E-ISSN : 2790-2404
P- ISSN 2070-9250
Qadaya siyasiyyat

Ministry of Higher Education
& Scientific Research
Al-Nahrain University
College of Political Science

وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة النهرين
كلية العلوم السياسية

قضايا سياسية
Political Issues

مجلة فصلية محكمة

العدد ٨٤
Issue 84

كانون الثاني - شباط - اذار / ٢٠٢٦
Jan. - Feb. - Mar. / 2026

قضايا سياسية
العدد ٨٤
٢٠٢٦

جامعة النهرين
كلية العلوم السياسية

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E-ISSN 2790-2404
P- ISSN 2070-9250
DOI prefix: 10.58298

مجلة فصلية محكمة تعنى بنشر الأبحاث والدراسات السياسية العراقية والعربية والدولية
http://pissue.iq

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البحوث المنشورة تعبر عن آراء أصحابها وليس بالضرورة عن رأي المجلة

قواعد النشر

- لغة المجلة هي اللغة العربية والانكليزية على أن يراعى الوضوح وسلامة النص.
- ترحب المجلة بنشر البحوث والدراسات السياسية النظرية والتطبيقية ولا سيما التي تجعل من قضايا المنطقة والعالم محط اهتمامها، ماضياً وحاضراً ومستقبلاً، وعلى وفق الآتي:

1. أن لا يزيد عدد صفحات البحث أو الدراسة عن (15) صفحة مطبوعة بحجم خط (14) والتباعد (1,15) ونوع الخط Simplified Arabic تقدم عبر المنصة الاليكترونية للمجلة على الرابط :
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2. أن تتصف البحوث والدراسات بالموضوعية والدقة العلمية.
3. أن تعتمد الترقيم العشري للعناوين الأساسية والفرعية او التنصيف المعياري العام.
4. يرفق مع كل بحث او دراسة ملخصين (احدهما باللغة العربية والآخر باللغة الانكليزية/ يتضمن اهداف البحث ، المنهج والمعالجة ، ابرز النتائج واهم الاستنتاجات والمقترحات) مع ضرورة مراعاة ان الملخص مختلف اختلافا جذريا عن المقدمة وليس تكرارا لها .
5. تخضع جميع البحوث المقبولة للنشر الى نظام الاستلال الالكتروني في كلية العلوم السياسية –جامعة النهرين.
6. يرفق مع كل بحث ودراسة سيرة ذاتية مختصرة للباحث وتعهد .

- تقوم المجلة بإخطار الباحثين بإجازة بحوثهم أو دراساتهم من عدمها بعد عرضها على محكمين تختارهم على نحو سري من بين أصحاب الاختصاص.

مجلة قضايا سياسية

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- يجوز للمجلة أن تطلب إجراء تعديلات شكلية أو شاملة على البحث أو الدراسة قبل إجازتها للنشر بما يتماشى مع أهدافها.
- البحوث المنشورة تعبر عن آراء أصحابها ، ولاتعبر عن راي المجلة .
- ترحب المجلة بالمناقشات الموضوعية لما ينشر فيها أو في غيرها من الدوريات وبأية ردود فكرية أو تصويب، وكذلك ترحب بنشر التقارير عن المؤتمرات والندوات ذات العلاقة ومراجعات الكتب وملخصات الرسائل الجامعية التي تتم إجازتها على أن تكون من إعداد أصحابها.

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الموقع الاليكتروني
https://pissue.iq/index.php/pissue

E-ISSN 2790-2404
P- ISSN 2070-9250
DOI prefix: 10.58298

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Employing smart power in US foreign policy towards the Middle East after 2011▽

Prof. Dr. Abbas Saadoun Rif'at* **Prof. Dr. Salman Ali Hussein****

Abstract:
The concept of power has several different meanings due to varying opinions and definitions among thinkers and researchers, as well as the different theories that have interpreted it. Therefore, research into the topic of smart power and its application is of paramount importance. The smart power strategy adopted by the United States in its foreign policy after President Barack Obama took office in 2009 is considered a combination of soft power and hard power. This approach reflects the difficulty of achieving desired results using either soft or hard power alone.

Keywords: Smart Power, Middle East, U.S. Foreign Policy, Post-2011 Dynamics

introduction:
The topic of smart power is among the important topics in current political science, as countries tend to conduct their foreign policies and establish their international relations by relying on military power, or by moving towards strengthening cooperation relations or establishing alliances, and the whole matter depends on the acumen and skill of the political leader's perception, without the existence of methodological and academic frameworks that analyze those trends.

