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**PhD THESIS SUMMARY**

*US foreign policy under the aegis of President Donald Trump. A perspective on  
the posterity of the international scene.*

*Case Study: The Middle East*

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## CONTENTS OF THE PHD THESIS

List of abbreviations .....5

*Preface*.....7

### Chapter I. Theoretical approaches and paradigms in the configuration of the

international system.....15

1.1 International politics - a dualistic study between the term "political power" and the question of international peace.....15

1.2 National interest as a political principle. Defining and classifying national power as a determining factor on the international political scene.....20

1.3 Barriers and the balancing of international power – the “balance of power”.....32

1.4 Dominant aspects in international relations: the moral factor and the power of public opinion.....40

1.5 The role of media and social media platforms in US foreign policy.....50

Chapter II. US foreign policy in the last century. The evolution of the American political system.....63

2.1. Foreign policy in the international system.....63

2.2. Alliances and alliance systems in the 20th century. The implications and role of the USA in the two world wars.....68

2.3. Post-war international relations and the US position: sensing and interpreting the main American goals in the world share.....73

2.4. Geostrategic interests and international security at the beginning of the 21st century.....79

2.5. Conclusions.....85

Chapter III. The Trump vision in the foreign policy of the American state: founding themes, reactions, continuity.....87

3.1. "The art of negotiation" - analysis of the Donald Trump character through the perspective of the businessman.....87

3.2. Economic protectionism, freedom and foreign policy.....97

3.3. Controversial political decisions? Repercussions at the international level.....106

3.4. Ways of political dialogue and the Twitter platform as a tool for political debate.....121

3.5. Conclusions.....131

Chapter IV. The implications of US foreign policy in the Trump era in relation to the Middle East. A Study of conflicts of interest and territorial constraints based on national interest.....134

4.1. Brief history of the Middle East – geopolitical interest, natural resources, weaponry and military training.....134

4.2. The theoretical framethesis of US foreign policy in the Middle East.....157

4.3. The Trump Doctrine and the Emergent Evolution of the World Order.....171

Conclusions – the decline of the balance of power and regional instability?.....179

General conclusions.....193

Bibliography.....198

Annexes.....213

## Summary of PhD thesis

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Research objectives.....	5
3. Research motivation .....	6
4. Limits of research .....	7
5. Research hypothesis.....	8
6. Research methodology.....	9
7. The topicality and novelty of the reserach topic.....	10
8. Synthetic presentation of the chapters of the doctoral thesis .....	11
Chapter I. Theoretical approaches and paradigms in the configuration of the international system.....	11
Chapter II. US foreign policy in the last century. The evolution of the American political system.....	13
Chapter III. The Trump vision in the foreign policy of the American state: founding themes, reactions, continuity.....	14
Chapter IV. The implications of US foreign policy in the Trump era in relation to the Middle East. A study of conflicts of interest and territorial constraints based on national interest.....	19
Conclusions and recommendations.....	22
Bibliography.....	26

## **1. Introduction**

It can be stated that the USA is a strong economic, political, social and security leader on the international stage, thus, we can mention that, currently, it is a main actor in the international community, whose presence cannot be ignored. The definition of the foreign policy of a state like the USA can be difficult to analyze because of its relatively large geographical area and the political and social changes that have accompanied the emergence of the United States since the beginning of the War of Independence. In order to understand America's foreign policy decisions, one must analyze the historical decision-making process and the factors that led to the emergence of the US as the main leader on the international stage. The United States has adopted, from independence to the present day, a series of steps aimed at developing externally, and the impact of which has determined, over time, the construction of today's American foreign policy.

The 2016 US presidential election produced an unprecedented state of anticipation and analysis in the field of International Relations, following the unexpected victory of a president who lacked the characteristics of a statesman, his limited political experience and many controversial statements.

Despite all that has been said or reported about Trump and his campaign, he has managed to come to power in the world's largest country and in an era of conservative growth in several countries. It has been found that the presence of Trump at the head of the US administration raises many expected issues at the level of the foreign policy of the United States, which requires the understanding and analysis of the ideological orientation of President Trump and his reflection on the approach of the US foreign policy.

## **2. Research objectives**

The study wants to trace the evolution of American foreign policy since the arrival of Trump and the reflection of these developments on a series of American domestic and foreign policies. In addition, an attempt is made to understand the expected shape and aspects of the international relations system, according to the vision of the Trump administration, following a

prospective study of the data presented and after an in-depth analysis of this data. The study will consider all the dominant writings and the views of various observers regarding the expected future of American foreign policy, particularly in relation to the Middle East region, and the future of international relations in general.

