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### Is Chaos in the Middle East Largely the Fault of U.S. Policy?

The argument of who is at fault of the tensions in the Middle East over the recent decades is widely debated among politicians and historians today. The blame among these debates is often placed upon US policy, more specifically the policies produced by the Obama administration as the conversation develops. While arguments made by Elliot Abrams have been made in support of the argument that the Obama administration is responsible for the hostile tensions, the lack of depth in his claims and the counter argument produced by national correspondent Jeffery Goldberg have proven this argument as insufficient.

To understand the modern tensions in the Middle East, the history of the region must also be considered. The division caused by ethnonationalism is largely at play in terms of rising tensions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, both externally and internally, for example tensions between the Muslim faiths of Sunnis and Shiites are prominent in this region. Developing on religious impact on tensions, interests in implementing either traditionalist governments and fundamentalist governments has caused massive instability and at times war in the region. The inability to settle on a government that has a separation of religion or adoption of religion has created a massive divide amongst religious citizens and the leaders of these states. Another massive historical element to be included in this debate is the role that interference of Great Britain and France has had in the middle east, more specifically towards Arabs who were promised independence following World War I who were inevitably betrayed. All of this to be considered, without the interference of U.S. foreign policy, there are many internal and external elements at play that have caused unstable tensions in the Middle East.

When Obama took office in 2009, these tensions were by no means at ease. Israel and the Gaza-based Hamas were actively engaging in war between each other, a war that is persisting to this day. In fact, it was the policies of the Bush administration that had an impact on this war for by engineering elections that allowed for the Hamas to rise to power in 2006. There was no way that U.S. policy under Obama's administration could have played any part in creating these already active tensions and managed to keep the U.S. out of the matter for, early in his presidency, it was not the top priority to be settled. While it can be argued that his passivity with this war was an addition to it, it was by no means adding fuel to the already burning fire. To continue, Obama's administration also inherited an already developing nuclearizing Iran. However, with his intervention in Iran, his administration was able to create negotiation for a solution to the development to the nuclear issues which had not yet been achieved by the previous commander in chief. His creation of a plan for the issues facing Iran, while mainly rhetoric based, were the furthest the U.S. policy had gone about applying the US in ways that the previous administration simply had not. Similarly, Obama also inherited an unstable, unpredictable relationship with Egypt in which his administration was not the only to maintain a sound affiliation with their military rulers. After evaluation of the Middle East's relationships with the U.S. prior to his inauguration, it is made clear relatively quickly that the actions made

by his administration had little to no influence on the already violent and unstable tensions of this region.

Finally, one cannot solely look at the influence of one leader who was in power for two terms and make a claim of breaking the middle east without the evaluation of the influence of other global leaders and powerhouses. For example, the terror driven in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Saddam Hussain with his rule during his dictatorship in Iraq from 1979 to 2003 simply cannot go unnoticed. With his defiance of UN resolutions, the deaths carried out under his rule of over half a million people, and dozens of human rights violations resulted in mass terror in the region and mistrust of Iraq on a global level. Other leaders responsible for much more chaos that developed in the Middle East mentioned are George W. Bush, President Gamel Abdel Nasser, Ruhollah Khomeini, and others. To claim that the influence of the Obama Administration over the course of 2009 to 2016, mainly in its passiveness, was more effective in disrupting the region and keeping it from being peaceful is a blatantly underdeveloped and uneducated argument.

Obama's administration by no means created peace in the middle east, and his claims to have personal knowledge rooted in his own experience of Islam between three regions may not have been fully matched by action with his policies. However, historically, peace may not have been possible for the middle east by means of his administration without first ensuing more chaos and destruction. With what I have presented to you, I find that the argument that he was the man who broke the middle east as inaccurate and unjustified.