PIECES OF PEACE: AN EVALUATION OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE TO THE RISE OF ARAB RADICALISM IN THE PERSIAN GULF, LIBYA, AND JORDAN

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an examination and evaluation of the Nixon Administration's response to the emergence of Arab radicalism in three areas: the Persian Gulf, Libya and Jordan. It examines the foundations of the Nixon Administration's foreign policy, its methods of formulating responses to challenges in the regions, and the consequences of its actions. Many studies of the Nixon Administration have been undertaken; so too have many works on Arab radicalism in the Middle East. This thesis combines the two areas of study and draws on primary sources, many recently declassified, to provide a more accurate description of the Nixon Administration's handling of this particular issue.

Each of the three chapters examines the Nixon Administration's specific policy interests, the activities of Arab radicals, and the consequences of the administration's actions in each area. These three particular areas were selected because they represent three different types of challenges Arab radicals posed. This thesis develops a number of viewpoints on the Nixon Administration. It argues that the Nixon Administration partially succeeded in building structures of peace in the region and was most successful at building regional frameworks for stability when incentives for participation were most apparent. It also points out that the Nixon Administration was capable of developing highly nuanced and accurate views of regional dynamics that led to appropriate responses to radicals' challenges. Still, it further affirms the argument that the Nixon Administration's preoccupation with Cold War concerns dominated its policy formulation. Finally, it argues that the Nixon Administration overlooked the solidification of terrorist networks in the Middle East because it either failed to understand the new threat or chose to ignore it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As European nations granted independence to their 19th century colonies and the Cold War increasingly intensified, the middle of the 20th century became a time of great international commotion. Dozens of nations examined themselves and determined where they would fit into the new global environment. As these nations searched for their new place in the world, many fell into civil and ethnic conflict, some even into full-scale war. Competition for the world's resources, international monetary instability and a general clash of ideologies created an environment of change and uncertainty. The task for American government officials throughout this time was to determine how to best respond to the great threats as well as the great opportunities. Pursuit of American interests in the late 1960s, given the complex and unstable global environment, required a strong understanding of world events and an equally comprehensive system of managing them. Richard Nixon and his administration indeed adopted a comprehensive approach to world affairs, but debate continues as to the effectiveness of the Nixon approach. One of the more highly debated of these topics is Nixon's handling of the Middle East during his years in office.

The Middle East has puzzled policy makers up to the present day. Its combination of religious, political and ethnic loyalties and rivalries is further complicated by its geographic idiosyncrasies and the sheer volume of oil the region possesses. It is not surprising that the region has been inclined to conflict, especially since the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. To add to this general instability, decades of the Cold War introduced a multitude of global considerations into the region that further warranted American attention. Though it was one of many theaters of the Cold War, the Middle East soon proved to be a difficult but important region for U.S. foreign policy.

To gain fuller insight into the motivations and effectiveness of the Nixon Administration's management of foreign policy in the Middle East, it helps to study how the administration handled many of the particular problems that arose. This paper examines the factors shaping the Nixon Administration's handling of three issues in particular: the challenges posed by Arab radicals on the Arabian Peninsula, the 1969 coup in Libya, and the 1970 civil war in Jordan. It seeks to explain how the Nixon Administration perceived these situations, how it responded to them and then evaluates the results of the policies adopted.

The Nixon Administration and Its Approach

Richard Nixon eagerly accepted the challenges and triumphs of foreign affairs. The former vice president was no stranger to international relations and relished opportunities to travel and meet foreign leaders. Narrowly winning the 1968 election

with a "secret plan" to end the war in Vietnam, he set about reshaping the global landscape almost immediately upon entering the White House. As for his priorities, the Soviet Union, the war in Vietnam, arms limitations and increased trade dominated his thinking. Furthermore, Nixon wanted to build new foreign policy architecture for a multi-polar world. By the time he left office, the U.S. regularly consulted with the Soviet Union, opened relations with the People's Republic of China and removed its forces from Vietnam. While the manner in which this was done and the long-term results of these moves is highly debatable, they did represent bold foreign policy steps.

Harvard academic Henry Kissinger ingratiated himself with Nixon during the 1968 presidential campaign. Kissinger had written on nuclear policy in the early 1960s, yet had very little experience in government. His first post in the White House was as the omnipresent Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs or National Security Advisor (N.S.A.). He spent the first five years in the White House providing the president with analyses, conducting secret talks with various states and assembling a bureaucratic structure to centralize the foreign policy making process.

Kissinger underwent an odd evolution during his time in the White House. Initially, Kissinger was a "yes" man. Declassified documents are full of his deferential affirmations to the president. H.R. Haldeman, the president's chief of staff, filled his diary with tales of Kissinger's outbursts and tantrums aimed at other White House personnel.[1] Haldeman points out that only Kissinger's penetrating grasp of foreign affairs could counterbalance his petty behavior. During his time in the administration, Kissinger displayed a pragmatic realism, a penchant for secrecy only comparable to

[1] H. R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1994).

Nixon's and a proclivity for dramatic foreign policy maneuvers. In September 1973, when he became Secretary of State, he moved from being a White House staffer to the global stage. During Nixon's last year in the White House, Kissinger eclipsed the president in handling foreign policy as Nixon's concerns over Watergate grew. In the end, the two men had a profound impact on U.S. foreign policy and the world in general.

With so much attention on Nixon and Kissinger, often times other important personnel in the administration are overlooked. Secretary of State from 1969 to 1973, William Rogers, a personal friend of Nixon's, served as a calming force in the White House. The consummate professional, Rogers understood Washington politics and handled foreign affairs with dignity. While not the major factor in shaping U.S. policy, Rogers's voice did serve as a background influence on many issues. Furthermore, as captured in Haldeman's diary, Nixon relied on Rogers's overt public role nearly as often as he relied on Kissinger in-house input. Other important personnel in the Nixon Administration were Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas Moorer, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) Richard Helms, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs U. Alexis Johnson, and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Joe Sisco.

President Nixon regularly drew on the advice of members of his administration. One key organizational tool that expedited policy formulation was the formation of the Washington Special Actions Group (W.S.A.G.). Kissinger chaired the W.S.A.G., which was regularly convened during times of crisis. Administration principals and their lower-level advisors attended the meetings and developed action plans intended to become effective immediately.

Like any presidential administration, the Nixon White House sought to maintain a manageable global situation in which it could pursue the U.S.'s interests. Like previous administrations, it worked to contain the Soviet Union's influence and replace the Soviets' role wherever possible. But by 1969, the U.S. was mired in a costly war in Vietnam, and the Soviet Union had achieved a higher degree of parity with the United States than ever before. The Soviets engaged in a variety of activities around the globe that gave the new administration cause for concern. Although Richard Nixon embraced the role of "cold warrior," he envisioned using a new set of tools to confront the Soviets.

Nixon and Kissinger developed a unique approach to handling the many foreign policy issues they faced. Commonly called "linkage," their strategy rested on both superpowers recognizing each other's relative strength, agreeing that cooperation over issues was preferable to confrontation and realizing that previously unopened avenues for consultations and planning existed. Nixon and Kissinger worked to tie dozens of foreign policy issues—anything from America's need to depart from Vietnam to grain deals—together in a manner such that progress in one area meant progress in other areas. Throughout the administration's tenure, the pair watched developments in one area of the world, considered how they might impact issues elsewhere, then confronted the Soviets over how to link the issues in a manner that served, to one degree or another, both nations' interests. Always concerned with American interests primarily, Nixon and Kissinger would seek ways to gain ground against the Soviet Union through skillfully playing the linkage card.[1]

[1] For more on linkage, see Warren I. Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Volume IV, America and the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

In addition to the linkage strategy, Nixon articulated a plan for new global relations. Commonly referred to as the Nixon Doctrine, this plan used regional allies to share the responsibilities of ensuring peace and stability around the world. The idea was to arm regional powers, like Iran or Indonesia, and essentially use them as neighborhood policemen. After the debacle of Vietnam, the early Cold War idea of using American men and money to fight communism in *any* location lost much of its support. The U.S. needed a method by which it could work with other states whose interests were compatible with the U.S.'s to confront local threats. The doctrine rested on massive arms shipments and close diplomatic assistance. This idea also foresaw the post-bipolar world, or multi-polar, world that would materialize as the two superpowers' dominance of global developments waned in the face of a rising Western Europe and Japan. The Nixon Doctrine allowed the U.S. to involve itself, with comparatively little investment, in a multitude of situations around the world.

Literature on the Nixon Administration

The foreign policy of the Nixon Administration has been extensively studied. As years pass, historians look at an increasing number of issues of the administration's development and implementation of foreign policy. Historians have also fixated on the personalities of the administration, especially Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Nearly as much research has been devoted to studying the intricacies of their personalities and relationship as to the U.S.'s relationship with the Soviets at the time.

Furthermore, as it is the source of ongoing tension in the world, the Nixon Administration's relationship with the Middle East has occupied historians.

Over the three decades since Nixon left office, historians have assessed him and his administrations in drastically different ways. On nearly every topic, the pendulum swings between praising the administration for its accomplishments and criticizing it for its methods or shortcomings. Furthermore, given the piercing nature of many of the issues the administration dealt with—the Vietnam War, questions regarding Israel and the oil crisis of the mid 1970s—the nature of discussion on the Nixon Administration is expectedly passionate. Very rarely has an administration confronted so many broad, important and sensitive issues.

In order to best understand the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy, it helps to understand its foreign policy more generally and how historians have advanced the study of that field. One of the major topics in the study of the Nixon Administration's foreign policy is relations with the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War. This comprehensive topic was the main focus of the administration and received a great deal of its attention. The major issue of the Nixon tenure was détente with the Soviets. Essentially referring to a "relaxation" of ties between the two superpowers, the concept became, to both contemporary analysts and later historians, one of the major topics of discussion.

The debate over détente essentially centers around its effectiveness and the factors that accounted for its rise and fall. Looking quite favorably toward détente, Coral Bell's 1977 study, *The Diplomacy of Détente,* points out that détente eased the bitterness of withdrawal from Vietnam and improved the relations between the U.S. and China, the

Middle East, and Latin America. Furthermore, it opened the communist bloc to Western sources of supply, while allowing the U.S. to actually expand its military position in certain areas of the globe.[1] Tad Szulc's *The Illusion of Peace*, published the following year, contrasts with Bell's rather favorable view of the Nixon Administration's pursuit of détente. Szulc focuses heavily on the administration's more distasteful qualities. He points out that throughout his first year, Nixon made the impression he intended on the American people, portraying himself as a formidable, wise leader in charge of important international issues. Szulc recounts the administration's successes in foreign policy endeavors while retelling its darker side—its unscrupulous, Machiavellian methods and overly pragmatic mindset. He agrees with the underlying foundations of the détente philosophy—the need to rethink Cold War competition and to search for new methods of cooperation—but he criticizes its execution. Nixon and Kissinger failed to establish clear guidelines by which the U.S. and the Soviets linked global issues. As a result, détente never lived up to Nixon's promises and did not survive the throes of Watergate.[2] Furthermore, the reputation of the presidency was damaged by the exploits of this quite devious administration.

Working to delve more deeply into why the Nixon Administration's Cold War foreign policy failed to stand the test of time, Michael Genovese's *The Nixon Presidency* examines the evolution and nature of the administration's policy. His account begins by examining the shaping of Nixon's worldview and the factors that influenced his policy. Genovese points out that since his days as vice president, Nixon believed in the U.S.'s

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[1] Coral Bell, *The Diplomacy of Détente: The Kissinger Era* (New York: St. Martin's, 1977), 223-250.

[2] Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978).

postwar world leadership, but also recognized the new limitations on American influence that had emerged by the late 1960s. Consequently he worked to redesign the global arena through a new structure of peace. In order to do this, Nixon pursued five goals: legitimate the doctrine of sufficiency (as opposed to the 1950s mindset of Mutually Assured Destruction), end the Vietnam War with honor, rejuvenate the Western Alliance, restore America's self-confidence, and place America in a position of global leadership. Seeing Nixon and Kissinger largely working as one unit, Genovese points out that the team fell short of many of its main goals of using détente to solve other global issues because they overestimated the Soviet Union's influence and capacity to shape those global events—Vietnam, the Middle East, conflicts in South Asia, etc. Furthermore, the two men overly personalized the policy making process and never institutionalized their plans, thus inhibiting the permanence of any of their progress.[1]

Similar to Genovese's theme of examining the factors shaping Nixon's foreign policy, Richard Melanson examines six American presidents' methods for developing and implementing foreign policy. In the third edition of *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Nixon to Clinton*, Melanson looks at the domestic roots of Nixon's foreign policy. He points out that the second Republican president since 1933 identified a large, publicly silent majority that disliked the "leader" class of elites and social engineers. Along with "peace with honor" in Vietnam, Nixon sought a "generation of peace" in the global arena through improved relations with the Soviets. Nixon recognized the global limitations the U.S. faced by the late 1960s and wanted to work with the Soviets in establishing a multi-polar world more conducive to a

[1] Michael Genovese, *Nixon Presidency: Power and Politics in Turbulent Times* (New York: Greenwood, 1990).

balance of power system. In order to do so, Nixon undertook a massive domestic program to articulate these policies to the American people. While somewhat successful, Nixon's defense of détente did not deter critics like Senator Henry Jackson from arguing that détente-era treaties contained a veneer of goodwill, yet enhanced the overall Soviet position. The ultimate obstacle the administration confronted was the need for congressional approval for all the "carrots and sticks" necessary to make détente work. Congressional approval directly conflicted with the Nixon Administration's penchant for centralized authority, thus hindering détente's longevity.[1]

Throughout the period of détente, leaders from the two nations maintained an ambiguous, enigmatic relationship through which they both tried to advance their individual positions while simultaneously yet intermittently worked to improve overall relations. Examining the viewpoints of the two superpowers toward the new concept of detente, Robert Litwak argues in *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine* that détente was intended to provide the superpowers with a stable "periphery" along which they could conduct new and expanded relations. This system overlooked the dynamics of the Third World and the ongoing instability there, as well as allowed the superpowers to continue to manipulate various situations to their own ends just as before détente.[2] While Litwak's text, published in 1984, is unable to foresee an end to the Cold War, Melvin Small's *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (1990) is able to place the administration in the context of a Cold War wind-down. Praising the administration's willingness to attempt new methods of cooperation with the Soviets, Small argues that détente with the Soviet Union and

[1] Richard A. Melanson, *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Nixon to Clinton* 3rd ed. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 43-86.

[2] Robert Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1984), 193-197.

China was largely successful at heralding the end of the Cold War. Nixon largely, though not solely, conceived and executed the maneuver. Certain features of détente—the S.A.L.T. treaty aimed at slowing the arms race, U.S.-Soviet trade deals and domestic agreement on and acceptance of the plan—had their shortcomings. However, the idea of triangular diplomacy to increase American leverage throughout the world, Small argues, was brilliant.[1] Further confirming and expanding on some of Litwak's ideas, while challenging Small's assessment, is Raymond Garthoff's *Détente and Confrontation* from 1994. In it, he argues that detente failed because the U.S. and the Soviet Union developed different understandings of what détente actually meant as well as their own maneuverability within the system.[2]

As the Cold War ended and historians were able to look back on the era with more perspective, comparing different administrations' approaches to handling the Cold War became a useful methodology in the study of the period. In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis places the Nixon Administration's practice of détente in a long succession of American administrations' efforts to contain the Soviet Union. To Gaddis, détente was the Nixon-Kissinger umbrella term for a new era of U.S.-Soviet relations under which a number of tactics were utilized—the Nixon Doctrine, linkage, arms treaties with the Soviets, triangular diplomacy, etc. Kissinger, Gaddis points out, added an "intellectual coherence" to the conduct of American foreign policy and carried out a rather successful foreign policy adjustment. The flaw of Kissinger's détente was

[1] Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

[2] Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1994).

that it relied on centralization of decision making, a feature unlikely to last for any substantial period of time in the American political system.[1]

Certainly the theme of U.S.-Soviet relations was an important part of the Nixon Administration's foreign policy. However, this theme is only one of many in the broader discussion. Another major area of study is the formulation of policy within the administration itself. To understand the Nixon Administration's development of foreign policy, it is necessary to examine the roles both Nixon and Kissinger played in developing policy methods and goals. Both men preferred foreign policy to domestic concerns and spent a great deal of time considering international issues. Questions have emerged among historians as to how the two men contributed to the development of American foreign policy and what their relationship in the process was.

Seeing Nixon as the main visionary and practitioner of policy, C. L. Sulzberger's *The World and Richard Nixon* lists many of Nixon's accomplishments, the first of which was his selection of Kissinger as top aide. Sulzberger points out that Nixon was more adept at gauging what needed to occur to pursue his international goals than his domestic goals. Those international goals, primarily conceived and achieved by Nixon himself, included improved relations with the Soviets and China, the saving of Israel in 1973 and better relations with Europe.[2] Contrasting Sulzberger's focus on Nixon as the shaper of American diplomacy, Coral Bell sees Nixon and Kissinger as competitors, as they both developed compelling visions for foreign affairs. Nevertheless, they more or less complemented each other, while ultimately the helm of foreign policy was left to

[1] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2005).

[2] C. L. Sulzberger, *The World and Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1987).

Kissinger during the Watergate saga.[1] Similar to Bell's viewpoint, Gaddis, in *Strategies of Containment,* also sees Kissinger as the primary theoretician behind America's international pursuits, though he sees a nearly equal contribution from Nixon. Kissinger conceptualized détente and worked to execute most of its moves, while Nixon complemented his efforts with a strong but flexible anti-communist rhetoric.[2]

In 1994's *Nixon Reconsidered,* Joan Hoff argues that Nixon was the main director of foreign policy and that Kissinger was mostly an aide, though she for some reason uses the term "Nixinger" to refer to the two of them as one unit.[3] She points out that the major foreign policy initiatives Nixon undertook were largely of his own doing, while Kissinger merely assisted. Subsequently, when she places blame for foreign policy issues, she does so squarely on Nixon's shoulders. A more provocative interpretation is Richard Thornton's *The Nixon-Kissinger Years* (2001). In it, he argues that Kissinger and the Eastern Establishment, the Ivy League elites, essentially worked to undermine Nixon's vision of a modified containment of the Soviet Union and to replace it with their New World Order in which the U.S. could respond more effectively to periphery crises. Thornton claims that between 1969 and 1972, Nixon pursued a "modified" containment of the Soviet Union with a noticeable degree of success. But beginning in the summer of 1972, Kissinger began his pursuit of détente with the Soviets and used the developing Watergate scandal to entrap the president into accepting the Kissinger system.[4]

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[1] Bell, *Doctor*, 39.
[2] Gaddis, *Strategies*, 272-341.
[3] Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
[4] Richard C. Thornton, *The Nixon-Kissinger Years: The Reshaping of American Foreign Policy* 2nd ed. (St. Paul: Paragon, 2001).

While this thesis is intriguing, more well-rounded examinations exist. Not nearly as conspiratorial as Thornton's view, William Bundy's *A Tangled Web* (1998) manages to praise the administration for certain accomplishments while criticizing it for certain methods. Bundy argues that Nixon was the main director of foreign policy and assembled a qualified and able staff of which Kissinger was but one of many participants. He points out that the administration could handle foreign affairs quite effectively at times—the Jordan Crisis stands out as an example—but its overall penchant for secrecy and deception ultimately undermined its efforts to build a lasting foreign policy structure.[1] It seems as though Bundy's assessment, taking into consideration the dynamics of the staff more broadly and the paradoxes inherent in Nixon and Kissinger's personalities, is most convincing. The administration can be easily viewed as a team, led by Nixon and his advisor Kissinger, that drew on the entire group's contributions. When problems did arise, they were largely attributable to those two men's character flaws. When the administration met with success, it was usually after a joint effort, perhaps led by one key player, but taking into account a number of opinions and considerations. H. R. Haldeman's diaries and Richard Reeves's removed, dispassionate account *President Nixon: Alone in the White House,* also highlight the multitude of opinions shaping Nixon's own judgment.[2] Also clear from these two works is the position of Nixon as ultimate decision maker and administrative veto wielder.

Garnering a great deal of attention in his own right is Henry Kissinger. The man who demonstrated a strong desire to be in the media spotlight has been covered by

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[1] William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

[2] Haldeman, *Diaries*; Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Along in the White House* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2001).

foreign policy historians nearly as much as Nixon. When assessing Kissinger's role in shaping U.S. foreign policy, historians have either focused on his accomplishments or his shortcomings—and he had plenty of both.

Marvin and Bernard Kalb's early on work *Kissinger* (1994) contains one of the most complementary accounts of Henry Kissinger. Going to great length to relate Kissinger's political, diplomatic, social and intellectual achievements, the Kalbs portray him as a pioneer and a genius. They argue that his desire for global stability was the highest form of international morality and that during his tenure, his efforts to attain peace with honor in Indochina, bolster European security and manage Middle East crises represented the most noble of undertakings. Only Kissinger himself could have written a more positive assessment.

In contrast to the Kalbs' opinion in its detailed criticism of Kissinger's activities in the Nixon Administration is Seymour Hersh's *The Price of Power.*[1] As an expose journalist, Hersh details Kissinger's role in a number of immoral or illegal activities—from a character assassination plot against Daniel Ellsberg, source of the Pentagon Papers, to Kissinger's role in the Chilean coup and his support of repeated bombings of Indochina. Hersh's account was one of the first published that criticized Kissinger in such detail and called into question Kissinger's own memoirs. Perhaps one of the works most critical of Kissinger's morality is Christopher Hitchens's *The Trial of Henry Kissinger.*[2] Hitchens examines Kissinger's role in over a dozen ugly episodes—from the bombing of Cambodia, to the U.S.'s role in the Chilean coup, to repression activities

[1] Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit, 1983).

[2] Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London: Verso, 2001).

within the U.S., as well as others—highlighting Kissinger's often leading role in them. Hitchens's goal is to build a case that Henry Kissinger is a war criminal and should be recognized as such.

As time passed, historians have begun a balancing act of rationalizing and weighing Kissinger's role. Robert Schulzinger argues in *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (1989) that Kissinger's accomplishments outweighed his shortcomings. Acknowledging Kissinger's role in prolonging the Vietnam War, his faulty Middle East dealings, his lack of concern for human rights and even his peevish professional behavior, Schulzinger chooses instead to point out that Kissinger did succeed in improving relations with the Soviets and China and in planting the seeds for a future Middle East settlement.[1] Aware of the "ends and means" that concerned Kissinger, Walter Isaacson's 1992 biography, *Kissinger,* criticizes the advisor and secretary of state for his cold and amoral pragmatism and readiness to use force. Isaacson argues that Kissinger essentially took the idealistic considerations that had shaped American foreign policy since the time of President Woodrow Wilson out of the equation, leading to a period of hardly impressive diplomatic accomplishments, with grave human rights violations.[2]

Clearly much has been written about the Nixon Administration's inner workings and its views on the broader Cold War. Unfortunately, few monographs have been undertaken that deal specifically with the Nixon Administration's handling of Middle East policy. Most commonly discussed amongst historians of this topic is the Nixon

[1] Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1989).

