

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED: RACE, RELIGION, AND THE
EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION'S ENCOUNTER WITH ARAB
NATIONALISM

A Dissertation

by

RIAN T. BOBAL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

Stand Up and Be Counted: Race, Religion, and the Eisenhower Administration's
Encounter with Arab Nationalism. (August 2011)

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“Stand Up and be Counted” explores how American racial and religious beliefs guided the American encounter with Arab nationalism in the 1950s. It utilizes both traditional archival sources and less traditional cultural texts. Cultural texts, such as, movies, novels, travelogues, periodical articles, and folk sayings, are used to elucidate how Americans viewed and understood Arab peoples, and also religion. Archival records from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, National Archives, and John Foster Dulles Papers at Princeton University are used to elucidate how these beliefs shaped the Eisenhower administration's policy in the Middle East.

The first chapter provided a brief introductory history of the Arab nationalist movement, reviews the literature, and introduces the dissertation's argument. The second chapter demonstrates that American culture established a canon of racialized beliefs about Arabs. These beliefs forged a national identity by constructing an Arab, to use Edward Said's famed term, “other.” Americans to project what they believed they were not onto Arabs in an effort to establish what they were. The third chapter

demonstrates that historical events caused subtle, yet important, shifts in how Americans perceived Arab peoples over the years. By focusing on the 1920s, 1940s, and 1950s “Stand Up and Be Counted” elucidates that historical events compelled specific racialized associations to assume greater prominence during these periods. The fourth chapter demonstrates that these racially filtered perceptions guided the Eisenhower administration’s decision to oppose Arab nationalism. Arab nationalist leaders, such as Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, advocated adopting a neutralist stance in the cold war. Administration officials, however, reasoned that Arabs’ innate gullibility and irrationality would ultimately allow Soviet leaders to outwit and subjugate them—perhaps without them knowing it had even occurred. These racialized assumptions, the sixth chapter reveals, compelled the administration to labor to contain Arab nationalism, even after the combined British-French invasion of the Suez Canal. The seventh chapter establishes that many considered the United States to be a covenanted nation, a nation chosen by God to lead and save humanity. Beginning in the 1930s, however, many Americans came to fear that material secularism at home and abroad were threatening this mission. The monumental nature of these dual secularist threats prompted many to advocate for the formation of a united front of the religious. Among those who subscribed to this understanding were President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The eighth chapter established that this conceptualization of religion guided the administration’s decision to promote King Saud of Saudi Arabia as a regional counter weight to Nasser and the Arab nationalist movement. The ninth chapter reveals that this strategy was fraught with peril.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser met for the first and only time in September of 1960. The meeting took place in the President's suite at the Waldorf Towers in New York City. Nasser was visiting to attend a session at the United Nations. A photographer captured the encounter. The photo reveals the two leaders seated next to each other on a couch. President Eisenhower is speaking, intently, leaning towards the Egyptian leader, gesticulating with his right arm. Nasser sits, seemingly perfectly at ease, with palms upraised, as if to brush off what the President is saying. Eisenhower meanwhile fixates on Nasser's upraised palms, as if he does not quite know what to make of the gesture. All the while, the Egyptian leader looks away, directly into the eye of the camera, as if he is more concerned with an audience just out of view, one which the President cannot see.

This scene serves as a metaphor for U.S. relations with Nasser, Egypt, and Arab nationalism during the Eisenhower years. During the eight years he spent in office Dwight Eisenhower's attention was constantly drawn to the actions of the Egyptian government and the Arab nationalist movement. His administration labored tirelessly to convince the Egyptians, and other Arab nationalists, to listen to, and accept, their view of the world, and the role they believed that Arabs should play in it. The Egyptian

This dissertation follows the style of *Diplomatic History*.

government, however, continually turned its figurative head away from Washington, instead focusing on an audience and on forces that the administration seemed unable, or unwilling, to see.

When President Eisenhower entered the oval office he, and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, possessed a meticulously reasoned, and inflexible, understanding of world affairs. The Soviet Union, they believed, constituted a threat, not just to the United States and to Western Europe, but to the very existence of freedom and independence. According to the President, the cold war was a war between a side who rejected the “dignity of the human being” and who subordinated “him to the state,” and a side “who believe[d] in the dignity of the individual human being.”¹ In containing and rolling back the Soviet peril, administration officials believed, they were doing the work of the world, protecting the very existence of freedom and individuality.

The problem which confronted the administration, however, was that the cold war by the early 1950s had become global. Nearly six hundred million people had gained their independence. New nations—Indonesia, Laos, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan, the Sudan, Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia, and many others—came into being. The roots of this development stretch further back, of course. Colonial peoples had long resented western domination, and with good reason. Western nations frequently employed violence against colonial peoples, persecuted ethnic groups, and robbed them

¹ Notes for Chapel Talk, Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 193, folder “Kansas State, October 24-25 ’47,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (DDEL hereafter). Secretary Dulles’ thinking on Soviet communism evolved. Initially he looked upon the Soviet Union quite empathetically. But, as the cold war solidified in the late 1940s and early 1950s he too began to think like President Eisenhower. He wrote that the Soviet Union preached a “creed that teaches world domination and that would deny those personal freedoms which constitute our most cherished political and religious heritage.” John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950), 2.

of self rule and sovereignty. The two world wars catalyzed resistance. The carnage of the First World War, one historian has observed, “undermined any faith” colonial peoples had in “European superiority” and consequently a worldwide resistance movement emerged. This movement only gained further strength after World War II when the European powers’ senseless slaughter of each other belied their claims that they were the most fit to govern. Japanese successes, meanwhile, undermined the notion of western white superiority.²

The new nations of the so-called third world, and the nationalist movements in lands still struggling under the yoke of European rule, presented the new administration with a bewildering challenge. In a time when the United States wanted the nations of the world to “stand up and be counted” in the cold war, to reflexively, and unquestioningly, align with the west, many of these new nations and nationalist movements were reluctant to do so.³ They desired, as one historian has written, to end “foreign control of the exploitation of raw materials through foreign loans, or thorough development aid.”⁴ They were also leery of entering into military alliances with the west, fearing that doing so would only perpetuate western meddling in their sovereign affairs.

Of all the nationalist movements perhaps none frustrated the Eisenhower administration more than the Arab nationalist movement. The movement emerged just

² Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 79 and chapter 3.

³ National Security Council Report, January 24, 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-60*, vol. 12 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 22. (Hereafter *FRUS*)

⁴ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 95-6.

prior to World War I. As is so often the case, intellectuals led it.⁵ They rebelled against the inept rule of the Ottoman Empire. Thinkers began to, as one historian has summarized, “outline ideas of unity based on common language, similar cultural outlook and shared historical experience.”⁶ Secret societies in what would later become Syria agitated for the creation of an independent Arab state and throughout the empire underground societies proliferated.

Salvation seemed to arrive with the end of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire, the perennial “sick man of Europe,” expired. This, however, was not to be. The western powers carved up the Ottoman carcass, created new nations ruled by local elites, and “administered” them as western mandates.

The creation of these new states, even if they lacked true sovereignty, initially sapped much the Arab nationalist movement’s energy. This, however, would not last long. The conclusion of the Second World War revived the movement. Despite gaining independence, traditional conservative elites, who the western nations had placed into power, continued to rule. This infuriated many. These elites, they believed, lacked legitimacy. Their loyalty lay with those who had placed them into power, and who continued to support them economically and militarily, and not with their people. The war also producing a middle class for the first time in many Middle Eastern states and this new class began, as one historian has written, “criticizing the traditionalist regimes for the existing economic stagnation and continued subservience to the imperial

⁵ See: Ronald Suny, *Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁶ Ray Takeyh, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: The U.S., Britain, and Nasser’s Egypt, 1953-1957* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 12.

powers.”⁷ The Arab nationalist movement also gained strength from the creation of the state of Israel. Many Arabs believed that the existence of the Jewish state only divided the Arab world and in response many turned to the re-enlivened Arab nationalist movement.

Despite this reinvigoration the entrenched elite remained in power. They were a potent force. It would take another equally powerful entity to unseat them. In many countries, including in Egypt, the military would serve this function.

Egypt technically gained its independence from Britain in 1922. King Farouk ruled the country as an independent monarch, but the British continued to wield considerable influence. They supported individual politicians or parties, offered “advice” to government ministers, and on at least two occasions delivered ultimatums demanding changes in the composition of the ruling coalition. In addition a large number of British forces remained in the country—most at the immense base at Suez.⁸

This state of affairs disturbed many, including many officers in the Egyptian armed forces. They soon formed the Free Officers movement, with the objective of overthrowing the King and establish meaningful independence for the Egyptian people. The Free Officers, however, realized that the King and his supporters constituted a powerful force. So they waited for a precipitous moment.

Such a moment arrived in July of 1952. As darkness descended upon Cairo so too did Egyptian armored and artillery units. Elsewhere in the country the military

⁷ *Ibid*, 13.

⁸ James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers: 2002), 12 ; Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

arrested much of the high command and as dawn broke on the 23rd a new force wielded power in Egypt: the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC).

Once in power the RCC appointed General Mohammad Naguib to serve as its titular leader. The real force behind the council, however, was its founder Gamal Abdel Nasser. He founded the Free Officers Movement and, as one historian has concluded, his opinion, while “not always prevailing,” always “counted the most.”⁹ Naguib was chosen to represent the RCC merely because he possessed higher status and visibility. He was largely a figurehead. One, who in less than two years time, Nasser would force from power.¹⁰

Nasser and the RCC possessed a very different understanding of the world than Eisenhower and Dulles. To them the preeminent threat came not from Soviet communism, but from western imperialism. As Nasser explained “the Soviet Union is more than a thousand miles away and we’ve never had any trouble with them. They have never attacked us. They have never occupied our territory. They have never had a base here, but the British have been here for seventy years.”¹¹ Decades of colonization and exploitation at the hands of the British had made Nasser and the RCC conscious of, and concerned with, continued western influence in their nation. They worried that the western powers would continue to divest Egypt of meaningful sovereignty and independence as long as they exercised any influence over the Egyptian economy or over Egyptian foreign policy. This fear prompted Nasser and the RCC to strive for

⁹Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 15. See also: Gordon, *Nasser’s*, 13,47, 55.

¹⁰ See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, chapter 3.

¹¹ Mohammad Heikal, *The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and his Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 41.

complete independence from the west. The only way to achieve this, Nasser believed, was to utilize Arab nationalism.

Nasser was no ideologue, nor was he a power hungry megalomaniac, as many in the Eisenhower administration believed (the administration went so far as to commission a study comparing Nasser to Hitler).¹² He was first and foremost a military man. His primary goal was to secure meaningful independence for his country. The west's economic and military superiority, however, led him to conclude that the only way to accomplish this was for Egypt to unite with the other Arab states. For Nasser, one historian has concluded, "Arab nationalism meant Arab effectiveness," by working together the Arab states could obtain a "protective armor . . . against both imperialism and Israel." Arab nationalism for Nasser was a "defensive necessity," a "weapon" to be used in the "struggle against foreign domination."¹³

This was a very different understanding of the world, of security, and of sovereignty than the Eisenhower administration possessed. What complicated matters was the administration's certainty in the correctness of its view. The only rational, intellectually justifiable position, the administration held, was to view the Soviet Union as the preeminent threat, as a threat not just to worldwide stability and security, but to the very essence of civilization—individuality. To meet and defeat this existential challenge, the administration believed, the nations of the world needed to sacrifice their own individual interests and unite for the common good. For this reason the

¹² Hitler and Nasser: a Comparison, August 14, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 11, folder "Egypt," National Archives. (Hereafter NA).

¹³ Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt*, 33.

administration could not, on any intellectual level, empathize with, or understand, any other view of the world. As a result when confronted with an opposing view, such as the one held by Nasser and his fellow Arab nationalists, they, perhaps unknowingly, interpreted it through the prism of race.

Stand Up and Be Counted is a cultural history of the Eisenhower administration's encounter with Arab nationalism. Before I proceed, a few words of definition. By culture I mean, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously delineated it, an "interworked systems of constructable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols)."¹⁴ These "constructable signs" collectively form the basis for epistemological categories such as race, class, gender, and religion.

Cultural histories posit that the symbolically constructed categories of race, class, gender, and, religion, give meaning to everyday life and provides the context upon which people base their decisions. Cultural histories like Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* and Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process* first appeared in the 1970s.¹⁵ Historians of U.S. foreign relations, however, were slow to adopt the approach. The first cultural history of foreign relations, Akira Iriye's *Power and Culture*, did not appear until 1981. In *Power and Culture* Iriye reveals how American and Japanese cultural and intellectual perceptions effected relations between the two countries.¹⁶ In the wake of Iriye's groundbreaking work others followed and explored other aspects of culture and its affect on foreign policy. Kristen Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood*, for

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books: 1973), 14.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) ; Elias Norbert, *The Civilizing Process* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

¹⁶ Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: the Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

example, elucidated how American gender constructions influenced policy abroad.¹⁷ Thomas Borstelmann's *The Cold War and the Color Line* demonstrated how domestic racial beliefs, and politics, effected U.S. foreign relations.¹⁸ Despite the recent popularity of the cultural approach, however, questions remain. As Melvyn Leffler has cautioned "emphasis on culture, language, and rhetoric often diverts attention from questions of causation and agency."¹⁹

Historians who interpret foreign relations through the lens of culture have responded, in a, perhaps, less than satisfactory manner to these criticisms. Andrew Rotter has argued that "cause and affect" is "perhaps not so easy to discern as my colleagues would claim." Echoing Clifford Geertz who posited "that man is animal suspended in webs of [cultural] significance he himself has spun," Rotter asserts that policymakers "are influenced and constrained by webs of significance, but," he cautions, "they are [also] human beings with agency."²⁰ Consequently, instead of demonstrating causality, he writes, he labors "to show" in his work "a correspondence between culturally conditioned ways in which selves made others and specific events."²¹

¹⁷ Kristen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also: Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) ; Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) ; Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Melvyn P. Leffler, "New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfigurations," in Michael J Hogan, ed., *America in the World: the Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72.

²⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5; Andrew Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), xxii.

²¹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

I agree with Rotter that policymakers are indeed “influenced and constrained by webs of significance.” But as cultural historians of American foreign relations I believe that we can and should do more than demonstrate a “correspondence” between culture and events. In his study of race, religion, and U.S. relations with Vietnam Seth Jacobs wrote that “while the roots of American activities in Vietnam were many and complex,” policymakers’ “ideological assumptions,” Jacobs concludes “facilitated” their decisions “by making them seem logical and necessary and blinding” them “to their consequences.”²² This work follows in the path pioneered by Seth Jacobs. It upholds that culture, while it indeed provides context, does, in certain instances, more than that. By providing context it shapes policymakers’ actions and effects causality. It, as Seth Jacobs has astutely elucidated, makes certain options “seem logical and necessary.”

As this work will demonstrate, this is what occurred when officials in the Eisenhower administration were confronted with Arab nationalism. Ill informed of Arabs’ historical experiences, they filtered the actions of Egypt’s nationalist government through the prism of race. They relied on racialized assumptions or stereotypes to understand, interpret, and give meaning to Egyptian actions. By racialized assumption or stereotype I mean, as historian Janice Terry has defined it, a “mental package’ in which a collection of traits or characteristics are combined to delineate or identify a group or a member of that group without reference to particular individual differences or complexities.”²³ It was just such racialized assumptions that allowed policymakers in

²² Seth Jacobs, *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.

²³ Janice J. Terry, *Mistaken Identity: Arab Stereotypes in Popular Writing* (Washington DC: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1985), 8.

the Eisenhower administration to interpret Egyptian actions and it was these racially filtered perceptions that precipitated the administration's decision to oppose Nasser and Arab nationalism. Racialized assumptions made this decision seem "logical and necessary."

Works written on the American encounter with Arab nationalism during the Eisenhower years have largely ignored the importance of race. Works specifically on U.S.-Egyptian relations have failed to probe this nexus all together. Many early authors are content to merely assign blame for the breakdown in U.S.-Egyptian relations. Peter Hahn, in *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt*, for example, chooses to fault Nasser. The Egyptian leader, Hahn concludes, "obstructed the Alpha peace plan, assaulted the Baghdad Pact, stirred Arab nationalism against Western interests, and practiced positive neutralism."²⁴ In other words, Nasser obstructed reasonable American policy initiatives at every turn and precipitated the break in relations. Geoffrey Aaronson, in *From Side Show to Center Stage*, offers a similar interpretation, albeit from the opposite end of the spectrum. Aaronson maintains that "arrogant assumptions of United States cold-war imperialism" alienated the "Egyptian regime" and "the lack of U.S. economic or military aid" pushed Egypt into the Soviet fold.²⁵ The United States, in Aaronson's view, caused the break in relations.

Historians who have examined U.S.-Egyptian relations through the lens of the Suez crisis have presented a similar blame-oriented view. Both Steven Freiberger in

²⁴ Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 194-5.

²⁵ Geoffrey Aaronson, *From Sideshow to Centerstage: U.S. Policy Towards Egypt, 1946-1956* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner, 1986), 57-8.

Dawn Over Suez and Donald Neff in *Warriors at Suez* argue that administration officials chose to scapegoat Nasser for the failure of their initiatives in the region. As Freiberg concludes, as relations soured the administration “chose Nasser as a scapegoat for its failure.”²⁶

Matthew Holland takes a more novel approach in his *American and Egypt*. He argues that the structure of “the Eastern Question” precipitated the U.S.-Egyptian rift. The “nature of the Eastern Question system,” he writes, meant that “friendship between big and small nations required common interests, an important one being the idea of national sovereignty.” The cold war, however, caused “American policymakers to abandon this idea on the pretext of national security.”²⁷

Recent works have broadened their focus beyond the more traditional nation-to-nation approach and in doing so, they have presented a more nuanced interpretation. Both Ray Takeyh in *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine* and Salim Yaqub in *Containing Arab Nationalism* have moved beyond the U.S.-Egypt paradigm to explore how the administration responded to the emergence of the larger Arab nationalist movement. Both of these authors conclude that diverging interests produced an irreconcilable rift between the United States and Egypt. As Takeyh writes, “the inherent conflict between a superpower focused on curbing Soviet moves and a local regime preoccupied with regional challenges eventually caused a breakdown in US-Egyptian

²⁶ Steven Freiberg, *Dawn over Suez: The Rise of American Power in the Middle East, 1953-1957* (Chicago, IL: I.R. Dee, 1992), 213 ; Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 253 ; Diane Kunz also offers a similar interpretation. See: Diane Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 63.

²⁷ Matthew Holland, *America and Egypt: From Roosevelt to Eisenhower* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 172.

relations.”²⁸ Salim Yaqub, perhaps the leading scholar in the field, offers a similar interpretation. “The two parties,” he writes, “applied their shared values inversely, each urging compromise in precisely those areas in which the other demanded commitment.”²⁹ Conflicting interests, not race or culture, both authors conclude, precipitated the clash between the United States and Egypt. Yaqub even argues that cultural beliefs “tell us relatively little” about the “Eisenhower administration’s policies towards the Arab world.”³⁰

While works on U.S.-Egyptian relations or American relations with Arab nationalism have ignored or slighted the importance of race, several works on U.S. relations with the larger Muslim or Arab world have interrogated how racial assumptions influenced U.S. policy. Melani McAlister’s *Epic Encounters* reveals how American perceptions of Arabs influenced U.S. interactions with the nations and peoples of the region.³¹ Unfortunately, McAlister fails to analyze how cultural productions specifically shaped U.S. policy. Instead she only offers the conclusion that American cultural representations “helped make the Middle East an acceptable area for the exercise of American power.”³² Matthew Jacobs, in his article “The Perils and Promise of Islam,” investigates American perceptions of Islam during the late 1940s and 1950s. Jacobs asserts that Americans viewed Islam through a bifurcated lens. Early in the period they perceived most Muslims as “religious conservatives” who threatened to

²⁸ Takeyh, *The Origins*, ix.

²⁹ Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 271.

³⁰ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 8.

³¹ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and the U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, rev. edition. (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2005), 11-27.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.

imperil U.S. policy within the region with their anti-American Arab nationalist or communist ideologies.³³ Later, policymakers came to believe that Islam held promise. They believed that a faction of “Western-educated, upper and middle class intellectuals” within Islam adhered to “more secular principles” and would support American interests.³⁴ Jacobs, while he superbly analyzes American perceptions of Islam, does not investigate the racial implications of these perceptions.

Douglas Little broaches the subject in his superb survey of U.S.-Middle Eastern relations since 1945, *American Orientalism*. Little devotes a chapter to the topic of race. In it he dispenses such tantalizing morsels as Eisenhower was “comfortable with such orientalist stereotypes of the Middle East” because his “view of the Muslim world was colored by his wartime experiences in North Africa” and “Nasser’s seizure of the Suez Canal during the summer of 1956 reinforced Eisenhower’s belief that the Arabs were irrational, resentful, and dangerous to Western interests.”³⁵ Unfortunately, however, Little, does not explore how the Eisenhower administration’s racial beliefs affected policy, an understandable omission given his work’s larger purpose.³⁶

Michael Oren also touches on the subject in his survey *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*. As part of his “fantasy” section Oren broadly examines American racial

³³Matthew E. Jacobs, “The Perils and Promise of Islam: The United States and the Muslim Middle East in the Early Cold War” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 30, no. 4 (Sept. 2006), 714.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 717.

