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The U.S. Decision-Making Process and the Formulation of The American Strategy

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Introduction

American politics under President Donald Trump—particularly during his second term, which began in early 2025—has entered a phase of unprecedented shifts and fluctuations not witnessed since the founding of the Republic. These shifts have manifested in the rapid issuance of executive orders, the president’s disregard for traditional constraints that govern the relationships among the three branches of power, and the rise of a sharp economic and social nationalism tone on the domestic level. In addition to this internal shift, U.S. foreign policy priorities have been redrawn in ways that significantly diverge from many of the classical principles of American diplomacy. The decision-making system in the United States is no longer detached from the dynamics of party-based competition and the influence of lobby groups; rather, it has become a stage for conflicting domestic and international wills—driven by ideological and strategic factors that, in many instances, transcend constitutional texts and congressional procedures. The importance of this research stems from the need to understand the pathways of U.S. decision-making in light of these rapid transformations. Decisions made by the United States—as the world’s leading economic and military power—have far-reaching consequences across different regions and countries, particularly in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Africa. This research therefore aims to explore the institutional mechanisms that shape and guide U.S. decision-making, starting with the relationship among the executive branch, Congress, and the Supreme Court, and extending to the influential role of pressure groups (lobbies). Among these, the American Israel

Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) stands out as a clear exception, reflecting the significant and growing impact of lobbying on highly sensitive political files within the U.S. political arena.

In this context, the research raises a central question: How is U.S. decision-making conducted during Trump's second term? And what are the main characteristics of this process in light of the exceptional transformations witnessed in both domestic and foreign policy?

The research aims to identify and analyse the most significant changes that have affected the mechanisms of legislation and execution over the last five years, and to examine how these shifts have influenced the traditional balance among the constitutional branches—particularly through the extensive use of executive orders and the imposition of tariffs without effective recourse to Congress. The research also sheds light on the role of the AIPAC and other pressure groups, clarifying the mechanisms through which they intervene to support or obstruct legislative and executive decisions, whether through campaign financing or by exerting pressure on legislators and senior officials.

These issues are discussed in the research through three main axes:

First: the rapid transformations in policy during the Trump era.

Second: the institutional roles in shaping American political decision-making.

Third: the influence of the Jewish lobby *AIPAC* on U.S. decision-making.

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First: The Rapid Transformations in Policy During the Trump Era

1. Domestic Policies:

A. The Economy

At the outset of his second term, President Trump began implementing an economic program primarily based on expanding tax cuts and stimulating local production. He called for a permanent extension of the individual tax cuts introduced in 2017, including an increase in family tax exemptions and raising the child tax credit to \$5,000. Trump also proposed new corporate tax cuts, revising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 20%, and reducing it to 15% for companies that export their products domestically. He also pursued protectionist trade policies, as his proposals included the imposition of a 20% global tariff on general imports and a 60% tariff on Chinese imports¹. The direct result of these policies was a 0.3% shrink in the U.S. economy during the first quarter of 2025, due to anticipatory import floods aimed at avoiding the higher customs tariffs². Nevertheless, it was announced that inflation had fallen to 2.4% on an annual basis in March 2025 (described as the lowest level in six months³), an achievement that the White House portrayed as a political success.

¹ "Trump's Proposed Tax Policies: What to Expect for You and Your Business." Cbh.com, Cherry Bekaert, 22 Nov. 2024, www.cbh.com/insights/articles/trump-tax-policy-in-2025-what-to-expect/#:~:text=President,specifically%20the%20Electrical%20Vehicle%20Credit.

² Mutikani, Lucia. "US Economy Shrinks in First Quarter as Tariffs Unleash Flood of Imports." Reuters, 30 Apr. 2025, www.reuters.com/business/stockpiling-ahead-tariffs-likely-hurt-us-economy-first-quarter-202504-30/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%2C%20April%2030%20%28Reuters%29%20,Trump%27s%20often%20chaotic%20trade%20policy.

³ "White House Press Release - America Is Back — but Inflation Is Not | the American Presidency Project." Ucsb.edu, 2025, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/white-house-press-release-america-back-but-inflation-not#:~:text=Today%27s%20new%20Consumer%20Price%20Index,consumer%20prices%20in%20several%20years>

On the other hand, the unemployment rate remained at moderate levels, reaching around 4.0% in January 2025 (the lowest level since the previous May⁴). However, economic analysts warned during the first 100 days of the term that the proposed protectionist pressures could lead to future increases in inflation and unemployment⁵.

B. Immigration

Immigration policies witnessed an unprecedented tightening, as Trump declared a national emergency on the southern border and considered illegal immigration as an “invasion” requiring military measures to protect the border. Based on this premise, military zones were re-established along the border, with around 10,000 soldiers deployed in the southern region, in addition to building new sections of the border wall under massive contracts.

These measures led to a historic decline in the number of detained migrants at the border (interception cases dropped to 7,181 in March 2025, a 95% decrease compared to the same month in 2024). At the level of asylum policy, the “CBP One” application was shut down, and approximately 270,000 pending asylum appointments were canceled, while the “Remain in Mexico” policy was reinstated, returning asylum seekers to Mexico while awaiting decisions on their applications.

⁴ Mutikani, Lucia. "US Job Growth Slows in January; Unemployment Rate at 4.0%." Reuters, 7 Feb. 2025, www.reuters.com/markets/us/us-job-growth-misses-expectations-january-unemployment-rate40-2025-02-07#:~:text=.year.

⁵ Hoff, Madison, and Matthew Fox. "Donald Trump's 100th Day: How Americans Feel about the Economy." Business Insider, 29 Apr. 2025, www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-100th-day-inflation-economy-tariffs-markets-stocks-businesses-2025-4#:~:text=Hard%20economic%20data%20doesn%27t%20reflect,of%20new%20tariffs%20kicked%20in.

These measures led to a widespread state of anxiety among refugees, as tens of thousands remained stranded in Mexico or in other countries, exposed to the risk of deportation or loss of employment. Meanwhile, the administration greatly expanded the detention capacity of deportation centres, with around 50,000 detainees by April 2025, and plans to double that number soon. Family detention centres were reactivated, and military bases (such as Fort Bliss and Guantánamo) were utilized to accommodate large numbers of migrants, in addition to multi-billion-dollar contracts signed with private prison corporations. Reports also emerged of overcrowding and inadequate care in these facilities⁶.

C. Judiciary and Legislation

Trump continued to unleash a wave of conservative judicial appointments. By mid-2025, numerous federal judicial vacancies for key positions had been announced, although the pace was slower than during his first term (46 vacancies compared to approximately 100 in 2017). The nominations included numerous names from the conservative camp, including judges who had previously worked with conservative governors or who had authored research opposing immigration laws⁷.

⁶ “The First 100 Days of the Second Trump Administration: Key Immigration-Related Actions and Developments.” <https://immigrationforum.org/article/the-first-100-days-of-the-second-trump-administration-key-immigration-related-actions-and-developments/>

⁷ Sareen Habeshian. “Trump Begins Nominating Judges.” Axios, 6 May 2025, www.axios.com/2025/05/06/trump-judge-nominations.

No opportunity yet arose to appoint a new justice to the Supreme Court (with no vacancy on a judicial seat); however, it is believed that any future vacancy would likely be filled by a right-leaning nominee, supporting the restriction of abortion rights and the expansion of gun-carrying privileges. In this context, on February 1, 2025, Trump issued an executive order to protect Second Amendment rights, tasking the Attorney General with reviewing all relevant laws and regulations (especially those issued between 2021–2025) that might restrict the right to bear arms, and to propose a plan to overturn them⁸.

