



U.S. Military Capacity Building in the Middle East

Case Studies on Divergent Security Concepts

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction _____	1
Chapter Two: Iran: Stable Partner or Aspiring Hegemon? _____	10
Chapter Three: Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Defense as a Political Tool _____	23
Chapter Four: Egypt: Executors of the Will of the People _____	36
Chapter Five: Israel: Go-It-Alone _____	43
Chapter Six: Yemen: Telephone Diplomacy in a Collapsed State _____	55
Chapter Seven: Summary & Conclusions _____	69
Bibliography _____	74

Chapter One

Introduction to U.S. Capacity Building

“War is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.... War cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense.” ~Carl von Clausewitz

Introduction

The United States’ Government uses the acronym “DIME” to address four main elements of national power: diplomacy, information, military, and economics.¹ Each of these entities is important to holistically evaluate a whole-of-government approach in complex environments. No longer is the United States Government (USG) in the business of “Four-Star Foreign Policy”² where generals and admirals of the strongest military in the world jockey to dictate that sole superpower’s foreign policy. Globalization, multi-national partnerships, scarcity of resources, and fifteen years involvement in two protracted conflicts are making solitary hegemony a thing of the past. In the Obama administration, the United States has been even more reticent to exert its force over areas where diplomatic and military forces would have traditionally been used. In general, the USG plays by the rules and leverages all elements of national power to protect its interests in the world. Outside of the Developed World, however, a balance between the elements of national power is not the norm. In fact, in other regions, one element regulates all others: the military paradigm.

In the Middle East, military power is oftentimes synonymous with political power. Dictatorial, autocratic, and even democratically elected governments throughout the Middle East and North Africa have used a strong, centralized military (à la Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser) to control its public and protect the regime. Occasionally the opposite is true; the regime maintains a

¹ Department of the Army Field Manual 3-05.130, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare*, September 2008, 1-1.

² Diane Priest, “A Four-Star Foreign Policy?” *Washington Post*, September 28, 2000.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2000/09/28/a-four-star-foreign-policy/f9779938-7a88-449f-9f55-84ab020abbd7/>

decidedly weak military because its social contract with society as a welfare state needs little regulation from a strong power, and in having a strong military the possibility of a coup is greater, so the monarch restricts the military powers. Interestingly, it is rare to find a military in the Middle East that actually uses its forces for defense against external threats- the normal function of a ministry of defense. A brief reprieve into any country's military history can ultimately show you why the military was designed and utilized the specific way it is.

Every military is designed for a very specific purpose, and by understanding the nuances between each country's utilization one has the ability to understand that country's diplomatic role as well. As such, being an American diplomat with the Department of the State in the Middle East is myopic if one only understands the normal economic, political, or informational elements of national power without an understanding of how that particular country's military operates. And as a Department of Defense advisor, one cannot understand the military landscape without knowing why that military has been politically limited.

Research Question

The two questions that this thesis seeks to answer are 1) "What is the perceived role of various Middle East militaries by the United States Government?" and 2) "Is that perception ever likened to the reality of our bilateral relationship?" Perceptions do not occur in a vacuum. International press, lawmakers, and domestic lobbying groups all have input into how the U.S. relationship with another country is interpreted. Through press conferences, proposed and codified laws, and lobbyist interaction, the decision-makers in Washington see a facet of the United States' priorities. However, this perception is only one side of the coin.

The second question, whether the country with which the United States is so closely engaged is actually living up to U.S. expectations is the much tougher question to evaluate. For this,

the United States needs boots (and suits)-on-ground. The daily cables and intelligence reports that U.S. diplomats and troops around the world generate help feed the decision-making machine in Washington. When there is cognitive dissonance and U.S. officials find that the country is not living up to its end of the bargain, is when policy must change.

Changing policy is not easy. Change takes patience, persistence, and a lot of lobbying. This lobby is oftentimes completed inside the USG Interagency community, which contains the Department of State (DOS), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Commerce (DOC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and others. Sometimes this lobbying has to be accomplished away from this community. When living in a foreign country far away from Washington D.C., it is easy to be labeled as someone who has “gone native” when trying to communicate new perspectives. But this is exactly what diplomats (foreign service, military, or otherwise) are paid to do; to be the conscientious objector who brings up points that no one else has thought about because they are not seeing things from the tactical perspective. These two research questions are intimately connected, but usually only those who have served in-country have the ability to clearly articulate what is happening. In order to articulate this, some key terms are used in interagency vernacular that are worth defining: capacity building and security assistance.

Definitions

Capacity Building

There are two phrases in the arsenal of the US military-industrial complex that are indelibly linked: *defense of the homeland* and *capacity building*. Although causally associated under the assumption that the development of institutional capabilities will lead to more stability and

ultimately a safer homeland from terrorism, this transitive link substantially fades when it arrives on foreign soil. These phrases have pushed American “security” interests to covering all manners of sins. It has justified profiting from multi-million dollar contracts for Foreign Military Sales, sending troops on continent for training-and-assistance missions with minimal return-on-investment, and establishing infrastructural projects that are seemingly disconnected from the real needs of the indigenous people. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Developing World where institutions have been designed to fail by those in power in order for those in leadership to maintain and wield that power.

Looking at capacity building in a regional frame, a few definitions are needed, and therein rests the problem: the idea of state, capacity, and capacity building are often ill-defined or undefined by international governments and organizations. Sometimes these definitions are too nebulous like the UNDP:

The UNDP defines capacity building as a long-term continual process of development that involves all stakeholders; including ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, professionals, community members, academics and more. Capacity building uses a country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional and resource capabilities. The goal of capacity building is to tackle problems related to policy and methods of development, while considering the potential, limits and needs of the people of the country concerned.³

Other times, the definition can be a little vague, like the U.S. military definition: the ability to maintain and employ a capability with sufficiency over time.⁴ In some manuals, there are examples of over 20 types of security cooperation programs⁵ that run the gamut of capacity building programs, but the term itself is not actually defined. Because of that it, in practice, this buzzword has lost its significance and has come to mean *make them better* or *make them more like us*. What is lost in the vagary of these definitions is the discussion of capacity building *toward a particular end*

³ United Nations Environment Programme, <http://www.unep.org/ietc/Default.aspx?tabid=56256>

⁴ Department of the Army Pamphlet 11-31, *Army Security Cooperation Handbook*, February 2015, 84.

⁵ Department of the Army Field Manual 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*, January 2013, 1-22.

with *buy-in from the local government*. This, in turn, reflects the bureaucratic tendency towards adopting a standard template for addressing diverse issues, rather than focusing on the prime requirement of understanding and resolving the particularities of a specific situation.

The USG's perennial problem with capacity building is that it tries to measure a nation's capability as a projection of itself. With the best intentions, the USG tries to replicate the best parts of its governance in foreign settings. These "best practices" might mean rebuilding a girls' school in Afghanistan, or using a detachment of Special Operations Forces as Train and Assist team of advisors for aiding Syrian rebels. Usually, without a solid understanding of a socio-historic context, these efforts amount to wasting treasure in the most innocuous environments and wasting blood in the most savage.

In a few cases, carefully developed and implemented capacity building projects find solid ground... and then start regressing. The reason for this regression is that the project that was adopted was merely mimicking what these "best practices" ought to look like. This "isomorphic mimicry" is the tendency to introduce reforms that enhance an entity's external legitimacy and support, although it does not demonstrably improve performance.⁶ Before long, the donor organization finds itself in a "capability trap" where the project facilitators are limited in what they can actually accomplish because of a strong central government and are reduced to undertaking organizational survival. Sometimes this is manifested in a violation of the Hippocratic oath, where the project's second and third order of effects caused more harm than it has salvaged.

Security Assistance

The second definition that must be defined is *security assistance*. Security assistance is a "Group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms

⁶ Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, and Michael Woolcock, "Escaping capability traps through problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA)," 235.

Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives.”⁷ Security Assistance is a component of a broader concept of *Security Cooperation*, which covers a variety of interactions including: combined exercises, appointment of attachés and liaison officers, military education and training exchanges, arms sales, over-flight privileges, basing agreements, visits of senior defense officials, and counter-proliferation programs.⁸ The phrases of *security cooperation*, *security assistance*, or plainly, *military aid* will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

The United States has profited from its security cooperation with allies. The U.S. arms industry, and the money that is tendered from these contracts, helps to strengthen the American economy with assembly line production, keeping the middle class gainfully employed. It also gives the United States a cost advantage in maintaining its domestic arsenal with greater economies of scale.

There are two types of military assistance: Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF). The former are weapons, training, and equipment that financially solvent partners buy from the United States. The latter, by contrast, is aid that is routed through geopolitical partners whom need U.S. support.

The United States is a cautious steward of these contracts, filtering requests not solely for financial benefit, but for strategic alignment of goals as well. The United States conditions these requests with the promise that these weapons be used for defensive purposes only and not resold to antagonistic third parties. In order to evaluate compliance, the USG instituted a program called End Use Monitoring, which is an intricate inventorying and reporting system that looks at U.S. equipment annually in other nations. When there are violations, the United States leverages its

⁷ Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, October 2008, 212.

⁸ Joint Publication 1-02, 212.

military-industrial complex to exact military and diplomatic ramifications, oftentimes with multi-year effects. This has occurred most recently in Egypt after Mohammad Morsi's ouster,⁹ in Bahrain after U.S.-purchased helicopters were used to fire upon protestors, and in Yemen where aid had to be diverted from units that were still loyal to the former regime.

Research Design and Case Study Organization

The research design will be five mini-case studies that examine the past and present U.S. military relationship with Middle East countries, and the future policy implications based on how these countries are being evaluated. These case studies have traditionally been some of our biggest partners in security and economic cooperation in the region. These case studies also deal with some countries with which the United States has had changing relations recently, and explores opportunities for expanded military involvement.

Each case study is organized to quickly access information regarding the perception of U.S. military assistance. Each chapter will contain:

- 1) Literature Review
- 2) History of U.S. military assistance with that country.
- 3) How that country views its relationship with the U.S. military?
- 4) How the United States views its relationship with that country's military?
- 5) In what capacity is their government actually utilizing the military?
- 6) Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?
- 7) What are the policy implications based off this paradigm?

Data Collection

Data collection will be a combination of primary and secondary literature, archival research, news, and interviews. To answer the main research question about "What is the perceived role of various Middle East militaries by the United States Government?" primary and secondary resources

⁹ Elise Labott, "U.S. suspends significant military aid to Egypt," *CNN*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/09/world/meast/us-egypt-aid/>

will be used. These products are typically available through proprietary websites. There is an abundance of literature on U.S. foreign policy and military intervention in the region. To tackle the much harder question about “whether that perception is ever likened to the reality of the bilateral relationship?” interviews will be used that the author had at 11 different embassies across the Middle East and North Africa in 2015.

Chapter Organization

Chapter One of this thesis provides an overview of the project. It presents the research questions, definitions, research design and case study organization, as well as the data collection. The literature review is country specific and is incorporated within the chapters.

The remaining chapters were intended to be a selection of countries that fit into a few broad categories where diplomats work for the Defense or State Departments:

- *Civil War States*: Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya
- *Status Quo Monarchies*: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman
- *Post-Revolutionary States*: Egypt, Tunisia
- *Aspiring Hegemons*: Iran, Turkey
- *Refugee Absorption Nations*: Lebanon, Jordan
- *Special Relationship*: Israel

Although each country has its nuanced relationship with the United States, choosing from a few of these countries will give the reader a taste for the type of relationship of which to be cognizant.

Chapters Two and Three look at the relationship of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Although the U.S.-Iranian relationship has only recently renewed because of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concerning the Iranian nuclear program, the U.S.-Iranian military assistance relationship was the largest by the time of the fall of the Shah. KSA is selected because it is the largest consumer of U.S. Foreign Military Sales and it epitomizes a status quo monarchy.

Chapters Four and Five look at the top two countries that receive more military aid in the form of FMF than any other country: Egypt and Israel. Since the conclusion of the first Camp David accords in 1979, the United States has a special military aid relationship with both Egypt and Israel. Egypt is selected because it is a post-revolutionary democracy has had many controversial dealings with its own people. This type of policing has strained its long-term relationship with the United States. The protection of Israel has always been in the long-term strategy of the United States, but that perception is slowing changing as well.

Chapter Six concerns Yemen. It is the only civil war state covered and the only country that currently does not have a U.S. Embassy. For fear of premature speculation about U.S. policy or adding little to the conversation about the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the author specifically decided not to discuss Syria, Iraq, or Libya. Furthermore, the author's next assignment will be the Army Attaché in support of the Yemen Assistance Unit based in Jeddah, KSA.

Finally, Chapter Seven is the Summary and Conclusions. The chapter will quickly revisit the lessons learned from the previous chapters. It will also give best practices for how Entry-Level Officers in the Foreign Service or Department of Defense Foreign Area Officers can affect policy at the Embassy-level by giving their most-informed analysis.

Chapter Two

The Islamic Republic of Iran: Stable Partner or Aspiring Spoiler?

“In Iran, fundamentalism was fueled to an extent by the regime of the Shah being supported by the West.” ~ Salman Rushdie

Literature Review

David Lesch’s *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* is a primer for those wondering why the United States got into the oil business in the Middle East, and how it began with the Massadeq coup in 1953. This piece interweaves various portions of Iranian, Saudi, and Israeli history together in the middle of the book through five chapters on the complications with U.S.-Israeli relationship. Although woefully underwhelming on the quantitative side of the immensity of any of these three relationships with regard to the United States, it qualitatively paints the psyche of the Shah for this research and how he became increasingly dependent on the United States. It also portrays the United States no longer as a defender of freedom, liberty, and self-determination, but a nation whose national interests willingly allow it to intervene in the affairs of other nations, even those with which it has never wanted to pursue relations.

Former member of the National Security Council Howard Teicher and his wife Gayle co-wrote *Twin pillars to Desert Storm: America's flawed vision in the Middle East from Nixon to Bush* as an exegesis for why the United States should have never become involved with the propping up Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). They are even more critical of the intervention of a U.S. “tilt” toward Iraq at the expense of Iran because the United States never understood the barbarity of Saddam until his 1991 invasion. Their suggestion is that the United States should have had a stronger alliance with Israel all along quickly glossing over Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories. This book informed the research with more quantitative data that was taken into consideration by a Carter, and then Reagan, insider.

