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The Individual Level of Analysis in the
U.S.-Israeli Context

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Duccio Basosi

Assistant Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Federico Donelli

Graduand

Giovanna

Rettore

Matriculation number

863500

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Abbreviations

American Association of Retired Person.....	AARP
American Israel Public Affairs Committee.....	AIPAC
Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.....	BDS
Central Intelligence Agency.....	CIA
Chief Executive Officer.....	CEO
Christian United for Israel.....	CUI
Council of Foreign Relations.....	CFR
European Union.....	EU
Fiscal Year.....	FY
Grand Old Party.....	GOP
Gross Domestic Product.....	GDP
International Atomic Energy Agency.....	IAEA
International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.....	ICEJ
International Criminal Court.....	ICC
Islamic Relief Agency.....	ISRA
Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.....	ISIS
Israel Democracy Institute.....	IDI
Jewish Democratic Council of America.....	JDCA
Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.....	JCPOA
Joint Plan of Action.....	JPA
Memorandum of Understanding.....	MOU
Middle East.....	ME
Middle East and Nord Africa.....	MENA
Missile Defense Agency.....	MDA
National Intelligence Council.....	NIC

Occupied Palestinian Territories.....	OPT
Organization of Islamic Cooperation.....	OIC
Palestine Liberation Organization.....	PLO
Palestinian Authority.....	PA
Political Action Committee.....	PAC
Prime Minister.....	PM
Qualitative Military Edge.....	QME
Republic Jewish Coalition.....	RJC
Emergency Committee for Israel.....	ECI
The Israel Project.....	TIP
Unitarian Universalist.....	UU
United Arab Emirates.....	UAE
United Church of Christ.....	UCC
United Nations.....	UN
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.....	UNESCO
United Nations General Assembly.....	UN GA
United Nations Human Rights Council.....	UN HRC
United Nations Relief and Works Agency.....	UNRWA
United Nations Security Council.....	UN SC
United States Agency for International Development.....	USAID
Vice President.....	VP
Zionist Organization of America.....	ZOA

Israel-U.S. Relations Chronology

1881-1903	First Aliyah
1882	Manifesto of the Bilu
4 March 1897	William McKinley 25th President of the U.S.
29 August 1897	First Zionist Convention
1904-1913/4	Second Aliyah
14 September 1901	Theodore Roosevelt 26th President of the U.S.
4 March 1909	William Howard Taft 27th President of the U.S.
4 March 1913	Woodrow Wilson 28th President of the U.S.
1917	Fall of the Ottoman Empire
2 November 1917	Balfour Declaration
1919-1923	Third Aliyah
25 April 1920	British Mandate over Palestine Assigned
4 March 1921	Warren G. Harding 29th President of the U.S.
2 August 1923	Calvin Coolidge 30th President of the U.S.
29 September 1923	Britain official control over Palestine
1924-1928	Fourth Aliyah
4 March 1929	Herbert Hoover 31st President of the U.S.
1929-1939	Fifth Aliyah
4 March 1933	Franklin D. Roosevelt 32nd President of the U.S.
1939-1945	Second War World
12 April 1945	Harry S. Truman 33rd President of the U.S.
29 November 1947	UN GA Resolution 181 (II)
14 May 1948	Independence War; Birth of the State of Israel; Nakbah

14 May 1948	David Ben-Gurion elected Israel's PM
20 January 1953	Dwight D. Eisenhower
26 January 1954	Moshe Sharett elected Israel's PM
3 November 1955	David Ben-Gurion elected Israel's PM
29 October - 7 November 1956	Suez Crisis / Second Arab Israeli War
20 January 1961	John F. Kennedy 35th President of the U.S.
26 June 1963	Levi Eshkol elected Israel's PM
22 November 1963	Lyndon B. Johnson 36th President of the U.S.
28 May 1964	Foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organization
5-11 June 1967	Six Days War
20 January 1969	Richard Nixon 37th President of the U.S.
26 February 1969	Yigal Allon elected Israel's PM
17 March 1969	Golda Meir elected Israel's PM
6-25 October 1973	Yom Kippur War
9 August 1974	Gerald Ford 38th President of the U.S.
17 September 1978	Camp David Accords
3 June 1974	Yitzhak Rabin elected Israel's PM
20 January 1977	Jimmy Carter 39th President of the U.S.
20 June 1977	Menachem Begin elected Israel's PM
26 March 1979	Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty
20 January 1981	Ronald Reagan 40th President of the U.S.
6 June 1982 - 5 June 1985	Lebanon War / Operation Peace for Galilee
10 October 1983	Yitzhak Shamir elected Israel's PM
13 September 1984	Shimon Peres elected Israel's PM

20 October 1986	Yitzhak Shamir elected Israel's PM
8 December 1987 - 13 September 1993	First Intifada
20 January 1989	George H.W. Bush 41st President of the U.S.
2 August 1990 - 17 January 1991	Gulf War / Operation Desert Shield
30 October 1991	Madrid Conference
13 July 1992	Yitzhak Rabin elected Israel's PM
20 January 1993	Bill Clinton 42nd President of the U.S.
13 September 1993	Oslo Accords I
26 October 1994	Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty
4 November 1995	Shimon Peres elected Israel's PM
18 June 1996	Benjamin Netanyahu elected Israel's PM
4 November 1997	Yitzhak Rabin's Assassination
6 July 1999	Ehud Barak elected Israel's PM
28 September 2000 - 8 February 2005	Second Intifada / Al-Aqsa Intifada
20 January 2001	George W. Bush 43rd President of the U.S.
7 March 2001	Ariel Sharon elected Israel's PM
23 June 2002	Beginning of the West Bank Barrier's Construction
30 April 2003	Road Map to Peace
12 September 2005	Israeli Disengagement from 21 Settlements in Gaza
4 June 2006	Ehud Olmert elected Israel's PM
6 September 2007	Operation Orchard
27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009	Gaza War / Operation Cast Lead
20 January 2009	Barack Obama 44th President of the U.S.
31 March 2009	Benjamin Netanyahu elected Israel's PM

2009	First Talks for a Two-State Solution
2010-2013	Secret Negotiations in London for a Two-State Solution
27 March 2011	Beginning of the Iron Dome Project
27 July 2012	US-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act
14-21 November 2012	Operation Pillar of Defense
June 2013-April 2013	Kerry's Negotiations for a Two-State Solution
24 November 2013	Signing of the Joint Plan of Action
5 March 2014	US-Israel Strategic Partnership Act
8 July - 26 August 2014	2014 Gaza war / Operation Protective Edge
14 July 2015	Signing of the JCPOA
September 2016	Memorandum of Understanding
23 December 2016	Abstention to UN SC Resolution 2334
20 January 2017	Donald J. Trump 45th President of the U.S.
6 December 2017	Recognition by the U.S. of Jerusalem as Israel Capital
8 May 2018	U.S. Withdrawal from JCPOA
14 May 2018	Opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem
August 2018	U.S. Cut Funds to UNRWA
25 March 2019	U.S. Recognition of Israel Sovereignty over the Golan Heights
28 January 2020	Deal of the Century - Peace Plan for Prosperity
September 2020	Abraham Accords
20 January 2021	Joe Biden 46th President of the U.S.
6-21 May 2021	Israel-Palestine Crisis
13 June 2021	Naftali Bennet elected Israel's PM

Abstract

Fin dalla creazione dello Stato d'Israele nel 1948, le relazioni tra questo nascente stato e gli Stati Uniti d'America sono sempre state costanti. Nonostante questo, in ogni Amministrazione è possibile riscontrare alcune differenze nei loro atteggiamenti verso questo Stato, con le relative conseguenze nella politica estera. L'amministrazione Obama, di natura democratica, puntava non solo a stabilizzare e a sviluppare i rapporti con Israele, ma si è subito posta anche l'obiettivo di aiutare e porre in maggiore rilievo i Palestinesi e le loro esigenze. Obama e i suoi funzionari erano convinti della necessità e dell'importanza della creazione di due stati, uno israeliano e uno palestinese. L'ostacolo principale per poter arrivare a questa soluzione era, ed è tuttora per queste personalità, la presenza delle costruzioni israeliane nei territori occupati della Cisgiordania e di Gerusalemme Est. Tuttavia, sebbene l'amministrazione Obama abbia aiutato considerevolmente Israele dal punto di vista economico e militare (con aiuti economici pari a 38 miliardi di dollari e il finanziamento per la creazione dell'Iron Dome System per proteggere la popolazione israeliana dai razzi nemici), i rapporti tra i due leader, Obama e Netanyahu, non era affatto roseo. I due si sono scontrati duramente molte volte: Netanyahu ha pubblicamente sostenuto il candidato Repubblicano Mitt Romney nelle elezioni del 2012 e tenuto un discorso al Congresso dove insultò Obama. Al contrario, tra il successore di Obama, Trump, e il Premier israeliano c'era una grande amicizia. Inoltre, l'amministrazione Trump può essere considerata una delle più pro-Israele di tutte le precedenti amministrazioni americane, viste le innumerevoli, e controverse, politiche adottate a favore di Israele tra cui: il riconoscimento di Gerusalemme come capitale di Israele e il relativo spostamento dell'Ambasciata da Tel Aviv a Gerusalemme. Oltre a questo, Trump ha riconosciuto la sovranità nazionale israeliana sulle Golan Heights, che

furono conquistate da Israele durante la Guerra dei Sei Giorni nel 1967, è uscito dall'accordo sul nucleare firmato da Obama nel 2015 e ha tolto i fondi per finanziare la UNRWA. Ha anche avviato le relazioni tra Israele e quattro paesi arabi, tra cui gli Emirati Arabi Uniti, e di aver proposto un piano per risolvere il conflitto arabo israeliano.

Considerato queste differenze nell'atteggiamento delle amministrazioni nei confronti di Israele, si è ritenuto necessario cercare di scoprire i motivi dietro a queste politiche. Questo lavoro si propone quindi di rispondere a una domanda precisa: quali sono stati gli elementi che, dal punto di vista dell'"Livello di Analisi Individuale", hanno influenzato le politiche estere delle amministrazioni Obama e Trump nei confronti di Israele. Per poter rispondere a tale domanda è stato necessario innanzitutto comprendere che cosa si intende con Livello di Analisi Individuale: per poter studiare gli avvenimenti storici, gli studiosi di relazioni internazionali possono soffermarsi e analizzare non solo una delle figure centrali di ogni stato, il suo leader, ma anche i suoi più stretti collaboratori. Prendendo quindi come soggetti di analisi non solo i due Presidenti americani ma anche le figure più vicine a loro, e che avevano un ruolo di primaria importanza nelle relazioni con Israele, è stato quindi possibile riuscire a inquadrare e a individuare quei fattori che hanno avuto un peso importante nell'influenzare i processi decisionali delle amministrazioni. Dopo una lettura attenta di una serie di articoli accademici (che sono stati ripresi e usati in questo lavoro per la sua elaborazione) che trattavano non solo delle politiche estere ma anche di tali soggetti, si è potuto arrivare a due fattori ai quali gli autori davano un certo carico di importanza e che, essenzialmente, hanno contribuito a influenzare le decisioni della politica estera americana.

Vista quindi l'importanza delle amministrazioni per poter determinare e trovare i fattori influenzanti la politica estera, si è ritenuto necessario trattare queste personalità, che da un punto di vista religioso, economico e/o ideologico sono collegate con Israele, in un capitolo specifico a loro dedicato. Dalla loro analisi si è passati allo studio dei risultati che sono emersi: l'importanza delle Lobby israeliane e dei Cristiani Sionisti che esercitano la loro influenza politica e religiosa a vantaggio di Israele. Si è riscontrato, ovviamente, una differenza tra l'influenza esercitata da questi fattori. L'amministrazione Obama, sebbene abbia attuato politiche molto forti per tutelare la sicurezza di Israele e per sviluppare il suo reparto militare, non ha fatto cenno, nei suoi otto anni, di voler riconoscere Gerusalemme come capitale di Israele, come invece era stato promesso da Obama stesso durante i suoi comizi. È stato possibile riscontrare dalle analisi come l'amministrazione Obama fosse molto unita sul fronte della Soluzione dei Due Stati, e

come anche il benessere dei Palestinesi fosse al centro delle loro scelte. Inoltre, non è stato possibile trovare riferimenti a influenze pesanti da parte dei Cristiani Sionisti durante l'amministrazione Obama e, in più, lo stesso Presidente riuscì a tenere testa alle Lobby in alcune occasioni. Al contrario, l'amministrazione Trump era costituita da un numero importante di personalità sostenitrici e finanziatrici delle costruzioni israeliane in Cisgiordania e di Cristiani Sionisti (i quali ritengono che la Seconda Venuta del Messia avverrà soltanto quando tutti gli ebrei torneranno nella Terra Santa) in posizioni rilevanti e strategiche. Inoltre, la campagna elettorale di Trump poté contare sul grande aiuto economico di un magnate dei casinò americano, Sheldon Adelson, il quale era anche un potente Lobbista ebreo.

Introduction

It is commonly accepted to describe and refer to the relationship between the State of Israel and the United States of America as a *special¹, unbreakable, and unshakable* one (Baroud, 2017; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1998; Shilon 2019; U.S. Department of State, 2021). The U.S. Department of State (2021) itself states that "Israel is a great partner to the United States, and Israel has no greater friend than the United States". To support this statement, Tzipi Livni (2012), minister in several Israeli governments, trusts that, since America and Israel share "democratic values", Israel will not change its role as an ally of the United States. Moreover, since the deepening of this relationship, it is questioned whether Israel would survive without U.S. help, not only in the economic and security area but also in the diplomatic one. For example, until 2011, the United States vetoed between the 38 and 41 unilateral or anti-Israel Resolutions at the United Nations (U.N.). The possibility of a U.S. retreat from supporting Israel seems improbable as for now, considering how the U.S. and the Israeli political and cultural basis are embedded with one another, severing them would prove difficult for the Americans (Freilich, 2017).

Another way to name this relationship is *special patron-client relationship* based on the American aid in the political, military, security, and economic sphere to Israel. In exchange for American support, Israel has to discuss and consider U.S. interests and

¹The book "*American Orientalism, The United States and the Middle East since 1945*" has a special chapter, number three "*The Making of a Special Relationship: America and Israel*" where the author Douglas Little (2008) explains the origins and the relationship between Israel and the American Presidents. Also the book "*Israel and the Clash of Civilisations, Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*" by Jonathan Cook (2008) deals with the special relation between the two countries in chapter 3 "*End of the Strongmen*" in its sub-chapter "*Israel's Relations with its Patrons*".

opinions in its foreign policy, needs to act diplomatically, and tries to prevent the use of military force (Bar-Simon-Tov, 1998; Freilich, 2017). Concerning this matter, Avi Shilon (2019) suggests that, upon reading Ehud Barak's biography *My Country, My Life*, in case of American disapproval of an Israeli policy, they can make the Israeli aware of their disposition and Israel would act accordingly. Supporting this opinion, Freilich (2017) states that, even if there were moments when Israel did not follow U.S. dispositions in this unsymmetrical alliance, the United States still is the "be-all and end-all" primary determinant in Israeli decision-making policies.

1. From 1948² to 2008: U.S. Presidents and Israel

² 1948 has two different connotations: from the Israeli side, it is the year they gained a homeland for all the Jews; for the Palestinians, it is called the Nakbah, the disaster. The book *The Israel-Arab Reader* by Walter Laqueur (1970) comprises the most important documents and speeches of the Israeli-Arab history from the Manifesto of the Bilu 1882 to the 1969 speech made by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The book presents the Israeli Proclamation of Independence of May 14th, 1948. Such declaration highlights Israel's ancient history in the Land and stresses how the recent War and the Holocaust that the Jewish population suffered showed how important it was for the Jews to have a land of their own. The declaration recalls the U.N. GA Resolution of November 29th, 1947, which entailed the creation of the State of Israel.

Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé (2010), in their book "Gaza in Crisis" suggest that the Lobbies on U.S. soil helped the creation of the State of Israel. Also, the book *Against Our Better Judgment, The hidden history of how the U.S. was used to create Israel* by Alison Weir (2014) deals with how the Israelis managed to create their State with America's approval.

Khirbet Khizeh (La rabbia del vento in Italian) was published in 1949 by S. Yitzhar (1926-2006), an Israeli writer and politician. The book received many criticisms at home because it dealt with the 1948 Independence War and the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homes and villages by the Israeli military. Yitzhar differentiated himself from other Israeli authors of the time who used the literature to celebrate the greatness of their new nation. His literature was more a reflection on the conflict. The protagonist is an elderly Israeli soldier who fought for the Independence of Israel and recounted the conquest of his regiment of some Arab village and the actions committed by his fellow soldiers. The protagonist wonders the rights and the morals of what they were doing to the Palestinian population: *"Then we saw a woman who was walking in a group of three or four other women. She was holding the hand of a child about seven years old. There was something special about her. She seemed stern, self-controlled, austere in her sorrow. Tears, which hardly seemed to be her own, rolled down her cheeks. And the child too was sobbing a kind of stiff-lipped "what-have-you-done-to-us." It suddenly seemed as if she were the only one who knew exactly what was happening. So much so that I felt ashamed in her presence and lowered my eyes. [...] We understood that she was a lioness, and we saw that the lines of her face had hardened with furrows of self-restraint and a determination to endure her suffering with courage, and how now, when her world had fallen into ruins, she did not want to break down before us. Exalted in their pain and sorrow above our—wicked—existence [...] Something struck me like lightning. All at once everything seemed to mean something different, more precisely: exile. This was exile. This was what exile was like. This was what exile looked like. [...] Things were piling up inside me. I had never been in the Diaspora—I said to myself— I had never known what it was like ... but people had spoken to me, told me, taught me, and repeatedly recited to me, from every direction, in books and newspapers, everywhere: exile. They had played on all my nerves. Our nation's protest to the world: exile! It had entered me, apparently, with my mother's milk. What, in fact, had we perpetrated here today?"* (Yitzhar, 1949:130-131).

Even though the United States was the first country to recognize the State of Israel when it declared its existence in 1948, scholars agree that this *special* relationship started after the Six Days Wars in 1967³ (U.S. Department of State, 2021; Bar Siman Tov, 1998; Koplow, 2011; Lewis, 1999). Even though during the Nixon (1969-1974) and the Ford (1974-1977) administrations, a sort of "rudimentary relationship" between the two countries started to be, it was only with Carter (1977-1981) that it began to develop. The 80s saw an increase in the military relationship between the two countries under President Reagan (1981-1989), who is said to have been the greatest ally of Israel during his period in the White House, giving the country a level of security support never seen before. Nevertheless, during George W. Bush's presidential years (1989-1993), the hostility between Israel and the U.S. increased because of primary "policy disagreements". The following decade saw the relationship based on shared ideas and interests, such as preventing terrorism by trying to stop Islamic radicalization (Lewis, 1999; Bar-Simon-Tov, 1998). According to Mearsheimer and Walt in Ariel Ilan Roth (2009), in the beginning, America's main interest in the region was to counterbalance the presence of the Soviet Union and Communism. After USSR's collapse in 1991, it was mainly to maintain a stable area for its interests that lie, for these scholars, in the presence of oil.

The presidency of Bill Clinton (1993-2001) was considered "the most biased," and his foreign policy to Israel was "implemented in a complete and direct harmony with the Israeli policy". In addition to this, Clinton endorsed Palestine and Jordan to follow Israel's dispositions concerning economy, security, and policies (Al-Rousan, 2013:199). His administration was responsible for a treaty between Jordan and Israel (1994) and the so-called Oslo I (1993) and Oslo II (1995). Clinton did not have contacts with the

³ The Six Days war began in 1967, from June 5th to June 10th, in which Israel fought against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The Report "*SIX-DAY WAR 1967 Operation Focus and the 12 hours that changed the Middle East*" by Shlomo Aloni (2019) is a fully detailed military report on the six days of the war, the preceding days, and the aftermath of the war.

The book "*Six Days of War June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*" by Michael b. Oren (2002) depicts and recounts the events that led to the war, the days, and the consequences. With this War, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank.

"*Six Days—A Watershed? Cleavages in the Way Israelis View Their History*" is a paper written by Mordechai Bar-On (2018) dealing with the representation of the war and its aftermath in the Israeli public. Since 1948, the Independence War, Israel had to retreat from the Sinai and the Golan; this war was considered an "incomplete business" and a "partial and unsatisfying victory". The Six Days War changed Israel's landscape and is considered as "the main watershed" of the Zionist movement. Moreover, the war also changed how the Palestinians were considered and seen by the International Public: They "gained" the title of anticolonial force, conquering the compassion and the recognition from the international sphere.

Palestine Liberation Organization⁴ (PLO) until Oslo, and it is said that he refused to talk positively about it even after Oslo (Quandt, 2001). The Oslo accords did not deal with Jerusalem, the refugees, or even a Palestinian State. They only stipulated that the "final-status issues" would have been negotiated in five years. The agreements made after 1995 had "mixed results," and the escalation of violence undermined them in late 2000, which showed the negotiations' fragility.

Moreover, according to Daniel Ross, chief U.S. negotiator, both the Israelis and the Palestinians caused the Oslo accords' failure: He highlighted the intensification of the settlement construction between 1993 and 2000 as a factor of mistrust (Quandt, 2001; Indyk, 2018; Smith, 2013). Furthermore, the President in 2001 outlined what were, according to him, the parameters for reaching an agreement between the two countries: Clinton spoke about the establishment of a Palestinian State based in Gaza and the "vast majority" of the West Bank. This State should guarantee Israel's security and its demographic issues. Moreover, the Parameters dealt with the Palestinian refugees: They should be allowed to return to a Palestinian State, have compensation for their losses, and assist in building a new life (United Nations, 2001).

George W. Bush Jr.'s (2001-2009) policies in the Middle East "dramatically heightened" the insecurities in the State of Israel. According to scholar Ari Barbalat (2008:91), Bush's policies in the Middle East region were responsible and participated in the "radical deterioration of Israel's external environment". Moreover, even if he, in the beginning, declared his interest in trying to stop the violence that erupted between Israelis and Palestinians, he "allowed the situation to fester" (Hudson, 2013). Nevertheless, in 2002 the President discussed the situation in the area, maybe because of pressures made by U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, or because of the advantage that a halt in the conflict could represent for the U.S. (Jeffrey, 2003). During a speech in 2002, Bush Jr. expressed his willingness to create a Palestinian State alongside a Jewish one. To reach such an outcome, it was necessary to change the Palestinian leadership (The White House, 2002). With the commitment of the President to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the election of Mahmoud Abbas –better known as Abu Mazen – as leader of the PLO, the U.S., Russia, the European Union (E.U.), and the U.N. created the so-called "Road Map to Peace". This

⁴ The Palestinian Liberation Organization was founded in 1964. The book by Helena Cobban (1992), *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, People, Power and Politics* tells the story of the Organization during its first two decades, 1960-1980.

plan was presented in 2003 and entailed the creation of a Palestinian State, through three phases, in 2005. However, the plan still presented some problems and left the refugees, Jerusalem, final border, and Israeli settlements issues at the end (Jeffrey, 2003; UN SC Resolution 529, 2003). Despite all of this, scholar Michael C. Hudson (2013:336) sustains that, even if Bush Jr. presented himself as an honest broker, he still believed that the “real problem was on the Palestinian side”.

As it is possible to grasp from the previous paragraph, however *unshakable* this relationship is, every administration had its priorities concerning Israel and which policies were better to implement. This work’s aim is to answer a specific question: What are the elements that, from the Individual Level of Analysis, influenced the two administrations policies. The thesis will thus study the divergences in the foreign policies adopted by the two Presidents about the State of Israel and investigate the factors that led to such different behaviors by the American Presidents in favor or opposition to the State of Israel.

The first chapter deals with the policies adopted by the Obama administration during its eight years in the White House. Specifically, this dissertation will discuss the interest and the attempt of Obama and his Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton, and John Kerry, to fix the Israeli-Palestinian issue by promoting the so-called "Two-State Solution". The problem of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank will be analyzed since the two topics seem to be connected. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will also be touched, stressing, above all things, the Israeli reactions to this agreement. Moreover, another critical issue regards the economic aid that the Obama administration still gave to Israel, despite their turbulences.

The second chapter focuses on the foreign policies adopted by Donald Trump that supported Israel, such as the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the following relocation of the U.S. Embassy in this city, and the validation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Trump also adopted policies made in order to show his opposition to the Palestinian Authority (P.A.), such as the withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Association (UNESCO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). He supported Netanyahu's discontent about the Iranian Nuclear Deal by withdrawing from it. Moreover, the so-called "Deal of the Century" between Israel and some Gulf States, The United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrein will be discussed.

After having discussed the two administrations' policies separately, the third chapter will analyze the possible reasons for adopting those policies through the Individual Level of Analysis. The findings will stress how significant is internal politics and how it influences and binds the Presidents. An essential element is the President team, its opinion on Israel, and its connection to it. Another crucial factor is the presence and the strong influence of the Evangelicals and the Christian Zionists in vouching for Israel during the Trump Administration. The Israeli Lobby has to be considered in analyzing the relationship between the two countries, precisely how and if its power diminished during one administration or had a more substantial influence.