The title of the research paper has a double role: it is a concise and short one that presents the analysis of the US foreign policy defined under the leadership of President Donald Trump, but at the same time, it is intended to arouse the reader's curiosity to deepen the proposed topic and to be able to observe the possible repercussions of the president's policies American that will flow into the Middle East region.

The present thesis aims to consider the following research objectives: First, it will focus on the presentation and analysis of the Donald Trump character from the perspective of the politician, as well as the analysis of the president's foreign policy decisions and how they have influenced US relations with other states and international organizations.

The second objective aims to present the concept of the "balance of power" of a powerful state like the USA in relation to the Middle East, tracing the events from the election of the American president to the present. Moreover, the short-term effects and the reactions received to the US president's intrasigencies in the Middle East region will be followed.

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze and transpose in this research the foreign policy instruments of the USA under the aegis of Donald Trump and how they will intervene in the relations of the American state with the other states of the Middle East, with international organizations, we will observe how the changes generated by US policies will have political, economic, military, security and human rights consequences.

### **3. Research motivation**

The motivation behind my desire to start this research lies in the personal will to prepare a concise analytical study of the changes that have taken place since the election of the American presidency in 2016, a president with no political experience, who raised many question marks regarding the future of international relations, since the USA is a main political leader in the

international arena and any decision in the field of foreign policy would produce major changes at the global level, more precisely it can lead to the imbalance of the balance of power, international security and to the aggravation of conflicts already existing in the Middle East.

The innovative contributions with which I will participate in this study are closely related to the topicality of the subject, so we will see if a president without a political history will manage to lead a strong state like America and if he will have an eligible proposal to resolve the conflicts of the Middle East area or if it will worsen international relations and existing conflicts. At the same time, by including questionnaires in the research paper, we will be able to have access to certain information and we will be able to observe and analyze the changes generated by Trump's policies from the perspective of the population in the Middle East.

#### **4. Research limits**

The present thesis is of particular importance due to the following considerations:

- Scientific: this study proposes to refer to the analysis of the methods and tools used by the US foreign policy under the leadership of Donald Trump in order to involve the American state in the conflicts in the Middle East, but also the American national interest regarding the conflict zone in that region.
- Security: here reference will be made to the American military interventions in the region and which lead to the destabilization of the regional security of the Middle East.
- Social and human rights: this perspective is closely related to the destabilization of regional security, as foreign interventions in the region have contributed to social degradation and triggered huge waves of immigrants.

Another consideration would be the fact that the issue of foreign policy decision-making in International Relations is an aspect of particular interest in the field of Political Sciences, considering the perpetual transformations that take place on the international scene, being considered a subject of debate in academic circles, becoming themes of great interest for research and knowledge projects.

Difficulties in writing the paper would arise because the topic chosen is current and every decision and speech of Trump must be followed, thus the element of novelty will be present until the end of his presidential term. At the same time, being a new topic on the international arena, the theoretical framework will, in most cases, be formed by official normative acts and press statements or online platforms.

## **5. Research hypothesis**

Following the logical line, the limits of the research study are delimited by the existing political realities, thus we start the research from the moment of the presidential elections in the United States of America, in the year 2016, a period in which I will be able to analyze his foreign policy decisions regarding the Middle East region, and I will monitor them, not only until now, but until the end of his presidential term, thus, during the doctoral school that I want to follow, new elements will appear that I will introduce in my research.

The topic of the research question from which I started this paper is the following:

1. *Will Donald Trump, a character with no political experience, be able to make a positive mark on International Relations, or will he manage to unbalance the balance of power and lose the USA's credibility in the international arena?*

2. *What major repercussions will the American president's decisions have on the situation in the Middle East?*

The hypothesis that emerges from the research questions: *As long as the US presidency will be led by Donald Trump through the lens of the businessman and his plan for the American state to become the main economic power of the world, the political decisions taken by him may have negative consequences, both on the targeted states in the region and on American national credibility.*



## **6. Research methodology**

The theoretical framework is a multidisciplinary one, made up of the bibliographic references that will help me write this paper, from the field of International Relations, which contain topics related to the concept of power in International Relations, the balance of power, the national interest, security, the characteristics of the neoconservative ideology, being deeply implemented in US foreign policy, in a relatively new and well-defined geostrategic context, being a right-wing branch of American liberalism that emerged, in large part, as a reaction to the liberal utopianism and irrationality of the New Left. In addition, I analyzed topics from both the economic and historical fields to render the American motives and interests in the intervention in the Middle East region. At the same time, I will also include articles or posts from online platforms, especially in the case of President Trump, in order to make a genuine analysis of his involvement in the region targeted for observation.