³⁵ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 27.

³⁶ Little does offer such tantalizingly vague conclusions as “influenced by potent racial and cultural stereotypes, some imported and some homegrown, that depicted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior, U.S. policymakers from Harry Truman through George Bush tended to dismiss Arab aspiration for self-determination as politically primitive, economically suspect, and ideologically absurd,” Little, *American Orientalism*, 11 and “American Orientalism, a tendency to underestimate the peoples of the region and to overestimate America’s ability to make a bad situation better” was a constant in U.S. Middle Eastern relations, *Ibid.*, 314. But he fails to demonstrate how this concretely affected American policy.

perceptions of Arabs. Muslims, he writes, “generally called Musselmen, were perceived by eighteenth century Americans as the ultimate Other, a colorful garbed but amorphous mass, the descendents of once venerable but long decayed civilizations, primitive, sordid, and cruel.”³⁷ Such pejorative beliefs, Oren states, continued into contemporary times, when Americans viewed Arabs as cruel, sensual, and “at once romantic and threatening.”³⁸ Once again, however, Oren does not examine how these beliefs affected U.S. policy towards the Middle East during the Eisenhower years.

A final work, Andrew Rotter’s *Comrades at Odds*, however, does. Rotter is primarily interested in exploring how Americans perceived Indians, and vice versa, during the early cold war. In doing so, however, he briefly examines American perceptions of India’s Muslim neighbor Pakistan. Rotter argues that Americans viewed Pakistani Muslims in largely positive terms. They viewed them as “fellow monotheists who rejected relativism and neutrality in favor of a single received truth and an ardent commitment to defend it.”³⁹ This belief, he argues, influenced the American decision to enter into an alliance with Pakistan. Rotter’s work offers an intriguing interpretation, and one, which unlike the previous works mentioned, demonstrates how American perceptions influenced policy. But Rotter does not investigate how these perceptions affected U.S. relations with either Nasser or Arab nationalism.

“Stand Up and Be Counted” will. It will establish that officials in the Eisenhower administration attributed Egypt’s embrace of a neutralist position in the cold

³⁷Michael Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 39.

³⁸ For information on Arabs as cruel see: Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, 154, for information on Arabs as sensual see: *Ibid.*, 156-7, and for the quotation turn to page 43.

³⁹ Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, 248.

war to Arab irrationality. It will also demonstrate that they believed Arabs' innate gullibility would ultimately allow the Soviets to outwit and subjugate them—perhaps without them knowing it had even occurred. As President Eisenhower once remarked about Nasser, he is a “puppet” of the Soviets “even though he probably doesn't think so.”⁴⁰ For these reasons the administration chose to oppose and contain Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Arab nationalist movement .

Race and the Eisenhower administration's decision to oppose Nasser and Arab nationalism, however, is only half the story. How the administration chose to combat Nasser constitutes the other half. Ultimately the administration chose to support the conservative governments in the region and promote King Saud of Saudi Arabia as a regional counterweight. This decision to wager on King Saud emanated from racialized assumptions about Arabs, but also from how administration officials viewed and understood religion.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and many other Americans in the 1950s viewed religion as good for the individual, for society, and for the world. They did not believe that the particulars of a person's beliefs mattered, as long as they believed. Americans in the 1950s, to paraphrase Secretary of Dulles, believed in belief. They believed that belief, regardless of in which religion, was necessary to confront the existential threats of the day, secular materialism at home and secular communism abroad.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, July 15, 1958, *FRUS*, vol. 12, 245.

This understanding of religion prompted the administration to promote King Saud as a regional power, as a force to contain and defeat the combined communist/Nasserist threat. The King's faith, they believed, imbued him with the strength and conviction necessary to confront and defeat these threats. Saud's position as protector of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, they also thought, empowered him with the authority and respect necessary to command other Muslims in the region to do the same. In King Saud the administration saw, to borrow a turn-of-phrase from Seth Jacobs, a Miracle Man of sorts, someone who could solve all of their problems in the region.

Most works on U.S.-relations with the Middle East during the Eisenhower years do mention the administration's plan to promote King Saud as a regional leader.⁴¹ They also note, usually in passing, that the administration believed that the King's religious status empowered him for this role. Ray Takeyh, for example, writes that the administration attempted to challenge Nasser by "building up and exploiting" King Saud's "status as the guardian of Islam's most cherished shrines."⁴²

These works, however, fail to explore, in any detail, why the administration believed this. At best, they offer one to two lines on the matter. Ray Takeyh notes in passing that the administration supported King Saud because they misread his "status" in the region.⁴³ Salim Yaqub posits that the administration's faith in Saud sprang from

⁴¹Freiberger, *Dawn Over Suez*, 205-7; Hahn, *The United States*, 238.

⁴²Takeyh, *The Origins of*, 148-9; Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, 212-213; Holland, *American and Egypt*, 133; Anthony Cave Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold: The Story of AARAMCO and the Saudi Kings* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 217.

⁴³Takeyh, *The Origins of*, 148-9; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 44, 103.

“self-deceiving,” but also from “the realization that no other conservative Arab leader could make a more plausible bid for pan-Arab leadership.”⁴⁴

The only work that devotes any significant time to analyzing this decision is Nathan Citino’s *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC*. According to Citino, “the president tapped Sa’ud to lead a pro-Western coalition in the Arab world and hoped that the king as keeper of the holy places of Islam, could transmit Western influence to other Arab and Muslim countries.”⁴⁵ Why? “Eisenhower’s Islamic strategy,” Citino concludes, “reflected Western scholarly assumptions that religious faith was the essential, defining characteristic of Muslims and that a monolithic ‘Islam’ could somehow be manipulated to shape the political future of the Middle East.”⁴⁶ The problem with Citino’s work is that it does not relate academics’ positive views of Islam to Americans’ larger understanding of religion in the 1950s. Additionally, Citino marginalizes religion’s importance. U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia, he argues, were primarily animated by a desire to obtain “multilateral free trade among developed economies.” To accomplish this goal, he writes, the administration needed to “secure access to the oil of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries.” To do so they appeased “Arab nationalism” by relying “upon private, corporate interests,” instead of formal imperial structures.⁴⁷

Other works, while they do not specifically address the role of religion in U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia, do address the importance of faith in American relations with the Islamic world. Michael Oren in *Power, Faith, and Fantasy* examines American

⁴⁴ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 103.

⁴⁵ Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Saud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87-88, 126.

⁴⁶ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 95-96.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

religious beliefs as one of his three primary motifs. He chronicles American missionary efforts in the region, describes the schools, clinics, and universities those efforts helped produce, and details the rise of Christian restorationism and the affect it had on U.S. policy towards the region. But, he does not explore how religious beliefs influenced U.S. policy towards Saudi Arabia under Eisenhower. Melani McAlister's *Epic Encounters*, investigates how American religious beliefs influenced the nation's interactions with the Middle East.⁴⁸ In the Eisenhower era she accomplishes this by deconstructing 1950s Hollywood biblical epics. She demonstrates how Americans used the Middle East and religiously loaded cultural depictions of it to construct domestic "narratives of American national identity."⁴⁹ She does not, however, analyze how these cultural productions specifically shaped U.S. policy towards the region. In his *Comrades at Odds* Andrew Rotter also explores religion in his section on Americans' perceptions of Islam. He argues that Americans viewed Pakistani Muslims in largely positive terms. These positive perceptions influenced the American decision to enter into an alliance with Pakistan. Rotter does not, however, investigate how these perceptions affected U.S.-Saudi relations.

Matthew Jacobs' article "The Perils and Promise of Islam," comes closest to doing so. As noted earlier, Jacobs asserts that Americans viewed Islam through a bifurcated lens. Early on they perceived most Muslims negatively.⁵⁰ Later, he concludes, they decided that Islam held promise.⁵¹ This conclusion, Jacobs notes,

⁴⁸ McAlister., *Epic Encounters*, 1-2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁵⁰ Jacobs, "The Perils and Promise," 714.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 717.

influenced the administration's decision to promote King Saud as a regional leader.

While Jacob correctly notes that positive American perceptions of Islam contributed to this decision, he does not relate these positive views to Americans' larger understanding of religion and its role in the 1950s.⁵²

This book will demonstrate how American understandings of race and religion guided the Eisenhower administration's encounter with Gamal Abdel Nasser and Arab Nationalism. Racialized assumptions, it demonstrates, channeled the administration's confusion and frustration with Nasser and Arab nationalism into a policy of opposition. Racialized views and administration officials' understanding of religion shaped the administration's strategy to contain Arab nationalism. They prompted the administration to promote King Saud as a regional alternative to Nasser. American cultural views, in short, led the administration to oppose "the puppet" and support the Miracle Man.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 733-734.

CHAPTER II

“SOMETHING THOROUGHLY AND UNCOMPROMISINGLY FOREIGN:”

ARABS IN AMERICAN THOUGHT

In 1890 Chicago’s Jackson Park was a “treacherous morass” of uneven, sparsely vegetated swamp land. By May 1, 1893, however, it had been transformed. Its 660 acres had been drained. Its soil removed and stored temporarily off site. And over 200 buildings built. On that day then President Grover Cleveland turned a golden key which completed an electronic circuit. In unison across the grounds fountains spewed, flags unfurled, and visitors cheered. The World’s Fair, the Columbian Exposition, had come to Chicago.⁵³

The fair’s official purpose was to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of the new world. Its true purpose, however, was to celebrate “America’s coming of age.” As historian David Burg has noted it was designed to “inform all visitors” of America’s “momentous achievements.” Buildings dedicated to the arts, agriculture, horticulture, livestock, fish/fisheries, mining, machinery, transportation, manufacturing, electricity, liberal arts, ethnology, and architecture displayed America’s burgeoning greatness. The manufacturing building, which could comfortably house the U.S. Capital, the great pyramid of Giza, Winchester Cathedral, Madison Square Garden, and St. Paul’s Cathedral, with room to spare, presented the latest in American manufacturing prowess. The agricultural building exhibited every fruit and vegetable

⁵³ Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World’s Fair of 1893* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 11, 27.

known to man. And the World's Congress Auxiliaries hosted conferences on every important issue of the day, including, women's progress, temperance, art, religion, and many others. All of this was unified and elevated by the fair's august design. The buildings were uniformly white, pure, crafted in the classical or renaissance style, interspersed with flowing canals, waterways, and over 2,000 works of sculpture supervised by world renowned sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.⁵⁴

Over 28 million Americans visited the fair during its six months of operation. While many strolled the grounds taking in the hauteur grandeur of the "White City," most were drawn to and spent the majority of their time on a more modest strip of land one mile long and 500 feet wide: the Midway Plaisance.

The midway had been a last minute addition to the fair, added to attract the masses and assure financial solvency. There visitors experienced something very different from the pristine planned perfection of the White City. They attended the Hagenbeck animal show, where on any given day visitors observed lions driving chariots, camels on roller skates, and a man boxing a kangaroo (although, they would want to attend this last spectacle early, for as one visitor noted, the match often "ended abruptly when the animal kicked his opponent out of the ring.") They also rode the world's first Ferris wheel, a hot air balloon, and an ice rail road. Or they experienced the midway's main attraction, what one literary critic called the "sliding scale of humanity."⁵⁵

⁵⁴David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), *xiii*.

⁵⁵Quotation about the kangaroo from Robert Muccigrosso, *Celebrating the New World: Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (New York: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1993), 160. "Sliding scale of

As crowds teemed into the midway they passed reproductions of an Irish village, a Javanese village, a German village, an Austrian village, a Cairo Street scene, a Algerian village, a Lapland village, and a Dahomay village. As some noted at the time, and more have since, these displays seemed purposefully arranged. The most “white” or “civilized” cultures, such as the Irish and German villages, were located at the entrance, while the least “civilized” or “white” cultures, such as those from Africa and the Middle East, were located at the end of the midway.

Several of these rear exhibits portrayed Arab or Muslim cultures. One, the Cairo Street scene, was the most popular exhibition at the fair. There visitors experienced a bazaar “swarming” with polyglot peoples, camels, “boys begging and pulling at the clothing of visitors,” a “barbarous” wedding procession that “lacked intelligence and civilization,” and performers engaged in sword or candle dances.⁵⁶

Visitors who ventured beyond the Cairo Street scene took in similar representations of Arabs or Muslims. They beheld Bedouin tribesmen performing a “Wild East” show, where performers mesmerized visitors with adept knife and lance handling and where Arab men continuously “smoked, preferring to do that rather than anything else.” They took in the Algerian Village with its Moorish palace, complete with a horror chamber, snake charmers, and performers who ingested hot coals, live scorpions, and who inserted ice picks through their eyes. Many saw Fatima the “queen of beauty,” who relaxed in a “room in the Sultan’s harem,” while “on either side,

humanity” quoted in Zeynep Celik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-century World’s Fairs* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 83.

⁵⁶ C.M. Stevens, *The Adventures of Uncle Jeremiah and Family at the Great Fair: Their Observations and Triumphs* (Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1893), 195 ; Mrs. Mark Stevens, *Six Months at the World’s Fair* (Detroit, MI: Detroit Free Press Printing Company, 1895), 102.

reclining on an Ottoman, were her waiting maids, and at her feet” lay “her special servant.”⁵⁷

Then there was Little Egypt, a dancing girl, who one academic has called the first “pre-Hollywood American sex symbol.” Men and women, both, flocked to see her, with good reason; for as one visitor described it, she began to dance as the orchestra accelerated its “measure” she swayed her “lithesome body in a curious rhythmical fashion. Suddenly” she seemed to “tremble” the “hips and waist of the dancer” appeared to “undulate” and quivered in “what might be called an ecstasy of delirious delight.” Such a display shocked, but and also titillated, America’s Victorian sensibilities. One fair visitor reported that her male companions were left “deaf and dumb,” while it was rumored that Little Egypt’s performance scandalized literary legend Mark Twain into a coronary.⁵⁸

Throughout much of America’s history most Americans’ knowledge of and contact with Arabs came from experiences similar to those at the Chicago World’s Fair.⁵⁹ They learned about Arabs through culture, not through experience or interaction. The reason for this is simple; Arabs were few in number in America. Moreover, most immigrants who did migrate to and settle on American shores during this period did not meet American expectations of what an Arab was. An overwhelming majority, one

⁵⁷ Bolotin and Laing, *The World’s Columbian Exposition* 139 ; Stevens, *Six Months*, 134 ; Stevens, *The Adventures*, 140.

⁵⁸ Carlton, *Little Egypt*, xi, 29 ; Stevens, *The Adventures* , 117; For information on the veracity of the story see: Carlton, *Little Egypt* , 77, 93.

⁵⁹ It is important to note that many of the peoples Americans lumped together as Arabs were not Arab at all. Americans often placed Arabs, Persians, Turks, and other ethnic groups together into one singular category of peoples who they referred to as Arabs, Turks, or Mohemmedans. For simplicity’s sake I have elected to use the term Arab, even though many of the peoples described as Arabs are not. What is important is that most Americans during the time considered them to be Arabs or part of the same group.

scholar estimates nearly 90% of early immigrants from Arab lands, were Christian, not Muslim, and as such they often did not register with Americans as being Arab at all. It was not until 1948 that a significant number of Muslim Arabs immigrated to the United States and even then only in relatively small numbers compared to other immigrant groups.⁶⁰ In the absence of direct information about Arabs, Americans relied on cultural sources.

Cultural contacts with Arabs began from the beginning, or actually before the beginning. Before Americans ever became American, settlers to the colonies drew on a long history of Western interactions with Arab peoples, many knew of Arabs or Muslims from the crusades, Muslim military penetration into Europe, the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and Biblical depictions of Arabs. Evangelical Protestants carried with them a long tradition of incorporating Muslim Arabs into their eschatology (end times prophesy).⁶¹ And the colonies' educated elite drew on a rich intellectual tradition of associating Arabs with despotism. Denis Diderot's legendary encyclopedia, for example, described Turks as "a herd of animals joined only by habit, prodded by the law of the stick, and led by an absolute master according to his whim."⁶² While one of Thomas Jefferson's early drafts of the Declaration of Independence referred to slavery as the "opprobrium of INFIDEL [Muslim] powers."⁶³

⁶⁰ Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988). For information on the first wave and its makeup see: *Ibid.*, 46, 94. And for information on the second wave see *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶¹ See: Thomas Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terror* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁶² Quoted in Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22.

⁶³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 20.

Cultural contacts continued after independence. Early Americans learned about Arab peoples through a deluge of “captivity narratives,” which detailed Americans’ enslavement by the Barbary pirates, and also through novels, and biographies. Later Americans drew on travelogues written by American travelers to the region, newspaper articles, *National Geographic* articles, and movies.

These cultural contacts established how most Americans, including Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, learned about and formed beliefs about Arabs. This chapter lays the groundwork for this argument by exploring American cultural representations of Arabs. It focuses primarily on the period from 1890 until 1960—the years key Eisenhower administration policymakers were exposed to and imbibed in cultural representations of Arabs. Dwight Eisenhower was born in 1890, John Foster Dulles was born in 1889 and died in 1959. But it will also incorporate depictions from earlier periods which were decisive in shaping how Arabs were portrayed in the 1890-1960 period.

The portrait most Americans gleaned from cultural representations of Arabs during these years was perhaps best expressed by a then little known reporter in 1886. This young ambitious reporter had learned that a group of prominent Brooklynites were planning on embarking upon a whirlwind trip abroad. Smelling a story, the reporter decided to accompany them. The group spent weeks at sea, on the Canary Islands, and in Europe, yet, they failed to find what they were seeking. “Everywhere we have” gone, the reporter mourns, we have “found foreign-looking things and foreign-looking people, but always with things and people intermixed that we were familiar with before.” When

the group stepped ashore in Tangiers, however, they finally found what they were looking for; “something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign—foreign from top to bottom—foreign from center to circumference—foreign inside and outside and all around—nothing anywhere about it to dilute its foreignness.”⁶⁴ The writer was Samuel Clemens, better known by his *nom de plume*, Mark Twain.

Early American cultural productions and those since have represented Arabs, as Twain writes, as completely foreign. They were the ultimate, to use Edward Said’s famed term, “other”—an oppositional people who held the traits that Americans believed were in direct opposition to the ones they believed they possessed.

Americans like many Europeans during this period viewed themselves and their country as “civilized.” As such, they believed, they possessed certain traits: sexual restraint, a peaceful nature, the ability to think rationally, a robust work ethic, a propensity to treat women “fairly,” morality, and religious moderation. These were traits that had long been associated with civilization in the western tradition. To this mix they added one uniquely American trait: a democratic spirit.

For Americans to be these things, however, there had to be someone who was the opposite. Words have meaning only if there is something to contrast them with. The word civilized, for example, has no meaning if there is nothing uncivilized to contrast it to. The same applies to the composing traits Americans associated with civilization. For Americans to be sexually restrained there had to be someone who was sexually lascivious. For them to be rational there had to be someone who was irrational.

⁶⁴ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Signet Classics, 1966), 61.

American cultural works gave these self labels meaning by projecting the oppositional traits onto Arabs. They made Arabs an opposing “other”—an other, as Edward Said defines it, is a “contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” Americans became sexually restrained, peaceful, hard working, educated, rational, democratic, moral, and, therefore, civilized by making Arabs sensual, warlike, irrational, indolent, repressive to women, immoral, religious fanatics, despotic, and, “uncivilized.”

The argument in this chapter is deeply indebted to the one first advanced by Edward Said, but in several ways it proceeds further than Said. According to Said, the West created a category of people (Orientals) and a geographic space (the Orient) through a “style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinction” between “the Orient” and “the Occident.” Doing so “helped to define Europe as its [the Orient’s] contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” Such self definition, Said argues, created “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁶⁵

Said, however, believes that Orientalism as he defines it only truly applies to Europe, not to America. He argues that there was no “refining and rearticulation process” in the United States, that no orientalist academic tradition existed to create, define, and maintain the construction of “Orient” and “Orientals.” As a result of this no “imaginative investment” was ever made in the United States perhaps, Said theorizes, “because the American frontier, the one that counted, was an eastward one” and as a

⁶⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 1-3.

result the Orient became only an “administrative” issue, and even then only after “World War II.”⁶⁶

Much of Said’s European analysis, however, applies equally well to the United States during this period. America may not have possessed an academic establishment to produce the “imaginative investment” necessary to construct Orientalism. It did, however, possess a diverse cultural sphere which filled this role. American cultural productions independently, yet, collaboratively constructed the Arab as the ultimate other in order to construct the United States’ exceptionalist national identity.

This process was firmly established by America’s initial contacts with Arabs and remained relatively constant throughout the 1890-1960 period. As later chapters in this book will reveal this orientalist process, contrary to Said’s argument, did serve as an American “style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” Americans used this Orientalist understanding of Arabs to exert hegemony over them. In order to establish this, however, we must first explore how Americans perceived Arabs.