Regarding abortion, the president reaffirmed his support for strict laws: although he avoided announcing an explicit federal ban and called for leaving the decision-making to the states (implying that the matter falls under state rights), he indicated in previous statements his readiness to criminalize abortion if deemed necessary. This strong conservative orientation on social issues aligns with a broad campaign to limit individual freedoms through legislation and executive orders, particularly regarding issues such as abortion and bearing arms rights⁹.

⁸ “Protecting Second Amendment Rights.” The White House, 8 Feb. 2025,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/protecting-second-amendment-rights/>

⁹ “Trump May Get Another Chance to Be President. He’s Planning an Aggressive Second Term.” NPR, 30 Apr.

2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/30/1248151906/donald-trump-time-magazine-interview-abortion#:~:text=Trump's%20aggressive%20second%20term%20proposals,if%20he's%20comfortable%20criminalizing%20abortions.>

D. Media and Freedom of Expression

Trump continued to build his hostile strategy toward traditional media and the internet space. He described major media outlets (such as CNN and The New York Times) as enemies of the people, and launched repeated verbal attacks against them, while taking judicial and legislative steps to limit their influence. In January 2025, he issued an executive order titled “Restoring Freedom of Expression and Ending Federal Censorship”, condemning what he called a government conspiracy to pressure social media platforms into deleting or restricting any content deemed oppositional. The order explicitly prohibited any federal official from using government resources to suppress freedom of expression, and requested the Department of Justice to investigate all censorship practices under the previous administration and issue a report regarding them. On the technical side, Trump revisited protections for technology companies regarding legal liability (Section 230), while Congress was urged to tighten rules governing online publishing. He also announced international efforts to pressure the European Union to relax its digital censorship laws, which he viewed as incompatible with his approach to free speech—noting a potential collaboration with American tech companies and his European counterparts.¹⁰

¹⁰ “Trump Signs Executive Order on Free Speech and Censorship - the Free Speech Project.”

The Free Speech Project, 2025, <https://freespeechproject.georgetown.edu/tracker-entries/trump-signs-executive-order-on-free-speech>

Thus, Trump sought to reshape media regulations, emphasizing his increasing personal oversight and the expansion of governmental authority to define online discourse under the pretext of protecting traditional freedom of expression.¹¹

E. Civil Liberties:

In recent months, there has been an intense assault on Affirmative Action and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. On January 20, 2025, Trump issued an executive order titled “Ending Unlawful Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” which in its preamble described DEI initiatives as “ideological, demeaning, unlawful, and in violation of existing civil rights laws.” The order stipulated the cancellation of several previous executive orders (including those from 1994, 2011, and 2014) that had promoted diversity in the workforce and public sector, as well as the 1965 order that formed the legal foundation for equal employment opportunity standards. It further required all federal agencies to terminate hiring and benefits policies based on race, gender, or any other identity category, including within federal contracting programs.¹²

¹¹ Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship.” The White House, 20 Jan. 2025, www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-freedom-of-speech-and-ending-federal-censorship/#:~:text=Section%201,speech%20rights%20of%20American%20citizens.

¹² “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity.” The White House, 22 Jan. 2025, www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/#:~:text=Sec,mandates%2C%20policies%2C%20programs%2C%20and%20activities.

As for minority and marginalized group rights:

Measures during this period included intensified surveillance of individual freedoms, as security and monitoring authorities expanded under the banner of national security. Legal steps were introduced to increase the prosecution of organizations deemed “hostile to national interests,” raising concerns over potential violations of civil liberties and opposition rights.

Regarding LGBTQ+ rights, Trump revoked previous executive orders that had provided protections — including those prohibiting discrimination in healthcare and on the basis of gender identity. One new directive defined sex strictly as a fixed biological classification (male/female), rejecting governmental recognition of gender identity as a valid category.

Additionally, orders were issued to suspend health and social programs aimed at supporting the LGBTQ+ community and to review educational policies that protect LGBTQ+ students from discrimination. Collectively, these actions represented a systematic hostility toward LGBTQ+ rights and provoked strong condemnation from human rights organizations.¹³

¹³ "Overview of President Trump's Executive Actions Impacting LGBTQ+ Health | KFF." KFF, 28 Apr. 2025, www.kff.org/other/fact-sheet/overview-of-president-trumps-executive-actions-impacting-lgbtq-health#:~:text=The%20order%20states%20that%20%E2%80%9CIt,people%E2%80%99s%20health%20are%20as%20follows.

Second: Foreign Policy

A. The Middle East

The Middle East arena witnessed dramatic shifts in Trump's approach. Despite the legacy of his first term (such as relocating the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and brokering the Abraham Accords), the second phase proved more varied and filled with surprises.

The Iranian Nuclear Issue:

Trump announced his readiness to de-escalate tensions and open direct channels with Tehran. In a speech delivered from Saudi Arabia, he stated that he was prepared to forge new partnerships with Iran, even if profound differences remained, affirming his intent to end the conflicts of the past.¹⁴ However, despite this conciliatory tone, he continued pursuing the maximum pressure policy: Iranian oil exports were targeted with measures that drained the country's access to foreign currency — leaving Iran's oil exports nearly at zero.¹⁵

¹⁴ French, Howard W. "What Trump Got Right in the Middle East." Foreign Policy, 16 May 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/16/trump-middle-east-trip-iran-us-foreign-policy/#:~:text=On%20Tuesday%20Trump%20expressed%20his,during%20a%20speech%20in%20Riyadh>

¹⁵ Charles W. Dunne, Trump's Second-Term Foreign Policy: Highly Centralized, and Highly Personal, Arab Center Washington DC., Feb 12, 2025: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/trumps-second-term-foreign-policy-highly-centralized-and-highly-personal/#:~:text=With%20regard%20to%20Iran%2C%20Trump,%E2%80%9D%20This%20is%20similar%20to>

The Issue of Israel:

Relations experienced noticeable tension. Israel's name was absent from the agenda of Trump's first Gulf tour (which included Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates) and he implicitly criticized Netanyahu's positions, while giving greater attention to Gulf leaders. The president notably skipped the traditional visit to Tel Aviv, stating that U.S. policy was no longer to be "copied in alignment" with Israel's preferences. In Gaza, Trump stirred controversy by announcing an undeclared concept: he reiterated the idea of turning Gaza into a free zone under U.S. guarantees for reconstruction — but only after the evacuation of its Palestinian inhabitants (a move that legal experts described as mass expulsion).¹⁶

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates:

Trump leveraged his relations with Gulf leaders, concluding massive investment deals with countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, followed by repeated praise of their rulers. However, unlike in his first term, he did not press seriously for rapid normalization with Israel.¹⁷

Yemen:

During his Gulf tour, Trump announced the resumption of a ceasefire with the Houthis — a move aimed at de-escalating tensions after years of confrontation.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ali Harb, Five key takeaways from US President Donald Trump's Middle East trip, Aljazeera, 16 May 2025: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/16/five-key-takeaways-from-us-president-donald-trump-middle-east-trip#:~:text=On%20Thursday%2C%20Trump%20suggested%20that,say%20amounts%20to%20ethnic%20cleansing>