In the current millennium, the concept of soft power has rapidly developed, expressing the existence of options for a state to achieve influence in the international community through a method that focuses on persuasion. However, the administration of President Barack Obama in the United States quickly moved towards combining the approach: soft power, with the components of hard power: military power, after realizing that neither of them alone can achieve the goals of a superpower in the global system.

The other aspect of the subject is the region known as the Middle East, which is a region whose description is predominantly political rather than geographical, national, or religious. This region is a political region, which has its importance in global human history, and today it is subject to complex interests and conflicts with confused titles, and it is an internationalized region.

▽ تاريخ التقديم : 2026/ 1/21 تاريخ القبول: 2026/ 3/ 11 تاريخ النشر: 2026 /3/31
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The United States has been working on what is known as the Middle East region for several decades, specifically after the British withdrawal at the beginning of the 1970s, and has managed to establish extensive relations and has used multiple tools in it. In recent years, American intervention has increased, and for this reason, there is a belief that the events of 2011 in the Arab region were not far removed from the United States, as they came in light of the transformations in American policy from the concept of preventive power to the concept of soft power and then to the concept of smart power.

The importance and purpose of the research:

The importance of researching the topic of smart power and how to use it is among the important topics, given that the United States adopted the philosophy of resorting to smart power in its relations with the Middle East region, when it supported change in the region in 2011, resorted to using force in other cases such as Libya, and turned to supporting chaos in the cases of Syria and Yemen, all with the intention of achieving the goals of American policy.

The aim of the research:

• Understanding the meaning and methods of employing smart power
• Understanding US foreign policy in the Middle East since 2011

Research problem:

This research seeks to address a problem formulated as a central question:

Why did the United States resort to smart power in its policies towards the Middle East? And how was this done?

This problem raises several questions, the answers to which will be the focus of this research, namely:

1. What is the meaning of smart power?
2. How and why did the Obama administration adopt smart power?
3. How has the United States exercised smart power in the Middle East?

Hypothesis:

We assume the following:

The use of smart power in US foreign policy (independent variable) resulted in major changes in the Middle East region after 2011 (dependent variable).

Methodology:

The descriptive-analytical method will be used in this research.

Structure:

The research will be divided into three sections, an introduction, and a conclusion, as follows:

First - Conceptual and Historical Framework

Secondly, the Obama administration's adoption of smart power.

Thirdly - Examples of the United States' practice of smart power

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First - Conceptual and Historical Framework

The concept of power has several different meanings due to the differing opinions and definitions among thinkers and researchers, as well as the different theories that have interpreted the concept of power. However, most definitions that address the concept of power revolve around the idea that "power is the ability to influence the behavior of others," meaning that it is a behavioral relationship between two parties, one of whom influences the behavior of the other in order to achieve his goals within a specific time period and through a specific field. From here, we can define the elements and characteristics of power as follows: **(Nye, 2012, pp. 20–21)**

- Power is a means to an end.
- The effect produced by the force is not in one direction or field all the time.
- Power is a relative value, not an absolute one, as there cannot be one party that is always strong and another that is always weak.

The concept of soft power:

The research topic introduces several terms that need to have their meanings defined, namely:

Smart power

- Foreign policy
- The Middle East

Foreign policy is a term that refers to a state's policy in its external environment, with the intention of arranging it in a way that ensures, through the approach and behavior adopted by the state, the achievement of multiple results in the international environment. Each state has a specific approach and has the tools it focuses on, which gives a particularity to the study of the foreign policies of the world's countries. However, among the definitions that are relied upon in understanding foreign policy is the definition of Dr. Ould Sidiq Miloud, who sees it as: one of the main elements that constitute the general policy of the state, and it includes making decisions related to national security, the state's territorial integrity and independence. It consists of two things: decisions and positions, and behaviors, all of which are purposeful and intended to create an influence on the external environment. **(Ould El-Seddik, 2018, p. 19)**

Regarding the meaning of the Middle East, it is clear that the region is not a distinct regional system, but rather a political region. There is the Arab regional system and the Gulf sub-regional system. However, Western powers sought to achieve two goals: first, to define the region to their east, regardless of its national composition, and second, to attempt to dismantle the geographical and ethnic unity of the Arab region. They carved out the area from Egypt to Iran and called it the Middle East. Then they designated the area from Libya to Morocco as North Africa, ignoring many other Arab regions, including Sudan, Somalia, and Mauritania, and classifying them as belonging to other regional systems. What is important here is that this region is of interest to the United States and other