Chapter I: The Obama Administration and Israel

When Barack Obama entered the White House in 2009, one of his primary goals was to re-establish peaceful relationships with the Muslim communities in the U.S. and worldwide that were deeply deteriorated after George W. Bush Jr.'s presidency (Kalantari, 2018; Siniver, 2011). He specifically stated that, in his view, Islam and the U.S. share common values like justice, dignity, progress, and tolerance and that Islam is embedded in the American structure (Douglas, 2020). Therefore, Obama was seen, and wanted to be seen, as the first president to consider and defend the needs of the Palestinians in pursuing their own state "with more strength and passion" than any other president (Rodríguez Blanco, 2018). He even avoided visiting Israel on his first trip to the Middle East, as a way to distance himself from the State. Obama believed that it was necessary to equilibrate the alliances to fix the relationships with the Muslims (Gilboa, 2013; Gilboa, 2009).

However, despite Obama's commitment, he could not "rescue American foreign policy from the baleful influence of the 'Israel first school'" (Gerges, 2013:313). Obama is considered the most pro-Israel leader since Truman, thanks to his economic and military aid to the State, the largest that Israel has ever received. Moreover, Obama always stressed the importance of ensuring Israel's safety and that Israel needed a military superiority to maintain its position and security in the region. With Obama, the U.S. was a reliable partner who would always back up Israel in the most serious and important moments (Rosenbaum, 2015; Shapiro, 2017). Barack Obama was the first president who abstained on vetoing a United Nations Security Council (UN SC) Resolution against

Israel (Weiner, 2017). However, he also funded and supported the Iron Drome project and signed a huge military package deal. So, it can be said that, as an Israeli defense official stated, the military relationship "was incredible" during Obama's terms. (see Chap.1, paragraph 4) (Shapiro, 2017; Rosenbaum, 2015; Shlaim, 2017; Kalantari, 2018).

Nevertheless, the relationship between Obama and Netanyahu, Israel Prime Minister (PM), is known to have been antagonistic (Goldberg, 2016). Obama acknowledged that they disagreed on several issues, but he said that they "enjoyed a good working relationship" (Gilboa, 2013:24). Other than Obama's settlements policies, other causes of animosity were his support for the removal of Hosni Mubarak and his attempt to normalize U.S. relations with Syria and Iran, two Israeli enemies (Freedman, 2017b; Freedman, 2017a). Moreover, Jeffrey Goldberg – a journalist that had access to the White House and President Obama – in Gerges (2013), states that Obama viewed Netanyahu as a coward concerning the Palestinian issue. On his part, Netanyahu backed the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, in the 2012 elections, insulted Obama in his speeches at both houses of the Congress and tried to sabotage the Iranian Nuclear Deal (Shlaim, 2017).

The Israeli public's opinion on Obama and his foreign policies changed through the years. When he arrived in office, 41% of the Israeli surveyed saw him in a favorable, positive light, and only 42% believed in his support for Israel, and for 6%, this support was a strong one (Atallah and Levy, 2009; Allin and Simon, 2010). In 2013, the percentage of Israelis who saw him as "friendly" rose from 29 to 37%, even though 51% considered his attitude "neutral". Moreover, 62% of the surveyed thought he would disagree on the Palestinian-Israeli issue (Gilboa, 2013). 2015 saw a drop in the number of people that trusted Obama: from 71% of 2014 to 49%. Moreover, 80% of 1000 surveyed were against the Nuclear deal (Lewis, 2015). With the abstention from vetoing the UN SC Resolution 2334, the number of Israelis that considered him "unfriendly" arrived at 57% (Shapiro, 2017). With the end of his mandate and with Donald J. Trump at the White House, only 19% of the surveyed strongly approved of Obama, 30% slightly approved of him, and 49% disliked him (Staff, 2018). Bard (2018) believes that Obama could not convince the Israelis that he was working for their well-being. Moreover, Obama presented the cause of the existence of Israel in light of the Holocaust and not, as Israelis believe, based on Biblical and historical claims. Along with this, Israelis believe that Obama is closer to the reading that Arabs do of Zionism⁵: Israel's existence was a

⁵ To know more about Zionism and its history, read "*A History of Zionism*" by Walter Laqueur (2003).

way to lessen European guilt, leaving the Palestinian population to suffer its cost (Allin and Simon, 2010). It is also worth noting, as Sciarcon (2016:2) highlighted, that the Israeli electorate is moving toward the Right – the Center-Left in twenty years moved to the Center-Right. In contrast, the Democratic party "shifted Left-wards on foreign policy".

2. The MENA Region during Obama

Despite Obama's intentions to re-establish the relations with the Muslim communities, during his first term as President, he was more focused on internal matters, such as fiscal policies, rather than the Middle East. His foreign policies shifted towards the Pacific Region and Asia, where it was believed that America's future interests would have been (Gerges, 2013). Obama's National Security Strategy of 2010 asked for the "rebalancing of America's global commitments away from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that "had distracted the country from its more pressing 21st-century challenges in Asia and the Pacific Ocean" (Gerges, 2012). Moreover, after the devastating effects that the wars initiated by Bush Jr. had on the U.S., Obama opted for a non-interventionist approach in the Middle East. Only if vital U.S. interests were at risk would the U.S. mobilize its troops that should cooperate with local allies (Krieg, 2016). According to Obama, American troops should not be put at risk in humanitarian disasters that do not directly threaten the U.S. (Goldberg, 2016). It was important for Obama to be an "honest mediator and broker", trying to help the different conflicting parties to ensure security in their own country: As an example, Obama relied upon Gulf States' aides towards the Syrian rebels to defeat the Assad regime (Kalantari, 2018; Krieg, 2016). However, the series of revolutions that touched the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) since the end of 2010 pushed the region to the "top-level" of the U.S. foreign policy agenda (Krieg, 2016).

In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak ruled from 1981, and he was an important U.S. ally for what it concerns terrorism, nuclear proliferation, energy security, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the Tunisian revolution spread in Egypt, Obama initially supported the President but then upheld the protesters' demand for Mubarak's withdrawal (Gerges, 2013). In Israel, political commentators were shocked by the news: a journalist of the Ha'aretz said that Obama had betrayed a modest president, loyal to the United States. Another one in the *Ma'ariv* blamed Obama and his administration for "pursuing a naive,

smug, and insular diplomacy heedless of the risks". Also, the then President of Israel, Shimon Peres (2007-2014), expressed his support for Mubarak, highlighting how the Egyptian President helped maintain peace in the region (Hamilton, 2011). Israel feared that the new ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Morsi (2012-2013), could enforce an anti-Israel agenda and support the Hamas Government in Gaza. Netanyahu expressed his concerns that Egypt could be transformed into an "Islamic Iran". Moreover, Israel did not express what kind of regime it preferred in the region and when the Muslim Brotherhood rose, and President Morsi was overthrown, Israel remained silent (Magen, 2015; Khani, 2013). Abdel-Fattah el- Sisi (2014-) took the lead and continued maintaining the peace treaty with Israel and moderated disputes between Palestine and Israel (Elmenshawy, 2014).

In Syria, the revolution led to a dramatic war. Following his non-interventionist approach, Obama limited American participation in the war, overruling his National Security team that called for direct intervention in Syria (Gerges, 2013). When Bashar al-Assad (2000-) in 2013 used chemical weapons in the region, the Syrian leader agreed not to use them after Obama warned him not to (Freedman, 2017a). However, both Israel and Saudi Arabia were pressing Obama to strike against Assad: Israel considered Obama's decision to cancel the airstrikes against Damascus as a way through which Iran could be encouraged to acquire nuclear weapons. Moreover, Israel and Saudi Arabia expressed their concerns over U.S. aid against Iran (Heller and McDowall, 2013).

Another problem that Obama faced in Syria was the rise of ISIS: in 2014, ISIS beheaded three American civilians in Syria. For him, the defeat of the Islamic State became more critical than the overthrow of Assad (Goldberg, 2016). Obama tried to create an opposition force with the Kurds and the Arabs. Nevertheless, the Kurds were more interested in conquering Kurdish territories than fighting ISIS, and the Arabs were more engaged in the fight against Assad. With Obama's leaving in 2016, it was impossible to predict if and when ISIS would be defeated in Syria (Freedman, 2017a).

The Arab Spring also touched Libya. In opposition to his non-interventionist approach, the Obama administration intervened in Libya in 2011 to prevent the slaughter of civilians by then-President Muammar Gaddafi (1969-2011). VP Joe Biden and the first-term Secretary of Defense Robert Gates advised Obama to avoid any confrontation in Libya. Nevertheless, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, Biden's National-Security Adviser Antony Blinken, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, and National Security Staff Samantha Power "lobbied hard" to intervene in Libya (Goldberg, 2016). The airstrikes in

Benghazi followed UN SC Resolution 1973 that the U.S. proposed. Gaddafi was killed in 2011 after some Western countries conquered the country and located the President. However, in retrospect, the War in Libya can be considered a failure: Libya did not become a democracy but a failed state where the human rights situation is even worse than during Gaddafi (Kuperman, 2015; Glass, 2019).

In opposition to his predecessor Bush Jr., Obama was against the war in Iraq. He expressed his intention to withdraw all the troops from the country in over 18 months, even though Bush Jr. had already agreed about the American retreat in 2011 (Rynhold, 2008; Fordham, 2015). After the death of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, ISIS, a new terrorist group, emerged. Obama did not understand the seriousness and the group's influence, addressing them as "Al-Qaeda's junior varsity". After ISIS conquered the city of Mosul in 2014, American troops returned to Iraq. Moreover, Obama also vouched for Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's (2006-2014) removal in favor of Haidar al-Abadi (2014-2018). With Obama's military and political help, there was the re-conquest of almost all the territories occupied by ISIS, including half the city of Mosul (Freedman, 2017a; Gustafson, 2017).

When Obama entered into office, he wanted to leave Iraq and Afghanistan (Goldberg, 2016). However, he soon realized that it was impossible to do so in Afghanistan since he understood that the U.S. would never transform the country into a "semblance of a democracy". In 2009 Obama sent 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, declaring that they would be withdrawn in 2011. At the end of his mandate, he reduced troops from 100,000 to 10,000 (Landler, 2017a; Perry, 2016). This still present presence of American armies – occupied in training Afghan forces and counterterrorism activities – was necessary to demonstrate to the Taliban that the U.S. and its allies would not leave the country "until insurgents agreed to talks" (Lee and Schwartz, 2016). According to journalist Marvin G. Weinbaum (2014), the best place to verify the so-called "Obama Doctrine" is Afghanistan. It ensembled Obama's reluctance to open war, his inclination to cooperation – both with local allies and other states – and the advocacy of democracy.

American involvement in the Yemeni civil war was due to its alliance with Saudi Arabia. In 2015 Saudi Arabia decided to strike against the Houthi, a Shia militia, that supported the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh (1990-2012), who sized the power only two years before (Oakford and Salisbury, 2016). Saudi Arabia was supported by Western countries such as the U.S., the United Kingdom, and France (Al-Adeimi, 2019). Senior officials of the Obama administration tried to justify the help given to Saudi

Arabia: They intervened because of the threat posed by missiles near the border of Saudi Arabia and the overthrow of the government done with Iran's help. Obama's officials stated that the support given to the Saudis was a kind of retribution for their acceptance of the Iranian Nuclear Deal and a way to show that they could still consider the U.S. as their ally. The aid given to the Saudis consisted in "providing intelligence, refueling, and logistical assistance" but also in "shielding Saudi Arabia from scrutiny at the United Nations" (Whitson, 2018; Al-Adeimi, 2019). In 2016 Obama agreed to a 100 billion dollars in arms sale when a U.N. Report suggests that over 2,200 civilians have been killed since the start of the War (Oakford and Salisbury, 2016).

2. The Two-State Solution⁶ and the Settlements' Issue

On July 4th, 2009, the newly elected President Barack Obama held a speech at the Cairo University in Egypt. During said discourse, called "A New Beginning", Obama expressed one of the critical instability issues in the MENA Region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He specifically said that, according to him, the only possible solution is to create two countries, one for the Israelis and the other one for the Palestinians. Moreover, Obama stated in this speech his utter allegiance to this cause and his involvement in trying to fix this problem (Douglas, 2020). This vision was accepted and shared by Obama's Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton (2009-2013) and John Kerry (2013-2017). According to them, and rightly so, the Two-State Solution is the only way through which peace and stability can be assured and reached in the region. Thanks to this agreement, for Obama, Clinton, and Kerry, the Israelis can maintain their democratic State and achieve security,

⁶ There is an ongoing debate in the political and intellectual sphere about which solution, one State or two distinct states, is better for solving the prolonged crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. "*The Two-State Solution The U.N. Partition Resolution of Mandatory Palestine Analysis and Sources*," edited by Ruth Gavison (2013), contains articles by different scholars trying to understand the two factions' opinions on the Partition Plan (the division of the Land in two countries as it was hypothesized in 1947). Moreover, the book's second part contains direct sources such as documents, reports, and memorandum of that period (1937-1948). Writer Ian S. Lustick (2019) believes that "By the early twenty-first century, however, it became impossible to explain how a TSS could materialize and deeply implausible to expect one". In his book "*Paradigm Lost, From Two-State Solution to One-State Reality*" he explains his idea better. Also, Adam Heribert (*Neither a Two-State nor a One-State Solution*, 2011:454) believes that "The two-state solution may indeed be dead or not worth the effort, as a growing number of Palestinian intellectuals [...] imply". Scholar Benjamin Miller (*Israel-Palestine: One State or Two: Why a Two-State Solution is Desirable, Necessary, and Feasible*, 2016) gives four different solutions to the problem: the creation of a "bi-multi-national state", a "partition among ethno-sectarian lines", a "civic nationalism" or even the takeover of an "ethno-national group". However, after analyzing these prospects in the Israeli-Palestinian context, Miller concluded that "there are no good solutions to the state-to-nation imbalance".

whereas the Palestinians can live in a sovereign country of their own, dignity and peace (Douglas, 2020; Harb, 2016; Begley, 2016).

During the same speech at Cairo University, Obama stated the necessary elements that could lead to the resolution of the conflict. For him, the Palestinians needed to stop violence towards the Israelis who had to accept the Right of the existence of a Palestinian State. In doing so, the Israeli needed to freeze settlement construction. Obama, rightfully, explicitly said that: "This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop." (Douglas, 2020: loc, 215-216). For him, it was a "key obstacle" to realizing peace (Siniver, 2011). Even to George Mitchell, the Special Middle East envoy chosen by Obama to tackle the conflict, the continuation of the settlements' construction in the West Bank as an obstacle to the peace negotiations (Terry, 2017).

Scholar Eytan Gilboa (2009), when referring to Obama's settlements policies, maintains that this was an "obsession" for the President that caused him and his administration to omit the other problems that exacerbated the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, Doctor Asaf Siniver (2011), suggests that the Palestinians did not demand the freeze of the settlements as a prerequisite to start the negotiations. However, since the U.S. Government demanded it, Siniver believes that the Palestinian leaders had to ask the halt not to be seen as weak by their people.

On June 14th, 2009, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accepted the Two-State Solution proposed by the American President. However, in this acceptance, he also expressed the terms that would make Israel agree: Netanyahu demanded a demilitarized Palestine and the recognition by this new Palestinian State of the existence of the State of Israel. Moreover, he stated that the Palestinian refugees' issue should be dealt with outside the borders of Israel. Lastly, he also wanted the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Eretz Israel. Nevertheless, this speech was not accepted by the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) (Nicoll, 2009).

On the contrary, what Obama sought to achieve with the realization of the Two-State Solution, was the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied during the Six Days War in 1967, namely the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. However, this proposal is not new: Every President since Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), when dealing with this matter, asked to return to the pre-1967 borders (Siniver, 2011; Brom, 2011). Additionally, the UN SC Resolution 242 adopted in 1967, which is considered to be the "building block of peace in the Middle East" (Lapidoth, 2011:7), calls for the "Withdrawal

of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict [the Six Days War]" (article 1, i). The omission of "the" before "territories" gave Israel the claim that it had not to withdraw from all the territories occupied, but rather that it could keep some territories for security reasons (Smith, 2013). Nevertheless, Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, believed in the impossibility of accomplishing the 1967 lines. All populated centers would be incorporated into Israel, leaving the Palestinian refugees who could not enter Israel outside it (Daud, Idris, and Salleh, 2020).

2.1 *The Negotiation Stages*

The first talks in 2009 failed. Late that year, going against his coalition, dominated by pro-settlement politicians, Netanyahu announced a halt in the settlement constructions for ten months, even though the freeze was not extended to 3,000 units and buildings in Jerusalem. Additionally, the P.A. wanted to bring to the negotiations the matter of East Jerusalem, avoiding direct consultations until this issue was brought into the discussions. Already in March 2010, when Vice President (V.P.) Joe Biden visited Israel, its Interior Minister, Eli Yishai, announced the intention to establish 1,600 new units in East Jerusalem. When the moratorium ended in September 2010, Netanyahu succumbed to the will of his right-wing party and did not extend it. Netanyahu was more concerned with the stability and the support of his coalition than with the possible consequences that this action could cause in the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Following this decision, the Palestinians demanded to restore the constructions' stop before returning to negotiations (Terry, 2017; Rodríguez Blanco, 2018; BBC News, 2010; Freedman, 2017a; Freedman, 2017b; Gerges, 2013).

Ben Caspit (2017), in his book *The Netanyahu Years*, retells the back-channels negotiations held in London between 2010 and 2013. According to Caspit, Obama considered these secret negotiations "the only game in town". Dennis Ross, appointed in 2009 as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Central Region, mediated these consultations. During this period, as Caspit (2017) writes, the P.A. negotiator, Hussein Agha, realized what "no one else has been able to achieve". In fact, not only did he succeed in obtaining from the Israeli counterpart the 1967 lines with an exchange of lands, but it seemed that Netanyahu's ideas on the refugees' issues were more malleable. Journalist Amir Tibon (2014) also recalls that the Palestinians had shown openness to the recognition of Israel as the State of the Jews.

Nevertheless, the problem of these secret negotiations was that Abbas did not appoint the Palestinian negotiator: he was acting without the approval and the knowledge of the P.A. leader. When asked about this matter, Abbas stated that the only communication with Netanyahu was with Martin Indyk, the new U.S. Middle East envoy; Whereas Kerry, Indyk and Livni were all aware of these negotiations (Tibon, 2014; Staff, 2014). In the end, these negotiations were not conclusive: Obama surrendered to his new Secretary of State, John Kerry, who believed in his capacity to accomplish the task by himself, in nine months and outside the secret negotiations (Caspit, 2017). For Staff (2014), the leading cause for the end of these negotiations was the impossibility of the two negotiators to reach an agreement on Jerusalem.

Kerry's negotiations lasted nine months, from July 2013 to April 2014, and are considered, by the scholar Rodríguez Blanco (2018), as the most intensive ever done. In their retelling of the entire peace negotiations, Birnbaum, and Tibon (2014) sustain that Abbas requested a total freeze in the settlement constructions and the drawing of the borders based on the 1967 lines and the release of 104 Palestinian convicts imprisoned before the 1993 Oslo Accords. Nevertheless, even though Netanyahu had accepted freeing 80 prisoners initially, he then announced the starting of new constructions as an exchange for new prisoners' release. The Prime Minister approved the building of 2,600 new settlements near the 1967 lines (Freedman, 2017b; Birnbaum and Tibon, 2017). After this declaration, the negotiations "were doomed" (Terry, 2017). The Gaza War of July 2014 is considered an external factor for the end of the negotiations.⁷The killing of three young Israelis by Hamas and the so-called Operation Protective Edge launch, which resulted in 2.205 casualties on the Palestinian front and 71 in the Israeli one, blocked the talks (Rodríguez Blanco; 2018).

⁷ "The 51 Day War, Ruin and Resistance in Gaza" by Max Blumenthal (2015) recounts the events that led to the war, what happened in those 51 days, and the aftermath of the war. In the paper "Interview with Dr. Yasser Abu Jamei: The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme" (2016), Dr. Yasser Abu Jamei, the founder of Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, talks about the mental condition of the people living in Gaza, especially children, and how the Gaza Wars have affected them.

"Enemies and Neighbors, Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917–2017" by Ian Black (2017) is a historical book that recounts the history of the relationship between Arabs and Israelis from the 1917 Declaration of Balfour to the 2015 Intifada of Knives.

2.2 *On whom falls the accountability for the unsuccess of the negotiations?*

International Relations scholars have not yet found a sole reason and a unique factor or actor that caused the stagnation of the negotiations between Israel and the P.A.

Both Eytan Gilboa (2009) and Mitchell Bard (2018) believe that Obama's press on Netanyahu concerning the settlements' halt was "counterproductive" and caused the attempts and the efforts for finding a solution to go "on a downward spiral". Dennis Ross maintains that Obama should be held accountable for the failure of the negotiations and not Netanyahu. For him, Obama considers the Palestinians as weak, while the Israelis are in a stronger position. Hence, to achieve peace, they have more possibilities to negotiate than the Palestinians. He was also "unwilling" to consider the Palestinians responsible for not achieving a solution (Bard, 2018; Terry, 2017). This is confirmed and reported by journalist Jeffrey Goldberg (2015) when he interviewed the President: Obama said that, since Israel is more powerful than Palestine, and it controls the Land where the future Palestinian State will be created, it should have a significant role in the negotiation process. Moreover, Obama failed to acknowledge that the settlements were built for security reasons and that the 1967 lines would constrict the Israelis to live in less than nine miles away from Palestine, exposing Israel to serious security problems, as Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban stated (Daud, Idris, and Salleh, 2020). It was believed that the Israeli government would try to avert any kind of solution until Palestine would prove that it could secure itself and, consequently, also Israel (Nicoll, 2009).

Mahmoud Abbas thought that even if Obama was inclined to find a solution to this issue, he "did not have the will to use the full weight of American influence to force Israel to accept Palestinian demands" (Bard, 2018:160). Besides, for what concerns the Israeli Prime Minister, it is reported his angriness towards Obama's administration that considered the settlement constructions as the cause for the stagnant negotiations. For Netanyahu, the problem relied on the Palestinian's restraints to peace agreements and the P.A. coalition with Hamas (Freedman, 2017b). Netanyahu did not believe that the settlements' halt, imposed and wanted by Obama, could enhance the possibilities for peace (Daud, Idris, and Salleh, 2020). Moreover, for Bard (2018), John Kerry did not comprehend that the settlements were never the reason for the nonacceptance of the deals; It was not a mere geographical dispute, rather a religious, historical, and even psychological conflict. Likewise, Jeffrey Goldberg (2015) believes that the conflict is

more complicated than being just about settlement constructions, specifically since it did not start when Israel occupied the West Bank area. He fairly sustains that, since the Palestinians do not consider Israel a legitimate state and claim that the "Jews are not a people", it will not be until the recognition of such elements that the conflict could be considered concluded.

For Daud, Idris, and Salleh (2020), the stagnation of the negotiations was not attributable to a single agent, being Obama, Netanyahu, or Kerry, but rather to the "bitter relations" between the two leaders, Obama and Netanyahu. It is noteworthy that they represent two different political ideologies; Obama is a left-liberal Democrat, whereas Netanyahu is a right-wing conservative. In light of this, Netanyahu has always preferred Republicans, which brought him to dispute with Democratic representatives since the mid-90s. President Obama, other than being against the so-called "Likud approach"⁸ to the agreement, he believed that Netanyahu could be the only one to endorse the Two-State Solution, but he was "too fearful and politically paralyzed" to achieve this goal (Goldberg, 2016).

Other than the start of the Gaza War in 2014, scholars Robert O. Freedman (2017b) and Asaf Siniver (2011) suggest that the agreement between the United States and Iran over the nuclear program was also to blame. Netanyahu focused more on impeding the deal than finding a solution to the conflict (See Chap. I, Paragraph 2). Furthermore, Freedman (2017a) declares that the various changes made by Obama in assessing the priorities did not help pay the way to a peaceful resolution. Firstly, Obama asked for a halt in the settlements' activities. Hillary Clinton suggested that they confront issues such as the refugees, Jerusalem, borders, security, and again settlements all at once. However, then again, Obama changed his mind, affirming that Israel and the P.A. should deal with security and borders first, and only after that should they discuss Jerusalem and the refugees' situation. Finally, John Kerry underlined the need to negotiate the issues altogether.

As it is possible to see, some different possibilities and causes led to the stagnation of the peace negotiations: However, it is important to stress that the leaders involved in these consultations seemed to all have their opinion, and it was challenging to make them

⁸ It is the idea that there would never be an independent Palestinian State west of the Jordan River (Rynhold, 2008; Shlaim, 2017). Moreover, the West Bank is considered the ancient Judea and Samaria, so, for the Likud electorate, it is of ideological and national importance to maintaining this area. Whereas the Labor Party is more willing to renounce the area for peace with Arabs (Smith, 2013).

change their minds, being about settlements, security, borders, and more. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a complicated and severe struggle and, as much as any President and Secretary of State would want to crown themselves as the ones that ended this clash, giving an expiration date to the consultations would only lead to more resistance between the parties.