First and foremost Americans viewed Arabs as sexually unrestrained. Early recordings of encounters with Arabs often established this by focusing on Arab women’s intoxicating beauty. For instance in William Prime’s travelogue of his journey through the “holy land” (as most early Americans referred to the lands of the Middle East) the author frequently falls transfixed by Arab beauty. Typical is this description of an Arab family he encounters. The mother, he writes, is “of splendid beauty.” He had “never,”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

he waxes, seen a “woman half as beautiful” and “her daughters were like their mother,” painfully beautiful.⁶⁷ Later in his account Prime comments on another Arab girl’s “Madonna-like beauty.”⁶⁸

American encounters with Arab women in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries continue this captivation with Arab beauty. The association is particularly prevalent in *National Geographic* articles. The author of a 1914 article lustily records an Arab woman’s appearance. Her “nails, lips, and eyelashes,” are all dyed, he notes, “her limbs, tattooed, rings in her nose, and anklets jingling.”⁶⁹ Another author in the 1920s falls similarly enthralled. When he encounters a group of young Arab girls he exclaims “what eyes! Lustrous, long-lashed, unlike the eyes of any other woman anywhere.”⁷⁰ The photographs and captions which accompany these *National Geographic* articles are also highly revealing. The articles often include photographs of Arab dancing girls, who often appear scantily clad, provocatively posed, and alluring beautiful (see Figure 1).

⁶⁷ William Prime, *Tent Life in the Holy Land* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1874), 35-36.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁶⁹ Frederick and Margaret Simpich, “Where Adam and Eve Lived,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December, 1914, 573.

⁷⁰ Frederick Simpich, “Along the Nile, Through Egypt and Sudan,” *National Geographic Magazine*, October 1922, 393.



Figure 1: An Egyptian “Belly Dancer”
(From a photograph in Grant Parr and
G.E. Janssen, “War Meets Peace in Egypt,”
National Geographic Magazine
(April 1942), 511)

The captions, meanwhile, are also illuminating. A caption to a 1955 photograph of a veiled woman reads “with eyes like this” a “veil need not be a disadvantage.”⁷¹

Associating Arab women with intense beauty and sensuality was particularly prevalent in motion pictures. Take for instance Cecil B. Demille’s *Cleopatra*. From the very opening of the 1934 epic the title character’s beauty and sensuality are emphasized. In the opening frame Cleopatra (played by Claudette Colbert) is displayed in a sheer top—which makes her appear topless—arms up-stretched, supporting two steaming camphors. Throughout the film Colbert is constantly coiffed, heavily accentuated with eye makeup, and incased in shockingly revealing ensembles. When her character first encounters Julius Caesar, for instance, she sports a flowing skirt with slits sweeping up both legs nearly to her midsection, while her upper torso is barely covered by two straps (see Figure 2).

⁷¹ Jean and Franc Shor, “From Sea to Sahara in French Morocco,” *National Geographic Magazine*, February 1955, 161.



Figure 2: Claudette
Colbert as Cleopatra
(From Cecil B. Demille's
1934 film *Cleopatra*)

Later in the film Colbert appears, abdomen exposed, top clothed in what can perhaps best be described as a shimmering gold bikini top.⁷²

Similar images surface in 1940's *The Thief of Baghdad*. In the film, June Duprez's character, simply referred to as "the Princess," appears throughout the film in clothing which accentuates her sexuality. When the viewer first encounters her she is wearing a bodice that encapsulates her waist, while a slit, loose fitting, blouse descends

⁷² *Cleopatra*, dir. Cecile B. Demille, 100 min., Paramount Pictures, 1934, dvd.

from her shoulders. The slit in the blouse widens as it descends from the neckline, leaving an exposed triangle of flesh in the center of her torso, which exposes her midsection and the sides of her breasts.⁷³

In American depictions Arab women's beauty is often linked to sexual promiscuity. Robert Hichens' bestselling 1907 novel *The Garden of Allah* explicitly makes the connection. Midway through the novel the reader accompanies the story's two main characters as they stroll down an alleyway as the night cools the lingering heat of day in the North African oasis town of Ben Mori. The characters have just left a night club and are lost in conversation when, slowly, they realize, they are being watched. A large number of Arab women peer at them from the houses which abut the alleyway. As Hitchen describes them they are "thickly painted, covered with barbarous jewels and magnificent dresses," with "hands, tinted with henna, folded in" their lap, "eyes watching under eyebrows heavily darkened, and prolonged" their "naked, brown ankles decorated with large anklets of gold and silver."⁷⁴ After passing several more of these women it gradually dawns on the characters, and the reader, that they are prostitutes.

Other works, while not directly linking Arab beauty to prostitution, convey the idea that Arab women use their beauty and sexuality to entice men. Mark Twain during his travels to the holy land writes of Arab women "exposing their breasts to the public."⁷⁵ While an article in the *New York Times* cautions that Arabs use "love potions"

⁷³ *The Thief of Baghdad*, dirs. Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, and Tim Whelan, 106 min., United Artists' Corporation, 1940, dvd. See also *Land of the Pharaoh's*, dir. Howard Hawke, 144 min., Warner Brothers, 1955, dvd, particularly early in the film when the Princess of Cyprus enters to pay tribute.

⁷⁴ Robert Hichens, *The Garden of Allah* (New York: F.A. Stokes, 1907), 127.

⁷⁵ Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 320.

to ensnare their lovers.⁷⁶ From these representations the message is clear, Arab women, use their unrestrained sexuality as a weapon, to entrap others and to bring them down to their base carnal level. To many westerners it seemed in particular that Arab women were interested in enticing Westerners with their carnality. Travelogue writer William Prime warns that “veiled ladies” often throw “up their veils when they met the Franks,” a generic term for westerners, “and let the full luster of their fair faces, and large, black eyes, flash with bewildering splendor on him.”⁷⁷

Arabs, Americans believed, were not only highly sexual, but also terminally violent. Early recordings emphasize this point. James Riley, for example, in his vastly popular 1817 captivity narrative writes that “every person,” he met while in captivity, “had a long knife or a scimitar always slung by his side.”⁷⁸ Writer Washington Irving, best known for his stories about American folk legend Ichabod Crane, declares in his biography of Mohammed that the “Arab of the desert” is “from his infancy” familiar with the “exercise of arms” and warns of their “predatory propensities.”⁷⁹

Associating Arabs with violence remained a constant theme in the 1890-1960 period. Take for instance the lyrics to the popular 1920s era folk song “The Desert Song:”

Ho! So we sing as we are riding!

Ho! It's the time you'd best be hiding!

⁷⁶ “Arabian’s Romance Approved Officially,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1938. See also: Frederick Simpich, “The Rise of the New Arab Nation,” *National Geographic Magazine*, November, 1919, 388.

⁷⁷ Prime, *Tent Life*, 436.

⁷⁸ James Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Month of August, 1815* (New York: T.W. and Mercein, 1817), 112.

⁷⁹ Washington Irving, *Life of Mahomet* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1911), 8-9, 105. See also: William Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886), 236.

Ho! It means the Riffs [North Africans] are abroad!

Go! Before you're bitten by the sword!⁸⁰

Many *National Geographic* articles from the period articulate the same point. When the author of a 1920s article visits a local mosque he reflects that “through the centuries bearded Moslems with the blood of the Unbelievers red on their hands have gathered here.”⁸¹ In another article from 1940 the author cautions that the “warlike temperament of the Arabs is proverbial.”⁸²

Photographs often expressed the same idea in visual form. Two pictures from 1956 are particularly revealing. The first depicts Omani Bedouin armed with rifles, tossing them into the air. (See Figure 3)

⁸⁰ Quoted in: Lawrence Michalek, "Cruel and Unusual: Negative Images of Arabs in American Popular Culture." *American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Issue Paper*, no. 15, 4.

⁸¹ Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Casserly, "The White City of Algiers," *National Geographic Magazine*, February 1928, 229.

⁸² Maynard Owen Williams, "American Alma Maters in the Near East," *National Geographic Magazine*, August 1948, 464. See also: Frederick Simpich and W. Robert Moore, "Bombs over Bible Lands," *National Geographic Magazine*, August 1941, 141.



Figure 3: Omani Bedouins (From Ronald Codrai, “Desert Sheikdoms of Arabia’s Pirate Coast,” *National Geographic Magazine* (July 1956), 66-67)

The other, from the same article, shows an Omani child, obviously posed, with dagger menacingly in hand. (See Figure 4).”⁸³

⁸³ See also “Desert Sheikdoms of Arabia’s Pirate Coast,” *National Geographic Magazine*, July, 1956, 67 ; Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 67 ; “warlike Arab” in Stephens, *Adventures of*, 117-18 , Charles Rabat, “Recent French Explorations in Africa,” *National Geographic Magazine* III, May 1897 , 131 ; “Asia Minor,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1918 ; “Many Foes Sought Essad Pasha’s Life,” *The New*



Figure 4: An Omani Youth (From
 Ronald Codrai, “Desert Sheikdoms of
 Arabia’s Pirate Coast,” *National
 Geographic Magazine* (July 1956), 67)

Fanatically violent Arabs also appear in the 1951 Humphrey Bogart film

Sirocco. The film unfurls against the backdrop of the Syrian battle for independence in

York Times, June 17, 1920 ; “Iraq in the War,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1943 ; William E. Curtis, “The Great Turk and his Last Provinces,” *National Geographic Magazine* February 1903 , 47; Thomas Lindsly Blaznez, “A Journey in Morocco: the Land of the Moors,” *National Geographic Magazine*, August 1911 ; 759 ; “Peace May be in Moslem Hands,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1952 ; and Albion Ross, “The Vast and Restless Arab World,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1951.

the 1920s. In an early scene General LaSalle, who leads the French efforts against the resistance in Syria, delivers several revealing lines. The first occurs as he struggles with how to respond to an Arab ambush which has killed several of his men. He quickly decides to execute five Arab hostages for every French soldier killed. “This is a language,” he growls, “they should understand.” Later in the same scene the general declares in assured exasperation that “you can’t talk to these people,” they are “fanatics, they want war.”⁸⁴

Why were Arabs so, seemingly, violent? Americans often attributed Arabs’ warlike propensity to their religion. As Royall Tyler writes in his exceedingly popular 1797 captivity narrative Islam is “promulgated by the sword.”⁸⁵ Tyler’s sentiment was shared by many other Americans, who saw Islam as a challenger to Christianity. George Bush wrote in his 1850 biography of Mohammad that he used “fire and sword to propagate” Islam “among mankind” and that “the terrific announcement attending the Moslem arms” has been, ‘the Koran, death, or tribute!’⁸⁶ While a *National Geographic* article from 1912 pronounces that the “spread of Islam was largely due to the sword.”⁸⁷

Early recordings of American encounters with Arabs gave the impression that they were not only violent, but, that they reveled in their violence, that they took pleasure from it, that they were, in a word, cruel. Royall Tyler, for instance, recounts

⁸⁴ *Sirocco*, dir., Curtis Bernhardt, 98 min., Columbia Pictures, 1951, dvd.

⁸⁵ Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive: or, The life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, Six Years a Prisoner Among the Algerines* (Gainesville, FL.: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), 139.

⁸⁶ George Bush, *The Life of Mohammed; Founder of the Religion of Islam, and of the Empire Saracens* (New York: J & J Harper, 1831), 55, 112.

⁸⁷ Edward Pears, “Grass Never Grows Where the Turkish Hoof has Trod,” *National Geographic Magazine*, November 1912, 1145. See also: Frederich Simpich, “The Rise of the New Arab Nation,” *National Geographic Magazine*, November 1919, 378.

how his slave master “struck” him “with his whip,” knocked him to the ground “senseless,” and awakened him from his “stupor by the severe lashes of his whip.”⁸⁸

Another American captive relates that when he asked for water during the course of his long slave march across the Sahara he was rebuffed and “forced to remain in the scorching sun for the remainder of” the “long day.”⁸⁹

These vivid early descriptions forged a connection between Arabs and cruelty which persisted. Proof of this can be seen in the 1924 Douglass Fairbanks silent spectacle *The Thief of Baghdad*. In the film the title character, played by Fairbanks, impersonates a prince. When his duplicity is uncovered by the Sultan he proceeds to devise “torments” for Fairbanks. He first has Fairbanks flogged and then, deciding that this is not cruel enough, orders him to be “flung to the ape” to be eviscerated.⁹⁰

The trope of the cruel Arab also appears in *Sirocco* and the 1936 film version of *The Garden of Allah*. Near the end of the first film Colonel Faroud meets with the leader of the Arab resistance. Faroud wishes to seek compromise with the resistance leader, but is sadly disappointed. Not only does the resistance leader refuse to compromise, he decides to kill and torture the colonel. “My soldiers,” he delights in imparting to the colonel, “haven’t had much pleasure lately.” They will “give you the attention you deserve.” In *The Garden of Allah* Batouch, the main character’s Arab guide, delights in inflicting pain and humiliation upon his cousin and rival Hadj. In one scene Batouch escorts his client and cousin to a club where he knows a dancer, Elena,

⁸⁸ Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 125-6.

⁸⁹ Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 56. See also: *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁰ *The Thief of Baghdad*, dir. Raoul Walsh, 155 minutes. United Artists, 1924, dvd.

will be performing. Elena, we are informed, “wants to kill” Hadj. As they enter Hadj is noticeable nervous, but Batouch assures him that Elena will not be dancing that night. Soon thereafter Elena appears, slithering dangerously, brandishing daggers. A petrified Hadj hurriedly covers himself with his hood. As her dance proceeds and she moves in the group’s direction Batouch, with a wicked smile, first gestures at Hadj, and then, delights in unveiling Hadj’s face to Elena, who, daggers in hand, pounces.⁹¹

Additionally, Americans believed, Arabs were incapable of rational thought. America’s earliest cultural productions of Arabs, such as *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania*, one of many spy narratives which sprouted in the shadow of America’s imbroglio with the Barbary pirates, conveys this belief. *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* masquerades as a work of non-fiction. It supposedly contains letters written from an Algerian spy back to his superiors. Most modern scholars, however, believe that the book is actually a work of fiction written by an American. As such it is highly revealing, particularly as to how it deals with Arabs, education, and rational thought. The supposed Arab author chastises “what benefits can be derived from societies” like America, where “a young man is fettered by logical rules” and “where the mind is, too often disgusted by unsuitable studies.” Such an emphasis on education and rational thought concludes the author produces nothing but “much mis-spent application

⁹¹ *The Garden of Allah*, dir. Richard Boleslawski, 79 min., United Artists, 1936, dvd. See also: *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1940 especially the scene where Jafar sentences the Prince to a “death of a thousand cuts” ; *The Ten Commandments*, dir., Cecille B. Demille. 220 min., Paramount Pictures, 1956, dvd. Particularly the scene early in the film where Pharaoh decides to murder all first born Jewish children and a later scene in which Egyptian overseers whip an exhausted Jewish slave as he lies on the ground.

and an irreparable loss of time.”⁹² This time and energy, the American author insinuates, would not be so squandered if the populace, like Arab populations, was not educated in the useless intricacies of rational thought. Another early work, Royall Tyler’s captivity narrative, also emphasizes Arabs’ irrationality. In it Tyler derisively writes, “if the alcoran had declared that the earth was an imminent plain and stood still, while the sun performed its revolutions around it, a whole host of Galileos, with a Newton at their head, could not have shaken their opinion.”⁹³

The Arab as an uneducated irrational thinker remained a prevalent trope long after U.S. Marines stormed the shores of Tripoli and dispatched of the Barbary pirates. In a *National Geographic* article from 1910 the author highlights the inadequacies of an Arab education. The “education” the Arabs receive, she writes, is “from a *mullah*” who “teaches him to read and write, and to recite the Koran in Arabic.” The author attaches little importance to this type of education, concluding that such a technique leaves the student little better off than a parrot. The student simply recites the passages from the “Mohammedan bible” they have been taught to memorize “probably without understanding a word of” it.⁹⁴ Works later in the century continued to make this connection. The famed Lawrence of Arabia, T.E. Lawrence, wrote despairingly of Arabs’ mental abilities in his bestselling memoir of his time in Arabia during WWI. According to Lawrence, Arabs are a “dogmatic people” who “do not understand our [the

⁹² Peter Markoe, *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania: or, Letters Written by a Native of Algiers on the Affairs of the United States of America, from the Close of the Year 1783 to the Meeting of the Convention* (Philadelphia, PA: Prichard and Hall, 1776) , 79. Note I have modified the text using current spelling conventions in the interest of readability.

⁹³ Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 155. See also Thomas Cook, Ltd., *Cook’s Tourist Handbook for Palestine and Syria* (London: Thomas Cook and Son, 1891), 42 and Thompson, *Land and the Book*, vol. 2, 379.

⁹⁴ Syke, “A Talk about Persian Women,” *National Geographic Magazine* XXI, September 1910, 853.

West's] metaphysical difficulties, our introspective questioning," and whose thoughts are, instead, "at ease only in the extremes." Arabs he admonishes, irrationally pursue "the logic of several incompatible opinions to absurd ends, without perceiving the incongruity." Arabs are, Lawrence pronounces, "limited narrow minded people, whose inert intellect lay fallow in incurious resignation."⁹⁵ Arabs were, to summarize Lawrence's pronouncements, mentally inferior irrational thinkers.

Instead of rational thought derived from education, Arabs, Americans believed, relied on irrational thought, particularly on superstition. Once again America's earliest literary contacts with Arabs established this belief. James Riley informs the reader in his captivity narrative that Arabs believe in "evil eyes."⁹⁶ A revealing anecdote from travelogue writer William Thompson conveys the same idea. At one point during his nearly decade long trek through the deserts of the holy land Thompson stops and refreshes himself at the Fountain of the Virgin Mary. Soon thereafter he observes that the fountain has an "irregular" flow. Thompson and his companions decide to remove some of the rocks from the fountain and ascertain the cause of this irregularity, something which the "natives," he scorns, show no interest in, because they believe that the "agency of the jan, or demons, who are believe to occupy all such place" account for this irregular water flow.⁹⁷ Washington Irving also comments on Arabs superstitious ways in his biography of Mohammed. "The vast solitudes of the desert" in which Arabs

⁹⁵ T.E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, a Triumph* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1935), 2,4. See also: *Salome*, dir. Charles Bryant, 72 min., Nazimova Productions, 1923, dvd, particularly how the head guard and the King act near the end of the film.

⁹⁶ Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 112.

⁹⁷ Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 1, 459.

“pass so much of their lives,” he writes, engender “superstitious fancies” such as believing in “good and bad geniis” and “tales of enchantment.”⁹⁸

Visitors to the Arab world in the 19th and 20th centuries continued to emphasize their alleged irrational superstition. This can be seen in one particularly revealing anecdote from a *National Geographic* article written in 1935. During the course of the author’s travels a tragedy occurs. A man accidentally drowns. This, however, the author writes, does not come as a surprise to the Arabs. For, several days earlier it had rained, filling the Arabs’ water tanks. And, as the author informs us, “the Arabs” superstitiously “believe that each time the tanks become full there must be three deaths by drowning.”⁹⁹ Another article about Persia written in 1910 hammers the same point home. “Soothsayers and dervishes,” the author writes, “are consulted on every occasion.”¹⁰⁰

As a result of these and other descriptions the superstitious Arab became a stock character in American cultural thought. In the 1904 novel *The Garden of Allah*, and the later film adaptation of it, the reader/viewer encounter a “sand diviner” who reads several characters’ futures in the shifting desert sands. A sand diviner also appears in *The Thief of Baghdad*, where he foretells that the princess will marry the man who first

⁹⁸ Irving, *Life of*, 24-25. See also: Thompson., *The Land and the Book*, vol. 2, 369, 171 ; and Markoe, *The Algerine Spy*, 93.

⁹⁹ HGC Swayne, “The Rock of Aden,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1935,111. See also: Major Edward Keith-Roach, “The Pageant of Jerusalem,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1927, 97.

¹⁰⁰Ella C. Syke, “A Talk about Persia and its Women,” *National Geographic Magazine*, September 1910, 866. See also: Harold F. Weston, “Persian Caravan Sketches,” *National Geographic Magazine*, April 1921 , 453 ; Frederich Simpich, “Change Comes to Bible Lands,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1938 , 725 (photo caption) ; William Price, “By Felucia Down the Nile,” *National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1940, 472 (caption) ; Harry Hoogstraal, “Yemen Opens the Door to Progress,” *National Geographic Magazine*, February 1952, 230-231 ; and Hermann F. Eilits, “Waking the Incense Roads of Aden,” *National Geographic Magazine* CX, July 1956, 242 , 245.

touches the rose bush in the palace court yard.¹⁰¹ And in 1958's *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* the audience is introduced to Sulkura the magician—who turns royal attendants into four armed blue serpents, conjures skeletons to life, and shrinks the Princess—along with a genii and a Cyclops.¹⁰²

Because of their irrationality Arabs were, Americans believed, gullible or easily deceived. Americans believed that since Arabs were willing to believe almost anything, such as in superstition, they could be deceived and exploited by anyone who thought rationally. Early recordings press this point home. Washington Irving's biography of Mohammed proclaims that Arabs are "easily aroused by the appeals of eloquence, and charmed by the graces of poetry."¹⁰³ In James Riley's captivity narrative he and his fellow shipmates dupe gullible Arabs they encounter shortly after their ship runs aground. After Riley swims ashore Arabs take him captive and hold him for ransom. Riley's crew pays the initial ransom. Soon, however, another of Riley's crewmates comes ashore and is promptly taken hostage. Unwilling to pay another ransom Riley hastily develops a ruse. He informs his captors that he and his shipmates have buried a treasure a ways down the shore. When his captors turn their attention to this spot, Riley makes his escape, running, then diving, into the breaking waves, swimming to the safety of his ship (and also parenthetically, leaving his shipmate behind to be killed).¹⁰⁴

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century cultural productions continued to emphasize Arabs "dupability." For instance, several times in 1924's *The Thief of Baghdad*

¹⁰¹ Hichens, *The Garden of Allah*, 215 ; *The Garden of Allah*, 1936 ; *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924. Also see the 1940 remake of *The Thief of Baghdad*.