The present research is based on two elements, namely a theoretical study, through the critical analysis of specialized theses in the field of international relations and security studies, and an empirical research, carried out on the one hand, a qualitative level, through the analysis and the critical interpretation of the focus group interviews conducted with the American president, through the critical analysis of the statements and press articles that reproduce Donald Trump's decisions regarding the situation in the Middle East, and, on the other hand, a quantitative level, by performing some questionnaires and opinion polls aimed at civilians in the region proposed for analysis, through statistics and numerical data, processed from these questionnaires that I propose to apply, regarding the evolution of the conflict in the region in relation to Trump's decisions from 2016 until now, both from a political, economic, military, security and social point of view. The theoretical study is correlated with the empirical one by means of the comparative method and critical interpretation. The present paper aims, on the one hand, to prove certain formulated and already existing hypotheses, and, on the other hand, to give rise to some new ones, depending on the result of the qualitative research.

The methods and techniques used aim at data collection, processing and analysis, but the main method used is content analysis. For this press analysis, I will monitor press articles, carry out a content analysis, analyze the speeches of political figures relevant to the subject being followed. In order to carry out a rigorous and genuine analysis, a deep analysis of official

documents, acts, reports and laws that could be the subject of the proposed study is necessary. The impact of the mass media is important to note, as the propaganda of political campaigns in the USA is very much based on the information distributed by the mass media, moreover, another means of informational communication is online platforms, in the case of our subject - Donald Trump - it is of Twitter, being his main way of expressing his statements.

This study aims to follow a logical and chronological structure for a good understanding of the evolution of events and the causal relationships arising from them. Thus, if the first chapter is dedicated to the introduction to the subject of the thesis, with emphasis on the research objectives, the justification of the debated topic, the research methods used and the novelty that the study aims to bring to the field, the second chapter will show a retrospective of the foreign policy of the United States of America in the last century, in order to be able to show, and later, compare, the decisions that led to the change of the course of history. The third chapter begins with the coming to the US presidency of Donald Trump, analyzing it from the perspective of a political figure, as well as analyzing US relations with the states of the Middle East, but also with international organizations, under Trump's leadership. The following chapter presents the situation and reasons for the conflicts in the Middle East, approaching the subject from a historical, political, economic, social, military, regional security and cultural perspective. Moreover, we will observe what are the foreign policy and strategy decisions of the USA in relation to the Middle East, what implications they will have, the national and economic interests of the states, consequences that can affect both regional security and at the social level.

The last chapter will bring to the fore the impact and repercussions that could be brought by the decisions of the American president, Donald Trump, at the same time, I will also make an analysis in which I will present the consequences that the international scene could suffer from Trump's presidential mandate. The conclusions, the last chapter, will present an overview of the entire problem on the basis of which the thesis was built, by referring to the current situation in which the relations between the American state, as the main actor in the international arena, and the Middle East region are located.

## **7. The topicality and novelty of the reserach topic**

The novelty of the present research is justified by the fact that it starts an in-depth study of some topical issues, which decisively influence the international power system. In the context of globalization and the evolution of politics and foreign affairs, the analysis of how a powerful state and an important leader like the USA can lose its credibility or unbalance the balance of power through the prism of a president with no history or political skills.

## **8. Synthetic presentation of the chapters of the doctoral thesis**

### **Chapter I. Theoretical approaches and paradigms in the configuration of the international system**

International politics means the system based on the state, unlike world and global politics, international politics studies this system from the perspective of interactions between states. In this sense, even if the states are the main actors, other actors intervene and must be taken into account. Also, at a lower level there is a certain differentiation between international politics and international relations that comes from the nature of relations between states and organizations, but international politics is more about the general attitude of actors, the policies they develop, the policies general and strategic policy ideas of states provided with various guidelines or practices. International relations include in its spectrum, the tangible realities between the actors on the international stage - treaties, operations resulting from direct interaction between states or organizations. This duality derives precisely from the characteristic features of the entire international system that constrain states to have a general policy that cannot be equally transposed according to legislation at the international level, something found predominantly within organizations and treaties.

Politics is considered to be a polysemantic term, "a diversity of meanings that can often seem difficult to assume"<sup>1</sup>. Leo Strauss argued that politics, in its approach, cannot be separated from value judgment, so that politics requires positioning one way or the other, in agreement versus disagreement. At the opposite pole, but equally important, is Max Webber's view, the

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<sup>1</sup> PREDA Cristian, Introduction to Political Science, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 9.

characteristics of genuine politics refer to neutrality and indifference to values, thus "the approach to politics requires neutrality in relation to any value judgment"<sup>2</sup>. Politics is a complex and often ambiguous science, its mechanisms often being complicated. Cristian Preda gives an example: legislation. It exposes the apparently simplistic phenomenon, the fact that a law is what results from the activity of a parliament, then explains the complexity of the legislative process: the large number of people involved in this process, the disagreement produced due to various political divisions, the duration of the debates. Raymond Aron supported the idea that there is a difference between the politics that designates reality and the perception or awareness of this reality, based on a deepening of this science, emphasizing the foundation: "the knowledge of reality, even if it is very different from one individual to another, is part of the regime. And the modern democratic regime starts from reality, from the force of difference. Democracies include difference as an essential given."<sup>3</sup>