[2] Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992).

Administration's handling of the Arab-Israeli issue. Here the debate has mainly been about the Nixon Administration's effort to encourage a peace settlement between belligerent parties, an effort which, over the course of Nixon's six years, evolved into massive U.S. aid to Israel and polarizing ties between the U.S. and various Arab states. William Quandt's *Decade of Decisions* (1977) examines the phases of the administration's relations with the region, from the initial Rogers Plan through the Jordan Crisis and on to the October War of 1973. For the most part, Quandt lauds the administration's efforts to broker a settlement and avoid further wars. However, the Nixon Administration's favoritism of Israel and penchant to confuse superpower issues with strictly Middle Eastern ones posed ongoing obstacles.[1]

Thematically similar to Quandt's major points, Alan Taylor in *The Superpowers and the Middle East* delves deeper into the U.S. and Soviet efforts to pursue their interests in the region. Making an analogy out of Jonathon Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Taylor describes the superpowers as giants tied down in a land of miniature issues about which they know very little. The local rivalries, conflicts and loyalties of the Middle East, in Taylor's analogy, so constrain the U.S. and the Soviets that they lose sight of their original plans for the area. In discussing the Nixon Administration in particular, Taylor points out that Kissinger's global approach to the Cold War did not anticipate the strong and often deleterious influence of the Israeli lobby and encouraged a marginalization of the traditional foreign policy bureaucracy, a marginalization that made the policy implementation process much more difficult. The heavy focus on eclipsing the Soviets in the Middle East through détente, and Israeli intransigence on a range of issues,

[1] William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1977).

limited the Nixon Administration's progress in the region. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the selection of unreliable regional allies and the domestic political strife that plagued Soviet surrogates in the region hampered its efforts to increase its influence in the region. Ultimately, even though both nations were constrained by unexpected challenges in the region, Taylor does point out that Kissinger succeeded in out-maneuvering the Soviets during his years in Washington.[1]

In another survey of U.S. policy toward the region, George Lenczowski, like other authors on the topic, places American policy in the Middle East in the context of three ongoing struggles: the effort to roll back Soviet influence in the region, the need to protect Israel, and the desire to ensure access to Arab oil. In *American Presidents and the Middle East* (1990), he argues that assisting the Iranian regime's arms buildup was shrewd and successful in the short run, that Nixon's handling of the Jordanian Crisis and the October War of 1973 further cemented U.S.-Israeli ties, and that Nixon ignored the Libyan revolution because of its tertiary importance.[2]

Looking specifically at the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy in the context of the broader Cold War, Ishaq Ghanayem and Alden Voth look quite favorably on the U.S.'s ability to balance its concerns with the Soviet Union and the Middle East. In *The Kissinger Legacy* (1984), the authors point out that the administration developed a two-tiered policy—international and regional—as it crafted its own innovative responses and solidified diplomacy as a means of handling regional issues. The administration's Middle East policy was aimed at saving détente and promoting peace between Israel and

[1] Alan R. Taylor, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Syracuse: Syracuse U.P., 1991).
[2] George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham: Duke U.P., 1990), 116-140.

its enemies. Détente succeeded in helping the U.S. reduce—through the various crises and wars—the Soviets' role in the region, and the administration's use of the Nixon Doctrine allowed the U.S. to increase its influence throughout the region through its allies.[1] Adding to the discussion Ghanayem and Voth began, Burton Kaufman's *The Arab Middle East and the United States: Inter-Arab Rivalry and Superpower Diplomacy* goes into more detail about the evolution of different administrations' Middle East foreign policy. Kaufman argues that Nixon and Kissinger's initially limited views on the complexities of the Middle East matured as ceasefire agreements broke down and wars broke out in the region. While the administration largely allowed its Soviet concerns to shape policy after the October War of 1973, the administration became much more sensitive to Arab concerns. The U.S. realized its limited influence in the region and became more willing to pursue gradual diplomacy.[2]

Steven Spiegel's 1985 book, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict,* details the intra-Washington debate about U.S. Middle East policy since Israel's founding in 1948. In handling the Nixon Administration's conflict over Middle East policy, Spiegel points out the rival approaches of Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers. The latter, the man Nixon tasked with finding a peace settlement, adopted a regional strategy, hurriedly aimed at dealing with the major problems between the Arabs and the Israelis. Kissinger on the other hand, wanted to wait until either the Soviet Union or key Arab states moderated their stance on a settlement, and then to position America so as to eclipse the Soviets' role. The result of these differing approaches was a series of "inconsistencies"

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[1] Ishaq I. Ghanayem and Alden H. Voth, *The Kissinger Legacy: American-Middle East Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1984).

[2] Burton I. Kaufman, *The Arab Middle East and the United States: Inter-Arab Rivalry and Superpower* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 65-85.

in U.S. policy: the U.S. moved from an initial "even-handed" approach aimed at a comprehensive settlement to a piecemeal, highly involved approach. As such, the U.S. consulted extensively with the Soviet Union, drastically increased arms shipments to Israel, worked to secure a modest Suez ceasefire and conducted extensive "shuttle diplomacy," all unexpected moves from a 1969 perspective. Ultimately Spiegel commends the limited consistency Nixon displayed in pursuing American goals—consistency that survived the major intra-administrative conflicts and the regional surprises that characterized his tenure.[1]

Another major issue in the study of American relations with the Middle East is the emphasis that was placed on access to oil. Daniel Yergin's *The Prize* (1991) places the Nixon Administration's handling of the oil question in the context of the broader transition that took place in the international oil economy between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s. He points out that Nixon recognized Iran's need to generate more income in order to bolster its national defense, a goal consistent with Nixon's desire to see Iran fill the power vacuum left in the Persian Gulf after the British withdrawal. On the domestically touchy subject of transitioning U.S. oil imports from a quota based system to an allocation based system, Nixon favored the latter as the best way to meet rising energy demands. The administration, despite detailed prophecies from experts like State Department oil specialist James Akin, reacted with diffidence to the transition of the oil economy for the better part of its first term, even through the summer of 1973. As a result, the administration possessed very little leverage over the international oil economy

[1] Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 215-219.

when the embargo of 1973 set in. Nixon did try to reassure the nation by proposing a comprehensive energy plan, but to little avail.[1]

In addition to the oil question and the debate over which approach to take in handling Middle East affairs, the presence of highly charged revolutionary groups in the Middle East occupied the administration's thinking. William Stiver's 1986 study, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-83,* offers a survey of how successive administrations dealt with the particular surprises posed by the Middle East. In his assessment of Nixon's role in the region he argues that Nixon adopted a repressive approach that sought to stifle any developments beyond America's control. In doing so, the administration reasserted itself in the region through increased arms transfers, a broadened strategic position and opposing Palestinian nationalism. Throughout the process, the U.S. position was only tenuously strengthened—vis-a-vis Israel and Iran for example—and contained inherent flaws that ensured future problems.[2] At times the "revolutionary" challenges Stivers mentions boiled into outright violence. In discussing three particular revolutionary challenges in the Middle East—the 1958 Lebanon Crisis, the 1970 Jordanian Crisis and the 1973 October War—Alan Dowty looks at America's crisis management role. He recognizes the U.S.'s desire to help defend friendly states threatened by domestic and neighboring radicals, as well as the Soviets' relative regional parity with the U.S., and argues, like many other authors, that the administration was driven by a need to balance and stabilize Cold War relations, was intent on making progress on the Arab-Israeli dispute, and was concerned with what it

[1] Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 577-632.

[2] William Stivers, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-1983* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

perceived to be irrational Arabs. Dowty also points out that Nixon and Kissinger displayed an antipathy toward terrorism. Since Dowty's aim is to assess the Nixon Administration's crisis management approach, the bulk of his study examines the hypotheses the administration followed. He identifies directly proportional relationships between the intensity of crisis-related stress and considerations such as the number and variety of core informational inputs that were considered, the cost the administration assigned to its decisions, the reliance on removed, rational calculus in searching for options and the willingness to accept unprecedented options. As such, ad hoc teams within the administration considered a wide range of options—from limited assistance to direct, large-scale involvement—while continually updating their stances on various issues. However, the administration never considered speaking directly with Syria or pursuing open and public dialogue with the Soviets.[1] Dowty's work is helpful in analyzing intra-administrative roles and the administration's understanding, or lack thereof, or regional issues.

Two other works contribute valuable perspectives to the discussion of Henry Kissinger and his role in the Middle East: Jeffry Rubin's collection of articles entitled *Dynamics of Third Party Intervention* (1981) and Edward Sheehan's *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger* (1976). The former is a psychological study of the effects of Kissinger's involvement in the region. It points out that Kissinger desired a series of small-scale, short-term settlements and saw his direct, highly active intervention as the best method of educating the parties' views on the terms of these settlements. Kissinger's step-by-step approach, along with a "mediation-with-muscle" attitude, secured progress, albeit

[1] Alan Dowty, *Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision Making in 1958, 1970 and 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

somewhat limited, toward a peace settlement in the aftermath of the October War. Sheehan looks more critically toward Kissinger's step-by-step approach. In what he refers to as an "interim settlement" that necessitated a more substantial solution in the future, he sees the work of Kissinger as a patchwork that, while praiseworthy for its ambition, did not address the key issues. Sheehan does commend Kissinger's transfers of technology to certain Arab states and utilization of Sadat as stabilizer in the region, yet questions the existence of an identifiable Kissinger strategy for the area. Left unresolved was the Palestinian issue, with all its prickly partisans. Furthermore, the well-being of Israel, a nation deeply in debt and unpopular in the region, was helped little.[1]

While many fine articles have been written on Nixon's Middle East policy, three should be examined briefly as they represent important perspectives adopted by analysts of the region. Cathy Tackney's article, "Dealing Arms in the Middle East I: History and Strategic Considerations," provides useful information about the arms supply process and how different administrations have utilized it. Critical of the superpowers' exploitation of regional clients, Tackney describes American actions aimed at ensuring continued consultation over equipment and surpassing Soviet military and technological influence in the region, as well as pragmatic use of regional clients to patrol areas of the Middle East.[2] Barry Rubin's article, "America's Mid-East Policy: A Marxist Perspective," heavily criticizes the U.S. for militarily and economically exploiting the Middle East for its own ends. For example, the U.S. worked to build up Israel as a quasi "mother county," an imperialist leader, in the region. Rubin also criticizes the U.S.'s exploitation

[1] Edward R. F. Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976).

[2] Carol Tackney, "Dealing Arms in the Middle East I: History and Strategic Considerations" *MERIP Reports,* No. 8 (Mar. – Apr., 1972), 3-14.

of regional policemen—Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iran—to preserve American interests. As a Marxist interpretation, the article points out that the anger surrounding the victimization of the Palestinians in union with revolutionary and left-leaning advances in Iraq, Syria and the Gulf ensure that the solidarity the U.S. has sought through its partners will continue to face threats.[1]

Finally, dealing with the Jordanian Crisis in particular, is a finely researched and widely quoted 1985 article by Adam Garfinkle entitled "U.S. Decision Making in the Jordan Crisis: Correcting the Record." Garfinkle reexamines the Nixon Administration's assertion that it sought strong, reciprocal ties with Israel and the wider assumption by many commentators that the U.S.-Israeli political and military coordination has served both parties well. The Nixon Administration relied heavily on Israel during the Jordanian Crisis, preparing to encourage the small state to directly intervene if it felt necessary. A defining feature of Garfinkle's article is his argument that Nixon gave only minimal assurance to Israel that the U.S. would provide an "umbrella" to its surrogate; yet when the crisis ended surprisingly to America's favor, Nixon and Kissinger revised their storyline to give the impression that they had made a strong and certain commitment to back Israel. Provocative and informative, this article, along with the first two, provides useful analyses of more specific issues of American Middle East policy, especially during the Nixon Administration.

Another widely studied theme in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is the search for a peace settlement between Israel and its neighbors. The conflict has taken many forms throughout the decades as Israel has been forced to defend itself against a

[1] Barry Rubin, "America's Mid-East Policy: A Marxist Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1973): 58.

variety of threats and at times has taken on an offensive posture of its own. Providing a detailed look at all the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict throughout the Cold War, Dan Tschirgi's *The American Search for Mideast Peace* explains the evolution of the conflict and where the Nixon Administration fit into it. He points out that the Johnson Administration realized the flaws and contradictions in its Middle East policy—partiality toward Israel and disregard for the Palestinian issue—but was unable to develop a workable framework for handling relations. The Nixon Administration, heavily preoccupied with broader Cold War goals, lost its bearings when trying to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. He argues that the administration's focus on détente and efforts to link progress in the Middle East with progress elsewhere on the globe clouded the administration's judgment on key Middle East issues such as the rise of the P.L.O., the positive energy Egyptian President Anwar Sadat brought to the conflict, and the intricacies of the oil issue. Ultimately, the Nixon Administration avoided the Palestinian issue, perceiving it as unwanted radicalism and recognizing Israeli intransigence on the issue. Consequently, the Arab-Israeli conflict was hardly improved upon.[1]

Indeed, the Palestinian issue has received much attention from a variety of perspectives. Surveying America's handling of the Palestinian issue since 1948 is Mohammed Shadid's *The United States and the Palestinians* (1981). Shadid examines the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the subsequent U.S. response and then looks at the U.S.'s handling of Palestinian militancy. He argues that in 1969, the Rogers Initiative recognized the reality of the Palestinian issue, citing the need to resolve the refugees' fate. As both Israel and the Soviet Union harshly criticized the overall

[1] Dan Tschirgi, *The American Search for Mideast Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

Rogers Initiative, it, along with all its components, including its stance on the Palestinians, underwent reshaping. Simultaneously, Kissinger adopted a step-by-step approach which ignored Palestinian interests. In the summer of 1970, the major powers accepted the second Rogers Initiative, which relied on Jordan and Egypt to reduce hostilities, an aspect of which meant controlling the elements of Palestinians in their countries. Not surprisingly, the Palestinians felt betrayed. That fall, Jordan succeeded in thwarting a group of radical Palestinians' attempt to stage a coup. Throughout the episode, Nixon Administration officials revealed "an increased cognizance of the Palestinians as a people with legitimate interests and aspirations."[1] However, between 1970 and 1973, the U.S. dodged the Palestinian issue, admitting that it existed, yet adopting a "wait and see" attitude to determine the movement's longevity.[2] In the aftermath of the October War of 1973, with Kissinger largely in charge of peace negotiations, the administration again stalled on improving relations with the Palestinians. In the Geneva talks, Kissinger followed Israel's request to prevent the Palestinians from participating independently. While arguing that the Nixon Administration dawdled on the Palestinian issue, Shadid argues that it took a hard line against terrorism, complete with diplomatic and covert efforts. He lists the administration's efforts to pass anti-terrorism resolutions in the United Nations and its intelligence sharing with Israel as examples of its strong measures.

While the topic of U.S.-Palestinian relations has been heavily researched, still many topics or interpretations have been left unstudied. Most of the work done has

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[1] Mohammed K. Shadid, *The United States and the Palestinians* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), 95.

[2] Shadid, *TheUnited States and the Palestinians*, 97.

overlooked the administration's development of policy to deal with Arab radicalism and Arab, mainly Palestinian-inspired, terrorism. Most often, historians argue that the administration categorized these topics, primarily the former, as simply potential Soviet in-roads or threats to regional stability. But this narrow view overlooks the administration's understanding, or lack thereof, of the sources, nature and potential threats of radicalism and terrorism. Furthermore, it leaves no room to assess the administration's handling of a particularly dramatic and threatening issue. Undoubtedly the Palestinian issue increased in potency during Nixon's tenure. While many works deal with the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy and even more deal with the issue of Palestine, few if any examine the two together in sufficient detail. Although the Palestinian issue had gained attention before Nixon, the Palestinian cause gained particular notoriety during his time in office and has remained prominent ever since the late 1960s. It is important to understand what shaped the Nixon Administration's thinking on the Palestinian issue, as the Palestinians increasingly utilized radicalism and terrorism during the Nixon years.

In a broader sense, the history discussed above can be developed further. Quite often détente and linkage are dealt with, but as more documents become declassified, it becomes clearer as to how linkages were calculated within the administration. With more information on the administration's thinking about particular issues, it is easier to identify the blending of détente and linkage with regional considerations and actions. For example, recently declassified documents illustrate the impression that certain Soviet maneuvers made on the Nixon Administration during the Jordanian Crisis of 1970. Whereas earlier texts second guessed the seriousness with which the administration

viewed certain Soviet activities, newer documents capture the broader administration's consensus on those moves.

Thesis

This thesis uses three instances of the Nixon Administration confronting Arab radicalism in order to better relate its understanding of the region, to assess its ability to manage difficult situations there, and to evaluate its ultimate ability to pursue American interests in the region. The three situations represent three vastly different situations in which Arab radicalism played a role. In the Persian Gulf region, Arab radicalism posed an asymmetrical threat to the U.S.'s vision of a regional security framework. In Libya, Mu'ammar Qaddafi very vocally spread his firebrand anti-Americanism while exerting a new and surprising degree of influence over American interests there. Finally in the Jordanian Crisis, Arab radicals of many varieties attempted to overthrow a legitimate government friendly to the United States. The first example represents an organically developed policy solution led by the Nixon Administration that incorporated a number of factors. The second example displays the administration's ability to respond to potentially threatening surprises that appear to possess longevity and that forced the administration to extensively reassess its posture toward that state. In the third example, the Nixon Administration confronted what appeared to be a violent but ephemeral threat that was actually the derivative of a larger, more encompassing movement. The three examples challenged the administration's abilities along a number of far-reaching lines.

Ultimately, an evaluation of the Nixon Administration's perception of and responses to these issues broadens the discussion on the administration's Middle East policy and enriches historians' understanding of this difficult phase on Middle East history.

This thesis works to help fill certain historical gaps. This thesis is a diplomatic history of the Nixon Administration's understanding of and relations with radicals in the Middle East. The three locations in the Middle East around which it is organized represent three very different sides to the Nixon Administration's policy there. In the Persian Gulf region, the Nixon Administration worked to create a framework for regional stability by building up selected states in the region to confront regional threats and cooperate in a manner that best served not only their interests, but the interests of the states who worked with the Gulf. In Libya, the administration faced an enigmatic challenge from Mu'ammar Qaddafi and his Revolutionary Command Council. Not knowing exactly what effect the young colonel would have on regional politics, the Nixon Administration adopted a tentative "wait-and-see" approach as it worked to keep the situation calm. Finally in the Jordanian Crisis of 1970, the Nixon Administration assisted a moderate ally in the face of a guerilla onslaught. The effects of that civil war, lasting less than a month, had a profound impact on the way the administration related to Jordan and its neighbors throughout the rest of Nixon's time in office.

Discussion of Terminology

This thesis will adopt a form of the Nixon Administration's definition of Arab radicals. Kissinger described various sets of Arab radicals in a memo to Nixon in October, 1969. He used the term to refer to groups that favored revolution or violent activity, groups that looked to Moscow and especially Peking for revolutionary guidance, and groups that were "fanatical" or "wild-eyed."[1] He also used the term to refer to those groups that worked outside the legitimate political process.[2] Nixon's use of the term was similar. Throughout his memoirs, he uses the term when describing states or groups that were overtly violent and favored a communist orientation.[3]

This paper will assume a broad definition of the term. For example, if a "pro-communist" orientation is required for one to be considered radical, then Qaddafi, staunchly anti-communist, would be excluded. Yet numerous examples can be found where the Nixon Administration referred to Qaddafi as a radical. With Palestinian groups, it is often tempting to categorize radicals in terms of their proclivity to violence. In that chapter, with its own detailed delineation of the various forms of radicalism, the Kissinger understanding, which sees radicals mainly as those who work largely outside the international political process will be used. Essentially the view that the radicals held extremist views, adopted violent methods and regularly disregarded the established diplomatic process best fits the Nixon Administration's understanding and use of the term.

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[1] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003), 115-116.

[2] "Conversation with Kissinger," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, No. 3, (Spring, 1981): 189, 191.

[3] Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 476-485.

On another point of clarification, it is necessary to point out that the term "administration" will be used quite broadly. Consistent with Bundy's portrayal of the Nixon Administration working as a well rounded team led by key players, this paper will view the administration as a hierarchical unit with little variance of opinion. This is not to say that the Nixon Administration was free of dissent, but rather in the issues studied in this thesis, consensus usually dominated the administration's actions. Much has been made of the Kissinger-Rogers rivalry during the first years of the administration. While this thesis acknowledges that rivalry, its impact on the three issues in this thesis was minimal. Even during the Jordanian Crisis, when Kissinger's views were at odds with those of other members of the administration, that limited, intra-bureaucratic discussion did not weigh on the administration's overall view of the Palestinians, which is the subject of the chapter on Jordan. Also along the lines of administrative consensus, this thesis utilizes National Intelligence Estimates and administrative memoranda, generated at lower levels and working their way to Nixon, as contributions to policy. In sum, Nixon drew on a synthesis of various opinions as well as his own political and diplomatic instinct, and the result, at least as the topics studied here are concerned, was a relatively uniform and solid approach to foreign policy.

Sources

This thesis draws on a number of sources in an effort to achieve a balanced look at a highly debated topic, but relies most heavily on the State Department's *Foreign*

Relations of the United States series. The State Department is continually adding volumes to the Nixon-Ford collection, much of it recently declassified information. Another useful State Department publication is the periodical, *Department of State Bulletin.* This series includes useful policy announcements made by various members of the administration and updates State Department stances on different issues. The memoirs of key individuals, especially Nixon and Kissinger, have also proved useful. One of the most comprehensive and helpful sources for this study is the Tel Aviv published *Middle East Record.* Essentially an encyclopedia of Middle East events, this series compiles translated newspaper articles from the region, as well as the West, to tell the story of the Middle East in great detail. Additionally, newspapers like the *New York Times* contain a great deal of useful primary information.

CHAPTER 2: THE NIXON DOCTRINE IN THE PERSIAN GULF: A MULTIFACETED RESPONSE TO A MULTIFACETED PROBLEM

Introduction

A region of understated importance in 1969, the Persian Gulf gained global attention by the middle of the 1970s. The Nixon Administration devoted increasing time to the region to develop a system of regional order that took into account a number of interests. The region posed some of the most sensitive strategic, political, economic and military challenges of the day. Though open to certain criticisms, the Nixon Administration's handling of the volatile Persian Gulf region did represent success in some important areas of American foreign policy.