2.3 *UN SC Resolution 2334*

On December 23rd, 2016, the United States of America abstained from vetoing the UN SC Resolution 2334, which passed by 14-0 votes. Said Resolution stressed the importance of stopping the settlements' constructions for the peace processes. The Resolution itself considers the settlements as a "flagrant violation under international law" (article 1) – the need to prevent and end the violence, the eminence of maintaining the 1967 lines, and re-emphasizing the vision of two states, Israel, and Palestine, that live nearby in peace. Israel Prime Minister considers this abstention as "shameful," and he even withdrew New Zealand's and Senegal's ambassadors and suspended Senegal's economic aid, since these countries demanded to hasten the vote and moved to push the action as soon as Egypt suspended it (Terry, 2017; Beaumont, 2016).

According to Amos Yadlin (2016), with the abstention from the UN SC Resolution 2334, the peace process resolution has reached "its lowest point since 2008". He believes that by abstaining from this Resolution, the U.S. has awarded the Palestinians for not participating more actively in the negotiations, endangering the possibilities of future bilateral talks between the two countries. It also enforced the idea that they, the Palestinians and also the Americans, can impose on Israel their demands, from the outside, through international pressure (Spoerl, 2016). From that point onwards, the Palestinians could not behave in a more restrained way than what the Resolution demands; From an Israeli perspective, this Resolution ignored the negotiations and the issues still in talks. Moreover, for the Israelis, this Resolution represented a political incentive for anti-Israel actions, boycotts, and sanctions from those hostiles to it (Baker, 2016; Yadlin, 2016). This Resolution was agreed under Chapter Six of the UN Charter and not under the seventh. This means that sanctions and other measures imposed by the U.N. on Israel are impossible without other resolutions (Yadlin, 2016; Makovsky, 2016). According to Yadlin (2016), this Resolution could cause Israeli politicians and militaries to be brought to the International Criminal Court (ICC), hampering the negotiations.

One of the many questions that this abstention created was why Obama made this choice in 2011. He vetoed a UN SC Resolution similar to this Resolution in condemning the settlements' construction (Bard, 2018; Rodríguez Blanco, 2018). U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry answered this question. He stated that by abstaining from this Resolution, the United States was in line with the foreign policies pursued throughout the years, affirming and behaving accordingly to its values. Kerry said that the UN SC Resolution vetoed in 2011 did not discuss violence and incitement. Vetoing this new Resolution meant "giving license" to more settlements (Begley, 2016). Also, Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador at the U.N., spoke about this matter. She said that this Resolution did not tackle all the critical issues of the conflict and, she underlined that the United States did not agree with everything written in it. Powell also stressed that the U.S. would not have let the Resolution pass if it thought that it damaged Israel and its security: In fact, it is worth remembering that the Resolution faced the matter of incitement to violence and terrorism done by the Palestinians (Staff, 2016). Some U.S. officials stated that the United States had precisely expressed the need to have a balanced resolution with a condemnation of Israeli settlements' activities and of the violence and terrorism exercised by the P.A. However, seeing as the Resolution confronted one of the main points supported by both Republican's and Democrat's representatives, being the settlements' halt, it could not have vetoed it. In addition to this, for power, this Resolution would enable Israel to maintain its democratic and Jewish status (Staff, 2016; DeYoung, 2016; Makovsky, 2016). On the contrary, the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, talked against the Resolution, saying that voting in favor was a vote against the negotiations, peace, and better living conditions for the Palestinians and Israelis alike (Beaumont, 2016).

In their book *"The Worst President in History: The Legacy of Barak Obama"*, Margolis, and Noonan (2018), suggest that this Resolution was created by the U.S. President himself and pushed by VP Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry for its approval by the UN SC. This theory was reported by Jason Squitieri (2016), a CNN journalist, in an interview with David Keyes, Netanyahu's spokesman. He suggested that Israel had "ironclad proofs" of orchestration by Obama that would be presented to the new President of the United States, Donald J. Trump. In addition to this, the Washington Free Beacon implied that VP Biden and a Palestinian diplomat, Saeb Erekat, discussed pushing forward the Resolution. Moreover, some phone calls between Biden and Ukraine's President, Petro Poroshenko, were discovered to ensure the support to the

agreement (Kredo, 2016). However, according to some U.S. officials, these phone calls between V.P. and Poroshenko were held several times to discuss the nationalization of a corrupt bank and not to push for a "yes" (DeYoung, 2016). Also, John Kerry responded to these accusations saying that the Obama administration was not behind the drafting of this Resolution or pushed for it. It was wanted by the Palestinians and drafted and proposed to the Commission by Egypt itself. He also stressed the fact that the U.S. informed Israel of the intention of Palestine and Egypt of proposing this Resolution (Begley, 2016).

3. The Iranian Nuclear Deal

Obama's policy in dealing with the Iranian threat of nuclear weapons was different from that of his predecessors. To avoid a war with Iran, Obama decided to pursue "in a more constructive and diplomatic manner" a deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran (Perwita and Razak, 2020; Vakil, 2014). He decided to put zero preconditions for the negotiations, an element that represented a big difference from George W. Bush's policy. Bush asked for the halting of nuclear activities as a precondition, which is considered a significant obstacle to the negotiations (Aliyev, 2021; Akbarzadeh, 2009).

To achieve an international agreement, Obama pushed for sanctions against Iran, not only by the U.S. itself but also by the E.U., Russia, and China. Also, the U.N. passed a resolution that imposed sanctions on the arms embargo and the selling of the so-called "proliferation-sensitive activities" (Perwita and Razak, 2020). The outcome of such harsh sanctions was the Hormuz crisis: Iran threatened to close the strait, and the U.S. was ready to respond to such an act. Fortunately, both countries did not want to start a war (Aliyev, 2021).

According to scholars Mehta and Whitlark (2016), the election of the moderate Hassan Rouhani in 2013 was an essential element for reaching the interim deal: He sought to rebuild the international relationships and restore Iran's image in the world. Both leaders, Obama and Rouhani, were engaged in the negotiations, which are considered to represent the peak of diplomatic interactions between the two countries since 1979 (Vakil, 2014). The Joint Plan of Action (JPA) was implemented in 2014 for six months. It entailed decreasing Iran's enrichment program by 20%, impoverishing half of its stockpile to 3.5 percent, and also stopping the works at the Arak Heavy Water Reactor. (Perwita and Razak, 2020; Landau, 2014). This interim deal was only meant to be temporary and to

enable the P5+1 ⁹ to continue the negotiations and reach a more permanent deal that "would end the decade-long crisis" (Landau, 2014: 11).

The U.S. Congress did not fully believe in Iran's total commitment to the deal; hence it opposed the realization of a deal that, if created, would only represent a U.S. commitment and not a treaty or an executive agreement. Moreover, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and other groups, tried to lobby Congress to oppose the deal. AIPAC also gave 20 million dollars to the group Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran to educate the population about the perils of a nuclear Iran (Perwita and Razak, 2020; Vakil, 2014). Nevertheless, at the international level, on July 14th, 2015, the P5+1, Iran, and the E.U. announced the creation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA/JCPA), also called the Iranian Nuclear Deal. The JCPOA ¹⁰ would have "effectively [prevented] Iran from producing fissile material for nuclear weapons at its declared nuclear facilities for at least 10 to 15 years" (Samore, 2015:4). This deal was endorsed and made operational through UN SC Resolution 2231 (2015), reiterating the obligation that Iran cannot "seek, develop or acquire" nuclear weapons. The agreement granted access to Iran to nearly 100 billion dollars in frozen assets and the use of the global financial system for trade. Moreover, Iran had to limit the number of centrifuges to five thousand sixty until 2026, and also, the uranium stock was reduced by 98 percent to 300 kilograms (Aliyev, 2021).

3.1 *Israeli leaders' perceptions of the nuclear deal*

In Eretz Israel, there is an intense fear of the possibilities that may arise if Iran gets nuclear.¹¹ This fear stems from "annihilation, fear of a more difficult security

⁹ P5+1: The five permanent members of the UN SC, namely the U.S., the U.K., China, Russia, and France, plus Germany.

¹⁰ To know more details about the JCPOA, read the report written by "Samore, G. et al. (2015). *The Iran Nuclear Deal: A Definitive Guide*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. August 2015. Harvard Kennedy School".

¹¹ The research made by the RAND Corporation in 2011, "*Israel and Iran, A Dangerous Rivalry*" (written by Kaye, Nader and Roshan), is a handy document to comprehend better the political, ideological, and historical rivalry between the two countries.

Chapter Two, "*The Long Campaign against Iran*," present in the book "*Israel and the Clash of Civilisations, Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*" by Jonathan Cook (2008), deals with the battle that Israel and the U.S. conducted against Iran and its nuclear ambition. It retraces the more recent history of hostilities between the two countries since the 1990s.

Mark Hitchcock (2020), in his book "*Showdown with Iran, Nuclear Iran and the Future of Israel, the Middle East, and the United States in Bible Prophecy*," studies the prophecies present in the Holy Bible in correlation to the historical events of these years

environment, socioeconomic fears, and fear of a challenge to Israel's founding ideological principles" (Eiran and Malin, 2013:78). As claimed by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, the only solution for the problem of Israel's existence is its annihilation. Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports extremists groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas in their struggle against Israel. (Landau, 2015; Eiran and Malin, 2013; Asculai, 2015). Moreover, this hate towards the Israeli State is not only ideological – due to offense caused to the Muslim community as a whole for the creation of the State – but it is also cynical: the presence of Israel prevents Iran to become a hegemony in the region, which is apparent in its military and terrorist involvement in the area (Alterman, 2015; Asculai, 2015). Moreover, creating a nuclear arsenal in Iran would interrupt the Israeli nuclear hegemony in the region (Anderson, 2017).

He, who has taken upon himself the task to defend Israel and its population from this threat, is its Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Michael Oren, the then Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., maintained that Netanyahu sees himself as a "man with a mission" which is to save its country "from a Holocaust-like occurrence" (Bard, 2018). Specifically, the PM maintains that Iran will use its nuclear capacity to destroy Israel (Alterman, 2015). Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, Israeli PM urged the U.S. not to relieve the sanctions against Iran. Moreover, Obama initiated with the UN SC the "toughest sanctions" ever directed to Iran to emphasize that the U.S. were to "remain unwavering in [its] commitment to Israel security". Netanyahu praised this action, and he encouraged other leaders to take the same action as Obama (Perwita and Razak, 2020:27). Moreover, the U.S. and Israel engaged in a joint operation to weaken the development of the Iranian nuclear program through an attack on its computers (Anderson, 2017).

The JCPOA agreement was considered by the PM, wrongly, as "a bad deal" and as a "stunning historic mistake" (Zezima, 2015; Kaye, 2016). He believed that this deal would enable Iran to acquire the tools needed to create nuclear weapons, jeopardizing the deal itself (Zezima, 2015). In a speech at the U.S. Congress in March 2015, Netanyahu reiterated that the deal "paves Iran's way to a bomb", stressing the idea that the agreement would cause a worsening of the situation in the Middle East, causing other countries to try to obtain nuclear capabilities (Calamur, 2015). For Netanyahu, the solution was not to engage in a war with Iran. It was creating a new and "better" deal: However, as Obama stated, Israeli PM did not offer any new alternatives to improve the deal (Zezima, 2015; Calamur, 2015).

Nevertheless, Israel's political and military groups had different opinions on the deal. As an example, Avigdor Lieberman, the then Foreign Minister, compared the JCPOA to the Munich Agreement of Nazi Germany, saying that the states had “submitted to terror”. Also, Naftali Bennett, leader of the Far Right, expressed his concerns for the deal and the dangers this would pose for the time. Moreover, the deal was deemed "a tragedy for all who aspire for regional stability and fear a nuclear Iran" by then-Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon (Beaumont, 2015; Kaye, 2016). However, Amram Mitzna, a former Member of the Knesset¹² and former Mayor of Haifa fairly stated the necessity of a deal rather than no deal at all, since, with diplomacy, it is possible to achieve better security. Omer Bar Lev, Member of the Knesset and former commander of Special Forces unit, stressed the deal's importance, highlighting that Iran would not be under sanctions if the U.S. did not ratify the agreement, meaning that Iran would acquire a nuclear bomb. Also, Ami Ayalon, the then head of the Shin Bet¹³, considered the deal as the best one concerning Iran’s nuclear capabilities (Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, 2015). Efraim Halevy, former head of the Mossad, suggested that Netanyahu was unwilling to deal with Iran. According to Halevy, the PM attempt to nullify a deal - that would guarantee Iran's detachment to nuclear bombs, of vital importance to Israel security – was illogical. Moreover, Netanyahu also demanded the Iranian recognition of Israel (Americans for Peace Now, 2015). Furthermore, retired Israeli generals wrote a letter to the PM to urge him to accept the deal to enhance the U.S. relationship and control and detect Iran's nuclear behavior (Americans for Peace Now, 2015; Blue White Future, 2015).

The existence of a nuclear deal that had the purpose of controlling and impeding Iranian acquisition and development of a nuclear arsenal was crucial and strategic not only for Israel but also for the stability of the region and the world. The fact that such a powerful country as Iran would not have the means to produce the necessary tools to create a nuclear armament for the following 10-15 years should have been considered by the Israeli Prime Minister as a victory for its country. Moreover, the sanctions' lifting would be pivotal for the Iranian population since the citizens are the ones that are heavily affected by these kinds of political punishments

¹² Israeli Parliament.

¹³ Israel internal security services.

4. Economic and Military Aids

As previously stated, during Obama's eight years at the White House, the military and economic aids to Israel had been higher than in the past: In fact, the leading interest for the U.S. was to defend Israel's security (Shlaim, 2017; Rodríguez Blanco, 2018). For example, in 2012, Obama signed the 'US-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act' made to fortify Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME¹⁴). Also, in 2014 the signatory of the 'US-Israel Strategic Partnership Act' was able to guarantee three million dollars in pilot programs' research between the Israeli government and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Furthermore, joint military training and exercises were held, alongside the possibility for Israel to access U.S. military hardware and emergencies supplies – as an example the overuse of U.S. weapons during the Gaza War – (The White House, 2012; The White House, 2016a; Ruebner, 2016). Nevertheless, for the Policy Director of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Josh Ruebner (2016), the exceptional aid program was used by Obama to oppose the allegations made against his administration on its low support towards the State of Israel.

4.1 *The Iron Dome project*¹⁵

In addition to these acts, as soon as Obama entered the office in 2009, he asked Congress to accept the request made by Israel of 200\$ million to fund its Iron Dome project (Weiner, 2017). H.R. 5327 (2010) states that Israel "deserves all necessary assistance to defend itself and its citizens from the many threats that it continues to face" and accepted the request with 410-4 agreements. One of the Representatives against the bill was Dennis Kucinich. He argued that a missile defense system was unnecessary if Israel did not resolve the main reasons behind the attacks, mainly the settlement constructions (Johnson, 2010). The Iron Dome is a short-range anti-missile developed and produced – originally – by Israel. Since 2011, the system has intercepted 2.400

¹⁴ The QME is a U.S. foreign policy concept, established during George W. Bush years, that entails the evaluation of "any potential weapons sale to the Middle East with a view to ensuring that no country or combination of countries possesses the firepower to battle Israel evenly" (Ruebner, 2016:59).

¹⁵ The Israeli military is one of the most advanced globally, especially in the Arab country. Two veterans of the Israel Defence Force, Yaakov Katz, and Amir Bohbot, in their book "*The Weapon Wizards, How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower*" (2017), explain the story of Israel through its military and technological development, trying to understand how this military superiority was achieved.

missiles: It is said that during the Gaza War in 2014 – when Hamas launched nearly 3,000 missiles – it had an interception rate close to 90% (Sharp, 2020; Weiner, 2017). Nevertheless, it is reported that this system is not entirely efficient when talking about intercepting Qassams¹⁶ and mortar shells in a short range of 4.5 kilometers or less (Johnson, 2010). Unlike the Iron Dome, Israel's other anti-missiles systems, such as David's Sling and the Arrow systems (I, II, III), were jointly made and owned by the U.S. and Israel since 2008 (Scheinmann, 2012). However, in 2014 the U.S. and Israel signed an agreement of joint production that would "enable the manufacture of components of the Iron Dome system in the United States, while also providing the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) with full access to what had been proprietary Iron Dome technology" (Sharp, 2020:16).

Obama continued to fund the Iron Dome project, for example, in 2014 when he signed H.J. Res. 76 (2014) granting other "\$225 million in U.S. taxpayer dollars" and spent 1,300 million dollars between 2011 and 2016 (Shimoni Stoil, 2014; Rodríguez Blanco, 2018). However, it is reported that in 2012, Congress moved to grant a fund for other Iron Dome projects that the administration had "zeroed out" (Scheinmann, 2012). In addition to this, the budget for the so-called "Israeli Cooperative" – Arrow systems and David's Sling – passed from 106.1 million in fiscal year (F.Y.) 2012 to 99.9 million in FY2013. Some commentators believed that the budget constraint was due to the President's discontent over Israeli behavior on the peace agreement and the Iranian Nuclear Deal. However, the cut was already decided in FY2012, before such events. For Gabriel Scheinmann (2012), the leading cause was the Obama administration's "coolness" and skepticism in dealing with such systems highlighting, as an example, the cancellation of the agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic.

4.2 *The Memorandum of Understanding*

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in September 2016 between the U.S. and Israel, entered into force in 2019, and covered ten years (Nagel, 2020). The agreement called an "unshakable commitment to Israel security" consisted of a 38-billion-dollar military aid, divided into 33 billion in "foreign military financing

¹⁶ Qassam missiles are "crude rockets" and "unsophisticated weapons" that give to the Palestinian terrorists the capacity to attack deep into Israel (Weiss, 2008).

funds" and the other five billion destined for missile defense (The White House, 2016a; U.S. Department of State, 2016). It was designed after three years of negotiations. For Israeli National Security Advisor Jacob Nagel (2020) the negotiations started in compensation for Israel's compromise on Turkey and its "progress on the Iranian issue". The Israeli Premier considered the deal the "largest military assistance package" that the U.S. has ever done to any other country.

Moreover, this agreement ensured that the relations between the two countries were still "strong and steadfast" and that Israel could continue to develop its security systems and military strength (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Also, Barack Obama stated that the agreement represented U.S. commitment to Israel's security and its ability to develop ways to defend itself (The White House, 2016b). Furthermore, Jacob Nagel, in his discourse at the signature of the MOU, stressed the importance of the deal in helping Israel enhance its missile defense system capabilities and also in strengthening the U.S.-Israeli alliance (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

According to Bernard Avishai (2016), a crucial element for Obama was the impossibility for Netanyahu to lobby and ask for more money from Congress. Lindsey Graham, a member of the Senate, was critical about this provision: Graham believed that Congress had an "independent duty" to decide the level of support to any of the U.S. allies. Moreover, Ilan Goldenberg, director of the M.E. Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, suggests that the agreement is not binding. For this, Congress can make its changes (Dorell, 2016). Sustaining this theory, Jeremy M. Sharp (2020:5), Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, affirms that MOUs are non-legally binding agreements. So, Congress has the potential to "accept or change year-to-year assistance levels for Israel or provide supplemental appropriations". In contrast with the precedent MOU was the gradual elimination of the provision that enabled Israel to use the 26% of the aid "on its defense industry instead of on American-made weapons" (Spetalnick, 2016). Moreover, it is said that at the beginning, the Israeli PM did not want to discuss the agreement since it would have meant to accept the Iranian Nuclear Deal. Interestingly, despite his reticence, the prospect of a possible Trump's victory was troublesome: Trump declared that Israel should reimburse the U.S. for its security assistance. For this reason, Netanyahu decided to "avoid uncertainties" and signed the deal with Obama (Ahren, 2016; Spetalnick, 2016).

Some authors, such as Bard (2020), Ahren (2016), Terry (2017), and Rynhold (2016), claim that Netanyahu hoped for a more considerable military aid than the one

received: It is said that the PM wished for an MOU of 40-45 billion dollars, and some even of 50 billion dollars. However, the then National Security Advisor, Ya'akov Amidrod, certified that no amount higher than 38 billion dollars was discussed (Ahren, 2016). These same authors highlighted that Netanyahu's political adversaries believed that the aid package would have been higher if the relationship were better between the two leaders. Contrary to this theory, Rynhold (2016) believes that if Netanyahu conceded on the Iran issue – thus allowing a better relationship and, consequently, a better military deal– this would have given the impression that Israel was not as concerned as it is regarding Iran. Moreover, the scholar maintains that an increase in the deal would have only relieved some budgetary pressure on Israel. In addition to this, journalists Toosi and Bender (2016) sustain that, because Obama has imperiled Israel with the Iranian Nuclear Deal, a more significant military deal would not have made any difference at all.

Besides, some figures consider the deal to be far more modest than what everyone claims. Gilead Sher, the former Israeli peace negotiator, sustains that the deal is almost identical in the amount of money set in the precedent MOU. The negotiator calculated that the difference is only 300 million dollars since 500 million dollars were added every year along with the three billion (Toosi and Bender, 2016; Ahren, 2016). Sustaining this theory is Jonathan Schanzer, VP for research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies: Other than stressing the smallness of the increase, the deal obligated Israel to contemplate the capabilities that it will need, even if ten years represent an extended period, in which changes are more than likely, especially in the MENA region (Dorell, 2016).

The MoU and all other military projects that Obama financed during his years at the White House highlighted the still present and still strong relationship between the two countries, despite the turbulent relationship between the two leaders. It stresses that for Obama and his team, the security of Israel is crucial. However, the elimination of the provision concerning the possibility to use the funds on Israel's industry, American production of anti-missiles components and its access to the systems' technology could raise a reasonable question. Does the American interest rely more on ensuring Israel and its citizens the tools to defend themselves and sleep peacefully, or are they more engaged in having a stable, dependable, and committed buyer that will boost American war industry?

Chapter 2: Trump and Israel friendship

The first trip done by the new President of the U.S. was in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where Trump delivered a speech in front of fifty Muslim leaders. However, despite this fact, one of the first bills that he promulgated was the Muslim Ban. On the 27th of January 2017, Trump promulgated Executive Order 13769 in which the President highlighted the necessity to protect the U.S. and its citizens from the entry of potential Muslim terrorists into its territory. The ban was directed to citizens from six Muslim countries –Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – to whom it was neglected the entry for ninety days. Moreover, the ban also halted the Syrian refugees' program and their resettlement. This order was contested by several courts which tried to stop its implementation. However, on the 26th of June 2018, the US Supreme Court – in a 5 to 4 opinion – allowed the entry into force of a new version of the Executive Order in which nationals from Venezuela and North Korea were neglected the access. The list of banned countries was extended in 2020 with Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania (Rabinovich, 2017; Executive Order 13769, 2017; Immigration History, 2020; Amnesty International UK, 2020).

A difference between Trump and Obama regards the relationship with the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. The relationship between Obama and Netanyahu was considered toxic, whereas Trump and Netanyahu are regarded as great friends. Some journalists and scholars call their relationship a “budding political symbiosis” or even defined Netanyahu as Trump’s “political soulmate”. Netanyahu was the fifth political leader that Trump met after his assignment at the White House and in his first trip, Trump visited Israel and the Western Wall where he prayed (Klug, 2020; Landler, 2017b; Cavari, 2021). The following chapters will present all the pro-Israel policies that Trump did in

his four years as President: In fact, he promised that during his presidency, “the days of treating Israel like a second-class citizen will end on day one” (Stevenson, 2017:8).

Nevertheless, despite this relationship between the two leaders, it is possible to consider Trump as anti-Semitic. According to the journalist of *The New Yorker*, Masha Gessen (2019), Trump positions himself as pro-Zionist but anti-Semitic. It is undeniable that Trump adopted a series of pro-Israel stances but at the same time, during various conferences, he expressed anti-Semitic comments. He stated that Jews try to control their politicians with their money, that Jews are motivated and obsessed with money and he used images to represent an international Jewish upper class as the oppressor of white Christian Americans. Indeed, at the end of his electoral campaign, Trump’s team decided to use an advertisement with anti-Semitic tropes: The video wanted to convey the idea that international financial Jewish people were controlling politics and the world’s economy (Stevenson, 2017; Morris, 2020). Moreover, when presenting an executive order to fight anti-Semitism on campuses, Trump was with two evangelical Christian pastors, Robert Jeffress, and John Hagee. According to Jeffress, Jews are doomed to hell and Hagee believes in a plot by the Rothschild¹⁷ to conquer the world and that the anti-Christ is half Jewish. Regarding the anti-Semitism fight on the campuses, the executive order is a way to link anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism: It serves to target anti-Israel voices that are, for him, equal to anti-Semitism (Shanes, 2019). Furthermore, another important aspect of Trump's anti-Semitic discourse is considering American Jews as Israelis and not American. In a conference in Florida, Trump expressed his sadness over American Jews scarce loyalty towards Israel, as if they should be loyal to another country and not their own: Israel is “your country” said Trump in 2018. In fact, for Trump, Jews are “aliens”, “tolerated [...] foreigners” whose devotion should be directed to Israel but are “welcome” in the U.S. as long as they back him. This line of thought is very dangerous, especially in a period where the number of anti-Semitic assaults is increasing in the U.S.: During the first year of Trump’s presidency, the number of attacks increased by 60% (Gessen, 2019; Shanes, 2019; Chait, 2020).