History of U.S. military assistance with the Iran

Understanding U.S. engagement with Iran starts with understanding the United States' *raison d'être* in the region. There was minimal U.S. involvement in the Middle East prior to World War II. The region had long been a bastion of British Policy in its Passage to India. During WWII, the United States piggybacked on Britain's headquarters in Cairo and naval outpost in Manama with a footprint of 40,000 of its own troops.¹⁰ By 1968, the lasting influence of the British that permeated the region for over a hundred years in Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula sailed home. This strategic shift of departing the Suez Canal, which they had negligibly left 12 years earlier because of nationalization, left a power vacuum in the region at the least opportune time for the United States, which already had commitments in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. However, this vacuum had its origins long before the Vietnam War.

The Truman Doctrine of 1947 shaped U.S. foreign (and domestic) policy throughout the 1950s and the 1960s. President Harry Truman told Congress "it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,"¹¹ which translated into a move from isolationism to being fully entrenched in conflict to contain the Soviet threat. Among other smaller conflicts, this led the United States to entrenchment in Vietnam for a period of time far less palpable than any newly minted president desires.

In 1969, the Nixon Administration undertook a major review of US Persian Gulf Policy. In an effort to redefine security efforts when the public had no taste for another protracted war, the "Nixon Doctrine" posited the idea that the US can move away from past entanglements by building

¹⁰ David Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States: a historical and political reassessment*, 316.

¹¹ Michael Beschloss, *Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents from the National Archives*, 194-99.

up police states to assume that role.¹² The Nixon Doctrine would do this by institutionalizing the U.S. security cooperation apparatus from its embassies throughout the world. In short, it would sell arms to those countries that could afford it, give arms to those who that could not, and withhold arms as leverage on those sympathetic with the Soviets. These arms sales and “assistance” manifested themselves around the globe in various ways, but in the Middle East they became known as the Twin Pillar Policy. This policy intended to fill the void of Britain in the Middle East by evenly focusing on arms deals with KSA and Iran as the two protectors of U.S. interests in region. From the start, it was never an evenhanded approach.

The United States’ selection of Iran was an easy choice for five reasons. Primarily, its geostrategic location was the closest to the Soviet Union, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. It could physically control the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring the free flow of oil tankers. Iran was a lead producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Nearly 40,000 U.S. military personnel, technical advisors, and dependents had their homes in Iran.¹³ Lastly, because of the reinstatement of the Shah in 1953 after the U.S.-backed Mussadeq coup,¹⁴ the Pahlavi dynasty was seen as having an outstated willingness to act aggressively on behalf of American interests if and when they might be threatened.¹⁵ After two and one-half hours of discussion in Tehran in May 1972, this “special relationship” between Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Richard Nixon was sealed with the president’s frank “Protect me.”¹⁶ It cannot be overstated that the entire policy between the United States and Iran was predicated on the close, personal relationship with the Shah’s regime.

The second pillar was neither marked by candor or a close relationship. Despite the Defense and State Departments’ testimony before Congress that Riyadh was a “strong and reliable partner”

¹² Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*, 173.

¹³ Howard Teicher and Gayle Radley Teicher, *Twin pillars to Desert Storm: America's flawed vision in the Middle East from Nixon to Bush*, 30.

¹⁴ Lesch, 6.

¹⁵ Teicher, 29.

¹⁶ Lesch, 316.

in the mid-1970s, there was ample evidence to suggest otherwise.¹⁷ KSA was one of the belligerents against Israel in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973.¹⁸ Riyadh's newfound oil affluence also allowed it to charitably focus its "Rial diplomacy" on other Arab states, which frequently clashed with US objectives and was seen as opaque foreign relations. The Kingdom's control of production and use of oil as a weapon in 1973 outraged the West economically and infuriated Israel territorially, whereby the latter was forced to return parts of occupied Sinai back over to Egypt. Ultimately, Nixon pursued his second pillar with the House of Saud because of its influence in OPEC, which affected the price at the pumps back home, and their sway in keeping the remainder of the Gulf away from Soviet control. This decision did not occur without a fight from Israel.

Israel was not a part of Nixon's strategic calculus at the time. Today it could be considered a pillar, but in the 1970s, the parasitic relationship that Israel had with America usually harmed the United States. The American Israeli lobby, which had its start in 1963, pushed for three legitimate reasons why the United States should not pursue its sale to KSA: it would encourage KSA to have a decisive, combined Arab attack against Israel, the United States would pressure Israel to not have an over-reactive heavy hand if they were attacked, and there would no longer be a qualitative advantage with these updated Arab inventories.¹⁹

The United States was not convinced. The U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) had concluded in its formal analyses that all of Saudi Arabia's neighbors possessed military capabilities far in excess to those of the Saudi armed forces,²⁰ and that backing them was critical to maintaining the balance of power in the region. It also concluded that the Saudi Ministry of Defense had a very limited number of ground troops (as compared to the National Guard, the Royal Family's protective unit) and they were altogether unimpressive, and could further be used to justify more arms sales.

¹⁷ Teicher, 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 39.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 36.

After more debate with Israel, and agreeing to strip down the military aircraft capabilities, the decision to go ahead with this first major military sale to KSA, was motioned during the Nixon administration and brought to fruition by Carter.

Although couched as an even-handed balance-of-power across the region, from the start, Iran was seen as the more consistent and more capable pillar. This was because of scaling, money, and its relations with Israel. Since 1953, the United States had an enduring relationship with the Shah, but even before that, in 1947, the USG had set up its home in Tehran under the Military Assistance Advisory Group. The United States also had a special mission to the Army (which combined with the MAAG in 1962) and a special mission to the Imperial Iranian Gendarmerie. The military mission in Iran, which was separate from the technicians and trainers, was the largest America had in any Developing Country, employing (in 1978) 185 military, twenty-three civilian, and forty local personnel.²¹ Meanwhile, the United States was limited by the Saudi government as to how many troops it could have the Land of the Two Holy Mosques.

Aside from the fully functioning military-industrial complex allowing for easy scalability of military sales and contracts, the Pahlavi Dynasty was flush with oil wealth. Between 1950 and 1977, the United States supplied Iran with over \$20 billion in assistance, which accounted for around 25% of all US foreign military sales. Because “Iranian orders for new hardware were placed faster than the weapons could be produced and delivered,” by the closure of 1978 the US still had an outstanding balance of \$12 billion worth undelivered arms destined for Iran.²² This quantity of sales, even in 2015 numbers, was voluminous and affected the livelihood of many American corporations. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia did not see substantive fruit from their oil production until 1973.

²¹ “Background information on the crisis in Iran,” *Institute for Policy Studies*, 1979, <http://ivl.8m.com/USMI.htm>

²² *Ibid.*

The final reason for the easy support of Iran was its relations with Israel. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Iran maintained a full range of political, economic, and security relations with Israel. For almost every political reason, providing arms to Iran was feasibly an easier and smarter move, ultimately resulting in a blank check policy.

In 1978, after the deal of sixty F-15s to KSA was approved, the Twin Pillars were in full-effect. This occurred even despite Carter's Presidential Directive 13 (PD-13), whereby he directed the USG to reduce substantially the sale of U.S. weapons to all countries except NATO allies, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.²³ PD-13 was issued in May 1977. The military-industrial complex saw an opportunity that was too good to pass up, and thought it would be self-defeating to reduce the sales of arms, countering a basic tenet of U.S. foreign policy. Unfortunately, before the implications of Carter allowing his own administration to usurp PD-13 could be fully played out in domestic politics, the Twin Pillars crumbled with the fall of the Shah.

The Twin Pillar Policy to stabilize a Middle East for U.S. oil and democratic interests was based on a personal relationship with the Shah of Iran and a contradictory relationship with Saudi Arabia. In Iran, the image of a compliant shah responding to orders dictated in Washington remained vividly implanted in the national psyche.²⁴ The puppet, whose own largesse was unrivaled anywhere else in the world, was having problems of his own in Iran. Starting in 1975, Mohammed Reza made a series of missteps including consolidating the two-party structure into a single Resurgence Party, further reducing the role of Islam, mismanaging state finances leading to runaway inflation, and liberalizing his regime at the behest of Carter.²⁵ As a consequence, when the revolution exploded in late 1978, the United States had the worst of both worlds. It had relinquished much of its independent capacity to assess and influence Iran's internal politics because it removed

²³ Teicher, 28.

²⁴ Lesch, 317.

²⁵ William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A history of the modern Middle East*, 349.

many of its personnel to cut back on bureaucratic costs, but it was popularly suspected of orchestrating every move by the Shah's regime.²⁶

American arms sales to Saudi Arabia came to represent a fundamental contradiction²⁷ of U.S. strategy in the Middle East. On one hand, Saudis needed to demonstrate that they could defend themselves and U.S. oil interests, and they required advanced arms to achieve this objective. On the other hand, weaponry that the Saudis needed for self-defense could also be used to threaten Israel or, as in the case of Iran, crackdown on internal stability, which would also threaten American's vital interests. Perhaps the worst part of this Catch-22 was that a failure to supply KSA arms would likely turn Riyadh elsewhere for assistance, and reducing the likelihood that it would turn to the United States in a crisis.²⁸ Nixon continued this never-ending juggling act of manipulating rewards and punishments in a region where unpredictable retaliations often thwart the best intentions. As long as the balls remain in the air, the show could go on, but one mistake could be a total loss.

Overall, the Twin Pillars codified the special relationship with Iran that had already been in existence since 1947. President Carter gave ringing endorsements of KSA in May 1977:

I've said several times since I've been President of our country that I don't believe there is any other nation with whom we've had a better friendship and a deeper sense of cooperation than we've found in Saudi Arabia.

There have been many times unpublished when we saw a particular problem, either in our country or around the world, and as soon as this need became known by the leaders of that great country, the need has been met in a quiet but very effective and friendly way.²⁹

However, this endorsement did not stand up to the truth of the U.S. military bottom line with Iran. That U.S.- Iranian relationship would change fundamentally with the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and the fall of the Shah in 1979.

²⁶ Lesch, 317.

²⁷ Teicher, 42.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁹ Spiegel, 333.

For the past 35 years, there has been a slow, mutual demonization of both Iran and the United States by each other. This demonization was not only caused by the espoused rhetoric of the Supreme Leader, but the United States was complicit in this as well. In order to assist Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. began its military cooperation relationship with Iraq in the June of 1982 by authorizing the sale of sixty military-grade helicopters, providing a \$460 million credit for the sale of rice to Iraq, and removing it from its list of countries that support international terrorism.³⁰ This was but the beginning of increased financial support and intelligence sharing it would provide Iraq in the years to come. Importantly, the United States sent Donald Rumsfeld as a special envoy to meet with Saddam Hussein in December 1983, thus paving the way for reestablishing diplomatic relations the following year. In January of 1984, the United States placed Iran on its list of nations that support terrorism, three months after the Marine Barracks bombing in Beirut, which left 241 dead.

Currently, there is limited diplomatic relations between Iran and the United States. Since the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program, the United States has cautious optimism about starting military relations. For these talks to occur, the United States has had to sacrifice many other relationships with its Sunni neighbors in the region.

Militarily, there has been limited cooperation between Iran and the United States since the start of the campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in June 2014. In having a common enemy, the United States found that limited cooperation in the form of assigning targets for military aircraft³¹ and de-conflicting troops' location³² could be feasible for short-time gains.

³⁰ Adam Tarock, *The Superpowers' Involvement in the Iran-Iraq War*, 83.

³¹ Tim Arango, "U.S. and Iran Unlikely Allies in Iraq Battle," *New York Times*, August 31, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/01/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=0

³² Tom Cohen, "U.S. and Iran: From sworn enemies to partners in Iraq?" June 18, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/18/politics/us-iran-iraq/>

How Iran views the U.S. military?

Iran views the U.S. military with a healthy suspicion. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (2003-2011), Major General Qasem Suleimani, the commander of the elite Quds Force, argued that they needed to take the fight to the Americans.³³ His thought was that the United States would use its war in Iraq as an opportunity to overthrow the Iranian revolution (it is still called the revolution thirty years later). However, the supreme leader hedged his bets with a *talk-and-fight* strategy where he approved continued Track II talks with Americans and said that Iran would remain neutral, all the while building up its borders with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IGRC).³⁴ Important to note, throughout this time, Iran never had direct attacks on U.S. troops.

Instead of having direct attacks, the Quds force and Ministry of Information and Security officials started a full-scale program to train proxies. The members of these groups were disenfranchised Shia Iraqis who saw the opportunity for their autonomy in government. Since the 1968 coup, the Ba'ath Party had moved the 65% Shia majority to the periphery of society. With the U.S. occupation, groups like Kata'ib Hezbollah (Party of God Battalions), the Jayesh Al-Mahdi (the Mahdi Militia), or Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (the League of the Righteous), spawned as a result of this reclamation of their land. These operatives worked throughout Baghdad and southern Iraq, and were trained in a few specializations: assembling and emplacing Improvised Explosive Devices as roadside bombs and firing Improvised Rocket-Assisted Munitions on Forward Operating Bases of U.S. troops. These two devices were the biggest threats to U.S. security during its second Iraqi war.

³³ David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran*, 466.

³⁴ Crist, 466.

How the United States views its relationship with the IRGC?

The United States has a healthy fear of Iran as a credible military force because of the IRGC's discipline, size, and purchasing power. The IRGC's lack of direct attacks on U.S. troops debatably shows its training and discipline more than a planned, spectacular attack. Discipline is what sets apart the world's strongest militaries from its mediocre ones. The personnel within the IRGC number 150,000.³⁵ This number is both believable yet voluminous for such a small country. Oftentimes, total military numbers are skewed in the Middle East, where "ghost soldiers" who do not actually exist are placed on the payroll so that a particular unit or commander receives more money. This is not the case with the IRGC, which has real personnel, real bases, real training, and thirty years of real-world experience, most of which was to suppress rebellions that arose against the regime.