This chapter examines the Nixon Administration's policy toward the Persian Gulf, looking at motivating factors, methods and outcomes. In the Persian Gulf region at this time, smoldering Arab radical sentiment threatened a number of interests and required the Nixon Administration to address the problem. Just as the Nixon Administration did, this chapter will consider all states bordering the Persian Gulf and/or on the Arabian Peninsula in varying degrees. This chapter aims to view the two most "important" states, Iran and Saudi Arabia, in the context in which the administration viewed them—largely significant states integral to the broader Middle East, but by no means the main focus of U.S. policy in the region. This chapter will delineate a confluence of interests, through

which many parties from various states in the region and beyond participated in various developments to further their interests. Ultimately, the Nixon Administration's two pillars policy, as well as the administration's ability to encourage "buy-in" by many parties in the region, fostered a regional framework for handling issues that facilitated a high degree of cooperation at various levels. It is clear that the Nixon Administration's policy was not perfect—there were victims and policy shortcomings—but given the complexities of the challenges the administration faced, the policy adopted worked comparatively well.

The Administration Meets the Gulf

In 1969, few factors were working toward the administration's favor in the Persian Gulf. Heavily occupied with foreign policy issues elsewhere on the globe and primarily focused on the Arab-Israeli dispute, the White House faced a paradoxical situation in the Middle East, where seemingly tertiary issues could have potentially global impact. Elsewhere, this thesis deals with two such episodes: in Libya, where an unknown young colonel inspired a revolution that changed the balance of Middle East politics and in Jordan, where rag-tag bands of revolutionaries incited a war that nearly drew in major regional and global powers. Indeed, many of the factors that made the Persian Gulf region such an explosive one also made it an important strategic theater.

The Persian Gulf is surrounded by a number of states of various sizes. Obviously the most prominent are Saudi Arabia and Iran. The powerful state of Iraq possesses less

than 30 miles of coastline on the Gulf and will not be considered in great detail in this chapter. Adding to the geographic complexity of the region is the narrow Strait of Hormuz. The narrow distance between Oman and United Arab Emirates and Iran can serve as a chokepoint to Persian Gulf traffic and can have a great impact on the entire Gulf. Furthermore, the diversity of landscape of the region—rocky and cliff-covered coastlines and mountainous inner regions—can exacerbate military and political problems in the littoral states. Finally, in this thorny region, nature ironically placed one of the largest deposits of oil on earth, ensuring that the region would become the focus of many industrial states.

Adding to the geographic challenges of the region were the handful of serious political problems. Throughout the mid 1960s, the British moved toward independence for a handful of sheikhdoms in the region. While the British intended to keep some semblance of political and military influence in the region, the sheikdoms liberated in the late 1960s faced decolonization issues similar to those that wreaked havoc in other areas of the globe. Though the British attempted to stabilize the region through inter-Arab pacts and federations, the birth pangs of decolonization soon destabilized some areas.

The main debilitating political problem of the region throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s were the destabilizing effects of Arab radicalism. Various definitions of the word can be found, some actually conflicting with one another. Kissinger described radicals as "radically leftist, pro-Peking rather than Moscow," and used terminology like "wild-eyed nationalists" and "revolutionary."[1] In a broader understanding, he implied that Arabs resorted to radicalism when they became frustrated with conventional

[1] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 2003), 115-116. (Hereafter referred to as FRUS).

diplomatic processes.[1] Nixon's thinking was similar. Throughout the Jordanian Crisis in 1970, he confronted radicals as they attempted to overthrow the moderate and pro-U.S. King Hussein of Jordan. Throughout the crisis, he did not differentiate between the ideology and goals of the terrorists from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.) and those guerilla fighters attacking the monarchy.[2] In *The Arab Radicals,* Adeed Dawisha points out that radicals use "limited tactics" aimed at legitimate governments and directed primarily at the local "political environment."[3] For a politically young region and one easily susceptible to outside influences such as Soviet or radical Palestinian influence, radicals such as these could and did significantly change the political landscape of the region.[4]

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Arab Radicalism increasingly became a noteworthy force. Though the political foundation for Arab Radicalism had existed in the Middle East since the 1950s, Israel's victory in the June War of 1967 sparked a new round of radical activity. Through Palestinian groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.), politically charged Arabs had a new medium for confronting their "enemies." Often these groups engaged in revolutionary activity, utilizing terrorism or other acts of violence. To the extent that the June 1967 war revealed Arab states' limited military capabilities against Israel, those defeated states often supported—directly or

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[1] "Conversation with Kissinger," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, No. 3, (Spring, 1981): 189, 191.

[2] For more on this topic see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 594-631; Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 476-485; William Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1977), 105-127.

[3] Adeed Dawish, *The Arab Radicals* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986), 4-5.

[4] Although the Soviets struggled to actually influence client behavior, the expansion of ties between the Soviet Union and various radical groups alarmed the administration.

indirectly—radical groups. Examples of direct support include Syria's backing of its Arab Radical group *Saiqa* or Iraq's homegrown radical group, the Arab Liberation Front (A.L.F.). Indirect support included Kuwait's funneling of money to various groups whose values it supported and Libya and Egypt's alternating logistical support to groups with whom they sympathized. The net result of all this activity was a network of sub-state forces that often erupted in erratic episodes of violence.[1]

While motivated by a variety of factors, radicalism in the Gulf region grew in large part because of the British withdrawal. Financially constrained and ready to move beyond their colonial image, the British decided in the mid-1960s that they would withdraw their major military presence and relinquish their major political role in the region. As this withdrawal gradually took place, political instability began to rise.

In fact, a series of problems stemmed from the decolonization of the states bordering Saudi Arabia—most notably in the two Yemens. Throughout the 1960s, Egyptian president Gamal Abdal Nasser worked to spread his pan-Arab, anti-imperial visions to the unstable states. To counter this effort, the British grouped a handful of federation territories into what became known as the Federation of South Arabia. Certain elements of the population resented this imperial makeover and formed the Marxist National Liberation Front (N.L.F.) in 1963 and began to carry out guerilla attacks against the British. To further complicate the situation, another anti-British group, the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (F.L.O.S.Y.) began carrying out attacks of its own. As the

[1] For more information on the rise of Arab radicals see Aryeh Y. Yodfat and Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.: Strategy and Tactics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981); Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John W. Amos II, *Palestinian Resistance: Organization of a Nationalist Movement* (New York: Pergamon, 1980); Riad El Reyyes and Dunia Nahas, *Guerillas for Palestine* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976); Mohammed Mughisuddin ed., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Praeger, 1977).

N.L.F. and F.L.O.S.Y. fought against each other for control and against the British for liberation, the situation became intolerable for the British, who announced their immediate formal withdrawal in 1967. In November of that year, the British essentially evacuated the country, leaving the capital, Aden, to fall to the N.L.F. Marking a new phase in the drama, the N.L.F. renamed the state the People's Republic of South Yemen (P.R.S.Y.). Between 1967 and 1970, the N.L.F. defeated F.L.O.S.Y. and gained unchecked power over the small state. The activity that seriously alerted Washington was Aden's invitation to the Soviet Union, East Germany, Cuba and China for assistance, which was readily supplied. Furthermore, the P.R.S.Y. openly voiced its support of the most radical Palestinian groups and allowed the P.R.S.Y. to be used as a logistical base for various radical activities.[1]

Similarly, the state that became known as the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) faced a period of political instability around the time of the British withdrawal. During the 1960s in North Yemen, royalists and revolutionary forces fought a civil war. Nasser backed the revolutionaries, whereas Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United States favored the royalists. This war, though, ended more clearly than the ongoing debacle in the P.R.S.Y. Upon Egypt's loss in the June War, Nasser withdrew support of the revolutionary forces and decided to be less hostile toward Riyadh. Subsequently, the revolution in North Yemen collapsed; the monarchy was restored; and Saudi Arabia recognized the Y.A.R. in 1970.

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[1] For more on developments in the Persian Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia's role, see Aryeh Y. Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula: Soviet Policy Toward the Persian Gulf and Arabia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) 1-31; Amitav Acharya, *U.S. Military Strategy in the Gulf* (London: Routledge, 1989); Fred Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Joseph Kostiner, *South Yemen's Revolutionary Strategy, 1970-1985: From Insurgency to Bloc Politics* (Bolder: Westview, 1990).

Though the Y.A.R. episode ended more favorably for Saudi Arabia, both Yemens' instability highlighted the need for a reliable regional framework for handling conflict. While this framework was being created, violent activity in the region continued. Still promulgating revolution, the N.L.F. in the P.R.S.Y. supported the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (P.F.L.O.A.G.), an upstart group with anti-imperial goals that employed terrorist and guerilla tactics. The government of the P.R.S.Y. again renamed itself the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (P.D.R.Y.) in 1970, further distancing itself from the moderate Y.A.R., joined the "Rejection Front" with Libya and Syria in 1973 and continued to receive support from communist states.[1] Perhaps the most egregious affront to neighboring states was the P.D.R.Y.'s support of Dhufari rebels (named for the region of western Oman which they populated) in their war against the Sheikh of Muscat. In rhetoric and by limited logistical means, the P.D.R.Y. supported broader liberation of the Gulf States from whatever form of imperialism existed. Indeed, during a period of fragile political reorganizing, the presence of a hostile P.D.R.Y. and a relatively weak Y.A.R. with revolutionary leanings did little to help the overall stability and cooperation of the region.

Further complicating the regional problems for the U.S. were the Soviet Union's interests in the Persian Gulf. Long interested in Indian Ocean access, the Soviets eyed developments in the region with great interest. The region was of great naval importance to the Soviet Union. In a time of global war, the Soviets could try to close or disrupt strategic waterways, while in time of peace, the shipping lanes through the region were

[1] The Rejection Front has been described as a "group of Arab states and Palestinian groups that coalesced in the wake of the October 1973 War to propound a hard line in opposition to any Arab-Israeli peacemaking." For more information see: Avraham Sela ed., *Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 636-637.

critical as Soviet transportation routes.[1] And finally, as with the U.S., the Soviet Union was well aware of the region's oil and continually prepared itself to exploit whatever possibilities arose.[2]

Logically, the Soviet Union sought to gain useful footholds in the region. A main target for Soviet assistance was the P.D.R.Y. (South Yemen). The Soviets sought to develop close military and economic ties, as well as to secure port rights in Aden.[3] In both the Yemen Arab Republic and South Yemen, governments were "quick" to invite Soviet aid and military supplies.[4] For the Soviets, this relationship served many purposes. Beyond the waterways and oil issues, the Soviets wanted to overtake Peking's role as revolutionary-backer in the region, exploit the British pullout and counter the U.S. naval presence in the area.[5] For the Soviets, arms assistance packages were the most sensible means to accomplishing these goals. Soviet arms shipments to the region throughout the 1950s and 1960s were nearly double that of American shipments. Between 1950 and 1969, the Soviets supplied $1.971B compared to the U.S.'s $1.010B in weapons. Furthermore, by 1969, Soviet military aid had nearly doubled compared to

[1] John C. Campbell, "The Superpowers in the Persian Gulf Region," from Abbas Amirie ed., *The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in International Politics* (Tehran, Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, 1975), 67-68.

[2] Given the vital importance of this region to the Soviet Union, the U.S. maintained surprisingly little naval presence there. After the October War of 1973, the U.S. raised its naval presence to 6 ships (in the whole northwest Indian Ocean region; the Soviet Union had 20-25 at all times). For more information on these numbers, see Alvin G. Cottrell, "Response to John C. Campbell," from Abbas Amirie ed., *The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in International Politics* (Tehran: Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, 1975), 66.

[3] Cathy Tackney, "Dealing Arms in the Middle East. Part 1: History and Strategic Consideration," *MERIP Reports* No. 8 (March – April, 1972): 10.

[4] Ibid., 10.

[5] Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 228.

its 1950 amount. Much of this aid was directed toward revolutionary regimes. Only between 1965 and 1969 did the U.S. begin to close the gap.[1]

It was in this environment that the U.S., beleaguered by Vietnam and commitments elsewhere, worked to pursue its foreign policy goals. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger summarized the situation quite lucidly in an October 1970 memo to Nixon. After meeting with the National Security Council to discuss problems and policy options in the region, Kissinger explained the "problem" was that it was "easy to recognize potential for instability in the Gulf and increased Soviet and radical exploitations, but it [was] difficult to determine how the U.S. can best help minimize the consequences."[2] The State Department provided a clear, encompassing list of goals on two notable occasions. In September, 1972 and again in December, 1973, the State Department listed five major regional goals:

- Non interference in the internal affairs of other nations
- Support for friendly countries in their efforts to provide for their own security and development
- Encouragement of regional collective security efforts, especially Iranian-Saudi cooperation to provide stability
- Containment and peaceful resolution of local disputes without outside intervention

[1] Most of this aid went to Egypt and Syria, much to the chagrin of Washington. Throughout the 1960s, Soviet economic and technical assistance to both North and South Yemen increased throughout those nations' decolonization wars. While the magnitude of Soviet assistance was slight compared to other nations (for example, 1,000 "advisors" went to North Yemen, whereas nearly 20,000 "advisors" were stationed in Egypt at the time), the aid was decisive in helping those regimes continue fighting their wars. See Thackney, "Dealing Arms," 6; Yodfat, *The Soviet Union*, 2-7.

[2] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1972, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1970*, vol. E-4, No. 91. (*http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/index.htm*, accessed 15 May 2007).

§ Avoidance of confrontations, in accordance with principles worked out at US-Soviet summit meetings[1]

Not mentioned above but certainly a recurring issue was the U.S.'s need for Middle Eastern oil. The U.S. worked to continue to supply its own oil needs, as well as those of Western Europe and Japan. While a comprehensive examination of Nixon's oil policy is beyond the scope of this thesis, oil concerns will be dealt with as a factor in the Nixon Administration's policymaking process.

American goals, whether articulated by Kissinger as National Security Advisor or the State Department, were straightforward and comprehensive. Goals in this region were consistent with goals elsewhere in the world—they aimed at preserving American options and interests and spreading American influence, while finding and investing in new opportunities. Given the multifaceted difficulties in the Arab world and the especially thorny issues in the Gulf region, achieving the goals listed above would require diplomatic skill and methodological creativity.

The Nixon Doctrine in Action

The situation in the Persian Gulf in 1969 was arguably quite ripe to become a test case for the Nixon Doctrine. The new administration sought to develop a flexible, multifaceted approach to regional security that could assist local powers in bringing about stability to the region while blocking further Soviet expansion. In the October 1970

[1] *Department of State Bulletin,* 4 September 1972: 241-245; 17 December 1973: 725-730. (Hereafter referred to as DSB).

memo, Kissinger articulated a comprehensive approach the U.S. should take in order to ensure its presence in a positive, powerful manner. His approach called for a gradually increased naval presence (which a number of states in the region desired), increased aid and diplomatic presence and more liberal arms sales policies. Ultimately Kissinger explained that the U.S.'s strategy must:

> …aim at building the Gulf into a self-regulating regional system as capable as possible by itself of filling whatever gap is created by revision of the British protectorate. This system would be built upon a strong role by more powerful nations and cooperation among all states at various levels. The smooth functioning of this system would inherently discourage those states to seek Soviet assistance, as they would be operating sufficiently without it.[1]

Ultimately the Nixon Administration developed what became known as the two-pillar policy. The idea was to support the two most powerful and reliable states bordering the Persian Gulf—Iran and Saudi Arabia—in hopes of gaining the greatest influence in the region with the lightest material commitment. But the administration also recognized the confluence of different states and various groups' interests in the region—the overlapping political, economic, security and ideological goals that did exist. An example of such an area of interest is the oil issue. The administration sought to ensure the steady supply of oil. The companies involved felt similarly, but did so for profitability's sake. The states in the region were inclined to pursue the financial rewards of oil exporting, and all agreed on the need for a peaceful Gulf. Nixon would skillfully play on this and similar confluences of interests to facilitate his foreign policy initiative. Making pillars out of Saudi Arabia and Iran, though not a perfect solution, was a logical and practical approach.

[1] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 91.

The Saudi Pillar

Saudi Arabia is the largest, most religiously important state on the Arabian Peninsula. Home to Mecca and Medina and the annual Hajj, this conservative Arab state is of particular significance to the Muslim world. A well established monarchy, the Saud family, sought to resist revolutionary challenges and momentary political upheaval. Though vocally anti-Israeli, the Saudis handled the Arab-Israeli dispute comparatively calmly, and were never as outspoken as Nasser or Syrian president Hafez Asad. Furthermore, Saudi Kings Abdel-Aziz (1932-1952), Saud (1953-1964) and Faisal (1964-1975) all maintained working relationships with U.S. presidents going back to Franklin Roosevelt.

In fact, Saudi Arabia proved to be a useful, reliable partner in the region. The first few years of the Nixon Administration dealt mostly with diplomatic overtures toward Saudi Arabia and encouragement of cooperation between it and its neighbors. But over time, Washington began to rely quite heavily on Riyadh's role. The most significant role Saudi Arabia played for the U.S. was in countering revolutionary sentiment on the Arabian Peninsula. The hostile regime in the P.R.S.Y. sparked a conflict with Saudi Arabia over a disputed wadi region along the two states' border. Begun in November, 1969, this dispute led to a tit-for-tat fight that lasted until Riyadh quashed the South Yemeni forces.[1] The South Yemenis then looked northward toward

[1] Daniel Dishon et. al. eds., *Middle East Record* Vol. 5: 1969-1970, parts 1-4 (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1977), s.v. "South Yemen-Saudi Arabia: The Wadi Area." (Hereafter referred to as MER).

Oman's Dhufar region. Saudi Arabia helped North Yemen defend itself against external threats from South Yemen. It assisted Oman in countering Dhofari and South Yemeni challenges throughout the early 1970s.[1]

Further examples of Saudi Arabia playing a stabilizing role it the region exist. Saudi Arabia and Washington planned a ten-year Yemeni Arab Republic military modernization program, which the Saudis largely funded.[2] Moreover, they contributed money and military training to counter the P.F.L.O.A.G. in Dhofar, sold arms to Eritrean rebels later in the 1970s who fought Soviet and Cuban backed Ethiopian troops and sold arms to Somalia in its fight over Ogaden against Ethiopia.[3] As time passed, Saudi Arabia warmed to some of its most important Arab neighbors. Once the target of Nasser-backed Yemeni aggression, Riyadh got along much better with Cairo during the Sadat years. Not only did this relationship foster stability and cooperation across the Middle East in general, it played into the Americans' hands to the extent that the Riyadh-Cairo détente worried Moscow.[4]

Saudi Arabia also proved to be an effective diplomatic partner outside the realm of conflict as well. 4300 military officers and thousands of university students came to the U.S. for training—a positive relationship from the U.S.'s perspective.[5] Saudi Arabia also played an "intense" and effective role convincing Anwar Sadat to expel the Soviets from Egypt. Likewise the Saudi government increasingly embraced its role as

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[1] Amirie, *Persian Gulf*, 296-297; James H. Noyes, *The Clouded Lens: Persian Gulf Security and U.S. Policy* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 21-22.

[2] William Stivers, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-1983* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 68.

[3] Ibid, 68.

[4] Golan, *Soviet Policies*,228.

[5] Bahgat Korany, "The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," from Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki eds., *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenges of Change* (Bolder: Westview, 1991), 332.

"go-between" for Egypt and the United States.[1] A residual effect of Washington's use of Riyadh was the Saudis' efforts to reconcile Cairo-Damascus tensions in 1975 after Sadat made peace with Israel. Finally, Riyadh has been one of the most powerful forces standing up against Qaddafi's radicalism, offering a more stable alternative to the revolutionary posture of Libya.

The Iranian Pillar

The second state the U.S. selected, obviously the more powerful of the two, was Iran. Unique because it was non-Arab (Persian) and therefore immune to certain pan-Arab sentiments and given its enormous size and extensive boundaries, Iran could play a variety of roles. Regional expert in the State Department Joe Sisco further explained that Iran could play a "major role in providing for stability in the gulf and continued flow of oil to consumer countries" and that it could "offer assistance to the smaller gulf states should [those states] wish it."[2] Similarly, Kissinger argued that Iran's direct role was "achievable without any American resources, since the Shah was willing to pay for the equipment out of his oil revenues."[3]

A significant overlap of U.S.-Iranian interests existed, making the decision to work with the Persian nation even more rational. A 1970 National Intelligence Estimate (N.I.E.) explained that "what the Shah fears most in the Gulf is the growth of Arab

[1] Ibid., 340.
[2] DSB, 4 September 1972: 244.
[3] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years,* 1264.

radicalism—seeking the overthrow of traditional rule there—with consequent harm to Iranian interests."[1] Furthermore Iran served as an intelligence gathering post for the U.S.—a point Kissinger was quick to remind Nixon of in discussions about the country.[2]

Iran came to play an important and welcomed role in assisting Oman in its struggle against revolutionary forces in Dhufar. The Omanis essentially invited Iranian help, and the Iranians acted relatively professionally in their operations, i.e., murders and rapes were surprisingly few.[3] This operation served a number of interests. Beyond supporting a moderate Omani government and fostering reasonable cooperation between Gulf states, this act helped protect a strategic waterway in the region. The narrowness of the Strait of Hormuz means that developments on one side—in either Iran, the United Arab Emirates or Oman—directly effect the state(s) on the other side. A moderate, friendly Omani regime was not just in Iran's interest, but was desired by many states.[4]

The Two Pillars Together and the Broader Gulf Region

Although in 1969, intelligence experts predicted that an ascendant Iran would face "recurrent tensions" with Saudi Arabia and that problems arising out of this rivalry could be easily exploited by the Soviets, it was still reasonable for the administration to assume

[1] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 86.
[2] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 59.
[3] John Duke Anthony, "Insurrection and Intervention: The War in Dhofar," from Abbas Amirie ed., *The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in International Politics* (Tehran, Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, 1975), 297.
[4] Ibid. 297.

the two nations would work together.[1] The administration therefore remained sensitive to relations between the two states and whenever possible encouraged cooperation between them. Iran was the more powerful of the two pillars, but faced certain obstacles to regional prominence. Kissinger realized that the role a lone Iran could play was "somewhat limited by Arab/Persian antagonism." Moreover, since its ability "to counter internal revolutionary sentiment in its neighbors was "circumscribed" by such obstacles, cooperation between Iran and its Islamic neighbors, namely Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was necessary.[2] Therefore the administration worked continually to encourage cooperation.

An assessment of the two states' relations sheds light onto prospects for localized cooperation. A 1970 N.I.E. stated that "the Saudis and the Iranians have cooperated fairly well in the Gulf recently, although Iranian pretensions occasionally grate on the Saudis." The Saudis were seemingly tolerant of Iranian efforts to play a "pre-eminent" role in Gulf security, as long as the Iranians respected their neighbor's territorial integrity.[3] In a sense, the two states shared enough overlapping interests to work together, and felt part of sufficiently distinct spheres so as to not rival each other.