¹⁰² *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, dir., Nathan Juran, 88 min., Columbia Pictures, 1958, dvd.

¹⁰³ Irving, *Life of*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 32.

Baghdad the noticeably Anglo appearing Fairbanks easily tricks or deceives Arab characters. Near the beginning of the film, for instance, he easily evades Arab pursuers by concealing himself in one of several conveniently placed and comically oversized vases. Later he gains entrance to the royal court and impersonates visiting royalty simply by wearing clothing he stole from the local bazaar. And near the end of the film, the visiting Prince of the Mongols overruns and conquers the defensive walls of Baghdad by hiding his soldiers throughout the city. The oblivious locals react in astonishment as night falls and an entire invading army emerges from plants and vases.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in the 1938 adventure film *Beau Geste*, the protagonists quench their thirst and avoid death's embrace by tricking a group of forty to fifty Arabs who occupy a life saving oasis they happen to stumble upon. One of the main characters, Digby, informs the group that he will separate from them and blow his bugle from several dunes over. His companions, meanwhile, are to fire their rifles from their original location. This, the character boasts, will cause the hapless Arabs to believe that the entire French Foreign Legion is attacking them. Predictably, the facile ruse works. The Arabs flee in a panic as soon as the shots and bugle call ring out.¹⁰⁶

Arabs, Americans believed, were not only irrational and gullible but indolent. Early works such as William Prime's travelogue convey this belief. Prime writes of "baths in which the lazy Turks dreamed away the long days"¹⁰⁷ Another early American visitor to the Arab world notes that Arab "men lounge about, smoke, sip

¹⁰⁵ *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924.

¹⁰⁶ *Beau Geste*, dir. William A. Wellman, 112 min., Paramount Pictures, 1939, dvd. See also: John Von Ers, "Forty Years Among the Arabs," *National Geographic Magazine*, September 1952, 125 and Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 549.

¹⁰⁷ Prime, *Tent Life*, 436.

coffee, play” and that they “will not work unless directed by an overseer, who is himself a perfect specimen of laziness. He does nothing but smoke his pipe.”¹⁰⁸

Like other associations made by early American encounters, this one too lived in American thought long after these particular American travelers left the arid deserts of the Arabian peninsula. A *National Geographic* written in 1909 describes “coffee-houses, wherein sit the turbaned Turk cross-legged, listlessly smoking a nagileh or sipping coffee in *Oriental indolence*.”¹⁰⁹ A *New York Times* article from 1920 informs its readers that “the French” in North Africa have accomplished an exceedingly difficult task in “making an Arab give up his vagabond ways and go to work for a living.”¹¹⁰ While another article in the same paper nearly twenty years later speaks of “indolent Arabs.”¹¹¹

Arabs, Americans believed, also unjustly treated their women. Early writers like William Thompson established this connection. Thompson writes that Arab men “tyrannize” their women, who are, in fact, their “slaves.”¹¹² James Riley echoes this view in his captivity narrative. Arab men, he informs the reader, are “lords and masters of their families.” They are “severe and cruel to their wives, whom they treat as mere necessary slaves.”¹¹³ Mark Twain conveys a similar message in his travelogue. In the Arab world, Twain laments, “there are no valentines, no stolen interviews, no riding out,

¹⁰⁸ Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, 80, 284 ; See also: Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 281.

¹⁰⁹ Ernest L. Harris, “Some Ruined Cities of Asia Minor,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1908, 13. (emphasis added)

¹¹⁰ Charles Divine, “After-the-War Scenes in Algerian Market Town,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1920.

¹¹¹ Anne O’Hare McCormick, “Europe: is the Arab World Starting to March in Palestine?” *New York Times*, July 9, 1938. See also: Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 56, 190 and Archibald Forder, “Arabia, the Desert of the Sea,” *National Geographic Magazine*, February 1909, 1045.

¹¹² Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 2, 364.

¹¹³ Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 186.

no courting in dim parlors, no lovers' quarrels and reconciliations" for Arab women. Instead, "the young man takes the girl his father selects for him, marries her" and "if after due acquaintance she suits him, he retains her; if he suspects her purity, he bundles her back to her father," like a chattel slave.¹¹⁴

The belief that Arab men repress their women continued to be a common one in the years between 1890 and 1960. An article written in 1893 underscores this point. The article tells the story of an Arab performer who falls in love with an American typist at the Chicago World's Fair. The Arab in question proceeds, with the help of several friends, to abduct his adored. Such an occurrence, the paper informs its readers, should come as no surprise, for, "in the land these strange people come from they frequently steal one another's wives and nothing much is thought about it."¹¹⁵ A similar portrait emerges from 1904's *The Garden of Allah*. One of the reader's first encounters with Arabs comes as the main characters pass several Arab women guarded by a "gigantic man" who pushes them into the "train as if they were bales of hay."¹¹⁶ A *National Geographic* article from 1911 conveys a similar impression. It chastises that a "plowman's wife or female slave (the distinction in the country is often quite fine)."¹¹⁷ The connection between Arabs and mistreatment of women, however, is perhaps most colorfully captured in the 1920 Rudolph Valentino film *The Son of the Shiek*. In the film

¹¹⁴ Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 68. See also Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 158 and Markoe, *The Algerine Spy*, 32.

¹¹⁵ "Steals Ahmed's Wife," *The Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 1893.

¹¹⁶ Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 14-15.

¹¹⁷ Blaznez, "A Journey in Morocco; the Land of the Moors," 765.

one of the Arab characters blithely remarks “I don’t know her [his wife’s] name. When I want her, I whistle.”¹¹⁸

Arabs, Americans believed, were also immoral. As Mark Twain pithily wrote “morals and whiskey are scarce” in the Arab world. “The Koran does not permit Muhammadans to drink. Their natural instincts do not permit them to be moral.”¹¹⁹ Twain and other Americans often concluded that Arabs were immoral because, they believed, Arabs were duplicitous liars and thieves.

Initial contacts forged the belief that Arabs were duplicitous.¹²⁰ Mark Twain, not surprisingly expressed this sentiment most colorfully. Arabs “say of a person they admire, ‘Ah, he is a charming swindler and a most exquisite liar!’” “Everybody” in the Arab world, Twain continues, “lies and cheats.” Twain of course was not the only early American to make statements of this type. In one of the supposed “letters” in the apochryal spy narrative *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* the author salivates over the “unsuspecting crowd” of Americans who are “busily employed in their affairs or pleasure, as if I” were “at home extended on my sofa” and not creeping in their midst, intriguing doom.¹²¹

By 1890 the connection between duplicity and Arabs had been firmly established. The effect was evident in American depictions of Arabs. In *Cleopatra* the

¹¹⁸ *The Son of the Sheik*, dir. George Fitzmaurice, 68 min., Feature Productions, 1926, dvd. See also: Ella C. Syke, “A Talk about Persia and its Women,” 853, 863, Edwin Pears, “Grass Never Grows Where the Turkish Hoof has Trod,” *National Geographic Magazine*, November, 1912, 1147 ; and “Cars for Harem have No-Look-See Windows,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 1952.

¹¹⁹ Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 271. See also: Lionel Fielden, “The Mind There Still Eludes our Grasp,” *The New York Times*, November 16, 1950.

¹²⁰ This trait would seemingly be in opposition to the belief that Arabs were easily deceived and manipulated. But, Americans simply wrote it off as Arabs being irrational. The thinking was that Arabs were so irrational that they could not see that their traits contradicted each other.

¹²¹ Markoe, *The Algerine Spy*, 67. See also: Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 2, 252.

title character spends the majority of the movie deceiving, inveigling, and manipulating Romans. The film begins with Cleopatra using her sexuality and Caesar's own ambition to beguile him into protecting her from Ptolemy. She first saunters about in a glittering bikini top, enticing him. When she finds that her sexuality is wanting, she plays on Caesar's ambition to be "emperor of the world." The "road to India," she coyly intimates, "lies through Egypt." After this Caesar is putty in her willing hands. The scene repeats itself when Cleopatra encounters Marc Antony. Cleopatra is to meet him in the town square. When she fails to appear, an infuriated Marc Antony confronts her on her boat, decrying that he will force her to meet him in the town square as agreed. Soon, however, he too falls victim to her manipulation. She plays on his ego by admitting that she was trying to "lure him." But that he could "not to be dazzled." After setting him at ease she proceeds to entice him. She produces dancing girls, wine, and a sumptuous diner. The diner begins with reed birds, then, theatrically, her men raise a net from the sea. From it emerge women, clam shells in hand, which they open to reveal glittering gem stones. After this deceptive and alluring tour de force Antony, like Caesar, abandons his original plan and falls prey to her manipulation.

Later films are also awash in perfidious Arab characters. For example, in the 1936 film version of *In the Garden of Allah* Batouch desires to leave the desert and return to Ben Mori. Instead of simply informing his employer of his desire he plots and manipulates. He teaches his cousin and rival to say in broken English "I want to go home, I hate the desert." He then shepherds him to his employer urging him to impress Madame with his English. When they reach her Batouch tells her that his cousin has

something he desperately wants to tell her. At this point Batouch's scheme goes array. Instead of telling Madame "I want to go home, I hate the desert," he sputters out "I hate home, I want to stay in the desert."¹²² The title character of 1940's *The Thief of Baghdad* is also a deceptive character. At one point during the film he and his companion inveigle a honey dealer in the local bazaar. The two desire honey for their "pancakes," but they have no money to procure it. Quickly they scheme a solution. They inform the honey merchant that they wish to purchase an entire jar of his nectar. But, alas will only do so if it is the best they have ever had. Predictably, the honey merchant falls for the simple subterfuge and provides them with their "sample," which they proceed to slather on their pancakes before quickly departing.¹²³

A 1958 *New York Times* article makes the connection between Arabs and deception bluntly. "Intrigue and conspiracy," it opines, "are the most powerful weapons" in the Arab world. "Throughout history," it continues, "intrigue, Machiavellian finesse, trickery, political lagerdemon, bribery, blackmail and the double cross are the real forces that govern Arabs."¹²⁴

In addition to being conniving, Arabs, Americans thought, were also thieves. Examples of supposed Arab thievery are legion in early writings. In James Riley's captivity narrative, the first Arab he encounters immediately begins "plundering" their

¹²² *The Garden of Allah*, 1936.

¹²³ *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1940. See also: *The Sheik*, dir. George Melford, 80 min., Paramount Pictures, 1921, dvd, especially the sequence where the Sheik creeps into Lady Diana's bedroom, removes the bullets from her revolver, follows her on her voyage into the desert, and abducts her; *Salome*, 1923, especially the scene where Salome tricks the guards into letting her see the prophet John and *Sirocco*, especially the scene where the flower merchant plants explosives in the club and the scenes involving Balukjiaan.

¹²⁴ Osgood Caruthers, "Life of Intrigue: the Middleeast," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1958. See also: Foster Hailey, "Nasser Holds the Middleeast Key," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1958; and Rom Landau, "Peace May be in Moslem Hands," *The New York Times* April 6, 1952.

clothing.¹²⁵ Later in his narrative he writes that his captors depart camp at night “seeking for plunder.”¹²⁶ Another author of a captivity narrative moralizes that Arabs suffer from “avarice and rapacity” and are people “who live by plunder.”¹²⁷

Later works continued to make this association. In 1924’s *The Thief of Baghdad* we first encounter Ahmed, the title character, asleep on top of a public water fountain. When another towns person approaches the drinking fountain, we quickly, however, realize that he is not asleep. As the parched traveler bends to quench his thirst Ahmed opens his eyes and deftly picks his pocket. After this Ahmed engages in a veritable orgy of theft. He proceeds to steal a magic rope, food from a balcony, and jewelry from a woman being transported luxuriously about on a litter.¹²⁸ T.E. Lawrence also emphasizes Arabs’ innate need to plunder in his war memoir. Arabs, he writes, were often more interested in being “sated with spoils,” than winning the battles.¹²⁹

Religious fanaticism is another trait Americans associated with Arabs. The earliest references to Arabs emphasize their fanaticism. William Thompson makes reference to “fanatical Moslems” in his travelogue, while one of the first printed tour guides of the Middle East cautions of the area’s “Muslim fanaticism.”¹³⁰

Depictions or references to religious fanaticism remained constant up until 1960. When the main character in *The Garden of Allah* visits a mosque her mind races with thoughts that “there was violence within these courts.” She could, she tells herself

¹²⁵ Riley, *An Authentic Narrative*, 24.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹²⁷ Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 170-1. See also: Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 1, 387.

¹²⁸ *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924.

¹²⁹ Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 371.

¹³⁰ Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 1, 409; Cook, Ltd., *Cook’s Tourist*, 241-2. See Also: Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 155 and Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 1, 409 and *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 205.

“imagine the worshippers springing up from their knees to tear to pieces an intruding dog of an unbeliever.”¹³¹ A 1958 *New York Times* article notes that the Arab world is “deeply injected with fanaticism.”¹³² *National Geographic* articles throughout the period also reference Arabs’ alleged rabid religiousness. The author of a 1901 article about Morocco writes of “Mohammedan fanaticism” and warns of Muslims “who massacre Europeans as soon as they get the chance.”¹³³ Two articles written in 1911 echo this view. In one the author writes of the “fanaticism so often exhibited by Mohammedans,” while in the other, the author warns of the “barbaric colors of Mohammedan fanaticism.”¹³⁴ The topic of Arab fanaticism was also popular in the pages of the *New York Times*. An article written in 1907 speaks of the “unguided fanaticism of the Mohammedans,” while another from 1917 references “fanatical Moslems.”¹³⁵

American commentators on Arab religion often made one other connection. They often associated Islam and therefore Arabs with fatalism. Arabs, they believed, were passive peoples. You can see this in the earliest American writings on Arabs. George Bush’s 1850 biography of Mohammad proclaims that “Mohammedans are the most strenuous sticklers of any people on earth” for “absolute unconditional

¹³¹ Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 170.

¹³² C.L. Sulzberger, “Foreign Affairs: Basic Issues in the Middle East,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1955.

¹³³ Charles Rabat, “Recent French Explorations in Africa,” *National Geographic Magazine*, April 1902, 131.

¹³⁴ A. Forder, “Damascus, the Pearl of the Desert,” *National Geographic Magazine*, January 1911, 72; George Edmund Holt, “The Two Great Moorish Religious dances,” *National Geographic Magazine*, August 1911, 777.

¹³⁵ “France in Morocco,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 1907; “Girl Who Will be Egypt’s Queen Sends Trousseau to Cairo Palace,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 1938. See also: “Darkness and Dawn in the Persian Capital,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 1907; Fielden, “The Mind There,” and *Sirocco*, particularly the last confrontational scene between Col. Faroud and the head of the Arab resistance.

predestination.”¹³⁶ While an early tour guide of the area proclaims that Arabs are “resigned to their fate.”¹³⁷

Future cultural works continued to make this association. Robert Hichens writes in *The Garden of Allah* that even in even the “greatest scoundrel that the Prophet’s robe covers there is an abiding and acute sense of *necessary surrender*.” To make the point more explicit, Hichens later writes that a character is behaving as “fatalistic as an Arab.”¹³⁸ A 1912 *National Geographic* article informs its readers of Arabs’ “deep rooted belief in and influence of fatalism.”¹³⁹ While another *National Geographic* article from 1927 laments that Arabs are “fatalistic and irresponsible.”¹⁴⁰ A final *New York Times* article written in 1951 asserts that “acceptance of the inevitable is a virtue” in the Arab world.¹⁴¹

Arabs, Americans believed, possessed one final trait. They were despotic. Early works such as Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad* established this link. Twain characterizes the emperor of Morocco as a “soulless despot” and the officials beneath him as “despots on a smaller scale.”¹⁴² Arabs, Americans believed, were despotic, in large part, because of their taxation system. Americans, as a result of their colonial

¹³⁶ Bush, *The Life of Mohammed*, 130.

¹³⁷ Cook Ltd., *Cook’s Tourist*, 42. See also: *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁸ Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 181. (emphasis added), 215.

¹³⁹ Pears, “Grass Never Grows,” 1147.

¹⁴⁰ Maynard Owen Williams, “East of Suez to the Mount of the Decalogue,” *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1927, 742.

¹⁴¹ Albion Ross, “The Vast and Restless Arab World,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1951. See also: Gordon Casserly, “Fez, Heart of Morocco,” *National Geographic Magazine*, June, 1935, plate xvi; *The Sheik*, a dialogue card reads: “fate rests with Allah”; Hichens, *Garden of Allah*, 140, 215; Edwin Pears, “Grass Never Grows,” 1143, 1147; Alan Villiers, “Sailing with Sinbad’s Sons,” *National Geographic Magazine*, November 1948, 677; Landau, “Peace May Be,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1952; Elizabeth Monroe, “Behind the Headlines in the Middle East,” *The New York Times*, September 14, 1952; Fielden, “The Mind There Still Eludes our Grasp,” *The New York Times*, November 16, 1950.

¹⁴² Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 66.

experience, tended to view any taxes suspiciously, especially those levied by unrepresentative governments. Taxes levied by such governments, they believed, were by definition excessive and exploitative. Arab tax systems seemed to fit this definition exactly. William Thompson writes that the “taxes levied by these oriental governments” are “numerous, vexatious, and tyrannical.”¹⁴³ And Mark Twain fulminates that the “inhuman tyranny” of the Ottoman Empire “grounds down” its populace with a “system of taxation that would drive any nation frantic.”¹⁴⁴

The belief that Arabs and Arab governments were despotic became a popular one in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A 1905 *New York Times* article about the Persian government refers to its “typical Oriental despotism.”¹⁴⁵ While a *New York Times* article written in 1958 avers that “authoritarian rule has always prevailed in the Middle East.”¹⁴⁶

A similar portrayal emerges from motion pictures. In one of the first scenes from 1940’s *The Thief of Baghdad* Prince Ahmed and his Grand Vizier, Jaffar, preside over an execution. When Ahmed asks why this particular criminal was being executed. Jaffar replies: “he had been thinking.” Jaffar goes on to preach that violence and fear are

¹⁴³ Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. 2, 52.

¹⁴⁴ Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 328. See also: Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*, 170-171.

¹⁴⁵ “Revolution in Persia,” *The New York Times*, February 11, 1907.

¹⁴⁶ Peggy and Pierre Street, “Five Middleeast Illusions that Befog Us,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1958. See also: Thomas H. Kearney, “The Date Gardens of Jerid,” *National Geographic Magazine*, July, 1910, 554 ; E.J. Tabet R.C.E. and Mrs. Emil Paaswell, “The Conquest of Syria, People will Look upon the French as Liberators,” *The New York Times*, September 4, 1917 ; James Morris, “The Two Arab Worlds: Pashas and People,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1958 ; and F.L. Bird, “Modern Persia and its Capital,” *National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1921, 393.

necessary to rule and that any leader who wishes to make his people happy is but a fool.¹⁴⁷

By linking Arabs with unrestrained sexuality, warlike behavior, uneducated irrationality, indolence, the repression of women, immorality, religious extremism, and despotism American cultural works established the Arab as an inferior other, which helped Americans throughout this period construct and maintain an exceptionalist national identity for themselves. This identity held that Americans were civilized and “good” because they possessed all the traits associated with civilization: restrained sexuality, a pacific nature, morality, hard work, moderate religion, a rational education, and a democratic government. For Americans to be good and civilized, however, there had to be someone who was bad or uncivilized. For in western culture meaning is often created through opposition. There can be no such thing as civilized, if its opposite, uncivilized, does not exist. Likewise, for the composing traits of civilization to have meaning they too needed an opposite. So Americans projected these oppositional traits and the meta designation of uncivilized onto Arabs. Who became the ultimate inferior uncivilized “other”—although it is important to note there were other such “others,” if you will, that helped define American identity during this period.

Captivity narratives, biographies of Mohammad, travelogues, and other early works erected a canon of oppositional traits that Americans believed Arabs possessed. Once established this canon of Arab traits and the overarching designation of uncivilized they supported remained *relatively* stable from 1890 through 1960, the years

¹⁴⁷ *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1940.

policymakers such as Dwight Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles matured. I emphasize relatively, however, for two reasons, which the next chapter will now explore in greater detail.

CHAPTER III
 REVERBERATING NOTES: THE ARAB AS ‘SEX MANIAC’ AND IRRATIONAL
 MARIONETTE

In his foundational work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said argued that a European academic tradition defined the “west” by constructing an inferior Arab “other.” European Orientalists projected negative traits onto Arabs. Doing so, Said charged, allowed Europeans to define themselves as superior by branding Arabs as inferior.¹⁴⁸ As the last chapter revealed something similar occurred in the United States. American’s initial contacts with Arabs established a canon of cultural beliefs about them.