The Guards' purchasing power is the final reason for healthy U.S. suspicion. After ten years of being battered and hardened by the Iran-Iraq War, the IRGC was the largest national institution that could be used for reconstructive efforts. The IRGC switched from protection to reconstruction in the 1990s. Over the next 25 years, the Guards received a little more piece of the economic pie and slowly started taking on more projects across all sectors of the economy. Today, the Guards dominate energy, construction, telecommunication, automotive manufacturing, and even banking. The IRGC is also linked to dozens of private companies that are run by IRGC veterans.³⁶

These enterprises give the IRGC deep pockets. They allowed the IRGC to double its arms purchases from 1990 to 1993.³⁷ The vast preponderance of weapons came in the form of naval mines, anti-ship missiles, and fast boats. All of these armaments were purchased from China and used to enhance its asymmetric naval strategy of using smaller, faster boats rigged with these

³⁵ Alireza Nader, "The Iran Primer: The Revolutionary Guards," *U.S. Institute of Peace*, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/revolutionary-guards>

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Crist, 396.

weapons to swarm larger carriers that approach its littoral waters. The IRGC also spent millions developing its ballistic missile program, with each generation getting more accurate with a longer range. Although that program has morphed into a nuclear nature, it was originally intended as the most effective deterrence for not having to fight Iraq again in the future.³⁸ For these three reasons- discipline, size, and economic solvency- the United States prognosticates that aside from the Israeli Defense Force, the IRGC is the strongest military in the region.

In what capacity is Iran actually using its military?

The IRGC's mission set is possibly more adaptive than that of the United States. Initially, the Guards were used to quell those rebellions that were counter to the new Islamic Republic. Throughout the 1980s, the Guards fought conventionally against Iraq, along with unconventional proxies in Lebanon. In the 1990s, they were co-opted in domestic reconstruction efforts. Since 2003, they have helped train surrogate forces throughout the region, especially for the marginalized Shia populations in Yemen, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. Most recently, the Guards have been used to repress the Green Revolution in 2009, and has aided in the fight against ISIS. The IRGC is unequivocally used as both the primary internal and external security force for the Islamic Republic.

Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?

The United States' military does not have a relationship with the IRGC, so this question cannot be answered until mil-to-mil relations have been reestablished.

³⁸ Crist, 397.

What are the policy considerations based off this paradigm?

The United States has been given an opportunity to charter a path that it has not looked at with clear eyes for over thirty years due to the JCPOA. Through calculated diplomatic skill and strategic relationships based on more than just personality, it has moved away from using the military instrument of national power. By looking at the historic context when the bilateral relationship was the strongest before the Shah's ouster, the United States might see Iran in a very similar light to itself, and move away from the dichotomy of fallacious contexts of Sunni-Shia divide and the Iranian nuclear option. In a nuclear negotiation that isn't built on trust, but on verification, the IRGC will be the canary in the coalmine for the remainder of the Republic.

Some policy considerations:

1. *Diminishing marginal returns.* The IRGC is the richest institution in Iran (other than the Guardian Council). Its heavy involvement in the economy has huge ramifications, especially as economic sanctions are being lifted. The Guards have profited from economic sanctions because they control the black market³⁹ and were automatically awarded no-bid government contracts. As its profit margin decreases, watch the actions of its major generals Muhammad Ali Jafari and Qasem Suleimani to see whether this institution will be inclined to grab more power away from the president, the majlis, of the people.
2. *Outrunning its supply lines.* Another litmus strip of the effectiveness of the Iranian military is how its proxies are faring. If the IRGC cannot effectively supply its proxies, or the political capital is too great for the surrogate to continue its efforts, there could be a vast reallocation of personnel resources long more susceptible fronts. For example, last month was the first time the

³⁹ Ambassador Wendy Sherman, the USG point woman for the JCPOA at Harvard Kennedy School, April 21, 2016.

Houthi rebels in Sana'a have pushed away Iranian help for military assistance.⁴⁰ If these rebukes are sustained, it could be indicative of the lack of quality of assistance, lack of political will, or lack of ability to effectively implement its aid.

3. *Regional Reassurance.* The JCPOA has not been an easy agreement for U.S. allies to digest. The USG must continue its full-court press to address the paranoia of these governments and their people, whom are not always in direct communication with each other. Reassurance comes through education, candid discussions about nuclear capabilities, and integration of ballistic missile defense systems that have been purchased by all countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, but have yet to be tested as an entire system.

⁴⁰ Ahmed Al-Haj, "Yemeni rebels ask ally Iran to stop exploiting country's war," *AP News*, March 10, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ef373665e2a24841aa756ac920e067a5/yemeni-rebels-ask-ally-iran-stop-exploiting-countrys-war>

Chapter Three

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Defense as a Political Tool

“The Americans largely assessed that that Saudis could contribute little to the Coalition campaign against Iraq. Many expected the Saudis to run away en masse when the first shots were fired... experienced U.S. officers noted the Saudi tendency to obfuscate rather than admit a mistake. As a result, U.S. military commanders carefully structured Coalition operations to minimize the role of the Saudis and to make sure that they only went into battle on optimal conditions.”

~ Director Kenneth Pollack, National Security Council (Persian Gulf Affairs Bureau)

Literature Review

Ukrainian-born award-winning journalist Yaroslav Trofimov details the siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, which received little publication in the Western world at the end of 1979 because it was sandwiched among the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the fall of the Shah, and the announcement of the Carter Doctrine. *The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam’s Holiest Shrine and the Birth of Al-Qaeda*, gives an explicit account of the Saudi government’s complete inability to define the actual threat, isolate that threat, and remove the threat without the assistance of foreign (Western) intervention, which is why the account has been blotted from the history books in the Kingdom. After days of conspiracy theories and suspicion, it became apparent that the threat was radical Wahhabi Juhayman Al-Utebi who was protesting the corrupt Saudi Royals. Eventually, the Americans and French were called upon to squash the rebellion inside the Grand Mosque, even though these interlocutors were not Muslim. For this research, this point of collective assistance is critical to analyze because it demonstrates the delicate balance of the way Saudi protects itself (with foreign allies) and the King’s role as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (a solely Sunni responsibility). This balance is being reevaluated today amidst the monarch’s social contract with the Kingdom. Trofimov concludes his book with an assumption that attacks like 9/11 spawned from the shock of this Western intervention on Sunni holy land. He gives Osama Bin Laden as a prime example of unknown second order of effects of international involvement.

History of U.S. military assistance with the Kingdom

The United States has a long history with KSA regarding their combined military legacy. These are best sliced into its early security assistance history, international intervention at the Grand Mosque of Mecca (1979) and Operation Desert Shield (1990), and its current contractual history.

Early History: 1953- 1979

The U.S. history of security assistance with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has been indelibly linked to the Twin Pillar Policy with Iran. For a comprehensive overview of U.S. policy with the Kingdom, read Chapter Two. The condensed version is here. The Saudi defense budget ballooned during the 1970s. The Saudis allocated 35 and 40 percent of their total revenues to defense and security expenditures. This percentage remained the same even when its revenues swelled post-Oil Embargo. By 1975, the Kingdom allocated nearly \$36 billion for military sales, especially for its air force, and the United States was the main beneficiary of this largess.⁴¹ Important to note, technologically advanced equipment does not necessarily equate to a military force that has the capacity to use that equipment.

International Intervention in the Kingdom Part One: Siege of Mecca (1979)

A detailed account of the Siege of Mecca reflects a marked difference in the way the Saudi government handles its international affairs. On the morning of November 20, 1979, there was a shot heard ‘round the world just after the Morning Prayer. Juhayman Al-Utebi, and his band of a thousand sympathizers, pulled the trigger, but no one outside the Grand Mosque at Mecca could explain who they were or what they wanted. As far as their demands, in the same vein as Hasan Al-Bana and Sayid Qutb, the deliverers wanted to rid the Kingdom of its fat leadership who had

⁴¹ William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A history of the modern Middle East*, 397.

perverted Islam and made ill-aimed policy that does not incorporate shariah law. This was the Near Enemy, and it had to be punished. Al-Utebi did it by chaining all 51 gates, bringing in rifles in coffins around the Kaaba, and holding those thousands of Muslims who had just witnessed the First of Muharram of Islam's year 1400 as hostages.⁴²

The sequence of events for the duration of the first large-scale operation by an international jihadist movement in modern times was not as important as the interpretations of the events in the eyes of the Kingdom, the United States, and Iran. These interpretations were, at least for the first few days, blinded completely by regional stereotypes because no government entity had a clear picture of what was happening inside the Grand Mosque.

The Saudi government showed “sickening arrogance, cruel incompetence, and bewildering disregard for the truth. The royal family's image was sullied forever.”⁴³ Their first response was total silence- staying with tradition and keeping its people in the dark. This would also be the modus operandi after the completion of the operation, blotting its record from Saudi books. The Saudi silence, and its subsequent refusal to let Westerners help with intelligence collection because they were not Muslim and therefore not allowed to go into Medina or Mecca, led to widespread rumors.

The Americans, who still had diplomatic relations with Iran despite the hostage crisis, were more calculated in their estimates. The Iranian embassy in Jeddah was contacted as well, and they angrily denied all knowledge of the affair.⁴⁴ Not satisfied with that answer, or the telegram dispatched by U.S. Ambassador West that gave no great synthesis of information, the Defense Intelligence Agency cable said that based on the 1st of Muharram being a period of great Shiite fervor, “it is therefore quite likely members of the group holding the mosque are fanatic followers

⁴² Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca: The 1979 Uprising at Islam's Holiest Shrine*, 2.

⁴³ Trofimov, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 92.

of Ayatollah Khomeini.”⁴⁵ This theory nicely fit with the new paradigm that still dominates Western thinking about Islam with dire consequences. Shiites, because of Khomeini’s appeal to this minority sect of Islam, were now deemed to be Western enemies. Majority Sunni- including Wahhabi zealots- was, by de facto, seen as benign, if not outright friends.⁴⁶

The Iranians had their own conspiracy theories of Western involvement in the takeover. The ayatollah’s hypothesis that was repeated throughout the Arab world was “we estimate that this operation is a Zionist-imperialist attempt to torpedo the Arab Summit.”⁴⁷ Rioting had spread to U.S. embassies across the region, in Turkey, India, and Bangladesh, and the Ayatollah’s hatemongering caused Secretary of State Vance to recommend to President Carter that there be a pullout of all non-essential embassy personnel in region to stop any further risk of being overrun. This action only caused the Ayatollah to harken louder in its insistence of the cowardice of the American “Great Satan,” and emboldened the Shiites in the Eastern Province of KSA to broadcast against Americans who were working at Aramco while at least 50 employees received life-threatening letters.⁴⁸

This gravity of the situation was not as heavy as the timidity of the American response according to Paul Henze, an ex-CIA Station Chief in Turkey turned adviser to the National Security Council. He drafted a letter to the National Security Advisor stating:

Rather than demonstrating to the world that we break and run under pressure, we would serve our own interests better if we displayed a stubborn insistence on staying in place, asserting ourselves and being ready to fight (let the Marines shoot!) to defend our installations and our principles when challenged. We are well on our way to being cast as anti-Islamic... in most of the Muslim world. Local demagogues find tactics expedient, and their appetites are whetted every time we look weak. It contributes exactly to what our enemies most want to see: we isolate ourselves from the Muslims, mutual suspicions grown, and permanent alienation sets in... If we do not stem this process, the Carter administration will have left its successors a legacy that will require many years to eliminate.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 120.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 181.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 141.

These words, both ominous and prescient, left their mark on Brzezinski as the National Security Advisor who eventually pressed Carter to announce an emboldened new plan, a Carter Doctrine at his State of the Union address in January 1980. Carter told the world that: “Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and as such will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁵⁰

The Carter Doctrine comforted the Royal family. For the first time, the Kingdom had a total commitment of a friend in the region, and the United States had a listening ear for military and economic exploits. Unfortunately, this was too late for the 50,000 Saudi soldiers and National Guardsmen⁵¹ who died while trying to stop Wahhabi ideologues in Mecca.

Eventually, the House of Saud permitted American and French troops to protect Mecca. This action, a Catch-22 of their own, was deemed necessary because the family had run out of options against a well-planned enemy. However, it proved that King Khaled, as the Guardian of the Two Holy Shrines, had failed in his duties. This catastrophic failure, one that needed non-Muslim intervention, further reinforced the notion that KSA was utterly reliant on the United States, and pushed the migration of Islamists like Osama Bin Laden to withdraw their citizenship to find a better locale where they can transplant Wahhabism,⁵² such as Afghanistan. As for Iran, this failure continued to fuel the rhetoric of Khomeini, which he directed toward Iranians about KSA’s incompetency.

For Americans, the siege would have very real policy implications that continue to plague its regional involvement to this day. For it being the first major explosion of Sunni Islamist violence that the US experienced firsthand, it was widely disregarded by Western policy makers because of

⁵⁰ David Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States: a historical and political reassessment*, 318.

⁵¹ Trofimov, 169.

⁵² Cleveland and Bunton, 459.

their focus on the Soviet and Iranian threat. What is most surprising, however, is that in the international institutional memory Juhayman is still referred to as a Shiite. Some American officials working at the Tehran bureau still call the crisis a “Shiite uprising,” and the Grand Mosque affair is consigned as another nefarious Iranian act.⁵³ This permissible ignorance is one reason the United States cannot contextually estimate its relationship with Iran; even when there is no direct correlation, the USG chooses to make one.

The Battle in Mecca, although stricken from the record of most history books in the Gulf and bypassed for more interesting stories in the West, left an indelible line in the sand between Iran and the Kingdom for two reasons: the Carter Doctrine and the demonization of the Ayatollah. The Carter Doctrine was a marked change adopted by the “baby-faced Boy Scout”⁵⁴ himself to stop turning the other cheek and stand up to aggressors by any means necessary. The declaration reassured Saudis of American consistency in its policy. After a decimation of its troops in this domestic incident, the Kingdom wanted a more robust relationship with the United States. Without its first pillar, the United States was hoping that KSA was willing to fully cooperate to enhance its position in the region. By 1981, with oil prices peaking at \$34 per barrel after the fall of the Shah, Saudi revenues were \$102 billion⁵⁵ and the Kingdom was awash with funds to purchase the best military equipment.

International Intervention in the Kingdom Part Two: Operation Desert Shield (1990)

Saddam Hussein’s incursion on Kuwaiti soil began a second round of international intervention for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but this time the request came much quicker and was much more explicit. Washington policymakers thought that this bold move by Saddam would 1)

⁵³ Trofimov, 244.

⁵⁴ Trofimov, 175.