Examples of Iranian-Saudi aid around the region had a noteworthy impact. In the states bordering Saudi Arabia that experienced upheaval throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Iran and Saudi Arabia engaged in joint campaigns against a clearly recognized common threat. Three significant examples exist where the two states cooperated: in the period 1962-1968, both countries supported Yemeni royalists in the Civil War; in 1969

[1] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 1.
[2] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 75.
[3] FRUS, *Iran and Iraq*, No. 86.

Iran loaned military equipment to Saudi Arabia when the P.R.S.Y. was violating the Saudi border; and throughout the 1960s in the Dhufar uprising.

The effect the Nixon Administration had on these involvements was to encourage other states' participation. To the extent that these conflicts could spread and have harmful effects on the region, it was in a number of states' interests to play a role. For example, the Jordanians provided military and logistical assistance to Oman; Iran gradually escalated its military role in the state; and even countries such as the United Arab Emirates lent financial assistance to the Omani government.[1] Ultimately, the Dhufari rebellion collapsed in 1976 and Oman maintained a peaceful participation in regional politics.

The Nixon Administration also encouraged Bahrain to participate in the region's activities. The Nixon Administration facilitated the evolution of Bahrain from a one-dimensional, oil-centered state to one prepared for a post-oil economy and integration into a more multifaceted global community. The U.S. trained and armed the military and helped expand airport and harbor facilities. Private oil companies, obviously sensing profits of their own, helped Bahrain transition from an oil-producing state to an oil-refining one, preparing a sizable amount of Saudi Arabia's oil for export. The capital investment was welcomed by the Bahraini government as it recognized that its oil supplies would be depleted by the mid-1980s. Indeed from a business standpoint, American companies gained much; likewise from a strategic standpoint, the Nixon Administration enhanced America's position in the region—international oil supplies

[1] Noyes, *Clouded Lens*, 21-23.

were further stabilized and the U.S. could better balance the Soviet naval presence in the region.[1]

Objections

The Nixon Administration did employ some coldly pragmatic tactics in its implementation of its policy and could have benefited from a few important adjustments. A critical look at the administration's means is necessary to gaining a more complete understanding of the period. Objections can be raised to the Nixon Administration's methods along a variety of lines, and the brief discussion below explores some of the more often voiced criticisms. Many authors, especially those writing from the Gulf, particularly those contemporary writers sympathetic to opposition forces in the region, cite the administration's amoral and even Machiavellian posture. For example, the use of impoverished young males from South Asia to serve as mercenaries in Peninsula wars supports the above accusations. Furthermore, the Saudi and Iranian regimes were extremely brutal in their suppression of domestic dissent. Indeed, the Nixon Administration was aware of and even complicit in such forceful suppression and should share a burden of the guilt. It has been on ongoing hypocrisy in American foreign

[1] Saudi Arabia certainly utilized its oil money to increase relations with the U.S. Throughout the 1970s, the U.S. assisted with a military modernization program; thousands of Saudi students attended the American universities; the Saudi commercial class grew with help from Riyadh; and Saudi Arabia provided increased aid to nations in the region. See Korany and Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*, 262-274. For more on the U.S.-Bahrain relationship, see Buzz Theberge, "U.S. Base in Bahrain: Guarding the Gulf," *MERIP Reports* 8 (March, 1972): 15-16+19; Barry Rubin, "America's Mid-East Policy: A Marxist Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1973): 60-61; Archarya, *U.S. Military Strategy,* 30.

relations that the U.S. touts human rights yet continually supports brutal regimes. The only plausible route by which the U.S. can distance itself from such horrors is to argue that the abovementioned methods of suppression are part of those societies' culture and would have continued regardless of U.S. complicity. However, the U.S.'s training and supplying of groups like Iran's domestic intelligence service, S.A.V.A.K., unquestionably engender criticism. Had the Nixon Administration truly sought to build a workable framework for long-term security and peaceful stability, it would have, to whatever degree possible, discouraged the abhorrent practices employed by its partner states.

Widely cited as one of the most negative consequences of the Nixon Administration's policy in the region is the oil embargo that wreaked economic havoc on the West. Authors such as Tore Petersen, Daniel Yergin, and Richard Thornton argue that the Nixon Administration played some role in fostering such a reaction from oil producing states.[1] At the least, these authors argue, the administration ignored those states' warnings that they would readjust price. At a basic level, however, the administration engineered a price hike so those states, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia, could purchase more arms and consequently serve as more effective pillars in the region.[2]

Actually measuring the extent to which the administration was complicit in this scheme is beyond the scope of this paper. But the utility of a price adjustment, assuming the administration played some role in encouraging it, can be discussed in the context of this paper. It is plausible to perceive that a regionally-initiated price readjustment was

[1] See: Tore Petersen, "Richard Nixon Confronts the Persian Gulf, 1969-1972," (*http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reports/SHAFR2004/Petersen.pdf*, accessed 24 February 2007); Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Power and Money* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992), 581-586; Richard C. Thornton, *The Nixon Years: The Reshaping of American Policy* (St. Paul: Paragon House), 69-88.

[2] For more on the administration's efforts to reshape the regional oil industry, see note 3, pg. 73.

inevitable, although the timing and magnitude was certainly not known. In such a case, it is understandable that a U.S. presidential administration, sensing a potentially harmful price readjustment, should work to ensure that such a shift would benefit as many American interests as possible. To this end, the president's regional security, America business interests—not *just* the oil companies—and the defense industry benefited from this involvement in re-pricing. Had the administration not actively sought oil revenue, perhaps no parties would have benefited, while American consumers would still have been similarly burdened.

Other objections to Nixon Administration policy deal with its role in creating the conditions for the 1979 revolution in Iran. This accusation requires Nixon to be held accountable for U.S. relations with Iran for five years after his departure from the White House. William Bundy goes to great length to describe the role Nixon Administration policies played in facilitating revolution in Iran, noting, like other authors, U.S. military assistance as being a major reason the revolution took on such an "anti-American character."[1] But, Bundy also explains that the personality of the Shah and the "disruptive" effects of oil wealth were the major hasteners of revolution. By confusing the causes with the character of the revolution, Bundy argues that Nixon bears significant responsibility. It is important to realize that while supporting the Shah's military buildup and domestic policing in general, the U.S.-Shah relationship underwent a period of relative neglect during the Ford administration and a period of struggles during the Carter administration. Ultimately, it was the Shah's own carelessness and lavishness, far out of touch with the Iranian people, and a host of other domestic and religious issues that led to

[1] Bundy, *Tangled Wed*, 508.

the 1979 revolution. Furthermore, revolution in Iran was a bit of an anomaly—no other state in the region has experienced a revolution since the Nixon Doctrine was applied to the Persian Gulf.

As described above, an extensive confluence of interests existed in the region whereby many parties, some of which were the ruling parties of their particular states, were highly motivated to buy into the Nixon Administration's plans for the region. As is the often the case in politics, a notable portion of the population is relatively unaffected by regional developments. Those that do involve themselves in the political process do so out of some vested interest—either they sense an opportunity to advance their situation or they sense their situation being threatened. The Nixon formula worked to benefit those powerful, active and stabilizing parties in the region while marginalizing and eliminating threats.

Barry Rubin's critique of the U.S.'s neo-colonial posture, "America's Mid-East Policy: A Marxist Perspective," deserves discussion also. Pointing out that the U.S. maximized economic clout along with military assistance oriented carrots in the region, Rubin argues convincingly that the U.S. and Nixon, in particular, acted largely out of self interest and unfairly toward regional players. While Rubin's article offers a compelling criticism of the Nixon Administration's policy along Marxist lines, is does not address the needs and wishes of a large number of people on the "ground."[1] While many people and parties were to some degree exploited during Nixon's tenure, a good many people and parties benefited. Beyond the slow spreading of oil wealth and various development projects that occurred as part of the increased aid and diplomatic presence Kissinger

[1] See note 1, pg. 24.

called for, a noteworthy degree of stability came to the region. True, in quelling Yemeni violence, for example, a coalition of "neo-colonial" partners formed, but when one examines the violence associated with various wars of liberation elsewhere, it is possible to argue that the alternative would likely have been worse for the region.

A Comparative Success

This episode in Middle East foreign policy serves as an example of the Nixon Doctrine working at its relative best. No longer able to dominate a region militarily and economically, Richard Nixon shifted the focus of American foreign policy, to use an analogy from the business world, to gaining 51% control over a region. By allying the U.S. with strategic partners, the administration could maintain its existing interests and pursue more interests with fewer resources than before. Iran and Saudi Arabia fit into this plan quite well. The administration was able to use either or both of those states to advance its own position and the position of its allies on a number of fronts. Furthermore, though American support was obvious, the idea of using indigenous forces undermined much of the opposition's fuel. Though Iran did experience a catastrophic revolution five years after Nixon left office, other states, including Saudi Arabia, have continued to maintain extremely favorable ties with the U.S. and other Middle East states. This was exactly one of Nixon's goals.

Though the U.S. and the Soviet Union never diplomatically confronted each other in the region—as they did over the Arab-Israeli dispute, Vietnam or issues in Cuba—the

U.S. did manage to eclipse Soviet influence in the area. By the time Nixon left office, the architecture of Gulf security was entirely the U.S.'s design. The U.S. modestly but effectively expanded its strategic position in the region—countering Soviet military assistance programs, gaining greater naval flexibility in the region and expanding intelligence gathering facilities aimed at the Soviet Union. In the Cold War context, the Nixon Administration achieved significant diplomatic and strategic success in the region without any substantial sacrifice.

While aspects of the Nixon Administration's Gulf policy are highly debatable, certain areas of success are undeniable. First and foremost, an explosive situation was quelled. In 1969, revolutionary activity on the Arabian Peninsula threatened to spread violence and instability to neighboring states. Many precedents exist where a decolonization war spread to neighboring states, continued to fester for decades and/or invited Soviet exploitation. After six years of the two pillars policy, none of these possibilities occurred; rather, stable states in the region were equipped to contain such conflicts.

Ultimately the Nixon Administration's two pillars policy, as well as the administration's ability to encourage "buy-in" by many parties in the region, fostered a regional framework for handling issues that arose and encouraged a high degree of cooperation at various levels. A regional framework for cooperation was established. While this framework did not serve the needs and interests of all states equally and favorably, the framework did utilize the confluence of number of important issues. Other than the Iran-Iraq war during the 1980s, which was subject to forces far beyond the scope

of any Nixonian regional framework for peace and stability, the states of the region have gotten along relatively well ever since.

A highly debatable topic, the flow of arms to the region and the effect of such a flow, is noteworthy. It is necessary to point out that the Nixon plan for the region benefited the American defense industry. During lean defense spending years in the United States, the defense industry could profit to some extent off of sales to Gulf states. Furthermore, the broader precedent of arming allies could not have gone unnoticed around the world. Continually concerned with "credibility," Nixon considered the message he was sending to spectator states, demonstrating the idea that U.S. backing was effective and reliable. Moreover, arms sales ensure continued cooperation between states. Weaponry sets up continuing demands by recipients for training and military advice, for parts, replacements and ammunition, for credit and economic assistance and for political support from suppliers.[1]

By and large, administration cohesiveness was comparatively high in handling issues in the region. If one thinks of Nixon and Kissinger's handling of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, the disputes between the State Department and the White House stand out noticeably. Similarly, in the U.S. supported coup in Chile, voices of dissent from within the administration are not difficult to detect.[2] In handling the Gulf, nearly all of those

[1] Tacnkey, "Dealing Arms," 3.

[2] The most well-known example of intra-administrative dissent during the 1971 Pakistan Crisis is the "Blood Telegram" detailing the horrors of Pakistani president Yahya Khan's clampdown in the spring of that year. For more on this crisis, see Christopher Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia," *Asian Survey* Vol. XX, no. 4 (April, 1980): 339-361; Geoffrey Warner, "Nixon, Kissinger and the Breakup of Pakistan, 1971," *International Affairs* 81 (May, 2005): 1097-1118; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, South Asia Crisis, 1971,* (Washington: *http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/,* accessed 15 May 2007); *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972,* (Washington: *http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/,*

American participants were in agreement on the means and ends of the policy. Furthermore, Nixon's handling of Gulf developments resulted in hardly any known American lives lost—a noteworthy accomplishment given the high degree of domestic frustration with American casualty figures coming out of Vietnam. Last but not least, hardly any protest directed toward the Nixon plan arose from Israel. Given the continual sensitivity American administrations demonstrate toward that state's diplomatic issues, it made sense to develop a plan with which the Israelis would agree. Much research could be done examining Israeli cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Iran, but suffice it to say that the administration ensured that its Gulf policy would be more smoothly instituted if it gained Israel's assent.

Conclusion

A region that was essentially a powder keg in 1969 was measurably pacified by the Nixon Administration's involvement. Of great strategic value to the U.S., the Persian Gulf was in need of some system that encouraged states of the region to cooperate. While the Nixon-inspired two pillars policy and the administration's diplomatic efforts were not entirely above reproach, their involvement in the region worked toward ensuring overall regional stability and providing opportunities that served many parties' interests. Moreover, here was a case where the Nixon Doctrine could be effectively

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accessed 15 May 2007). For more on the Chilean coup, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 658-683; and Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Root, 1982), 374-413.

applied, which it was with great enthusiasm. It is true that the administration's handling of the situation could have been more sensitive to certain parties' interests and more affected by moral and humanitarian concerns. Perhaps when students of Middle East politics study the Nixon Administration's handling of the region they will take note of this reality and the negative consequences that arise from partially enlightened reliance on force. But as for building a much needed structure in the region—ideally to be improved upon by later administrations—the Nixon Administration should be recognized as a creative architect of an effective system.

CHAPTER 3: LIBYA AND THE "LIVE AND LET LIVE" POLICY

Introduction and Historical Background

In 1969, a 27 year-old colonel overthrew an aging and corrupt king in Africa. The young colonel and his band of militants achieved power relatively bloodlessly, yet did so without any substantive, long-term vision for leadership. They put in action a moderately scaled national reform plan aimed at helping the country's population, while they engaged in vitriolic denunciations of the both the East and the West. Initially, American policymakers were baffled as to how to interpret their actions—whether the young colonel was truly hostile or simply vocal, whether his revolutionary ideas would materialize into international action or even how long he could maintain his hold on power. That Mu'ammar Qaddafi has stayed in power ever since is a surprise to many observers and a testament to his survivability. Throughout his tenure, he has assisted, confused and challenged many nations, especially the United States.

The coup in Libya was but one of the dozens of coups that occurred around the world throughout the 1960s. To policymakers, each political shift required some degree of sensitive attention—in best case scenarios, those shifts could be co-opted to support U.S. policy; in worst case scenarios, the decolonization struggles of the post-World War II era could grow into bitter and violent battles. For a region already as explosive as the Middle East, yet another coup did little to help the situation. The Nixon Administration

therefore had to closely examine the roots and nature of the coup to determine the most appropriate response. The administration adopted a "wait and see" policy whereby it would continue to pursue its interest vis-a-vis Libya while monitoring the new regime's activities. Through a nuanced understanding of Libyan politics and Middle East relations, the Nixon Administration managed to coexist with Libya and continue pursuing its strategic goals in the region with no substantial change in relations.

Throughout the 1960s, Libya experienced such serious domestic problems that a coup by the end of the decade did not come as a surprise to many. The impoverished state never achieved a real level of stability during its post-colonial years after World War II, and its monarchy helped the situation little. Middle East ambassador James Akins referred to Libya as "one of the most corrupt [countries] in the region and probably one of the most corrupt in the world."[1] The oil boom of the late 1960s only worsened this problem. Libya gained attention during the 1967 closure of the Suez Canal because its geography made it immune to that particular and any future canal dispute. Furthermore, compared to some of the less stable oil producing states—Iraq and Saudi Arabia, for example—Libya was a practical alternative.[2] Once its strategic location and vast oil reserves were fully recognized, Libya gained ascendancy, joining the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (O.P.E.C.) in 1967 and equaling Iran and Saudi Arabia in oil output by 1968.[3] While King Idris sought British weaponry and stronger relations with the West, inevitable problems ensued. The king's pro-Western sentiment became a major source of tension after the 1967 June War. After what many

[1] Carole Collins, "Imperialism and Revolution in Libya," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, (April, 1974): 3-22.
[2] Ibid., 13.
[3] Ibid., 12-13.

Arabs perceived as American-backed Israeli aggression in the June War, cooperation with the West, especially the United States, opened Idris, as well as other pro-American Arab leaders, up to potentially serious criticism. Also, in addition to Idris's corruption, oil revenues were not being spread equitably across the Libyan population.[1] Not surprisingly, these features nourished revolutionary sentiment.

By 1969, the domestic situation in Libya was ripe for a coup. The government was so feeble that the brief revolution required nowhere near the tenacity and ingenuity of the Chinese or Cuban revolutions. In fact, the ease of the coup gave Qaddafi a false sense of accomplishment. As one author points out, Qaddafi's putsch "owed its success more to the relative incompetence of the old regime than to an expression of popular sentiment."[2] Regardless of the ease of his rise, Qaddafi found himself in charge and quickly set about implementing changes.

Qaddafi's early changes to Libyan politics reflected his anti-monarchical and pan-Arab intentions, as well as some important characteristics of the new leadership. First, Qaddafi disbanded parliament to rule through the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), yet continued the Idrisi policy of banning political parties—including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ba'ath and the communists.[3] He cancelled a billion dollar air defense deal with Great Britain and sent the U.S. Peace Corps home. Furthermore, he nationalized and "Libyanized" aspects of the Libyan economy and culture and doubled

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[1] Collins, "Imperialism," 14-15.

[2] Dirk Vandeville, *A History of Modern Libya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86.

[3] Collins, 16. The Muslim Brotherhood is an orthodox religious and political organization that was fiercely persecuted by Nasser in Egypt for subversive activities. The Ba'ath Party is a socialist, pan-Arab political party founded in Syria in the mid-1930s. Like the Brotherhood, its activities often bring it into conflict with ruling regimes across the Middle East. Its members have been similarly persecuted. For more on both topics, see, Avraham Sela, ed. *Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 166-169 and 540-545.

the minimum wage.[1] Ideologically, Qaddafi preached a populist, Islamic egalitarianism, but was rabidly anti-communist and anti-Marxist. Yet for all his activity, Qaddafi's early policy initiatives seemed more like knee jerk reactions stemming from a surprisingly quick rise to power. His initial policy stance made it clear that "what the young revolutionaries may have possessed in charismatic appeal and ideological rhetoric, they lacked in programmatic clarity."[2]

Initial Perception and Responses from the Nixon Administration

A thorough understanding of developments in the Middle East as well as the global context and an awareness of the Nixon Administration's thinking at the time help explain the administration's initial response to the Libyan coup. It is necessary to understand where the Libyan revolution fit into Nixon's broader vision for the Middle East. The Nixon Administration's response to the coup and handling of relations with Qaddafi reveal a great deal about how the administration wanted to shape the coup to fit the goals of the U.S. as well as the relative significance the administration assigned to the coup. Because the coup was not the most important development in the region at the time, the administration adopted a pragmatic approach toward maintaining ties with Libya.

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[1] For more on the specific post-coup adjustments listed here, see Collins, 16. For a broader look at Qaddafi's domestic political stances and his outlook on relations with neighbors, see I. William Zartman and A.G. Klug, "Heroic Politics: The Foreign Policy of Libya," in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouli, ed. *The Foreign Policies of Arab States* (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 175-195.

[2] Vandeville, *Modern Libya*, 81.

Events in Libya generated mixed emotions in the Nixon Administration. Early on, Kissinger recorded some insightful comments about the coup and its potential consequences in an October 1969 memo to Nixon. He first identified the character of the revolution, describing its leaders as "leaning toward the Iraqi type of Ba'athism, one of the most fanatic and anti-Western forms of Arab-radicalism."[1] This characterization was relatively accurate. It captured the new regime's policy orientation, radical nature and proclivity to proselytize its ideals. However, Kissinger also noted that the R.C.C. demonstrated a certain degree of pragmatism, pointing out that the Qaddafi government "declared their willingness to tolerate our base at Wheelus and promised not to nationalize the U.S. and other Western oil companies."[2] While this cooperation eventually oscillated between reluctant tolerance and low-level hostility, Kissinger's initial summary of the event reveals a surprisingly nuanced understanding of the revolution. Kissinger recognized the combination of ideological radicalism and pragmatic realism on particular issues. While Qaddafi's stance would change later, this assessment coming one month after the coup was fairly accurate. With so many states around the world to study and numerous relationships to analyze, Kissinger's fairly accurate portrayal of and predictions about Libya, a state of tertiary importance, is worth noting.

After his initial summary of the new regime, Kissinger immediately described how the recent developments in Libya fit into the Nixon Administration's overall plans

[1] This assessment compared the new government in Libya to Iraqi Ba'athists in its proclivity toward extremism based on its rhetoric. While Qaddafi banned the Ba'ath Party, he did display a similar form extremism. The new Libyan government still adopted a Nasserist stance on political issues. See *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 2003), 115-117. (Hereafter referred to as FRUS.)

[2] Ibid., 116.

for the Middle East. If the United States sought to ensure the credibility of its backing and convince Arab states that partnership with the U.S. offered more advantages than cooperation with the Soviet Union, Kissinger argued that the U.S. needed to intensify its efforts toward those goals. Although the situation in Libya was not as immediately explosive as some might have thought, the U.S.'s inaction to such a drastic change likely alarmed some of Libya's neighbors. As Kissinger pointed out, "we" were "either unwilling or unable to do anything" as the R.C.C. overthrew a legitimate monarch.[1] In the interest of gaining credibility in the region—one of Nixon's most prominent ongoing goals—the U.S., according to Kissinger, should have taken some action to reassure moderate states in the region that their friends in the West could help stave off any similar threats they might face. Since the coup, Kissinger went on to point out, not only had "roughly one billion $ [sic] in annual oil revenues…passed into the hands of avowed revolutionaries," but "enlightened" states like Tunisia increasingly feared the spreading radicalism.[2]

Nixon weighed in on developments as well. During a Chicago press conference on September 16, 1970, he spoke at length about foreign policy, sharing his thoughts on the Mediterranean region in particular. Pointing out that "over the past ten years the American position in the Mediterranean has been rapidly deteriorating and has deteriorated there more than any place in the world," he noted that the only friends of the U.S. on the southern rim of the sea—Tunisia and Morocco—were both economically and militarily weak. The major wild card in the region was, in fact, Libya. Considering the state's unpredictable government, the fact that half of its population was Palestinian

[1] FRUS, *Foundations*, 116.
[2] Ibid., 116.

refugees (an obvious exaggeration) and the influx of oil wealth, Libya's future was highly uncertain. Nixon also pointed out that given the instability of Libya's government, the state could easily be subjected to Nasserite or Soviet influence.[1]

Nixon then went on to provide perhaps one of the most useful policy statements he delivered on the topic. Tersely calling for a "live-and-let-live attitude," he hoped that the region could at least maintain an uneasy ceasefire in which neighbors could get along peacefully.[2] While this statement is hardly an articulation of the Nixon Administration's approach to the Middle East, this policy stance does effectively describe its behavior toward Libya. In fact, from this September 1970 press conference, one can infer a great deal about Nixon's thoughts on and goals for the region. As opposed to taking any immediate action, he advocated waiting to determine how to best shape the region's present instability to the benefit of the U.S. and the longer term benefit of the region. He displayed no intentions of changing the order of the region, despite some rather inflammatory comments from Qaddafi. This combination of policy stances, simply described as "live-and-let-live" and "wait-and-see," formed the basis of Nixon's relations with Libya for the remainder of his term.