This chapter counters one of the major criticisms leveled against the Orientalist paradigm. Kenan Malik has charged that Orientalism is “ahistoric.” It does not allow for historical change. In *Orientalism*, Malik concludes, Said “creates a ‘Western traditions’ which runs in an unbroken line from the Ancient Greeks through the Renaissance, the Enlightenment to modernism.” The tradition remains almost “unchanged through two millennia of European and Western history.” This leads Malik to conclude that Orientalism mimics “the very discursive structures against which” Said “polemices.”¹⁴⁹

This chapter, however, establishes that, at least in America, the Orientalist paradigm did respond to historical change. Americans’ canon of beliefs about Arabs,

¹⁴⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 1-3.

¹⁴⁹ Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, Culture and History in Western Society* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 228-9.

while stable, did not remain completely static. At points in American history some traits assumed greater prominence in American thought. Outside events occasionally made some of these traits more relevant and increased their prominence. To understand this it is perhaps best to imagine these traits as if they were notes on a piano. Initial contact introduced these notes and set them resonating in the American cultural consciousness. Every once and again, however, an outside force intervened to strike one or two of these chords again, causing them to reverberate with greater intensity. This process occurred three times in the 1890 to 1960 period. First, in the 1910s and 20s, when domestic events made belief in excessive Arab sexuality more prevalent. Again, in the late 1930s and early 40s when events in the Middle East caused belief in Arab gullibility and manipulability to come to the fore. And lastly, and most important for this book, during the late 1940s and 1950s when events in the Middle East made belief in Arab irrationally and manipulability resonate again.

* * *

In the 1910s and 20s the first force struck when a gender revolution shook America. During these years women surged into the workplace. Initially, they coursed through the few extant channels for female employment. Soon, however, they overwhelmed these limited opportunities and they began to percolate elsewhere, to new

professions.¹⁵⁰ Women's ventures into new professions created new responsibilities, new duties, new independence, and, what one author has called a "'New Freedom' in morals." Cumulatively these changes produced the "New Woman." The new woman "smoked, drank," shockingly, "danced close, became freer with her favors, kept her own latchkey ... used makeup and bobbed and dyed her hair."¹⁵¹

The appearance of these more independent-minded women precipitated a crisis of masculinity in America. Throughout the nation's history American men had exerted their power in society by controlling women through patriarchal marriage. The appearance of the new woman, her refusal to marry, her campaign for suffrage, and her new-found independence endangered this patriarchal power system. American men came to believe that they needed to bridle this new found, and unsettling, female independence. Cultural productions of Arabs provided them with one way to do so.

During these years pregnant with change American cultural works continued to provide the traditional trope of Arab sexuality. The Arab woman as a sensual and unrestrained temptress. Typical of this line of thought is a 1922 *National Geographic* article. The author lusts over an Arab woman. "What eyes!" He writes. "Lustrous, long-lashed, unlike the eyes of any other woman anywhere."¹⁵² A similar image emerges from the 1923 film *Salome*. In the film the title character uses her sexuality as a weapon. Sheathed in a short skirt and a sleeveless top she lures the commander of the

¹⁵⁰ See: Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: the New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), particularly the preface.

¹⁵¹ James R. McGovern, "The American Woman's Pre-World War I Freedom in Manners and Morals," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 55, no. 2 (September 1968), 317.

¹⁵² Frederich Simpich, "Along the Nile, Through Egypt and the Sudan," *National Geographic Magazine*, October 1922, 393.

royal guard into permitting her to enter the cage which imprisons John the Baptist. Later in the film she preys upon King Herod (her step-father) and his infatuation with her. The King yearns to see her dance. But Salome shows no interest in providing what he desires, that is, until, she realizes, she can extract something of value from him (John the Baptist's head). Alongside these traditional representations of Arab sexuality, however, there emerged a new trope, one directly related to the gender revolution that was occurring in American society at the time, the Arab male as a "sex maniac."

The most famous example of this phenomenon is Rudolph Valentino's *The Sheik*. In the film Valentino's title character falls "under the lure of the defiant English girl," Diana. From the moment the Sheik first lays eyes upon her he cannot control himself. He gazes dementedly at her. His eyes look as if they threaten to burst from his head in lust. This unbridled, uncontrollable desire quickly overtakes the sheik. "When an Arab sees a woman that he wants, he takes her!" He confides to the audience. Throughout the rest of the film the sheik does all that is within his power to possess her. He skulks into her hotel room the night before she is to travel into the desert and removes the bullets from her revolver. Later he arranges for one of his subordinates to serve as her guide. The next day as she rides off into the broad desert expanse, with his furtive agent in tow, as he follows her, leering at her through binoculars, from behind a sea of sand. When the moment presents itself, he abducts her, and informs her she is to be his desert bride. As such she lives until she attempts to escape and chances upon a rival sheik, Omair, in the hot sands of the desert. He, like the Sheik, conspires to and

eventually does seize her for himself, only to lose her as the Sheik storms his camp and reclaims her.¹⁵³

The “sex maniac” trope was in direct reaction to America’s domestic gender revolution. As one scholar admonishes, such movies “must be seen in the context of the threat to institutionalized power presented by the women’s suffrage movements and the nascent feminist struggle.”¹⁵⁴ *The Sheik* and other works like it allowed American men to confront the New Woman and the changes she engendered in two ways.

First it allowed American men to live out their ideal course of action: to force the “New Woman” into submission. In *The Sheik* the female character, Lady Diana, is clearly a flapper, the embodiment of the New Woman. She has short bobbed hair, is unmarried, and in fact bristles at the suggestion of marriage, declaring that “marriage is captivity.” The first portion of the film allows American men to safely live out their ideal solution of forcibly subduing New Women by living vicariously through the Arab sheik. He abducts the Lady, hurries her away to his territory, forces her to dress as he pleases, and decrees that she will marry him (A feat they themselves could not accomplish because of their “civilized” American identity, which decreed that a civilized man respected women and treated them well).

Movies like *The Sheik* also served the American male’s cause in a second way. They delivered a message to women: it is in your best interest to resubmit to white male patriarchy. Towards the end of the film the sheik begins acting in very un-Arab like

¹⁵³ *The Sheik*, 1921. See also the sequel, *Son of the Sheik*, in which the Sheik’s son, also played by Valentino, races twenty leagues each night to rendezvous with the dancing girl he falls in love with.

¹⁵⁴ Ella Shahot, “Gender in Hollywood’s Orient,” *Middle East Report* (January-February 1990), 42.

ways. He allows Diana to again wear her western clothes and he begins to have recriminations. “How,” he wails, “I have made her suffer” but, he laments, “it gives me so little pleasure.” Soon after this occurs Lady Diana is captured by Omair, who is even more cruel and demanding than the sheik ever was. This harsher captivity, however, does not last long. The sheik rescues Diana and dramatically reveals that he is not an Arab at all. He was merely raised as an Arab. His parents are English and Spanish. After learning this, the recalcitrant Lady Diana agrees to marry the sheik and they live happily ever after. The message is clear, submit to the embracing fetters of white patriarchal marriage or face the primitive barbarity of the “others,” like Omair, alone.¹⁵⁵

In the late 1930s and early 1940s another force struck which sent beliefs about Arabs resonating: the rise of fascism. In 1922 Benito Mussolini ascended to power in Italy. Little over a decade later Adolph Hitler did the same in Germany. Both fascist leaders seemed—at least to Americans—to have interest in the Middle East. Mussolini talked of reviving the Roman Empire and gathering all of its former lands—including territory in the Middle East. He extended a hand of friendship to the Italian Diaspora in the Mediterranean basin, include to the nearly 60,000 ethnic Italians in Egypt. Mussolini’s extended hand was often eagerly accepted, because, as one historian has written, Mussolini aroused the “émigré’s patriotism” by building them “new modern schools, hospitals, and clubs in every littoral city from Tunis to Beirut.”¹⁵⁶

Mussolini also extended a hand to Arabs in the region. During a speech in Tripoli *il duce* proclaimed himself “the protector of Islam.” Meanwhile his fascist

¹⁵⁵ *The Sheik*, 1921.

¹⁵⁶ Howard M Sachar, *Europe Leaves the Middle East 1936-1954* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 42.

government in Libya extended religious freedom to its subject Muslims and built new mosques throughout the country.¹⁵⁷

Europe's other major fascist power, Germany, was also suspiciously active in the area. German propaganda flooded the region. It capitalized on rampant anti-imperialist and anti-western sentiments in the area. The propaganda campaign reached its saturation point between the fall of France in June 1940 and the Allied powers' Mediterranean offensive at end of 1942.

Meanwhile Nazi diplomatic efforts supplemented their propaganda campaign. The German government maintained relations with Iraq and other nations in the region. It also dispatched special diplomatic agents like Dr. Fritz Grobba to roam ominously about the region. The Nazi's also courted the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, a vocal advocate of Arab nationalism and independence. Germany eventually reached an agreement with the Mufti. The Nazis would recognize the Arab states' independence and extend to them *carte blanche* in dealing with Jewish settlers in Palestine in exchange for the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the Arab states and the fascist powers, the extension of preferred oil concessions in Iraq, and collaboration on matters of "mutual interest."¹⁵⁸

Throughout the period fascist military forces also threatened Egypt. In 1940 nearly 200,000 Italian troops invaded Egypt. While this Italian threat subsequently receded as an allied counterattack routed Italian forces back across the border into Libya, the respite would not last. In 1941 famed German general Erwin Rommel arrived in

¹⁵⁷ Sachar, *Europe Leaves*, 42-43.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 166.

North Africa. The Desert Fox brought with him German ground forces and soon launched a series of successful attacks into Egyptian territory. The threat became most perilous in 1942 when Rommel drove his tanks within 60 miles of Alexandria, threatening to take the Suez Canal.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, ominously, these events were met with only deafening silence by the country's native population.¹⁶⁰

Fascists also—seemingly—menaced other countries in the region. In April of 1941 Rashid Ali Kilani and the “Golden Square”— a group of four Iraqi army generals—overthrew the pro-western Hashemite dynasty in Iraq. The rebels soon began receiving aid from Germany. Much of this aid arrived on German planes via airbases in the Vichy administered governments of the Levant, where Nazi propaganda coursed unabated.¹⁶¹

These events raised alarm in America. They also caused certain beliefs about Arabs to take on greater prominence in American thought. The activity of “superior” and hostile Western nations in the region brought belief in Arab gullibility and manipulability to the forefront of the American cultural consciousness.

Newspaper articles on fascist activity in the region emphasized that the fascists were manipulating Arabs. The Arab masses, one author decried, “are ready to listen to every dirty crack at England put at by that Nazi propaganda travelling circus.”¹⁶² Other writers conveyed a similar point. One blamed unrest in Palestine on Italy “fanning the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 248-249.

¹⁶⁰ Phillip J Baraam, *The Department of State in the Middle East: 1919-1945* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), chapter 5.

¹⁶¹ See: Sachar, *Europe Leaves*, 190 and Baraam, *The Department of State in the Middle East*, chapter 5.

¹⁶² C. L. Sulzberger, “Arab World Plans a New Future,” *The New York Times*, May 9, 1943. Also see: McCormick, “Europe” and Joseph M. Levy, “Palestine Outlook Continues Gloomy,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 1938.

flames of Arab lawlessness.”¹⁶³ Another concluded that Anti-Jewish activities were “instigated , organized, and financed by Nazi representatives.”¹⁶⁴ While Arab religious intolerance and national antipathy were said to have been “brewed up in Adolf Hitler’s witches’ cauldron of propaganda.”¹⁶⁵ The common denominator in all of these passages was the belief that outside powers, not Arabs, were directing events and Arab actions in the region. Arabs were merely passive vessels through which outside powers operated.

American concern over Arabs’ manipulability did not die with the fascist threat. If anything these concerns multiplied after fighting in World War II wound to a close. In the post-war period the victorious Allies were left to survey the world they had created. The Axis powers were gone. Old Europe and its powers were a battered shadow of their former selves. In most areas of the world the war had left a power vacuum. The old European Empires had either retreated out of necessity or withered on the vine during the war years. Indigenous people were of course left to fill the vacuum, but to policymakers they didn’t really count. To them an absence of foreign power in the area meant an absence of any power.

This was particularly true in the Middle East. As things stabilized in the years following the war French influence evaporated from the region, while the British presence condensed to a few Gulf Sheikdom on the environs, its mandate in Palestine,

¹⁶³ “Terrorism Continues in Palestine,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 1938.

¹⁶⁴ “Egypt will Warn Anti-Jewish Arabs,” *The New York Times*, May 16, 1938. See also: “Revenge of Arabs Alarms Palestine,” *The New York Times*, July 27, 1938 (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁵ Syke, “A Talk about Persia,” 866.

and its massive military base at Suez. Soon, however, even this limited British influence waned. The last British troops left Palestine in 1948 and Suez eight years later.¹⁶⁶

While Western presence retreated from the area, Soviet influence appeared ready to course into it. During the war Soviet forces had moved into Northern Iran. They did so in conjuncture with the British to open a supply route for American war material. With war's close, however, Soviet troops lingered in the area and encouraged separatists in the bordering Iranian province of Azerbaijan. West of Iran, meanwhile, the Soviets delivered a "note" to Turkey requesting the revision of the Montreux Straits treaty, which regulated entrance to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. In the note the Soviets "requested" the right to use the straits and to create a permanent Soviet naval base. To make their point more emphatic the USSR amassed ground forces near Turkey's borders.

While the Soviets would later give way on both of these issues, withdrawing from Northern Iran and dropping their ultimatum to Turkey, these actions alarmed Americans. Many came to believe that the Soviets were intent on overrunning the area on their way to total world domination. Loy Henderson, director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs during the Truman administration wrote in 1946, that the Kremlin "seems to be determined to break down the structure which Great

¹⁶⁶ See: Sachar, *Europe Leaves* and Jacob Abadi, *Britain's Withdrawal from the Middle East, 1947-1971: the Economic and Strategic Imperatives* (Princeton, NJ: The Kingston Press, 1982).

Britain has maintained so that Russian power and influence can sweep unimpeded across Turkey and through the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean, across Iran and through the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean.” Henderson continued, “during the last five years, two great barriers to Russian expansion have disappeared, namely Germany in the West and Japan in the East.” “Judging from recent events in the Near East,” Henderson concluded, “Russia now appears to be concentrating upon the removal of a third barrier in the South.”¹⁶⁷

Government officials were not the only ones to harbor this concern. As a political cartoon from the time illustrates many in the American public feared the same. The cartoon showed a giant soldier with the words “War Threat” emblazoned on his armor charging through the Middle East, trampling on counties as he progresses. The soldier’s sword prominently displays a tag which reads “Made in Russia.” (See Figure 5).

¹⁶⁷ Loy Henderson, “Present Situation in the Near East: A Danger to World Peace,” *FRUS*, vol. 7. 1-6.

'MIDDLE EAST HOPSCOTCH'

Figure 5: Middle East
Hopscotch (From "Editorial
Cartoon No. 4- No Title," *The
New York Times*, December 2,
1956)

As the Soviet threat emerged, so too did another force: Arab Nationalism. Arab nationalism was not new, but it became more pronounced during this period. Imperial retreat allowed it room to breathe. Advocates became much more vocal and visible.

The emergence of the Soviet threat and Arab nationalism at the same time caused certain beliefs about Arabs to take on greater prominence. Chief among them was belief in Arab irrationality. Assertions of Arab irrationality stained the pages of American reports on Arab nationalism. Riots by nationalist students were due to the irrational “persecution complex that is widespread in Middle Eastern countries.”¹⁶⁸ Nationalism, proclaimed another, was “frequently guided along xenophobic lines.”¹⁶⁹ An “expert” on Arabs and the “Arab mind” wrote that “an Eastern mind once stirred to fury in a cause which inspires it, will not be deterred by the fastidious [intellectual] niceties of the West.”¹⁷⁰

The last quotation hints at the specific brand of irrationality Americans attributed to Arabs during this period: emotionalism. To use the previous author’s words, Arabs could not be “deterred by the fastidious niceties of the West,” such as rational thought, and were instead “stirred to a fury.” Arabs, many believed, acted on the behest of their emotions not because of superior logic or reason, which would lead them to see that supporting their repressive autocratic governments was necessary to contain Soviet communism and better their lives.

¹⁶⁸ Albion Ross, “Syria to Harness Student Energies,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 1952.

¹⁶⁹ C.L. Sulzberger, “Communists in the Middle East Abet Nationalist Surge,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1951.

¹⁷⁰ Lionel Fielden, “The Mind There Still Evades our Grasp,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1950. For other expressions of Arab irrationality see: Albion Ross, “The Vast and Restless Arab World,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1951 and Rom Landau, “Peace May be In Arab Hands,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1952.

References to Arabs' emotionalism are legion in American news reports of the time. Take for instance reports on the rise and actions of Iranian nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mosadegh. When Mosadegh came to power 1951 most Americans found him and his actions once in office, particularly his decision to nationalize the oil industry, mystifying. It never entered most Americans' mind that a people would like to control their own economic resources and profit from them, instead of being exploited by foreign corporations. Instead most Americans explained away his actions by falling back on the long-held racial stereotype that Arabs are irrational, specifically emotional, thinkers. As one newspaperman wrote "Iranians speak with their hearts. They do not encumber their thinking with intellectual considerations."¹⁷¹ Another author reported that the Arab elite's decision to embrace nationalism and turn against the West was "prompted by emotions that are deep-rooted." And still another author writing on politically active Egyptian students wrote that they have a "tendency to examine everything in terms of resentment and emotion."¹⁷²

Hand in hand with the belief that Arabs were acting irrationally out of emotion came the belief that others were manipulating or taking advantage of this irrational emotionalism. Who Americans believed were doing the manipulating, however, varied. Some believed that the masters who were pulling the strings resided in the Arab lands themselves. The Arab ruling classes, they believed, were the ones manipulating the Arab marionette. The "medieval ruling forces," wrote one author, "aware of their own

¹⁷¹ Michael Clark, "Mossadegh of Iran in Messianic Role," *The New York Times*, July 8, 1951.

¹⁷² Elizabeth Monroe, "Behind the Headlines in the Middle East," *The New York Times*, September 14, 1952 ; Albion Ross, "A Power in Egyptian Politics," *The New York Times*, August 3, 1952. See Also: Rom Landau, "Peace May be in Muslim hands," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1952.

unpopularity and the misery of the masses, are turning popular discontent against the ‘heathen’ and the ‘foreign imperialists’ to avoid being engulfed in the gathering torrent themselves.”¹⁷³ The Arab “ruling class,” wrote another, “has hit upon colonialism and Western imperialism as obvious scapegoats to distract the masses from their economic misery.”¹⁷⁴ While some believed they spotted the hidden hand of the Arab elite in the masses’ actions, most believed the calculating hand pulling these strings resided further away in more frigid climes.

“Communists” screamed one article “have sought to guide mass [Arab] emotions.”¹⁷⁵ Soviet propaganda, another author wrote, has convinced Arabs to fight an anti-imperialist “battle whose main objectives were won a long time ago, blinding themselves to the new Communist offensive.”¹⁷⁶ The Arab masses were, many believed, unbeknownst to them, being made to dance to the tune of the Communist International. They were unwittingly following Soviet directions to bring instability to the region, which would only benefit the Soviet Union. Two political cartoons from the era perhaps best express this view. In the first cartoon a Soviet soldier ominously attired in a military uniform is carrying away a stereotypically sexualized Arab maiden as a rifle toting Uncle Sam sheepishly asks President Eisenhower “Say, what if she doesn’t want her honor protected?” In the second cartoon Joseph Stalin appears garbed in traditional Arab attire beckoning an Arab male with the words “Middle Eastern Countries” written

¹⁷³ C.L. Sulzberger, “Drumbeat of Nationalism in Near East,” *The New York Times*, October 14, 1951.

¹⁷⁴ “Islam in Ferment,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 1952.

¹⁷⁵ C.L. Sulzberger, “Communists in Middle East Abet Nationalist Surge,” *The New York Times*, October 27, 1951. See also: “Rationalizing Imperialism,” *The New York Times*, February 29, 1952.