¹⁷ Ibid

— ¹⁸ Ibid

Syria:

Syria witnessed a surprising development. In Riyadh, President Trump met with the new Syrian president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, expressing readiness to lift all U.S. sanctions on Damascus. He appeared eager to resume trade cooperation and revive investments in the new Syria, despite criticism from Israel, which voiced concern over Washington's renewed ties with the remnants of the Assad regime.¹⁹ At the regional level, Trump continued to scale back U.S.

interventions, publicly declaring that the United States was "not automatically committed" to protecting its allies — a stance consistent with his broader drive to reduce foreign entanglements. A notable example was his now-famous call with the Ukrainian president, conducted outside the framework of formal federal support, during which he urged Kyiv to negotiate. This approach drew sharp criticism for linking security assistance to political outcomes. Ultimately, however, this shift deepened divisions with European partners, who called for tightening sanctions on Russia to compel it toward resolving the Ukrainian conflict.²⁰

B. China

Trump continued his economic confrontation with China. Despite a temporary truce that reduced tariffs on Chinese imports to 10% until August 2025²¹, he maintained an escalatory stance.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Birnbaum, Michael, et al. "Trump, Putin Talk as Ukraine and Europe Push for Immediate Ceasefire." The Washington Post, 19 May 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/05/19/trump-putin-call-ukraine-russia-ceasefire/.

²¹ Lowell, Michael J. "Trump 2.0 Tariff Tracker." Trade Compliance Resource Hub, 16 May 2025, www.tradecomplianceresourcehub.com/2025/05/16/trump-2-0-tariff-tracker/#:~:text=be%20forthcoming,baseline%20reciprocal%20tariff%20rate

During his campaign, he reaffirmed his intention to raise overall import tariffs to 20%, and on Chinese goods specifically to 60% (the highest level in a century.)²² He justified these measures as necessary to protect American industry and promote onshoring of manufacturing, urging major technology companies to relocate production facilities to the United States. This policy spurred massive investments by corporations such as NVIDIA and Hyundai to re-establish domestic production of semiconductors and electronics.²³

On the issue of Taiwan, Trump's administration publicly maintained its strategic ambiguity policy, while reiterating a conditional commitment to defend the island in case of an attack by Beijing. However, several Chinese platforms questioned U.S. intentions after media speculation suggested that Washington might request Taipei to contribute to the American defence budget—a move aligned with Trump's broader "pay-your-share" doctrine.

²² "Trump's Proposed Tax Policies: What to Expect for You and Your Business." Cbh.com, Cherry Bekaert, 22 Nov. 2024, www.cbh.com/insights/articles/trump-tax-policy-in-2025-what-to-expect/#:~:text=President,specifically%20the%20Electrical%20Vehicle%20Credit.

²³ Hoff, Madison, and Matthew Fox. "Donald Trump's 100th Day: How Americans Feel about the Economy." Business Insider, 29 Apr. 2025, www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-100th-day-inflation-economy-tariffs-markets-stocks-businesses-2025-4#--text-.Trump%20delivered%20a%20historic%20economy.

In the realm of cybersecurity and technology, Trump signalled a new focus on strengthening national resilience. In March 2025, he issued an executive order establishing a National Resilience Strategy, aimed at bolstering the capacity of U.S. states and local governments to respond to cyberattacks and natural disasters. The order emphasized upgrading critical infrastructure and enhancing cooperation across agencies, marking a shift in U.S. security priorities toward localized and strategic defences in response to growing cyber threats from competitors such as China and Russia.²⁴

C. Russia and Europe

Trump's administration replaced its previous confrontational stance toward Russia with a relatively conciliatory tone, though the Ukraine file remained a key test for bilateral relations. In mid-May 2025, Trump held a phone call with President Vladimir Putin, focusing on the prospects for a negotiated settlement and ceasefire, in exchange for limited economic concessions to Moscow. However, Vice President Vance cautioned against granting Russia any major concessions—such as recognizing territorial annexations in Ukraine—warning that the U.S. would withdraw from talks if Moscow failed to show flexibility. Meanwhile, European leaders pushed for a firmer approach: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced his agreement with Trump to intensify sanctions pressure on Moscow to compel a settlement.²⁵

²⁴ Cassidy, Susan B. "March 2025 Cybersecurity Developments under the Trump Administration." Inside Government Contracts, 18 Apr. 2025, www.insidegovernmentcontracts.com/2025/04/march-2025-cybersecurity-developments-under-the-trump-administration#-text=%E2%80%9CAchieving%20Efficiency%20Through%20State%20and,%20prioritize%20focus%20and%20spending.

The NATO alliance presented a separate political challenge: The alliance was not mentioned in Trump's first major foreign policy address, and he refrained from calling for further U.S. support at that stage—prompting unease among some European states about Washington's commitment to new collective defence arrangements. Subsequently, however, NATO issued statements reaffirming joint monitoring of security conditions in Eastern Europe, in an effort to offset perceptions of declining traditional U.S. engagement in the region.²⁶

D. Latin America

In Latin America, Trump's policy focused heavily on the issue of immigration. In the early days of his new term, he renewed the national emergency declaration at the southern border, describing migration from Latin America as an "invasion crisis." He launched plans to deport more than one million migrants annually (over three times the previous record) ²⁷ and expanded the legal framework for border enforcement.

²⁵ Birnbaum, Michael, et al. "Trump, Putin Talk as Ukraine and Europe Push for Immediate Ceasefire." The Washington Post, 19 May 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/05/19/trump-putin-call-ukraine-russia-ceasefire/.

²⁶ Charles W. Dunne, Trump's Second-Term Foreign Policy: Highly Centralized, and Highly Personal, Arab Center Washington DC., Feb 12, 2025: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/trumps-second-term-foreign-policy-highly-centralized-and-highly-personal/#:~:text=With%20regard%20to%20Iran%2C%20Trump,%E2%80%9D%20This%20is%20similar%20to>

²⁷ "The First 100 Days of the Second Trump Administration: Key Immigration-Related Actions and Developments." National Immigration Forum, 16 May 2025, <https://immigrationforum.org/article/the-first-100-days-of-the-second-trump-administration-key-immigration-related-actions-and-developments/>

Trump also threatened to impose broad punitive measures against regional governments that refused to repatriate their nationals or failed to cooperate with U.S. security policies.

This included reinterpreting the constitutional “birthright citizenship” clause to deny automatic citizenship to children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants. These policies produced some alignment with certain Latin American governments seeking to contain migration, yet they also provoked fierce criticism from human rights organizations and international advocacy groups.²⁸

E. Africa

In Africa, Trump adopted an extremely minimalist approach. He cut off portions of development and aid funding from the European Union and international community, including large parts of foreign aid agencies such as USAID and the PEPFAR program, which experts predicted could lead to tens of millions of additional infections and a rise in mortality from diseases on the continent. He also eliminated trade exemptions for many African countries and threatened to impose a 10% tariff on all imports from the continent. Analysts noted that these measures could push millions more into extreme poverty by 2030, with setbacks in health, education, and development resources.

²⁸ Tracking Trump and Latin America: Migration—Judge Rules against Use of Alien Enemies Act." AS/COA, May 2025, www.as-coa.org/articles/tracking-trump-and-latin-america-migration-judge-rules-against-use-alien-enemies-act/#:~:text=During%20his%20first%20term%20,with%20his%20requests%20around%20deportation.