⁵⁵ Cleveland and Bunton, 399.

enable Iraq to control the oil-rich portion of the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula and 2) be a prelude to an attack on KSA, whose military would be crushed by the war-hardened Iraqi army, despite its better equipment. The Saudi government issued a formal invitation to the United States and in October 1990 over 200,000 U.S. troops were relocated to the deserts of Saudi Arabia.⁵⁶

After a successful passing of a United Nations Security Council Resolution in January 15th, 1991, the coalition was authorized “use of all necessary means” to enforce Iraq’s withdrawal. The next day, a coalition air force led by the United States commenced a bombing campaign for 42 consecutive nights.⁵⁷ There was less of a Saudi public outcry for U.S. involvement during this international involvement, but again, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia found itself in a situation where it did not have the technical expertise to defend itself despite the superior technology.

Recent Security Assistance Developments

Today, the United States sells more equipment to KSA than it does to any other government in the world. In 2014, U.S. foreign military sales (FMS) contracts totaled \$4.6 billion, or roughly \$12.6 million every day.⁵⁸ This amount of cash is more than the United States gives Israel and Egypt combined in military assistance annually. To enable these contracts (also known as cases), to push through the military-industrial bureaucracy more smoothly, the United States has established an alphabet soup of organizations that specifically deal with training, advising, and contracting deals for the Kingdom. Established in 1953, the United States Military Training Mission (USMTM) to Saudi Arabia was established “to advise and assist the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces (SAAF) through Security Assistance efforts in developing, training and sustaining capable deterrent and

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 448.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 450-1.

⁵⁸ Security Assistance Monitor, <http://www.securityassistance.org/saudi-arabia>

self-defense forces for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to facilitate regional security.”⁵⁹

The other major agencies are the Office of the Program Manager of the Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG) Modernization Program, Ordnance Program Division (OPD), and Defense Contract Management Command (DCMC). The Chief of USMTM works under the general guidance of the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. These organizations under the USMTM umbrella require just over 2,500 full-time U.S. service members working in Riyadh. The Saudi government also pays for these troops’ accommodations. In general, the troops are a welcomed addition to the country as long as they do not change the cultural landscape, which is difficult to do when the service members’ mobility is limited to work and home life at Eskan village.

How KSA views its relationship with the U.S. military?

Based off these accounts, the Kingdom has looked to the United States as a protectorate in the past. Whenever the threat became too real or too consequential, the U.S. military was called in for assistance. The USMTM has slowly grown from a couple dozen people who quietly coordinated logistics without the remainder of the Kingdom’s knowledge to thousand person offices that support the Ministries of Interior and Defense, along with the Saudi National Guard, which has the special responsibility of protecting the Royal family. With a physical presence of U.S. troops in country, and multi-billion dollar annual FMS contracts being brandished, the Saudis have the continued guarantee of U.S. assistance.

Recently, however, this view is changing. With the 30 year-old heir apparent Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS) taking over as Minister of Defense in January of 2015, there has been a lot of talk about the USG’s role in the region. MBS perceived the Houthi movement into Sana’a as a direct threat to Saudi sovereignty on its border, even more so than the Islamic State of Iraq and

⁵⁹ USMTM Welcome Packet, http://usmtm.org/docs/USMTM_Welcome_Packet3.pdf

Syria (ISIS). Because of this encroachment, he began Operation Decisive Storm, a bombing campaign in March 2015. For the first time in this long relationship, the Saudi government is proactively using its advanced weapons for defensive purposes at its borders, and to advance its agenda outside its borders. Although KSA has been defamed for the subsequent humanitarian crisis and war crime allegations that have emanated from this bombing campaign killing 3,200 civilians,⁶⁰ the campaign has been a controversial opportunity for the new Saudi leadership to be showcased in the region.

Concerning the U.S. military, Operation Decisive Storm has only fueled the desire for more contracts for more munitions. KSA also relies heavily on the United States in the Joint Coordination Planning Cell, which is led by an American two-star general. This is where the Saudis produce their daily air tasking orders for their sorties. The intelligence shared by U.S officials is not driving the air campaign, but it does allow for better terminal guidance refinement of munitions so that civilian casualties can be minimized.⁶¹

How the United States views its relationship with the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces?

The USG views the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a reliable partner at the governmental level. The relationship is symbiotic in nature, where the USG is willing to turn a blind eye to contentious issues of the Kingdom (mainly its human rights violations) in exchange for \$4 billion in annual contracts. Militarily, however, the U.S. defense officials have rarely thought highly of the SAAF. The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) receives more accolades from the USG than the SAAF, but that is because the SANG is better funded. Historically, the joke among the U.S. security assistance personnel is that the reason the Gulf militaries buy the best equipment is so that the

⁶⁰ “Yemen External Situation Report #34,” *International Medical Corps*, May 3, 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-external-situation-report-34-may-3-2016>

⁶¹ Interview with a defense official at the U.S. Embassy Riyadh on 03 June 2015.

Americans don't have to waste any time coming to defend them because the equipment is already in place.

Operation Decisive Storm is slowly changing that paradigm. Many mistakes were made during the initial onset of the campaign: lack of coordination efforts between GCC partners, incorrect grid coordinates for munitions, poor forecasting of requirements, and the lack of an exit strategy.⁶² However, after a year of continuous bombings and coordinated land raids with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the SAAF has shown that it is capable of planning, leading, and executing a large multinational operation. Two years ago, the words “planning” and “leading” would have never have been mentioned in the same sentence with Saudi Arabia.

In what capacity is their government actually utilizing the military?

Like most status quo monarchies (among them Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Oman), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has specifically designed its military to be ineffective. By having a large but ineffective Ministry of Defense, it is much easier to dole out national petro-dollars as a part of the social contract and maintain complicity from an otherwise bored public. The SANG is the most powerful agent in the Kingdom, ensuring that the Royal family remains in place in the case of public protests. However, the SANG in and of itself, is not strong enough to stop the SAAF or Ministry of Interior forces. These three power brokers have specifically been leveraged against each other so that the regime does not have to worry about a coup from any one of these forces.

So if the security apparatus is intentionally made to fail because of domestic concerns, and its ineffective at keeping international forces at bay, what use is a purported 440,000 strong military? In two words: political tool. In a region of the world where nearly every government came into power because one tribe amassed enough loyalty from other tribes to lay siege to a city,

⁶² *Ibid.*

coalitions and bartering are part of the life cycle of the tribe. Aside from internal tribal conflict and competition, the Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula also had to worry about the external colonial ambitions. This constant anxiety of being attacked has led many of the GCC governments to look for a better way to ensure their security. With the blessing of oil royalties and an operating budget flush with cash, most of these countries use their militaries as a vehicle to make long-term contracts that will outsource foreign advisory services and weapons. Most of the militaries do not really care to build their capacity. Most of the service members and their leadership are content with the status quo of their military. Professionally, most officers view a career in the military as a solid career move that has some special personal perks like membership to yacht clubs or officer clubs that are on beachfront property. Through big-ticket contracts and small pockets of U.S. troops scattered throughout the country, there is a guaranteed assurance that the United States will always be available if the situation becomes too dire.

Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?

No. Most policymakers in Washington believe that U.S. trainers and advisors are building the capacity of the countries within the GCC to make them more competent at fighting their wars without the United States. Debatably, this policy has been flawed since the Twin Pillars. Most would not believe, as one Foreign Service Officer in Riyadh put it “that the GCC is a Potemkin village, all but an empty façade.”

What are the policy considerations based off this “political tool” paradigm?

Through a comprehensive historical analysis of the U.S. military relationship with the SAAF and SANG, there are a few policy considerations regarding our relationship with the Kingdom:

1. *Existential threats deserve unilateral action.* Many pundits have critiqued MBS for using Yemen as a punching bag while the young Defense Minister finds his footing in his new position. Saudi officials have said quite the opposite, that their intervention is out of necessity because it is an existential threat on their border, even likening it to the Saudi “Bay of Pigs.”⁶³ Given Saudi reticence to request for help in the affairs that affect the Kingdom, this logic makes sense. When the situation was dire enough, it called upon other monarchies around the Gulf, then Western powers. This is also consistent with their *modus operandi*.
2. *Sunni-Shia divide will be even more contentious.* If the SAAF and SANG are merely diplomatic tools, the United States will continue to find itself involved in politically contentious areas of foreign policy where Sunnis are portrayed as “good” and practical Muslims, and Shia are portrayed as “bad” and irrational Muslims.⁶⁴

There are a few inconsistencies with this dichotomy. One, from a practical USG approach, the Sunni-Shia divide only receives lip service. The USG makes comprehensive arms and humanitarian assistance deals with Sunni governments, with subsequent incursions into Sunni territory, targeting Sunni proxies, with or without Sunni host nation approval. During the last fifteen years of war, the targeting of Shia insurgents, even in a bellicose Southern Iraq, was the most tediously micro-managed venture, so as to not appear targeting one sect over another, thereby making it extremely limited.

Two, the Sunni-Shia dynamic is most frequently discussed in terms of religious absolutes. So the thinking goes that any group associated with that particular sect is fundamentally and religiously aligned with one branch. This thinking rarely takes into account the derogations that these current regimes have used sectarianism for, a religious

⁶³ Fletcher Fares Center discussion with HRM Sultan bin Khalid al-Faisal on February 24, 2016.

⁶⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the roots of terror*, 3.

tool to mobilize the masses for a political end state.⁶⁵ For these two reasons, especially from a Western lens, the Sunni-Shia split is a false dilemma, but this has to be understood by policymakers.

3. *Who really is the “free-rider?”* Goldberg’s *Atlantic* article outlining the “Obama Doctrine” has caused a ripple effect for our embassies in the Middle East. Particular to the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom was labeled a “free-rider” along with most other U.S. historic allies. “[Obama] has questioned, often harshly, the role that America’s Sunni Arab allies play in fomenting anti-American terrorism. He is clearly irritated that foreign-policy orthodoxy compels him to treat Saudi Arabia as an ally.”⁶⁶

As president, it is absolutely critical to challenge key assumptions about one’s relationship with another country. It is okay to say that the relationship “is complicated,” but understanding that part of the symbiotic relationship is the \$4.6 billion keeping Joe Six-Pack happily working on tank assembly line in Lima, Ohio. When Americans feel that the USG is being used as a political tool for Saudi Arabia’s bidding, then it should be prepared to leave the \$4.6 billion security contracts behind, expand its international trade in the commercial sector (which could be just as profitable), or find ways that it can leverage the SAAF and SANG as diplomatic tools for U.S. bidding. The game should be played both ways.

⁶⁵ Jocelyne Cesari, *The Awakening of Muslim Democracy: Religion, Modernity, and the State*, xiii.

⁶⁶ Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April 2016, p 31-47.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>

Chapter Four

The Arab Republic of Egypt: Executors of the Will of the People

“What the Egyptians are facing, two sick prostitutes could handle.”
~ U.S. General Calvin Waller, on the Egyptian Army’s advance during the Gulf War⁶⁷

Literature Review

Ken Pollack’s *Arabs at War* analyzes why Arab militaries have consistently failed in wars against Jews, Iranians, Kurds, Americans, and Africans- even when the Arab armies had competitive advantages such as technological superiority, numerical superiority, strategic and tactical surprise, and foreign backing. Pollack essentially argues that military effectiveness- as measured by unit cohesion, strategic and tactical leadership, morale, technical expertise, information dissemination, and logistical adeptness- does not equate to victory on the battlefield. The book is battle comprehensive. Even for an audience accustomed to non-fiction war literature, the hour-by-hour accounts of the militaries are conspicuously dense. Pollack’s examination brings home the point that was reiterated at the U.S. Embassy Cairo that the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) were designed to fail and that the lack of a meritocracy has diluted effective leadership.

History of U.S. military assistance with Egypt

Egypt’s crippling debt and ballooning public payroll was the reason it invaded the Sinai in 1973, hoping to use war as a political tool to get Israel to the negotiation table. With a stable border, it could focus on domestic priorities. Anwar Al-Sadat’s Pyrrhic victory initially won the battle, however, retaliation by a strong Israeli Defense Force lost the war. The Egyptian economy was further exacerbated (ironically) through the War of Attrition, and the President Al-Sadat was looking for an opportunity for any country to help alleviate political and economic pressure in order

⁶⁷ Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 141.

to keep him in power. Thus began the U.S. security cooperation relationship with Egypt on March 26, 1979 with the formal signing of the Camp David Accords.

In order for this new relationship with the Americans to work, Egypt vowed to sever its twenty-year relationship with the Soviets and solely turn to the United States for military aid, training, and equipment to the tune of \$2.2 billion a year.⁶⁸ This aid coupled with the first lasting peace with Israel since 1948 allowed the Egyptian Armed Forces to grow in numerous ways. It alleviated economic pressure because Cairo began using the military as a social welfare program in order to keep unemployment under control.

This peace also allowed Al-Sadat to use this opportunity to shift its focus away from Egypt's traditional external threats, and toward the internal security threats like the Muslim Brotherhood. During this time, Al-Sadat was criticized for accelerating the presidency's shift away from legality and toward a coercive police state. He achieved this through the utilization of the Central Security Forces as his personal army, allowing him to cast away a wary eye on social institutions like the Brotherhood or state institutions that have been known to overthrow regimes, like the Free Officers in 1952.⁶⁹ The United States was witting in this assistance with its embassy providing a million dollars' worth of surveillance and riot equipment to help found the security state.⁷⁰

During the 1980s, the U.S. Embassy Cairo went from a barebones diplomatic staff to thirteen-story high-rise overlooking Zamalek Island whose sole existence was to maintain and preserve the \$1.3 billion it would receive on a per annum basis. The embassy elicited help from the Department of Defense by growing its Office of Military Cooperation to a 400-service member

⁶⁸ William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A history of the modern Middle East*, 390.

⁶⁹ Hazem Kandil, *Soldiers, spies, and statesmen: Egypt's road to revolt*, 111.

⁷⁰ Kandil, 20.

directorate.⁷¹ Since that time, the U.S. strategy in Egypt has been to focus on four security pillars: maritime, border security, counter-terrorism, and defense in the Sinai.