¹⁷⁶ “The Abuse of Nationalism,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1952. See also: “Outlook in Palestine,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1952.

on his robe to walk under a dangling iron prison in the shape of a tent. The caption reads “I’m An Old Arab Tentmaker. Slip This On For Size.” (See Figures 6 and 7)



Figure 6: Arab Governments and Soviet Influence (From Herbert Block, *Herblock's Special Report* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), 124)

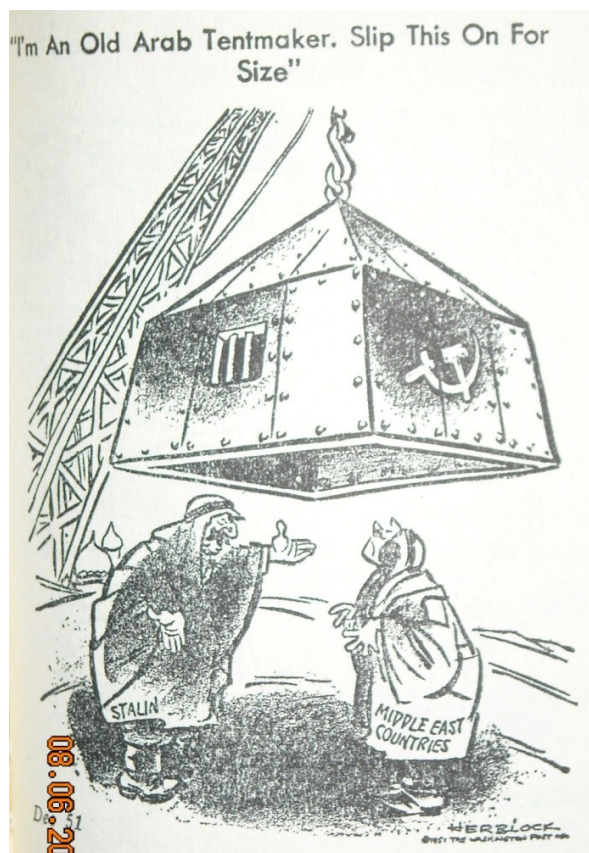


Figure 7: Untitled Political
Cartoon (From Herbert Block,
The Herblock Book (Boston,
Mass.: The Beacon Press,
1952), 179)

The point of both cartoons is explicit. The Soviets are beguiling the Arabs, verbally inducing them into voluntarily entering a bleak communist captivity, taking advantage of what one article proclaimed was Arabs' "susceptible to oratory."¹⁷⁷

It was not just the masses who, many Americans feared, the Soviets were beguiling, but also the ruling elite. "What the governing classes from Cairo to Tehran do not seem to realize," wrote one journalist, "is that Moscow's aims are dual. First the Russians wish to destroy all lingering friendships between the Middle East and the West" and "then, in the resulting and inevitable economic chaos, they wish to destroy the governing classes themselves. The pashas," he concludes, are "sharpening the long knives that are to be used against them."¹⁷⁸

The fear that the Soviets were exploiting Arab emotionalism and nationalism only increased after Abdul Gamal Nasser rose to power in Egypt in 1952. It began as night descended on Cairo on a warm July day. As darkness embraced the city so too did Egyptian armored and artillery units. Elsewhere in the country military units arrested much of the high command. As dawn broke on the 23rd a new force was in power in Egypt: the Revolutionary Command Council.

The Revolutionary Command Council or the RCC was a group of likeminded officers in the Egyptian armed forces who opposed continued British meddling in their country. Egypt had technically become independent in 1922. The government had a constitutional monarch and parliament. But the British still wielded considerable power.

¹⁷⁷ "Nasser's Radio Effective," *The New York Times*, July 5, 1958, 3.

¹⁷⁸ C.L. Sulzberger, "Middle East is held Duped by Moscow's Double Game," *The New York Times*, December 13, 1951.

They supported individual politicians or parties, offered “advice” to government ministers, and on at least two occasions delivered ultimatums demanding changes in the composition of the ruling coalition. In addition a large number of British military forces remained in the country—most at the United Kingdom’s immense airbase in the Suez area.

Once in power the RCC appointed General Mohammad Naguib as their titular leader. The real force behind the RCC, however, was its founder Gamal Abdel Nasser. Naguib was chosen to represent the movement because of his higher status and visibility. But, he was largely a figurehead. One, who in less than two years, Nasser forced from power.¹⁷⁹

Once in power Nasser slowly moved towards embracing a neutralist position. By the time he decided to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956 he had firmly adopted a neutralist stance. He tried to steer a course between the two superpowers, to align with neither, but to play the two off of each other in competition, to extract more for Egypt. He also vied for leadership of the region wide Arab nationalist movement. The emergence of a leader in Egypt and in the wider Middle Eastern world who bucked Western “protection,” who tried to make it on his own, only further enflamed American concerns over Arab irrationality, emotionalism, and dupability.

American descriptions of Nasser stressed his irrationality. According to one writer Nasser “himself doesn’t know what he wishes to do” his “desk is piled with books

¹⁷⁹ See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, chapter 3.

whose ideas are not yet digested.”¹⁸⁰ The point is blunt. Nasser was intellectually unstable, irrational; he meshed together pieces of ideas and others’ writings without thinking them through, thoroughly and rationally.

Americans not only saw Nasser as irrational, but also the entire Arab population that was listening to his ideas. In attempting to explain the appeal of Nasser and Arab nationalism one writer relied on the supposed fact that “the Arabs are imaginative, high-flown people.”¹⁸¹ Another article proffered a similar explanation. Nasserism’s success was due to the “mercurial Arab temperament.”¹⁸²

As the last quotation hints at Americans continued to perceive Arab irrationality as resulting primarily from their emotionalism. Arabs were “mercurial,” erratic, volatile, emotional. One article proclaimed that the “Storm” of Arab nationalism that is “blowing is far more emotional than ideological.”¹⁸³ Another decreed that “deep emotions lie very close under brown Arab skin.”¹⁸⁴ A final writer when describing the situation in Iraq asserted that the Arab nationalist movement is a “cauldron of passion.”¹⁸⁵

Americans were convinced that the Soviets would, and indeed were, having little difficulty manipulating irrational emotional regimes like Nasser’s. As one writer wrote “Communists have been successful in the Middle East” because they “support the

¹⁸⁰ C.L. Sulzberger, “Foreign Affairs: Nasser: IV,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1958. For other meditations on Nasser’s irrationality see: “Key Elements on Nasserism,” *The New York Times*, July 27, 1958.

¹⁸¹ James Morris, “The Two Arab Worlds: Pashas and People,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1958.

¹⁸² Peggy and Pierre Street, “Five Middle East Illusions that Befog Us,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1958.

¹⁸³ C.L. Sulzberger, “Foreign Affairs: Confusion on the Middle East,” *The New York Times*, April 5, 1958. See also: Foster Hailey, “Currents in Baghdad’s Tides,” *The New York Times*, August 10, 1958.

¹⁸⁴ Foster Hailey, “Currents in Baghdad’s Tides,” *The New York Times*, August 10, 1958.

¹⁸⁵ Wayne Phillips, “Divided Arab World Moves Toward Unity,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1958. See also: “Nasser’s Radio Effective,” *The New York Times*, July 5, 1958 ; Foster Hailey, “Cairo Press Scourns Economic Proposal,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1958.

Arabs,” in their irrationality, in their “twin phobias of Anti-Zionism and Anticolonialism.”¹⁸⁶ Americans believed the neutralist policy Arabs’ emotionalism and irrationality had lead them to adopt could have no possible outcome except for eventual Soviet domination over the Middle East. Arabs may have thought they could open the door to Soviet aid and assistance without risking domination, but they were dead wrong. Arab nationalist regimes like Nasser’s, wrote one frenzied observer, “would open the way for the establishment, overt or concealed, of Russian suzerainty in the Arab world.”¹⁸⁷ Nasser and other likeminded Arabs, wrote another, may think they can stand alone “but neither Arab nationalism or Pan-Arabism stands alone. Behind them trying to use them for its own ends, stands the Russian colossus.”¹⁸⁸ Once Arabs opened the flap to the tent, Americans believed, it was only a matter of time until the Soviets would barge in and take over. A political cartoon from the day perfectly expresses this belief. In the cartoon Soviet soldiers disguise themselves under a sheet designed to look like a camel. The words “Military Aid” appear on the side of the Soviet camel. In the cartoon the camel has stuck its head into a tent pitched at the foot of the great pyramids of Giza. The caption reads “Once he gets his head in the tent.” The message is clear. Arab states like Nasser may think they are just receiving aid, military or otherwise, from the Soviets, but what they are really getting is underneath, Soviet domination. (see Figure 8)

¹⁸⁶ “‘Realistic’ Policy on Middle East Asked,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 1958.

¹⁸⁷ James Morris, “The Two Arab Worlds: Pashas and People,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1958.

¹⁸⁸ “Behind Pan-Arabism,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 1958. See also: “The Middle East,” *The New York Times*, October 19, 1955.



Fischetti, N. E. A. Service
 "Once he gets his head in the tent."

Figure 8: Soviet Military Aid to the Arab World (From "Editorial Cartoon 2 –No Title," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1956)

The rise of Nasser and Nasserism sent one final note oscillating in the American cultural consciousness. The emergence of a strong independent-minded Arab leader, who failed to follow conventional Western wisdom, and who labored to increase his own

influence in the region enlivened the long held belief that Arabs were cunning, duplicitous, and untrustworthy. One author pronounced that “conspiracy is the way of life in the Middle East.”¹⁸⁹ Another wrote “Plot and counterplot are a way of life in Arab lands.”¹⁹⁰

This one dimensional stereotype truly flourished in the movies of the day. Take for example the 1951 Humphrey Bogart film *Sirocco*. In a scene midway through the film the viewer is transported to a Syrian cabaret. Despite the ongoing struggle for independence the mood is light and jovial. French soldiers and the local populace coexist in an alcohol nurtured accord. In the midst of the relaxed joviality meanders a seemingly innocent Arab flower merchant. The florist, warm in smile, convinces some carefree French soldiers at a table to purchase some flowers. As he collects their money he slips an unnoticed addition, a bomb, to the underside of their table. The Arab slinks off and the bomb soon explodes, shattering the soldiers’ bodies and the room’s affability. A similar stock character appears in 1953s *The Robe*. The movie follows the spiritual transformation of Marcellus Gallio. Roman soldier Gallio begins the film a cold hearted man who plays dice while Christ anguishes on the cross. By the end of the film he is a Christian martyr. At one point during his transformation a wracked Gallio returns to Palestine. While there he is escorted by a Syrian merchant. As Gallio’s stay lengthens, and profits dwindle, the Syrian threatens to inform the locals that Gallio was responsible for Christ’s death. Eventually, the duplicitous Syrian follows through on his threat and aligns himself with a group of Roman soldiers Gallio has come into conflict with.

¹⁸⁹ Foster Hailey, “Nasser Moves to Tighten His Grip on Syria,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1958.

¹⁹⁰ Foster Hailey, “Nasser Holds Middle East Key,” *The New York Times*, October 5, 1958.

Duplicitous, irrational, gullible, and highly sexual, Americans, since the time of independence, associated these traits with Arabs. During the periods discussed in this chapter, however, they took on greater prominence as outside forces intervened to make them more relevant. In the 1910s and 20s, the late 1930s and early 1940s, and in the late 1940s and early 1950s outside forces struck and made these beliefs about Arabs more relevant and thus resonate with greater intensity in American thought. Of particular importance to the argument yet to come is the intensification that occurred in associating Arabs with irrationality and gullibility. Americans came to believe that inferior Arabs simply could not be trusted to implement an independent neutralist foreign policy in the face of the Soviet threat. The Soviets, Americans believed, would find a way to pull the strings of the Arab marionette. This belief was not limited to the American public. Policymakers within the Eisenhower administration matured in American culture, internalized its beliefs about Arabs, and similarly deployed them to rationalize events in the Arab world. This would have a profound effect on the Eisenhower administration's policy towards Gamal Abdel Nasser and Arab nationalism.

CHAPTER IV

“A TOOL OF THE RUSSIANS:” RACE AND THE EISENHOWER
ADMINISTRATION’S INTRODUCTION TO GAMAL ABDEL NASSER

November 13, 1942, found General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force, North Africa, “in bed with a runny nose, a terrible cough, an intermittent headache, and a pain in the stomach.” The General and future President passed the miserable hours composing letters to his friends and family in the United States. In one he described his interactions with the local population. “The Arab” he wrote “typifies filth, squalor, rags, and laziness.” He wears a “dirt-stained imitation of a circus tent” and “stalks along in his stately filthiness,” seemingly “perfectly content with his lot.”¹⁹¹

Later that month, the future President confided to his wife Mamie that “millions of Arabs are a very uncertain quantity. Explosive and full of prejudices. Many things done here that look queer are just to keep the Arabs from blazing up in revolt.”¹⁹²

Laziness, fatalism, irrationality, violence, the traits the future President associated with North Africans are some of the very same traits American cultural works had long ascribed to Arabs. This should not be surprising. Dwight Eisenhower, his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and other key policymakers in the administration

¹⁹¹ Eisenhower to his Gang, Pre-Presidential Papers, Administrative File, box 71, folder “Lee, Ernest (3),” Dwight David Eisenhower Library. DDEL.

¹⁹² John S.D. Eisenhower, ed., *Letters to Mamie* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 66.

matured in a domestic culture suffused with such racial depictions of Arabs and they often relied on these beliefs to understand Arabs and their actions.

This was particularly true once Eisenhower and Dulles entered the Oval Office. Their years in Washington coincided with the ascension of Arab nationalism and neutralism. These phenomenon were difficult for many Americans to comprehend. Many times the administration managed to understand and empathize with Arab concerns, at other times, however, Arab actions left them perplexed. It was at these crucial junctures that administration officials, like the common Americans presented in the previous chapter, relied upon racial associations to explain Arab actions and motivations. This had a profound effect on the administration's policy towards Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt, and Arab neutralism.

When Dwight Eisenhower took the oath of office in January 1953 the United States was already deeply enmeshed in Middle East affairs. Soviet actions beckoned American eyes to the region after World War II. The Kremlin moved suspiciously towards Iran and Turkey. This alarmed policymakers in the Truman administration. They believed the USSR was bent on world domination. To prevent this from occurring, the administration implemented its doctrine of containment. The United States would use every resource at its disposal to contain the communist menace.

The Middle East, located adjacent to the Soviet Union's southernmost expanses, seemed particularly vulnerable to creeping Soviet influence. Communist activity half a world away only increased these concerns. As communist North Korean forces plunged south, policymakers in the White House became increasingly concerned that similar

communist offensives might occur in other areas of the globe, particularly in the Middle East. President Truman estimated at the time that the Soviets were “figuring on an attack” towards the “Persian Gulf.”¹⁹³

President Truman could not allow this to happen. Holding a majority of the world’s petroleum reserves made the area especially important. While at that time the United States only obtained a fraction of its oil from the Middle East, America’s allies in Western Europe obtained most of their petroleum from the region. If the Middle East and its vast oil reserves fell to communism, Western Europe and its industry and military would grind to a halt, leaving Europe exposed.

Strategic considerations also lent importance to the area. American war plans, such as plan Makefast, envisioned using the British base at Suez in Egypt as a “springboard” to launch crippling air assaults against the Soviet Union’s oil fields in the Caucasus. The Suez base was particularly valuable because it could be, military planners estimated, defended for four to six months, while air fields in Europe could only hold out for two months.¹⁹⁴

For these reasons the Truman administration developed a plan to protect the Middle East from Soviet aggression: the MEC, or the Middle Eastern Command. The command was an integrated command structure centered around Egypt. Policymakers chose Egypt as the focal point because its large population and economy made it

¹⁹³ Robert Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 185.

¹⁹⁴ See: Holland, *America and Egypt*, xxvii.

“unquestionably the senior partner of the Arab States.”¹⁹⁵ If the United States could convince this “senior partner” to join MEC, U.S. officials believed, other Middle Eastern nations would fall into line.

Soon the Truman administration began trying to convince Egypt’s King Farouk to join MEC. All did not, however, go according to plan, because two issues complicated the matter. When Britain granted Egypt its independence in 1922 it forced a defense treaty upon it. The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance bound the nation and its foreign policy to Britain for twenty years. Consequently, Egypt, while technically sovereign, exercised little control over its own foreign policy. Many Egyptians wanted this treaty abrogated, and they also wanted Britain to withdraw the last of its forces from the kingdom.

The Truman administration proved unable to resolve these issues. Instead the administration changed the organization’s name from the Middle East Command to the Middle East Defense Organization or MEDO, hoping that the problem lay in the term command, which held imperial connotations. This semantic change, however, made little difference, King Farouk remained noncommittal and American strategy for the region languished.¹⁹⁶

The winds of change seemed to reveal fresh promise in July 1952. The Free Officers, a group of approximately 100 military personnel, seized power and exiled King Farouk. The Free Officers, the administration believed, were a “military regime of

¹⁹⁵ Background Information, RG 59, Lot File 59 D 654, Box 41, folder “Background Information 1953,” NA.

¹⁹⁶ Peter L. Hahn, *The United States*, 144.

unusual disinterestedness and clear strategic perception,” who, they hoped, would see the wisdom of joining MEDO.¹⁹⁷

The administration tried to convince the group’s titular leader General Muhammad Naguib to join MEDO. American efforts, however, ran into several difficulties. First and foremost the new military government, the Revolutionary Command Council, or RCC, longed for American military equipment. It needed a substantial influx to assure that its power base in the military stayed loyal.¹⁹⁸ The new government also needed military equipment to confront its regional enemy, Israel.¹⁹⁹

In October of 1952 the RCC submitted a request for seventy three tanks, six hundred and sixty four Armored Personnel Carriers, three hundred jeeps, seven squadrons of aircraft, eighteen destroyers, twelve minesweepers, and a myriad of other smaller items to Washington.²⁰⁰ Truman declined to provide this much coveted material. He worried that it would precipitate a regional arms race with Israel.²⁰¹

The British base at Suez complicated America’s relations with the new Egyptian government. The base was immense. It enveloped an area sixty miles wide by ninety miles long. During the Second World War it supported fifteen British divisions, sixty five air squadrons, and a fleet. The Suez base, the United Kingdom believed, was indispensable, both in maintaining its influence in the region and in—possibly—waging

¹⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, October 20, 1952, RG 59, lot 57 D654, box 41, folder “Background Information, 1953,” National Archives (From here on NA).

¹⁹⁸ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 50.

¹⁹⁹ Takeh, *The Origins of*, 37.

²⁰⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, October 20, 1952, RG 59, lot 57 D654, Box 41, folder “Background Information, 1953,” NA.

²⁰¹ Takeh, *The Origins of*, 37.

war against the Soviet Union.²⁰² For these reasons London adamantly refused to abandon it. This position caused the Truman administration much headache. As General Naguib informed Ambassador Robert McClintock “under no circumstances,” would Egypt “enter a Western organized MEDO unless the British have evacuated the canal zone.”²⁰³

Obtaining a British evacuation of Suez was extremely important to Egypt. Great Britain exerted significant control over the nation’s domestic affairs. The U.K. supported politicians and political parties who promoted continued cooperation with the metropole, frequently gave “advice” to ministers, and on at least two occasions presented governments it found wanting with ultimatums, in both instances these recalcitrant coalition governments quickly collapsed.²⁰⁴ To Egyptians the continued existence of the base at Suez, with its 80,000 military personnel, allowed Britain to intervene, or threaten to intervene, in Egyptian affairs. Until the last of these forces were gone, many believed, their nation would never be truly independent.

Dwight Eisenhower’s ascension to the Presidency in 1953 seemed to offer fresh promise of resolving these issues. The new administration seemed to recognize the importance of Third World nationalist movements, such as the Free Officers movement. Nationalism, the National Security Council believed, “should be channeled not

²⁰² See: Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, 55.

²⁰³ Memorandum of Conversation, October 20, 1952, RG 59, lot 57 D654, Box 41, folder “Background Information, 1953,” NA.

²⁰⁴ See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 12.

opposed.”²⁰⁵ While President Eisenhower confided in his diary that “nationalism is on the march and world communism is taking advantage of that spirit.”²⁰⁶

The administration may have believed it understood the importance of third world nationalist movements and desired to work with them, in reality, it failed to appreciate them and their goals. Policymakers wanted Egypt to join MEDO, a western organized and dominated defense pact.²⁰⁷ The nations of the Middle East, however, particularly Egypt, wanted to free themselves from all foreign influence. The RCC not only wanted formal independence, but also independence from Western economic and foreign policy. They did not wish to enter into a Western dominated defense organization. Instead they wished to unite and form an indigenous independent defense grouping, which would, as one historian has written, serve as “‘the protective armor’ of each Arab state against both western imperialism and Israel.”²⁰⁸

Such absolute freedom, the administration believed, was impossible. As Secretary Dulles bluntly stated, “times have changed.” The cold war demanded certain sacrifices. “No nation exercises total independence.”²⁰⁹

Administration officials could not understand why Egypt’s leaders failed to appreciate this. In the absence of any other explanation for Egypt’s embrace of, supposedly, archaic definitions of sovereignty and security they relied on racial

²⁰⁵ Progress Report on NSC 5484, February 29, 1954, OSNSA, NSC Status of Projects, Box 3, DDEL.

²⁰⁶ Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries* (New York: Norton, 1981), 223.

²⁰⁷ Administration officials believed Egypt represented the “key” to efforts to construct MEDO. See: Untitled Document, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles May ’53,” DDEL.

²⁰⁸ See Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 28-33.

²⁰⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, May 26, 1953, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, Working Papers, Box 74, folder “Dulles Trip to Middle East and S. Asia, May 9-29 ’53,” NA.

explanations. Arab nationalism's inflexibility, they believed, sprang from Arabs' innate irrationality. It, Elbert Matthews of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff wrote, was "hypersensitive and xenophobic."²¹⁰ A "peculiar regional malady variously referred to as nationalism, anti-Westernism, xenophobia, or simply as a mass inferiority complex" wrote the American Ambassador in Egypt, afflicted the region.²¹¹

Instead of recognizing Egypt's interests, the administration wrote them off as the product of Arab irrationality and Soviet intrigue and attempted to force Egypt to join MEDO, subordinate its sovereignty, and accept American definitions of nationalism and security for the region.