The literature presents a dizzying array of interactions between the public, leaders, and the media, the complexity of which is evident. Even this highly stylized representation of the literature reveals studies that argue that mass media influence public opinion, public opinion influences the media, public opinion influences decision makers, decision makers influence public opinion, decision makers influence the media, foreign policy influence's public opinion, decision makers influence events, and the media influence foreign policy. In short, any possible causal links between the public, decision-makers (external and internal) and the media were investigated.

The ability of the public to collect and retain information and use it to form coherent opinions is undoubtedly integral to the functioning of democracy. Contemporary democratic theorists also consider responsiveness to the public to be a cornerstone of democratic governance. However, despite the theoretical importance of public engagement with foreign policy, social scientists have struggled to consistently characterize the public's actual role in the foreign policy process.

The prevailing scientific consensus in this field has been constantly evolving. Early work suggested that public opinion was volatile and lacked structure, or that the public naively followed elite leadership. Over time, a rebuttal arose from scholars who, while acknowledging that typical

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<sup>2</sup> PREDA Cristian, Introduction to Political Science, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> PREDA Cristian, Introduction to Political Science, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 17.

individuals did not know much about politics or foreign policy, argued that the public's individual and collective behavior was nevertheless efficient and rational.<sup>4</sup>

## **Chapter II. US foreign policy in the last century. The evolution of the American political system**

The definition of the foreign policy of a state like the USA can be difficult to analyze because of its relatively large geographical area and the political and social changes that have accompanied the emergence of the United States since the founding of the state. In order to understand America's foreign policy decisions, one must analyze the historical decision-making process and the factors that led to the emergence of the US as the main leader on the international stage. The United States has adopted, from independence to the present day, a series of steps aimed at developing externally, and the impact of which has determined, over time, the construction of today's American foreign policy.

Regarding the tense situation in the Middle East region, I have written a concise presentation on the interests of the Great Powers in the area: for more than 2000 years, the Middle East has been an area of dispute involved in the strategic and ambitious goals of the Great Powers. The last two centuries have witnessed the Middle East's dynamic relations with the Great Powers. OM was seen as a geographical commercial center, an important geopolitical and geostrategic point on the map, being one of the world's regions full of vital natural resources. While oil remains the major focus of external powers in the O.M., it should be noted that it is not their only factor of interest in the region. Added to this is foreign trade and the influence exercised with the aim of asserting power in the region.

From the point of view of the economic interests of external powers, we refer to the importance of the natural resources of the region, if, in the 20th century, the major interest of the great powers was territorial expansion, currently, the struggle is on the front of maintaining influence and control over rich territorial divisions in natural and, above all, energy resources,

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<sup>4</sup> The Role of the Media in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Theoretical Framework, available at: [https://regeneronline.de/journalcco/2002\\_2/pdf\\_2002\\_2/naveh.pdf](https://regeneronline.de/journalcco/2002_2/pdf_2002_2/naveh.pdf)

since the 20th century is considered to be the century of oil, in the same way that the 19th century was that of coal.

The state that is subject to a detailed analysis is the USA, a state that, with the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, is redefining its status and position as an influential power in the region. Although there have been some changes on the international scene, we can say that American interests remain roughly unchanged, the American state continues to show its interest in the region's natural resources, especially oil, but also in arms control. The United States of America pursued a double policy, as it wanted to maintain a relationship and a bilateral dialogue with Israel, but also to establish a cooperative relationship with the Arab states regarding the maintenance of security in the Gulf. Specifically, it pursued a policy of promoting security with both the Israeli state and the Arab states to enable it to secure its control point and route to the region's oil resources.

### **Chapter III. The Trump vision in the foreign policy of the American state: founding themes, reactions, continuity**

The 2016 US presidential election produced an unprecedented state of anticipation and analysis in the field of International Relations, after an unexpected victory by a president who lacked the necessary characteristics in the political field and many controversial statements. Since his arrival in the White House, Donald Trump has favored a more active intervention by his government in the level of trade of the United States with the rest of the world. In many of his public statements, Trump has accused his trading partners of "taking advantage" of his country through "huge trade deficits," predatory and unfair trade practices. The American Union's "horrible deals" with states that "don't pay their bills" would have turned it, to its detriment, into the "world's leading consumer." Trump criticized, first of all, the negative effects of these agreements on the American economy and, in particular, on the social and material well-being of its population.<sup>5</sup>

Despite all that has been said or reported about Trump and his campaign, he has managed to come to power in the world's largest country and in an era of conservative growth in several

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<sup>5</sup> Emily Anne JEFFERS, The "America First" Trade Policy of the Trump Administration and its Economic and Military Repercussions, p. 35

countries. It has been found that the presence of Trump at the head of the US administration raises many expected issues at the level of the foreign policy of the United States, which requires the understanding and analysis of the ideological orientation of President Trump and his reflection on the approach of the US foreign policy.