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Western countries, and they attempt to give their policies in the region a special status, given the presence of the Zionist entity. In general, the Middle East does not fall under a single political, legal, economic, or ethnic definition. Rather, it is a region that encompasses several countries with existing and historical ties and shared characteristics. However, there is an inaccuracy in describing it as a regional system. In this region, Western countries want to make the Zionist entity a regional religious, political, security and economic center, and to make other countries with historical extension suffer from unstable conditions. **(Amer, 2001, pp. 36–38)**

As for smart power, it clearly refers to the combination of soft and hard power. While the use of both has existed since ancient times, the theoretical foundation of smart power is linked to American policy in the current millennium, specifically to the integration of hard and soft power.

Both hard and soft power have been used by states at different historical stages. Soft power refers to the ability to persuade others through various means of attraction, including cultural and educational ones, without resorting to military force or imposing one's will, so that the other party is convinced that it can be influenced by other parties **(Maad, 2019, pp. 15–16)** . Hard power, on the other hand, refers to the methods of using coercive force, most importantly military force, to impose one's will on others. The fundamental purpose of both types of power is to achieve and exert influence in a way that fulfills the objective of politics and its practice in the external environment. **(Abdel-Hay, 2014, pp. 31–32)**

Theorizing about power with its various concepts was adopted early on because international relations are linked to it. There is no room for the idealist approach to be the only way to interpret those relations. Rather, power is the most realistic approach to understanding most of those relations. The impact of power was estimated and measured, and comparisons were made between states. However, the references and distinctions between material and non-material power took a direction towards dealing with two meanings: hard power, referring to material and military power, and soft power, referring to non-material power in most cases. Theorizing about the two powers developed later, that is, theorizing about both material and non-material power, hard power, and soft power. **(Appadurai, 2020, p. 5)**

As for hard power, in its various forms—military, economic, etc.—it found a way to be practically applied in American foreign policy with the arrival of George W. Bush to power in 2001. This occurred under an administration dominated by the neoconservative movement, which adopted an approach of using force and intervention in international relations, in contrast to the Clinton administration's approach of partnership and economics in international relations. The neoconservative movement worked to distance the country from deterrence and containment and move towards preemption, that is, resorting to force early

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even if there was no suitable justification for it. When the events of September 11, 2001, occurred, the movement quickly pushed the United States' policy towards the highest interventionist approach, and issued the "Patriot Act," or "Patriotism Act," whose official name is "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing the Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Disrupt Terrorism." It worked to reduce the level of freedoms, focused on hard power, and significantly increased the rate of military spending.

The main focus of the arguments of the current in American politics is on the protection of the security of the American nation, and accordingly the current has turned to supporting policies of power. The events of September 11 left a negative impression on Americans, and they were used by the neoconservatives to reach this result.

The primary desires and orientations of successive US administrations are linked to global hegemony and influence. Power is one manifestation of American policy, alongside consumerism and the export of the American model of individualism. Therefore, the presence of the conservative movement is not alien to the distinctiveness of the American approach and way of life. This conservative movement understands that achieving its goals is only possible through the use of hard power, particularly in its military form, on the international stage. As for the various forms of soft power (diplomacy, propaganda, etc.), their foundations were laid during the administration of President Bill Clinton (1993-2000) to emphasize activities promoting democracy and protecting human rights from an American perspective. The logic of globalizing the principles and values of American liberal democracy, based on the centrality of human rights and individual freedom, compelled the Clinton administration to prioritize soft power over hard power, despite the significant military power the United States possessed during this period compared to other major powers in the post-Cold War era. **(Al-Laheibi, 2019, p. 241)**

What the country experienced in 2001 made it review its various policies and the traditional deterrence logic adopted, and as a result it moved towards adopting a logic that is consistent with its military doctrine at its defensive and offensive levels. This requires that the change in the nature of the threat imposes a change in the method of confrontation. So the shift was from deterrence (making the other party realize the risks of unacceptable behavior) which characterized the foreign policy of the United States during the Cold War - to the strategy of preemption, before a later trend towards adopting the strategy of prevention in 2002 (when there are no indications that the other party may turn to attack, so prevention is done to avoid the risks of not being classified as an ally). This approach in American policies under the presence of the neoconservatives continued from 2001 until the end of 2008 before Barack Obama came to power representing the Democrats in 2009. This raised many discussions and debates about the goals and strategy of American foreign policy for the period after the era of George W.