After Al-Sadat's assassination and Mubarak's assumption of the presidency, little changed on the Egyptian political front other than the arrest of more terrorists. Mubarak's principle goal was to ensure survival of the regime by introducing minimal institutional adjustments while appearing to liberalize political and economic practices.⁷² He only further reinforced Al-Sadat's attempts at turning his country into "America's Egypt." By the late 1980s, the bulk of Egyptian compulsory conscripts were uneducated farmers. Those with a high school education only had to serve one year, so institutional brain drain occurred right at the time a soldier fully understood his job.⁷³

The same security state existed for thirty years under Mubarak. The capacity of the military grew, not in its effectiveness, but in its economic outreach. Throughout this time, the military maintained financial and industrial privileges as well as extralegal oversight in sectors from petrochemicals to tourism.⁷⁴ However, to hedge against Mubarak's campaign of liberalization and privatization, the EAF diversified its portfolio to include nearly 40% of the economy, from manufacturing computer hardware, wastewater recycling, wind farms, state banks, and joint ventures with some of the world's largest shipping conglomerates.⁷⁵

The United States maintained its interest in Egypt throughout the 1990s because of one thing: key terrain. During the first Gulf War, the Suez Canal had become an indispensable piece of geography that gave the United States the flexibility to get its ships anywhere within the region within a few days. The special relationship between the USG and Egypt, has given the United States the flexibility to give Egyptian ministries only two or three days notice for its ships (a privilege no

⁷¹ Interview with a defense official at the U.S. Embassy Cairo on 10 June 2015.

⁷² Cleveland and Bunton, 389.

⁷³ Pollack, 138.

⁷⁴ Shana Marshall, "The Egyptian Armed Forces and the Remaking of an Economic Empire," 5.

⁷⁵ Marshall, 5.

other country receives). During its Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, Egypt afforded the United States exceptions to the six aircraft over-flight rule that it demands from all over countries. In Afghanistan, the EAF even maintained a field hospital for ten years specifically for U.S. troops.⁷⁶

Since the Arab Spring and Obama's "Apology Tour" of the Middle East in 2013, the U.S. relationship with the Egyptian Republic has been strained. Whenever a coup occurs, military aid is indefinitely turned off. In October 2013, after Mohammed Morsi's ouster and a crackdown on the arrest of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt with mostly U.S. equipment, the Obama administration suspended \$260 million in cash and two large weapon deals⁷⁷ for one and a half years.⁷⁸ This proved to President Abdel Fatah Al- Sisi that the United States is an unreliable partner. Even as the effectiveness of the Egyptian military, which was arguably never great to begin with, has further diminished effectiveness, the military has been the sole functioning institution. "The military, having effectively deposed two Egyptian leaders in two and one-half years, has firmly established itself as the only real power in the country."⁷⁹

How does Egypt view its relationship with the U.S. military?

Today, the Egyptians view its relationship with the USG as unsteady. Although the \$1.3 billion in aid has been revived, there have been severe frustrations with the EAF's relationship with the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation in Cairo. The fallout from these frustrations is real. Sisi wants his military to be more self-reliant and is willing to divest Egypt from a single country solution. This tangibly looks like military aid diversification with France with the purchase of 24

⁷⁶ Interview with a defense official at the U.S. Embassy Cairo on 10 June 2015.

⁷⁷ Elise Labott, "U.S. suspends significant military aid to Egypt," *CNN*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/09/world/meast/us-egypt-aid/>

⁷⁸ Roberta Rampton, "Obama ends freeze on U.S. military aid to Egypt," *Reuters*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-egypt-military-idUSKBN0MR2GR20150401>

⁷⁹ Robert Kagan, "In Egypt it's past time for the Obama administration to use what power the U.S. has," *Washington Post*, July 5, 2013. Accessed: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-egypt-its-past-time-for-the-obama-administration-to-use-what-power-the-us-has/2013/07/05/86e0bd0a-e5a2-11e2-ae3-339619eab080_story.html

Dassault Rafale fighter jets and six Normandie frigates.⁸⁰ It also looked like a return to historic partners with its inaugural “Bridge of Friendship” Joint Naval Exercise with Russia last year.⁸¹

How the United States views its relationship with that country’s military?

The USG views the EAF as a force that has an overinflated sense of their history and bargaining power, as if the Pyramids were built yesterday and as if Egypt and the United States are equals at the negotiating table. What the EAF is competent in is its ability to perform set-piece operations, where they had had time to plan its defense and practice beforehand.⁸² The EAF is also capable of enduring a lot of bleeding at these checkpoints without having to be quickly reconstituted as well. The chief complaints to U.S. defense officials from the EAF are the need for “more technology and better equipment.” Pollack contends this has always been the case and without an institutional reform of the military, neither better technology nor more equipment, would make a difference in the EAF’s capacity.

In what capacity is Egypt actually utilizing the EAF?

Egypt uses its armed forces as the executor of the will of the people. With 450,000 personnel, the EAF is the largest (and debatably, the only functioning) institution in the country. The military is the People’s Army, which will sincerely protect the intentions of the people, which many times means maintaining the status quo. The reason Mubarak fell was not because the military was violent; rather, the military chose not to do anything at all. The same could be said for Morsi. Sisi also gained power because the military allowed it. To ground this esoteric sounding ideal into

⁸⁰ Pierre Tran, “French Navy Plans Around Ship Sale to Egypt,” *Defense News*, February 12, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/ships/2015/02/11/france-egypt-frigate-fremm-sale-navy-multimission/23232695/>

⁸¹ Agence France-Presse, “Russia and Egypt Hold First-Ever Joint Naval Drills,” *Defense News*, June 10, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/06/10/russia-egypt-military-drills-armament/71001974/>

⁸² Pollack, 96.

reality, the reason the military can execute the will of the people is because it is inextricably linked to the people. With its hands controlling 40% of the economy and many joint venture contracts, the people are just as invested in the military.

Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?

Yes. The U.S. military has never predicated its relationship with Egypt on its reliance of the Egyptian Armed Forces. The USG relationship with the Government of Egypt has been one based on the security of Israel and on geographic significance as a gateway to Africa, Europe, and Asia.

What are the policy considerations based off this “Will of the People” paradigm?

1. *Nothing will change.* Kandil called this *institutional realism* where "conceiving of the state not as a reified or monolithic body, but as an amalgam of institutions, each with its own power-maximizing agendas... [and whose incessant power struggles result] in new power formations. In this way, we can see that regime type reflects the prevailing balance of power at a given time, not an official hierarchy or ingrained practices."⁸³ As long as the military thinks it is the strongest institution in the state (and it is), there is little incentive to change the *status quo* because there is no struggle with a competing power broker. When a mediocre organization has no impetus for change, its effectiveness will only worsen.
2. *Sergeants as Colonels.* U.S. officials across the Middle East have been known to say that a particular country's colonels or brigadiers work on the same tasks that are tackled by junior officers and non-commissioned officers in Western and East Asian militaries.⁸⁴ The EAF is not a meritocracy, and because of that, it will not attract the best and brightest, and if it does,

⁸³ Kandil, 3.

⁸⁴ Pollack, 138.

it will not retain them. If one finds a foreign officer of exceptional caliber, do everything possible to maintain that relationship.

3. *Political Party disenfranchisement.* In an unprecedented move, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Anne Patterson visited the Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters in January 2012 after the Arab Spring.⁸⁵ This leap of faith showed an inclination to pursue new relationships in the wake of uncertain times. In May 2015, those relations ended at the behest of Sisi. The Brotherhood has professedly moved back to the underground. The disenfranchisement is seen as a short-term solution for the current instability, but with a conventional military that is not used to thinking about center-of-gravity, or asymmetric warfare, or (perhaps) policy at all, its ability to address the deep-seeded grievances of political groups is going to turn this into a protracted war of attrition.

⁸⁵ Cleveland and Bunton, 537.

Chapter Five

The State of Israel: Go-It-Alone

“The IDF is a second tier military, using first tier equipment, against a third tier enemy.”
~ U.S. Defense Official at U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv

Literature Review

Mark Tessler’s *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* comprehensively tackles the monumental task of gleaning every detail from both (and periodically more than two) sides of the conflict. His evenhanded treatment of the conflict gives the reader an encyclopedic account that is detail-rich but analysis-poor. For sheer data, there is no book better to assist in finding injections, but use the glossary. Tessler’s survey informed the depth of U.S. reticence before the formation of the state because of domestic politics.

Walid Khalidi is the unapologetic and authoritative Palestinian academic on the conflict. His *Palestine Reborn* offers insights that augment Tessler’s poor analysis. One cannot help but feel the plight of the Palestinian people after the arguments set forth in his seven short chapters. His article “The Origins and Development of the Palestine Problem: 1897-1948” details the actions that were happening in Mandatory Palestine while the rest of the world was consumed with the Second World War. This piece informed the counter-narrative for the Jewish feeling of betrayal by the United States.

Finally, Jeremy Sharp’s Congressional Research Service annual report on “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel” is indispensable for a quick read of how and why the U.S. military established its military legacy in Egypt and Israel. Aside from this brief history, the remainder of the document (like all documents from the Congressional Research Service) gives the details of these big-ticket contracts with absolutely no forecasting of the implications of these purchases. Sharp’s quantitative data substantiated the qualitative interviews at the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv and U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem.

History of U.S. military assistance with Israel

This chapter's tongue-in-cheek opening quotation, said in June 2015, defines a defense narrative that began with the founding of the Haganah in 1921 and continues to this day. This narrative is that Israel looks at the world from a deficit-focused security lens, which constantly needs better equipment so that it can outpace its numerically superior but tactically deficient foes.

Despite deep economic, military, and legal ties and an American Judeo-Christian penchant for Israeli sympathy, the Israeli Ministry of Defense feels lukewarm about American military assistance, this is because Israel has been shaped by a sense of abandonment from Allies that feeds this intractable conflict from the Peel Commission in 1937, the Holocaust, and the Suez Crisis of 1956. This isolation has caused Israel to have a go-it-alone attitude. With this attitude, and within each of these examples, there is also an often-neglected Palestinian counter-narrative.

From the first waves of Jewish immigrants into Mandatory Palestine in the late 1880s, the Arabs were “not hated, not loved, not taken into consideration”- just a part of the landscape.⁸⁶ By the 1930s, where subsequent *aliyahs* had increased the Jewish population eightfold, the idea of having an uncontested homeland where total Jewish Labor could be employed was a distant reality. The British realized that this irreconcilable reliance on Arab labor was forcing segregation and causing political instability through riots and economic strikes. As a response, the Peel Commission drafted the first idea of a two-state solution recommending population transfer to quell further exacerbations.⁸⁷

It could be said that the inability of the Zionist Founding Father's to achieve “one hundred percent of Jewish Labor” enhanced the tendency for separation, and created the psychological and political condition for the acceptance of partition as the only solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Dina Porat, “Forging Zionist Identity Prior to 1948—Against Which Counter-Identity”, 56.

⁸⁷ Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 217.

⁸⁸ Flapan, 200.

The early settlers, through voluntary use of Arab labor, and subsequent maltreatment of those in the labor pool chose segregation over inclusion. Even Nahum Goldmann, the former president of the Zionist World Organization, said “if violence broke out it would be because Jews ignored the Arab.”⁸⁹ Much of this narrative has been lost in recent dialogue, where Israelis have found it easier to blame the lack of involvement of the West in its founding.

In early Twentieth Century America, where the Fourteen Points Speech touting state autonomy was recited, there was a decided lack of political commitment of American leadership in locating a temporary home for the Jews, at least in the United States. Wilson himself only allowed 7,700 emigrants from Eastern Europe annually during his administration (less than 0.1% of the population).⁹⁰ The FDR administration was so domestically focused on the Great Depression, that Ben Gurion made it his personal mission to focus US efforts for crafting a solution when the anticipated U.S. support for Zionist statehood never materialized. Quite the contrary, the United States backed down from its support for partition and proposed a truce and a trusteeship that was not supported by any of the involved parties. It then attempted to achieve the truce without the trusteeship. Zionists opposed the truce due to their belief that it would allow the United States to change its mind and give up on creating a Jewish state.⁹¹ According to the Zionists, the Americans were not committed to them.

The creation of the State of Israel was a natural concession from the international community that largely abandoned the Jews during World War II. To be certain, the Holocaust altered the psyche and feelings of those in the diaspora, especially those survivors and families of survivors in Europe. The political ramifications of this genocide altered many multi-national governing bodies and encouraged state cooperation, creating a general sympathy for Jews

⁸⁹ Porat, 53.

⁹⁰ Walid Khalidi, *Palestine reborn*, 24.

⁹¹ Flapan, 302.

everywhere except in the Arab world. However, for those Jews who were in Palestine, they looked at the Holocaust in a different entrepreneurial light: that of labor recruitment and rebranding Zionism.

Jon and David Kimche found that Zionist policy was not as preoccupied with rescuing Jews from the Nazis as they were with finding “suitable” pioneering specimens who were physically fit to help make the desert bloom.⁹² Zionists had a selective immigration policy, but it was not until five years *after* the rise of Hitler on the eve of the outbreak of WWII, that this policy encouraged more Jews to join the homeland. Prior to the outbreak, Zionist leadership was so preoccupied with gaining strategic footholds in British and American politics that most of the Eastern European Jews were put off by the *realpolitik* and selectivity of the Zionists. In Poland, the rabbinical leaders were adamantly hostile toward emigration to Palestine.⁹³ Those specifically allowed during the later *aliyahs* had to be capable of giving back to the Zionist cause.

There was also a rebranding effect that the Holocaust had on Jewish Palestine. Since the 1880s, Zionism provided an outlet for those who wanted to move away from discrimination. It was a salvation movement for the oppressed Jew. After WWII, however, a highly sympathetic world emerged to acknowledge and remedy the plight of the Jews. For the first time, Zionist leadership’s call to be the rescuer in *Eretz Israel* was threatened because assistance was offered nearly everywhere else.⁹⁴ To ensure that the remainder of the First World did not supplant them, Zionists changed their focus to rescue Jewry from another Holocaust-type event,⁹⁵ reinforcing a *victimization* stereotype rather than a *settler* one. According to the Zionists, no one would be more committed to them.

⁹² Khalidi, 38.

⁹³ Khalidi, 38.

⁹⁴ Porat, 62.

⁹⁵ Porat, 64.

The 1948 war had lasting effects on all peoples involved. It transformed Israel into a military state dedicated to technical supremacy, rather than diplomacy, as the best method to maintain its sovereignty and security. The only way for the Jewish state to survive was by developing such military and technological superiority that the Arabs would recognize the futility of their attacks on the Holy Land. Accordingly, the achievement of peace, as an objective in Israeli policy, “was relegated to a lower rank in the scale of national priorities than security, military power, immigration and economic and technological development.”⁹⁶ This began the start of Ben-Gurionism where “every Arab act of aggression against Israel would be met by an armed response well out of proportion to the initial act itself.”⁹⁷ This overreaction continued into the Suez Occupation of 1956 where the United States thought Israel overstepped its bounds.