MEDO essentially institutionalized the administration's racial views. Arabs, it was thought, were an inferior other. As such they were expected to assume a deferential position to racially superior Westerners. With MEDO, the believed to be, inferior Egyptians would voluntarily submit to superior American "protection" and tutelage in the cold war.

Such thinking can be seen in the multiple references to a "vacuum" in the region. "The decline and weakness of the UK and France in various sections of" the Middle East "have left a growing vacuum," the administration's Regional Planning Advisor for the Middle East stated. This vacuum, he continued, "should, from a US point of view, be

²¹⁰ US Policy in the Middle East, RG 59, lot 59 D518, Box 37, folder "OMEGA – Memos, etc. for July 1 to Aug. 31 1956 (3)," NA.

²¹¹ Summary Record of the Conference of US Chiefs of Mission in the NEA Area Held at Istanbul, May 11-14, 1953, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, OCB Central File Series, Box 77, folder "OCB 091.4 NE (File 1) (1)," DDEL.

filled.”²¹² The logic was simple and brutal, Arab states were so inferior they simply ceased to exist. The only time a power or a force existed in the region was when a Western power did.

Some may argue that strategic realities not racialized thinking, account for talk of a vacuum. There is some merit to this contention. The administration believed that most Arab states, if invaded by the Soviet Union, held little hope of prevailing, a National Intelligence Estimate concluded that “except for Turkey, and possibly Israel, the states of the Middle East still have almost no ability to withstand a Soviet attack.”²¹³ The point is counter factual and thus impossible to prove, but, probably correct. Indigenous Arab forces stood little chance of repelling a full-scale Soviet invasion of the region, but this did not mean that a “vacuum” existed. Arab states and Arab forces existed and could have been augmented to withstand potential Soviet aggression. The administration could have provided the RCC with the military equipment it desired. American belief in Arab inferiority, however, precluded them from implementing such a policy. Instead the administration continued to advance MEDO, believing that it could convince the RCC to appreciate the inaccuracy of their irrational thinking and acquiesce to the American understanding of nationalism and security. As long as this seemed possible the administration swept these racial concerns out of sight, but never completely out of mind.

²¹² Memorandum by the Acting Regional Planning Advisor, April 7, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 1, 208. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, May 11, 1953, *ibid.*, Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State, December 7, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 391 ; Memorandum of a Conversation, Ambassador Dillon’s Residence, Paris, December 10, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 400 ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, December 20, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 415.

²¹³ National Intelligence Estimate, June 21, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 93

Events in the region seemed to offer hope that this was possible. During the first months of 1953 Egypt and Britain concluded an agreement on the status of the Sudan. For years Egypt had claimed the Sudan as Egyptian territory. In early 1953, however, the RCC accepted Sudanese self-determination.²¹⁴

The RCC also accepted U.S. aid. In early 1953 it welcomed ten million dollars in agricultural aid and 11.7 million dollars in aid for rural revitalization, public health, public works, and industrial improvement.²¹⁵

The recommencement of negotiations on the status of the base at Suez in April also offered promise. Egypt and the United Kingdom had been intermittently negotiating the status of the Suez base since 1945, with little success.²¹⁶ The likelihood of reaching an agreement, however, seemed to improve in 1953. The previous year British military officials concluded that the base was no longer “indispensible.” The proliferation of atomic weapons and the means to deliver them long distances made large bases such as the one at Suez exceedingly vulnerable to nuclear annihilation.²¹⁷

This finding made the British more amenable to settling the dispute, but only on their terms. The United Kingdom continued to believe that the base could prove valuable in the event of war with the Soviet Union. Consequently they refused to unilaterally withdraw their personnel. Instead they wished to remove the bulk of their

²¹⁴ Gordon, *Nasser's*, 168.

²¹⁵ Memorandum by the Administrator of the Technical Cooperation Administration (Andrews) to the Deputy Director of the Mutual Security Agency for Program and Coordination (Ohly), March 3, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2205-06 ; Editor's Note, *ibid*, 2074.

²¹⁶ Gordon, *Nasser's*, 158.

²¹⁷ Hahn, *The United States*, 156-7.

forces, but leave behind sufficient personnel and equipment to reactivate the base in the event of war.

British planners formulated three potential outcomes to negotiations, scenarios A, B, and C. Under A the United Kingdom would relinquish control of the base, remove the majority of its 80,000 personnel, but leave behind 7,000 personnel to administer and maintain the base. Under scenario B it would remove all of its forces and leave behind a skeleton crew of technicians to supervise Egyptian personnel, maintain the base, and, if needed, reactivate it in sixty days. In the third and final scenario Great Britain would withdraw all of its forces, but, periodically inspect the base to ensure that it could be reactivated in sixty to ninety days.

With negotiations set to resume the British sought U.S. participation, hoping that a united front would force the RCC to compromise. Eisenhower initially agreed to participate, but only if Egypt requested United States participation. President Eisenhower wanted to help settle the dispute, but he did not want to “gate crash.”²¹⁸ When Egypt balked at U.S. participation, however, and the administration honored these wishes. Negotiations soon resumed without American participation.

Spurred by American entreaties the two sides made progress towards reaching an agreement along the lines of B. In May, however, negotiations collapsed over how London would transmit its orders to the technicians. The U.K. maintained that it needed

²¹⁸ Quoted in Hahn, *The United States*, 162.

to convey all orders directly to them, while Egypt insisted that all orders go through Egyptian officials.²¹⁹

Deadlocked, the two sides turned to the United States. Caught between a steadfast partner and a coveted ally, the administration eventually sided with Britain. While the administration desperately wanted to resolve the base dilemma and secure Egyptian participation in MEDO it could not, it believed, afford to deny its European ally. As Undersecretary of State Bedell Smith noted U.S.-U.K. relations were worse than “at any time since Pearl Harbor.” If the administration did not side with Britain the Conservative government there might fall and be replaced by a Labor government which “might cost us our bases.”²²⁰

Relations with the RCC only worsened after this decision. Eisenhower soon bowed to British pressure and withdrew an offer of nearly eleven million dollars in military aid. The British feared the RCC would use this aid against their forces at Suez. The RCC had sanctioned a guerilla campaign against British forces at Suez and between October 1951 and June 1954 guerillas killed 47 British soldiers and committed 3,267 acts of theft or vandalism.²²¹

The administration tried to soften the blow. It offered to provide Egypt with flight training for fifty pilots.²²² The RCC, however, turned down this offer. Flight

²¹⁹ Telegram from Cairo to the Secretary of State, May 12, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles May ’53,” DDEL.

²²⁰ Memorandum, Discussion at the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 4, folder “145th Meeting,” DDEL.

²²¹ Sachar, *Europe Leaves*, 602.

²²² Hahn, *The United States*, 168.

training for fifty pilots did little to offset Israel's perceived military advantage and did not eject British forces from their country.

Disappointed, the Eisenhower administration continued to try to convince the RCC to accept its understanding of nationalism and regional security. The man charged with accomplishing this feat was no less than the Secretary of State himself. In May Secretary Dulles left for a three week fact finding trip to the region.

The Secretary's most important stop came in Cairo. He landed ready to reconciliation. This, however, was complicated by the administration's beliefs about Arabs, Arab nationalism, and the RCC. Just weeks before Dulles departed President Eisenhower complained to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill that Naguib must "satisfy the population's intense emotionalism with respect to national prestige."²²³ A State Department briefing paper prepared for Dulles' trip stated that it is currently in "fashion in the Arab world is to blame colonial exploitation for all ills" and that an "important current motivation" in Egypt is "intense emotionalism."²²⁴ Arab, and particularly Egyptian actions, the administration believed, were being driven by irrationality, specifically by emotionalism, not by rational thought.

²²³Dwight Eisenhower to Winston Churchill, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder "Dulles, April 1953," DDEL.

²²⁴ Proposal for Special Information Effort to the Arab Region, June 12, 1953, RG 59, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject File, Box 11, folder "Dulles Report on NCA /RIP 1953," NA (my emphasis). For other early examples of the administration associating Arabs and Egyptians with emotionalism see: The Charge in Lebanon to the Department of State, September 17, 1953, *FRUS*, vol. 9, 1952-54, part 1, 1316.

The whole purpose of the Secretary of State's trip was to replace these "excessive emotional outbursts with presentations which hew closer to the facts."²²⁵ The sober rational westerner was visiting the region to talk some sense into the irrational emotional Arabs.

These beliefs caused problems from the start. During his first meeting with the Egyptian government the Secretary presented General Naguib with a .32 caliber pistol from President Eisenhower's personal collection. The act was designed to demonstrate to Egypt that the United States understood its desire for arms and could, and would, fulfill it. But the way in which the Secretary presented this symbol sent a very different message. As the Secretary placed the pistol in the General's hands he lectured him that "this is for keeping peace, not for war."²²⁶ The sober Westerner had to assure that the irrational Arab did not misconstrue the message.

Further friction ensued as the two sides sat down for a series of meetings. The Secretary tried to convince the Egyptian representatives to accept a settlement on Suez along the lines of Britain's scenario B. The Egyptian foreign minister, however, informed Dulles that Egypt "would never accept non-Egyptian experts here 'in control of anything.'"²²⁷ British technicians, Egyptian representatives believed, were unnecessary. Egyptian technicians could maintain the base's stores and equipment. The Secretary of State, however, dismissed this assertion as "unreasonable and

²²⁵ Proposal for Special Information Effort to the Arab Region, June 12, 1953, RG 59, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Subject File, Box 11, folder "Dulles Report on NCA /RIP 1953," NA.

²²⁶ Robert C. Doty, "Dulles, In Cairo, Indicates U.S. Backs Britain on Suez," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1953.

²²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between the United States and Egypt, May 11, 1953 4pm, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Planning Policy Staff, Working Papers, Box 74, folder "Dulles Trip to Near East and S. Asia May 9-29 1953," NA.

unfortunate.”²²⁸ Instead the Secretary tried to convince Egypt that the presence of British technicians at Suez did not violate the country’s sovereignty. The technicians, Dulles rationalized, were no different than Ford motor company supervisors who oversaw production at the company’s factories in the country. Needless to say Egyptian officials found this argument less than compelling.²²⁹

Dulles also had difficulty convincing Egypt to accept the American definition of regional security. Egyptian officials indicated that they would not join MEDO regardless of how Suez negotiations turned out. Egypt, the Prime Minister stated, “has had bitter experience with many agreements with the UK which have not been kept.” In a 1926 treaty the United Kingdom had promised Egypt a modern army, but instead delivered one “fit only for funeral celebrations.”²³⁰ These past experiences, he informed Dulles, had taught them that “agreements made on the basis of a master-slave relationship are of no use.”²³¹ Egypt would not subordinate itself and its interests to the West. It had its own definition of sovereignty and security and was not about to accept the American view.

Additionally, the new government would not join MEDO because, as the American Ambassador in Egypt wrote, “acceptance of any type of MEDO would be

²²⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo, May 12, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54*, vol 9, part 1, 22.

²²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation between the United States and Egypt, May 11, 1953 4pm, RG 59, Records of the Planning Policy Staff, Working Papers, Box 74, folder “Dulles Trip to Near East and S. Asia May 9-29 1953,” NA.

²³⁰ Memorandum of Conversation between the United States and Egypt, May 11, 1953 5pm, RG 59, Records of the Planning Policy Staff, Working Papers, Box 74, folder “Dulles Trip to Near East and S. Asia May 9-29 1953,” NA.

²³¹ *Ibid.*,

‘suicide’” for it.²³² As one historian has written by this point in time “the junta’s star appeared to be in decline. It had failed to resolve the base dispute. It had also implemented unpopular price controls, which produced severe shortages of basic foodstuffs. The officers could not enter into a defense pact with the west at this time.²³³ As Nasser, the real power behind the scenes, informed Dulles the people “think of MEDO as a ‘perpetuation of occupation’ and the “people’s will would have to be respected.”²³⁴

Such Egyptian intransience left Dulles perplexed. He simply could not understand why they could not see the bigger picture: the Soviet threat to the region. The “great difficulty” Dulles informed the National Security Council was the “complete preoccupation of the Arab states with their own local problems and their lack of understanding and interest in the threat posed by the Soviet Union.”²³⁵

The Arab character, the administration believed, prompted this lack of understanding. “Intense xenophobia and distrust of the West,” Dulles complained, are rampant in the region.²³⁶ “Almost entire area,” he grumbled, is “caught in fanatical revolutionary spirit that causes” them “to magnify their immediate problems and depreciate the Soviet threat.”²³⁷

²³² Memorandum of Conversation by the Officer in Charge of Egypt and Anglo-Egypt Sudan Affairs, May 4, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 1, 373.

²³³ Gordon, *Nasser’s*, 75.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council, June 1, 1953, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box, 4, folder “147th Meeting,” DDEL.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* See also: Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Israel, May 14, 1954, *FRUS*, vol. 9, part 1, 39 ; Ambassador in Egypt to Department of State, May 13, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part one, 25.

²³⁷ Conclusions on Trip, RG 59, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, Country and Area File, Box 30, folder “Near and Middle East 1953,” NA.

Convinced that the Egyptians were acting irrationally the administration began to question the value of MEDO. After returning to Washington the Secretary came to believe that “we must abandon our” efforts to make “Egypt the key country” in MEDO. Later he concluded that the “old MEDO concept” is “certainly finished.”²³⁸

The administration’s old strategy in ruins, it began to search for a replacement. Syria, Secretary Dulles believed, “was a state that offered real possibilities, thanks to” its pro-Western leader General Shishakli.²³⁹ Syria also had the benefit of not being involved in the Suez muddle, it was cheaper to improve economically, could absorb Palestinians refugees and therefore help defuse Arab-Israeli tensions, and was “more aware of Soviet threat, because of [the] proximity of Soviet frontier.”²⁴⁰

Ultimately, however, plans to anchor area defense around Syria fizzled. Military advisors believed that an alliance with Syria offered little value. The Levant state, they concluded, was “very unpopular with neighbors” and not an “adequate substitute for Egypt,” they concluded.²⁴¹

Instead the administration came to champion the Northern Tier. The Northern Tier proposed building an alliance of northern Middle Eastern states (initially Pakistan and Turkey) to contain Communist aggression at the region’s edge. These states, the

²³⁸ Telegram from Baghdad to Department of State, May 18, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles May ’53,” DDEL ; Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council, June 1, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 1, 380-385.

²³⁹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 June 1953, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box, 4, folder “147th Meeting,” DDEL ; Telegram from Baghdad to Department of State, May 18, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles May ’53,” DDEL.

²⁴⁰ Baghdad to Secretary of State, May 17, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles, May 1953,” DDEL.

²⁴¹ Baghdad to Secretary of State, May 17, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder “Dulles, May 1953,” DDEL.

administration believed, were rational, they perceived the Soviet threat, because they, as Dulles stated, felt “the hot breath of the Soviet Union on their necks.”²⁴² Perhaps not coincidentally, these two states were also not Arab.

While the administration shifted its focus to the Northern Tier it continued to keep Egypt in view. The Northern Tier was not a perfect solution. President Eisenhower worried that the grouping did not possess sufficient “defense in depth.” As insurance he wanted to “link” it to Egypt.²⁴³ Given time, the administration hoped, the Egyptians might cool down, start thinking rationally, perceive the Soviet threat, and accept the American plan for the region.

Egypt, however, had no intention of joining the Northern Tier. Instead Nasser and the RCC proposed building a defense pact around the pre-existing Arab League Collective Security Pact. This, unlike the Northern Tier, was an indigenous defense grouping. It provided for defense of the area, but did not provide western powers with control over Arab foreign policy.²⁴⁴

The administration found this option wanting. The pact, Dulles complained, would ultimately be “responsible to the Arab League Council,” not to the American government. U.S. adherence would also produce “sweeping commitments” to Arab states and their security. This might commit the U.S. to side with the Arab states in a war against Israel. The pact would also have likely excluded Pakistan, a staunch

²⁴² Memorandum of Discussion at the 153rd Meeting of the National Security Council, July 9, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 1, 395.

²⁴³ Memorandum of Discussion at the 207th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 23, 1954, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 5, folder “207th Meeting,” DDEL.

²⁴⁴ Discussion at the 21th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 6, folder “212th,” DDEL.

American ally and a military power viewed as critical to area defense. Finally the “general character of the treaty and the organization,” Dulles believed, would not produce a “workable” defense.²⁴⁵

Instead the administration continued to labor to convince the Egyptians to rethink and consider supporting the Northern Tier.²⁴⁶ To help accomplish this it continued its efforts to resolve the Anglo-Egyptian base dispute. In July 1953 it forwarded a proposal to Cairo. The British would retain technical control over the base, but Egypt would make the base available in the event of war. The administration hoped that Egypt would forward this proposal onto London as if it were its own. As an inducement the administration offered to provide a “substantial amount” of aid, 25 million dollars in economic aid and another 25 million dollars in military aid, if the two sides reached an agreement.²⁴⁷

Unable to resist the lure of military aid the RCC passed the proposal onto London. On this basis negotiations resumed in August. In a pattern that soon became familiar, however, negotiations promptly collapsed. The two sides could not agree on how long British forces would remain. The British insisted their technicians needed to remain on the base as long as British equipment resided there, while Egypt insisted that

²⁴⁵ The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, May 1, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 364-366. See also: Discussion at the 21th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 6, folder “212th,” DDEL.

²⁴⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, March 31, 1955, *FRUS* 1955-57, vol. 12, 47.

²⁴⁷ Smith to Cairo, 4 July 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2108-9 ; Dulles to Cairo, July 7, 1953, *ibid.*, 2111-12; Dulles to Cairo, July 15, 1953, *ibid.*, 2121-22.

they should remain only as long as it took for them to train Egyptian technicians how to maintain the base and its equipment.²⁴⁸

In September the two sides reached a compromise on this issue only to see negotiations derail again, this time over base availability. Under what conditions could Great Britain reactivate the base? Both sides agreed they could reactivate the base if the United Kingdom went to war with the Soviet Union or if the USSR invaded an Arab country. But, what if the Soviet Union invaded a non-Arab state in the region? London wanted to reactivate the base if the Soviets invaded Turkey or Iran. Britain eventually, however, agreed to merely “consult” with Egypt in this eventuality after Bedell Smith informed them that if “America thought the base necessary” it would “walk in and take it-whatever the agreement said.”²⁴⁹

Soon, however, another problem arose: uniforms. The British insisted that their technicians wear military uniforms. The Egyptians maintained that for public relations reasons they not. Unable to resolve this seemingly minor issue talks again collapsed in October.

Angered by the lack of progress, the United States’ unwillingness to provide it with the arms it so desperately needed, and the U.S. decision to provide its foe Israel with 26 million dollars in aid the RCC began considering implementing a neutralist policy. In January it officially embraced what the RCC called “positive neutrality.” Minister of National Guidance Salah Salim defined positive neutrality as “hostility and non-cooperation toward any nation which infringed [on] Egypt’s dignity and freedom,

²⁴⁸ Ambassador in Egypt to Department of State, May 13, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 1, 26

²⁴⁹ Quoted in Hahn, *American and Egypt*, 172.

but cooperation with all countries both east and west which extend a hand of friendship.”²⁵⁰

In retaliation, and under pressure from the British, the Eisenhower administration denied Egypt the aid it had previously offered. According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, supplying the aid “would make it appear that US was acting under threat” and this would only “encourage extremists and neutralists tendencies in other countries in the area.”²⁵¹

Angered, the administration still wanted to try to pull Egypt back from its neutralist course, but how? The Secretary of State thought he arrived upon an answer, “a general solution of the quarrel between the Israelis and the Arabs.”²⁵² For far too long, the administration believed, the USSR has been able “to capitalize on the discord between the Arab states and Israel and between the Arab states and the West.” If, however, the administration settled the Arab-Israeli dispute, it “would remove the main block to Arab willingness to cooperate with the West.”²⁵³ Once the Arab-Israeli issue was settled, the administration hoped, Egypt would start acting rationally and support, or at least not oppose, the Northern Tier.

Time for such a settlement seemed precipitous. In April General Gamal Abdel Nasser replaced Naguib. American officials were initially high on Nasser. The

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Janokowski, *Nasser's Egypt*, 57-58.

²⁵¹ Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs (Heart) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Jernegan), January 7, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, part 2, 2192.

²⁵² Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NCS Series, box 7, folder “267th Meeting,” DDEL.

²⁵³ Measures to Counter Communist Threat in Arab Countries, RG 59, General Records of the State Department, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (Box 1-12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 28, folder “ALPHA Washington Talks, July-Feb 55 Memos During Meetings,” NA.

American ambassador in Cairo wrote that “my appraisal of Nasser personally rise with each meeting.” He is “basically pro-West and certainly anti-Communist” and “is not hostile to northern tier approach nor Turk-Iraqi pact in itself.” While Salah Salem engaged in “ravings,” Nasser knew that he was “now very much in a box.” Nasser, he concluded, represents “basically the best that Egypt has had in our lifetime.”²⁵⁴ Nasser, in short, seemed to offer fresh promise of Arab rationality.