At the same time, the Trump administration called for “fair trade” aimed at reciprocal benefits, but in reality, it maintained exchange rules under harsh U.S. terms.

Washington also kept a limited military footprint in hot zones, for example, increasing intelligence coordination on the African coast to combat jihadist groups, but refused wider participation in international peacekeeping missions.²⁹

²⁹ . Bell, Curtis, and Christopher Faulkner. "The "America First" Case for U.S. Engagement in Africa." Foreign Policy, 19 May 2025,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/19/america-first-africa-trump-engagement/>



In light of the profound transformations witnessed in U.S. policy during Donald Trump’s second term, it has become evident that the decision-making process in the United States no longer operates according to the traditional institutional rhythm that had characterized it for decades.

New features have emerged, marked by an excessive and rapid use of executive orders, repeated attempts to bypass Congress and pressure the judiciary, and a noticeable oscillation between confrontational decisions and tactical retreats under the influence of public or judicial scrutiny.

This context reveals that American decision-making is no longer the outcome

of a careful balance among the branches of government, but rather an open arena for the clash of political wills—both domestic and external—accompanied by a growing influence of ideological impulses in shaping the actual direction of policy.

These characteristics raise a central question regarding the nature of the decision-making process in the United States:

How is American decision-making actually conducted?

Is it a strictly institutional process, governed by clear constitutional and legislative frameworks?

Or does it, especially in times of crises and major transformations, become subject to temporary balances between the executive branch and the other institutions of governance, and perhaps even to the influence of populist pressures and private interests?

In the following pages, this study will examine that question in depth—through an analysis of specific models of domestic and foreign policies, and a review of the mechanisms of decision-making as reflected in the interactions between the presidency, Congress, the judiciary, and public opinion.

It will also address the actual roles played by pressure groups (lobbies) in shaping political decisions, with a particular focus on the Jewish lobby(AIPAC), which stands out as a prominent exception in a landscape where the influence of other lobbying groups appears to be waning.

The research will explore how these actors—collectively or independently—have contributed to reshaping U.S. policy during Trump’s second term, and whether these transformations represent a temporary, exceptional course or the beginning of a long-term shift in the structure of American decision-making.

Second: The Institutional Roles in U.S. Political Decision-Making

1. Introduction to the American Political System and the Principle of Separation of Powers

The U.S. political system is founded upon the principle of separation of powers into three complementary branches — legislative, executive, and judicial.

The U.S. Constitution explicitly distributes legislative authority to Congress (which consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate), executive authority to the President, and judicial authority to the federal courts, headed by the Supreme Court.³⁰

This separation ensures that no single branch can acquire absolute power over the others, maintaining a system of mutual checks and balances.

For example, Congress enacts laws, some of which are subject to presidential veto, while in turn, the courts — particularly the Supreme Court — hold the authority to invalidate any law or executive act that violates the Constitution.

The design of the American Constitution is often cited as establishing a system that prevents any individual or group from exercising excessive power, thereby preserving the balance of authority and reciprocal oversight among the three branches of government.³¹

³⁰ "Separation of Powers." LII / Legal Information Institute, 2025, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/separation_of_powers_0#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%9C%20Separation,governments%20into%20these%20three%20branches.

³¹ "Branches of the U.S. Government | USAGov." Usa.gov, 2024, www.usa.gov/branches-of-government#:~:text=Each%20branch%20of%20government%20can,acts%20of%20the%20other%20branches.

2. The Core Institutions in U.S. Decision-Making Process

The President of the United States

The President occupies the apex of executive authority, combining the roles of Head of State and Head of Government.

He is endowed with broad constitutional powers, including the approval and execution of laws, the appointment of senior officials (subject to the Senate's confirmation), and the direction of foreign policy, particularly through the formulation of international agreements — often within the scope of limited treaties that do not require congressional approval.

In addition, the President serves as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, exercises the veto power over legislation passed by Congress³², and issues executive orders to guide the functioning of the federal bureaucracy — within the boundaries set by the Constitution and ratified laws.

In the policymaking process, the President relies heavily on a circle of aides and advisors, notably members of the administration and cabinet officials.

However, the final decision ultimately rests with the President, after considering the perspectives of the various components of the executive branch.³³

³² Ibid

³³ "Explainer: The U.S. National Security Council (NSC)." The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 7 Apr. 2025, www.belfercenter.org/research-analysis/explainer-us-national-security-council-nsc#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Council%20,the%20Council%E2%80%99s%20creation%20in%201947. .

The Vice President of the United States:

The Vice President supports the President's work and holds a formally defined role within the American political system. According to the Constitution, the Vice President serves as the President of the Senate and may cast a vote only to break a tie among the members of the chamber. The Vice President is also prepared to assume the presidency in the event that the office becomes vacant for any reason.

In practice, the Vice President is often devoted to advisory and diplomatic tasks that assist the President and may be assigned specific issues or special missions according to the needs of the administration. However, the Vice President's constitutionally defined powers are essentially limited to presiding over Senate sessions and breaking electoral ties in the Senate.³⁴

National Security Council (NSC):

The National Security Council is a senior advisory body within the executive branch, established in 1947 under the National Security Act. Its purpose is to coordinate security, defence, and foreign policies among the specialized agencies and represent them before the President.

The Council is primarily composed of senior executive officials (in their capacity as legal members) such as the Vice President and the Secretaries of State, Defence, Energy, and Treasury, in addition to the National Security Advisor and senior White House staff.

³⁴ Branches of the U.S. Government | USAGov." Usa.gov, 2024, www.usa.gov/branches-of-government#:~:text=%2A%20President%20,be%20approved%20by%20the%20Senate.

The Council prepares recommendations for the President on security matters and conducts crisis studies during coordinating meetings that include representatives from various departments and agencies. It operates through specialized committees that present and compare alternative options, enabling the President to make decisions based on the best available information. Notably, the NSC develops the President's policies (particularly in foreign and defence affairs) without directly implementing them, overseeing the coordination of efforts among relevant entities and ensuring their contribution to strategic planning.³⁵

Congress (House of Representatives and Senate):

Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government, deriving its powers from Article I of the U.S. Constitution. It is composed of two chambers: the House of Representatives, which represents the population proportionally based on the number of residents in each state, and the Senate, in which each state is represented by two members regardless of its size.

Congress holds the authority to enact binding laws and to fund government operations through approved budgets, in addition to its oversight powers over the executive branch. It has the right to hold hearings and investigations into the implementation of policies and laws, and it exercises the power of impeachment over certain officials. No final law can be enacted without passage in both chambers and the President's signature, or a two-thirds vote to override a presidential veto.

³⁵ Ibid

The House and Senate work collaboratively in the legislative process, though each chamber has its own specific responsibilities: the House holds authority over the budget and internal audits of the executive branch, while the Senate has the power to ratify appointments, international agreements, and war treaties.³⁶

Cabinet Departments (State, Defence, Justice):

The Department of State is the United States' principal agency for implementing foreign policy. It is considered the primary diplomatic arm of the presidency, and its head (the Secretary of State) serves as the President's chief advisor on diplomatic affairs. The department provides reports and analyses on global developments and proposes policy options to the President regarding international relations. It also represents the United States in international organizations and with other countries. Its work includes protecting American interests abroad, facilitating international trade, and providing foreign assistance in accordance with the goals of presidential policy.