Often the best predictor of a new US president's foreign policy is to look at his predecessor. However, each president leaves his impact on American foreign policy. Donald Trump came to office with no government or foreign policy experience, and his presidential campaign rhetoric suggests significant changes in a US foreign policy he has described as "America First." This research report examines Trump's most controversial foreign policy decisions since his inauguration, both in terms of how they are made and on three levels—interests, strategy, and tactics. The argument is that while Trump's foreign policy has many continuities with his predecessors, there are notable differences, especially in how it is conducted and the conflict between his intensely personal style and the control that the US foreign policy establishment has over him. Ultimately, any permanent change in US foreign policy beyond Trump may have more to do with larger changes in a world no longer dominated by the US.<sup>6</sup>

Using the neo-protectionist, mercantilist, and nationalist slogans of "America First" and "Make America Great Again," Trump has based his foreign policy in the area of international trade on two main goals. The former seeks to promote "fair trade" to reduce trade deficits, restore reciprocity and balance in the United States' trade relations with its trading partners, and defend American trade interests against the interests of other countries. Second, Trump's foreign policy intends to stop the displacement of productive activities from the United States and create new jobs to encourage a strong and growing domestic economy ("Make America Great Again").<sup>7</sup>

One of Trump's main campaign promises was to renegotiate or condition the United States to withdraw from many multilateral international trade agreements. After winning the election,

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<sup>6</sup> The Trump Presidency and American Democracy: A Historical and Comparative Analysis, American Political Science Association, Cambridge University Press, available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/trump-presidency-and-american-democracy-a-historical-and-comparative-analysis/E157E9BBA8D3E531A7DD4FD1A01E0478/core-reader>

<sup>7</sup> The Trump Presidency and American Democracy: A Historical and Comparative Analysis, American Political Science Association, Cambridge University Press, available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/trump-presidency-and-american-democracy-a-historical-and-comparative-analysis/E157E9BBA8D3E531A7DD4FD1A01E0478/core-reader>

Trump was particularly consistent and kept this promise. Shortly after his arrival in the White House, President Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and initiated the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada. At the same time, Trump blocked the Transatlantic Partnership (TAP) negotiations with the EU and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) with 24 other WTO members. Finally, the Trump administration also initiated a blockade against another WTO-administered multilateral agreement: the Dispute Settlement Understanding.

The TPP was originally a free trade agreement negotiated between 12 countries in the Pacific region, geographically located in three different continents (Asia, America and Oceania). Its ambitious goal was to create the world's largest free trade area, representing 40% of global GDP and a global market of over 800 million people. The draft treaty contained 30 chapters, with more than 2,000 pages, and was a priority for former President Barack Obama's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region. It represented not only free access for many American companies to the evolution of the domestic markets of the countries in this region, but it would also have a clear geostrategic value of controlling China's influence. The Obama administration viewed it as a legal tool to promote multilateral cooperation with states in the region, to retain American guidance and influence their respective international agendas. It was also an opportunity to preserve the Western path of trade liberalization under international law against the novelty of China's initiative.

Less concerned about the geopolitical implications of the deal, President Trump has estimated that the TPP is a no-deal treaty made to persuade China to be a part of it. In Trump's view, the geopolitical dimension of trade deals does not matter if they harm American workers. In his 2017 trade policy draft, Trump clearly rejected the notion that the United States should, for an alleged geopolitical advantage, turn a blind eye to unfair trade practices that disadvantage American workers, farmers, ranchers and businesses in markets global. Trump's foreign policy objectives have also materialized in the renegotiation of another international multilateral trade agreement - NAFTA. In 1992, Mexico, Canada, and the United States concluded NAFTA, seeking to reduce trade (but not political) borders and complementarity among the three economies in the North American region. The objectives of the agreement were to "remove barriers to trade (...) Promote conditions of fair competition(...) increase investment opportunities, provide adequate and effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights and create effective



procedures for the resolution of disputes".<sup>8</sup> Shortly after its entry into force, the treaty achieved its main objective - the elimination of trade barriers and launched an "All Duty Free" zone in the integrated territories of its member states. Other non-tariff barriers to trade persisted and competition from low-priced imports from other (developing) countries in the North American region raised some serious questions about the benefits of NAFTA for its developed member states, especially the United States.