Similar to President Nixon, the State Department's initial reactions revealed a desire to avoid any significant changes in policy: "The U.S. is maintaining diplomatic relations with the Government of Libya and looks forward to a continuation of traditionally close ties between our two countries."[3] Ultimately, the administration adopted a policy of practicality and flexibility. For the most part, the administration

[1] Ibid., 251.
[2] FRUS, *Foundations*, 252.
[3] *Department of State Bulletin*, 29 September 1969: 281. (Hereafter referred to as DSB.)

aimed for the best of relations, eyed possible routes to advance its position vis-a-vis Libya and monitored the situation in case relations did take an unfavorable turn. This three part policy, never directly articulated, required a great deal of sensitivity to and awareness of Libyan motives and activities. These three areas of concern shaped the U.S.'s approach to Libya in the post-coup Nixon years. The administration was aware of the potential dangers that could arise out of Libya and worked to minimize those threats in the context of advancing its overall position throughout the region.

Initial Causes for U.S. Concern

During his first year in power, Qaddafi displayed a variety of behaviors that gave the U.S. cause for concern. First and foremost, he vociferously supported Nasser, who, throughout the 1960s, had been one of the leading anti-Zionist and anti-American figures in the Arab world. At the Rabat Conference in December 1969, Qaddafi claimed that Nasser was "above everybody else."[1] He also conferred with Nasser on determining Libya's development for the post-coup years.[2] Also, since Qaddafi's assumption of control, Egypt provided useful intelligence to its western neighbor.[3] That Qaddafi was so pro-Nasser was a surprise to few. Nasser inspired a tremendous amount of Arab pride

[1] It is worth mentioning that the Arabic term "above all else" is a common expression for praise. See Daniel Dishon et. al. eds., *Middle East Record* Vol. 5: 1969-1970, parts 1-4 (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1977), s.v. "The Arab Summit: Denunciations of the Summit." (Hereafter referred to as MER).

[2] MER, s.v. "Bilateral Relations Between the Tripoli Charter States."

[3] Ibid.

and hope through his domestic and foreign policy activism. As Nasser's popularity seemed to rise throughout the 1960s, Qaddafi's cooperation with such a veteran of global politics was quite logical.

In addition to his Nasserist sentiments, Qaddafi made a number of other unsettling statements. Fueling conservative sentiments, he argued that regimes like Jordan and Saudi Arabia were "stumbling blocks" to liberated states.[1] In the 1969 Khartoum Resolutions, Libya pledged £20 million in military arms contracts for revolutionary causes, compared to Saudi Arabia's £10 million and Kuwait's £5 million. Furthermore, Qaddafi offered to underwrite 25% of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (P.L.O.) military budget.[2] Qaddafi spent most of the fall and winter of 1969 seeking opportunities to display tangible support for Arab and anti-Israeli causes. Quite actively, he engaged various states in the region in the pursuit of these goals. Throughout the spring and summer of 1970, Qaddafi became even more vocal and active about pan-Arabism. He traveled through the Middle East to discuss military and economic cooperation. Visiting the Sudan, Iraq and Jordan, Qaddafi repeated his pan-Arab sentiments and sought friends. Qaddafi stated afterward that he noticed a "readiness to wage the Arab state's great battle."[3]

Between the end of 1969 and the fall of 1970, Mu'ammar Qaddafi engaged nearly every potentially friendly state in the Middle East in the hopes of finding allies and friends. Above all, he quite successfully worked to secure relations between Libya and Egypt. His activities certainly gained the attention of policymakers in the U.S. But even

[1] MER, s.v. "The Arab Summit: Denunciations of the Summit."
[2] MER, s.v. "The Arab Summit: Hasty Attempts to Save the Summit; Closed Meeting."
[3] MER, s.v. "The Tripoli Conference: Nature of the Meeting Undefined."

for all his efforts, his ability to instigate broader, regional change was questionable. He undoubtedly displayed all the traits of a young, fresh revolutionary—idealism, activism, optimism, etc.—but the actual effects of his presence was yet to be determined. Furthermore, seeming to counterbalance his energy and ideals, were a number of challenges to his lofty plans. It was these challenges that tempered the Nixon Administration's worries about the young revolutionary.

Issues Tempering Qaddafi's Stance

A number of obstacles forestalled many of Qaddafi's plans. For example, a number of Qaddafi's actions turned out to be quite contentious throughout the region. Never secretive about his anticommunism, Qaddafi used a May 1970 speaking engagement in Khartoum to loudly criticize Arab reliance on Moscow for arms.[1] As a number of Middle East states—most notably Egypt and Syria—were heavily reliant on Soviet weapons, this vocal criticism both further defined Qaddafi's stance on the topic and slowed pan-Arab momentum. Further frustrating Qaddafi's attempts to transform pan-Arab sentiment into actual action were the different mentalities of Arab leaders he met during his 1970 tour of the Middle East. He considered the laxity with which the "Eastern Front" (Jordan, Syria and Iraq) viewed revolutionary anti-Zionism an affront;

[1] MER, s.v. "Tripartite Activities: The Third Tripartite Summit."

those leaders in turn cared little about his naive advice.[1] As was noted throughout a handful of Arab papers, the trip surely spurred a number of conversations on the pan-Arab issue, but no real substantive plans were made for the future, largely because of inter-Arab differences.[2]

A rather lofty goal Qaddafi pursued between 1970 and 1973 was the formation of a federation between Libya, Egypt and the Sudan. Tentatively called the Federation of Arab Republics (F.A.R.), these three states tried, on a number of occasions, to unite but continually disagreed on the particulars of federating. For example, Libya wanted the three states to immediately unify foreign policy initiatives, but the Sudan strongly disagreed. Egypt's proposal of "unified political leadership" through a shared executive authority was accepted only after "heated debate."[3] The Sudan left the federation planning conference with a great deal of suspicion, especially toward Libya. Because the states disagreed on the future "framework of relations," only an ineffectual federation came out of the talks.[4] This episode represented another situation in which Qaddafi articulated and pursued potentially significant or even hostile (to the U.S.) goals but failed in the execution of those schemes.

While many of Qaddafi's activities heightened contention in the area, other concerns of Qaddafi trumped his own pan-Arab sentiment. Since September 1969, Qaddafi invested a great deal of time and state resources into overcoming the many domestic problems that plagued the Idrisi regime. Cognizant of the causes of and ideals

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[1] John Wright, *Libya: A Modern History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 157-158.

[2] For more information on the details of the summit's failures, see MER, s.v. ""Bilateral Relations Between the Tripoli Charter States."

[3] For a summary of the differences between the three nations, see MER, s.v. "The Tripoli Charter States: Antecedents of the Federation of Arab Republics."

[4] Ibid.

behind the revolution, the young colonel was deeply concerned with domestic issues, even in the midst of his pan-Arab zeal. Especially during the first few years after the coup, Qaddafi and the R.C.C. worked to transform Libya from "merchant capitalism" to "productive capitalism" in preparation for a post-oil economy.[1] To this end, the state invested in areas that needed development, foremost of which were agriculture, education, and infrastructure.[2] The R.C.C. also implemented a "progressive statealization" of the state's banking system, whereby banks were expanded to encourage internal development projects.[3] The development plans of the 1969-1972 period were expanded during the mid 1970s, and the country began to see positive results from its investments.

Finally, for all the pan-Arab optimism Qaddafi emitted, ties between Libya and its neighbor to the east soon began to sour to a surprising degree. Nasser considered young Qaddafi "hard to handle" and an unwilling "student in the politics of compromise."[4] Nasser's aide Gahazzen Bashir described Qaddafi as being "dynamic in an irritating way, like a little boy, very erratic," and Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, eventually came to "hate" his western neighbor's posture.[5] Furthermore, average Libyans developed a less idealistic, even critical opinion of their Egyptian neighbors.[6] They worried about losing jobs to Egyptian workers, and many Libyans disliked the somewhat chauvinistic attitudes

[1] Jonathan Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya* (London: Zed Books, ltd, 1986), 124.
[2] Ibid., 124-125.
[3] Collins, 17; Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya,* 123-124.
[4] David Blundley and Andrew Lycett, *Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution* (London: Widenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 74.
[5] Ibid., 74.
[6] Problems in Libyan-Egyptian cooperation were covered by a number of media outlets. See MER, s.v., "Bilateral Relations Between the Tripoli Charter States: Opposition in Libya to 'Egyptian Penetration'."

many Egyptians brought with them when they visited or worked in Libya.[1] Even some members of the R.C.C. were fearful of Cairo's involvement and continually worried that the Egyptians were after some share in Libya's oil wealth.[2] Eventually Qaddafi's idealistic relations with Egypt fell victim to real-world problems so that the two states soon maintained only tepid ties.

Oddly-Calm Relations

Despite the turbulent waters that Qaddafi stirred up even further, the Nixon Administration maintained oddly calm relations with the young regime. The administration initially focused on two majors concerns specifically dealing with Libya—oil and the Wheelus Airbase. With those concerns in mind, the Washington Special Actions Groups (WSAG) examined the situation after the coup and developed a policy stance. It argued that "no immediate threat to these interests exists" but recognized that if there was a confrontation over the Wheelus air base or if another round of hostilities broke out in the Middle East, the need to seek "accommodation" with Qaddafi should "override U.S. interest in the airbase."[3]

Beyond strictly strategic considerations in Libya, Qaddafi's initial enigmatic posture led the U.S. to adopt a rather ambivalent stance. Looking back on the administration's initial opinion of the young revolutionary, Secretary of State William

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Quoted by Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 860.

Rogers pointed out that the administration was "kind of euphoric about him at first" because he was "he was young, malleable [and] anti-communist."[1] Given Nixon's desire for stability and support for anti-communists in the region, Qaddafi's presence could serve a purpose. In fact, the C.I.A. was so inclined to preserve stability in the region that the agency actually alerted Qaddafi to an impending coup within his first few months in power, an attempt by ousted King Idris's son, Salhi. The C.I.A. and British Intelligence learned that King Idris's son, Salhi, was consulting with mercenaries to overthrow Qaddafi and agents passed the information to Qaddafi.[2]

The most controversial issue between the U.S. and Libya during Nixon's tenure was France's agreement to sell 100 "Mirages" to Libya. Supporters of Israel protested vehemently throughout French President Georges Pompidou's visit to the U.S. Kissinger makes numerous references to these activities in *White House Years.*[3] But Nixon and Kissinger handled the transaction with a notable diffidence. While mentioning in a January 1970 news conference that the sale did "concern" the U.S., Nixon quickly turned the discussion into an opportunity to restate that his administration was neither pro-Israeli nor pro-Arab, but pro-peace and stability.[4] While he stated that he would talk with Pompidou about the sale, he did not proceed to make pronouncements about it or let it change his stance on any issues. When asked three months later about the sale, Nixon pointed out that the "lead time" before which the jets would actually be delivered was

[1] Blundly and Lycett, *Qadhafi*, 70.

[2] For more on this attempted coup, see John Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 84-100.

[3] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 421, 423, 565.

[4] DSB, 16 February 1970: 173-174.

substantial and that, ultimately, the deal was the French government's business.[1] Furthermore, he stated that he put trust in the stipulation barring Libya from transferring the jets to other, potentially hostile states.[2]

Obviously Qaddafi's oil was the major concern of Western states. Initially moving cautiously on the oil issue, the new regime worked to regain control over its resources. The regime could dictate outputs to foreign oil companies, as well as control fees and taxes, resulting in greater revenues and greater reserves for Libya. Because of Libyan price hikes, demands for Persian Gulf oil increased, allowing Tehran to charge more for its oil. Then in December 1971, in response to the British government's decision to hand over three Arab islands in the Persian Gulf to Iran, Qaddafi nationalized British Petroleum's holdings in Libya.[3] During this time, the Nixon Administration was focused on reshaping its relationship with the oil industry as well as producer states. Richard Thornton argues that the administration sought to reduce Libyan oil output while helping the major oil companies squeeze out the independent oil companies, who often undercut market prices. The administration's goal was higher oil revenues for producer states and more predictable output levels. As the independent companies were taken over by the majors and Libyan oil production declined, gulf states' share of the oil market increased, as did their profits. The gulf states used their increased oil revenues to purchase more military products.[4]

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[1] DSB, 4 April 1970: 438-439.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Collins, "Imperialism," 18.
[4] Richard Thornton, *The Nixon-Kissinger Years: The Reshaping of American Foreign Policy* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon, 2001), 82-88. Thornton relies on the testimony of James Akins, the State Department's "principal office" on oil matter, to the U.S. Senate in 1975. Akins relates his own actions, and those of Secretary of State William Rogers and Undersecretary of State John Irwin. See U. S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, *Multinational*

Other than the "Mirages" issue, 1970-1973 were years of relative calm between the U.S. and Libya. While the administration was aware of the revolutionary government's radical statements and attempts to foster pan-Arabism, the two states maintained a low-key, ongoing relationship. On a few occasions, the administration defined its stance toward Libya. During Secretary of State Rogers's tour through North Africa in March, 1970, he publicly stated that Libya was not a "major concern," saying that he had discussed the "general [North African] situation" with foreign leaders, but not in specifics.[1] Later, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and former ambassador to Libya David Newsom gave a brief history of U.S.-Libyan relations in the two years after the coup. He explained that since September, 1969, the U.S. had "adapted quickly to the change in Libya." After listing situations where the U.S. and Libya mutually agreed to sever a number of ties—in a rather cooperative, orderly manner—he stated that the main area of interest was "the investment and activities of private American companies in the development and production of Libya's vast oil reserves." And while reiterating that the administration had "problems" with Libya, he pointed out the relatively limited impact those problems could cause.[2]

The administration in the U.S. was willing to overlook the more unpleasant side of Qaddafi in the name of strategic and economic interests. But this unpleasant side never devolved into outright hostility or overly conflicting interests in the first few years after Qaddafi's rise. In fact, the opposite was the case: a surprising number of overlapping interests existed. Qaddafi agreed with the U.S. that a concerted Gulf effort

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Corporations and U.S. Foreign Policy: Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, 93rd Cong., 2d. sess., 1975.

[1] DSB, 23 March 1970: 367.

[2] DSB, 13 December 1971: 682-683.

was the most effective means of removing the Soviets from South Yemen. He actually provided military supplies to both North and South Yemen and Oman, hoping that when the Soviets did eventually pull out of the area, he would have gained an ally in the region.[1] Along less pragmatic lines, Qaddafi supported Pakistan in 1971 on the grounds that it was a Muslim state.[2] He sent a number of his own F-5 "Freedom Fighters" to his and Nixon's ally, Yahya Khan.[3] Closer to home, he helped Sadat crush an August, 1971 Soviet-backed coup in the Sudan, a move Washington gladly accepted. Perhaps most telling, even Israeli intelligence, while recognizing that Qaddafi was a long-term enemy, pointed out that he served effectively as a "tactical asset" to the extent that he operated as an agent of division in the Arab world."[4] To a number of interested parties, Qaddafi's activism served a series of confluent interests.

Relations continued along a similar track throughout 1972. The U.S. and Libya were signatories to international treaties dealing with oil pollution, wheat trade, and aviation.[5] During a press conference in April 1973, the press asked Deputy Secretary of Defense Kenneth Rush about a harsh anti-American comment Qaddafi had recently made. Rush downplayed the comment. Surprisingly, Rush equally downplayed an attack by a Libyan jet on a U.S. C-130 cargo plane. In this episode, the American military transport plane, with onboard eavesdropping equipment, flew into Libyan territory. As it began to leave, a Libyan jet fired a short cannon burst at it.[6] Reminding reporters that the

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[1] Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 85-86.
[2] Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya*,105.
[3] Benjamin Welless, "U.S. Says Jordan and Libya Sent Pakistanis Jets Last Year," *New York Times*, 19 April 1972.
[4] Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 100.
[5] For more information on these treaties, see DSBs, 10 July 1972: 75, 17 July 1972: 104 and 4 September 1972: 263.
[6] William Beecher, "U.S. Asserts Plane Fled Libyan Jets," *New York Times*, 23 March 1973.

U.S. had protested very strongly to the Libyan government about the attack, Rush went on to say that the U.S. had economic interests in Libya and that the two states were "friends."[1]

Another episode that played a role in defining relations between the U.S. and Libya occurred in February, 1973. A Libyan jetliner flying to Cairo accidentally crossed over an Israeli-occupied section of the Sinai Peninsula, just east of the Egyptian border. After the plane flew for a few minutes over Israeli-occupied territory, Israeli fighters, fearing the plane was a threat, shot it down. 108 people died in the crash. Nixon and Rogers sent messages of condolences to Qaddafi and Sadat for the loss.[2]

1973, however, saw relations between the U.S.-Libyan change, though not too significantly. While nothing significant about these relations changed, a marked cooling off is noticeable. As the U.S. continued to focus on issues elsewhere in the region, Libya, emboldened by oil revenues and angry with moderate Arab states in the region for abandoning revolutionary causes, adopted a more Libya-centric stance—aiming at Libyan leadership in religious and regional developments—and began warming to Soviet assistance. In 1973, Qaddafi championed his Cultural Revolution, delineated in his *Green Book*, urging a regional Islamic reawakening. At home, Qaddafi closed cafes that served alcohol and converted a Christian cathedral in Tripoli into a mosque.[3] Qaddafi's plans went beyond religion. In January 1974, the Soviet Union convinced a handful of Eastern European states to increase their purchase of Libyan oil. Qaddafi gladly accepted and, along with these purchases, fostered warmer diplomatic relations between Tripoli

[1] DSB, 23 April 1973: 481.
[2] "Nixon Sends His Condolences to Libya and Egypt," *New York Times*, 22 February, 1973.
[3] George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 138.

and various Eastern bloc capitals. Qaddafi soon seized upon these new relations to replenish his arsenal. By the end of the year, Moscow was making plans to ship significant amounts of war material to Libya. To Qaddafi, the expediency of doing business with Moscow overcame his earlier anti-Soviet animus. The Libyan-Soviet relationship grew throughout the 1970s.[1]

In the wake of the 1973 October War, Washington began a "diplomatic offensive" aimed at building consensus throughout the region, and Qaddafi shifted his posture on regional and global issues in an effort to "protect" Arab states.[2] This shift marked the most significant change in U.S.-Libyan relations since 1969 and the beginning of increased U.S.-Libyan tensions. Before, but especially after the 1973 October War, Libya encouraged non-Arab African states to sever diplomatic relations with Israel. Along with Libya's diplomatic efforts and assistance made possible from Libyan oil revenues, Libya sought to convince many African states not to resume those severed ties with Israel, to recognize Fatah (the Movement for the Liberation of Palestine), and even helped pass a vote in the U.N. General Assembly declaring Zionism as "racism."[3] Libya also increased its involvement in "underworld" and terrorist activities.[4] The Nixon Administration was largely silent about these issues. It often grouped Libya in with other boycott states when protesting their post-October War oil policies, yet took little action directly against Libya. When Arab states boycotted oil after the October War, Kissinger

[1] For the warming of relations between Libya and the Eastern bloc, see Cooley, "The Libyan Menace," *Foreign Policy*, No. 42 (Spring, 1981): 85-86.

[2] Ibid., 86.

[3] Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya*, 108.

[4] The true nature and extent of these activities is still not fully known. A great deal of proof exists for Qaddafi supporting—though money, arms and logistics—various terrorist groups and working to position himself as some sort of underworld "Godfather." For more information see Cooley, *Libyan Sandstorm*, 177-185, and Zartman and Kluge, "The Foreign Policy of Libya," 185-195.

expressed a somewhat diffident attitude toward Libya's role in particular, telling Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai that "most of the Libyan oil goes to Europe" and that Libya's boycott did not particularly matter because most of the U.S.'s oil supply came from Saudi Arabia.[1]

Conclusions

Libya went through a series of developmental phases between 1969 and the mid 1970s. From 1969-1971, Libya worked to regain control of its natural resources; from 1970-1973, Libya sought allies in the region; and around the time of the 1973 October War, Libya entered a period of "isolation," moving further away politically and diplomatically from former allies in the region.[2] To the Nixon Administration, these phases were largely foreseen and posed no real substantial danger to the U.S. or its interests. By the time Nixon left office, relations between the two states were cold but not hostile. Even though Qaddafi had a penchant for dramatic rhetoric and could deliver quite impassioned pleas for the pan-Arab cause, the Nixon administration maintained a recognizably effective "live-and-let-live" policy toward Libya.

On the oil issue, the administration achieved its objectives. As Thornton points out, the administration's preference for Gulf states' oil helped it avoid any contentious Libyan policies while pursuing other objectives elsewhere in the region. To the extent

[1] "Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Chou En Lai," 12 November 1973 (*www.foia.state.gov/documents/foiadocs/4f95.PDF*, accessed 11 March 2007).

[2] Zartman and Kluge, "The Foreign Policy of Libya," 182.

that the independent oil companies lost out, the administration could be blamed, but such a debate is beyond the scope of this study. The fairness of manipulating the oil market could also be questioned. For an inner circle of the U.S. administration to orchestrate price hikes and force some competitors out of the business can be considered quite unscrupulous, but the oil industry has historically been one that demands cunning business skills. Furthermore, Nixon was deeply convinced of the need to assist Gulf States in their efforts to build a regional framework of stability. This regional framework necessitated easy access to Western, primarily American, arms.