The Department of Defence (The Pentagon) is the U.S. government agency responsible for formulating and executing the country's military policies. It encompasses six branches of the armed forces (the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and, in certain cases, the Coast Guard) under the supervision of a senior-level Secretary of Defence.

³⁶ "About Congress | U.S. Capitol - Visitor Center." Visitthecapitol.gov, 2025, www.visitthecapitol.gov/explore/about-congress#:~:text=Article%20I%20of%20the%20United,oversight%20of%20the%20executive%20branch.

The Secretary, as a member of the National Security Council, implements the President's orders in his role as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and develops defence plans to safeguard national security. The department's official mission is to provide the military capability necessary to deter war and ensure the security of the nation.

The Department of Justice represents the executive branch in upholding the law and overseeing judicial enforcement. Headed by the Attorney General, it is responsible for enforcing federal laws and defending the interests of the United States in the courts. Its duties include combating organized crime and both domestic and international terrorism, supervising major criminal cases, and protecting citizens' rights under federal law.

A previous strategic report noted that the department works to enforce the law, safeguard U.S. interests, ensure public security against internal and external threats, provide unified leadership to prevent crime, and pursue fair and just accountability.

Intelligence and Security Agencies (CIA, FBI, NSA):

The U.S. intelligence and security agencies play an integrated role in providing decision-makers with the intelligence and oversight necessary to protect national security.

The **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)** is responsible for collecting and analysing intelligence from abroad, with a particular focus on human intelligence (HUMINT) related to foreign states and organizations.

It concentrates on foreign national security matters and supplies decision-makers with actionable intelligence regarding adversaries' intentions and capabilities. According to its official statements, the CIA is prohibited from

collecting information on U.S. citizens.³⁷

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** serves as the principal domestic law enforcement agency and also functions as a domestic intelligence service. It plays a leading role in countering internal threats such as terrorism, organized crime, and local espionage. Following the events of September 11, 2001, its mission expanded to include combating cyberterrorism and extremist organizations.³⁸

The **National Security Agency (NSA)** is responsible for collecting and analysing signals intelligence (SIGINT). The NSA provides decision-makers and U.S. military forces with intelligence on communications and signals from foreign nations and military networks, with the goal of supplying critical information to defend the country and protect its global objectives. The agency emphasizes delivering foreign signals intelligence to U.S. policymakers and military leaders.³⁹

³⁷ How Does the FBI Differ from the Central Intelligence Agency? | Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016, www.fbi.gov/about/faqs/how-does-the-fbi-differ-from-the-central-intelligence-agency#:~:text=The%20CIA%20and%20FBI%20are,of%20where%20they%20are%20located.

³⁸ Zachary Laub, The FBI's Role in National Security, June 21, 2017, Council on Foreign Relations: <https://www.cfr.org/background/fbis-role-national-security#:~:text=The%20Federal%20Bureau%20of%20Investigation,the%20September%2011%2C%202001%2C%20attacks>

³⁹ "National Security Agency/Central Security Service > Signals Intelligence > Overview." Nsa.gov, 2025, www.nsa.gov/Signals-Intelligence/Overview#:~:text=NSA%C2%A0is%20responsible%20for%20providing%20foreign,our%20nation%20into%20foreign%20adversaries.

All of these agencies perform an advisory and indirect operational role in supporting national security and political decision-making. They provide reports and forecasts that guide the President, Vice President, and Cabinet members in shaping domestic and foreign policies in ways that serve national security interests.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court represents the highest judicial authority in the United States, overseeing constitutional compliance in legislation and government policies. It is entrusted with interpreting federal laws and executive actions, and adjudicating disputes that arise around them. The Court serves as the guardian of constitutional principles and individual rights, acting as the nation's ultimate judicial body to ensure that the actions of Congress and the Administration comply with constitutional provisions. Its role is central because it possesses judicial review powers, enabling it to invalidate any law or executive action deemed unconstitutional. In this way, the Court plays a decisive role in safeguarding rights and ensuring the living application of the Constitution.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The Court and Constitutional Interpretation - Supreme Court of the United States."

SupremeCourt.gov, 2025,

www.supremecourt.gov/about/constitutional.aspx#:~:text=The%20complex%20role%20of%20the,w hose%20broad%20provisions%20are%20continually.

The nature of the relationship between these institutions:

The rules of mutual oversight stipulate that each branch has the ability to obstruct or amend the decisions of the other branches in order to prevent any single branch from monopolizing power. For example, the president can use the veto power against laws passed by Congress, but Congress can override the veto by a two-thirds majority. Similarly, the Supreme Court holds the authority to nullify any law deemed unconstitutional, while Congress can hold executive officials accountable and impose restrictions on budgetary actions.

The American experience shows that the relationships among these institutions range between cooperation and competition. On major national issues (such as national security) efforts often complement one another, as seen in the work of the National Security Council or joint congressional committees coordinating policies. However, political conflicts over the limits of authority continue to arise, especially when partisan affiliations differ or when one branch is led by the ruling party.

Recent research indicates that disputes among the branches over the distribution of constitutional powers have regularly emerged throughout the history of the modern Congress, as they have across American history as a whole.⁴¹ In other words, no authority is complete without being subject to the checks of others; such conflicts and mutual oversight are what have preserved the balance of power over time.

⁴¹ Matthew E. Glassman, Separation of Powers: An Overview, Congressional Research Service, January 8, 2016:

<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R44334.pdf#:~:text=Contemporary%20Issues%20Clashes%20between%20the,they%20have%20throughout%20American%20history>

A historical overview of the evolution of these roles since World War II:

The institutions of American decision-making underwent major transformations after World War II. Throughout the twentieth century, the president increasingly assumed a central and expanding role at the expense of Congress. This began early on, as several presidents sought greater executive oversight over the budget and foreign policy, and concluded international agreements (treaties implemented through executive orders) without prior approval from Congress.

When the United States emerged after the war as the world's leading power, Congress established in 1947 the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the modern defence structure (the Pentagon) to coordinate between diplomatic and military policies. Nevertheless, in the post-war era, the struggle over authority escalated: Congress has not formally declared war since 1945, and administrations have relied on broad authorizations for the use of force (such as the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) against terrorism) to conduct numerous military operations beyond the scope of an explicit constitutional declaration.

In the 1970s, a major shift occurred following the Watergate scandal, which exposed the misuse of presidential powers. In response, Congress enacted a series of reforms aimed at limiting executive authority. Among these was the War Powers Act (1973), which required the president to seek congressional approval to deploy armed forces abroad for more than 90 days. Congress also created the Congressional Budget Office to reclaim budgetary authority and imposed restrictions on the allocation of public funds.

Intelligence scandals likewise compelled Congress to impose new oversight mechanisms on agencies such as the CIA and the FBI, after unconstitutional abuses by those agencies came to light during the 1960s and 1970s. However,

these reforms did not entirely eliminate the influence of the executive branch; for instance, the War Powers Act has remained weak in its enforcement.⁴²

In the following decades, the dynamics of balance continued to shift according to the global and partisan context. In the 1980s, Republican administrations—such as that of Ronald Reagan—sought to restore strong presidential influence in national security and the expansion of military power, while the Iran–Contra affair led to congressional investigations into the extent of presidential authority in conducting covert programs.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a more cooperative atmosphere emerged, marked by certain compromises between the president and Congress in confronting competing centres of influence—such as budgetary disputes and the bureaucracy of the welfare state. Yet major events reopened the debate. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Congress passed authorizations for military action, allowing presidents and the Pentagon to engage in foreign wars whose effects persisted for decades without formal declarations of war.