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Bush, especially after the change characterized his political discourse throughout his election campaign. The intensity of these discussions and debates began to decrease as the outlines of President Obama's administration strategy became clear in its first year. In the inaugural session held on January 13, 2009, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton affirmed: "The United States' foreign policy during President Obama's term will be based on smart power, where we will work to combine the tools of hard and soft power in a way that allows us to deal with the various issues on the international stage." The smart power approach continued throughout President Obama's two terms, and continued at a slower pace with President Donald Trump, until 2021, when American policy changed under President Joe Biden, who focused on returning to the traditions of American politics that rely on a diverse set of tools: allies, the economy, and power. **(Strategic Thought Center for Studies, 2021, pp. 25–26)**

In general, the terms soft power and hard power are expressions of the total power that a state can use in its foreign relations. The larger the state, the greater the flexibility in using that power, and the greater the flexibility in using both types of power, the success in influencing depends on the tools and methods of using power by the state.

The term "smart power" gained significant popularity among academic circles and research centers after an article published by Susan Nossel, the US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations during the first term of former President Clinton, in the American quarterly (Foreign Affairs), entitled: "Smart Power: Restoring Liberal Internationalism," in 2004. The article represents a critical analytical view of American foreign policy under the administration of President George W. Bush, and that it resorted to the excessive use of hard power, which would affect the country's image and standing internationally, especially in establishing a new democratic world order by spreading the principles and values of Western democracy through diplomatic means, and activating the role of American leadership in the world through the mechanism of partnership rather than through hegemony. **(Al-Kaoud & Al-Khafaji, 2021, p. 28)**

Secondly, the Obama administration's adoption of smart power.

In 2009, a president of a unique nature came to power in the United States, at a unique time. As for his unique nature, his background was African, at a time when the majority governing the country was of white European origin and Protestant Christians. Thus, there was a new situation in the country, but he still reflected American political traditions, because he was nominated and came to power through traditional mechanisms that made him represent either the bureaucratic side of the state or the security background or be a representative of major economic interests. As for his coming at an exceptional time, the United States in 1989 found itself at the top of the international pyramid, without a competitor,

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after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and then its collapse, and then Russia's preoccupation with its internal affairs. So the American decision was to maintain NATO and then expand it in 1999, and to choose the economic option throughout the nineties of the last century, until the neoconservative movement began to crystallize strongly, which saw that there was an opportunity for the country to impose its global hegemony more and make the twenty-first century an American century par excellence. This came in the context of changes in American society. Indeed, the movement succeeded in rising, and then gained the trust of American voters, and reached the top of the political pyramid. After the rise of the conservative movement, the policies it pursued achieved rapid successes by making most of the world's countries sympathize with the United States, and then making those countries provide facilities and support to the United States, which enabled it to expand rapidly, and made many countries adapt their policies to serve American interests. **(Foot et al., 2016, p. 468)**

Despite the expansion achieved by the United States after 2001, its behavior provoked other countries. The expansion put it in conflict with Russia, China, and others, who began to feel that the United States wanted to dominate the international system. Consequently, these countries began to change their strategies, with the intention of rehabilitating themselves to be active forces in the international system. Thus, the challenges facing the country expanded instead of shrinking, because small countries cannot confront the United States in the first place. Therefore, what the country fears are the major powers. China, for example, greatly expanded its defense agreement after 2001 and rapidly modernized its various forces. Russia did the same, as did North Korea, Iran, and others. **(Badawi, 2015, p. 406)**

This introduction led to a significant increase in US defense spending, exceeding $600 billion in most cases, after it had been around $320 billion before the events of 2001. Most countries around the world also increased their defense spending in response to the heightened importance of security considerations. Consequently, the world began to prioritize security, defense, and armament programs. The United States was affected by this increase, as evidenced by the rise in its trade deficit, which increased from $28.6 billion in 2000 to $58.1 billion in 2005, and then to $64.2 billion in 2008 **(Trading Economics, n.d., October 11, 2024)** . Of course, this refers to the overall deficit, although there are also significant deficits in trade relations with both China and Japan. At a time when China's military spending was, for example, about $21 billion in 2000, about $46 billion in 2006, and about $145.8 billion in 2015, while Russia's military spending was about $14.7 billion in 2000, about $47 billion in 2008, and about $42.8 billion in 2015. **(Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2024)**

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In addition to the military aspect, and consequently the rise in the trade deficit and the increase in the debt ratio, the country was afflicted by what became known as the global financial crisis, the repercussions of which began to appear at the end of 2007 as a result of the mortgage crisis. That is, the American citizen takes out loans to buy housing units, then resells them after a period of time. However, market fluctuations led to American banks facing the problem of a large group of borrowers being unable to repay, which put many banks in a state described as bankruptcy, due to the lack of liquidity that was injected into the markets, thus turning into an American financial crisis. Several American companies subsequently collapsed, and then the collapse began to spread rapidly to the world in 2008-2009. The American administration took several options, the most important of which were: **(Massoud, 2010, p. 78)**

- Printing currency to meet the local market's currency needs
- Providing loans to struggling companies and banks
- International cooperation to contain the crisis.

