the military and scientific capabilities of China and Russia are near American ones is in itself a stretch. The argument is so shaky that it cannot support itself with damning evidence⁹⁷. The US still dominates the international structure, especially through its military capabilities and technological advancements when it comes to security.

The decline in influence is real for the United States. Though the US may still have a preponderance of power, it no longer has the ability to unilaterally deter or compel the actions of other great powers. Recent years have demonstrated that other larger powers are testing the proverbial waters on just how far the US will go to maintain its position in the system, and if it perceived the US as weak or unwilling, great powers will assert themselves. Ukraine is just

⁹⁷ Robert W. Murray and Luke H. Herington. "Russian, Ukraine and the Testing of American Hegemony" *E-International Relations*. 2014.

the latest example of Russia pushing the limits of American dominance. Other examples, such as Russia's involvement in the Syrian Civil War, Iran's nuclear program, and Arctic aggression all demonstrate clearly that the Russians no longer believe the US is fully capable of containing or deterring their actions. This also sets a dangerous precedent for other emerging powers, as questions abound regarding how China will approach Taiwan, Japan and other matters of its regional interests.

Employing defensive realists techniques to solve Egyptian problem while trying to counter the challenge of a China rising in power and influence with the US being the great power that needs to address this challenge meant that the United States was interested in decreasing aggression in the Middle East to address the international structure pressure to deal with China. The US still is not out of the woods yet.

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