The evacuation of the Wheelus Airbase, the other main, initial concern of the White House, was not as costly as was first feared. The tensions raised over the base and its waning necessity led Washington to question maintaining it. As protests over it and the U.S.'s support of Israel grew, even King Idris anticipated the U.S. withdrawing. When Qaddafi, two months after the coup, asked the British to evacuate their base, the U.S. followed suit, setting a June, 1970 deadline.[1] The U.S. departed with little protest and the issue was never substantially dealt with for the rest of Nixon's time in office.[2]

The Nixon administration could be criticized for overlooking Qaddafi's support of radical activity and terrorism, letting it germinate into the major issue it became during the Carter and Reagan administrations. The administration knew of Qaddafi's adventurism in the Middle East, Africa, and even Europe, and did comparatively little to forestall this activity. However, it is important to note the magnitude of contemporaneous threats in the region. Moreover, Nixon took a longer-term approach.

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[1] Blundly and Lycett, *Qaddafi*, 61.

[2] Between December 1969 and June 1970, the U.S. military evacuated from Wheelus airbase and returned the site to the Libyan government.

Through his oil policy and by working with moderate states in the region to combat radicalism, Nixon arranged for the easy marginalization of Libya if Libya were to engage in hostile activity. During his administration, Libya never became too overtly hostile. But over the following years, Libya increasingly engaged in threatening behavior. In a noteworthy way, Nixon helped create a situation wherein radical states could be marginalized by moderate ones.

The most amazing thing about what happened between the U.S. and Libya during Nixon's tenure is that nothing did. For all Qaddafi's early rhetoric, perhaps the most radical and outspoken any Arab leader at the time, relations between the U.S. and Libya remained relatively normal. The Nixon Administration's "wait and see" attitude toward Qaddafi was a result of its pragmatism and practicality. While certain opportunities could have been pursued—more extensive trade, a tempering of Qaddafi's stances, discouraging involvement in underworld activities, etc.—the administration reasonably responded to and worked to cooperate with Qaddafi's Libya. Qaddafi certainly confused and challenged Washington, but in the grander scheme, relations between the two states played out with a surprising degree of normality.

CHAPTER 4: JORDAN AND THE LEVANT: EBB AND FLOW OF PALESTINIAN RADICALISM

Introduction

In 1970 a crisis occurred that tied together a number of important aspects of the Cold War in the Middle East. In September of that year, bands of armed Palestinian guerillas attempted to overthrow King Hussein of Jordan. Fighting raged throughout the month as the superpowers prepared contingency plans and regional powers watched in nervous anticipation. Though the threat of regional and possibly even global war seemed possible at times, eventually King Hussein and his army triumphed over the guerillas. The crisis had a profound impact on many parties, including the Nixon Administration. As a result of its successful handling of the crisis, the administration formulated a broader policy toward the Levant region that would shape its relations there for the remainder of its term.[1] The results of the Nixon Administration's Levantine policy, however, went a long way in bolstering the cause of the Palestinians who provoked the fighting in the Jordanian Crisis. For years after the crisis, the administration overlooked and ignored the

[1] The term "Levant" or "Levantine" will be used from here onward to refer to the Near East. Though the specific definition of the word has changed over the years, here it will be used to refer to the Beirut/Damascus-Amman-Cairo triangle, the area which is largely the subject of this chapter. For more on the evolution of the word, see Avraham Sela ed., *Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 492.

development and maturation of the Palestinian cause, as well as Palestinian-oriented terrorism. [1]

The civil war that occurred in Jordan in the fall of 1970 sheds light on different aspects of the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy, especially toward Arab radicals. On the surface, the war saw a group of terrorists and guerillas attempt to overthrow a legitimate king and establish a radical government. While going to great lengths to demonstrate its ability to serve as a more effective partner than the Soviet Union to states in the region, the Nixon Administration revealed a deep flaw in its understanding of regional politics. Those American policy makers involved in handling the Jordanian Crisis and Middle East policy more broadly showed a rigid unwillingness to recognize one of the core issues that shaped politics in the region—the Palestinian cause.

Origins of the Levantine Policy

To understand what shaped the Nixon Administration's handling of the crisis, attention must be paid to understanding how the Middle East fit into the Nixon

[1] The "Palestinian cause" referred to here and Palestinian interests, in general, referred to throughout this chapter deal mainly with issues of land claims, national sovereignty and the drive to form a Palestinian Entity. While these topics are quite general and the methods various groups adopted in pursuit of them varied greatly, most of the rhetoric and ideological aims of the Palestinian groups dealt with here relate back to these core issues. The 1968 Palestinian National Covenant, while covering a multitude of topics, declares the Palestinian people's right to national sovereignty, the liberation of Palestine from "Zionist" control, and the necessity for armed struggle. Ensuing documents on the Palestinian cause deal with the right to cross borders as citizens of a legitimate Palestine, the right to work in foreign countries and other claims of national self-determination. See Aryeh Y. Yodfat and Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.: Strategy and Tactics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 29, 147-158.

Administration's broader policy agenda. Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger viewed the Middle East with essentially similar lenses, perceiving three separate yet intertwined conflicts in the region.[1] First, they pointed to the struggle of Arab states to pursue their own autonomy. Various Arab states faced domestic upheavals or decolonization efforts that led to internal strife, often destabilizing the country or decreasing the particular regime's capacity to govern. Next, Nixon and Kissinger identified the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, recently exacerbated by Israel's success in the June, 1967 War.[2] This conflict reverberated throughout many Arab states and fueled a strong anti-Israeli sentiment across the region. Finally, the two policy makers recognized the U.S.-Soviet conflict of interests. Both nations pursued their own national and strategic interests, often times at odds with the other.[3] Furthermore, they both realized how closely the region stood on the brink of war. Pointing to the solidification of superpower-oriented "sides" and mounting hostilities, Kissinger compared the Middle East, just a month before the Jordanian Crisis, to the Balkans before World War I.[4]

Nixon's dominant concern, which consequently permeated his administration, was containing Soviet expansion. To Nixon, Soviet activity in the Middle East was a

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[1] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*, vol. 1, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2003), 294. (Hereafter referred to as FRUS.)

[2] In 1967 Israel, fearing aggressive action from its neighbors, attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan and soundly defeated them. In the process, Israel gained new territory: the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and the West Bank. The United Nations passed Resolution 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from those occupied territories as a precondition to a peace process. As the U.S. was a cosponsor to the resolution, it became involved in the peace process. A process begun under President Lyndon Johnson was passed to the Nixon Administration. For more information on the U.S. response to the war, see William Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1977), 37-71.

[3] For more on the administration's perception of Soviet interests in the region, see FRUS, *Foundations*, 59.

[4] FRUS, *Foundations*, 235.

particular threat and one that was growing. Even before he was elected, in a July 1967 speech to the Bohemian Club, Nixon raised concerns about Soviet activity in the Middle East. He pointed out that in the 1967 war the Soviets blocked diplomatic moves to "avoid war" and supported the ceasefire only when it became necessary to "save their Arab clients from further losses." Furthermore, he reminded the audience that the Soviets had spent $4 billion arming Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and encouraging him and his colleagues into aggressive actions.[1] In fact, between 1950 and 1969, Soviet military aid to the Middle East was nearly twice that of the United States and increased sharply after the June 1967 war.[2]

The administration was also quick to point out that from the time it assumed office, the Soviets embarked on a daunting number of noteworthy global offensive moves. For example, the Soviets had left an extra five divisions in Czechoslovakia after its 1968 invasion; the scope and frequency of its naval deployments had increased to surpass its own previous records; its activity in the Arab world, especially in Egypt had increased; it was constructing naval facilities on Socotra Island in the Gulf of Aden; and its naval presence around Cuba had increased.[3] While a few of these developments could be considered normal superpower behavior, the Nixon Administration made special note of them as it began to consider a larger, global Soviet advance.

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[1] FRUS, *Foundations*, 7.

[2] Cathy Tackney, "Dealing Arms in the Middle East I: History and Strategic Considerations," *MERIP Reports*, No. 8 (Mar. – Apr., 1972): 6, 8.

[3] The list of Soviet offensive moves given here comes from a paper prepared by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is listed as "undated" in the FRUS. Based on information in the paper and its placement by the editors of FRUS, it can be deduced that this paper was drafted around the time of the Jordanian Civil War. Even if this paper was drafted after the Jordanian Civil War, its use here, primarily intended to relate the administration's concerns about Soviet offensive moves, is fitting given that the administration was most likely aware of these moves. For the meeting notes, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Soviet Union, January 1969-October 1970,* Vol. XII (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), 632-635.

By the end of the 1960s, both the Soviet Union and the United States established some degree of sponsorship in the Middle East, whereby both superpowers worked with and supported regional clients. While the specifics of such relationships were never clearly delineated, extensive discussion between the two nations and throughout the Nixon Administration illustrated such an understanding. Relations with client states played a direct role in the two superpowers' policy making process. In 1969, Kissinger specifically warned Nixon that the Soviets would be noticeably less compelled to restrain their clients as the Soviet fear of a direct confrontation with the West in relation to client conflicts waned.[1] In an August 1970 message from the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Alexei Kosygin to Nixon, Kosygin said that the Soviet Union would only consider decreasing its arms shipments to Egypt *after* the U.S. convinced Israel to sign a political settlement.[2] Again, on 3 September, the Soviet Union denied complicity in encouraging Egyptian hostility toward Israel and instead blamed Israel and the United States for ongoing trans-Suez skirmishes.[3] On 5 September, the State Department expressed leeriness toward Soviet activities in Egypt, pointing out that the Soviets had expanded missile activity along the Suez Canal in Egypt.[4] Many more instances of superpower discussions vis-a-vis their clients exist, and client considerations continually factored into the policy making process.

The two main thrusts of the administration's policy in the Middle East between the time it assumed office and the Jordanian Crisis were activating the Arab-Israeli peace process and using Arab moderates to play a stabilizing role. The administration tasked

[1] FRUS, *Foundations,*117.
[2] FRUS, *Soviet Union*, 586-587. (My italics).
[3] FRUS, *Soviet Union*, 610-612.
[4] FRUS, *Soviet Union*, 614-616.

Secretary of State William Rogers with pursuing a broad, comprehensive settlement plan aimed at resolving the border disputes between Israel and its neighbors following the 1967 war. While Rogers's first attempt failed immediately, the Arabs and the Israelis accepted the second Rogers plan after much discussion.[1] The administration hardily pursued the other main thrust of its policy, that of using Arab moderates to help stabilize the region. As Kissinger points out in his memoirs, Arab moderates "held the key to peace in the Middle East."[2] Consequently, the administration looked to allies in the region such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even more tertiary nations like Turkey and Morocco to play varying roles in pursuing American policy.

Lead Up to the Jordanian Crisis

Despite American hopes for the region, the precarious situation there did little to calm broader tensions. Quite simply, the Middle East at this time was in flux—relations between and among states changed; relations with the superpowers evolved; and new players in the Middle East drama, namely non-state groups, emerged. Arab states still reeled from the 1967 loss and looked for ways to restore their dignity in the aftermath of such a one-sided defeat. The Egyptians and the Israelis had been (since early 1969) engaged in the "War of Attrition," a cross-canal tit for tat conflict that taxed both sides

[1] Rogers Plan I called for a nearly complete Israeli withdrawal and an Arab peace settlement. Both sides rejected it. Rogers Plan II, from the summer of 1970, called for a more gradual move toward settlement and was accepted. This brought about an end to the "War of Attrition" between Israel and Egypt. None of the parties ever attended peace talks until after the 1973 war. For more information about U.S. policy in the regions, see Sela, *Political Encyclopedia*, 593-608; Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.*, 772-773.

[2] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 559.

and forestalled ceasefire efforts. Finally, the Rogers Initiative, an attempt at a comprehensive peace plan, was only barely accepted in the summer of 1970. During this volatile period, the U.S. found it difficult to play any sort of decisive role.

Another result of the Israeli victory in the 1967 war, Palestinian militancy became an increasingly multifaceted threat. The Palestinian issue became intertwined with Arab radicalism, constituting a particularly destabilizing force in the region. The armed struggle on the part of the Palestinians against Israel dates to the 1950s and markedly intensified throughout the 1960s.[1] Poor socioeconomic conditions, Israeli actions and de-colonization struggles elsewhere fueled and shaped the struggle. Numerous Palestinian interest groups formed with the goals of raising awareness of the Palestinian cause and confronting Israel and the West. The movement gained specific attention in 1968 when Fatah (one of the main groups in the Palestinian camp) joined the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.)—the former becoming the military wing of the latter—and gained notoriety as the most active Palestinian resistance group in the region.[2]

Throughout the late 1960s, the Palestinian resistance, a growing network of stateless organizations never under centralized leadership, adopted a number of different approaches to pursue its goal of Palestinian statehood. However, the resistance struggled to make progress because it lacked ideological and structural cohesion as well as a base

[1] For a concise, well-organized explanation and categorization of the various Palestinian resistance groups, see Sela, *Political Encyclopedia,* 593-608; Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O* ., 140-146.

[2] The acronym FaTaH spells the Arabic word for "victory" or "conquest." "FaTaH" backwards is simply the name of the group, *Harakat al Tahrir al Filistine*, which means, "the Movement for the Liberation of Palestine." The P.L.O. was founded in 1964 as a Palestinian pan-national group intended to address Palestinian issues and serve as a component of Egyptian foreign policy in the Levantine area. The group grew and evolved over the years, eventually coming to be recognized as the main spokespeople for the Palestinian people. See: Sela, 602-608; for a comprehensive history of the PLO, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

of operations.[1] Ideologically, the resistance movement could be categorized into three major groups, all of which played a role in the Jordanian Crisis. The "National Activism and Social Pragmatism" groups, like Fatah, sought to establish a multi-religious Palestinian homeland, based on historic land claims. Second, there emerged "Pan-Arab Revolutionary" groups, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.) and the P.F.L.P. General Command (G.C.). Finally various Arab states sponsored their own resistance groups, like Syria's *Saiqa* (Storm) and Iraq's Arab Liberation Front (A.L.F.). The sponsor nations of these groups used them to carry out guerilla activity in line with their own interests.[2]

The extremist elements of the Palestinian resistance—those least open to compromise and most intent on direct, often military action—have been commonly referred to as Palestinian radicals. Riad El-Rayyes and Dunia Nahas describe such groups as more inclined to the "radical, populist ideological perspective" which focuses more on "secularism, participation and social justice in the context of a revolution of national liberation."[3] The radicals, often grouped into the Arab Nationalist Movement (A.N.M.) technically founded in 1949-1950, targeted foreign interests, Israel, Arab conservatives and dissidents.[4] Looking to China's Mao Zedong and Cuba's Fidel Castro as revolutionary models, the groups that constituted the A.N.M.—namely the P.F.L.P., Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.D.F.L.P.) and the Popular Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.R.F.L.P.)—sought armed conflict,

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[1] John W. Amos II, *Palestinian Resistance: Organization of a Nationalist Movement* (New York: Pergamon, 1980), 68-71.

[2] Sela, *Encyclopedia*, 594.

[3] Riad El Reyyes and Dunia Nahas, *Guerillas for Palestine* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 21.

[4] Sela, *Encyclopedia*, 120.

specialized in terrorism and maintained a strict ideological mindset.[1] In a memo to Nixon, Kissinger fittingly defined the Radicals as "wild-eyed nationalists with Marxist leanings."[2] This strain of Palestinian militancy, while less prevalent than the P.L.O., represented a powerful aspect of the overall movement and increased the explosiveness of the general situation.

Throughout 1970, the Palestinian movement, as well as outside parties with interests in its activities—Iraq and Syria in particular—worked to establish a headquarters in Jordan. The activities of this so called "state within a state" had one major effect: chaos in the region. Numerous groups—both resistance and radical, splinter groups and state-backed groups—used the deserts of Jordan to conduct guerilla operations against Israel, train for further guerilla and terrorist operations and conduct quasi-state functions. Adding to the confusion, each of the participants had its own agenda. During the summer of 1970, P.L.O. leader Yassir Arafat wanted "something short of a civil war" to foment the toppling of the Jordanian regime; perceiving himself as a Bolshevik-like partisan, George Habash of the P.F.L.P. wanted a violent civil war.[3] Syria worked to support certain radical elements to counterbalance Egyptian support of the P.L.O.[4] As guerilla attacks on Israel increased, Israel responded by bombing targets in neighboring Lebanon and Jordan, often killing civilians and further fueling the chaos. The entire situation created an atmosphere of extreme instability. Ultimately, the Nixon Administration formed no policy on the Palestinian movement. As the administration

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[1] Amos, *Palestinian Resistance*, 68.
[2] FRUS, *Foundations*, 115-117.
[3] Adam Garfinkle, "U.S. Decision Making in the Jordan Crisis: Correcting the Record," *Political Science Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 123.
[4] Ibid., 120.

was concerned with larger Cold War issues, it ignored the Palestinian issue and relegated it to states in the region.

Jordan's Place in the Levantine Policy

One of the unique features of the Jordanian Crisis is that it tied together a number of important Nixon Administration policy initiatives. While the U.S. had no specific strategic interests in Jordan, the situation there in 1970 presented the U.S. with an opportunity to confront a number of issues and possibly make some useful diplomatic advances throughout the region. King Hussein and the Jordanian government were relatively friendly to the U.S. and deeply deplored the activities of the guerillas within their borders. Furthermore, the U.S. had worked with the Jordanians since the end of World War II. Between 1946 and 1970, the U.S. provided Jordan with $57.4 million in military assets (guns and tanks and promised jets), and between 1967 and 1969 trained 490 military personnel and given $1.2 million for police training.[1] The Kingdom of Jordan also had the unenvied task of accepting Palestinian refugees. As the Israeli-Palestinian wars raged, often thousands of Palestinians crossed into Jordan, heavily taxing the government.

Especially troubling were the military dynamics facing Jordan. The state was literally fighting on two fronts: against Palestinian militancy aimed at overthrowing the regime and against Israeli reprisal attacks. Jordan was forced to accommodate 17,000

[1] Barry Rubin, "America's Mid-East Policy: A Marxist Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 3 (Spring, 1973): 58.

troops that Iraq, "the most radical Arab regime," had left there since the 1967 war.[1] Those troops, along with Palestinian guerillas and the ubiquitous Israeli commandos and air force, represented a continually looming threat and an obstacle to Jordanian sovereignty. As Kissinger points out in *White House Years*, not only was Jordan a "test of our capacity to control events in the region," but the U.S. had to demonstrate that friendship with [it] had its benefits" [2] Nixon agreed. Kissinger includes a Nixon quote from a June 1970 National Security Council (N.S.C.) meeting in which the president stated that the U.S.'s credibility would [in the near future] be tested in the Middle East and that the U.S.'s response would indeed set the tone for future Middle East and U.S.-Soviet relations in the region.[3]

When the time came for a test of the administration's control over events in the region, the White House responded accordingly. Consistent with public pronouncements as well as internal memoranda, the administration worked to curb Soviet gains in the Middle East and ensure the security of an Arab moderate. With regard to these ends, the administration succeeded. Once it decided to become directly involved, the Nixon Administration developed a plan for managing the crisis toward its stated ends. Surprisingly, the U.S. never felt the need to become directly involved in the crisis and neither did Israel—a main component of the U.S.'s contingency plans. But the administration's handling of this crisis did reveal some of its most foundational precepts for handling issues in the Middle East. While the U.S. categorically opposed Soviet expansion in the region, it refused to recognize the legitimacy of claims by various

[1] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 595.
[2] Ibid., 596.
[3] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 596-597.

Palestinian factions. In one sense Jordan's crushing of pro-Palestinian Fedayeen constituted a military victory.[1] However, at the same time, the event worked toward Palestinian goals in an asymmetrical struggle between Israel (and "The West") and the Palestinians who felt dispossessed by the Zionist state. Therefore the situation in Jordan serves to illustrate the Nixon Administration's ability to shape events to the benefit of the U.S. within a Cold War framework, while failing to make inroads toward lasting peace and stability in Middle East terms.

The Jordanian Crisis

Two events sparked the Jordanian Crisis: the Fedayeen's September 1st assassination attempt on King Hussein and the P.F.L.P.'s massive terrorist operation a few days later. The Fedayeen's second assassination attempt on the king within a year underscored the seriousness of the threat to the king's throne. Moreover, George Habash and the P.F.L.P.'s hijacking brought widespread international attention to the situation. On 6 September, Habash and the P.F.L.P. commandeered three planes, took over 500 hostages, and flew the planes to Dawson Field, an abandoned airstrip in the Jordanian desert. The terrorists intended to use their multinational hostages—mainly Europeans and Americans—to bargain for the release of Fedayeen in European and Israeli prisons. More broadly, the P.F.L.P. wanted to upstage other Palestinian groups and possibly

[1] The Arabic term *fedayeen* literally translates into "those who sacrifice." As this term was commonly self-applied by the Arab resistance movement, especially throughout the Jordanian Crisis, the term will be used from this point forward to refer to guerillas involved in the Crisis.

provoke a confrontation between Iraq or Syria and Jordan.[1] Furthermore, if Jordan fell to the radicals, Iraq and Syria could possibly convince Egypt to reactivate its support for the resistance movement.[2]

Caught by surprise by the hijackings, the Nixon Administration reacted cautiously and slowly, while events in Jordan moved toward civil war. Bill Rogers adopted a practical approach, telling the Arab Chiefs-of-Mission that the U.S. did not hold them "responsible" for the terrorist action and hoped those states would help the U.S. "avoid outrage."[3] On the other hand, Kissinger, who goes to great lengths in his memoirs to convey the extent of his influence throughout the White House, argues that his "warning note to Arab governments" contained the bold action that led to a relatively non-confrontational outcome in the hijacking.[4] Nixon's primary concern was the safety of American citizens. To this end, he ordered elements of the 82nd Airborne, 6 C-130s transport planes, and a number of F-4 Phantoms moved to Incirlik, Turkey and the 6th Fleet activated in the eastern Mediterranean. The administration worked to keep abreast of the situation and continued to use the International Red Cross to broker a settlement and a release of the hostages. The main task facing the administration at the time was restraining the Israelis, who held Jordan fully responsible for the hijacking.[5] Throughout the crisis, the P.F.L.P. managed to bargain, semi-successfully with the international

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[1] A takeover of the Jordanian Kingdom by a radical government, likely aligned with Damascus or Baghdad, would serve the radical groups quite effectively. For more on this particular line of thought, see Quandt, *Decade*, 111.

[2] Garfinkle, "U.S. Decision Making," 123.

[3] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Documents on Global Issues, 1969*-1972 vol. E-1, No. 54. (*http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e1/c14586.htm*, accessed 15 May 2007).

[4] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 608-609.