However, the financial crisis continued until 2013 when the global economy began to recover from that crisis, which caused an economic recession and sometimes a contraction in some global economies.

In other words, the Obama administration found the country's strategic environment problematic. This came at a time when it wanted to manage several issues, including healthcare and controlling the federal debt, which had reached enormous figures relative to the average GDP.

On the international level, Obama found that there was an escalation in the dispute with Russia and China, and that there were multiple crises in more than one regional system, and that the American interest required it to turn to East Asia. Meanwhile, the American decision-making centers were moving towards making changes in the tools used in foreign policy, so they decided to use soft power on the one hand, and hard power on the other, according to the situations with which they interact.

One of the important regions I dealt with was the Arab region.

The Arab region is among the regions that have most engaged with the following topics: **(Hussein, 2018, p. 23)**

1) The search for legitimacy for rule is based on tribal, historical, religious, or political foundations.

2) Seeking to bolster the continuity of ruling regimes by creating police states and multiple security formations that conceal governance from the people.

3) Making the citizen preoccupied with the conditions of social and economic misery, and the security fear of persecution if he gets close to the regime or politics.

4) Seeking protection for the ruling regime through dependent relations with Western countries

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At a time when the Arab citizen was generally suffering from unstable conditions, a decline in income levels, a fragmentation of cultural identity, and a lack of clarity regarding the identity of the state because the ruling regime had imposed its image upon it, and a closed political and governmental system, it was therefore impossible for there to be change from within in the region.

For these reasons and others, the Arab region began to boil over, and young people began to turn either to violence or drugs, or to migration or to integration into the system of loyalty to the government even if they were not convinced of it. Arab society began to suffer from distortions, and the authorities began to work on further distorting the identity of society to prevent the existence of a movement that might overthrow those regimes. At that stage, the United States had settled on stirring up societies and making them live in chaos, in order to make the Zionist entity in a better regional position, at a time when social media was moving to be a fertile environment for interaction for young people, and civil society organizations were also a fertile environment for obtaining support and guidance, and those organizations have connections with the Western world. **(Ajab, 2016, pp. 11–12)**

The events of the Arab Spring, which erupted against the will of the West, cannot be separated from the reality of change. The change began in Egypt and Tunisia, both of which saw the fall of pro-Western regimes, each with a strong Islamist current. The events then spread to Syria, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and others. In Syria, Libya, and Yemen, the events took a dangerous turn because the ruling regimes were unwilling to relinquish power, unlike in Egypt and Tunisia. This led to uncontrolled violence. Even more dangerous was the intervention of conflicting international interests in these events, aimed at embarrassing Western countries. Russia provided support to Syria against attempts to forcibly change the government, resulting in a major internal, regional, and international division within the country. As for Libya, Western countries resolved their differences on two issues: **(Mahmoud & Mahmoud, 2022, pp. 221–224)**

1. Overthrowing the Libyan regime quickly
2. To push the country into chaos so that it would later be ready to accept the type of government that would be called for.

As for the situation in Yemen, it has descended into chaos, and the ruling regime temporarily collapsed before entering into an alliance of interests with the Houthi movement, which quickly expanded to control the capital, Sana'a. This led to a division within the state and in international positions regarding it, given the international community's recognition of the government based in Aden. The country continued to suffer from the depletion of its resources due to the conflicts it entered into. **(Hermiz, 2022, pp. 815–819)**

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The Obama administration was monitoring the events and regional conflicts that were emerging in the region, and how several countries had entered into serious instability, and that regional crises had become dangerous. The American administration decided to announce in 2012 that its interests required it to focus on East Asia, and not on the Arab region. Then it hastened to accept negotiations on Iran's nuclear program between 2014-2015, **(Abd & Khalid, 2020, pp. 74–75)** and the country moved to pass the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), which clashed with Saudi-American relations in 2016. This law imposes sanctions and compensation on any person accused by the Americans of being behind the events of September 11, 2001. **(Abu Arshid et al., 2020, p. 45)**

The Obama administration worked to use soft power to create a kind of attraction in other countries and succeeded in doing so between 2009-2012, before several countries began to consider it a non-neutral model involved in regional conflicts, especially in the Arab region. Then it began to turn to hard power in its intervention in Libya in 2011, and then its view and performance in East Asia.