Despite Trump's anti-Semitic stances, most of the Israeli public, the 70% that was interviewed – 751 people – by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI), preferred the winning of Trump over Joe Biden in the American electoral campaign of November 2020. 42% of the surveyed believed that the relationship between Israel and the U.S. would deteriorate

¹⁷ The Rothschild family is a very rich and prominent Jewish family of bankers. The forefather was Edmond Rothschild. The family was and is symbol of international Jewish wealth and power (Shanes, 2019).

in case of a Biden victory: They fear that Biden will align himself and his administration towards the Palestinians. Whereas the Arab Israelis were divided between 36% that wanted Trump, 31% that preferred a Biden’s victory, and 33% of hesitant (Staff and AFP, 2020). Another survey – made by the Pew Research Center – showed how only Israel’s and Philippine’s citizens had a greater consideration of Trump and his foreign policy: 71% of Israelis and 77% of Philippians. This could be due to all the pro-Israeli actions that the President made during his presidency: Richard Goldberg, a former Trump administration official, said that “this president is a dream come true” – obviously only for Israel (Eden and Sales, 2020; Tibon, 2020).

No.	Policies	Date
1	Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel capital city	December 6, 2017
2	Withdrawal of Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)	May 8, 2018
3	The inauguration of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem	May 14, 2018
4	Withdrawal of U.N. Human Rights Council due to bias allegation to Israel	June 19, 2018
5	Chopping the amount of USAID for Gaza and West Bank as much as \$200 million	August 25, 2018
6	Ending U.S. aid to U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in respect of Palestinian Refugees	August 31, 2018
7	Shutting down the Palestinian (PLO) Diplomatic Mission Office in Washington, D.C.	September 10, 2018
8	Re-enacting Iran sanctions	November 5, 2018
9	Withdrawal of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in respect to Russia, China, and Iran	February 1, 2019
10	Shutting down U.S. Consulate for Palestine in Jerusalem	March 4, 2019
11	Recognizing Golan Heights as part of Israel territory	March 25, 2019
12	Executive Order on Imposing Sanctions in respect to the iron, steel, aluminum, and cooper sectors of Iran	May 8, 2019
13	Executive Order on Imposing Sanctions on the Supreme Leader of Iran and the Worst Elements of Iranian Regime	June 24, 2019
14	Organizing Workshop entitled <i>Peace for Prosperity in Bahrain</i> , which was led by Jared Kushner	June 25, 2019
15	Declaring that Israeli settlement in West Bank was no longer illegal	November 18, 2019

Data were retrieved from the Council on Foreign Relations (2018), White House (2019), Al-Jazeera (2019, March 4), and The Guardian (2019, June 17; 2019, June 25; 2019, November 18).

Table retrieved from Abdiel, K.S., (2020). Individual Foreign Policy Analysis of Donald Trump: A Case Study of the US Embassy relocation to Jerusalem.

1. Trump and the MENA Region

According to many authors, it is very difficult to try to find a Trumpian foreign policy that is consistent throughout his four years as President; For Baker (Singh, 2021), the perception that emerged is of “don’t get roped in by doctrine” and Goldberg (Singh,

2021:337) says that “[unlike] Obama, Trump possesses no ability to explain anything resembling a foreign-policy philosophy”. However, Trump followed his predecessor's line of giving much of the security burden to regional allies, leaving the nation-building principle and wanting to end the “endless wars”. In fact, for what it concerns both Iraq and Afghanistan, President Trump intended to dismantle and bring home if not all the troops, most of them. When Trump became President, the number of American troops in Afghanistan was around 10,000 and he intended to leave the office with only 2,500 in the territory: When the decision was made – in November 2020 – the number of American militaries was 4,500 due to a precedent cut from 8,000. Also in Iraq, Trump maintained only a small number of troops: 3,500 which is, according to some data, roughly the same that was present in 2015 when ISIS took control of the area. At that moment, American's and allies' troops were switching their objective: They were more interested in training the local armies than in fighting ISIS. However, in 2020 the Taliban have committed 13,000 and more attacks in the region, which is considered the most violent period during the entire war. And, despite Trump's willingness to end the wars, he did not achieve this goal (Thompson, 2018; Kristian, 2021; The Editorial Board, 2020; Rasmussen and Amiri, 2020; Singh, 2021; Lubold and Youssef, 2020; Lubold and Gordon, 2020).

Talking about Egypt, the relationship between Trump and el-Sisi was, as Trump himself stated, based on good terms since they agreed on many things: He even called el-Sisi his “favorite dictator”. Trump expressed his concerns about the human rights situation that Egypt was living under el-Sisi but, he highlighted how the security of the region developed during el-Sisi's presidency. Nevertheless, this relationship was not without obstacles: Firstly, due to concerns about human rights violations and the easiness with which Egypt sold North Korean arms, Trump decided to partially cut \$300 million which were then returned in 2018. In 2019 Egypt signed a \$2 billion deal with Russia to buy 20 Su-35 warplanes. The U.S. soon intervened and exhorted Egypt to revoke the request. However, Egypt continued to withhold its deal with Russia. (Thompson, 2018; Salama, 2019a; Youssef, Salama and Bender, 2019; Schwartz, 2017). Concerning the situation in Libya, Trump, during a conference in 2017 with the then Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni (2016-2018), said that he did not see a role for the U.S. in the Libyan conflict, but rather one in trying to dismantle ISIS. In 2019 Trump had a phone conversation with General Haftar: Haftar is the militia leader who in 2019 launched an offensive to seize Tripoli from the UN-backed government. Trump and Haftar talked about shared visions about the country and the necessity of a peaceful transition towards

democracy. Before this call, the U.S. backed the UN-sponsored government in Tripoli and condemned Haftar's actions; Moreover, it is said that both the Saudis and the Emiratis urged Trump to back the General (Salama, Malsin and Said, 2019; Salama and Malsin, 2019; Faucon, 2019; Schwartz and Ballhaus, 2017).

Regarding the Yemeni civil war, Trump used his veto powers in 2019 to reject a Senate and House resolution to end U.S. support of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Trump considered this resolution an “unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken [his] constitutional authorities”. A reason for his, and Obama's, acceptance of the war, is the possibility of an Iranian conquest of the territory and the expansion of its influence in the region. However, the humanitarian crisis that is striking the civilian population – that pushed millions into starvation – should be sufficient to try to put coalitions aside and find a solution to this conflict soon, for the sake of the Yemeni population (Salama, 2019b; Hughes, 2019; The Editorial Board, 2019b). In Syria, the Trump administration continued the containment of the ISIS group and asked for Assad's exit. Other than focusing on ISIS, one of the objectives of the U.S. army was to counter Iranian influence and its expansion. The U.S. participation in the war in Syria enlarged and troops battled with the regime-led forces and pro-Iranian groups: Trump even suggested a semi-permanent military presence in Syria. Moreover, in 2018 Trump backed an Israeli attack in Syria after an Iranian drone entered Israeli airspace (Rabinovich, 2017; Barron and Barnes, 2018; Barnes and Barron, 2018).

2. Jerusalem and the Moving of the Embassy

During his speech at AIPAC on the 21st of March 2016 candidate, Donald J. Trump promised to move the U.S. embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, whom he considered the “eternal capital of the Jewish people” (Rinehart, 2018). Although this decision may seem avant-garde, Trump was not the first candidate to promise such relocation: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and also Barack Obama all guaranteed that the Embassy would be moved to Jerusalem once they entered into office. Obama even stated that Jerusalem must remain undivided since it was the capital of Israel (Moten, 2018; Baker, 2017; Rinehart, 2018). Also, the U.S. Congress was involved with the matter, promulgating a series of bills from 1984 to 1995 in which it asked for the relocation of the Embassy in Jerusalem (Moten, 2018; Aswar, 2018). Public Law 104-45 (1995: Sec 3 (a)) states that the U.S. has embassies in every capital city except for its “democratic

friend and strategic ally” Israel. Moreover, it declares that Jerusalem has to be recognized as the capital of Israel and it should remain an undivided city “in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected”. The embassy had to be moved by 1999 or the State Department would have its funds cut. Nevertheless, this bill has a “security waiver” that grants presidents to postpone the relocation every six months, and all the presidents have invoked it to “defer compliance” (Baker, 2017; Stevenson, 2018).

In line with his predecessors, Trump retreated from his decision: Some Arab officials warned of the “wave of violence” that the relocation could cause within the Muslim communities (Bard, 2018). The journalist of *The New York Times*, Peter Baker (2017), in an article states that King Abdullah II of Jordan influenced the decision to “back away” highlighting how the decision could cause “violent backlash among Arabs” undermining the possibilities to bring the two sides together. Moreover, Baker also notes that for Naftali Bennett the delay could spoil the peace process by giving false hopes to Palestinians of gaining control of East Jerusalem. Whereas Dan Shapiro believed that, if Trump wanted to achieve peace in the region, it was not the time to move the Embassy – although, for him, it belonged in Jerusalem.

In any case, on the 6th of December 2017, in a speech at the White House, Trump said that “it was time to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel” highlighting the fact that the State Department should start preparing for moving the Embassy to the now recognized capital (White House, 2017). It is believed that this decision was born from Trump’s talks with his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and the Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed ibn Salman (Tamimi, 2018). Moreover, according to Trump, delaying the recognition was “injurious to the peace process” (Augustine, 2018), but expressed the fact that the U.S. was not contrary to a two-state solution to the conflict and that the U.S. was not “taking a position of any final status issues, including the specific boundaries of the Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, or the resolution of contested borders” (White House, 2017). According to Stevenson (2018) the rationale behind this statement could be that, by supporting Israelis demands, prime ministers would find it hard to negate any U.S. requests regarding the Palestinian conflict and would be more flexible. Trump himself stated that he was trying a new approach to the conflict that could, in the future, bring to a peace deal (Abdiel, 2020). Contrary to Trump’s belief, this action did not have any positive effect on the peace process: It put an end to the U.S. image as an honest and impartial broker and the Palestinians were not inclined to return to the negotiation tables (Kalantari, 2018).

This statement, as it was foreseeable, divided the international community. First and foremost, it resulted in the escalation of violence in Palestine and Israel: there were protests in Gaza and in the West Bank which led to the death of fifty to sixty Palestinians. Hamas called for a new Intifada and Israel registered a surge in the attacks, from 84 in November to 259 in December (Rodríguez Blanco, 2018; Abdiel, 2020; Stevenson, 2018).

Netanyahu considered the declaration as “bold” and a “historic landmark” for the State. He also said that it was a festive moment for Israel that united all the country “making Jerusalem our chief joy” (Augustine, 2018; Fulbright and Ahren, 2017). Federica Mogherini, the then High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, expressed the firm commitment of EU member states to a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, expressing grave concern over the decision that has the “potential to send us backward to even darker times than the ones we are already living in” (Moten, 2018; Fulbright and Ahren, 2017). According to King Abdullah II of Jordan, this declaration threatened the possibilities for peace between the two conflicting parties, whereas Abbas considered it as a “gift to the Zionist movement” (Moten, 2018). Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riyad al-Maliki, regarded the U.S. as aggressors against not only the Palestinians but also international law, and the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, thought that the decision could put the region “on the verge of explosion” (Rinehart, 2018). A week after this statement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a meeting in Istanbul declaring East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, saying that Trump’s decision was “unilateral”, “dangerous”, “legally null and void” and rejecting the U.S. as the mediator in the conflict (Rodríguez Blanco, 2018; Stevenson, 2018). Scholar Azzam Tamimi (2018) recalls how it was believed that other than the Saudis, also the Egyptians, and the Emiratis knew beforehand Trump’s intention to move the embassy: They even tried to pressure both Palestinian’s and Jordan’s leaders to accept such decision.

Contradicting Tamimi’s theory, was the Egyptian-sponsored resolution that was approved by 14 of the 15 members at a UN SC emergency meeting, on the 7th of December 2017. The U.S., represented by its Ambassador Nikki Haley vetoed it. Then, the UN GA voted a resolution – 129 to 8, and 35 abstentions – that declared “null and void” the recognition made by U.S. President and asked Trump to rescind the statement. However, Haley said that the U.S. would remain firm in its affirmation and would move the embassy (Moten, 2018; UN GA, 2017). The new embassy was inaugurated on the

14th of May 2018, the same day of the 70th anniversary of Israel's Independence and is now located at 14 David Flusser Street in Jerusalem (Abdiel, 2020). Moreover, during his last period as president, the State Department allowed U.S. citizens born in Jerusalem to sign Israel as their country of birth (Staff and AFP, 2020). Even though the recognition of Jerusalem is a great step for Israel, it is undeniable that this move will bring the two parties away from a possible and future two-state solution since for the Palestinians it is important to maintain at least East Jerusalem as their capital.

3. Against Iran and the JCPOA

Since the signature of the JCPOA deal, Trump expressed his deep concern about what he considered a “disaster” of a deal (Bard, 2018). The President had to certify Iran’s compliance but, the second time – the 15th of July 2017 – announced his willingness not to do so anymore. Rex Tillerson, then-Secretary of State, warned him of the necessity to certify since there was no proof of Iran’s misbehavior. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran was fulfilling the agreement (Simon, 2018; Udum, 2018). Even though Tillerson believed that Iran was the “leading state sponsor of terror”, he believed that a withdrawal from the deal could be “counterproductive” and asked to maximize the verification and control systems to prove Iran’s compliance (Bard, 2018; Barnes and Barron, 2018; Nazareth, 2019). Despite this, and the fact that the other parties were broadly content with the deal, on the 8th of May 2018 Trump announced the withdrawal and the lifting of new and severe sanctions (Barnes and Barron, 2018; Simon, 2018).

As Abdiel (2020) writes, the Trump administration worked to ensure Israel’s security and the main threat for Israel was Iran. For Trump, Iran was the only state that could offensively counter Israel, and the only way to prevent this was to end any agreement and impose sanctions. Moreover, the scholar suggests that Trump and Netanyahu discussed and consulted before taking any decision. Additionally, Netanyahu, in April 2018, claimed that the Israeli military has found documents that revealed Iran’s non-compliance with the deal and its attempt to “conceal a military nuclear program”. However, this documentation was dated before 2015, the year of the deal (Ha’aretz and Reuters, 2018; Forgey, 2018; Abdiel, 2020). Another reason that was given to support Trump’s decision to withdraw was expressed by Tillerson: Iran violated the JCPOA with the ballistic missile project, even though it was delinked from the agreement. Tillerson

also tried to link the “viability of the deal” to the support that Iran gave to the Syrian regime – even though there is no connection with Iran’s nuclear capability (Simon, 2018; Udum, 2018).

The EU, which benefitted from the deal – from 9,2 billion dollars in trade with Iran in 2015 to 25 billion dollars in 2017 – was asked both by Iran and the U.S. to maintain or withdraw from the deal. The EU decided to maintain the deal, considering it “instrumental” and “worthy of protection”. Moreover, the EU decided to pursue legal actions if the U.S., which sanctioned U.S. companies that traded with Iran, decided to do so also with non-American companies (Nazareth, 2019; Pace and Yacobi, 2020; Phillips, 2018). For what concerns the Gulf States’ opinion on the withdrawal, Kuwait and Qatar did not express their position publicly. Oman – that had a pivotal role in the negotiations – was “measured” in its response: An Omani statement declared that “confrontation” between the two parties would not suffice their interests. Whereas, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates backed the U.S. decision (Nazareth, 2019; Saab et al, 2018). Evidently, the proximity born between the Trump administration and the Saudis gave the U.S. the “confidence” to act antagonistically towards Iran. Surely, Trump “pledged” to Saudi Arabia and Israel to control and minimize Iran’s influence in the region (Nusem, 2018; Abdiel, 2020).

According to scholar James Phillips (2018), the withdrawal was an important step taken to influence the Iranian regime to abandon its aggressive foreign policy and to hold it accountable for the spread of terrorism and subversion in the region. However, it is possible to argue that, as Kalantari (2018) writes, it is Trump’s antagonism regarding Iran that could lead to an increase in the extremists’ influence and strengthen their control. It is undeniable that the withdrawal has weakened the “status and prestige” of the U.S. as a reliable negotiator in security and non-proliferation matters: The U.S. was the one that violated the agreement, hence international law, and not the Iranians (Kalantari, 2018; Udum, 2018). Despite personal opinions about the deal, having an international agreement ratified by many countries can guarantee the parties’ execution of its provision and can give the right and legal instruments to sanction possible violations. Moreover, if Trump’s intentions were always to withdraw from the deal, it would have been better to delineate a “post-deal” agreement to avoid the possibility of an Iranian’s withdrawal – even though they still want the deal to function (Saab et al, 2018) –and the resume of a nuclear capability program.

4. Palestinians' Funds Cut

During his presidency, Trump realized a series of policies against Palestine. Firstly, Trump decided to limit, and then to completely halt, the funding directed to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). In fact, in January 2018 the President expressed his willingness to reduce the amount to \$60 million after Abbas' statement about the impossibility of a Palestinian return to the negotiations table due to the American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. In August of the same year, Trump declared the end of American aids to the UN agency – that received in FY2017 \$360 million (Bhungalia, Greven and Mustafa, 2019; Rinehart, 2018). In March 2018, the Taylor Force Act was promulgated: It demanded the end of aids from countries until Palestine stopped “all payments incentivizing terror” to those Palestinian families that had a relative in an Israeli prison or that committed an act of terrorism against it. Moreover, in January 2018 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)¹⁸ ended all its operations in Palestine. Thus, American civilian and governmental aids to Palestine were halted (H.R. 1164, 2018; Bhungalia, Greven and Mustafa, 2019). Lastly, in September 2018 the PLO office in Washington D.C. was closed: The reason behind this was the refusal by Palestinian officials to engage in “direct and meaningful” negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Lastly, he even withdrew in 2017 from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – since 2010 the U.S. stopped paying its bill due to Palestine's entry into the agency (Gordon, 2018; Erdoğan and Habash, 2020; Weiss, 2019).

According to both Trump and the Israeli leaders, the existence of the UNRWA conflicted with the possibility of a solution to the conflict because it promulgated the idea of the “right to return” and avoided the assimilation of refugees in Israel (Schwartz, 2018; Espín Ocampo et al., 2020). In fact, according to some scholars and journalists like Wong (2018), Rogin (2018), and Othman, Qaddoura, and Majid (2020), this political move was encouraged by Jared Kushner and by the U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley: Cutting the funds to the UN agency would have made the Palestinians drop their demands for the refugees and their return to the homeland. Whereas, it is said that Mike Pompeo argued not to cut so severely the funds and that also the Israeli government was not asking

¹⁸ The USAID was created by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and its goal is to help developing countries and to improve their standards of living (USAID, 2019).

for a complete cut of aids (Rogin, 2018; Wong, 2018). Moreover, it is said that this measure was also a punishment to the Palestinian government for their considered “bad behavior” in the negotiations’ issue and coercion to the agency to request to Palestine the return to consultations (Rogin, 2018; Erdoğan and Habash, 2020). It is also worth noting that the cut can be considered as a way through which Trump wanted to exchange economic relief for peace, instead of the normal land-peace bargain: The so-called Trumpian solution (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019; Brown, 2018).

However, for as much as Trump wanted to find a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, he did not consider the fact that his decision severely damaged the living conditions of millions of Palestinian refugees of the West Bank, Gaza, and other parts of the region that managed to sustain themselves with the aids. The UNRWA provided basic services to five million Palestinians, had 711 schools with 526.000 children enrolled, provided food and emergency cash aids in Gaza, West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. It even supplied health care assistance and wastewater projects (Erdoğan and Habash, 2020; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019; Donati and Schwartz, 2018). The agency, which was already facing a difficult financial situation, found itself not knowing if it could still help the population since the cut created a very serious resource shortage. It was even impossible to determine if the schools could remain open for the entirety of the school year; There were cuts in the services, the defund of six tertiary hospitals in East Jerusalem that nursed children with cancer. The agency was also forced to cut basic mental health assistance and short-term employments – it had the potential to seriously aggravate the unemployment situation that already affected 50% of the Palestinians (Bhungalia, Greven and Mustafa, 2019; Donati and Schwartz, 2018; DeYoung, 2018; Kuttub, 2018). This decision by President Trump will jeopardize not only the life of millions of Palestinians but also the peace process; Moreover, it will aggravate an already tense situation between the Palestinians and Israel, and it will raise Palestinians anger towards the U.S. and Israel.

5. Golan Heights Recognition

On the 21st of March 2019 with a tweet President Trump decided, “after 52 years”, to “fully recognize” the Golan Heights¹⁹ as part of Israel territory (Trump, 2019). This

¹⁹ The Golan Heights were conquered by the IDF, The Israeli Defence Force, during the 1967 war. Both Michael B. Oren (2002) in “*Six Days of War June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*” and Tom Segev (2007) “*1967 Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East*” there is a

sudden statement was then formally validated in an official statement on the 25th of the same month: Trump highlighted the need for Israel to be secure in its territory since the events of the Syrian war led to the intensification of Iranian proxy groups and terrorist groups in Israel's neighborhood that make the Golan Heights a "potential launching ground for attacks on Israel" (The White House, 2019). However, this declaration startled his Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, who continued to reiterate the U.S. policy of non-acknowledging Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Pompeo, after this proclamation, specified that this declaration is not a pretext through which the U.S. would recognize Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank (Al-Burai, 2019).

What is difficult to understand for scholars and experts of foreign relations is the reason behind such declaration and, most specifically, why it was done at that moment. As journalist Dina Badie (2019) states, this recognition opposes U.S. policies that consider necessary the recognition of territories during direct negotiations and not as a result of unilateral declarations. Moreover, journalist of The Washington Post, Adam Taylor (2019), stresses the fact that Israel was not searching for a U.S. recognition of the Golan Heights, but Israel would have used that land to reach a peace deal with Syria as it has done with Egypt and Sinai in 1979. Taylor underlines how Trump's declaration was made before the Israeli elections, which were expected to be held on the 9th of April, and how Netanyahu was facing the "toughest competition". For this reason, Taylor (2019) believes, for good reasons, that the declaration was a political move rather than a move based on a coherent foreign policy. This idea is also supported by the Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA) that questions the timing of the decision that, according to them, has been made through a political calculation (Al-Burai, 2019).

Another reason could be, as Trump himself stated, the security of the region. Netanyahu – who is said to have lobbied the President to recognize the territory (Salama and Schwartz, 2019; The Editorial Board, 2019a) – expressed the importance of the Golan Heights in a period where Iran tried to use the area as a springboard for attacks against Israel. It was a "proactive move" to ensure Israel's safety against Iranian proxies in Syria

recount of the actions that led to the conquest of the Golan. Michael Oren does a specific retelling of the two days, the sixth and the seventh of 1967: In this retelling Oren focuses on the three fronts of the war, the Israeli, the Egyptian and the Syrian, and the most important military officials of the fronts. Moreover, Oren also recounts the involvement of the United Nations Security Council in the war, after the Syrians accused Israel of not respecting the cease-fire. Fol Federenko, the USSR delegate at the UN SC, threatened Israel of being "severely punished" if they did not complain with the cease-fire. On the contrary, the U.S., as Segev (2007) writes, "would accept an attack on the Golan". Despite, the threats coming from the UN SC, Israel on the seventh day of war conquered the Golan and annexed it.

and also in Lebanon (Salama and Schwartz, 2019; Al-Burai, 2019). Moreover, some scholars have highlighted the fact that, if the Golan were not under Israeli control, it would now have been populated by terrorist groups like Hezbollah or ISIS and that is a situation that would create serious security concerns to Israel (The Editorial Board, 2019a; Schanzer and Dubowitz, 2017).

Furthermore, another reason for this decision could be to “soften” the Palestinians and their demands. There is this fear, in the international community, that if Trump can tell the Syrians that they can't return to the pre-1967 borders, then he can do the same also with the Palestinians. This situation sure sounds like a threat to the Palestinians who fear the possibility that a return to the pre-1967 line is, at this point, unrealistic and “no longer sacrosanct”. Decidedly so, Trump is trying to pressure the Palestinians to diminish their “maximalist objectives” which will cause them to have a “harder time” in presenting the 1967 borders and the West Bank as inviolable (Kaufman, 2019; The Editorial Board, 2019a; Schanzer and Dubowitz, 2017).

The Republican U.S. Senator of California, Lindsey Graham (2019), suggests that Trump's move was an attempt to demonstrate that the U.S. supported Israel unconditionally: Trump wanted to convey the fact that the U.S. was determinant in confronting Iran and that it would never compromise Israel's own security in the region. Moreover, Graham also mentions that this recognition was a clear message directed to Bashar Al-Assad that there would be a penalty for murdering his civilians.