Since the beginning of the presidential campaign, Donald Trump has promised his voters to renegotiate NAFTA. After the election, on May 18, 2017, President Trump became the first US president to begin renegotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement such as NAFTA. From the Trump administration's point of view, since the deal went into effect in 1994, trade deficits have exploded, thousands of factories have closed and millions of Americans have found themselves stranded, unable to use the skills they used to have were trained. The goals of the US government's renegotiation were to maintain the elimination of trade barriers to United States products, reduce trade deficits with Mexico and Canada, and achieve more reciprocal and secure access to their domestic markets.

Trump's foreign policy in international trade has not been limited to withdrawing or renegotiating multilateral international trade agreements. Trump's vision of international trade has also clashed with the WTO and the multilateral international trading system as a whole. As noted above, the "trade war" caused by the United States' decision to raise tariffs on imports from the rest of the world is a severe violation of many articles of multilateral trade agreements administered by the WTO. In response to Trump's neo-protectionism, many other countries have filed claims against the United States before the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body, or Dispute Settlement System (DSS).

Trump's bilateralism in international trade policy is inspired by the mercantilist theory of international trade developed in Europe in the 16th century. Mercantilist authors assume strong government intervention in the volume and nature of foreign trade and use trade taxes as a tool to manipulate the balance of trade in favor of their own domestic economy. In the view of mercantilists, a country should try to maximize exports, minimize imports<sup>55</sup> and accumulate

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<sup>8</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), available at: <https://www.cbp.gov/document/forms/form-434-north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta-certificate-origin>

precious metals that would allow it to reach a positive trade balance with constant trade surpluses in its international relations. The two main goals of mercantilism are: the accumulation of gold to consolidate the power of the monarch and to promote trade and industrial development in the domestic economy. A mercantilist trade policy refers to increasing exports of manufactures and imports of primary inputs, banning imports of manufactured goods and exports of primary inputs, and concessioning monopolies to private investors. In the mercantilist world, military power determines the economic wealth of nations. War is also an instrument of foreign trade for mercantilists because it serves to preserve trade monopolies and economic dominance. Their ultimate objective, so far, is to win wars as the key to ensuring economic and commercial success.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike his postwar predecessors, President Trump supports blatant economic and military protectionism, which aims to revive American Greatness from the fundamental challenges of poverty in America's inner cities, economic decay, proliferation of crime and homeland security problems, and apparently deteriorating capabilities US military.

This Trump administration's overall strategy for restoring national greatness emerges from the diagnosis that Trump's predecessors systematically neglected. US national interest in strengthening the military capabilities and economic development of America's Allies. His America First policy suggests a decades-long commitment to liberal internationalism—specifically, global engagement through multilateral forms of governance, commitment to increased economic cooperation through open trade, and the promotion of human rights, democracy, and liberal values—all of which must be abandoned by adopting instead nationalist and anti-interventionist policies. Those policies, as the Trump administration has repeatedly hinted at, include dramatically reducing US foreign aid, systematically reviewing and eventually withdrawing from longstanding security guarantees to allies.

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<sup>9</sup> Mercantilism, disponibile a: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mercantilism>

## **Chapter IV. The implications of US foreign policy in the Trump era in relation to the Middle East. A study of conflicts of interest and territorial constraints based on national interest**

Barack Obama has built a Middle East strategy designed to repair the damage done during George W. Bush's presidency. The United States needed to rest an exhausted military, replenish its depleted strength, and create political space to address longstanding challenges. To that end, he reduced troops in Iraq, avoided further large-scale military interventions, asked allies to take more responsibility for regional security, and mostly sought to address issues through diplomacy. He used a combination of engagement and sanctions to induce Iran to give up its nuclear weapons and tried to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians, approaches endorsed by the international community - including a two-state solution, flexibility on the status of East Jerusalem , and stopping the expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory. To the chagrin of allies such as Saudi Arabia, Obama has also encouraged democratic reforms in the region, albeit inconsistently and with little success, and has avoided overtly favoring either side of the Sunni-Shia divide.

Donald Trump took a different approach. Certainly, there are aspects of continuity. The president encouraged allies to shoulder more of the regional security burden, resisted the temptation to send large numbers of troops to Syria and other hot spots, and — like Obama — tolerated Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen. In one key respect, he departed from the policies of his predecessor. Relations with Riyadh have improved significantly, whereas during Obama's presidency, the US and Saudi governments were uncertain. Similarly, improving ties with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, which suffered during Obama's tenure, was a priority. Trump withdrew from the 2015 deal to reduce Iran's nuclear weapons - officially known as the JCPOA - and reinstated sanctions on Tehran. Iran was a top concern of the administration. However, the administration has struggled to formulate a realistic policy following its May 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA. The marginalization or departure of advisers inclined to support the JCPOA — such as Defense Secretary James Mattis, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and former national security adviser Herbert Raymond McMaster — and the influence of national security adviser John Bolton made the withdrawal from the agreement possible .