During President Barack Obama's administration, the concept of "smart power," recommended by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was adopted. In her address to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 13, 2009, Hillary Clinton stated that the Obama administration should utilize what is termed "smart power" and the various tools at its disposal—diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural—in its foreign policy, selecting the appropriate tool or tools for each international situation. In other words, it would not focus solely on soft power, as circumstances and situations might necessitate the use of hard power. She added that she and her administration believed American leadership was always essential, and therefore, hard power should not be disregarded when necessary in implementing foreign policy. This approach by the Secretary of State was also endorsed by the President himself, who wrote in Foreign Affairs magazine, in an article titled "Renewing American Leadership," that the emerging challenges in the international security environment, across various levels, necessitate a reassessment of the United States' foreign policy, adopting more prudent policies than those pursued during the administration of President George W. Bush. By encouraging a shift from a logic of power for its own sake to a logic of needing to engage with others. President Obama considered that existing threats required multilateral international cooperation to confront them. Accordingly, the Obama administration issued National Security Strategies for the years 2010, 2012, and 2015, all of which considered that there was a need to reconsider the foundations upon which American foreign policy was built during the administration of President George W. Bush, by implementing other policies more appropriate for dealing with the new security environment that the international arena witnessed after the events of September 11, 2001.

Some of the most significant changes that the United States witnessed during the Obama administrations were: **(Belkacem, 2016, p. 77)**

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1) The trade deficit is rising
2) The public debt increased from about $14.3 trillion in 2008 to $20.1 trillion in 2011. Then it developed and reached $31.7 trillion in 2022.
3) Escalating Russian competition
4) Escalating Chinese competition

While the American focus was on: **(Belkacem, 2016, p. 77)**

a. Further containment of Russia, especially after Russia used the military solution in managing the conflict with Georgia, then the military solution in managing the situation in Syria in 2011, and then the military solution in managing the Ukraine issue by annexing the Crimean Peninsula.

b. Openness to dialogue with China, especially in the wake of successive crises in the South China Sea region during the Obama administration.

c. Further dialogue with NATO

d. Opening up to dialogue with some Asian countries, specifically Japan and India, in addition to Australia, within the framework of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue launched in 2007, which has remained effectively frozen.

e. Further change in the Arab region, within the framework of what is known as the Arab Spring, and Syria, Libya and Yemen are evidence of this. Despite the great support for change in the three countries, the management of those files by the United States was with the continuation of instability.

The Obama administration pursued a strategy of simultaneously employing both persuasion and power. Generally speaking, the smart power strategy adopted by the Obama administration in foreign policy starting in 2009 is based on broad principles that include: **(Al-Kaoud & Al-Khafaji, 2021, p. 34)**

1. The need to work on reducing policies of using force proactively and unilaterally with the intention of domination, reducing the excessive tendency towards military intervention in regions of the world, and working to revive and restore the role of alliances and traditional partnerships, while finding formulas for global consensus to develop the necessary creative technologies in dealing with international issues of common threat, such as climate change, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the spread of transnational organized crime.
2. To promote the role of economic development to help the United States reconcile its interests with those of other peoples around the world.
3. Investing in public (people's) diplomacy that focuses less on media attention and is concerned with direct communication, education, and various forms of exchange with other peoples, and which includes and targets civil society.
4. Dealing with the global economic crisis through dialogue, cooperation and partnership.
5. Keeping the US military forces away from any direct, short-term or long-term individual interventions or wars in any region of the world, and replacing them with international interventions based on bilateral or multilateral alliances, and

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proxy wars, as well as employing aircraft to target sources of military threats instead of ground attacks; or what is known in contemporary terminology as smart warfare methods.