As it was predictable, the reactions against this declaration were strong: Both allies and foes of the U.S. denounced the proclamation as contrary to international law. Syria expressed grave concern over the matter, underlying how the statement is a clear attack against its sovereignty, and vowed to recapture the land. Russia, a partner of both Israel and Syria said that the Kremlin would never accept the declaration suggesting that such an action could cause severe consequences in the region. The Arab League head, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, specified the lack of international legitimacy of the declaration. Also, the Council of Europe released a statement affirming its unchanged position over the non-sovereignty of Israel over the Golan Heights (Rasmussen, 2019; BBC News, 2019; Council of the EU, 2019). It is undeniable that the declaration falsely interprets the concept of sovereignty: It “[puts] the concepts of recognition, autonomy, and self-determination, citizens' rights to establish their own set of governance on the stake” (Al-Burai, 2019:11).

Netanyahu was delighted by the proclamation: In a tweet, he thanked the President “for the friendship” towards Israel and himself and also expressed how this action brought the relationship between the two countries to “unprecedented heights” (Netanyahu, 2020). But Israel PM did not only show his gratefulness via tweet but also in creating a new settlement on the Golan dedicated to the American President: “Ramat Trump”, Hebrew for “Trump Heights”. According to Netanyahu, Ramat Trump will incentivize the development of the area. David Friedman, U.S. Ambassador in Israel, said that this settlement in honor of Trump was “well deserved but [...] much appreciated”. Nevertheless, for this “mythological town”, as a Ha’aretz journalist called it, there was no budget, no planning, and, more importantly, no binding decision to build it (Milbank, 2019; Ben Zion, 2020; Lieberman, Schwartz and Picheta, 2019). This recognition proves again Trump’s political convergence with Israel, especially its Right-Wing political class, but also his disregard for international law. If the international community found Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights legitimate, it would have already recognized it at the UN level.

6. West Bank Settlement and the “Deal of the Century”

On the 18th of November 2019, Mike Pompeo declared that the settlements in the West Bank, contrary to popular belief, were not “inconsistent” with international law. Pompeo and Trump were then legitimizing what both the international community and the U.S. government itself condemned since the Israeli annexation of the area. This declaration overstated the 1978 Hansell Memorandum which reiterated the illegality of the settlements under international law (Sher and Cohen, 2020; Ogunnoiki, Iwediba and Ani, 2021). The number of Israeli settlements in the West Bank since the coming into power of Trump was more than 9,200 with a “nary peep” of disagreement from the U.S. and the Deal of the Century gives Israel the possibility to annex 30% of it (Boot, 2021; Golan, 2020).

Other than vouching in favor of the settlements, Trump announced, since his electoral campaign, the willingness to reach the “ultimate deal” regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Asseburg, 2019). According to Trump the two-state solution was the best option but, if the two parties wanted only one state he will be “happy if they’re happy”: This opened a new range of possibilities for the Palestinians, among those also a non-sovereign Palestinian State (Holland and Bayoumy, 2018; Anziska, 2017). In the

same conference, Netanyahu expressed the two prerequisites for an Israeli acceptance of any deal: The recognition from Palestine of the existence of the Israeli State and the fact that the security of “the entire area east of the Jordan River” will be handled by Israel (Anziska, 2017). According to Arieli (2020), and rightly so, Netanyahu found in Trump, Kushner, and Friedman the “Petri dish” for his approach to the conflict: In fact, he never presented a possible plan to Obama because his ideas were “world apart” from the Annapolis parameters.

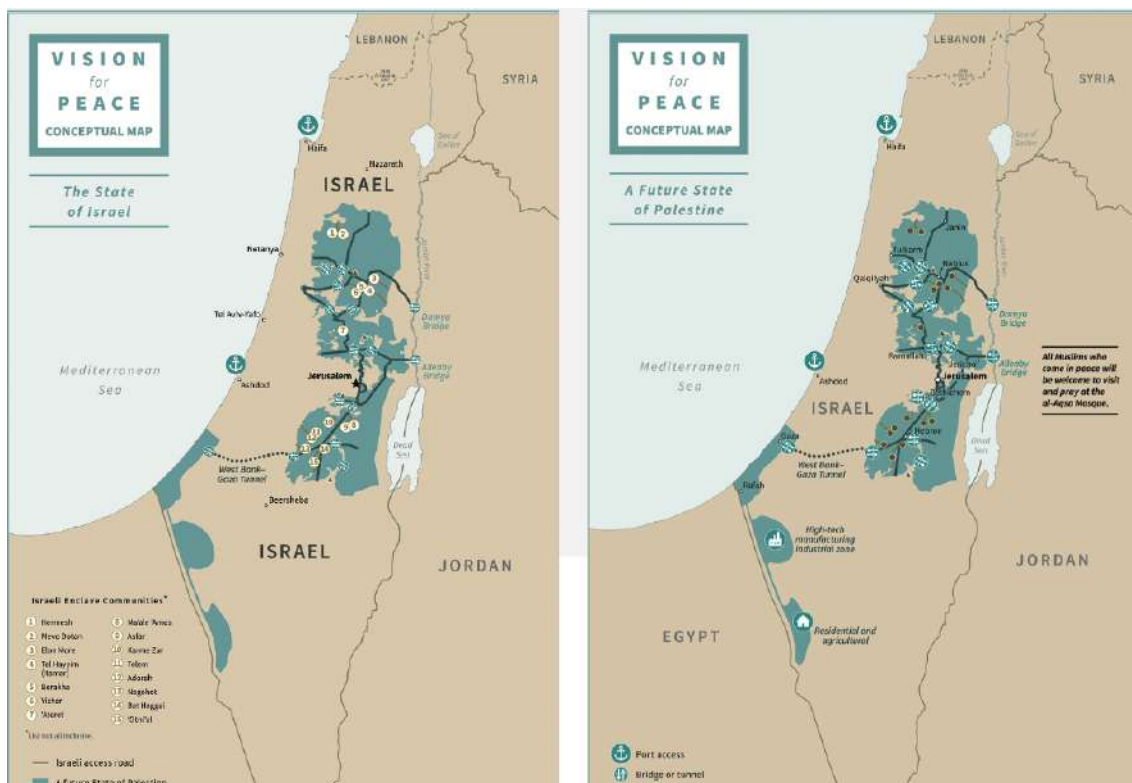
6.1 The Plan “for Prosperity”

On the 28th of January 2020 Trump, in a conference in which there were both Netanyahu and the opposition leader of the Kachol Lavan party, Benny Ganz, but no representative of Palestine presented the so-called “Deal of the Century”. The 181-page document entitled “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People” was designed by Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner (Ogunnoiki, Iwediba, and Ani, 2021; Ghanem, 2020). The plan, as Kumaraswamy (2020:54) states, may at the beginning be considered suitable for the Palestinians but it is “highly partisan, skewed, controversial, and hence unrealistic”. Firstly, no Palestinian delegate was present during the drafting of the plan, making it an “American-Israeli plan”. The plan states that a possible Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) will be considered a “significant concession” since Israel has legal and historical claims. Moreover, following Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, the city will remain undivided under Israeli sovereignty, while the Palestinian capital – that can be called Al-Quds²⁰ – can be established in one of the suburbs of East Jerusalem, beyond the Separation Wall. And, satisfying Netanyahu’s desire, the Palestinian State will be demilitarized: Israel will have “operational control” of the airspace West of the Jordan River. The Palestinians will only have to grant a domestic police force (Golan, 2020; Kumaraswamy, 2020). Moreover, with this plan, Israel will incorporate most of the Israeli settlements, 30% of the West Bank. The Palestinian enclaves will be surrounded by Israel with no “territorial contiguity” and external borders (Arieli, 2020; Golan, 2020; Kumaraswamy, 2020). Lustick (2020) calls these enclaves “ghettos” so areas in which non-citizens Arabs will be confined within Israel. Tatarsky and Oppenheimer (2020) talk

²⁰ Arabic for Jerusalem.

about “a deal within the deal”, specifying how this deal conceals the existence of another one that favors Israel.

Another relevant issue was touched in the plan: The Palestinian refugees. Although the plan initially states that the refugees have been “treated as pawns on the broader Middle East chessboard” and is necessary to find a “just, fair and realistic solution”, Israel will not receive them (Peace to Prosperity, 2020:9). According to the plan, the future of the refugees relies upon the uninhabited areas of the Negev desert. Moreover, the ones that will seek shelter in a Palestinian enclave will have to be approved by Israel (Lustick, 2020; Golan, 2020; Kumaraswamy, 2020). The plan delineates an economic objective for Palestine: With the investments, 50 billion dollars in ten years, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will double in ten years, the poverty lane will decrease by 50%, and with the creation of one million jobs the unemployment rate will go below the 10%. However, this economic plan can be seen to endear the Palestinians: Palestinian self-determination and statehood will be exchanged with economic cooperation and development (Lustick, 2020; Asseburg, 2020).



Vision for Peace, (2020). Conceptual Maps: The State of Israel/ A Future State of Palestine. Peace to Prosperity. Pg. 45-46.

The Deal of the Century can be considered as a “summary” of Israeli Right-Wing positions and ideas that it has offered since the Oslo Accords. With this plan, only one

real state will emerge which is the Israeli one and it tries to prevent the reaching of a peaceful agreement that could establish a Palestinian State, by international law (Ghanem, 2020; Lustick, 2020). The Deal is perceived by its supporters as a means to “[resolve] once and for all the chronic Middle East problem or what has been known as the Palestinian issue” (Tamimi, 2018:76). It is said that Saudi Arabia backed the plan and even increased its aids from 7.5 million per month to 20 million to bribe the Palestinians into accepting a deal (Short, 2018). Trump viewed the Palestinians as the “greatest beneficiaries” of the deal whether Abbas considered the deal as the “slap of the century” and rejected it. For Netanyahu, the deal will constitute a “historic opportunity” to annex the OPT and achieve a “Greater Israel” (Klug, 2020; AbuZayyad and Schenker, 2020; Short, 2018). Also, the EU High Representative, Joseph Borrell, said that the EU opposed the deal but could not present a collective declaration: The U.K. saw the deal as a “serious declaration” and Hungary thought that it was “suitable for creating peace”. On the 4th of February, the UN SC drafted a resolution that tried to put pressure on the U.S. to withdraw the plan (Pace and Yacobi, 2021). Interestingly, even if the settlers were normally very enthusiastic about Trump, they were “dead set” against the deal since it enabled the creation of a Palestinian State (Scham, 2020). It is also worth mentioning, how the timing of such a deal is suspicious. It was presented in a moment where both Trump and Netanyahu were having difficulties at home: Trump had to deal with the impeachment and Netanyahu with a corruption case. It could have been done to distract the media and public opinions but also to help Netanyahu since he was going through his 3rd electoral campaign in that year (Mulrean, 2020; Elgindy, 2020; Tharoor, 2020). Although the economic part of the deal could be considered important to help the Palestinian State to develop and to increase its economy, a peace plan delineated without one of the main interested parties should not have been considered since the beginning. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis should have the same possibilities to express and discuss their demands and their concerns about the proposes and how their future states should be delineated.

7. The Abraham Accords²¹

In September 2020, the 15th, the United States was the witness of a historical peace deal signature between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain. This agreement will be then signed also by Sudan – 23 October 2020 – and Morocco – December 2020. Trump, the sponsor of the peace deal, said that the agreement could be considered the “dawn of a new Middle East”; Netanyahu viewed the deal as a new beginning (Fraiooli, 2020; Lubold and Schwartz, 2020). Even if the accord is called the “Treaty of Peace”, there was no war between the countries in question, and indirect, back-channel economic activities were carried out between them during the decades. The deal's main goal is to develop and intensify economic relations between the countries in tourism, security, transport, communication, technology, etc. (Tharoor, 2021; Even, Fadlon and Guzansky, 2020). According to the research done by Egel, Efron, and Robinson (2021), the deal could create almost 150,000 new jobs for the four countries already parties to the deal: Israel could gain \$46 billion in economic activities and 19,000 new jobs within ten years. For the other four partners, there would be 46,000 new jobs and \$24 billion of gains. The deal does not only discuss the economy but also politics: It allows establishing embassies in the relative countries. On the 1st of March 2021, the UAE opened its embassy in Tel Aviv in a ceremony where the first UAE Ambassador to the State of Israel, His Excellency Mohamed Mahmoud Al Khaja, declared that the two countries share a “common vision for the future” and that they were “witnessing a new vision that will create a better path for the Middle East region” (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2021). The opening of the embassy in Tel Aviv and not in Jerusalem is regarded to “give Palestinians a message of peace and negotiation” (Khan and Shahzad, 2021:182).

However, these deals were not concluded out of a pure desire: According to some scholars, Trump and his team offered to the signatories some “geopolitical sweeteners” in return for the signing. The UAE is said to have asked to stop the annexation of the West Bank by Israel – though Netanyahu said that the halt was only temporary and was “still on the table”. Moreover, after the signing, Trump notified Congress of his willingness to sell to the UAE “fifty stealth F-35 fighter jets and eighteen advanced

²¹ “*Sledgehammer: How Breaking with the Past Brought Peace to the Middle East*” is a book written by the former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman (2022) where he recounts the paths that brought Israel to normalize its relations with four Arab countries in 2020.

military drones” that were part of an arms deal worth \$23 billion (Khan and Shahzad, 2021; Singer, 2021;450; DeYoung and Hendrix, 2020). For Bahrain the U.S. had to recognize a Bahraini Islamist resistance group, Saraya al-Mokhtar, as a terrorist organization; Whereas Sudan was removed from the list of the states that sponsor terrorism, which resulted in the lifting of sanctions. Morocco saw the contested territory of Western Sahara to be recognized as part of the territory of the Kingdom (Singer, 2021). It is possible to prove that the normalization of the relations was to some extent a bribe because there were rumors that Qatar – a “pipeline” that send messages to Hamas – could enter the deal in exchange for the halting of the boycott realized at its expense by the Quartet²² (Michael and Guzansky, 2020).

For what it concerns Saudi Arabia, the possibility for normalization could arrive only with the death of King Salman: He is a supporter of the exchange of land for peace, whereas the Crown Prince Mohammed ibn Salman is more interested in an economic interaction with Israel – Israel can provide with the military, technological and cyber security knowledge. It is said that the Crown Prince is considerably engrossed with the gains that Saudi Arabia could derive with its collaboration with Israel (Dazi-Héni, 2020; Guzansky, 2020; Fraioli, 2020). However, even if the Prince seems favorable to an opening of economic relations with Israel, only 30% of the Saudi population approves this possibility. An element that could show Saudi’s acceptance of the deal is its permission to let Israeli airplanes fly over its airspace when going to or from UAE and Bahrain. Additionally, it is believed that Bahrain is highly dependent on Saudi Arabia, and, for scholars, Bahrain received the authorization from the Saudis before signing – even though there are no proofs of such consultations (Trigano, 2021; Fraioli, 2020; Guzansky, 2020).

A negative aspect that comes from the Abraham Accords is the near absence of mentions regarding the Palestinian issue: In the deal, Palestine is only mentioned twice. The difference with the Oslo Accords is that Oslo dealt with the exchange of land for peace, whereas the Abraham Accords are bilateral agreements that handle economic and security interests leaving aside the Palestinian situation (Khan and Shahzad, 2021; Dazi-Héni, 2020). For this reason, the deal was considered by the PA leader, Abbas, as a “stab in the back” and Hamas saw it as a treason of the Palestinian struggle (Fraoli, 2020; Winter and Guzansky, 2020). According to DeYoung and Hendrix (2020), the reason

²² UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

could be that Arab leaders are “fatigued” with the Palestinian issue and are more interested in pursuing their interests rather than the Palestinians. Nevertheless, even if the Abraham Accords are economically and politically important, it is important to keep in mind that a full normalization of the relations between the Arab world and Israel could never be achieved without a clear solution to the thorny issue of Palestine.

Chapter 3: Comparative Analysis

To better understand and explicit International Relation theories two scholars, Kenneth Waltz and J. David Singer, developed an “analytical device” to achieve this goal. The “Level of Analysis” framework is the tool that scholars tend to use to study their particular case, which helps them to better focus on the processes and the actors that influence and shape international relations. The Level of Analysis is divided into three levels: the individual, the state, and the international level (Griego, Ikenberry, and Mastanduno, 2019). For this dissertation, the most suitable level of analysis was the individual one. The individual level of analysis, as the name resonates, bases its examination on the influence of individuals, particularly the decision-makers, being the presidents and their advisors. Since at the roots of the system some individuals govern, it is important to understand their personal beliefs, their experiences, their personalities, and aspirations that motivate them (Griego, Ikenberry, and Mastanduno, 2019; Rourke, J. T, 2008).

To understand Obama’s and Trump’s Israeli political choices it is important to learn also about the main protagonists of their administrations, who were close to the President, to Israel – religiously, economically, or ideologically– and that worked closely with the State. For this reason, in the following chapter, different team members and their views on some core Israeli policies, like the settlements and the Two-State Solution, will be examined. Moreover, those personalities are connected to influential groups, the Christian Zionists, and the Israeli Lobbies, who have deep interests and attachments to the State of Israel. Consequently, also their groups and their link with both Presidents and their administration will be analyzed to better understand some policies choices made by the administrations.

1. The Team

1.1 *Obama's Team*

•**Joe Biden** (1942), Obama's VP, has a strong devotion to Israel and even his mother was a great supporter of the state of Israel. Netanyahu even planted three trees in Jerusalem for her. Moreover, Biden said that if he were a Jew, he would be a Zionist, trying to assure his commitment towards Israel. In 1986 Biden, in a Senate session, said that the U.S. "should not apologize" for the military aids and the support that it gives to Israel (C-SPAN, 1986; De Borchgrave, 2010; Toosi, 2021). It is remembered how there were moments of tension between Biden and Netanyahu, especially when in 2010 the Israeli government decided to announce the construction of 1600 new houses in the West Bank – when it was decided a halt – during Biden visit in Israel. It is even reported how Biden "muscled up" when Netanyahu criticized Obama. Despite this, the relationship between the two did not blemish. Biden said that when he disagrees with "Bibi", he explicitly says so, adding a "but I still love you" and Netanyahu, after Biden's victory remembered their "long and warm personal relationship" (Toosi, 2021; Osnos, 2020). Biden believes in the Two-State Solution and in the fact that the settlements are troubling since their presence does not permit Israel to remain both a Jewish and a Democratic state. However, Biden also considers the role that the UN Resolution 2334 caused, along with the settlements, as a cause for the end of the negotiations (Dovere, 2016; De Borchgrave, 2010).

When Biden became President, Biden reiterated his support for Israel and for Palestine: In a speech at the White House, following the weeks of unrest in the Middle East caused by the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas, the President said: "I believe the Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely and to enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity, and democracy. My administration will continue our quiet and relentless diplomacy toward that end. I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress, and I'm committed to working for it". Moreover, he also stressed the importance of the Iron Dome System promising "[his, *ed.*] full support to replenish Israel's Iron Dome system to ensure its defenses and security in the future" (The White House, 2021).

•**Hillary Clinton** (1947), Secretary of State from 2009 to 2013, enjoys a positive relationship with Netanyahu, who considers her a more “sympathetic” politician than the ones present in the White House. Even Clinton said that the two of them share a good relationship even though they “yell at each other” (Pfeffer,2018; Gaouette and Labott, 2016). Regarding the difficult times in the relationship between the two countries during the Obama era, Clinton, in an interview at the Saban Forum in 2014, said that: “I happened to believe that the relationship between the United States and Israel is [...] is solid and will be solid, [...] but that does not mean we have to agree on everything. That does not mean that not only our leaders but people in our country who care deeply about Israel, just like Israelis who care deeply about the United States -- that, to me, is the mark of a mature relationship and a deep, abiding friendship” (C-SPAN, 2014).

Clinton’s views on settlements construction differed from Netanyahu’s: To her, the settlements were one of the biggest remonstrances that she had with the Israeli government since it was not possible to support a Two-State Solution, as she did, and at the same time allow the proliferation of the settlements which constituted an obstacle for the peace process, the Two-State Solution and for the Israeli Democratic and Jewish nature of the state (ABC News, 2011; Gaouette and Labott, 2016). In an interview Hillary said:

“I am a strong supporter of Israel, strong supporter of their right to defend themselves. But the continuing settlements [...] are clearly a terrible signal to send if at the same you claim you’re looking for a two-state solution. [...] Some of the settlements would be within any reasonable drawing of borders for Israel. But a number of them would not. And those that would not would have to be either dismantled or live under Palestinian rule” (Dessí, 2016:2).

Despite this, she acknowledged that their line – harsh policies against the settlements – did not succeed. Clinton was the one responsible for pioneering the Nuclear Deal with Iran and for negotiating the ceasefire between Israel and the PA during the Gaza War in 2014. (ABC News, 2011; Gaouette and Labott, 2016; Fisher, 2016)

•**John Kerry** (1943) was Obama’s Secretary of State from 2013 to 2017. In his book, *Every Day is Extra*, Kerry (2018) explicitly says that he feels a “personal connection” to the State of Israel, that he visited many times. He writes that when he lands in Tel Aviv it seems to him that he is visiting “a branch of America’s family” that lives in the Middle East. Moreover, in 2014 Kerry discovered that his ancestors were sent to

concentration camps during the Second World War for being Jews. After this discovery, for Kerry, as he says, the need to secure a safe homeland for the Jewish people was felt more “viscerally”. Kerry, as Obama and other members of the administration, believes in the Two-State Solution: He believed that the peace process was not a “dead cause” as many others. For Kerry, the Two State Solution is “the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is the only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors. It is the only way to ensure a future of freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people. And it is an important way of advancing U.S. interests in the region” (Stein, 2016).

Kerry expressed his criticisms towards the continuation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, calling them illegal and a “major impediment” towards a conclusion of hostilities (Kerry, 2018). In the speech that Kerry gave after the passing of UN SC Resolution 2334, he clearly stated his position regarding the possibility of a One-State Solution: “if the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic – it cannot be both –and it won’t ever really be at peace. [...] This critical decision about the future – one state or two states -- is effectively being made on the ground every day, despite the expressed opinion of the majority of the people. The status quo is leading towards one state and perpetual occupation, but most of the public either ignores it or has given up hope that anything can be done to change it. With this passive resignation, the problem only gets worse, the risks get greater and the choices are narrowed” (Stein, 2016).

However, not only the settlements were an obstacle, but also the UN Resolution 2334 which destroyed a possible and meaningful agreement (Kerry, 2018; Wamsley, 2016) – even though it can be argued that the Resolution is just a consequence of the settlements activities and that the negotiations were already at a dead point. Moreover, Kerry (2018), contrary to Obama, enjoys a good relationship with Netanyahu, whom he considers “one of the better politicians” he ever encountered, calling him a “consummate backroom wheeler and dealer”. Moreover, he recounts that Netanyahu has a picture of the two of them on one of his shelves.

•**Samantha Power** (1970) was nominated by Obama as the U.S. Ambassador to the UN from 2013 to 2017. The choice of Power as Ambassador divided the public opinion. Those who were favorable to her candidacy remembered her relevant book “A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide” thanks to which she

gained the Pulitzer Prize: This book outlines the various American administrations and their roles in helping or not communities that were undergoing a genocide or an ethnic cleansing. One of these supporters was Rabbi Shmuley Boteach (2013), a Republican Nominator for Congress, who cheered her nomination because, as he said, being a member of a community that suffered from genocide, having an Ambassador that was committed to such an issue is important in a places like the UN. Nevertheless, not everyone was in “awe” as Boteach regarding Power, and their ill-sentiments towards her remain. The Israeli Lobby ZOA wrote an article in March 2021 listing all the reasons why Biden should not consider Power as the head of the USAID. According to them, Power is responsible for the “worst anti-Israel” Resolution, the infamous Resolution 2334, for promoting “false moral equivalence and anti-Israel myths at the UN”; for persuading and giving aids to Palestinians against alleged Israeli human rights violations; for trying to remove the Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA) from the list of terror organizations, which is linked to Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaida, and Hamas; and other accusations. Also, other groups rejected the nomination of Power as the Ambassador, like The Endowment for Middle East Truth and The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC), due to her 2002 statements that the conflict was “moving towards genocide” and that she supported an American invasion of Israel if the state to protect the Palestinians (Kamaras, 2013). However, as Boteach (2013) recounts, Power was anguished in discovering that she was considered an anti-Semite. In a discourse at Harvard Kennedy School, Power (2016) highlights the strong bias against Israel that can be found at the UN level, especially at the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC). She gives the example of ZAKA, an Israeli humanitarian group that helps in rescuing people from disasters and in guaranteeing a proper burial for the victims. This organization was denied the possibility to enter UN meetings and to participate, allegedly for its nature - being an Israeli organization. However, Power recounts how, after lobbying and “[cornering] diplomats” they managed in getting the recognition that the organization deserved.