In a speech in May 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the administration would be willing to restore diplomatic and economic ties in exchange for: complete denuclearization; ending Iran's ballistic missile program; the release of all prisoners who are citizens of the United States or an allied nation; the end of efforts to expand Iranian influence in the region, particularly in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan; and the end of cyber attacks.

Trump and his advisers have abandoned their longstanding policy of opposing Shiites and Sunni extremism, opting to turn to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — and by extension Israel — all of which favor confrontation with Tehran. This decision risked destabilizing the Middle East. Saudi Arabia hosted its first visiting foreigner and ignored the Riyadh disaster, an intervention against the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen. Most importantly, the administration was in the process of creating in the Middle East a strategic alliance - an "Arab NATO" - a proposal supported by the Saudis in the past. The goal would be to increase global security and economic cooperation, including a regional missile defense shield, and the confrontation with Iran that would assume a major role on the agenda of the new alliance.

Israel and its peace process supports the confrontation with Tehran, which it considers an existential threat. In fact, Israel is one of the few countries in the region that is happy with the president's policies. This is largely a product of conservative political culture, where support for Israel is unquestioned. In addition to withdrawing from the JCPOA, Trump moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem - a move long sought by the Israelis - and notified the Palestinians that their diplomatic mission in Washington would be closed. As ambassador, he sent attorney David Friedman, a longtime friend of the president who has been a vocal opponent of the two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The administration is also canceling all funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees and would like to dramatically reduce the number of Palestinians granted refugee status. Doing so would essentially eliminate the right of return for most Palestinians. The administration has also considerably reduced the financial aid granted to the West Bank and Gaza.

Despite this unilateral approach, Trump has promised to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to reports, players such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan have rejected fundamental components of the plan. After the embassy move to Jerusalem, Palestinian National

Authority President Mahmoud Abbas refused to meet with Kushner and Greenblatt, let alone discuss the possibility of a deal.

Although Trump repeatedly criticized Obama's Syria policy before taking office, as president he faces the same challenge as his predecessor - the desire to influence the course of the conflict and the post-war order without sending large numbers of troops. Like Obama, he has taken a similar approach, which involves focusing on defeating the Islamic State and pressuring other nations to take action that will serve US interests. He had little success in these efforts. The presence of a small number of US troops does not fundamentally change the dynamic, and when it comes to determining the nature of Syria's post-conflict political landscape, Washington is likely to have less influence than Russia, Iran or Turkey.

Trump apparently supports the ascendancy of the Saudi-Israeli-UAE axis and the corresponding geopolitical consequences. However, there is no indication that this is the product of careful analysis. The administration's only public presentation of its vision for the region, the national security strategy, mentions only vague goals such as promoting stability and a favorable balance of power, and like other analysts, we noted that it bears little relation to the president's other foreign policy statements . Instead, his decision-making is the confluence of a number of largely independent factors. Washington has long had alliances with Saudi Arabia and Israel, maintaining them has involved a balancing act, seeking improved but still strained ties.

The Biden administration's support of human rights and democracy around the world has made it a prominent rhetorical focus of its foreign policy. Shortly after taking office, President Joseph R. Biden pledged to center US foreign policy on the defense of democracy and the protection of human rights, and to pursue diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values: the defense of liberty, the promotion of opportunity, the universal support of rights, respecting the rule of law and treating each person with dignity. Following these presidential commitments, Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged that the Biden-Harris Administration will prioritize human rights in US foreign policy and advocate against human rights abuses wherever they occur, whether the perpetrators are adversaries or partners.

The Biden administration has pushed Washington back to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Biden endorsed former President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and pushed for normalization of ties between Israel and the Gulf Arab states. But

the Democratic administration rejects its predecessor's premise for that strategy — forming a united front between former adversaries against Tehran and placing newly established diplomatic ties in the Middle East. Unlike in 2015-2016, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh are no longer organizing a public campaign against Washington's proposed action in Tehran. And Saudi Arabia and Iran are holding unofficial talks through Iraqi mediation to end relations.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The present research aimed to consider the following research objectives: firstly, it focused on the presentation and analysis of the Donald Trump character from the perspective of the political man, with the aim of facilitating the comprehensive understanding between the importance of the nature of man as a social individual and the influence them, in our case, on the decision-making methods in the field of foreign policy, as well as to analyze and transpose in this research the foreign policy instruments before the Trump era, as a review of the foreign policy system developed by the American state from the 20th century and until the end of Obama's term. We specified what were the effects of foreign policy decisions in relation to the other states of the Middle East, with international organizations, observing how the changes generated by American policies in the Trump era had consequences in the political, economic, military, security and human rights fields.

