

Abstract:

The researcher's goal was to present a picture of the variety of responses on the part of the United States towards the policies of others, through the case studies of three Middle Eastern countries: Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. The theoretical framework is that of dependency theory, which divides the world into two categories, the center and the periphery. Countries of the global center possess the attributes of economic and military power, whereas those of the periphery, since they are less developed, lack these qualities and are thus placed in a relationship of dependence with the center. In this study, an additional category has been culled from a reading of Immanuel Wallerstein's work, that of the semi-periphery. Countries of the semi-periphery are situated on the continuum between periphery and center, having more of the key economic and military attributes of the former, and less than the latter. This nuanced and more intricate model of dependency theory makes it possible to analyse the differentiated policy of the United States towards the three countries under study. It has acted in the conviction that its strategic interests are best preserved by minimizing the number of actors present in the semi-periphery, and has therefore done what it could to guarantee their continued peripheral status. Given that the key strategic asset of the Middle Eastern region is oil, it is even more essential from the point of view of the US to prevent the ascension of any given actor to semi-peripheral status. To this end, it employed military force against Iraq, precisely because the latter was making a sustained attempt to move from peripheral to semi-peripheral status. Because Saudi Arabia has never made such an attempt, because its investments in the United States are so important, and because of the reinforced presence of US troops in the Arabian Peninsula, a military move against Saudi Arabia is unnecessary. Indeed, Saudi Arabia remains a sure ally of the United States. The case of Iran lies somewhere between the two previously mentioned, that is to say, between the certainty of a military strike based on the attempted move to semi-peripheral status, and the certainty of alliance based on respect for continued peripheral status. Despite Iran's move towards semi-peripheral status, the United States is hesitant regarding the necessary response. The thesis presents a detailed analysis of the cases at hand, in the context of dependency theory and the broadened and more nuanced vision of the periphery.