•**Daniel B. Shapiro** (1969) was the U.S. Ambassador to Israel from 2011 to 2016. Shapiro, a Jewish man, was previously Senior Director for the MENA on the National Security Council and he advised the President during the 2011 Arab Spring. During Obama’s period, Shapiro counseled and contributed to several important decisions made by the administration: Among those, the negotiation of the MoU which assured Israel a \$38 million deal in military aids. Moreover, during Shapiro’s mandate,

there was a rise in “public outreach” to the different Israeli communities and a “40% growth in U.S.-Israel trade” (Israel Institute, n.d.). When asked why he thought that Obama chose him as the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Shapiro, in an interview for the journal *The Politico* he said “I think the president saw somebody who had a close relationship with him, the Israeli prime minister, and the embassy officials of both governments [...]. I was somebody who had really deep ties to Israeli society and could connect not just on a government-to-government level, but also with the Israel people” (Ellison and Schuster, 2013).

Shapiro did not hide his commitment to the Two-State Solution, which is considered by the Ambassador as the “only solution” for the conflict. Shapiro, during a conference at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2018, said that he is an “unabashed promoter and supporter” of such solution and that the decision of entering the diplomatic life was made because of this with the hope of helping, even with a “small contribution”, to end the conflict (Shapiro, 2018). In the same interview for *The Politico*, Shapiro expressed his opinion on the issue of the Two-State Solution. “the United States remains committed to the goal of two states for two peoples as a way to end this conflict. This solution will give Israelis and Palestinians the ability to achieve their own aspirations: security, a recognized Jewish State of Israel, and a viable, independent Palestinian State where Palestinians can determine their own future”. (Ellison and Schuster, 2013)

Furthermore, the Ambassador supported the moving of the Embassy to Jerusalem since, according to Shapiro (2019), West Jerusalem has always been Israel’s capital and, in the hypothetical Two-State Solution, West Jerusalem would still be part of Israel. Nevertheless, Shapiro objected to the “silence” of the Trump Peace Plan about Palestinians and their capital: According to him, East Jerusalem should be recognized as the Palestinian capital. Moreover, Shapiro, although defending Resolution 2334, said that he would have preferred if the administration had taken a different course of action to strengthen its criticism towards both the settlements, Hamas’s terrorism, and Palestinian instigation: He suggested writing a Report which would have been “more balanced” in assessing those issues (Ahren, 2017).

•**Martin Indyk** ²³(1951) was Obama’s Special Envoy for Israeli Palestinian Negotiations. Indyk during an interview said that the U.S. is not an “honest broker” when dealing with Israel and that many times it has sided with Israel. According to Indyk, it is important to influence Israel so that the U.S. can accomplish establishing “legitimate national rights for Palestinians”. Indyk, who was a member of AIPAC, was co-chairman of the New Israel Fund²⁴, an organization that gathers funds to left and anti-Israel groups all around the world. This organization even gave 92% of the quotes that appeared in the Goldstone Report – considered a one-sided and Israel defamatory UN Report on Israel’s counter-terrorism operation “Cast Lead” (Roth, 2016; Morocco World News, 2016; Ronen and Soffer, 2013).

Indyk, although blaming himself responsible for the negotiation’s fiasco, holds accountable also the Palestinians and the Israelis. In particular, he considers that both Netanyahu and Abbas did not understand “the pressing need to make gut-wrenching compromises”. Moreover, also the Israeli settlements should be considered a reason for the negotiations’ failure: In his view, the settlements are leading Israel to an “irreversible binational reality”, one that could jeopardize Israel’s denotation as a Jewish State (Roth, 2016; Morocco World News, 2016; Middle East Eye, 2015). Moreover, in a 2010 interview with *The New York Times*, reported by journalists Phillips and Korn of *The Algemeiner* ²⁵ (2014), Indyk said that Israel should withdraw from 95% of the territories it has in the West Bank and recognize East Jerusalem as the Palestinians capital”. “There is no solution other than a two-state solution” is what Martin Indyk opines: “annexing the West Bank and its 2.5 million Palestinian Arabs [...] is antithetical to Israel functioning as a democratic, Jewish state. If it remains democratic under this scenario, then the Palestinians will constitute a majority of the population. If it remains Jewish, then the Palestinians will be stripped of their rights” (Friedman, 2014).

²³ “*Master of the Game, Henry Kissinger and the Art of the Middle East Diplomacy*” written by Martin Indyk in 2021 is a book where the former Special Envoy recounts Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon’s Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, and his policies towards the Middle East, especially Israel. He considers that Kissinger was the only one that was successful in his efforts in the negotiations for bringing a solution to the conflict (O’Malley, 2021).

²⁴ He had to renounce to his role at the Fund when Kerry nominated him as Special Envoy (Sokatch, 2013).

²⁵ The Algemeiner is a pro-Israel newspaper that “claims to be the fastest growing newspaper” in the U.S. and is particularly attentive of anti-Semitism in America’s colleges and campuses (Al-Jazeera, 2018).

1.2 *Trump's administration*

•**Michael Richard Pence** (1959) is now considered a fervent Christian Zionist, however, the path that led him to this faith was very long. As the writers and journalists D'Antonio and Eisner (2018) and LoBianco (2019) state in their books, Pence was born in an Irish Catholic family and approached for the first time the Evangelical faith during his time at the Hanover College, a Presbyterian school in southern Indiana. There he joined a Bible study group, the Vespers, with both Catholic and Evangelical students. Then, in 1978 at the Ichthus Festival – the “evangelical version of Woodstock” – allegedly Pence became a “born-again”. Despite being an evangelical he still called himself an “evangelical Catholic” to make both groups converge into his person: the largest one, and the “second largest and most organized” one. LoBianco (2019) also recounts how the Pences frequented the Saint Barbara Church, a Catholic one: Pence still frequented it when his wife, Karen, decided to move to an evangelical church. Pence had to follow her, however “reluctantly”. Concerning Israel, already in 2000 Pence stated that Israel is a “priority” to him. One of his proposals to the Congress was to end all financial support to those organizations that aided Palestinian associations – a political move that he achieved during his time as Vice President, as already seen. Moreover, he also asked for the approval of the H. Res. 34 bill (2009) – that deliberates that the U.S. “recognizes [Israel] right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against Hamas’s unceasing aggression” – in 2009 when he was the chairman of the House of the Republican Conference (Salleh et al., 2016). Furthermore, Pence is also said to be a member of the group Family and Fellowship²⁶, a secretive group that is said to “spread a kind of elitist fundamentalism”. Pence is said to be a “mid-level figure” in the hierarchy of the organization, although he is believed to have a better understanding and relationship with God. Other than this, Pence also aligned himself closer to Falwell’s and Pat Robertson’s theological thinking, despite not being “quite ensconced” with them. Moreover, according to a longtime friend of the VP, he does not sincerely believe in the dispensationalist beliefs and speaks like

²⁶ The book "The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power" written by Jess Sharlet (2008:3-7) who infiltrated in this group for a month as a "follower of Christ". The people of this group are considered by Sharlet as "an avant-garde of [...] American Fundamentalism, a movement that recasts theology in the language of empire". The followers of this group name themselves "The Family" or "The Followers" and as Sharlet says, it "is not a conspiracy. Rather, it's a seventy-year-old movement of elite fundamentalism, bent not on salvation for all but on the cultivation of the powerful, “key men” chosen by God to direct the affairs of the nation".

that only because he needs the evangelicals' support (D'Antonio and Eisner, 2018; LoBianco, 2019). It has been reported that Pence is going to publish a memoir of his time as Vice President: Unfortunately for this dissertation– it could have provided for a closer, even if subjective, view of Pence's beliefs and reasons of some of the policies implemented during his vice-presidency – the book is set to be released in 2023 (Italie, 2021).

•**Michael Richard Pompeo** (1963) is also connected to Christian Zionism. Pompeo was first appointed as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director by Trump in 2017 and then as America's Secretary of State in 2018. Pompeo became a “born-again” during his time at the West Point Academy where he joined a Bible study group with other cadets in the 80s. He calls himself an “evangelical Presbyterian” and used his faith to justify and comment on Trump's political decisions. In an interview with All Israel News in 2021, Pompeo answered the question where his love for Israel came from. His response was simple: “[Israel, ed.] is a very special country, in a very special place. Those of us who take seriously the words of the Bible, the history that is contained within that and whose faith has a central understanding of the places that Jesus walked and lived and can't help but have a special love and special understanding of how special this place is. As a geopolitical matter, as a global matter, it's the place where these three Abrahamic faiths all come together in Jerusalem. The history there, the scores of people who were faithful servants of the Lord who have walked in that place makes it a unique and special location and it was truly a privilege to serve as America's Secretary of State and to work and build out the important relations between our two sovereign states, to make each of our people more secure” (All Israel News, 2021).

When a journalist asked him if Trump can be considered a modern Queen Esther that can help Israel against Iran, Pompeo answered positively, saying that according to his faith it is “possible” to affirm such a statement. Moreover, he cited the Book of Revelations to defend Trump after the assassination of General Soleimani and used the Rapture as a motivation for the U.S. support to Israel and its policies. Moreover, as Pence was instrumental to gain votes from the evangelical community, it is said that Pompeo was important for Trump because of his connections with evangelical leaders (BBC, 2019; Borger, 2019, Farley, 2020). For Pompeo, what Trump was doing during his time as President was to “make our relationship with Israel the strongest that it has ever been”

(U.S. Department of State, 2019) and he called the moving of the Embassy to Jerusalem “glorious” (All Israeli News, 2021).

•**David Melech Friedman** (1958), former Trump’s bankruptcy lawyer, was appointed by Trump as U.S. Ambassador to Israel from 2017 to 2021. His nomination raised a series of concerns due to his positions and connections with the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Friedman, an Orthodox Jew, and son of a Long Island Rabbi held his Bar Mitzvah in Jerusalem, the city that he considers the “eternal” capital of Israel and where he has a residence of his own. During his briefing at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in 2020 Friedman stated that “It’s in our interest in America to support Israel. It’s in our national interest. David Glawe who’s our Under Secretary of Homeland Security spoke at the most recent 9/11 Memorial in Jerusalem [...] and he said something that didn’t get picked up that extensively [...] he said that Israel keeps America safe. And that’s [...] very true. And it’s a hard [...] thing to really go into detail or to advertise, but it’s true. For generations the American support for Israel was very much that came from the heart, and it still does. It comes from my heart [...]. We are, without question, better off when Israel is strong and secure and stable and prosperous so it’s very much an American interest to support Israel” (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2020).

Friedman positions himself in the Right-Wing spectrum of political ideas and has strongly criticized U.S. views on Israel and the settlements. He aligns himself with Netanyahu’s and the settlers’ ideology in both governments. He considers Liberal American Jews, among those also the J-Street organization, as “kapos”— a degrading term with which were called those Jews that were forced by Nazis to lead other Jews to concentration camps, considered traitors of their faith and their people. In a very controversial declaration, Friedman expressed his idea that Israel had the right to annex, at least partly, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which he refers to with its Biblical names, Judea, and Samaria. He even stated that the Two-State Solutions, brokered by all American administrations, was a “scam”. After these statements, Friedman had to testify in front of the Congress that he will not be biased in his work and decisions and that he would pursue a Two-State Solution if requested by the President (Stevenson, 2018; Bard, 2020; Remnick, 2016; BBC News, 2016; Gaouette and Hansler, 2019). During his speech at the AIPAC Policy Conference in 2020 he said that the “President Trump and Secretary Pompeo reversed forty years of flawed legal analysis and concluded that Israeli

settlements in Judea and Samaria do not violate international law”. Moreover, Friedman is the President of American Friends of Beit El Institutions, an organization that has gathered \$2 million every year for the Beit El settlement and its Yeshiva²⁷ in the West Bank. It is reported that even Trump himself donated to the organization \$10,000, in honor of Friedman. The Beit El Yeshiva is “led” by a militant Rabbi, Zalman Melamed, founder of a Right-Wing party (Tkuma), who incited Israeli soldiers to disobey the orders of evacuating the Gush Katif settlements in the Gaza Strip in 2005. Moreover, Friedman writes for a pro-Israel journal, *Arutz Sheva*, which, allegedly, is owned by the same company that built the Beit El settlement (BBC News, 2016; Maltz, 2016; Kershner and Stolberg, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017). Not only Friedman is connected to Israel, having shepherded the construction of institutions and settlements in the State, but also his close advisor. Aryeh Lightstone, Friedman’s senior advisor, is linked to an “anonymously founded” organization called Shining City that, as of 2018, owed Lightstone \$50,000 and already paid him \$53,000. This group is said to have donated \$1 million to I’m Tirtzu, an Israeli organization that attacks those who express a liberal political view in Israel (Elliott, 2018; Kershner and Stolberg, 2016).

•**Jason Greenblatt** (1967) was Trump’s Organization Chief Lawyer and when Trump entered the White House, he was officially nominated as the Representative of International Organizations even though, unofficially, he was the Middle East Peace Envoy from 2017 to 2019. As with other members of Trump’s team – Kushner, Tillerson, and Friedman – Greenblatt did not have any kind of Foreign Policy experience, in the Middle East, and diplomacy. According to some reports, Trump chose him because he was an Orthodox Jew, who attended a Yeshiva in the West Bank. For these reasons, Greenblatt was considered adequate for the job because he knew the place and loved Israel. Indeed, in an interview that he gave to *Hamodia, The Daily Newspaper of Torah Jewry* in 2018, he said that “The benefit of that [being Jewish Orthodox, *ed.*] is that we [Kushner, Friedman, and himself, *ed.*] understand Israel’s needs, particularly with respect to security. [...] Being a religious person is a non-issue. There’s a mutual respect on both sides because so many of the people in the region are religious, or recognize the importance of religion in one’s life. There are different levels of observance perhaps, but

²⁷ Yeshiva is a Jewish educational institution, based on the study of the traditional religious texts.

since religion is as deep and emotional and important to them as it is to me, we connect in a way that doesn't require any learning curve" (Lehmann, 2018).

Along with Kushner and Friedman, also Greenblatt donated to Israeli settlements, and he is considered a "fervent supporter" of the Israeli colonization of the West Bank (Stevenson, 2018; Bard, 2020; Cafiero, 2019; Glueck, 2016; Rosen, 2017). According to Greenblatt, the blame for not reaching a solution to the conflict is not to be placed on the settlements: Firstly, the term "settlements" is considered by him as a "pejorative" and the territories are not occupied but rather "contested" (Winer, 2019). In an interview for the journal *Arutz Sheva*, Greenblatt complained about the use of the word settlement by saying that: "It is unfortunately the first thing that out of any diplomat's mouth and out of many politician's mouths – the so-called settlements and it's just not true [...] Another things I'd like to point out is nobody talks about the Palestinian construction. There are Palestinian 'settlements' too. But the focus is always on what Israel is doing" (Chen, 2021).

Nevertheless, he is considered quite different than Friedman in his positions. The Yeshiva that he attended is one of the most moderate in the Israeli State since its Rabbi decided to support the Two-State Solution. Greenblatt did not consider the Two-State Solution as "dead" and, contrary to Friedman, he used the term settlements and not the Biblical names for the West Bank. According to Greenblatt, the Arab Israeli issue can be seen as an economic transaction when the religious and historical claims are removed. Greenblatt, along with Friedman and Kushner helped develop the so-called "Deal of the Century" even though he resigned before the presentation of the plan. He said that he consulted with AIPAC when dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict – in addition to listening to a Jew radio program. (Maltz, 2016; Cafiero, 2019; Al-Jazeera, 2019). For what it concerns the Palestinians and President Biden plan to open the Palestinian Consulate in Jerusalem, Greenblatt said that: "They [Biden and his administration, ed.] need a reality check about the Palestinians. That doesn't mean I'm anti-Palestinian. I'm not. [...] But I think they have to treat the Palestinians not as children, which they often do. The Palestinians complain and therefore they give them this, [...]. But they should demand a higher standard from the Palestinian leadership so the Palestinian can have better lives and then, together with the Israelis, maybe they will be able to forge a path forward" (Chen, 2021).

•**Nikki Haley** (1972) former Governor of the State of South Carolina was appointed as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations from 2017 to 2018. In her book *With All Due Respect* (2019) Haley writes that before assuming the position of Ambassador she did not have any kind of bond or political connections with the State of Israel and its representatives. However, Haley writes that everything changed after the U.S. abstained from vetoing Resolution 2334. According to her, this political movement by the Obama administration was cowardice that showed how the U.S., during Obama's time, followed the UN anti-Israel bias without doing anything to change it. It was a clear "betrayal" to the "only democracy" present in the region and it represented a lesson, for her, on how to not represent the U.S. One of Haley's policies during her time as Ambassador was the cut off U.S. aid to the UNRWA: In the book (2019), Haley recalls how, after a trip to Israel and the OPT, she decided to find an organization to help the Palestinians. UNRWA, according to Haley, is a corrupted organization whose scope is to encourage "multigenerational dependency on international aid", amplifying the number of refugees to also those that are descendants from Palestinian refugees and have another citizenship. Haley says that she asked the organization to change its policies and the parameters of the distribution of aids, but it refused. For this reason, she decided that it was time for the U.S. to stop the funding and leave the other Arab countries to help – since they did not give much money to the PA (apart from Saudi Arabia). Haley, in this decision, was backed by Jared, Greenblatt, and Friedman; However, at the time Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was contrary to this decision. Tillerson, who believed that the decision could provoke rage and the closure of schools, decided to cut the funds to \$60 million and after his firing, Pompeo cut all the funds. Nikki agreed with the President over the moving of the Embassy to Jerusalem and said to have offered a "thank-you reception" to the almost forty countries that opposed or abstained from the UN GA Resolution condemning the moving (Haley, 2019). She also is considered responsible for U.S. withdrawal from the U.N. Human Rights Council (for its "chronic bias" towards Israel) and announced the withdrawal from the UNESCO, which she considers a "chronic embarrassment" since the aids for the Palestinians fall on the Israeli's shoulders (Hasan, 2018; Kampeas, 2021).

1.2.1 Jared Kushner

The figure of Jared Kushner deserves a separate and dedicated part. Jared Kushner was born in 1981 to an Orthodox Jewish family, whose grandparents were Holocaust survivors. Jared graduated from the Frisch School, also known as Yeshivat Frisch, where the politics is “distinctly Zionist”. His family, a Democratic one, had a close relationship with Netanyahu: It is remembered, in many books and articles recounting Jared’s life, an anecdote of how Jared had to leave his bedroom for the Israeli PM when he visited New Jersey during Jared’s childhood (Bennett, 2020; Vick, 2017; Bernstein, 2020). It is even reported by Anshel Pfeffer (2018) how pleased Netanyahu was of Trump’s personnel choices for the Israel-Arab issue – Jared who shared the same thoughts as Netanyahu on Iran, the “destructive threat” (Bernstein, 2020). Jared can also boast his relationship with important political and business figures such as Rupert Murdoch, Henri Kissinger, and Tony Blair. According to Michael Wolff (2018), the relationship with Murdoch was beneficial to Jared, since it is reported how Jared, “subtly”, mentioned Murdoch’s name in conversations with Trump, producing thus a “curious [...] power dynamic”. Moreover, Wolff (2018) recalls that the two spent a great amount of time together and that the relationship between Jared and Ivanka was “shepherded” by Wendi Murdoch. Kissinger is said, helped Jared in better understanding and detecting the “kinds of mischief” that could endanger Trump’s administration. He also became acquainted with Toni Blair, who has economic interests in the Middle East, helping Jared in his ME programs (Wolff, 2018). Not only did Jared develop these relationships but, during the mandate, he also met with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince, Muhammed bin Salman with whom he shared his hatred for Iran. Their relationship has also been denominated as a “bromance” (Bernstein, 2020).

Jared is said to be very influential in the White House he is regarded as the Second after Trump, and he can “weigh in on any decision”. Jared became the “enabler” of Trump’s agenda, his “effective body man”. Jared, and even his wife Ivanka, were considered to be the real Chief of Staff; Moreover, they had “super status”, having an independent rank in the House (Bennett, 2020; Wolff, 2018). Since the start of the electoral campaign Jared started to have an important role: According to Cliff Sims (2019), –former Special Assistant to the President – Jared could be considered, along with Trump himself, as in charge of the presidential campaign, even without having an official position. After Trump’s victory, Jared was entrusted with delicate matters such

as the Middle East, China, Mexico, and the construction of the border wall. Jared is regarded as responsible for the moving of the Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he “authored” the Plan for Prosperity, spearheaded the Abraham Accords, and brokered a \$110 billion arms sale deal to Saudi Arabia (Bennett, 2020; Vick, 2017; De Young and Hendrix, 2020; Turak, 2020). Outside the Middle East program, Jared crafted the criminal justice bill, helped in the negotiation of a deal between Mexico and Canada, drafted a policy reform, and was tasked with finding a solution to the Covid-19 pandemic (Foer 2020; Bennett, 2020). Despite all of this, Michael Cohen ²⁸ (2020) sustains that the former President “didn’t particularly like” Jared and that the sole reason for keeping Jared close to him was for Jared’s willingness to please his father-in-law, doing what Trump’s ordered him “with discretion”. Even journalist Franklin Foer (2020) maintains that for Jared, his job is to “please” Trump: he has “run the country in a spirit of filial devotion to an implacable father”. Lewandowsky called Jared “the butler” (Wolff, 2018) and Cohen (2020) compares him to Dag Hammarskjöld – being able to moderate and to negotiate with White House’s tenacious personnel, among which there is Trump.

Jared’s ties with Israel are not only based on religious beliefs but also business interests: He is concerned about finding new partners and investors for his family's real estate company. It is reported that in 2017 one of the biggest Israeli insurance firms invested \$30 million in Jared’s family company (Stevenson, 2018). Moreover, Jared’s family and himself donated to pro-Israel settlement construction institutions, such as Beit El Yeshiva– in 2013 the institution received \$20.000 from the Kushner family (Remnick, 2016). Not only does Jared’s interests rely on Israel but also in other parts of the ME. Charles Kushner had some business affairs in Qatar and, when the Qataris did not invest in 666 Fifth, and Jared, allegedly, backed EAU and Saudis Qatar’s blockade. It is even reported how officials in several countries, including the EAU and Israel, conferred about how they can “manipulate” Jared “taking advantage of his complex business arrangements” (Bernstein, 2020:506).

Other than his achievements in the Middle East issue, it is possible to see how influential Jared’s was in the White House through some examples: Journalist Brian Bennett (2020) lists a series of persons that Jared “pushed” to be hired such as Michael Flynn and Anthony Scaramucci. Moreover, Bennett (2020) implies, in his article, that

²⁸ Michael Cohen was the former Personal Attorney to the U.S. President, convicted for fraud and perjury.

behind Rex Tillerson’s firing there is Jared: Jared was “at loggerheads” with both Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis over the moving of the Embassy. Tillerson, after having said that he was against such a move, was removed from his position after a month.

Chris Christie – general attorney of the state of New Jersey (2002-2008) and then New Jersey Governor (2010-2018) –was nominated by Trump as the head of his Transition Planning Team²⁹. Christie was the attorney that sent 2005 Charles Kushner, Jared’s father, to prison for 18 counts of illegal contributions, tax evasion, and witness tampering³⁰. According to his book, *Let Me Finish*, Christie (2019) bluntly writes that Jared hated him for this reason. Jared clarified his disapproval of Trump’s decision and said that Christie was the sole responsible for his father’s imprisonment, that he “acted unethically and inappropriately” and that he did not trust the Governor with the transition process. Nevertheless, Trump at that moment sustained Christie and his work and decided to maintain his idea. Christie sustains that, Jared “[tried] to sabotage [him] with the candidate”. Paul Manafort, the successor of Corey Lewandowsky, plainly said to Christie that Jared did not trust him with the transition and that a commission was being created to evaluate the candidates proposed by Christie: The commission was composed of Jared, Ivanka, Eric, Donald Jr, Steve Mnuchin³¹, and Jeff Sessions³². Christie was then fired after Trump’s presidential victory: When he asked Steve Bannon whose decision it was, his reply was “Jared”, “the kid”. However, for journalist Michael Wolff, who wrote *Fire and Fury* (2018), Ivanka should be held accountable for Christie’s termination: According to him (2018), Ivanka said that Christie’s presence in the White House would be difficult for her family and that he should be “removed from the Trump orbit altogether”.

²⁹ Both candidates for the White House have to designate a “Transition Team”, preparing the future administration to readily take office. The team has to devise a political and managerial agenda and find information about federal agencies (Christie, 2018; Center for Presidential Transition, 2021).

³⁰ In 2004, Charles Kushner was sued by his brother Murray and sister Esther of running their family business as if it was just his own, excluding them from important decisions. Then the two brothers counseled with US Attorney Christie when Esther received a videotape in which her husband was filmed having a sexual intercourse with a sex worker, trying to blackmail Esther. Charles was later identified by the girl as the one who hired her and then sent to prison (Christie, 2018).

³¹ Secretary of Treasury from 2017 to 2021.

³² Attorney General from 2017 to 2018.