Israel was ambivalent toward U.S. military assistance until Czechoslovakia brokered a \$200 million deal with Egypt.⁹⁸ This landmark deal and security cooperation partnership polarized the region into pro-communist and pro-Western (but not necessarily Democratic) camps. Israel began a tepid reciprocal security cooperation relationship with the United States. The United States wanted an effective buffer in the region and Israel needed weapons to defend itself from a technological and numerically superior Egypt. However, Israel overstepped its boundary by occupying the Sinai Peninsula with the air support of France and Britain days after the nationalization of the Suez Canal. “Israel sustained a setback in the intangible realm of its reputation as a law-abiding member of the community of nations. As had happened in connection with the pre-1956 retaliation policy, the provocation was not of sufficient magnitude to keep the label of aggressor from being hung upon Israel.”⁹⁹ The Israelis view any labeling along these lines as both unfair and inaccurate, but the United States and United Nations disagreed. Eisenhower curtly said during the post-occupation that

⁹⁶ Flapan, 343.

⁹⁷ William Cleveland and Martin Bunton. *A history of the modern Middle East*, 330.

⁹⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, 290

⁹⁹ Mark Tessler, *A history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, 352.

“it would indeed be a sad day if the United States ever felt it to had to subject Israel to the same type of moral pressures as is being applied to the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁰ Again, the Israelis felt left betrayed by the Americans.

Bar-Tal and Salomon define collective memory as a story that is “biased, selective, and distorted, that omits certain facts, adds others that did not take place, changes the sequence of events, and purposely reinterprets events that did not take place.”¹⁰¹ The Arab-Israeli conflict is a narrative about selective fact-finding. The Israeli narrative maintains that the U.S. abandoned the Jews during the partition plan, the Holocaust, and the Suez occupation of 1956. This narrative has facets of truth to it. However, upon closer examination, Israel has been as complicit in shooting itself in the foot as often as it has accused its closet allies by being an overbearing, defensive monolith in a sea of real, but third tier enemies. This supposition was prior to the signing of the Camp David Accords.

After the Arab-Israeli wars in the late 1960s and 1970s, large-scale assistance from the United States increased by 47% as the American public felt that the ‘fledgling’ State of Israel was continuously under siege.¹⁰² The threat of another war was partially assuaged after Camp David I with mutual aid packages guaranteed to Israel and Egypt at a ratio of 3:2, ushering in the current precedent of security cooperation. Since the Accords, Israel has received the lion’s share of FMF funding worldwide: 53%,¹⁰³ which amounts to approximately \$10 million every day. FMF consequentially comprises 20% of the overall Israeli defense budget.

Because of its special relationship with the United States, there are many benefits that Israel is afforded to which no other country in the world is entitled. Qualitative Military Edge (QME)--the idea that Israel is reliant on superior technology to maintain its advantage in an adversarial

¹⁰⁰ Tessler, 355

¹⁰¹ Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salomon, *History's double helix: The intertwined narratives of Israel/Palestine*, 23.

¹⁰² Jeremy Sharp, "US foreign aid to Israel," 26.

¹⁰³ Sharp, 5.

neighborhood--is chief among these benefits. Informally understood and executed for decades by U.S. lawmakers, QME was only recently codified in law in 2008 by the George W. Bush administration (due in large part to unconditional support and pressure from the Evangelical Christian section of the Republican party).¹⁰⁴ Controversially, Public Law 110-429, Section 36 gives Congress (and to some extent Israel) the ability to veto aid “to any country in the Middle East other than Israel.” The Obama administration made subsequent amendments predicated on evaluating “how such a sale or export alters the strategic and tactical balance in the region, including relative capabilities.”

Moreover, this bilateral relationship is unique in a plethora of other ways. Israel is the only country that is afforded Cash Flow Financing,¹⁰⁵ which allows installment buying for big-ticket items that cannot be covered with its designated \$3.1 billion in one fiscal year. The U.S. Congress contrived this \$3.1 billion with informed help of Israeli authorities during the George W. Bush administration in 2008. This aid is given to the Israeli Ministry of Defense but further allocated at the brigade level. The most recent and largest multi-year contracts have called for the purchase of nine C-130J cargo planes and twenty A-64 Apache attack helicopters.¹⁰⁶

In another exception for Israel, this aid is deposited within the first 30 days of the fiscal year in an interest-bearing account, allowing Israel to pay down other debts. Another exception is that the United States’ Office of Defense Cooperation is not headquartered in the embassy in the capital, like every other partnership office, but at the Israeli Ministry of Defense-New York City (MOD-NYC), which has a direct liaison relationship with the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. This direct relationship allows the Israelis to bypass some of the bureaucracy that every other ally must endure and enables Israel to have more technocrats litigiously eyeing each contract.

¹⁰⁴ Shibley Telhami’s upcoming work on Evangelical Christian support of Israel.

¹⁰⁵ Sharp, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Interview of a U.S. defense official U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv on 26 June 2015.

Israel is the only country that is authorized to use the aforementioned FMF budget to purchase items that Israeli defense firms make in Israel. The FMF for in-country purchases has strengthened the defense firms of Israel, but has also caused them to be dependent on arms exports--as much as 75% of their output--to maintain profitability.¹⁰⁷ Israel is also the only U.S. ally (including NATO partners) who has been offered the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jet, and will have a fleet of 33 by 2021.¹⁰⁸ Israel also has stockpiles of U.S. munitions in Israel without the normal accompaniment of U.S. troops, as well as an extensive research and development program for anti-tunneling technology that is being aided by the United States.

This \$124 billion in aggregate aid, and the special nuances with which this aid is delivered and implemented, has made the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) the most well-trained and best-supplied military in the Middle East. The looming threat of being attacked by a neighboring country, group of countries, or non-state actors is embedded in the psyche of the IDF and arguably is an integral part of the national psyche more generally. However, even senior Israeli diplomats doubt that there is any longer an existential threat to Israel. Former Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren said the Gulf Cooperation Council countries “do not represent a meaningful threat”¹⁰⁹ to Israel. Absent an existential threat, it is difficult to justify why Israel should have such special treatment, nor such unquestioned military support, not least with the reality of ongoing human rights violations in the West Bank and Gaza.

How does Israel view its relationship with the U.S. military?

Israel’s go-it-alone attitude has been shaped by the aforementioned sense of abandonment from Allies. Even prior to the Iranian Nuclear Negotiations, when relations were a little warmer, the

¹⁰⁷ Sharp, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Mazzetti, “Sale of U.S. Arms Fuels the Wars of Arab States,” *New York Times*, April 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/world/middleeast/sale-of-us-arms-fuels-the-wars-of-arab-states.html>

IDF constructed its Operation Plans for go-to-war scenarios without regard to any direct foreign military intervention, even from the United States.¹¹⁰ Simply put, the IDF expects the world to turn its back on them during their time of greatest need.

This sense of abandonment easily couples with unreliability. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu displayed open disgust for President Obama and the Democratic Party writ large when he addressed the U.S. Congress for a third time on March 3, 2015.¹¹¹ Ramifications from that conversation are still playing out at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv; conversations have been less inclusive with U.S. Defense Officials and backdoor conversation with Israeli MOD-NYC are occurring in hopes of securing another 10-year commitment (this time over \$4 billion a year) from the United States while the Likud Party is clinging to power and while a Evangelical Republican Congress is still in the majority.

That being said, QME still defines the IDF's relationship with the U.S. military. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Israeli domestic lobby in the United States, will ensure its best and brightest lawyers keep the money coming. The United States, with a slow divestment from the region, sees this money as a small price to pay for at least one pillar of stability.

How the United States views its relationship with IDF?

Israel is the best military in the Middle East, and it might be the only success story for U.S. capacity building in the region. The accumulative \$124.3 billion it has used since its inception in 1948 is in no small part the reason that the State of Israel is as strong as it is today. Its good

¹¹⁰ Interview with a U.S. defense official at U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv on 26 June 2015.

¹¹¹ Washington Post Staff, "The Complete transcript of Netanyahu's address to Congress," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/03/03/full-text-netanyahus-address-to-congress/>

management of its training program and mediocre execution of combined-arms operations make the Israeli military synergistically better than the sum of its parts.¹¹²

The IDF is also seen as a liability. In a U.S. Special Operations Command training exercise in early 2012, operators were put into isolation for a week to develop contingency plans in case the United States was forced into war with Iran because of a “Third Party Attack” on the Islamic Republic.¹¹³ In stark contrast to Israel’s war plans without the assistance of the United States, the USG specifically plans to go to war because Israel has strategically roped it into certain conflicts.

One final aspect that was reiterated at the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv was the one-dimensional approach to war-fighting and problem-solving by the IDF. Because Israel has learned to be on the defensive because of multiple territorial intrusions by its Arab neighbors, it tends to look at its defense posturing as its modus operandi. With the exception of a few counter-terrorism units that are accustomed to thinking asymmetrically as to how it can contain threats, most conscripts within the IDF have little flexibility in tactical thinking, which oftentimes is mimicked in their problem-solving in general.

In what capacity is the IDF actually utilized by the State?

The IDF’s utilization has changed since its beginnings as the Haganah as a defender against external threats. As mentioned above, the Israelis have consciously structured their own military doctrine to take advantage of this perceived weakness amidst menacing neighbors.¹¹⁴ However, the existential external threat to Israel remains low. Instead, a shift from worrying about external threats to targeting internal threats has occurred. Although the IDF still defensively patrols fence lines and 40-foot walls, these are walls that its own government has established for the Palestinians. Thanks

¹¹² Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 45.

¹¹³ Author’s first-hand experience at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

¹¹⁴ Pollack, 44.

to technologically superior equipment like the Iron Dome that intercepts rockets from southern Lebanon and the Gaza strip, the main fears of Israelis are currently kidnappings (through tunnels) and one-off stabbings. In effect, the IDF has become a gendarmerie, a mechanism for population control that is usually more akin to a ministry of interior (MOI) function, rather than a protector from external threats.

Another utilization, the IDF and its mandatory conscription (two years for females, three for males, starting upon high school graduation) act as a national indoctrination tool. By having a shared military background and shared military experiences, it is an incredible way for an entire population to maintain the same shared heritage. The importance of this experience cannot be overstated. Governmental indoctrination, for better *and* worse, will bring people together under a shared narrative, and can have lasting effects for generations.

Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?

No. U.S. policy requires all recipients of military assistance to use this aid in providing the common defense for its people. By utilizing the IDF as more of an internal security force (MOI), rather than a force to exclusively combat nefarious external threats (like the MOD), Israel is showing that it no longer needs the aid as qualitatively as it has in the past. Because of AIPAC and other domestic lobbying groups, the \$3.1 billion and Israel's QME will not be changing anytime soon, even if American sentiment is slowly moving in favor of the Palestinians.

What are the policy considerations based off this “Internal Security Force” paradigm?

1. *When does quantity become quality?* When a military has a deficit-focused security lens, there will never be enough money or equipment to satisfy its thirst for invincibility- even when the perceived threat does not really exist. QME has stalled deals with countries in the

GCC because the sheer quantity of what a country like Qatar is asking for (73 F-15 Strike Eagle fighters) becomes a quality all of its own.¹¹⁵ This needy relationship has its cost. When the deal was stalled with the United States, Qatar bought 24 Rafale fighters from France instead to the tune of \$7 billion last year.

2. *Two sides of the coin.* With increasing focus on internal security tensions, the United States should find ways to balance what is increasingly becoming a police state. General Keith Dayton's inject of \$80 million in training and equipping of the Palestinian Authority Forces was welcomed by the IDF in 2007.¹¹⁶ Since that time, the PA security forces (PASF) have developed into a professional corps working in cooperation with the US and IDF despite Israeli constraints to their legitimate use of force. This inject also led to increase cooperation in other sectors, and should be exploited more fully.
3. *Look for the small victories.* Another way to take the focus off its internal policing mechanism is to continue cooperative development between U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the PA. The city of Jenin, which was once the home of suicide vest attacks, is now a thriving success story in the West Bank, allowing over \$15 million to be pushed into the Palestinian economy last year.¹¹⁷ With every development project that is focused on commerce, rather than governance or security, there is less suspicion and scrutiny by the Israelis and more lenience for the local market system to grow from an organic need. USAID has done incredible work in coordinating these efforts with the Defense Department and should continue to do so.

¹¹⁵ Dan DeLuce, "Qatar Wants to Buy Dozens of U.S. Warplanes. Why Won't Washington Sell Them?" *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/29/qatar-wants-to-buy-dozens-of-u-s-warplanes-why-wont-washington-sell-them/>

¹¹⁶ Elliott Abrams, *Tested by Zion: the Bush administration and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, 237-8.

¹¹⁷ Interview of USAID director in Tel Aviv on 03 June 2015.

Chapter Six

Republic of Yemen: Telephone Diplomacy in a Collapsed State

“The story of Yemen is that of economic disaster. Currently, inflation is between 30-35%, the state has lost two-thirds of its foreign reserves (from \$5.1 billion to \$1.3 billion), revenue is down 50%, public debt is up 20%, and unemployment is hovering around 70-80%... and that’s the good news... it could be much worse.”

~ Husam Al-Sharjabi, former acting Minister of Finance of Yemen, 13 April 2016

Literature Review

There is no simple way to digest the current situation in Yemen. Looking at the military paradigm is important, but is not enough to understand a system of patronage detailed under its former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. In a departure from the previous chapters, this history will be much more inclusive of the economic paradigm of national power. Since the Houthi revolt and takeover of Sana’a in 2014, there has been limited academic literature on the current state of the republic because its transparency has been all but obfuscated.

Victoria Clark’s *Yemen: Dancing on the Head of Snakes*, is the definitive guide for the country’s history of intervention prior to Houthi revolt. As a British citizen born in Aden, Clark writes a non-academic prescription as to why Ali Abdullah Saleh has described governing Yemen like “dancing on the heads of snakes.” Specific to the U.S. military assistance portion, Clark’s addition was her close read of the symbiotic relationship between George W. Bush and Saleh. In the end, her account attributes the lack of leadership that has so embedded itself in society and will take decades to undo, all because of Saleh’s incessant power-grab. She has been indelibly correct.