[5] Many of the hostages held dual citizenship that included Israel along with a Western nation. FRUS, *Global Issues,* No. 55.

community and to isolate the Israelis throughout the negotiations.[1] In the end, the hijacking crisis subsided as the military phase of the crisis began.[2]

Aware of more serious problems stemming from this terrorist act, Nixon and his advisors closely watched the Jordanians' actions as they worried about the weaknesses of the king's throne in the face of mounting guerilla activities.[3] As for a broader understanding of the situation, Nixon perceived the crisis in terms of dominoes. In his memoirs, he quotes Kissinger as saying to him that "the Soviets are pushing the Syrians and the Syrians are pushing the Palestinians." Nixon felt that if a "Syrian-inspired insurrection" succeeded in Jordan, the Israelis would attack, which would draw in the Egyptians and most likely the two superpowers.[4]

Determined to restore order to his kingdom, on 15 September, Hussein took action. He formed a military government and moved against the Fedayeen. The Jordanian army surrounded Amman and rooted out Fedayeen elements throughout the city, while Bedouin fighters, many of whom had been trained by the British, attacked Fedayeen in the western desert region. On that same day, the Washington Special Actions Group (W.S.A.G.), which essentially had become the crisis management team, continued the American military buildup in the region. Between September 16 and 17, heavy fighting was reported between the Jordanians and the Fedayeen.

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[1] A main goal of the P.F.L.P. was to isolate the Israelis from other nations in the hostage negotiations. The Israelis outright refused to trade Fedayeen in Israeli prisons for Israeli hostages, whereas various European nations—West Germany and Switzerland for example—considered making such a trade. The Israelis moderated their stance after pressure from Washington and London to do so. See FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 60. As retaliation, the Israelis did round up 450 Palestinians suspected of having links to the P.F.L.P. and interrogated them in Israeli jails to further pressure the P.F.L.P to release its hostages. See FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 68.

[2] Most of the nearly 300 passengers were released and flown via Amman to Cyprus. The P.F.L.P. blew up the airplanes in protest of U.S. and Israeli Middle East policies.

[3] FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 68, 69.

[4] Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 483.

At this point, after King Hussein began cracking down on the Fedayeen, while the threat of an expanded war loomed, Nixon put his characteristic stamp on the situation. Ever preoccupied with the Cold War and his grand strategy of containment, Nixon devised a flexible yet widely encompassing approach. His handling of the crisis was not as clear an application of the Nixon Doctrine as his response to events in the Gulf for example, but the principles and goals of the Nixon Doctrine and linkage formed the foundation of his response.[1] He listened to different voices within the administration but never wavered in his desire to manage the conflict to the detriment of the Soviet Union. On September 16, during a speech at Kansas State University, Nixon warned against outside intervention.[2] The next day, he told the Chicago *Sun-Times* that the U.S. would "intervene directly in the Jordanian War should Syria and Iraq enter."[3] Nixon took the opportunity to utilize what he called the "madman theory"—the idea of convincing the Soviets that he was capable of any sort of action in hopes of deterring certain Soviet behavior. He wanted to "be tough and keep his opponents off guard" and to remain "mysterious and unpredictable."[4]

To further clarify to Moscow his willingness to stand firm, Nixon embarked on a series of "steadily escalating military signals."[5] Also on 17 September, Nixon sent a third aircraft carrier, the *Kennedy* and a helicopter group to the area. Furthermore, he patched up temporarily sour relations with Israel by providing $500 million in aid and sending 18

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[1] For more on this theme, see James Chance, *A World Elsewhere: The New American Foreign Policy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973).
[2] Quandt, *Decade*, 113.
[3] *Chicago Sun Times*, Sept. 17, 1970.
[4] Quandt, *Decade*, 114.
[5] Garfinkle, "U.S. Decision Making," 123.

F-4 "Phantoms."[1] The military buildup and diplomatic rhetoric aimed at demonstrating American predominance over Soviet influence, support to Jordan and Israel, and an American willingness to participate in stabilizing the situation. Yet, throughout the hijacking episode and Jordanian fighting, the Soviet Union remained conspicuously quiet. Kissinger argues that the Soviets, who had remained diplomatically silent since 9 September, felt that their most advantageous response was to stay uninvolved and allow the Kingdom of Jordan to disintegrate.[2]

The crisis expanded when Syria moved into Jordan on 18 September. Nearly 300 tanks entered Jordan and closed in on the Irbid region. Once Syrian tanks were inside Jordan, the explosive potential of the crisis increased further. On the same day the tanks entered, the Soviet Union and Nasser warned against outside intervention and called for a ceasefire; yet the Soviets did little to instill confidence in Washington. As soon as the tanks entered Jordan, British and Israeli intelligence reports claimed that Soviet advisors were with the Syrian tanks moving into Jordan, heightening what Nixon saw as the seriousness of the crisis.[3] Still, Moscow was guilty of other misleading acts. For example, on 18 September, Yuri Vorontsov chief Soviet contact throughout the crisis, told Kissinger that the Soviets were urging restraint on Syria, but Nixon was skeptical, based on recent misleading assurances the Soviets had made about the ceasefire in Egypt. The mismatch between Soviet promises and actions did little to quell these fears. On 18 September, Moscow claimed that the Syrians were not moving against Jordan; the next day Syria crossed the border. On 21 September, Moscow claimed that it was pressing

[1] Quandt, *Decade*, 114.
[2] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 609.
[3] Quandt, *Decade*, 115.

Syria not to send additional tanks; the next day Syria sent more tanks. Furthermore, a convenient side product for Moscow of the Jordanian Crisis was the attention it took off of the Suez Canal region, the area of Moscow's greatest investments and highest hopes.[1]

Given these concerns, the administration subsequently adopted an approach to the Jordanian Crisis that focused on blunting any expansion of Soviet interests and bolstering the stability of moderate regimes in the region. As for handling Jordan and Israel, the administration postponed direct decision making in order to maintain freedom of action. Throughout the day on 19 September, King Hussein sent varying pleas to Washington for assistance—at times requesting either or both air and ground support, while at other times requesting no support. Washington refrained from making a specific response while it contemplated options. The event that tipped the administration's opinion toward intervention was the success of Syrian tanks in capturing territory in and around Irbid. On 21 September, the W.S.A.G. examined the situation and agreed that while American ground intervention was largely out of the question for tactical and logistical reasons, Israeli air and ground intervention should be planned. Nixon instructed Kissinger to work out a plan with Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.[2] The U.S. orally agreed to provide Israel with an "umbrella" of defense, in case the Egyptians or the Soviets intervened.[3] To most everyone's surprise, extensive outside intervention was unnecessary; on 22 September, Hussein's air force succeeded in driving the Syrians back

[1] Richard C. Thornton, *The Nixon-Kissinger Years: The Reshaping of American Foreign Policy* (St. Paul: Paragon, 2001), 57.

[2] Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 204-206; Quandt, *Decade*, 117.

[3] Quandt, *Decade*, 117.

across the border. From there, the task of crushing the remaining Palestinian resistance was easier, and within days, the crisis had subsided.

Quite simply, as a result of the Jordanian Crisis, Hussein stayed in power, militarily; the Fedayeen were crushed and divided; and the U.S.-Israeli relationship was strengthened. The U.S. embarked on a "tremendous program" of supplying aid to beleaguered Jordan, sending food, building an army and an air force hospital, providing over 700 major surgical operations, feeding Arabs on both sides, and continuing to support the Jordanian military.[1] A few months after the crisis, Rogers asked the world community for further donations as he condemned Syrian actions in the war.[2]

Solidification of the Levantine Policy

The Nixon Administration considered this episode a success, as it accomplished two important, widely stated goals: the need to contain and roll back Soviet expansion in the region and the use of Arab moderates to fight Arab radicals. By the standards of the Nixon Doctrine the administration's handling of the Jordanian Crisis was a success in that it met the U.S.'s responsibilities more effectively by "sharing" those responsibilities with others.[3] In 1976, Kissinger claimed that in the Jordanian Crisis, the administration adopted a posture that was "very provocative" and aimed at demonstrating the

[1] *Department of State Bulletin,* 2 November 1970, 754-755 (Hereafter cited as DSB.)
[2] DSB, 12 December 1970, 714.
[3] FRUS, *Foundations,* 262.

"limitations of Soviet influence" in the region.[1] Furthermore, the administration tied two events together to justify aggressive action in Jordan. By keeping abreast of the situation in Cuba, the administration could justify greater involvement in Jordan while criticizing a non-constructive Soviet role.[2] Additionally, the inter-White House policy making process operated effectively and efficiently to resolve the crisis.[3]

Most Western criticism of this episode rests on the administration's imbalanced reliance on Israel or its subsequent lack of imagination in future policy making.[4] However when one looks at the administration's handling of the Jordanian Crisis in the broader perspective of developments in the Middle East and the Cold War, the administration's handling becomes subject to more lines of criticism. Essentially, the Nixon Administration pursued progress in Cold War terms and a semblance of regional stability at the cost of ongoing, lower key regional troubles. A few months before the

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[1] "A Conversations with Henry Kissinger," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, No. 3 (Spring, 1981): 186.

[2] In *White House Years*, Kissinger makes reference to a three-pronged global communist challenge manifesting in Cuba, Chile and Jordan. He explained that the Soviets were taking a piecemeal approach to expanding their influence and network. All this activity served to cast even more American doubt on Soviet intentions and assurances. On 18 September, at the height of the Jordanian Crisis, Kissinger reported that he noticed soccer fields being built at a port in Cuba. His suspicion of Soviet activity grew as he considered Cuba's national penchant for baseball. In fact, the Soviets were working on installing a nuclear submarine base at the port of Cienfuegos. Ensuing intelligence further supported these fears. As the fighting in Jordan wound down, an NSC meeting convened to discuss the situation in Cuba. Based on intelligence reports, the group, led by Nixon, concluded that not only was a major submarine port being built, but that nuclear materials had already been shipped to Cuba. While this specific discussion occurred *after* the bulk of the fighting in Jordan had ended (September 23), it does substantiate administration concerns over the Cuba project. As revelation of this new activity surfaced, not only was doubt cast on the ongoing validity of the 1962 agreements between Washington and Moscow regarding Cuba, but Washington's broader view of Moscow needed reexamining. See, Kissinger, *White House Years*, 594; FRUS, *Soviet Union*, 648-653; Richard Reeves, *Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2001), 252. The argument made here is an augmentation of Robert Litwak's point from *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine* in which he notes the limitation of sources on the Cienfuegos base. See: Robert Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101-102.

[3] For more on this interpretation, see William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 179-191.

[4] For more on the administration's unbalanced reliance on Israel, see Adam Garfinkle "U.S. Decision Making;" and Donald Neff's "Nixon's Middle East Policy: From Balance to Bias," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 12 (Winter-Spring 1990). For Quandt's criticism of the event, see note 64.

Jordanian Crisis, Nixon delineated three criteria of a "Framework for Durable Peace." In it, he mentioned that lasting stability around the globe was dependent on partnerships, strength and a willingness to negotiate.[1] The administration clearly succeeded in meeting the first two criteria, but its failure to even consider accommodating Palestinian claims came to haunt it in years to come.[2]

Soviet aggression understandably concerned the Nixon Administration. The Soviets were highly active on many foreign policy fronts during the first two years of Nixon's tenure. Furthermore, Nixon made no secret of his tendency to perceive international developments through the lens of the Cold War and his brand of containment. This understanding constituted the foundation of the Nixon Doctrine and linkage strategy. However, in bringing long-term peace and stability to the Middle East, the Nixon approach failed. As William Quandt points out in *Decade of Decisions,* one of the main mistakes of the Nixon Administration in the aftermath of the Jordanian Crisis was the degree to which it solidified its Middle East policy based on its perceived success in handling the crisis.[3] This chapter augments that conclusion to argue that the administration became equally resistant to considerations of the Palestinian cause. Indeed, the Nixon Administration refused to recognize Palestinian claims and the support Arab states lent to the Palestinians. Ultimately, this obtuseness failed to recognize the viability and longevity of the Palestinian factor in Middle East politics. The Nixon Administration's handling of the Jordanian Crisis was one episode in a broader, flawed

[1] FRUS, *Foundations,* 197.

[2] This argument does not advocate rewarding terrorism or violence. Rather, the Nixon Administration should have perceived a core set of claims made by the Palestinians and worked to respond to those, while marginalizing and working to eliminate extremism.

[3] Quandt, *Decade,* 126.

policy that oversimplified the issue of Arab radicalism in the Middle East. When one looks at the string of events involving Arab radicals interested in the Palestinian cause—a progression in which the Jordanian Crisis played an integral role—one sees the flaws of the Nixon Administration's rigid Levantine policy.

Broader Implications of the Levantine Policy

While the Jordanian Crisis can be seen as only a brief episode in the Nixon Administration's relations with the Middle East, the crisis must be viewed in the context of developments in the region and part of a longer chain of the evolution of radical activity there. The Jordanian Crisis of 1970 was a military defeat for the Palestinian resistance; yet it played a long-term ideological role in the Palestinian cause, and even fueled further radicalism. Had the Nixon Administration made greater efforts to at least partially respond to Palestinian claims, it could have avoided a great deal of contention in the region. As events unfolded during the remainder of Nixon's tenure, the policy he and his administration adopted to deal with Jordan, a policy which set the tone for most subsequent U.S.-Middle East relations, increasingly manifested its inability to bring a stable peace in the Middle East.

It is important to remember that the Jordanian Crisis was by no means the first battle centered around the Palestinian cause. In 1968, Israel, in response to cross-border Fedayeen attacks from Jordan, launched an air and ground operation against the village of Karameh in Jordan. In one day of fighting, the Fedayeen, assisted by units of the regular

Jordanian Army, repelled the Israeli attack and bolstered the resistance movement's support across the region.[1] In the minds of many Palestinians, such an accomplishment served a greater ideological purpose and fueled future Fedayeen activities.

After the crushing defeat in the Jordanian Crisis, commonly called "Black September" by many Fedayeen, the resistance movement underwent a transitional period. Most of the Fedayeen from Jordan went to Syria, where they were "retrained and regrouped, submitted to strict Syrian army controls and encouraged to harass Israel through the territory of Lebanon." [2] While the Arab states in which the Fedayeen sought shelter after Black September largely succeeded in reigning in many elements of the resistance movement, the core issue—the plight of the Palestinians—was not resolved.

The Nixon Administration's handling of the Jordanian Crisis made terrorism a more viable option for Palestinian radicals and even some Palestinian moderates. Furthermore, guerilla activity continued with only a comparatively brief pause. In the aftermath of the crisis, three "trends" emerged: the Palestinian Right sought limited accommodation with Arab regimes and renewed its emphasis on military action; the Left sought alliances with revolutionary groups inside and outside the Middle East; and the Black September Organization, the most violent faction of the three, advocated "total terror for its own sake."[3] The various radical groups continued their anti-Israeli and anti-Western actions with even more pan-Arab support than before.[4] As the radicals realized

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[1] El-Rayyes and Nahas, *Guerillas*, 31.

[2] George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 495.

[3] Amos, *Palestinian Resistance,* 144. Fatah maintained a nebulous ongoing partnership with Black September, at times working closely together, at other times seeking distance. See Cobban, *Palestinian Liberation Organization,* 55.

[4] Amos, *Palestinian Resistance,* 147-153. Cobban argues that the Palestinian groups that Jordan crushed in 1970 faced a years-long setback. However, the Palestinian resistance actually grew stronger in

the impossibility of overthrowing an existing government and establishing a radical state, the practicality of terrorist attacks and using ad hoc support networks Arab states provided them came to play increasingly central roles in their struggles.[1] Moreover, groups like the Black September Organization garnered tremendous support among average Palestinians because such groups embodied the same spirit of confrontation that inspired groups after the June 1967 defeat.[2] With essentially similar conviction and with generally similar goals as the Fedayeen in the Jordanian Crisis, various radical groups carried out terrorist attacks across the Middle East and Europe.[3]

This surge in hijackings and terrorist attacks, lasting through the mid 1970s, underscored flaws in American Levantine policy and highlighted the Nixon

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that the crisis basically purged the Palestinian movement of half-hearted revolutionaries, putting more long-term focused leaders in charge. This transition, for example, saw former guerilla leader Yassir Arafat become the head of the P.L.O. as opposed to the movement being dominated by outside forces. Arafat, therefore, was in a much more powerful position to deal with Arab states after Black September than before. See Cobban, *Palestinian Liberation Organization*, 53-55.

[1] States did offer various forms of military, logistical, technological, and intelligence assistance. For example, Syria often vied with Fatah over issues of control and operations planning, but by 1974, the latter recognized the value of using Syrian camps for training. Iraq too could boast major involvement in similar operations. Throughout 1972, Iraq arranged to increase assistance to commando groups and serve as a conduit for further Soviet assistance to these groups. While the October 1973 War challenged this new Iraqi posture, 1974 saw Iraq grow even more radical, being the main nation to support the Rejection Front (rejecting attempts to work piecemeal toward a settlement with Israel). Furthermore, Iraq was actually accused by the P.L.O., which was trying to improve its international image, of aiding the hijackers of a British Airways flight in late 1974, a situation where the P.L.O. displayed more moderate behavior than an Arab state. In North Africa, Libya vacillated between assisting the resistance groups and persecuting them. For example, Qadaffi provided massive amounts of covert aid to resistance groups, criticized Jordan's King Hussein for his September 1970 suppression of the uprising, and allowed hijacked planes to land on Libyan territory. Even the US's allies developed support structures for resistance groups. Kuwait, one of the wealthier and more conservative gulf sheikhdoms, levied a domestic tax to raise funds for Palestinian guerillas. Kuwait supported the resistance movement in Lebanon but avoided US scrutiny because it tended to seek a more neutralist path in the broader Arab world and denounced leftist movements in general. Saudi Arabia, similar to Kuwait in its conservatism, favored Palestinian nationalist groups over radical leftists and pursued many of its anti-Israeli policies through these groups. The most significant and sinister connection Saudi Arabia established was with Fatah and Yassir Arafat. Arafat openly discussed this connection, including it in his address to the UN General Assembly in 1974. See El-Rayyes and Nahas, *Guerillas*, 55, 101, 110.

[2] Amos, *Palestinian Resistance*, 144.

[3] While the terrorists referred to here were not attempting to overthrow a particular regime, they sought to bring greater attention to the Palestinian cause and retaliate for perceived injustices.

Administration's unwillingness to sufficiently confront these challenges. For example, Kissinger limited "Possible Actions Against Countries Which Are Uncooperative on Hijacking," in which he prescribed leverage to be used against uncooperative countries, including the manipulation of aid packages and other economic sanctions.[1] Ultimately, he himself concluded that the real risks posed by hijacking or other forms of terrorism were comparatively petty, and that damages by terrorist threats were too minimal for the U.S. to pursue.[2] Two years, later, Nixon and Kissinger's stance had changed little—at one point even agreeing that the hijacking issue was "third-level."[3]

However Palestinian-oriented terrorism did make its mark on the international scene. The Munich Olympics Massacre in September 1972, perpetrated by a group calling itself "Black September" in honor of the Palestinian effort two years earlier, exemplified a terrorist attack aiming to bring attention to the plight of Palestinians and the perceived injustices on the part of Israel against various Middle East entities. During White House discussions as the incident was unfolding, Kissinger and Nixon were mainly concerned with how to respond and how to keep the Israelis from carrying out their vengeance on the Arabs. Nixon tersely commented: "I don't want [Israel] to go conquer Beirut. I don't mind them going in and knocking off a few camps [in southern

[1] FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 79.

[2] It is tempting to perceive Kissinger's conclusion here being fueled by his inability to solve a problem with which he was faced. Ibid.

[3] This argument directly challenges Dowty's description of Nixon and Kissinger's "antipathy" toward terrorism and Shadid's perception that the Nixon Administration took a hard line against terrorism. The Nixon Administration clearly did not view terrorism as a major concern and continued to ignore it. Dowty's writing preceded the declassification of significant White House conversations that reveal the duo's downplaying of terrorism. See, Alan Dowty, *Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision Making in 1958, 1970 and 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 95.

Lebanon]."[1] Nixon and Kissinger succeeded in limiting Israel's overt retribution. While the two agreed further that the U.S. was "against countries that harbor guerillas" because such an activity was "something that affects the international" community, Kissinger's flippant suggestion that "we could make a lot of statesman-like speeches about curbing terrorism" confirmed the event's placement close to the bottom of the administration's priority list.[2] Deciding with Nixon that a symbolic response to the Munich event was necessary, Kissinger agreed to send Secretary of State Bill Rogers to the U.N. to offer U.S. condolences.

The Nixon Administration was not primarily concerned with terrorist threats and dealt with them when world pressure induced it to respond. While the administration largely overlooked terrorist actions, the terrorists often achieved their more basic goals of raising awareness of their causes by stirring dramatic international attention. In the eyes of many Fedayeen and Arab radicals, the Munich crisis and the October 1972 hijacking of a Luftansa jet by which the terrorists bargained for the release of the three jailed Munich terrorists, represented a success. Yet again, the terrorist assassination in November 1971 of Jordanian Premier Wasfi Tal set off a round of applause in Egypt and Libya as he was perceived as an agent of the West, hostile to Palestinian issues.[3] To many of the groups, the main objective was simply to "keep the [Palestinian] issue alive."[4] World recognition of various Arab radical factions began to increase, if by force.

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[1] FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 95. Israeli actions were consistent with Nixon's statements. See Cobban, 54-55.

[2] FRUS, *Global Issues*, No. 95.

[3] El Rayyes and Nahas, *Guerillas*, 94.

[4] Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.*, 26.

In the wake of the October War of 1973, the U.S., as well as most Arab states, shifted their stances toward the P.L.O. Soon after the war, Kissinger tacitly recognized the P.L.O., approving a memorandum thanking the P.L.O. for its "restraint" during the hostilities.[1] Though the memorandum reminded the P.L.O. that the U.S. would continue to support Israel, it did call the P.L.O. activity during the recent war "responsible," stated that "Palestinian interests [were] a reality" and implied that future "economic or technical assistance" was likely.[2] It is also possible to see concerns over the Palestinians increasing in importance in Kissinger's thinking in the year after the October war. On a number of occasions, Kissinger recognized the need to handle the Palestinian issue responsibly if any progress was to be made.[3]

The Arab world also began to view the P.L.O. differently after the October War of 1973. As they came to realize direct conflict with Israel would never be successful, Arab states looked increasingly toward the P.L.O. and occasionally more radical groups as effective routes of continuing the fight against Israel. At successive Arab Summits—Algiers in December 1973 and Rabat in October 1974—twenty Arab states recognized

[1] "Talking Points for Meeting with General Walters," White House Memorandum, October 26, 1973 (*http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98/octwar-78.pdf*, accessed 15 May 2007).

[2] Ibid.