2. Christian Zionism

When analyzing the internal factors in the U.S. policy that can influence a President's decision, the role of the Christian Zionist groups is relevant. Journalist Mark Habeeb (2018) highlights the difference between the lobbies' support in the American policy and the one offered by the Christian Zionist: While the lobbies are important to the candidates for their donations, the religious group's weight is given by the large number of votes that they can grant. For example, the section of the "white, born again/evangelical Christians" represented the 26 percent of the electorate turnout since 2008 even if they represent only 15.3 percent of the American population (Martínez and Smith, 2016; Burton, 2018). Moreover, according to scholars of international relations, the presence, and the influence of Christian Zionists groups in American presidencies began with Jimmy Carter and increased with both Regan and George W. Bush. It is said that Reagan was not only influenced by these groups when dealing with the Middle East foreign policy but also by his comprehension of Christian Zionist's beliefs. Bush, for his part, was an "openly committed" evangelical Christian who was influenced by evangelicals agendas when pursuing Middle East policies – although his acceptance of the Road Map to Peace was contested by many evangelical Christians as a project that went against Israel and their visions (Ben Barka, 2012; Finney, 2016). Despite already having three Presidents connected with evangelical Christian Zionists, journalist of *The Washington Post* Dan Hummer (2017) believes that until Trump's presidency, there was not an evangelical grasp on the "bully pulpit³³ of the White House": Previous administrations only used "general biblical language" when discussing Israel, but with Trump, the theology reached a high level in the policymaking hierarchy. For this reason, it is necessary to give a brief explanation of who these Christian Zionists are, to better understand their claims and their beliefs, before analyzing their role and influence in both administrations.

2.1 *Who are and in what Christian Zionists believe?*

Christian Zionism is a "general label for a specific orientation and emphasis within evangelicalism" that gives theological and eschatological importance to the presence of Jews in Israel (Shapiro, 2014:161-162). However, it is difficult to precisely define and

³³ Term coined by Theodore Roosevelt that indicates "a prominent public position" thanks to which it is possible to express one's opinions. According to Roosevelt, the White House was a bully pulpit, through which the "incumbent" can "exhort, instruct, or inspire" (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

identify them as they “[come] in many different shapes, sizes and countries of origin”. Firstly, for what it concerns the term “Christian Zionist”, was initially used by Theodor Herzl to describe Jean-Henri Dunant, a non-Jewish European who sympathized with the Zionist cause. Despite the use of this term since about 1897³⁴, it was only in the 1980s that it crossed the Atlantic Ocean and entered the American glossary. Moreover, it is worth noting that the existence of a “Christian proto-Zionist” group in England, is recorded way much before the birth of the Jewish Zionist movement: 300 years. For this reason, describing it as “Christian support for Israel or Zionism” is quite incorrect, since its “birth” is before Zionism (Spector, 2009; Smith, 2014:327; Goldman, 2018). Considering this, scholar Robert Smith (2014:328), defines Christian Zionism as a “political action, informed by specifically Christian commitments, to promote or preserve Jewish control over the geographic area now comprising Israel and Palestine”. This definition can best summarize the group’s essence: The "theopolitical" nature and the independence from Jewish Zionism are stressed in it.

The theology through which Christian Zionism is based in the Premillennial Dispensationalism which is the reading of the Scriptures in the literal sense, through which it is possible to predict the events whose outcome is the Second Return of Jesus. Moreover, Christian Zionists have as the key principle for their preaching and beliefs verse 12:3 of the Genesis: “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”. To their understanding, God created the Jewish people to bless the rest of the world if, and only if, the rest of the world would bless Israel and its people. Through the reading of human history, they conceive that all the most glorious empires – the Babylonians, the Persians, the Romans, etc. – fell because of their anti-Semitic behaviors towards the Jews. For this reason, they conclude that the U.S. is still prosperous and the leading nation in the world, only because it is the “least anti-Semitic” country and for its policies in support of Israel. Jerry Falwell – a Southern Baptist and televangelist preacher – said that “If this nation wants her fields to remain white with grain, her scientific achievements to remain notable, and her freedom to remain intact, America must continue to stand with Israel” (Goldman, 2018:280-281; Spector, 2009; Phillips, 2014; Smith, 2018). They consider themselves to be the “watchmen of the walls”³⁵: Their role, given by God himself, is to protect God’s

³⁴ The first Zionist conference was held in 1897 in Basle.

³⁵ Isa 62:6 “I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest”.

chosen people – the Jews – and consequently they also support Israel's military actions. The Israeli military is, for them, righteous because it is fulfilling God's will. In choosing to sustain such actions, Christian Zionists believe that they are helping and participating in the future military victory of the Jews, as foretold in the Bible (Engberg, 2014; Phillips, 2014; Durbin, 2014).

What occurs to think when talking about Christian Zionism is initially, and above all things, their interest in causing the Armageddon. But this instance is erroneous since, according to them, the end times are already upon us. Christian Zionists are not trying to “force God's hand”, rather they are helping God in achieving his plans for the world by promoting and sustaining Israel and impeding those actions that will hinder God's will (Durbin, 2014). As stated above, Christian Zionists are not a homogeneous group, for this reason, each congregation and person has its motive to back Israel: for some, helping Israel and the Jews to return to the Holy Land will hasten the Rapture³⁶ and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Others think, like Jerry Falwell, that in sustaining Israel also the U.S. will thrive; Or, for some, God will judge them based on how they treated God's chosen people. But most of them support Israel just because “God does”. To be on God's side, they need to be on Israel's side because Israel is at the center of God's heart, and so Israel shall be in theirs (Spector, 2009; Durbin, 2014; Smith, 2018). Following this line, not all Christian Zionist agree about how much land should Israel occupy and about the Jerusalem matter. Some Christian Zionists believe that Israel should be based on the same territory that was promised by God because God gave the Jews “eternal ownership” over that land. For them, the Two-State solution is not possible since it would cost Israel its promised land. Others say that they will accept Israel's choice to yield land to achieve peace, even though for them those policies can be considered “suicidal” and contrary to God's plan. The same can be said for Jerusalem, some Christian Zionists believe that all the city should be part of the State of Israel, whereas others retain that Jerusalem should remain internationalized since it is a city not only sacred for the Jews but also the Christians and the Muslims (Spector, 2009; Goldman, 2018).

Members of Christian Zionist groups are encouraged to pray for Israel's safety, for its economy, and for Israel's victory over its enemies. They organize tours in the Holy

³⁶ According to the Evangelicals, it is the moment in which all Christian believers will rise to the sky to meet God.

Land and help American Jews to make their *aliyah*³⁷ because Jews must return to the land so Jesus would come. They also organize funds and John Hagee – an evangelical pastor and founder of one of the most prominent American Christian Zionist associations in the U.S., the Christian United for Israel (CUI) – states that he has raised \$80 million in funds for Israel (Raheb, 2014; Phillips, 2014).

2.2 *Christian Zionist and Obama*

It is reported that during the presidency of Barack Obama the influence exercised by the Christian Zionist group was less relevant compared to the presidency of other leaders such as George W. Bush. A first element that can reveal the reason behind such drop can be seen in the fact that Obama is Democratic. The evangelicals turned from the Democratic Party to the Republican one – also called the Grand Old Party (GOP) – in the 1980s. In fact, for scholars during this Democratic presidency, “the strong religious dimension of unequivocally supporting Israel has significantly diminished” (Saltzman, 2014:5; Guth, 2011).

Contrary to Bush that is a born-again Christian, the religious background of Obama is complex and variegated: His mother was an agnostic anthropologist, his grandparents were Unitarian Universalist³⁸ (UU), and his father and father-in-law are Muslims. Despite this multi-confessional set of beliefs, Obama later joined the Trinity United Church of Christ (UCC) in Chicago which is based on the Black Value System³⁹ written by the Manford Byrd Recognition Committee in 1981. This church is a Social Justice church, meaning that it struggles to bring justice every day to the community by feeding the poor, ensuring that people are paid a living wage, counseling spiritually both the incarcerated and the depressed, and ensuring health insurance. The Trinity United Church is also associated with the Civil Rights Movement and with the figure and the beliefs of Martin Luther King. However, during the first campaign, Obama had to resign from the Church, when the Reverend Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. made a series of controversial and anti-Israel claims among those saying that Israel is an apartheid state.

³⁷ Aliyah is a Hebrew word that concerns Jewish people immigration to the land of Israel. It derives from the verb לעלות (la'alot) that means “to rise”.

³⁸ UU members believe in the complete indivisibility of God, repudiating the deity of Jesus. According to them, it was not Jesus’s sacrifice to save humanity but rather his teachings (Treccani, 2021).

³⁹ The Black Value System is a system of 12 principles that are being followed “religiously” by the members of the church. To see all these principles, visit the web page: <https://www.tucc.org/black-value-system.html>

He also stated that the U.S. did not participate at the World Conference on Racism because Obama feared offending the Jews (Jewish Virtual Library, 2022; JTA, 2015; NBC News, 2009; Saltzman, 2014; Guth, 2011; Trinity United Church of Christ, 2015; Obama, 2004).

There is a divergence of beliefs between Obama and the evangelicals: According to the Christian Zionists, the 1967 war is seen as a very crucial moment for the coming of Jesus, and they see the intervention of God in the victory of Israel. Moreover, for their theological view, Israel is David, the young shepherd that is going to overcome the evil and gigantic Goliath, represented by Israel's enemies. Contrary to all of this is Obama. For Obama, and some of his staff members such as the U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, the White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, and the Senior Advisor David Axelrod, all believe that the Six-Day War caused a tear “between just and unjust aspirations” of Zionism. Moreover, not only Obama but also the UCC and most of the African American community consider Palestinians to be David. Furthermore, Martin Luther King and Obama are similar when dealing with Israel: King was a supporter of Israel and its security stating that “[peace] for Israel means security, and we must stand with all of our might to protect its right to exist, its territorial integrity”. Also for Obama, the security of Israel was an important matter – seeing his military-economic aids – but, for both leaders, it was hard to find a balance between sustaining Israel and being part of the social justice movement: For Obama, it was important to support and help the Palestinians as well (Saltzman, 2014; Kramer, 2019; Jewish Virtual Library, 2022; Camera, 2020).

During his campaign, Obama “wooed” religious leaders and electioneered not only in black megachurches but also in evangelicals. Evangelicals were important for Obama because they granted his win in Iowa, even though their initial support quickly faded. In the 2008 Presidential Elections, the born-again represented 26% of the electorate: 24% of them voted for Obama and the remaining 74% supported the Republican candidate, John McCain. During the second election, in 2012, the evangelicals still represented 26% of the population: 78% of them voted for Mitt Romney and 21% for Obama, showing a drop in the groups' appreciation for Obama (Gonzales, 2014). Indeed, based on Durbin’s research (2020), it is possible to see a demonization of the person of Obama in the Christian Zionists’ literature and preachers. Obama, for the evangelicals, persecuted Israel with his policies deemed anti-Israeli: Such behavior was not only dangerous for Israel and the relationship between the two countries, but it

threatened God’s approval of America. Christian Zionists believed that Obama’s presidency brought divine judgment upon the U.S. Moreover, Obama is called a “louse” and considered to be in an alliance with Satan (Guth, 2011; Taylor and Colbert, 2017; Durbin, 2020).

2.3 *Trump, Cyrus, Esther, and the Evangelicals*

Knowing the personal life and all the scandals of Donald J. Trump – twice divorced, accused of sexually assaulting women, does not frequent churches – it is difficult to understand why such a figure managed to gain eighty percent of the White Evangelical electorate during the 2016 elections (Borger, 2019). A possible explanation for this result can be given by the evangelicals' view of Trump being God’s tool to implement his will. Sturm (2017:5) calls Trump the “vessel for their civil and ethnoreligious national goals”. Trump was hence called and chosen by God himself to bring prosperity to America, to save it from “immorality and destruction” and to protect Israel. The use by God of a person that is not part of the Church is not new in the history of humankind: God not always used religious and pious people to accomplish His will, but also “through men and women who have ignored and rebelled against him” (Trangerud, 2021a). For this reason, many scholars have linked the image of Trump with King Cyrus of Persia⁴⁰. The most relevant passage and connection between King Cyrus and Trump is present, according to the evangelicals, in chapter 45 of the Book of Isaiah where it is stated that Cyrus will raise to conquer nations although he does not know God, same as Trump. Moreover, another important part of Cyrus’s story that can link him with Trump is the moment in which Cyrus let the Jews population, which was held prisoner in Babylon, return to their land and re-built the Temple. According to Christian Zionists and Evangelicals alike, Trump became the embodiment of Cyrus when he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. This move was not only important to reconcile America and God – after the disastrous years of Obama that caused the distance between God and the country – but it was also eschatologically important since it could help boost the Second Coming (Durbin, 2020; Trangerud, 2021a). However, Trump’s

⁴⁰ King Cyrus of Persia’s story is mentioned in several Books of the Bible: 2 Chronicles (36), Ezra (1-6), Isaiah (45-53) and Daniel (10). According to the Books, God commanded Cyrus, who was not a believer, through the words of the prophet Jeremiah, to re-build the Temple. He let the Jews population return to their land in order to comply with God’s command. Moreover, Cyrus returned to the Jews the furniture that was smuggled by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, when he exiled the Jews and destroyed their Temple.

parallelism with Biblical figures does not stop with King Cyrus but also with Queen Esther⁴¹. Like Cyrus and Trump, Esther was an ordinary girl who helped save her people from the Persian menace. In parallel with Queen Esther, Trump “saved” the U.S. from the Iranian Nuclear Deal by withdrawing from it and from General Qasem Soleimani by killing him (Durbin, 2020).

Not only can be done a parallel with Cyrus and Esther, but for the Evangelicals, it was possible to also do prophecies regarding Trump and his presidency. Four Charismatic Evangelical⁴² writers wrote books in which they presented their prophecies about Trump (Trangerud, 2021b). Mark Taylor and Mary Colbert (2017:151, 153) in their book *The Trump Prophecies* underline the fact that Trump was chosen by God to remedy the disaster that was done during the eight years of the Obama administration to make American great again. According to Taylor, already in 2011, God said to him that He “[has] chosen this man, Donald Trump, for such a time as this. For as Benjamin Netanyahu is to Israel, so shall this man be to the United States of America!” God, through the person of Trump, will make not only America thrive but also the State of Israel. The enemies of America will fear his presidency since he will return all that those countries have stolen to the U.S. and, regarding Israel “America will once again stand hand and hand with Israel, and the two shall be as one. For the ties between Israel and America will be stronger than ever, and Israel will flourish like never before”. For Charismatic writers, Jonathan Cahn (2019) and Lance Wallnau (2016), Trump is the only one that can save the nation, being called the “warrior-king”, and is equated with the figure of King Cyrus. Cahn (2019:455) in *The Oracle*, to better strengthen the connection between Trump and Cyrus, underlines the fact that Trump was born during the presidency of Harry Truman, in 1946. According to the Oracle, there were two Cyrus, the ancient and biblical one and a modern one, Truman – He said, “I am Cyrus!” when discussing his immediate recognition of the State of Israel in 1948 (Trangerud, 2021b). However, for the Oracle,

⁴¹ Esther, a young Judeo woman, married the King of the Achaemenid Empire – the first Persian Empire – Ahasuerus, although the King did not know the girl’s origins. The King decided to nominate Haman as his Chief’s adviser, however, Mordecai, Esther cousin and father figure, decided not to bow to Haman. For this reason Haman, after knowing Mordecai faith decided to issue a decree, with the approval of the King, ordering the killing, destruction, and annihilation of the Jews the 13th of Adar. Mordecai soon informed Esther of the decree and asked for her help. After starving for three days and nights, Esther fainted in front of the King. Ahasuerus, worried for her, asked Esther what he could do, and she asked for his mercy for her and her people the Jews, whose survival was menaced by Haman. The King granted such wish and killed Haman (Esth, 1-10).

⁴² The term indicates a branch of Evangelicals that believe in “gifts” such as prophecies, speaking and interpreting tongues. Whereas non-Charismatic Evangelicals believe that such gifts were present only in ancient times and that nowadays became extinct (Bible.org, 2021).

there would be a second American Cyrus that would continue the work of Truman, and the “seeds” for such a man were planted during Truman’s presidency, right when Truman was “was working to open the doors for the Jewish exiles to return home and setting the events in motion that would lead to the rebirth of the Jewish nation”.

Other than being associated with two Biblical heroes and being the subject of prophecies, Trump maintained good relationships with evangelical leaders. In 2003 Trump met with the Evangelical Pastor Paula White-Cain⁴³ that helped him connect with other evangelical leaders, many of those very Charismatics but there were also traditional evangelicals like Falwell Jr. White-Cain had, during the campaign moment, a leading role in Trump’s Evangelical Advisory Board; In her web site, she notes that she has been working closely with President Trump since 2016, counseling him about Evangelical matters, being Advisor of the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative, and being his Spiritual Advisor (Trangerud, 2021b; White-Cain, 2021; Smith, 2018). Moreover, during his inauguration ceremony, four of the six preachers⁴⁴ that were present were Evangelicals, among them also Paula White-Cain. Another evangelical leader with whom Trump discussed important issues was John Hagee: Hagee himself (2021a), in one of his sermons, remembers the visit that he paid to Trump at the White House where they discussed the matter of Jerusalem. Hagee said to the President that if he recognized the city as the capital of the Jewish State, he will be “forever engraved in [...] history books” and he would “win political immortality” because he had the courage that other leaders lacked. Before this meeting was held in March 2017, Hagee already met the President when he preached during a private service before Trump’s inauguration (Korade, Bohn, and Burke, 2018). Hagee, along with Robert Jeffress⁴⁵, was asked to bless the new American Embassy that was opened in Jerusalem (LoBianco, 2019): Hagee (2021b) in one of his sermons said “It was a great day for our nation and the world when the American Embassy was moved to Jerusalem, where it belongs. Because of that move, I believe our country experienced a season of blessing and abundance”. (“Articles”)

⁴³ The Pastor is based in Florida where she is Senior Pastor at the City of Destiny Church. She also conducts a Christian television program called “Paula Today” (White-Cain, 2021).

⁴⁴ Other than Pastor White-Cain there were also Rev. Franklin Graham, Bishop Wayne T. Jackson, Rev. Samuel Rodriguez along with Rabbi Marvin Hier and Cardinal Timothy Dolan (O’Donnell, 2017).

⁴⁵ Robert Jeffress is Senior Pastor at the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. He is also a Fox News Contributor and hosts a television program called “Pathway to Victory” (First Baptist Dallas, 2021).

As already seen, Trump is connected to the Christian Zionist through other members of his staff, his Vice President Mike Pence, the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and the Chief Strategist Steve Bannon.

3. The Israeli Lobbies

3.1 What is the Israeli Lobby?

Another important internal factor, or soft power, that helps to shape American policy, especially the foreign policy one, is the “lobby”. According to the Britannica dictionary (2021), the lobby, in general terms, is “any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of government”. Regarding the Israeli lobby, Mearsheimer and Walt (2007:8) define it as “a loose coalition of individuals and groups that seeks to influence American foreign policy in ways that will benefit Israel”. In an Al-Jazeera documentary about the lobbies' influence in the U.S. (2018), Professor Mearsheimer defined the lobby as a way through which “Israel gets special treatment from the United States forever”. Josh Block (2018) – the then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and President of The Israel Project (TIP) – stated, during the said documentary, that to understand what the Israeli Lobby is, it is important to imagine it as a “three-legged stool”. In this metaphor, each leg corresponds to a particular and crucial element that the lobby tries to touch with its actions: The political support, which is influencing the Congress; The policy, which is possible to shape using think tanks; And the public discourse, which is the most important without which all will crumble.

Scholars of international relations have different opinions about the real strength of the “lobby”: According to Mearsheimer and Walt (2006; 2007; 2009), who have written “The Israel Lobby and U.S. foreign policy” and various articles regarding this topic, the influence of the lobbies in the U.S. is very strong. As an example, according to the two International Relations professors, the Israeli lobby was a key element for the decision to wage war with Iraq. They sustain that, even though neither Israel nor the lobbies instill the idea of attacking Iraq, the individuals that were part of the lobbies were particularly helpful for “[selling]” the war to both the Congress and the American population. Moreover, they maintain that one of the main reasons why the U.S. is at the center of terrorist organizations' agendas, such as Al-Qaeda, is due to U.S. affiliation and close ties with Israel and its foreign policies: One of Bin Laden's motivations was the

occupation of Jerusalem by Israel and the suffering of the Palestinians (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006). Tanya Hsu, in Slimia et al., (2016:7), sustains that the influence of such organizations, particularly of AIPAC, is so strong in the U.S. that politicians cannot be elected without AIPAC's support. She even reiterates that Presidents cannot be elected without "affirming unbreakable allegiance to Israel". According to Mearsheimer and Walt (2006), the presence of the Israeli lobby is a mere sign of the fact that Israel and its policies are not a priority to the U.S.: For them just the fact that there is a lobby means that they are working against the national interests of the U.S. However, this statement, according to Dershowitz (2006), can be easily discredited just by providing the example of the number one lobby in the U.S. which is the American Association of Retired Person (AARP). He retains that it is implausible to think that the AARP, which is a lobby, is working against national interests, and links this idea also to the Israeli lobby.

Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) also discuss the presence of the lobbies in the media. According to their view, the majority of American hosts are pro-Israel. Not only the TV sector is touched by the lobby, but also the newspapers: They list several American newspapers as pro-Israel, where it is possible to find editorial boards biased toward a pro-Israel line. Those journals are The New York Times, The Washington Times, The Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Chicago Sun-Times, The New Republic, and Commentary. Dershowitz (2006) responded to such allegations saying that The New York Times is usually disapproving of Israel, and the editorial board is against the Likud Party. Also, the then VP Joe Biden discussed the role of the lobbies, especially the Jewish ones, in the American media, although he held a different view from Dershowitz. Biden sustained that Jewish presence both in the media and in Hollywood is "immense" and "outsized" which helped and contributed to shaping the U.S. populations' attitudes and in "driving major cultural-political changes" (Kane, 2020). To sustain this theory, TIP CEO and President, Josh Block, in the Al-Jazeera documentary (2018) said that what the TIP did was to spread the notion that Israel's existence was good not only for Israelis and for the Americans, but the whole world. The TIP was considered a "strategic communication group" that used the media, social or newspapers, to spread pro-Israel instances and to offset negative and harsh "narratives" about Israel. The journalist Phil Rees, who presented the documentary (2018), interviewed a member of the TIP who claimed that he assisted to pressures made to a press agency to change a headline regarding the Nuclear Deal, the TIP did not respond to such allegations. It is known,

however, that the TIP was able to publish its articles and to “feed newspaper editorial boards with a steady stream of pro-Israel talking points” (Kane, 2020).

It is commonly accepted that the lobbies are more successful in influencing Congress than the Executive Branch. This was stated by Mearsheimer and Walt (2006; 2009) various times in their research about the Israeli lobby, but it was also confirmed by Steven Spiegel (1985) who wrote that “Friends of Israel” have created positive energy in Washington, especially in Capitol Hill: This positivity has been determined by the “readiness” of some congressmen towards implementing good policies for Israel, being for a personal ideology or a political agenda. Moreover, the senior advisor on Arab Israeli negotiations during the George W. Bush presidency, Aaron David Miller (2008) declared that officials of the President and the Secretary of State undertook a kind of “preemptive self-censorship” when they presumed that some proposals would not have satisfied Israel. Additionally, Eric Gallagher (2018) when he said that it is difficult to directly influence the President of the U.S., but the Congress can: He maintained that “everything that AIPAC does is focused on influencing the Congress”. Indeed, Pat Buchanan – who was assistant and special consultant to U.S. Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan – labeled the Congress as “Israel-occupied territory”. In the web documentary of Al-Jazeera (2018), Craig Holman – who works with Public Citizen in Capitol Hill to create reforms on lobbying – said that there are two “effective” tools to influence a member of Congress. The first one is with money: Each congressperson can receive only \$2,700 from a contributor. What the lobbies do, Holman explained, is to gather 50 or a thousand people to collect that money and then giving them to the politician. Consequently, the Representative will feel obliged to execute what those donors ask them. The second tool used by lobbies is funding congresspeople vacations – mostly in Israel. Jim Moran, a former Democratic House Representative, said that lobbies spend roughly \$20,000 for a congressperson for “lavish”, “first-rate vacations”. Holman tried to restrict those gifts and voyages with the draft legislation H.R. 2316, commonly known as Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. Section 25 (2007:25) of said legislation states that those who are either a lobbyist, or an organization with one or more lobbyists or an employee who is listed (or has to be listed as such) “may not make a gift or provide travel to a Member, officer, or employee of Congress”. However, Holman (2018) expressed his disappointment over the legislation due to a “loophole”, that he calls “AIPAC loophole”: The final legislation – affected by AIPAC – does not exclude educational trips by charities that do not hire a lobbyist. The charity that Holman

used as an example was The American-Israel Educational Foundation which is, according to its web site (n.d.), “the charitable organization affiliated with AIPAC”: This foundation does not have, according to Holman, employees or even an office, but only files joint returns. An example of such vacations was done by Mike Pence – before becoming Vice President. Accordingly, this trip was a “high-level business delegation”, in which Pence, his wife, and his children went to Israel. This trip expenses for himself and Karen were entirely covered by the Christian United for Israel, the Christian Zionist organization, and lobby of John Hagee – whereas Pence had to pay for the children’s expenses (Maltz, 2016).