Judicial debates over constitutional oversight—such as challenges to the Affordable Care Act of 2010—demonstrated that the Supreme Court remains the ultimate arbiter in narrowing breaches caused by unprecedented expansions of executive authority.

⁴² "Restraining the Imperial Presidency." Digital History, 2021, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3354#:~:text=Over%20the%20course%20of%20the,a%20dominant%20relationship%20over%20Congress. Accessed 20 May 2025.

In the end, modern American history confirms that the struggle among the branches of power has evolved through alternating phases of expansion and regulation: some events (like wars and crises) have strengthened the executive hand, while others (such as scandals and abuses) have restored congressional and judicial powers within the constitutional balance.⁴³

Analysis of the Trump Administration (2017–2025):

President Donald Trump exhibited a pattern in which executive powers tended toward high centralization and a reliance on executive orders to bypass legislative and institutional constraints. For example, in the first one hundred days of his second presidential term (2025), Trump signed only five laws while issuing around 140 executive actions (orders and administrative directives). Policy analysts note that this heavy reliance on executive orders reflected Trump’s vision of a more dominant presidency, often applied in areas such as immigration, elections, and others. He also announced policies without prior congressional approval, used tariff powers without adequate consultative discussions with lawmakers, and allowed his administration to involve figures outside the traditional elite in senior government roles—for instance, appointing Elon Musk to lead a government reorganization program without Senate confirmation hearings—prompting criticism that he was “dominating” on powers constitutionally reserved for Congress in budgetary management.

⁴³ Jason Pye, How Congress Enabled an Imperial Presidency, The Independent Center, February 17, 2025, <https://www.independentcenter.org/articles/the-dangers-of-an-imperial-presidency#:~:text=,continued%20by%20Obama%20and%20Trump>

Trump also reshaped his administration through dismissals of leaders in independent agencies, invoking the “unitary executive” theory to enforce greater loyalty, despite objections that such actions conflicted with laws protecting certain positions from arbitrary removal. Meanwhile, disputes arose between the White House and the judiciary over the legality of several executive orders (such as the travel ban on citizens of certain countries) leading the Supreme Court to overturn or demand revisions to some of them. Overall, Trump largely implemented his political agenda through executive orders and decisions made independently of Congress. His partisan control (via the Republican Party) over key Washington institutions reduced the extent of parliamentary confrontation in many policy areas.⁴⁴

Partial Comparison with the Biden Administration:

In contrast to Trump’s style, President Joe Biden’s administration was characterized by a more traditional approach to decision-making and a focus on passing major legislation through Congress. While Trump (up to early 2025) relied on executive orders to an unprecedented degree, Biden found himself compelled to coordinate with members of Congress—including those from his own party—to pass his large-scale economic and social programs. For example, during his first hundred days, Biden signed only 11 laws, but they introduced major changes—such as the Economic Recovery Act—while he issued 42 executive orders.

⁴⁴ "So Far Congress Has Stayed out of Trump's Way, but Pressure Tests Lie Ahead." NPR, 30 Apr. 2025, www.npr.org/2025/04/30/g-s1-63360/first-100-days-congress-acquiesces-to-trump-but-pressure-tests-ahead#:~:text=Trump%20has%20taken%20about%20140,his%20entire%20time%20in%20office.

These figures indicate a relative decline in the use of executive orders compared to his predecessors, as Biden himself stated that he preferred consultation and legislative debate. Biden also worked to strengthen the role of intelligence and security agencies through visits and consultations, after a period of strained relations under Trump. In foreign affairs, Trump had returned to a unilateral approach, whereas Biden emphasized consultation with allies and international organizations.

Overall, a broad view suggests that the Biden administration sought to restore balance in the interaction among the branches of power—promoting greater partnership with Congress and expert advisers—in contrast to his predecessor’s heavy reliance on executive action and unilateral decision-making.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Breslow, Jason. "Biden's 1st 100 Days: A Look by the Numbers." NPR, 27 Apr. 2021, www.npr.org/2021/04/27/988822340/bidens-1st-100-days-a-look-by-the-numbers#:~:text=Bills%20signed%20into%20law%3A%2011.



The process of political decision-making in the United States cannot be confined solely to formal institutional frameworks; pressure groups (foremost among them the Jewish lobby) play a significant role in shaping American policies, particularly regarding Middle Eastern affairs.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is considered one of the most prominent of these groups. It exerts its influence through funding electoral campaigns, guiding foreign policy, and affecting appointments of officials across various administrations.

This influence became particularly evident during the administration of President Donald Trump, when decisions such as moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and withdrawing from the Iran nuclear agreement aligned closely with the interests and orientations of the Jewish lobby.

In the following sections, we will examine in detail the extent of the Jewish lobby's involvement in the Trump administration, focusing on its mechanisms of influence and the impact of its actions on U.S. policy in the region.

Third: The Influence of the Jewish Lobby (AIPAC) on U.S. Decision-Making

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is considered one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Washington, exerting a major influence on the shaping of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. It has the ability to secure the passage of numerous pro-Israel bills through Congress, often with near-unanimous support. The lobby has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to support pro-Israel candidates in U.S. elections, while its wealthy backers and the Christian–Jewish pro-Zionist public work through every possible means to ensure that Washington remains aligned with Tel Aviv.

According to a 2010 analysis by Mitchell Bard, the Arab lobby remains less organized and cohesive than the Jewish lobby. As a result of AIPAC's strength, security support for Israel has remained a top priority for most U.S.

administrations—whether in the form of annual military aid (about \$3 billion) or consistent political backing in international forums.

AIPAC's influence has been clearly evident in several previous administrations. Prior to the Iraq War in 2003, American Jewish newspapers reported that the organization would support any request by President George W. Bush to use force against Baghdad, and it exerted pressure on members of Congress behind the scenes to build a coalition in favour of the military strike.

During President Obama's administration, AIPAC called for the imposition of harsher sanctions on Iran, although the U.S. administration eventually refrained from supporting some of these proposals under presidential pressure.

In contrast, during Trump's first term, the lobby's unconditional support for Israel helped facilitate the announcement of the U.S. Embassy's move to Jerusalem and the expansion of Washington's security assistance to Tel Aviv.

This influence also extended to the 2016 elections, when AIPAC activists

awaited Trump's address at the organization's policy conference with great anticipation.

Upon assuming office, Trump viewed unwavering support for Israel as the safest political stance, and he maintained this course by relocating the embassy and bolstering Israel's position in regional negotiations.⁴⁶

Trump's second term further strengthened AIPAC's influence through the formation of an administration team composed almost entirely of figures aligned with Israel. Trump appointed officials with close ties to the lobby, including National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, who received \$235,966 from pro-Israel groups, and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Elise Stefanik, who received over \$917,000 from the same networks.

Analysts note that these appointments reflect a clear inclination to maintain Trump's pro-Israel foreign policy, coupled with an escalatory stance toward Iran. At the same time, the Trump administration persisted in its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and its prioritization of Israel's security agenda, aligning closely with AIPAC's objectives, which have consistently emphasized eliminating the threats posed by Hamas and Hezbollah to ensure Israel's security.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Daphne Psaledakis and Simon Lewis, US to fold Palestinian affairs office into embassy in Israel, Reuters, May 6, 2025: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-merge-palestinian-affairs-office-with-israel-embassy-says-state-department-2025-05-06/#:~:text=Bruce%20said>

⁴⁷ Edibe Beyza Caglar. "AIPAC Blueprint All over Trump's New Cabinet." Trtworld.com, TRT WORLD, 15 Nov. 2024, www.trtworld.com/magazine/aipac-blueprint-all-over-trumps-new-cabinet-18232443.