The smart power adopted by President Obama's administration is based primarily on what is known as public diplomacy framed by development issues and supported by power in its military dimension (with no exclusion of resorting to its use if necessary); as a practical translation of the change approach on which Obama based his election campaign speech. For this reason, public diplomacy has become the most important tool in the endeavor to restore the international standing that the United States used to occupy; and to deal with international issues that are directly related to American national security, including dealing with the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and even the emergence of both China and Russia as a possible strategic threat in the future. **(Belkacem, 2016, p. 83)**

The "smart power" approach was pursued by President Donald Trump, who focused on the economy and culture while emphasizing that the United States would not hesitate to use military force when necessary, as demonstrated by the military strikes in Syria and elsewhere. In contrast, the presidency of Joe Biden, who took office in 2021, was seen as a return to traditional American institutional practices that prioritize alliances and partnerships over purely economic considerations. Consequently, the Biden administration's approach has moved away from the "smart power" model.

Thirdly - Examples of the United States' practice of smart power

The practical aspect demonstrates the extent to which American administrations have resorted to smart power, in both its soft and hard forms.

The political developments witnessed in the international environment have produced a fact that the United States cannot be effective and continue to control and influence the patterns of the international system through military force alone, because resorting to military force means opening it up militarily to a large number of countries that are in areas of conflict or intersections with the American approach. American military power, no matter how large, remains limited, as it is determined to enter one, two, or even three wars at a time, and not to enter into an endless number of wars, as this is a drain on resources. Let us remember that the events in Iraq and Afghanistan in the first decade of this century caused problems for the American economy.

However, relying solely on soft power is insufficient to achieve the goals of American policy. While this approach has been successful in persuading some countries of the reasons, motives, and objectives behind the policies pursued, it

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cannot achieve its ultimate aim. Therefore, the Obama and Trump administrations shifted from hard power to soft power in response to international transformations that necessitated a reassessment of the power strategy employed. This is not about developing both soft and hard power capabilities, as the United States already possesses both. Rather, the focus has shifted to integrating this power into a clear strategy and utilizing it in international interactions. The international environment cannot tolerate the United States resorting to soft power while neglecting hard power, nor vice versa, a fact recognized by the Obama administration.

The use of soft power in American politics extends back decades, including in US policies toward the Soviet Union, encouraging other nations to abandon support for communism, especially given the appeal of the American model and its marketing to other societies in areas such as public diplomacy, education, the internet, computers, and the acceptance of immigrants and workers. This trend of using soft power continued even after that, and during the administration of George W. Bush, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called for "global idealism," which aimed to actively engage with others, listen to them, and not deviate from the idealistic goals of the American state. Meanwhile, President Obama was explicit in postponing the military option until diplomatic avenues and other means of influence had been exhausted. He called for supporting and encouraging scientific exchange and cooperation in research, striving to achieve food security, energy security, and humanitarian aid, and engaging in dialogue with Iran regarding its nuclear program. That administration did not neglect hard power, and thus adopted the approach of "smart power," which was intended to achieve certain objectives: **(Al-Faisal, 2016)**

1. Achieving economic recovery through an economic plan that includes a stimulus package to address the financial crisis and economic recession that hit the American economy, after President Obama was able to convince Congress to approve a rescue plan for the financial crisis that cost (825) billion dollars.
2. Securing energy sources, given the focus of countries on economic power alongside growth in military power.
3. Confronting major economic powers and blocs by employing multilateral alliances in American foreign policy, through which American control can be extended further.
4. Ending the militarization of foreign policy and restoring the importance of soft power. This was stated by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who called for dedicating more money and effort to developing soft power, as it reduces costs.
5. Maintaining American military superiority, as the American administration has moved towards maintaining the superiority of the armed forces, developing

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their expertise, and building a smart and small army that relies on the technological aspect and advanced programs.

Joseph Nye argues that the most effective strategies for influencing state behavior in today's world require a combination of hard and soft power. He emphasizes the importance of the United States relying on soft power to influence other countries' behavior in a way that secures its interests in the international arena, rather than solely on hard power (in its military and economic forms). He asserts that this combination depends on national security considerations and one's understanding of the international environment and the issues at hand. He states that "smart power" means learning how to better integrate our hard and soft power in the face of existing and anticipated international threats. **(Belkacem, 2019, p. 72)**

In 2008, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), with support from the Star Institute (STER), oversaw a project called the "Smart Power Project," led by Joseph Nye Jr. and Richard Armitage—who served as Assistant Secretary of State in 2001 and is now president of the Armitage International Center, which focuses on international trade development, strategic planning, and problem-solving. The project examined the key contributions that helped shape the concept of smart power and discussed the decline of US international influence due to excessive reliance on military force, proposing alternative approaches. The project produced a report titled "Global Outlook for Top Security Challenges 2008," which concluded that the image and influence of the United States had significantly declined during the early years of the George W. Bush administration. The report argued that the administration needed to shift from projecting fear to instilling optimism and hope by adopting more effective policies and strategies, and that military force alone was insufficient to defend US interests worldwide. The United States has a long history of using both types of power internationally.