Alex DeWaal’s *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*, is not a Yemen-centric source. However, his thoughts on how the “political marketplace”- where loyalties are most often purchased in collapsed countries- are the best read for Foreign Service Officers who are going to be stationed anywhere a long-lasting autocracy has taken root. DeWaal’s recounting of not just why, but how Saleh uses terrorism to fund him with equipment and

buy him loyalty forms the foundation of the section- *In what capacity is Yemen actually utilizing its military?*

Finally, Greg Johnsen's *The Last Refuge* offers the most recent accounts of what is happening in Yemen with special emphasis on the counter-Al-Qaeda drone campaign. His detailed research was a validation of what the author knew from his time in Sana'a with the Special Operations. Adding to this research, it showed specifically how Bush pulled aid from Saleh when he chose not to fight Al-Qaeda with enough fervor. It also showed the manifestations of the Special Operations Forces on the ground- first with Bush, then Obama- and ultimately how a policy of containment was easier than keeping boots-on-ground indefinitely. This book is a must for those studying transnational terrorist networks and Yemeni politics.

History of Yemen's Economic Mismanagement and U.S. Security Assistance

Yemen's laundry list of problems has been a balancing act of resources for governments and international aid agencies for the past few decades. There has been no lack of issues to tackle in managing illegal African immigration, drying deep-well aquifers, khat addiction, malnutrition, terrorist safe havens, child marriage, and constant tribal conflict prior to the Arab Spring.¹¹⁸ Most recently, Operation Decisive Storm, the Saudi-led bombing campaign against the Houthis, and its subsequent humanitarian crisis has amplified the political and military problems of this south Arabian country.

The resultant economic quagmire is often seen as a side effect, rather than a root cause, of why the situation has deteriorated. This outline posits that the opposite is quite true; that the long-term economic failures gave birth to the current situation. These failures started with former

¹¹⁸ Todd Dahmann, "Yemen: Capacity, Collapse, and Doughnuts," *Fletcher Forum*, March 22, 2016, <http://www.fletcherforum.org/2016/03/22/dahmann>

president Ali Abdullah Saleh who specifically designed institutions to reinforce a system of patronage that wove itself deep into the social fabric of society. Saleh's system of patronage had three devastating side effects for the Yemeni economy: it left him in total control of the oil subsidies, it left his country without the technical expertise to provide for its own people, and it left neighboring countries, non-state actors, and proxies with the need to intervene in the form of conditional aid.

Before looking at these three side effects, one must first understand the economic history of infrastructure in the Yemeni state. The story of Yemen's current economic collapse began in the 1970s when the developmental oil infrastructure of the 1950s came to fruition in the Arabian Gulf, along with increasing Western reliance on this oil. Infrastructure begat more infrastructure, and the demand for unskilled labor soared around the Gulf. Saudi Arabia alone had a labor requirement of 1,968,000 compared to its population of 1.3 million.¹¹⁹ Yemeni short-term migrants were welcomed with open arms in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and by 1976, 97% of the 740,000 short-term migrants¹²⁰ in North Yemen were living comfortably without work permits or sponsorship because of the open border policy. These migrants sent back remittances to the tune of \$526 million,¹²¹ totaling over 90% of the gross domestic product (GDP).¹²² These remittances became the backbone of the economy in both the Yemen Arab Republic in the north and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south.

What came to form in Yemen (as in most developing countries) was a booming informal service sector at the expense of industrialization. The Yemeni temp help in the Kingdom continued to see its income rise, and a need for more sophisticated banking, transportation, and

¹¹⁹ Nora Ann Colton, "Yemen: A Collapsed Economy," 411.

¹²⁰ Colton, 412.

¹²¹ Lee Ann Ross, "Yemen Migration – Blessing and Dilemma," *USAID*, 1977, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAP404.pdf

¹²² Mahmoud Ali Al-Iriani, "Migration, remittances and economic development in the Yemen Arab Republic," *Iowa State University*, 1987, <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=17566&context=rtd>

communication systems in place to get this money back into Yemen. However, the divided government never had a system in place to develop the industrial infrastructure required to equalize the service and industrial sectors.¹²³ This problem could have worked itself out, except for reverse migration.

In 1990, Saleh, Gaddafi, and Arafat cast their vote in favor of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait when every other Arab country stood at its defense. In retaliation, Saudi Arabia tightened its immigration laws overnight and within the span of a few months, 800,000 Yemenis¹²⁴ were deported and reabsorbed into North and South Yemen. These returnees were often not welcomed by their families because life was already painful without the added stress of extended family. These returnees also experienced a higher quality-of-life while in KSA and they brought that expectation back home. To add insult to injury, Secretary Baker promised Yemen that its decision would cost them dearly and using his coalition-building acumen, foreign aid plummeted from an average of \$25.5 million annually to a low of \$191,364 in 1991.¹²⁵ The nail in the coffin was the simultaneous decline of oil prices during this time. This decision by Saleh, coupled with the lack of coherent infrastructural development policies, cost the North Yemeni economy profoundly.

During reunification in 1990, Saleh as the President of the Republic of Yemen, still neglected to look at the reforms in its legal apparatus or in its infrastructure. To this day, the Yemeni legal system could be loosely defined as a set of laws without proper enforcement. With minimal accountability and transparency, and even less enforcement, there are few protections for the private sector. This lack of a consistent rule of law detracted foreign investors from setting up shop in Yemen, but it didn't stop Saleh from amassing more power. Saleh concentrated his power around a small group of Yemenis in his family, military, and security forces. In various parts of the

¹²³ Colton, 413.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 415.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 416.

country, Saleh has been accused of “targeting industries”¹²⁶ for personal gain at the expense of the nation. This resulted in the three aforementioned side effects.

First, oil subsidies were under complete governmental control. When Yemen became an independent oil producer in the 1986, Saleh had all the leverage he would need to govern this tribal country by “dancing on the heads of snakes.”¹²⁷ Oil royalties replaced remittances as the country’s primary source of foreign exchange. These royalties did not spur long-term growth because Saleh used the funds to buy tribal allegiances, expand bureaucracy with patronage jobs across the ministries, and depress energy prices encouraging oil smuggling on the black market.¹²⁸ By 1990, tribal loyalties had been purchased with oil proceeds and the guarantee of security from Saleh’s military in exchange for degrees of autonomy in pursuing their interests.¹²⁹ The General People’s Congress (GPC), a political party that purportedly includes all views and dominated the north, was another vehicle for arranging deals. Most ministers, businessmen, national and local leaders, had a vested interest in being a part of the GPC, even if they rarely pretended to follow a coherent ideology.¹³⁰

In February 2015, members of the United Nations’ Panel of Experts on Yemen published a 54-page letter that suggested that Saleh was able to “amass assets between \$32 billion and \$60 billion, most of which are believed to have been transferred abroad under false names or the names of others holding the assets on his behalf.”¹³¹ These assets originated from a combination of corrupt practices as president, such as granting exclusive prospect rights to certain gas and oil companies and from stealing from the fuel subsidy program, which uses up to ten percent of Yemen’s GDP. This revenue is in addition to that which came from his abuse of power, assumed embezzlement,

¹²⁶ Nicole Stracke and Mohammed Saif Haidar, “The Southern Movement in Yemen,” 4-5.

¹²⁷ Victoria Clark, *Yemen: dancing on the heads of snakes*, 145.

¹²⁸ Jeremy Sharp, “Yemen: Background and US relations,” 20.

¹²⁹ Noel Brehony, *Yemen divided: the story of a failed state in South Arabia*, 183.

¹³⁰ Brehony, 183.

¹³¹ UN Security Council, S/2015/125, 44, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_125.pdf

and oft-noted extortion. The net result of these criminal activities for private gain is in the ballpark of \$2 billion a year over the past three decades.¹³²

The second side effect from Saleh's system of patronage was having minimal technical expertise to run the government. Saleh deliberately chose policies that kept the public uneducated and never developed fully functioning civil structures in an effort to parry away competition. The net result of these policies, however, is an adult (male and female) literacy rate hovering around 61%.¹³³ Without a literate public, private ventures (like microfinance that has only penetrated three percent¹³⁴ of the market) and public ventures (like the High Relief Committee (HRC) that has no office space in Riyadh¹³⁵) have suffered in Yemen where they have been successful other failed states. These difficulties are only exacerbated in times of war, leaving Yemenis at the mercy of a broken bureaucracy.

The final way Ali Abdullah Saleh profited from his system of patronage was through his desire for multinational patronage and the resources that come from those international partners. His policies targeted intervention from neighboring countries, proxies, and non-state actors. At times, these policies contradicted themselves, all in an effort to guarantee more money flowing into his deep pockets, rather than into the lifeline of a stable economy.

International intervention, by choice or by necessity, has been in place long before Saleh took over the reigns of government, and with this intervention came aid. During the Ottoman Empire, the Egyptians decided that it would be mistake not to occupy this "land with no lord" that could supply Constantinople with an abundance of jewels. The British ruled Colonial Aden from 1890 until 1964 securing their Passage to India under the auspices of "protection and friendship."

¹³² S/2015/125, 46.

¹³³ World Bank. *World development report 2011*, 344.

¹³⁴ Ali Saleh Alshebami and D. M. Khandare, "Microfinance in Yemen: Challenges and Opportunities," 404.

¹³⁵ Rafat Al-Akhali and Ala Qasem, "Yemen Transition 2.0: Government efforts in aid coordination during the conflict," 5.

During World War II, Aden grew to become the second largest seaport in the world behind New York.¹³⁶ During the spread of Communism, North Yemen became a battleground between Saudi Arabia, Britain and Jordan, and the rebels backed by Egypt. The six-year war ending in 1968 resulted in an influx of weapons and assistance from both the Soviet Union and Western allies.

Most of this intervention and assistance had limited effects on the overall population of Yemen, especially in the south. In a July 2008 exposé in the *New York Times* concerning equal development in the north and south of Yemen, an angry Saleh stated that there was comprehensive development in the south in the form of electrical projects, roads, universities, and the restoration of publically confiscated properties during Marxist rule. The grim reality found by outside entities was that three-quarters of these projects failed or were severely delayed.¹³⁷ Most of these development dollars were too small and too conditioned to pique Saleh's interest. That all changed after the *USS Cole* was attacked off the coast of Aden in 2000.

The bombing of the billion-dollar vessel, killing 17 sailors, did not immediately place military aid in the hands of the Republic of Yemen Government. U.S. Ambassador Barbara Bodine saw the incident this way: "The attack on the *Cole* was a hostile act, but this was not a hostile government or a hostile people."¹³⁸ At the time, Saleh seemed more reluctant than anyone to realize that a homegrown terrorist problem would ruin rapprochement with the United States.¹³⁹ The Yemeni authorities approached the *USS Cole* investigation the way they approach every major case. "They arrested everyone they could find and then began the slow process of sorting them out. Suspects were guilty until proven innocent."¹⁴⁰ Saleh slowly realized that there was big profit for him in the insurgency business, and as long as the Sunni extremists that had bled over from Saudi

¹³⁶ Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The price of wealth: Economies and institutions in the Middle East*, 117.

¹³⁷ Clark, 246.

¹³⁸ Gregory Johnsen, *The last refuge: Yemen, Al-Qaeda, and the battle for Arabia*, 74.

¹³⁹ Clark, 173.

¹⁴⁰ Johnsen, 76.

Arabia are operating in the southern desert, they are not much of a threat to him. This windfall was only amplified after the 9/11 attacks on American soil, and Saleh opportunistically saw the Global War on Terror as one more way for him to buy loyalties.

In sum, the patronage network that Saleh established over his thirty years of rule made him rich, impoverished his country (intellectually and economically), and made international intervention mandatory because he could no longer provide for the common needs of his people. By 2010, Yemen recorded an unemployment rate of 40%, had a per capita GDP of \$2,500 and half of the Yemenis were living on less than \$2.00 a day.¹⁴¹ A year later, the situation came to a head with the Arab Spring. Fearing the plight of his fellow Gulf autocrats, Saleh voluntarily chose to step down from the presidency, but he never relinquished his power. Now, with the proliferation of AQAP in the east and the Houthis in historic North Yemen, the 21 million Yemenis who are dependent on humanitarian assistance are at the mercy of sectarian-aligned, inconsistent aid, rather than Yemeni structures like the HRC.

How Yemen views its relationship with the U.S. military?

Yemen, during the Ali Abdullah Saleh years, looked to the United States as a donor with limitless funds. This was amplified when Saleh met George W. Bush at the White House in November 2001. Bush promised to give Saleh a few million dollars worth of military equipment and surveillance technology with the promise from Saleh that he would slay the jihadi dragon.¹⁴² The awkward exchange ended with no firm cost cap for support to Yemen. This ambiguity allowed Yemen to perceive its relationship with the United States as something that can continually be renegotiated.

¹⁴¹ Colton, 418.

¹⁴² Clark, 176.

Three years later, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Lincoln Bloomfield Jr. visited Sana'a to meet with Saleh and his top military commanders after intelligence reports of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) having acquired surface-to-air missiles to target airliners. He was there to implement a buyback program of man-portable air-defense-systems (MANPADS). Yemen had 1,500 MANPADS in storage and dozens more in the hands of arms dealers throughout the country. Saleh told Bloomfield "Rest assured, Yemen will not have such weapons anymore. But everything has a price. You will have to pay one million dollars for each."¹⁴³ The interpreter broke the silence saying that this was intended as a joke, but the expectation was maintained that the United States would more than cover than the black market going rate. One day earlier on his trip, Bloomfield also received sarcastic comments concerning a spare parts contract for its fleet of C-130 cargo planes that it had received from the United States. Yemen had expected a lot more in return for defeating AQAP.¹⁴⁴ Yemen had become a beggar and a chooser.

Today, Yemen views the United States in much the same way, however, with the understanding that any aid (military or humanitarian) is going to be limited because of the ground situation. The U.S. Embassy is operating in exile as the Yemen Assistance Unit in Jeddah, KSA. The Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG), which is currently living in exile in Riyadh, has limited means to operate. Some government officials still do not have office space in which to work.¹⁴⁵ It hopes to maintain its relationship with the United States so that when a successful peace deal has been brokered with the Houthis, a resumption of military aid and humanitarian assistance can quickly be used to rebuild the country.

¹⁴³ Johnsen, 154.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 155.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Akhali, 5.

How the United States views its relationship with Yemen's military?