The importance of my inquiry is revealed by the fact that the subject is considered to be a recent and far-reaching one, which will surely enter the history of the United States of America and International Relations Studies. Thus, based on my research, written throughout and following the real-time trajectory of the US President, Donald J. Trump, new lines of research have been opened that are the subject of several disciplines. It will be possible to analyze sociological and psychological approaches, public international law, security and intelligence. Moreover, I outlined with special consideration the fact that the sociological factor is an important pillar in shaping a research, thus in the science of sociology, "social reality is made up of structures, forces and objective conditions - existing outside the consciousness and will of the individual - but also from subjective reality. And the latter means, mainly, the following social actors act by virtue of a motivation, which is not reduced to the minimum needs but also includes higher needs, such as the

full realization of the personality, the attachment to values (solidarity, justice, truth, etc.) . In addition to the actual motivation, needs and goals, subjectivity assumes that people do not relate directly to the world and their peers, but through symbols, codes, of greater or lesser generality, from the language of a culture to symbols and codes (not infrequently secret) specific to certain groups and organizations. Individuals continuously interpret the micro and macro social environment in which they live, the behaviors of others and their own. Interpretations, in turn, are not passive elements of subjectivity, they translate into acts of conduct. To a considerable extent, the way we act depends on the way we perceive and interpret. In other words, human agents, as individuals, groups, peoples and cultures, always construct through interaction both the subjective and the objective reality."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I consider that the sociological aspect of this thesis must also be treated with consideration, closely related to the field of political sociology and which frames and analyzes the typologies of characters that come into contact with the event that is to be debated, and because politics can be highlighted through the factor human, therefore, in the continuation of my doctoral research work, I included two appendices revealing two subjects with Palestinian citizenship, for which I inserted a set of questions intended to consolidate and argue the situation in the Palestinian territory, including the situations generated both by politics foreign policy of the United States of America, as well as the tensions that gripped the territorial region, supported and fueled by regional actors.

At the theoretical level, the identification of Trump's leadership typology was the basis of the comparative analysis between the policies carried out by his predecessors, his novelty elements and the particular changes he made in the international scene, emphasizing his policies implemented in the world political arena.

If there is one thing that is certain and indubitable, it is that history shows us the unpredictable nature of circumstances and the political decisions of leaders, which undergo continuous evolution. Regardless of the president, some decision-making elements are likely to remain common, while some old debates tend to resurface.

At the level of the debate, a continuity can be observed in certain foreign policy decisions, but the differentiating factor undoubtedly exists, especially in terms of its actions in the Middle

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<sup>10</sup> T. Rotariu, P. Iluț, *Sociology*, Ed. Mesagerul, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, p. 12.

East, relations with international organizations and economic protectionism, used as the main tool of external politics.

The Middle East has been a strategic point since the 19th century, having a special geopolitical, geostrategic importance, a geographical commercial center, being one of the regions rich in natural resources vital in the fields of military and expansion policy. Although oil remains the main source of major interest, it should be noted that it is not the only one. Added to this is foreign trade, influence and force used to establish power in the region.

Donald Trump has set a precedent and produced some destabilization in the region through several actions. Among them, we mention the move of the United States of America embassy to Jerusalem, the withdrawal from the agreement on the control of nuclear weapons with Iran, established in 2015, officially called the JCPOA, established an axis of connection with regional actors in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia-United Arab Emirates- Israel, thus favoring the confrontation with Tehran, these decisions at the time risked the destabilization of the Middle East, and yet leaving an imprint that could last in the future.

Therefore, the research aims at an analysis of the knowledge of the history of the Middle East, points out the importance of this region for external political actors, describes the external influences that the Middle East has had over the course of two centuries in order to facilitate the understanding of foreign implications in the area. We also discussed the similarities and differences between the foreign policy decisions made by President Donald J. Trump compared to his predecessors; we aimed at the importance of creating a precedent through the prism of his actions in the region, an important fact for future research in the field, as the future reactions of regional actors, originating from the closeness of the actions of the Trump mandate, can be analyzed. In other words, the present research is important for future historians for the following reasons: it was written in real time, highlighting here the important details that might be lost in time, for example, the tweets of the US president, which are not I can still find it because of his deleted account. The second aspect is related to the possibility of new analytical approaches to the character of Donald J. Trump that are the subject of the fields of History, Political Sociology, International Relations, Public International Law, but also approaches regarding regional, international actors or organizations, regarding the actions taken after the end of Trump's mandate, whether or not there will be a restraint on the foreign policy of the United States of America, a



diminished influence or a continued rise, both in the targeted region and on the entire international political scene.

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