Since 2020, the Jewish lobby has undertaken efforts to promote major arms deals in favour of Israel. The U.S. Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced the State Department's approval of a \$7.41 billion arms package, which included the delivery of thousands of GBU-39 Small Diameter Bombs (SDBs), hundreds of MK-82 bombs, approximately 3,000 AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, and hundreds of JDAM guidance kits to convert conventional bombs into GPS-guided munitions.

Congress approved the deal despite attempts by several Democratic lawmakers to restrict such exports — a development that demonstrates AIPAC's ability to secure these transactions through effective pressure, both via its connections with legislators and by encouraging support from the executive branch, notably the Trump administration, which often bypassed traditional oversight procedures on arms sales.⁴⁸

AIPAC's role did not stop at facilitating governmental approvals alone; it also extended to strengthening frameworks of industrial cooperation between the United States and Israel. The lobby supported joint projects such as the "Iron Dome," which exemplifies the integration of military and technological expertise between the two sides: Israel benefited from advanced American technologies in detection and missile guidance, while American manufacturers provided software and control systems that allow precise adjustment of defensive missile performance, which led to the development of a high-efficiency defence system for confronting guided missiles and short-range ballistic threats.

⁴⁸ "U.S. Approves \$7.41B Sale of Missiles, Smart Bombs to Israel." DefenseMirror.com, 2025, www.defensemirror.com/news/38790/U_S_Approves_7_41B_Sale_of_Missiles_Smart_Bombs_to_Israel.

In addition, AIPAC played a central role in shaping U.S. arms-export policies, protecting them from any restrictions or proposals that might constrain relations with Israel or friendly states. Despite opposition from some congressional Jews — such as attempts to ban exports of Hellfire missiles, SDBs, or JDAMs — these initiatives encountered strong resistance from the majority, which demonstrates the lobby’s ability to prevent any substantive legislative accountability. This influence enabled American defence companies to maintain a strong presence in the Israeli market and to develop a model of multi-million-dollar backing for their profits, while new types of military deals continued to be launched without meaningful political restraints.⁴⁹

Other Lobbies and Congress:

Unlike AIPAC, most other lobbying groups — such as the Arab lobbies or advocates of the Palestinian cause — lack a unified membership base or coherent goals comparable to the strength of the Jewish lobby. An analysis by the Middle East Research Project noted that the Arab lobby suffers from a lack of domestic grassroots support within the United States and remains divided between issues such as oil interests and the Palestinian question. Moreover, financial contributions (such as Gulf princes donating around \$20 million each to universities like Georgetown and Harvard) far exceed AIPAC’s annual budget of approximately \$60 million.

⁴⁹ Misztal, Blaise, and Ari Cicurel. “President Trump Must Use Every Tool to Speed up Arms for Israel.” Breaking Defense, 25 Feb. 2020. <https://breakingdefense.com/2025/02/president-trump-must-use-every-tool-to-speed-up-arms-for-israel/>

Nevertheless, efforts by pro-Palestinian or generally Arab-oriented lobbies remain scattered and of limited impact, while AIPAC continues to mobilize its electoral base and donors during every election season to advance its policy objectives.⁵⁰

As for Congress, during Trump's second term it largely remained loyal to him, with Republicans maintaining control of both chambers; a factor that limited the influence of opposing efforts. Although some Democratic lawmakers publicly expressed objections to White House policies, their impact remained largely symbolic.

For instance, in May 2025, members of the Democratic minority introduced joint resolutions to block arms sales to the United Arab Emirates over its alleged support for forces involved in Darfur. However, the U.S. administration bypassed this objection by directly notifying Congress of the deal.⁵¹ Similarly, during Trump's first term, Congress had voted to halt U.S. support for the war in Yemen, but Trump exercised his veto power to block the measure.

⁵⁰ "The Arab Lobby." Hudson Institute, 7 May 2025.

<https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/the-arab-lobby#:~:text=In%20describing%20AIPAC%E2%80%99s%20Arab%20cousin%2C%20Funded%20by%20oil%20companies%2C%20the>.

⁵¹ Meeks. "Meeks Blasts Trump Administration for Bypassing Congress on UAE Arms Sale, Announces Joint Resolutions of Disapproval." House Foreign Affairs Committee, 13 May 2025.

<https://democrats-foreignaffairs.house.gov/2025/5/meeks-blasts-trump-administration-for-bypassing-congress-on-uae-arms-sale-announces-joint-resolutions-of-disapproval#:~:text=Washington%2C%20DC%20%E2%80%93%20Representative%20Gregory,to%20block%20the%20weapons%20sales>.

These examples demonstrate that while Congress occasionally expresses symbolic opposition, the lack of consensus and the difficulty of overriding presidential vetoes render its efforts largely ineffective.⁵² In short, Trump's interests — along with those of his supporters — have to a significant extent dominated the decision-making process, leaving rival lobbies or obstructive parliamentary actions on the side-lines with minimal influence.

Fourth: The History of Sanctions on Syria and the Role of the U.S. President in Lifting Them

Since the late 1970s, the United States has pursued a policy of economic and targeted sanctions against Syria, which have resulted in broad and devastating restrictions on many vital sectors within the country. Syria was placed on the U.S. list of "State Sponsors of Terrorism" in December 1979, due to its military intervention in Lebanon and its material and intelligence support for armed groups such as Hezbollah. This designation enabled the U.S. president to issue executive orders freezing Syrian financial assets, banning arms exports to Damascus, and prohibiting direct economic assistance.⁵³

In 2003, Congress expanded this legal framework through the enactment of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, which imposed even stricter restrictions on trade and foreign investment with Damascus — except for what Washington deemed necessary for humanitarian purposes.

⁵² Patricia Zengerle, Defying Congress, Trump sets \$8 billion-plus in weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Reuters, May 25, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/defying-congress-trump-sets-8-billion-plus-in-weapons-sales-to-saudi-arabia-u-idUSKCN1SU25O/#:~:text=It%20is%20not%20the%20first,but%20Trump%20vetoed%20the%20resolution>

⁵³ "SYRIA | Global Sanctions." Global Sanctions, 12 June 2025, globalsanctions.com/region/syria/

By the mid-2000s, Syria had entered an almost complete economic isolation, forcing its authorities to rely on neighbouring countries as alternative channels for importing essential goods and medical supplies.⁵⁴

1. Sanctions in the Pre-2000 Era

The years between 1979 and 2000 witnessed a gradual evolution in both the nature and severity of U.S. sanctions on Syria. Initially, American measures were limited to freezing Syrian government assets and blocking official channels for military trade. However, with the escalation of the Lebanese crisis during the 1980s and Washington's accusation that Damascus was pursuing a "strategy of subversion" through regional proxies, the scope of sanctions expanded to include an almost total ban on foreign aid and on the export of dual-use technologies, in addition to restrictions on international financial transfers.