3.2 *AIPAC and the other Lobbies*

When dealing with the Israeli lobby, the most known of such organizations is AIPAC, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee. It is considered as “the nation’s most influential” and the “most highly effective” pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. which can influence and shape its foreign policies toward Israel and the Middle East (Landler, 2017c; Salleh et al., 2016). AIPAC was born as a Washington-based division of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) – that was created with the sole scope of helping the Jews’ colonization of Palestine and then of aiding Israel. The original name of AIPAC was American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, later changed in 1958 (Davidson, 2009). On its website, AIPAC (2020) stresses that its mission is to “encourage and persuade the U.S. government to enact specific policies that create a strong, enduring and mutually beneficial relationship with [their] ally Israel”. AIPAC considers itself a bipartisan group in which, “Democrats and Republicans alike [...] of different races, religions and backgrounds” can gather with common goals, all regarding Israel. On its site, AIPAC (2020) writes that its agenda is to ensure Israel's security, and a way to reach this objective is by opposing the nuclear deal with Iran and by combatting Iran’s terrorism in the region. Moreover, the organization also maintains that it supports the Two-State solution, even though Elsner (2014) sustains that there are members of the group that opposes such a solution. In the Al-Jazeera documentary (2018), Eric Gallagher – a director at AIPAC from 2010 to 2015 – retains that “everything that AIPAC does is focused on influencing the Congress”. Mearsheimer (2018), in the same episode of the documentary, maintains that this organization is interested in making sure that every politician, being a senator or a House representative, “toes the line” to Israel and its well-

being. According to the Professor (2018), AIPAC, other than financing those who seem pro-Israel – in their instances and actions –makes sure that those who are against Israel, not only do not receive funds but are politically attacked by the pro-Israel ones.

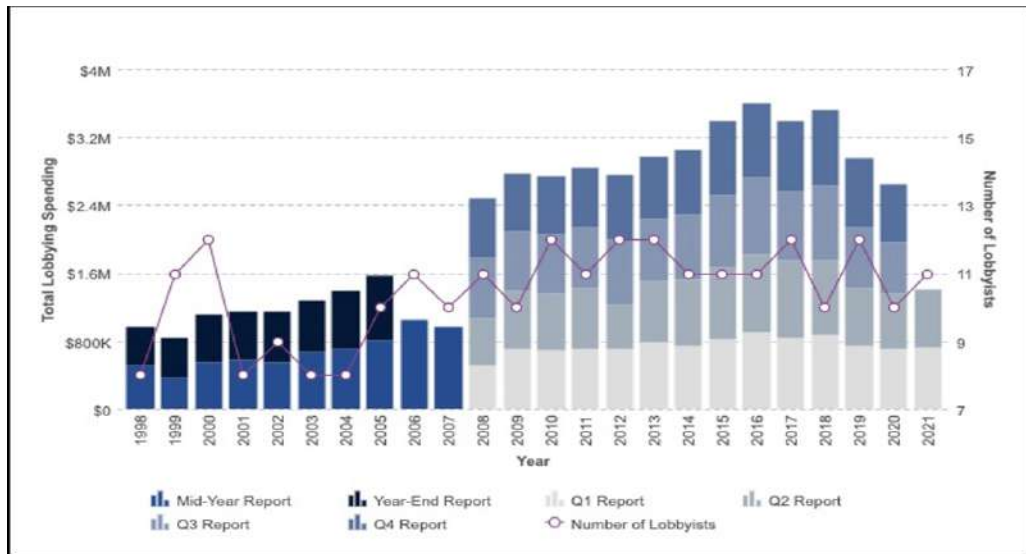
Despite all of this, the Committee does not finance by itself politicians. AIPAC cannot collect funds for political campaigns since it would be against the law. But, M.J. Rosenberg (2019), who was part of the organization for almost 20 years, reported that AIPAC does not “directly raise” the money to finance politicians. According to Rosenberg (2019), during AIPAC’s annual policy conferences, money was gathered to fund politicians: However, all of this happened in different rooms, that are not of the organization, to easily dismiss any allegations that fundraising was happening and to link it with AIPAC’s conferences. To support this theory, the website OpenSecrets⁴⁶ (2020) sustains that, the money directed to fund politicians or to lobby some congressional bills, do not come from the organization but members or employees of it.

“Graphic 1” below, shows the total amount of money that was spent every year by members of the AIPAC organization. As an example, during the year 2016, the total expenditure amounted to \$3.602.343 with eleven donors⁴⁷, whereas in the year 2020 it amounted to \$2.652.301 with 10 donators. “Graphic 2”, instead, shows the money used for lobbying bills⁴⁸. As it is possible to see, the average spent for lobbying bills during Obama’s eight-year at the White House is \$3.02 million, whereas, for the four years of Trump’s presidency, the average is \$3.13 million. According to Slimia et al. (2019), AIPAC has \$100 million funding and an annual income of \$60 million.

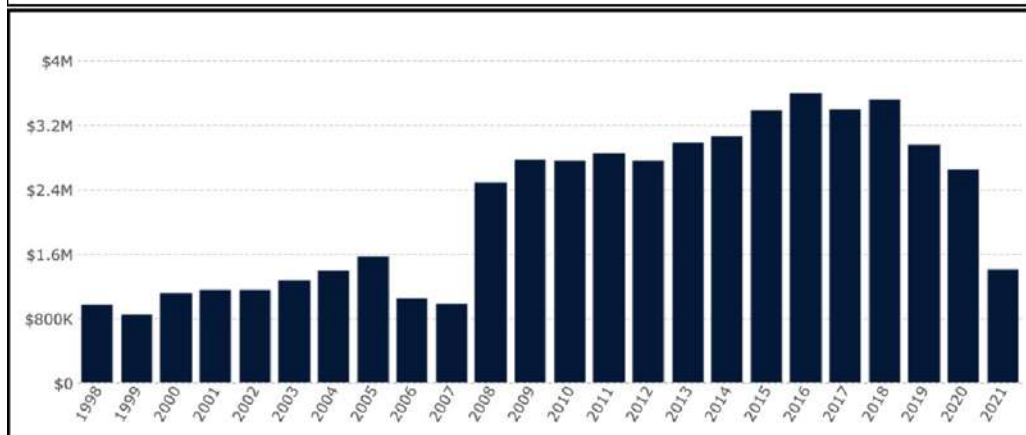
⁴⁶ OpenSecrets is a “nonpartisan, independent and nonprofit” site which tracks the money in U.S. politics and tries to assess the effects of such flows of money on elections and on the public (OpenSecrets, 2020)

⁴⁷ Following this link <https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/clients/lobbyists?cycle=2020&id=D000046963> it is possible to see the names of the lobbyist for each year.

⁴⁸ Going to the site it is possible to see the bills that were lobbied during all those years, from 1998 to 2021: <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/american-israel-public-affairs-cmte/lobbying?id=D000046963&lobbillscycle=2016>



Graphic 1. Opensecrets.com (2020). Client Profile: American Israel Public Affairs Cmte. Annual Lobbying by American Israel Public Affairs Cmte.



Graphic 2. Opensecrets.com (2020). Client Profile: American Israel Public Affairs Cmte. Annual Lobbying Totals: 1998 – 2020.

Despite being “second to no one” concerning Israel lobbies, the second lobby in the U.S., and counting more than 100,000 members, AIPAC does not “enjoy a monopoly on pro-Israel advocacy” (Waxman, 2010; Slimia et al., 2019). It is incorrect to suggest that all the various Israeli lobbies that exist in America share the same ideology regarding Israeli policies. The lobbies are not a “monolithic” or “unitary actor”: There are differences among them and Affiliate Professor of Political Science, International Affairs, and Israel Studies at the Northeastern University in Boston, Dov Waxman (2010) in his essay *The Israel Lobbies: A Survey of the Pro-Israel Community in the United States*, listed all the lobbies present in the American soil and tried to classify and divide them

based on their main political and ideological thought. Waxman lists AIPAC as a centrist lobby along with others such as the American Jewish Committee, because of their idea that to be successfully influential, it is important to maintain a “united front” both at the Congress and at the White House. An important aspect of being a centrist lobby is that these groups are going to support and try to help the Israeli government that is ruling at the moment. This element is what distinguishes the centrist with both the right and the left-wing lobbies. Both the left and the right have their political ideas and, according to Waxman (2010), they are going to challenge the Israeli government if its policies are against what they believe Israel should do. They must “save Israel from itself”.

The Right-Wing lobbies, such as StandWithUs and The Israel Project (TIP), are said to be against the possibility that Israel makes concessions to the Palestinians and supports the Israeli control of the West Bank. For Waxman (2010), the top priority for these groups is not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but the Iranian presence in the region and terrorism. However, checking the StandWithUs website (2020), it is written that the group “does not and has never advocated specific policies for Israel”. They also specify that their “goal is to counter antisemitism and to educate the public about Israel and empower others to educate their communities”. In the web documentary of Al-Jazeera (2018), it is reported how Israeli groups, such as AIPAC, StandWithUs, and TIP were “waging war” against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and its members. According to the documentary, StandWithUs had a strong relationship with Israel on Campus Coalition, which is the coordinating group at the center of this battle. Other than funding such groups, StandWithUs also helps in denouncing those students that advocate for Palestinian rights. Even though AIPAC and StandWithUs still exist, TIP ceased to live in 2019. Its collapse was due to a shortage of funds: TIP – funded by both Republicans and Democratic – saw its Democratic donors leave and cease the funding because of TIP's strong campaign against the Iran Nuclear Deal. This is one of the major problems that the lobbies are experiencing today: The Israel issue is becoming nowadays less than a bipartisan issue, as David Hazony, the then managing director at the TIP said. According to Hazony, this is due to the presence in the Democratic Party of Senator Bernie Sanders who “brought a lot of anti-Israel people” in the party. Also, Eli Clifton, a co-founder of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, reiterated how the collapse of the TIP can be seen as a way to demonstrate how the pro-Netanyahu and pro-Likud approaches are no longer welcomed in the Democratic Party (Al-Jazeera, 2018; Kane 2020).

Contrary to the Right-Wing, the Left one is contrary to Israel's occupation of the West Bank. They are called dovish groups because they favor diplomacy and negotiations. The most known group of these is J-Street that is considered the “dovish counterpart of AIPAC”, which was founded in 2008 by Jeremy Ben-Ami. One of J-Street’s principles is to ensure that the Palestinians can achieve a state of their own – although demilitarized. They write that “[they] believe that only a negotiated resolution agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians can meet the legitimate needs and national aspirations of both peoples”. Nevertheless, in the beginning, J-Street benefitted from George Soros who was considered a “zealous anti-Israel figure”. For this reason, it changed its ambivalent perspective on some matters such as the BDS movement – according to the website (2021), J-Street nowadays is against the BDS movement if it does not oppose the existence of Israel or a two-state solution (Waxman, 2010; Saltzman, 2014; J-Street, 2021).

Israeli Lobbies

Left-Wing	Centrist	Right-Wing
Ameinu	AIPAC	Americans For Safe Israel
Americans for Peace Now	American Jewish Committee	American Friends of Likud
Brit Tzedek v'Shalom	American Jewish Congress	Fuel for Truth
Israel Policy Forum	Anti-Defamation League	Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs
J Street	Hadassah	Republican Jewish Coalition
Jewish Peace Lobby	JCPA	Stand With Us
	Presidents Conference	The David Project
		The Israel Project
		Zionist Organization of America
Data extracted from Waxman, D., (2010). The Israel Lobbies: A Survey of the Pro-Israel Community in the United States. Pag. 10		

The lobbies that try to influence American foreign policies are not only Jewish lobbies. For this reason, scholars label the lobbies “Israel Lobbies” and not Jewish because also the evangelicals Christian Zionists have “turned into a pro-Israel lobby” with the scope of aiding Israel. Lobbies are based on their political agenda and not on a religious or ethnic basis. (Waxman, 2010; Ariel, 2006). One of the most known and first Christian Zionist organizations was founded in 1980, named International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ). This organization, which was born to counter the nation’s opposition in recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, believes in Israel's right to occupy the West Bank and Gaza and tries to guarantee this right. Other Christian Zionist lobbies

are the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, the National Unity Coalition for Israel, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, and Christian United for Israel (which was already mentioned in the previous chapter) (Ben Barka, 2012).

3.3 *Obama and the Lobbies*

Both Obama and John Kelly in their latest books discussed openly the role that the Israeli lobbies had and tried to have during their time at the White House. Kelly (2018) in his book *Every Day is Extra*, recalls the difficulty that the Obama administration had in realizing the JCPOA deal. Kelly (2018) even names three Senators, Mark Kirk, Bob Menendez, and Chuck Schumer, that were supported, in their efforts to push sanctions to attack and diminish the importance of the talks, by AIPAC. According to Kelly (2018), during that period there were massive anti-Iranian lobbying groups, AIPAC among them, that were determined to avoid the possibilities of an Iranian nuclear deal. AIPAC even used a “surrogate”, Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran, to accomplish this goal. The lobby group used the surrogate for commercial aids in 23 states, and it is estimated that AIPAC spent between \$20 and \$40 million for lobbying Democrats, even though it failed. But not all the lobbies were against the deal as J-Street is said to have supported the creation of the deal, despite using less money than AIPAC (Demirjian and Morello, 2015; Allison 2015). However, despite having lost this battle, AIPAC still managed to ensure 80 “Senators co-sponsors” vote for a bill made to harden the U.S. and Israel relationship – the journalist Bill Allison (2015) was specifically addressing the approval of the Iron Drome project by the U.S. government.

Obama (2020), in *A Promised Land*, recalls the moment in which, with his administration, he asked the Israeli government to stop the settlement constructions to guarantee the peace negotiations with Palestine to continue. According to his reconstruction of events, shortly after his request, “White House phones started ringing off the hook” with members and leaders of Congress, American Jewish organizations, and various supporters outraged by Obama’s continuous “picking on” Israel when the real problem was only the violence caused by the Palestinians. Moreover, another matter for which Obama was at the center of the lobbies’ eyes was his nomination of Republican Senator Chuck Hagel as Secretary of Defense. The main problem with this political figure was his “independence” and his insufficient loyalty to the State of Israel: He asked Obama to start talks with Hamas, refused to sign a letter asking the EU to consider Hamas as a

terrorist organization, and he was one of the four Senators that did not sign a resolution expressing solidarity to Israel. Furthermore, during an interview with Aaron David Miller in 2006, he expressed his support for Israel but stressed the fact that he is firstly an American Senator, not an Israeli one. He maintained that he made an oath not to Israel, but the U.S. government. The candidacy of Hagel, who was labeled anti-Semite, was opposed by many groups: The Emergency Committee for Israel (ECI) was backed in its actions by AIPAC, the Republican Jewish Coalition, the American-Jewish Committee, the TIP – Josh Block is said to have been a very active player in the anti-Hagel campaigns – and others (Cornwell, 2013; Lobe, 2013; Ahmad, 2012; Stephens, 2012;). However, according to journalist Rettig Gur (2012), for AIPAC the campaign against Hagel was done by “a small minority of zealots”. In addition to what has been said so far, also the Christian Zionists and the CUI intervened in the matter, with its members writing letters to their representatives to oppose Hagel’s position at the Pentagon: The CUI totaled 17,000 letters. Despite the efforts to block his candidacy, Hagel became Secretary of Defense in February 2013. This cannot be said for Charles W. Freeman who lost his chair at the National Intelligence Council (NIC) in 2009 allegedly for his anti-Israel stances (Guth, 2011). Senator Chuck Schumer said that since Freeman’s statements against Israel were disturbing, he repeatedly asked for his rejection as chairman of the NIC. The lobbies tried to circumvent the idea that it was because of them that he had to resign: They tried to make sure that the responsibility fell on Freeman’s financial ties with China and Saudi Arabia, rather than his opposition to Israel. However, according to Smith (2009), the anti-Freeman campaign “originated in pro-Israel circles”. Freeman himself renounced the candidacy sustaining that he was a victim of Israel lobbies’ attacks (Mazzetti and Cooper, 2009). A blog post written by Steven J. Rosen (2009) made everything began: “Alarming Appointment at the CIA” was the title of the post. Rosen, who was a former top official at AIPAC, wrote that the possibility of Freeman’s appointment was “disturbing and compared his views on Israel to the ones that could be formulated in places like Saudi Arabia. Additionally, Obama – whose choices for the MENA Region raised the concerns of Israeli groups – distanced himself from Carter National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski who expressed criticism of Israel. Plus, the former Clinton administration peace negotiator Rob Malley had to resign following a meeting he held with Hamas for the International Crisis Group (Smith, 2009; Mazzetti and Cooper, 2009).

3.4 *Trump and his benefactors*

For his two campaigns, Trump could count for the financial support of some important members of the Jewish community. One of those people was Sheldon Adelson: He was a casino magnate who is said to have been the biggest donor to the Trump campaign. During the 2016 electoral campaign, Adelson gave Trump about \$82 million, and for the 2018 campaign, he disclosed \$87 million. Summing both the money directed to Trump and the GOP, Adelson gave \$180 million in 2016, which is considered a “record-breaking sum”. Moreover, Adelson also helped Trump in his legal troubles, donating to a “legal defense fund” that was created to aid Trump and his administration. The magnate donated in 2020 \$90 to a pro-Trump super Political Action Committee (PAC) (Elliott, 2021; Tindera and Yakowicz, 2020a; Tindera and Yakowicz, 2020b). Eric Gallagher in the Al-Jazeera documentary (2018) briefly recalls the relationship between Adelson and then President Trump: According to Gallagher, when Trump asked Adelson to gather the largest number of pro-Israel organizations to help him, everyone had to follow what Adelson said, even though it was not what they usually did. Moreover, at the Israeli American Council in 2016 Adelson arrived with Rudy Giuliani who was Trump’s advisor. It is also believed that Adelson lobbied for the relocation of the American embassy in Jerusalem and the withdrawal from the JCPOA deal. Adelson not only established a political relationship with Trump but also with Netanyahu, with whom he had a “direct line” and to which he also donated money. Also, VP Pence was on the list of people that Adelson helped during their campaigns (D’Antonio and Eisner, 2018; Elliott, 2021; Zibel, 2018; Al-Jazeera, 2018). However, Trump was not only backed by Adelson but by other important American Jewish personalities. Cherna Moskowitz and Ira Greenstein donated respectively \$2 million and \$100,000 to American First Action, a pro-Trump group. Cherna and his late husband Irving Moskowitz were great supporters of the settlement constructions in West Bank and East Jerusalem. They both supported with their foundation, organizations that supported the relocation of Jews in Arab territories: They are considered to have been involved in almost every “significant building project” in Jerusalem, and thanks to them now almost 110 Jewish families live in the Mount of Olives (Zibel, 2018; JTA, 2016; Eisenbud, 2016). Ira Greenstein became, during Trump’s administration, Deputy Assistant to the President and Strategist. His connection with Trump is through Jared Kushner, being a long-time family friend. He

was also chairman of Genie Energy: In Israel, this firm's operations were directed by the right-wing (Zibel, 2018; Lerner, 2019).

Despite what is possible to presume, not all the lobbies were content with all the policies sustained by Trump for Israel. The Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) opposed the recognition of the Golan Heights, whereas AIPAC and Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) were enthusiastic about it (Dogantekin, 2019). Furthermore, AIPAC itself is divided over the figure of Trump. On one hand, Trump can be considered a very important and determining figure for AIPAC and other organizations to establish a more reliant and strong relationship with Israel and its then Prime Minister, Netanyahu. However, on the other hand, the presence of Trump is a "structural problem" for AIPAC, since it consolidates the idea that supporting Israel is now a Right-Wing, Republican policy and not bipartisan as AIPAC wants it to be. AIPAC has been trying to acquire more Democrats on its side, but the presence of Trump is considered an obstacle to this goal (Landler, 2017c).

4. Discussion

As it is possible to evince from the previous chapters there are significant differences between the two administrations. Firstly, the relationship between Obama, Trump, and Netanyahu is poles apart: Obama and Netanyahu are always depicted by the media as two leaders that could not stand each other, whereas Trump and "Bibi" had a great consideration of their counterpart. However, despite the angst that was felt by Obama towards the Israeli PM, the rest of his closest advisors, from Biden to Clinton and Kerry, enjoyed a good and cordial relationship with Netanyahu. A friendship that, as in the case of Biden, was not, allegedly, damaged by the different opinions that these political advisors had concerning Israeli policies. In this instance, Biden, Kerry, Clinton, and the other staff that worked closely with Israel, Indyk and Shapiro, all shared and followed Obama's positions regarding the Two-State Solution and the settlement's issue. All opinionated the importance that Israel maintained its security level intact but, at the same time, it was vital that also the Palestinians could gain rights and a state of their own. The only solution was the creation of two states, an Israeli and a Palestinian one, where they could all live. To gain such states, the settlements had to be stopped, since they damaged the prospects of peace and the character of the Israeli state. Even though it cannot be excluded the presence of Christian Zionists in Obama's staff, it is apparent from

the policies implemented, or to better say, not implemented (like the Embassy move or the recognition of the Golan Heights), that they did not have a great influence in the White House. Moreover, even if Obama had to cede sometimes to the request of the Israeli lobbies, he still won some of his battles against those organizations, like when he nominated Chuck Hagel despite the Lobbies' obstacles.

Trump, even though expressed the intention to support whatever choices the two parties would take, surrounded himself by pro-settlement and anti-Two-State Solution advisors. Having as Senior Advisor, U.S. Ambassador and ME Peace Envoy someone that donates to Israeli pro-settlement organizations can raise questions about the President's real intentions toward the peace conflict. Moreover, contrary to what has emerged with the Obama's administration, some important member of Trump's staff is connected with Christian Zionist organizations: Pence and Pompeo (even Steve Bannon, Trump's Chief Strategist of the White House in 2017 was a Christian Zionist (C-SPAN, 2017)). Moreover, Trump surrounded himself with numerous religious guidance, among those Paula White-Cain, a Christian Zionist. Having two figures of such standing, and religious confidants may have had a say in a very crucial and delicate matter like the moving of the Embassy. In addition, Trump's campaign was funded by Sheldon Adelson a lobbyist Jewish man who was pro-settlement. So, even though it is not known who influenced the President on these matters, Jared, Pence, Adelson, etc., it is reasonable to say that all these elements, the team and their religious (Christian Zionism and Judaism), and ideological background, the lobbying and even the friendship between the two leaders, helped to shape the policies that were conducted from 2017 to 2021.

Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to show and to analyze the factors that contributed to the U.S. policies towards Israel made by the Trump's and the Obama's administrations. It used the Individual Level of Analysis as the principal method to research and explain the causes that led the two administrations to develop such policies towards the State of Israel.

The first chapter focused on the policies made by Obama: It was possible to see how at the beginning, Obama's intentions were to distance himself and his administration from Israel and to give more support to the Palestinian side. Nevertheless, contrary to popular beliefs, it is not possible to say that Obama was anti-Israel: Even though the peace negotiations did not bring a solution to the long conflict, Obama still wanted to ensure Israel's safety and security by signing the Memorandum of Understanding and the JCPOA. Moreover, Obama's critics only remember how the U.S. abstained and let thus pass the UN SC Resolution 2334, even though it was the first time in a eight years span that the Obama's administration let a Resolution, opposed by Israel, to pass (Begley, 2016).

In contrast to Obama, there is no one that said that Trump was anti-Israel or did not implement policies to favor Israel. Without problems, it can be said that Trump was the most pro-Israel President in the history of U.S. The list of pro-Israel policies made by Trump is vast, from the moving of the Embassy, accompanied by the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital to the recognition of the Golan Heights. Moreover, although he drafted a Peace Proposal for ending the conflict, this proposal did not consider the Palestinians, who were left out in the negotiations talks. This disregard towards the Palestinians is apparent in his policies against those funds that provide help to the

Palestinian people like the UNRWA. By ending the incoming of aids, the U.S., who was the largest donor, contributed to the worsening of the living conditions of those people.

The third chapter intention was to analyze the three “Individual” factors that can be considered crucial in how the two administrations shaped their Israeli policies. Firstly, the role of the team has been studied, with a particular focus on the Presidents’ closer advisers and on those who work with Israel. From the analysis resulted that Obama’s officials were highly sensitive to the Palestinian matter and that the Two State Solution was considered by them as the only possible solution that could pose an end to the conflict. Whereas, in the Trump administration, the officials opposed the Two State Solution either for religious ideas or because of their businesses. For what it concerns the Israeli lobbies, it is undeniable that the Trump’s administration was influenced by what the leaders of those organizations wanted, especially Sheldon Adelson, who largely contributed to his campaign. Even Obama could not disengage himself from the Lobbies, despite being able to maintain his positions sometimes, as the case of Chuck Hagel suggests. Even the Christian Zionists can be held accountable for the policies implemented by Trump, since not only his VP and his Secretary of State were “born again” but he was surrounded by advisers of that faith. Whereas, from the analysis, resulted that the Obama’s administration and the President himself were not influenced so much by this religious group.

The analysis, thus, revealed how that the three elements, Team, Israeli Lobbies and Christian Zionists, were crucial in defining the policies implemented by the U.S. Naturally, the degree of the influence exercised by these elements differs from the two administrations, however it is undeniable how important their presence and their effect had.

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