The United States has used smart power in the Middle East, including against several countries, as examples, as follows: **(Al-Najm, 2020, p. 64)**

A. Iran: US President Barack Obama announced a new approach to the Iranian nuclear issue, based on postponing the military option and prioritizing direct negotiations to address the crisis. This was part of a new strategy he adopted as a new method for managing outstanding issues. This stemmed from a realistic assessment of the ineffectiveness of using hard power, and that launching a preemptive military strike against nuclear facilities would only delay the nuclear program for years, thus endangering US forces in the region. Therefore, President Obama offered a smart diplomacy approach to dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue, through negotiations to reach a final agreement on the nuclear program.

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Simultaneously, the United States indicated its willingness to impose sanctions on Iran should the agreement fail.

B. Tunisia: The United States chose to deal with the Tunisian events of 2010-2011 in three phases. The first phase was characterized by a media blackout on the events, coupled with calls for strengthening democracy and respecting human rights. In the second phase, as violence escalated in Tunisia at the hands of the authorities, the US administration called for respecting the will of the Tunisian people. The third phase consisted of US support for building a democratic political system based on freedom of expression, political participation, and human rights.

C. Egypt: Egypt was considered among the important countries in American policies in the region due to its weight, location, and proximity to the Zionist entity. The United States sought to maintain its strategic interests in Egypt, represented by (the right of passage for American naval forces to the Suez Canal, the continuation of the peace agreement between Egypt and the Zionist entity, and security cooperation between Egypt and the United States). The first step taken by the American administration towards the events in Egypt in 2011 was the statement by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: that the Egyptian regime was stable and had an opportunity to respond to the demands of the masses. She worked to encourage dialogue between the government and the opposition. However, with the continuation of the protests, the United States began to call for a peaceful transition of power and to work on securing interests in the post-Mubarak era. **(Al-Ardawi, 2018)**

D. Libya, ruled by Gaddafi until 2011, possesses vast oil and gas reserves. Given its proximity to Europe, the outbreak of protests and Gaddafi's brutal crackdown prompted the United States and NATO to use force to overthrow his regime. This included supporting Libyan activists against Gaddafi and attempting to isolate the regime diplomatically.

E. Syria: Syria became a crucial element in US policy after 2011 because it witnessed the outbreak of demonstrations and the regime's use of force, which accelerated the entry of regional and international actors into the internal conflict that escalated significantly over the years. After years of declaring a desire to overthrow the Syrian regime, the US shifted away from this objective, primarily due to Russia's presence and the fear of extremist groups seizing power. Furthermore, the United States was unwilling to expand its presence and incur additional costs in Syria. It resorted to calling for a peaceful transition and imposing economic sanctions, which were expanded under President Trump.

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F. In general, there are other applications of smart power, including dealing with asymmetric security threats such as climate change and international economic problems, and working to prevent the proliferation and then gradually eliminate weapons of mass destruction. This approach has led the US administration to further reduce its global military presence and to increasingly rely on public diplomacy.

Conclusion:

Resorting to smart power, that is, combining soft and hard power in foreign policy, is one of the requirements of the modern era, given that the international system has witnessed important global transformations, and competition within it has escalated to a level that sometimes reaches the highest level in international relations.

The smart power strategy adopted by the United States in its foreign policy after President Barack Obama took office in 2009 is considered a combination of soft power and hard power. This approach reflects the difficulty of achieving desired results using either soft power alone or hard power alone.

The administration of President George W. Bush resorted to greater use of hard power globally, causing negative consequences for American policy and prompting powers such as Russia to launch programs that rival those of the United States.

Soft power is useful in persuading other countries to act in accordance with what the United States wants, and hard power is useful in forcing other countries to respond, and each is based on the existence of great tools that the country possesses.

We conclude from the following:

1) Power is an option in American politics, as it is a type of traditional culture alongside pragmatism, consumerism, and individualism.

2) Soft power relies on cultural, economic, humanitarian, scientific, and diplomatic choices, and the United States is not far removed from these tools.

3) Hard power depends on military power, and the United States is the strongest country in the world militarily.

4) Smart power is a combination of soft and hard power in use, as long as the international environment is undergoing important transformations that necessitate resorting to smart power.

5) The events of 2011 in the Middle East are not far removed from the presence of American influence, and smart power was used in them.

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