In most civil war states where the United States has a presence, it is there because of one reason: defense of the homeland. Yemen is no exception to this rule. Yemen has the unfortunate plight of being just small enough that it does not attract substantial amounts of U.S. military aid (in comparison to other regional civil wars). However, the catastrophe in Yemen is big enough that it cannot be ignored altogether. The current administration prefers to deal with these types of collapsing civil war states with limited military equipment, special operations training, and drone strikes. This trifecta allows the United States to be involved in containment, rather than direct operations. This allows its leaders to understand what is going on by having personnel advising the ground campaign without having too much skin in a game in a country that has an unclear outcome.

From 2001-2005, there was a steady trickle of Navy SEALs who worked to specifically bolster the Yemeni Special Operations Forces (YSOF) and Army Green Berets who helped train the Ministry of Interior Counter-Terrorism Battalion within the Central Security Forces (CSF).¹⁴⁶ These forces worked throughout the countryside working as trainers and advisors. When the mission dictated, these forces would also work in conjunction with CIA and DOD drones that flew in from Djibouti.¹⁴⁷

In the past five years since Saleh stepped down and President Abd Rabboh Mansur Hadi has assumed the office, there has been a sea change to the approach of USG counter-terrorism efforts in Yemen. It would be incorrect to say that the policy change was because of U.S. lessons learned after an analysis of how Saleh abused military aid. Although there were many lessons learned from the collapse of the country after the Arab Spring, the change in policy occurred because of congressional restrictions and the Houthis siege of Sana'a.

¹⁴⁶ Johnsen, 180.

¹⁴⁷ Johnsen, 119.

Like Egypt, whenever there is an ordered departure of U.S. Embassy personnel, congressionally funded aid (all FMS and FMF) is halted. From April 2011 until September 2012, there was a full stop on all aid to Yemen. When the aid was eventually turned back on because the embassy was able to function with more than a skeleton crew, the embassy personnel were in a panic with what to do with the aid. The vast majority of this aid was destined for units that were still loyal to Saleh. U.S. Ambassador Gerald Feierstein, testified in front of congress to stop the flow of aid that September, but because the cases were already granted, Congress said that the delivery was still going to happen and the embassy better find a better place to park the new Hummers and Counter-Terrorist kit. Years later, the Office of Defense Cooperation at the YAU has learned that it must be very specific with the unit it chooses to give military resources, or be very selective of more innocuous gear, such as bullet-proof vests, riot control gear, and explosive detection kits.¹⁴⁸

When the Houthis took over the capital of Sana'a in September 2014 and made their slow trek south to Aden, the majority of the Western embassies packed their bags and left for neighboring Saudi Arabia. While implementing aid was difficult in Sana'a because of travel restrictions, it is even more difficult for the United States when it is not in the country where the aid is supposed to be delivered. Most direct military aid at this point ceased.

The current turmoil has refocused U.S. military efforts on the Al-Qaeda fight in Hadramawt Governorate. This time the campaign is without robust security assistance packages in the form of weapons and Special Ops assisting the Yemenis; instead, it is reliant almost entirely on drone strikes. Consistent with U.S. policy, there has been no targeting of the Houthis. As of the time of this writing, Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm has cost over 3,200 Yemeni civilians their lives. This prickly issue, will come back to haunt the coalition that supports these strikes.

¹⁴⁸ Based on the author's experience working at the U.S. Embassy Sana'a in 2012.

The United States has moved away from a solely belligerent strategy, the United States has also contributed more than \$317 million in humanitarian assistance for Yemen the past two fiscal years through the U.S. Agency for International Development.¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, this aid comes at a time of national triage where lasting infrastructural change, on the ground or through legal mandates, is an afterthought.

In what capacity is Yemen actually utilizing its military?

For a decade, Saleh deliberately used the crisis of the AQAP in South Yemen to keep his patronage system running. “Solving the security crisis by defeating Al-Qaeda was not in Saleh’s interest, as he discovered in late 2005 when his near-complete defeat of the jihadists resulted, not in American accolades and rewards, but in cutbacks in security aid and criticism over corruption. Saleh was more threatened by a diminished political budget than by Islamist militants.”¹⁵⁰ Saleh quickly found that if there was a brooding insurgency, the United States would be willing to pump more money into the problem rather than conditioning counter-terrorism assistance to the government’s level of effort. This created a *rentier* opportunity where Saleh could support those units most loyal to him with the best possible equipment and training from Uncle Sam.

The best example of how their military barely held up their end of the bargain was during the storming of the U.S. Embassy Sana’a on September 13, 2012. Two days after the Benghazi attack and a viral video that portrayed the Prophet in a negative light, protestors looted 16 embassies across the Middle East and North Africa. In Sana’a, there was \$42 million worth of vehicular and

¹⁴⁹ “United States Announces Nearly \$139 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for Yemen,” *USAID Press Office*, April 6, 2016. <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/apr-6-2016-united-states-announces-nearly-139-million-humanitarian-assistance>

¹⁵⁰ Alex DeWaal, *The real politics of the Horn of Africa*, 184.

infrastructural damage. The CSF, which were situated outside the front gates, took over three hours to finally clear the embassy grounds of protestors, which is their only job.¹⁵¹

Is this utilization consistent with USG policy?

No. Under Saleh's tenure, the manipulation of funds for personal patronage was inconsistent with how U.S. security assistance was designed to be used. Currently, the USG is simultaneously fighting a terrorist insurgency (AQAP) that has been a problem for over 15 years in Yemen, not intervening in the Houthi homegrown insurgency, and lessening the suffering on the 21 million Yemenis that are food poor on a daily basis. To affect these three goals from a location outside of Yemen is a difficult task, and the only way to implement that strategy is through containment. The problem with containment is that there is no reliance, and therefore, no buy-in from the Yemeni Ministry of Defense officials; especially a ministry that has been dismantled of capacity and weapons because of the Houthis plundering of its armories.

What are the policy implications based off this paradigm?

Ali Abdullah Saleh designed a deep-rooted network of patronage that left Yemen's economy in shambles and left its people at the mercy of a despotic government. Saleh's grip on oil royalties led him to personally amass billions and pay off tribal loyalties at the expense of lasting legal and logistical infrastructures. By never developing a functioning education system, the former president kept his constituents in the dark and any competition at bay without the technical expertise to run a bureaucracy. Finally, Saleh's desire for international donations led him to entertain a small insurgency in the south so that he could receive more military aid from the U.S. and use that equipment to maintain loyalty from his elite units.

¹⁵¹ Based on the author's experience working at the U.S. Embassy Sana'a in 2012.

This leaves U.S. diplomats with a few policy considerations:

1. *Telephone diplomacy.* Operating outside of a country is never easy, but networking with those with daily connections in Sana'a is even more important now than in the past.
2. *Be intentional with aid.* Just because there has been a precedent in the past to spend millions in the budget that are allocated to aid, does not mean that it has to be spent. Turning off cases that have already received the stamp by government is incredibly difficult. Selecting the right type of equipment, at the right time, for the right unit is of utmost importance. Always be cognizant that materiel might be put on hold because of complications.
3. *Legal framework.* The constant plea from the economic research is finding a legal framework for private enterprises to thrive. Without consumer protections, grassroots businesses will never be secure enough to replace the system of patronage that took decades to emplace, especially during a civil war.

Chapter Seven

Summary and Conclusions

“Military operations cannot be tidy or free of friction – particularly in a coalition whose contributing nations see the campaign through national prisms.”

~ General Sir Michael David Jackson (British Army)

Summary

U.S. **capacity building** has been limited in many countries in the Middle East because of the way that host nation uses its military. These five case studies demonstrate that there is often a divergence between how the United States perceives a host nation using security assistance and how that foreign military ultimately uses that aid for its own agenda. Lastly, each of these case studies looks at geopolitical considerations for U.S. diplomats’ continued use of military aid amidst changing and increasingly uncertain times.

In Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is changing the landscape for diplomatic relations. The easing of economic sanctions is going to have effects on the **Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps**. The Guards have directly profited from sanctions because they control the black market, and they have indirectly benefited from its contracts with hundreds of private companies with ties to the military. As the Guards’ economic subsistence wanes and its clout shifts to Iranian diplomats, there will be a domestic power struggle in the Islamic Republic. This change of focus will affect its relationship with Iran’s proxies, which have already become overextended in Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon. With too many irons-in-the fire, Iran would be wise to look for diplomatic opportunities to ensure its internal stability, and U.S. diplomats should come to the negotiation table with an open mind.

As for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the **Saudi Arabian Armed Forces** (SAAF) have been a lackluster, *status quo* ally for the past sixty years, offering little more than large contracts. However, since the onset of Operation Decisive Storm, this perception has been

changing. For the first time in the history of its relationship, U.S. officials are seeing leadership, planning, and coordination efforts from the Saudis. This operation, which celebrated its first anniversary in March 2016, has taken its toll on Yemeni civilians with over 3,200 dead. The United States will continue its \$4.6 billion security cooperation contracts with the Kingdom despite these munitions fueling this humanitarian crisis.

From a Foreign Service foxhole, policymakers need to understand that KSA's proclivity toward unilateral action exists because they see the Houthi takeover as an existential threat. This, in turn, will continue to feed the Sunni-Shia divide. As the United States continues to look for leadership in the Gulf so that it can focus its interests elsewhere, the Kingdom is stepping up to the plate. Their leadership should be encouraged, but also monitored; after the fog of war, the humanitarian crisis, war crimes, and prolonged grievances will need to be addressed by both Saudi and Yemeni governments for any hope of a lasting peace.

The **Egyptian Armed Forces** (EAF) is a byproduct of over sixty years of a bloated bureaucracy with its hands controlling over forty percent of the economy. As a post-revolutionary police state, the Egyptian military is used to both execute the will of the people and to regulate the people. The U.S. military relationship has never been fixated on the effectiveness of EAF, rather its shared security with Israel, the geostrategic importance of the Suez Canal, and Egypt's symbolic value as a democratic hope for a region that is constantly in flames. U.S. policymakers need to know that Egypt sees the United States as an unreliable partner, and that it is starting to diversify its options and arsenal around partners from its colonial and ideological past.

The **Israeli Defense Forces** (IDF) are the best-equipped and best-trained troops in the region, thanks in no small part to the largest U.S. military assistance package in the world. This capacity building success story along with the signing of the JCPOA has made Israel and the Gulf unlikely bedfellows, virtually eliminating the threat of invasion for the first time in its history.

While the external borders are hardening, the internal borders are becoming untenable and the IDF continues to be employed as an internal security force against the Palestinians. In the current political climate, the *status quo* is the endgame for Israel. U.S. public opinion is slowly changing in favor of the Palestinians, and U.S. diplomats will need to question assumptions about how its \$10 million daily contribution to the IDF is being used to bring about peace and maintain stability. This cross-examination is especially important when there is ample evidence in the West Bank substantiating the effectiveness of developmental dollars over security funding.

Finally, the **Yemeni Special Operations Forces (YSOF)** and **Central Security Forces** are remnants of Saleh's regime that are not currently in operation, but should be a stark reminder that systems of patronage exist in every type of government. Saleh intentionally created weak legal, educational, and infrastructural systems so that he could remain in power. The U.S. counter-terrorism training and equipment that these Yemeni Spec Ops received was sufficiently funded to help Saleh create a *rentier* enterprise where he could exchange loyalty for the best equipment and highest profile missions. Operation Decisive Storm has left the country in triage politically and physically: with the Yemeni Government in exile and 2.5 million internally displaced people. Now, even getting foodstuffs and medicine to war-torn Yemenis is becoming a sectarian issue with conditioned aid from foreign governments. The fighting will eventually stop, and when it does, U.S. officials should do everything in their power to restructure institutions that were designed to fail.

Conclusions

The United States of America is a nation of capacity building, democracy-loving people. More often than not, they think that building another country up in its likeness will enable that country to succeed like America for the good of the global economy and global. Fifteen years of war has proved otherwise. Ask any vet below the rank of lieutenant colonel who served in Iraqi or

Afghanistan to hear how effective large-scale capacity building ventures turn out. Perhaps more disturbingly, one could expand the timeline and pull the curtains back on the relationships with our closest allies in the region- like the five investigated here- and still uncover the same conclusion.

Western relationships in the Middle East are complicated by an amalgam of competing interests: historic distrust of colonial powers, “resource curses” that control the production of oil and natural gas, patronage states that were never intended to function efficiently, and post-Arab Spring fledgling democracies that simultaneously demand security and liberty, just to name a few. A recent interview with Obama highlights these complexities.

Obama has come to a number of dovetailing conclusions about the world, and about America’s role in it. The first is that the Middle East is no longer terribly important to American interests. The second is that even if the Middle East were surpassingly important, there would still be little an American president could do to make it a better place. The third is that the innate desire to fix the sorts of problems that manifest themselves most drastically in the Middle East inevitably leads to warfare, to the deaths of U.S. soldiers, and to the eventual hemorrhaging of U.S. credibility and power. The fourth is that the world cannot afford to see the diminishment of U.S. power.¹⁵²

Jeffrey Goldberg’s last point is the most poignant and the most intriguing. How, as diplomats working in the Middle East, is it possible to reassure allies that they are important while simultaneously pulling away from the region because it no longer is?

Diplomacy is one answer. Open and direct engagement with political parties and non-state actors in countries where communication is not always encouraged (and sometimes outlawed) will require critical thinking and creative problem solving. This does not equate to more diplomacy. Americans don’t need more diplomacy- they need better diplomacy.

Information and economic elements of national power are other possible solutions. Controlling the narrative of how American action is perceived is more important than the decision itself. Developing trade relations can be even more lucrative than increasing security ones.

¹⁵² Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April 2016, p 68-71.

Military engagement is another key. Capacity building can be an abused phrase and an “easy” solution with such a well-oiled machine like the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. U.S. Foreign Service and Defense Department officials must always look at prospective security assistance customers through a geopolitical and historic lens to ensure that this contract is more than just an addition to the bottom line, but also a cooperative ally that concerns itself with the ends as much as the U.S. stresses their means. These diplomats would also be prudent to question current relationships that consistently see dissonance from their original intention.

U.S. relations in the Middle East are complicated. Each country has its own story in its geography, adversity, ethnicity, and religiosity. All of these nuances are reflected in its story. Young diplomats must intimately know that story, hear those voices, and interpret both the unique challenges and opportunities of these countries.

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