The United States was not alone in this approach; the European Community (later the European Union) also imposed, in 1986, a comprehensive package of sanctions against Damascus. These included bans on the import of new weapons and the suspension of high-level official visits. These restrictions remained in place until the mid-1990s, when efforts to normalize relations with Syria led to their gradual lifting.

⁵⁴ "H.R.1828 - 108th Congress (2003-2004): Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003." Congress.gov, 2025, [www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-bill/1828](https://www.congress.gov/bills/108/house-bills/1828).

2. The Escalation of Sanctions Since 2011

With the outbreak of the Syrian uprising in 2011 and its transformation into a wide-scale armed conflict, President Obama's administration issued a series of executive orders freezing the assets of regime figures and individuals close to the decision-making circle in Damascus. These measures also included a ban on oil exports and restrictions on the import of services related to the energy sector.⁵⁵

Subsequently, sanctions expanded to target Syria's banking sector, as well as telecommunications and construction companies, rendering most of the population's daily transactions dependent on informal networks of money transfer and smuggling — networks that exposed participants to significant legal risks.

These measures directly disrupted the pharmaceutical market and triggered a sharp surge in inflation, while widespread impoverishment hindered humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts. Even some Lebanese and international platforms refrained from providing direct aid services for fear of secondary sanctions.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Syria: Transition and U.S. Policy." Congress.gov, 2025, www.congress.gov/crs-product/RL33487.

⁵⁶ Syria's post-war economic recovery will require 'substantial' international support, IMF says, The Associated Press, June 11, 2025: <https://apnews.com/article/syria-economy-imf-sanctions-reconstruction-f4f28e14b13ba7284142f6bcf6f84617>

3. The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act and Its Mechanisms:

The passage of the “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act” in 2019 marked a qualitative shift in the U.S. sanctions strategy against Syria. The law established two main components: a. Secondary Sanctions: These target any individual or entity, domestic or international, that engages economically with Syrian government institutions or their allies, primarily Russia and Iran. This broadens the scope of sanctions beyond direct Syrian actors, aiming to isolate the regime economically. b. Temporary Waivers: The President or Secretary of State can grant temporary exemptions from sanctions for up to six months in cases where there are serious negotiations to cease violence and protect civilians. The law came into effect on June 17, 2020, in addition to a series of executive orders that were subsequently issued to ensure the precise implementation of its provisions. It also includes a requirement for periodic reports to Congress on the progress of the negotiation process and the extent to which the parties are complying with civil protection requests.⁵⁷

4. President Trump’s Role in Lifting Sanctions:

In May 2025, during his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his intention to implement the exemptions stipulated in the “General License 25” issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on May 23, which pertain to secondary sanctions for a period of six months, subject to renewal by a presidential decision or with the approval of the Secretary of State.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ H.R.31 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019." Congress.gov, 2019, [www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/31](https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress-house/31) . Accessed 16 June 2025.

⁵⁸ Sutherland, Callum. "Breaking down Trump's Plan to Lift U.S. Sanctions on Syria." TIME, Time, 14 May 2025, time.com/7285433/trump-united-states-sanctions-syria-what-happens-next/.

Following the announcement, the Syrian pound temporarily witnessed an increase of about sixty percent against the dollar, while Turkish, Emirati, and Saudi companies began sending exploratory delegations to assess reconstruction opportunities, in an indicator of a geographical shift in regional investment trends toward Syria.⁵⁹

5. The Impact of Gulf States and Saudi Challenge:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, played a central role in pushing the Trump administration toward lifting sanctions on Syria, whether through direct diplomatic pressure or by providing financial facilitation for Syria to repay debts to international institutions such as the World Bank. Riyadh considered that the reintegration of Syria economically and regionally would serve the stability of neighbouring countries and limit Iranian expansion. The new relations were also used to pressure other regional parties to cooperate in rebuilding bridges with Damascus.

Most of what was promoted by the official Gulf press regarding this direction was considered part of a broader strategy to restore balance in the Middle East after years of conflict.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ KAREEM CHEHAYEB and BASSEM MROUE, What would lifting US sanctions on Syria mean to the war-torn country?, The Associated Press, May 15, 2025: <https://apnews.com/article/trump-lifting-syria-sanctions-al-sharaa-8bcf421edddad122780a56e7f2b63187>

⁶⁰ ABBY SEWELL, Assad's fall in Syria turned Turkey and Saudi Arabia from rivals to partners. Will it last?, The Associated Press, May 28, 2025: <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-saudi-arabia-syria-assad-cb93fb608dab2864bc7deb6407e8864c>

6. The Role of Turkey and Other States:

Ankara's strategic relations with Syria were clearly reflected when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received President Ahmad al-Sharaa in Istanbul on May 24, 2025, expressing his welcome to the United States' decision to lift the sanctions and pointing out that this step would enable Turkish companies to resume economic cooperation and reconstruction efforts.⁶¹

Despite some Western reservations regarding the increase of Turkish influence in northern Syria following military operations launched by Ankara against the Kurdish People's Protection Units, Turkey quickly moved to open financial channels with Damascus, with support from Qatar and the UAE, which announced humanitarian and investment pledges to finance infrastructure reconstruction projects and employ hundreds of unemployed Syrians.⁶²

⁶¹ Butler, Daren. "Erdoğan Tells Sharaa Turkey Welcomes Lifting of Syria Sanctions." Reuters, 24 May 2025, www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-syrias-sharaa-hold-talks-istanbul-media-reports-say-2025-05-24/.

⁶² Fullerton, Sophie, et al. "Lifting Sanctions Can Supercharge Syria's Liberal Economic Opening." DAWN, 21 May 2025, dawnmena.org/lifting-sanctions-can-supercharge-syrias-liberal-economic-opening/.

Conclusion

After a comprehensive review of the components of the U.S. political system and an analysis of how active institutions interact in decision-making, it can be said that the process of American decision-making is a foundational process in a general framework. However, in reality, it is subject to complex and variable balances that often transcend strict legislative and constitutional rules, especially during times of crises and major transformations.

Research has shown that, despite the clear separation of powers within it, the American system operates through a network of interactive relations between the executive authority (the President and his institutions), the legislative authority (Congress and its chambers), and the judicial authority, in addition to bureaucratic institutions such as the foreign, defence, and national security agencies. These relations do not always function within a stable framework but are shaped according to circumstantial contexts and shifting power balances. During major crises and transformations, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, the Ukraine war, or Middle East tensions, the influence generally tends toward the executive authority, which exploits the flexibility of constitutional frameworks and expands its executive powers under the guise of “necessity,” sometimes diminishing the role of Congress or oversight institutions. Analysis of real cases shows that public and media pressures, particularly with the rise of nationalist or conservative trends, have increasingly played a significant role in guiding decisions, either through direct influence in political discourse or indirect influence on election outcomes and thus on the composition of the ruling elite.

As for the role of lobby groups, research has shown that they are not merely peripheral pressure tools; rather, in many cases, they are active partners in

decision-making, especially in foreign policy, economic issues, and relations with Israel. They possess the ability to influence through political funding, relationships with decision-makers, and the preparation of targeted studies and reports.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that American decision-making is not a closed or strictly legally bound process; rather, it is a dynamic process shaped by the interactions of forces within the American political system and influenced by international and domestic contexts, interests of the elite, institutional and media pressures, and public opinion. Therefore, understanding American decision-making requires multi-level analysis that goes beyond legal frameworks to reading power balances, the interests of actors, and the influence of the broader context.

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