[3] In a conversation with Middle East specialist Joe Sisco, a regular advisor to Kissinger, the secretary of state recognized the need to incorporate the Palestinians into a workable solution and acknowledged the Soviet Union's acceptance of the "question of the Palestinians." See "Telecon with Joe Sisco and Kissinger at 9:26AM," U.S. State Department Freedom of Information Act Kissinger Collection (*http://foia.state.gov/documents/kissinger/0000C5C8.pdf***,** accessed 15 May 2007). In a conversation with columnist Joseph Kraft, Kissinger recognized the Palestinians' status as regional entity and displayed concerns about their reactions to ongoing discussions. See, "Telecon with Joseph Kraft and Kissinger at 7:45PM," U.S. State Department Freedom of Information Act Kissinger Collection (*http://foia.state.gov/documents/kissinger/0000C56F.pdf***,** accessed 15 May 2007). Finally, in a conversation with Israeli ambassador Simcha Dinitz, Kissinger argued for a reasonable outcome to the Palestinian issue. See, "Telecon with Ambassador Dinitz/Secretary Kissinger at 6:00PM," U.S. State Department Freedom of Information Act Kissinger Collection (*http://foia.state.gov/documents/kissinger/0000C9D8.pdf*, accessed 15 May 2007).

the P.L.O. as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. The P.L.O. "received extensive international attention" and opened a significant number of new offices abroad, even outside the Middle East.[1] In 1974, Yassir Arafat addressed the U.N. as the head of the P.L.O., the sole representative of the Palestinians—an inconceivable thought given the defeat Fatah and the Resistance movement experienced four years earlier in Jordan.

Although the P.L.O. had gained politically from the 1973 war and was now widely recognized as a comparatively legitimate resistance group, it was not alone; numerous resistance groups still existed. Arab states came to "support" these groups, "based on tactical considerations" in pursuit of their own interests.[2] Domestic issues, inter-Arab rivalries, and lingering anti-Zionism, while manifesting themselves differently in each country, all contributed to government leaders' or individual citizens' inclinations to side with various groups. As the P.L.O. gained ascendancy, the "radical" groups waned. Most of the groups that were considered "radical" in the earlier years of the Nixon Administration declined as political and military forces. However the ideals which initially inspired the radicals—the Palestinian cause and anti-imperialism—were picked up by later groups. As the 1970s unfolded, groups fighting with these ideals as their goals continued guerilla and terrorist activity throughout the Levant region.

[1] Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.*, 37.
[2] Ibid., 39.

Conclusion

Clearly the Jordanian Crisis represented a grave threat to regional stability. During the crisis, bands of guerillas attempted to overthrow a legitimate monarch, neighboring countries crossed into Jordan, and the superpowers intervened to suit their own interests. Had events unfolded differently—had Hussein been unable to drive Syrian tanks back across the border, had domestic forces from within Jordan joined the guerillas, had the Iraqis decided to fight against the regime, etc.—the outcome might have been quite different. That events—both in the hijacking crisis and the civil war—ended as comparatively calmly as they did, reassured the Nixon Administration that it had succeeded in avoiding a regional war. Furthermore, in the context of a broader Soviet strategy, the administration became understandably preoccupied with Moscow and Cold War concerns. This crisis was the first in which the administration could display to the Soviets its decisiveness in conflict, its crisis management skills and its ability to shape events in its favor.

The prospect of a moderate monarchy in the area being overthrown by radicals justified American attention. In many ways, this was the episode that the administration most likely anticipated—one that pitted supposedly Soviet-backed revolutionaries against a legitimate king and contained an opportunity for the administration to display its eagerness to supply weapons and assistance to allies. When given the opportunity, the administration involved itself thoroughly and worked to make a positive impression on other countries in the region. Consistent with its Cold War goals, the Nixon Administration's Levantine Policy succeeded, though only partially, in using allies in the region to confront regional threats.

The Nixon Administration's Levantine policy, however, did not contribute to medium-range or long-term peace in the region. Kissinger's post-1973 war "shuttle diplomacy" may have succeeded in ending hostilities between Egypt and Israel, but the Nixon Administration left the region with a serious problem—the Palestinian cause—largely because its policy of leaving regional problems in the hands of regional allies failed. Arab states soon became the P.L.O.'s biggest supporters. Furthermore, a great deal of support for pro-Palestinian terrorist networks came from non-governmental entities within various Arab states.

This chapter explains *why* the Nixon Administration failed to respond to the evolution and maturation of the P.L.O. and pro-Palestinian terrorism. Suggesting *what* the Nixon Administration could have done to forestall this process is more difficult. William Stivers points out the administration's blocking out of the Palestinian cause, largely at Kissinger's behest, on the grounds that the Palestinians' national claims were illegitimate. World opinion was against the administration, as the United Nations passed Resolution 3236 in November 1974, which recognized the Palestinians' rights to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty.[1]

The administration should have recognized the explosiveness of the situation and worked to incorporate some Palestinian moderates into a discussion over the future of Palestine. Primarily, the Nixon Administration should not have allowed its thoughts on Palestinian radicals to shape its entire policy toward the Levant. Furthermore, the administration could have considered options regarding occupied territory and Palestinian sovereignty, could have reassured responsible Palestinian officials that Palestinian

[1] William Stivers, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-1983* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 74-76.

concerns were important to the administration, or even encouraged European leaders to participate in a Palestinian solution. Had the administration picked up an issue as critical as the Palestinian one, it would have gained greatly needed credibility throughout the region that might have smoothed negotiations on other issues. Had the administration worked to accommodate Israeli security needs and engaged some Palestinian moderates in fruitful talks about Israeli-Palestinian relations—in a format similar to Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy of the later administration years—then not only could some progress have been made on direct Israeli-Palestinian issues, but the extreme radical Palestinian groups could have been more easily marginalized and targeted. As events unfolded, Israel continued to feel threatened by Fedayeen, who in turn felt just as compelled to carry out military attacks as during the Jordanian Crisis.

Nixon also failed to foresee the recognition the Palestinian issue would later receive. The Palestinian claims have been backed by a regional consensus, capped in 1974, and even later garnered Western European sympathy.[1] Various states throughout the region have lent logistical, financial and military support to the Palestinians. Given the sympathy many parties adopted toward the Palestinians, the Nixon Administration's refusal to respond to at least its more moderate claims, underscored its shortsightedness. The Nixon Administration's wholesale ignoring of the Palestinian issue during the period when the administration should have been working out its policy shortcoming led it to overlook the development and reinforcement of highly active, long-term oriented terrorist

[1] By 1980, France, West Germany, and Great Britain developed, formally in the last two cases, relations with the P.L.O. West Germany was the first European nation to call for Palestinian self-determination. Through the Venice Declaration of 1980, the members of the European Economic Community recognized the principle of Palestinian self-determination also. See Yodfat and Arnon-Ohanna, *P.L.O.*, 132-134.

groups and militant Palestinian activists. As a result of its failure during this trial-and-error phase, the Nixon Administration left the Palestinian situation, and to some extent the Levantine region more broadly, in no better shape than it was when the administration assumed office.

Indeed the Jordanian Crisis served as a defining moment in the administration's Middle East policy development. One the one hand, the Nixon Administration successfully demonstrated the superior credibility of U.S. backing while taking further steps in its regional goal of using Arab moderates to fight Arab radicals. On the other hand, the administration presided over what could easily be considered the maturation and entrenchment of Arab, and more specifically, Palestinian-oriented terrorism. Throughout this development, largely fueled by American intransigence on the Palestinian issue, the administration's preoccupation with Moscow and any of its potential attempts to involve itself further in the region clouded Washington's perception of, what to many Arabs, was the main regional issue. In 1974, as Nixon left the White House, the Soviet position in the Middle East was notably diminished and the strength of moderate Arab regimes bolstered. At the same time however, the international community became significantly more aware of the Palestinian cause; Palestinian groups displayed a greater anti-Americanism than before; and a number of Arab operatives gained experience in the development of terrorist networks and the execution of terrorist activities. As a result, violence related to these same issues has continued ever since Nixon's time in the White House.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Three Different Arenas

Clearly Arab radicalism posed the Nixon Administration with unique challenges. The essence of Arab radicalism was directly at odds with U.S. interests in the Middle East, while the diversity of political, ideological and social perspectives in the Middle East complicated the issue. This new, nebulous and potentially violent enemy truly signified a serious challenge to the Nixon Administration. Formulating and implementing a response therefore, was as important as it was difficult.

Understanding the Nixon Administration's perception of, plans for, and interaction with Arab radicals contributes to a better overall understanding of the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy. As each of the situations discussed represents a different yet equally important combination of Middle East issues, examining the Nixon Administration's handling of them provides much needed material for formulating better overall conclusions about the administration. The three different situations studied in this thesis which the Nixon Administration confronted Arab radicalism studied in this thesis further illustrate the complexity of the issue. The three situations posed significantly different challenges to the Nixon Administration, but important features common to each can be compared and contrasted to gain a fuller understanding of the administration's handling of them. Features of a situation such as the existence of a regional consensus,

the nature of the Arab radicalism in that particular situation, a situation's degree and type of militancy, and a radical group's openness to Soviet aid provide categories by which the three instances of Arab radicalism can be analyzed.

An important feature to consider is the degree to which a regional consensus existed in each of the situations. A key element of the Nixon Doctrine was the requirement that a sufficient group of supporters exist in a region to increase stability. Certainly the situation in the Persian Gulf met this criterion. The ease with which the Nixon Administration helped assemble a regional framework is a testament to the solidity of a local consensus. In the case of Libya, there existed a tenuous acceptance of the new regime. Countries in the region such as Egypt and the Sudan were willing to accept and partially cooperate with Libya, but refrained from participating in the broad policy adjustments Qaddafi advocated, thus blunting some of Qaddafi's revolutionary zeal. Here was a situation where the regional consensus was neither specifically for nor against the U.S.'s interests. Finally, in the Levant, the Nixon Administration tried to forcibly impose a regional framework and consequently continued to face challenges from disinterested or antagonistic parties.

Further complicating the Nixon Administration's duties were the three relatively different strains of Arab radicalism contained in the Middle East. In the Gulf, the Arab radicalism found in the Yemens and elsewhere was distinctly anti-imperialist. It was resistant to any forms of subjugation and openly invited Marxist support. In Libya, Qaddafi developed a nearly fundamentalist, overtly hostile strain of radicalism that was subject to his definitions and interests. Finally in the Levant, the radicalism that developed was characterized in some groups by Marxist and anti-imperialist leanings,

while in other groups it was characterized by nationalist and independence aims. Common to all three was a refusal to work within the parameters of accepted methods of diplomatic interaction and a strong proclivity to use violence and extremist methods to pursue goals. All three situations truly challenged the Nixon Administration.

Another feature that challenged the Nixon Administration was the strength and variety of militancy—a proclivity to use and encourage violence—in each of the three situations. In the Gulf, radicals posed a revolutionary threat and proselytized their beliefs throughout the region. Their militancy affected regional stability, in the form of ongoing guerilla and civil wars, and required a strong response. The Nixon Administration's encouraging of joint operations on the part of Iran, Saudi Arabia and other states against Gulf radicals ensured that the power of Gulf radicals would be sufficiently outweighed. Here, the administration used the regional consensus to confront and contain the radicals. More enigmatic than Gulf radicalism, Qaddafi's militancy required sensitive filtering on the part of the administration. An uninformed or simple-minded reading of the situation in Libya could have resulted in a rapid deterioration of relations between the U.S. and Libya. The Nixon Administration recognized the "bark and no bite" nature of Qaddafi's militancy and his inability and unwillingness to employ militant tactics in his early years. His encouragement and support of terrorism in the last years of the Nixon Administration was minimal and capricious. Consequently, the Nixon Administration monitored the situation and ultimately recognized that though vocally militant, Qaddafi's threat was manageable. Finally, the militancy of Arab radicals in the Levant truly challenged the Nixon Administration. In the Jordanian Crisis, as groups of highly charged radicals attempted a coup, the Nixon Administration overly simplified the issue and simply used

force to confront force. However, the Levantine radicals combined militancy with nationalist claims that were soon recognized throughout the region. While the Nixon Administration successfully used regional force to confront militant Arab radicals in September 1970, the policy it adopted ensured that that particular strain of Arab radicalism would survive, as too would its militancy—though mostly in the form of terrorism.

Given that the Nixon Administration largely viewed the Middle East in the context of the Cold War, it is helpful to consider different radicals' openness to Soviet aid and intervention. Clearly the radicals in the Gulf, anti-imperialist and often overtly Marxist, invited assistance and provided opportunities for the Soviets, as well as Marxists more generally. Aden's call to the communist world for support and cooperation and the Soviet approval of Nasser's support for North Yemeni revolutionaries during the 1960s illustrate opportunities for the spread of communism in the area. Clearly the Gulf heavily occupied the Nixon Administration's thinking as it tied together regional issues with broader Cold War concerns. More hazy was Qaddafi's relationship with the Soviets. Vocally anti-communist at the beginning of his reign, Qaddafi warmed to the Soviets as arms suppliers and consumers of Libyan oil. Similar to the radicals in the Gulf, some of the radical groups that challenged Hussein's throne in 1970 did welcome Soviet aid. Groups like the P.F.L.P., the P.D.F.L.P., and the P.F.L.P.G.C. adopted Marxist revolutionary methods and goals and at times welcomed Soviet influence. Furthermore, P.L.O. leader Yassir Arafat visited both Moscow and Peking in his effort to forge better relations with the communist giants. Ultimately, the Cold War factored largely into the Nixon Administration approach to radicals in the Middle East.

Surprisingly, the Nixon Administration, despite its antipathy toward the Soviet Union, did not extensively vocalize concern for Soviet-backed radical movements in the region. Clearly, each of the three situations contained some degree of Soviet influence and potential for involvement; yet the Nixon Administration did not seek to confront the Soviets over any of these three situations. Instead the administration perceived Arab radicals, whether they received substantial or little communist support, as regional destabilizing forces. If those radicals succeeded in destabilizing certain parts of the region, the administration believed the Soviets would reap the benefits.

Assessment

The Persian Gulf

In the Persian Gulf region, Arab radicalism posed an asymmetrical threat to the U.S.'s vision of a regional security framework. Fueled by regional instability and decolonization struggles, Arab radical groups fought an ongoing battle to establish themselves in the region and gain control of small littoral states. To counter this threat, the Nixon Administration worked to create a framework for regional stability by building up selected states in the region to confront regional threats and cooperate in a manner that best served not only their interests, but the interests of the states who worked with the Gulf. This represented an organically developed policy solution led by the Nixon Administration that incorporated a number of factors. During the six years Nixon was in the White House, regional stability increased as threats arising from Arab radicals

decreased. Some shortcomings plagued the policy, but the two-pillars policy largely succeeded in stabilizing the region until 1979.

Libya

In Libya, Qaddafi assertively spread his firebrand anti-Americanism while exerting a new and surprising degree of influence over American interests there. The Nixon Administration's handling of Libya displays its ability to respond to potentially threatening surprises with long-term dangers that forced the administration to reassess its posture toward that state. In Libya, the administration faced an enigmatic challenge from Mu'ammar Qaddafi and his Revolutionary Command Council. Not knowing exactly what effect the young colonel would have on regional politics, the Nixon Administration adopted a tentative "wait-and-see" approach as it worked to keep the situation calm.

The Nixon Administration ultimately viewed Qaddafi as a "tolerable radical." The administration was aware of Qaddafi's tendencies but did not feel significantly threatened by them. Furthermore, Libya proved to be a low-stakes situation—the Nixon Administration did not have much to concede to Qaddafi as the oil price hike and the abandonment of Wheelus Airbase did not significantly threaten U.S. interests. Of course the 1973 oil embargo, in which Libya played a role, did pose serious economic challenges to the U.S., but the 1973 embargo had little to do with U.S.-Libya relations. Nixon's "live-and-let-live" and "wait-and-see" policies were comparatively prudent and effective. Nixon ignored much of Qaddafi's support for terrorism because it was

comparatively insignificant—even the Israelis could tolerate Qaddafi's activities. Nixon also mostly ignored Qaddafi's relations with the Soviets. The marriage was one of necessity and never particularly concerned the Nixon Administration. By 1973 and 1974, the Soviet Union's regional partners were so unpredictable and uncontrollable—Syria and Iraq stand out as examples—that for the Soviet Union to improve ties with Libya did not worry the Nixon Administration. By the time the Soviets and Libya improved relations, the U.S., through diplomatic efforts elsewhere, had significantly improved ties with Anwar Sadat's Egypt and had made public efforts to work with other states in the region. Though Libya caused international problems during the 1970s and 1980s, very little of these later problems can be attributed to the Nixon Administration's Libyan policy after 1969. The Nixon Administration reasonably responded to the situation in Libya, accurately surveying the situation and acting accordingly.

The Jordanian Crisis and the Levantine Policy

It is impossible to view the Jordanian Crisis separate from the Palestinian issue, as it was militant Palestinians, angry over their marginalization, who fomented the Jordanian Crisis. The Nixon Administration's use of regional partners to crush the movement did not end the Palestinians' efforts; it simply forced the Palestinians to change their methods. Therefore, the Jordanian Crisis represents an odd duality in which the Nixon Administration "won the battle" but "lost the war." Here, the Nixon

Administration confronted what appeared to be a violent but ephemeral threat that was actually the derivative of a larger, more encompassing movement.

The Jordanian Crisis was arguably the most encompassing of the three situations. Not only did it require a high degree of crisis management from the Nixon Administration, but more than any other issue, it tied together local, regional and global concerns. It also had the most far-reaching implications on the Nixon Administration's handling of the Middle East. The month-long crisis did significantly galvanize the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy and its policy toward the Palestinian issue. After the crisis, the administration felt much more confident about using regional partners, especially Israel, to pursue its goals in the region and felt much less inclined to address the Palestinian issue. The Nixon Administration's focus on inter-state interaction which overlooked the existence and growth of non-state groups, as well as its continued overlooking of the Palestinian issue, ensured that threats from radicals, in one form or another, would continue long after the September 1970 crisis ended.

A potential contradiction arises when one affirms Nixon's relatively lax stance toward Qaddafi, supporter of terrorism that he was, yet criticizes Nixon for not sufficiently addressing terrorism in the Levant. It is important to remember, however, that Qaddafi-supported terrorism was inherently different from terrorism inspired by the Palestinian issue. The former was intermittent, partial and containable, ultimately subject to Qaddafi's whims. The latter, on the other hand, grew out of a nationalism shared by and sympathized with by a number of people throughout the region. The Palestinian issue tied together many more parties and was legitimated by a number of groups. Furthermore, the Palestinian issue, at its core, was centered around the idea of a

homeland for a displaced people. Qaddafi's pragmatic use of the Palestinian issue for his own ends was a perversion of its essence. One could say that radical Palestinian groups' use of the Palestinian issue to justify military action in the region was a similar perversion of the issue, but that question is more suitable for a discussion over liberation movement methods. In the end, ignoring both Qaddafi's actions and his support of terrorist groups was less of a policy shortcoming than overlooking the claims of Palestinians, claims that were largely sympathized with by many Europeans nations. If Nixon wanted peace in the Levantine region, as well as to deprive Qaddafi of some fuel for radicalism, Nixon should have better addressed the Palestinian issue.

Evaluation

The Nixon administration displayed a strong yet partial understanding of Arab radicalism. The administration could recognize the causes and nature of radicalism. In the Gulf, the administration knew that radicalism was fueled by regional instability and hostility toward perceived imperialism. Consequently, the Nixon Administration assembled a regional framework for containing and defusing the threat. In Libya, the administration recognized that Qaddafi was capitalizing on anti-Zionist and anti-American sentiment as well as lower-level desire to reintroduce Islam into politics. The Nixon Administration knew the limited viability of Qaddafi's rhetoric and acted accordingly. If any administration misunderstanding of the Libyan situation can be identified, it was the administration's inability to foresee Qaddafi's warming to Soviet

overtures, a policy shift even the most astute analysts were likely to miss. Finally, in the Jordanian Crisis, the administration understood the causes of radicalism; however, the administration chose to use force to quash the issue. The Nixon Administration committed its most egregious error when, in the aftermath of its perceived success in the Jordanian Crisis, it began systematically ignoring continued Palestinian militancy. Furthermore, relying on force to confront radicals and terrorists, a policy feature mainly rationalized by perceived success in the 1970 crisis, led the administration to adopt an overly simplified stance on terrorism and caused the administration to ignore the maturation of terrorism between 1969 and 1974.

As historians continue to debate the major themes of the Nixon Administration's Middle East policy, the Nixon Administration's handling of threats from Arab radicals should be considered. Much has been written about the Nixon Administration's pursuit of Cold War goals in the region, its handling of the Arab-Israeli dispute, its role in the oil crisis, and its crisis management throughout the region. To further enrich historical discussion on this topic in Nixon Administration history, the administration's policy toward radicalism should be further studied.

Radicals posed foreseeable and unforeseeable challenges to the administration. The presence and persistence of radicals in the Gulf, long before Nixon's time in the White House, is an example of the former, while Qaddafi's surprising coup represents the latter. In either case, the Nixon Administration's handling of the crises reveals much about its basic understanding of the Middle East and the assumptions that shaped its policies there. All three episodes demonstrate that the administration could sometimes accurately perceive issues, but the Jordanian Crisis reveals that the administration also

overlooked certain developments that stood outside its vision of Middle East developments. Finally, all three episodes contribute to the discussion of the viability of the Nixon Doctrine. The Gulf stands as an example of a situation where the Nixon Doctrine largely served its purpose. Relations with Libya validate the doctrine's reliance on stable, reliable regional partners. Here, while Egypt was not a full-fledged participant in the Nixon Doctrine, the same principles that guided successful implementation of the Nixon Doctrine led the administration to pursue better relations with Egypt. In the case of Jordan, the Nixon Doctrine worked semi-successfully, but could have worked more effectively. The administration would have fostered smoother relations with the Levant if it had taken into account that the Nixon Doctrine worked best when it evolved organically instead of being imposed. Furthermore, the administration should have noted the claims of the Palestinians and recognized that those claims would persist for decades to come. Finally, the administration should have recognized that, while Palestinian radicalism was frowned upon, the plight of the Palestinians was generally sympathized with.

Ultimately those "wild-eyed" radicals provided the Nixon Administration with a series of challenges. To a large degree, the Nixon Administration can be commended for not worsening the situation too substantially and even leaving some lasting improvements in certain areas. Unquestionably, the Nixon Administration was composed of some of the most perceptive and skilled analysts of any administration that has confronted the region and proved that it was capable of developing highly sophisticated policy. Furthermore, when the administration did set about to achieve a specific or explicit goal, it usually succeeded and did so in a manner rather favorable to a number of interested

parties. The problem with the Nixon administration however, was that it sometimes chose not to use its best resources. The Nixon Administration displayed an obvious inflexibility toward concerns outside its major policy goals. Quite often, if the Nixon Administration did not deem an issue important, it ignored the issue. The problems that arose out of the Nixon Administration's handling of the Middle East mostly came not from its poor handling of an issue, but instead from its overlooking or ignoring an issue.

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