Promise also sprang from another source. The long drawn out Suez affair was finally winding to a close. After resuming negotiations in July negotiators resolved the lone outstanding issue: how long would British technicians remain at the base. The British proposed they stay for ten years, the Egyptians seven. Eventually the two sides reached a compromise. The technicians would remain for seven years, but all other British forces would evacuate in twenty months. This last hurdle cleared the two sides signed an agreement on July 27th.

With the atmosphere in the region improving the administration launched Operation ALPHA, its solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute, in late 1954. ALPHA took an ambitious comprehensive approach to the dilemma. It tried to solve all the region’s problems with a single agreement. ALPHA proposed that Israel settle 75,000 Palestinian refugees in its territory. All remaining refugees, meanwhile, would remain in the Arab countries in which they resided and receive compensation from international authorities for their lost land. Additionally border adjustments would be made and the holy sites in Jerusalem would be internationalized. The plan also called for the Arab

²⁵⁴ Telegram from Embassy in Egypt, March 20, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 43.

states to end their economic embargo of Israel, for Egypt to reopen the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping, for an America sponsored development of the Jordan River Valley, and for the Western powers to guarantee Israel's borders.²⁵⁵

To induce Egyptian participation the administration offered to provide it with 20 million dollars in economic aid, another 20 million in military aid, to increase the number of Egyptian students allowed to attend U.S. universities, to give Egyptian arms purchases higher priority, to provide 100 million dollars in aid for the construction of the Aswan dam, to provide an atomic energy project and U.S. food surpluses, and to use American economic leverage to improve Egyptian cotton markets.²⁵⁶

To convince Nasser to accept this proposal President Eisenhower dispatched Texas oil man, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, and trusted confidant Robert Anderson to Egypt. This proved an inauspicious selection. From the start Anderson had difficulty communicating with Nasser. According to one participant, Anderson's "Texas drawl was so thick that Nasser couldn't understand a thing he said." When the first meeting concluded the Egyptian leader pulled the CIA's Kim Roosevelt, a trusted friend of Nasser and an advisor to Anderson, aside and asked him "Kim, what did he say?" The CIA operative proceeded to translate Anderson's Texan into English. To avoid any

²⁵⁵ Approach to Israel-Arab Settlement, January 16, 1955, RG 59. Miscellaneous Lot Files 59D 518 (box 1 of 12) Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega 1945-1957, Box 28, folder "ALPHA – Washington Talks, Jan – Feb 55 Memos Preceding Meetings," NA.

²⁵⁶ Approach to Arab Israel Settlement, RG 59, General Records of the State Department, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (Box 1-12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 28, folder "ALPHA Washington Talks, July-Feb 55 Memos During Meetings," NA ; Telegraph from London to Cairo, RG 59, General Records of the State Department, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (box 2 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 29, NA.

further complications at the next meeting Nasser bluntly informed Anderson “You speak English to Kim and he will speak English to me.”²⁵⁷

Unfortunately for Anderson, things did not improve once Nasser understood what he was proposing. For obvious domestic reasons the new Egyptian leader was reluctant to make any concessions to Israel. As for the administration’s offer of twenty million dollars in military aid, it underwhelmed the Egyptian leader. Nasser was under the impression, apparently the result of a visit by President Truman’s Deputy Secretary of Defense in 1952, that the United States would provide Egypt with 100 million dollars in aid.²⁵⁸ To be offered only twenty million dollars after years of waiting and after making many politically painful concessions to the hated British came as an insult.

If this was not bad enough the offer contained conditions which were completely unacceptable to Nasser. U.S. law required that an American military mission supervise how Egypt used the aid. Nasser and the RCC had just expelled British military personnel after years of difficult negotiation; they had no interest in inviting in the military personnel of another foreign power.

Cognizant of this the Eisenhower administration offered a compromise; American military personnel would wear civilian clothes. This sartorial change, however, missed the point. It was not the uniforms that Nasser found objectionable, but the presence of any foreign military personnel in the country. Nasser accepted the economic aid, but turned down the military aid, and Anderson left Cairo empty-handed.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, 135-136.

²⁵⁸ See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 51.

Unwilling to take no for an answer the administration reportedly made one last effort to convince the new Egyptian leader to accept the aid and ALPHA. According to the CIA's Wilbur Eveland, President Eisenhower dispatched Kim Roosevelt to personally deliver 3 million dollars in bribe money to Nasser. The effort, however, backfired. Nasser took the money, but was so insulted, that he used it to build a radio tower in Cairo, a tower which would later fill Arab air waves with anti-American invectives. As an added insult Egyptians took to calling the tower "Roosevelt's erection."²⁵⁹

U.S.-Egyptian relations only cooled further as the administration accelerated its Northern Tier strategy. In April the United States signed a military aid agreement with Iraq. This action infuriated Egypt. The civilizations of the Mesopotamian and Nile valleys had long competed for power in the Middle East. Each civilization thought its rightful place to lead the region.²⁶⁰ The U.S. decision to give aid to Egypt's historic rival provoked consternation in Cairo. It was particularly galling because Egypt had to suffer through years of delay and painful concessions to Britain in order to receive an aid offer much lower than expected.

In February activity on the Northern Tier quickened. Acting under American encouragement Turkey and Iraq signed the Turko-Iraq Pact, or the Baghdad Pact. The pact served as the structural foundation for the Northern Tier. It bound the two nations together in a military alliance.

²⁵⁹ Wilbur Crane Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 91 ; Holland, *America and Egypt*, 60.

²⁶⁰ See Elie Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World: the Struggle Over the Baghdad Pact* (Leiden, NY: E.J. Brill, 1995), 1.

Cairo viewed this act as overtly threatening. As historian James Jankowski has written, the Baghdad Pact threatened to “simultaneously consolidate Western hegemony in the area” and “threaten Egyptian regional influence.”²⁶¹

To make matters worse these American moves could not have come at a worse time for Nasser and the RCC. On February 28th Israeli forces raided a military camp in Gaza, killing 38 Egyptians and Palestinians. This put tremendous pressure on Nasser since a major reason for the public’s support of the RCC was their belief that a military government would be a more effective in protecting Egyptian interests. The raid on Gaza, the RCC’s inability to acquire arms, and the American aid offer to Iraq struck at the very core of this assumption. Nasser and the RCC found themselves in a precarious position. If they wanted to stay in power they needed to do something to strengthen Egypt’s position in the region and to rekindle the public’s faith in them.²⁶²

One way the RCC tried to strengthen its position was with Radio Cairo. Broadcasts from the station flooded the region’s airwaves with invectives against Iraq, the U.S., and the Baghdad Pact. The goal: convince other Arab states not to join the Northern Tier. In March the regime took another step towards solidifying its position in the region. It signed a mutual security agreement, the ESS Pact, with Syria and Saudi Arabia.

²⁶¹ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 59, 71.

²⁶² This had been a tumultuous period for Nasser and the RCC. In the two previous years opposition to the military government had increased. The RCC faced strikes by workers, a feud with the Muslim Brotherhood (which led the RCC to outlaw them), growing discontent within the ranks of the military, an attempted coup by artillery units, public protests in support of General Naguib, and an attempt on Nasser’s life. See: Gordon, *Nasser’s*, 83, 105, 112,-117, chapter 7, and 179.

These actions left American policymakers once again perplexed. Administration officials were unable to appreciate the position their actions had put Nasser and the RCC into, so they once again fell back on the only remaining explanation for Egyptian behavior: Arab irrationality. The RCC was attacking American interests in the region, Dulles believed, because it was irrationally “jealousy” of its historic rival in Iraq.²⁶³ The U.S. ambassador in Egypt described the Egyptian reaction as a going “into tantrums.”²⁶⁴

Despite this the administration continued to exercise restraint. While it could not give the ESS Pact its “blessing and support,” it decided not to oppose it. Any attempt to oppose the pact, they rationalized, “would be counter-productive.” It would only arouse “an all-out counter-attack on” the “US in much of” the “Arab world.”²⁶⁵

The administration also showed restraint because it had yet to completely give up on Nasser. He may have been acting irrationally, but the administration continued to believe that “rehabilitating” him was possible.²⁶⁶ As late as July Eisenhower spoke of continuing to “woo” the Egyptian leader.²⁶⁷ They found the fact that he had asked their “assistance in finding a solution” to the current difficulties reassuring.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Circular Telegram, March 28, 1955, RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Egypt, Cairo Embassy, Declassified General Records, 1953-59, Box 1, folder “320 Egypt-USA 1955,” NA.

²⁶⁴ Telegram from Embassy in Egypt, March 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 30.

²⁶⁵ Telegram from Embassy in Egypt, March 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 31.

²⁶⁶ Memorandum, March 28, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 2 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 29, folder, “Alpha Memos, etc... After Return from London, Mar 11 – April 26 1955,” NA.

²⁶⁷ Memorandum for the Secretary, July 11, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 2 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 29, folder, “Memos and Correspondence , July 1 – Aug 26 1955,” NA.

²⁶⁸ Memorandum, March 28, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 2 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 29, folder, “Alpha Memos, etc... After Return from London, Mar 11 – April 26 1955,” NA.

Good intentions aside, relations only worsened. In April of 1955 Britain joined the Baghdad Pact. Later that year Pakistan and Iran joined. These actions only further aggravated Nasser. By joining the pact Britain, Egypt's former imperial master, had found a way to perpetuate its influence in the region. Even worse, it had done so by aligning itself with Egypt's historic rival.

In April Nasser flew to Bandung, Indonesia. There a conference was taking place. The Asian-Afro Conference organized by the leaders of Indonesia, Pakistan, Burma, India, and Sri Lanka. While the conference addressed other issues such as ending the last vestiges of colonialism and racial discrimination its primary objective was to formulate a common policy for Third World nations in the cold war. For many leaders this was both a moral and a practical issue. As Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated in his closing remarks "if all the world were to be divided up between these two big blocs," as Soviet and American leaders wished. "The inevitable result would be war." Non-alignment was, he believed, the best way to prevent that from occurring. Non-aligned nations would exercise "objectivity" and "balance" and prevent the cold war from turning hot.²⁶⁹ Non-alignment had another benefit of course. It allowed these nations to stop subordinating their nations' national interests to the larger cold war cause.

Reinvigorated and now connected to a larger movement Nasser returned to Egypt and took drastic action. In September he signed a massive armaments deal with the Soviet satellite state of Czechoslovakia. Egypt received approximately 86 million

²⁶⁹ Speech in the closed session of the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, April 22, 1955, quoted from Nehru, *Selected Works*, second series, vol. XXVII, 124.

dollars in arms from Czechoslovakia (the Defense Department estimated the agreement's real value at closer to 200 million dollars given the sharp discounts the Soviets gave Egypt). In exchange for roughly 200 aircraft, 100 heavy tanks, six torpedo boats, two submarines, and countless other smaller items Egypt agreed to provide the Soviet bloc with a majority of its cotton export crop. Nasser and the RCC had finally received the military aid it had been seeking since 1953. Nasser preferred to receive the aid from the U.S., but as he warned the administration in August, Egypt "could not continue in a position obviously inferior to Israel. If Egypt was unable to obtain arms from her friends she would be obliged to turn to her enemies."²⁷⁰

Despite this warning, news of the deal shocked many in the White House. Secretary Dulles concluded, in a typically racially loaded fashion, the deal was "as irresponsible as giving a lethal weapon to children to play with."²⁷¹

Treasury Secretary George Humphrey cried that the Aswan package would allow the Soviets to "send in her people in large numbers," to "run all over Egypt" and "ultimately Communize it"²⁷² The Secretary of State held similar thoughts. The offer, he believed, constituted a "new cold war front in the Near East," which would prove

²⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation Between the U.S. and Egypt, August 8, 1955, RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Egypt, Cairo Embassy, Declassified General Records, 1953-59, Box 1, folder "320 Egypt-USA 1955," NA. See also: Telephone Call to the President in Denver, September 2, 1955, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder "Memo Tel-White House Jan 3 '56-Aug 31 '56," DDEL; Discussion at the 261st Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder "261st," DDEL.

²⁷¹ Quoted in Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 40.

²⁷² Memorandum of Discussion at the 268th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 7, folder "268th Meeting," DDEL.

“almost catastrophic for the West.” It would imperil Western Europe’s access to oil and allow Soviet influence to jump the Northern Tier and spill into Africa.²⁷³

Frustrated, the administration initially decided to “temporize” relations with Egypt. The U.S. would not actively oppose Egypt, but neither would it support the RCC. The only reason the administration did not break completely with Egypt was because, as Secretary Dulles rationalized, “Egypt as a neutralist” was “more tolerable than as a Communist satellite”²⁷⁴ Frustrated and abhorred as the administration was by Egyptian intransigence and its petitions of neutralism the administration could not risk pushing the country into the communist camp.

This did not last long, soon the administration spoke of isolating “Egypt from other Arab states.”²⁷⁵ The administration planned to isolate Egypt by undermining its influence in Libya and the Sudan, by erecting an armament embargo against the recalcitrant regime, by withholding future economic or technical assistance, by pressuring the International Reconstruction Development Bank (IRDB, later known as the World Bank) to cancel its aid package for the Aswan dam, by canceling any U.S. navy port calls in the country, and by using the United States Information Agency to

²⁷³ Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NCS Series, Box 7, folder “267th Meeting,” DDEL ; Discussion at the 261st Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “261st,” DDEL.

²⁷⁴ Memorandum of Conversation Between the United States and the United Kingdom, October 3, 1955, RG 59, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, Box 97, folder “Egypt,” NA.

²⁷⁵ Action Within the Area, RG 59, General Records of the State Department, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D518 (box 3 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 30, folder “Alpha Memos, etc. after Secretary’s Statement Aug 26 – Oct 29 1955,” NA.

conduct a propaganda campaign to erode support for the agreement among Arabs region-wide.²⁷⁶

In addition to these sticks, the administration proposed dangled a carrot, although a rather paltry one. The administration would inform Egypt that the United States would convince the IRBD to approve its aid package for the Aswan dam (which had been languishing in limbo since 1953) if it rejected the Czech offer. The administration also offered to dispense any aid already approved by Congress. Needless to say these meager inducements paled in comparison to the 86 million dollars in desperately needed armaments the RCC was about to receive from the Soviet bloc.²⁷⁷

Incensed Secretary Dulles railed in a National Security Council Meeting that the “Soviet Union had in effect opened up a new front in the Middle East.”²⁷⁸ The purpose of this new front, a National Intelligence Estimate predicted, was for the USSR to exclude “Western military bases from the relatively exposed south-western flank of the USSR” and to extend “Soviet influence” in the region.²⁷⁹

Nasser’s race, the administration believed, made this possibility highly likely. The Egyptian leader’s irrational “conspiracy-born suspicion,” stated one State Department memorandum, had already “prevented Nasser from reposing full faith in the

²⁷⁶ Action Within the Area, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D518 (box 3 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 30, folder “Alpha Memos, etc. after Secretary’s Statement Aug 26 – Oct 29 1955, folder 1 of 2,” NA.

²⁷⁷ Soviet Egyptian Arms Sale, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 3 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 30, folder “Alpha Memos, etc. after Secretary’s Statement Aug 26 – Oct 29 1955, folder 2 of 2,” NA.

²⁷⁸ Memorandum of Discussion at the 260th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “262nd,” DDEL.

²⁷⁹ National Intelligence Estimate, November 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 185.

good intentions of the West.”²⁸⁰ Now the Soviets, stated the Operations Coordinating Board, were using “irrational Arab nationalism,” to increase their influence.²⁸¹

Nasser’s irrationality, the White House believed, was causing him to fall into a carefully laid Soviet trap. The Soviets, concluded the National Security Council, were “promoting neutralism and fostering a false sense of security” in the region.²⁸² By assuming a neutralist position Nasser was allowing the Soviets to achieve their “ultimate goal” of surrounding the “USSR with a broad belt of neutralized states from which American military forces would be withdrawn.”²⁸³ Nasser, the President feared, might be “in the Communist pocket.”²⁸⁴

Once in the trap, the administration believed, domination was inevitable. Nasser may have believed that he could accept Soviet aid and maintain his freedom of action, but the rational Westerner knew better. According to a National Intelligence Estimate, the Egyptian government “overestimates its ability to cope with the long-range political risks involved in accepting Bloc support.”²⁸⁵ Nasser, Dulles chastised, “is toying with forces far greater than he knows anything about. In the face of Communist methods of penetration he is a babe in the woods” he does not have the “capacity to control the

²⁸⁰ Neutralism in the Area, RG 59, Lot File 59 D654, Subject Files Relating to the Dulles Trip, Box 41, folder “Neutralism,” NA.

²⁸¹ Operations Coordinating Board Progress Report on the Middle East, White House Office, National Security Staff Papers 1948-61, OCB Central File Series, Box 78, folder “File 4 (2),” DDEL.

²⁸² Communism in the Middle East, White House Office Files, National Security Council Staff, OCB Central File Series, Box 77, folder “OCB 091.4 ME (3),” DDEL.

²⁸³ Consequences of Alternative US Responses to Soviet-Egyptian Arms Deal, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 3 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 30, folder “Alpha Memos, etc. after Secretary’s Statement Aug 26 – Oct 29 1955, folder 2 of 2” NA.

²⁸⁴ Telephone Call to the President, November 29, 1955, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Telephone Conversations-White House September ’55- December ’55,” DDEL.

²⁸⁵ National Intelligence Estimate, November 8, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 189.

situation he is getting into.”²⁸⁶ The wily communists would ultimately, the administration believed, take advantage of, and dominate, the gullible Arab.

Despite this bleak racial thinking the administration decided to launch one last effort to instill rationality into the Egyptian leader. According to Dulles “we must seek a *modus Vivendi* with the Nasser regime in Egypt.” Why? Because, as Dulles, continued, “our course of action in the Near East depend[s] upon the success or failure of our efforts.”²⁸⁷ If Egypt fell to Soviet intrigue it would imperil all American interests in the region. The Soviet deluge would jump the banks of the Northern Tier. So in December the administration made one last attempt to woo Nasser—the White House offered to finance the construction of the Aswan dam. The United States and Great Britain would each provide Egypt with 200 million dollars while the IRBD would provide the remaining 200 million necessary to complete the project.²⁸⁸

In addition the administration launched Operation GAMMA. An American envoy would conduct separate negotiations with both Nasser and Israel’s David Ben Gurion in an effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute.²⁸⁹ To head this effort President Eisenhower once again turned to his good friend Robert Anderson. Anderson shuttled back and forth between Tel Aviv and Cairo. He was unable, however, to resolve two crucial issues. What to do with the Palestinian refugees? And what about Israeli

²⁸⁶ Memorandum of Conversation Between the United Kingdom and the United States, October 26, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 4 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 31, folder “Geneva Conference Oct 27 – Nov 17 1955,” NA.

²⁸⁷ Memorandum from Elbert G. Mathews of the Policy Planning Staff to the Director, December 13, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 212.

²⁸⁸ Discussion at the 268th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “268th,” DDEL.

²⁸⁹ Discussion at the 261st Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “261st,” DDEL.

territorial concessions? Nasser wanted land in the Negev to unite the Arab lands; Israel did not want to make such a concession. As a compromise the United States proposed the creation of “converging triangles.” The Jewish state would concede land in the Negev to Jordan and Egypt. This would divide it into four triangles; Israel would control those in the north and south, while the Arab states would possess those in the east and west. Where these triangles “overlapped” two highways would cross, one running north-south connecting Israeli territory, another, a raised highway, running east-west connecting Arab territory. This was far from an ideal solution. As Nasser chided “suppose an Arab was on the overpass one day and felt the call of nature and it landed on an Israeli car on the underpass.” If this happened, “there would be a war!”²⁹⁰ Not surprisingly Anderson left empty handed. Neither Nasser nor Ben Gurion were willing to make significant concessions.

In March a series of events began in Jordan which precipitated the administration’s final break with Nasser. It began when the British launched an effort to convince the Jordanians to join the Baghdad Pact, which produced a backlash among Jordanian nationalists. To quell these critics the newly enthroned King Hussein dismissed Lieutenant General John Bagot Glubb, the British commanding officer of the Arab legion, a force established while the nation was still a British colony.²⁹¹

Around this time Nasser and the ESS Pact also began courting the young Jordanian King. They wished to conclude a bilateral alliance with Jordan to help further

²⁹⁰ Nasser quoted in Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 55-57.

²⁹¹ Discussion at the 286th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “286th,” DDEL.

marginalize Iraq and the Northern Tier. To obtain the king's cooperation they offered to assume the 20 million pound a year stipend the British provided the insolvent Jordanian government.

These actions enraged the British. They believed Nasser had instigated Glubb's dismissal and was now attacking their position in Jordan. Prime Minister Anthony Eden raged "I want him [Nasser] destroyed" (Minister of State Anthony Nutting's biography asserts that Eden actually fumed "I want him murdered").²⁹²

Soon London began pressuring the United States to join the Baghdad Pact. The administration, while worried by events in Jordan, was not convinced this was good policy. American participation would drag the U.S. into "intra-area politics," poison relations with the USSR, and raise Israeli insecurities, prompting them to—possibly—demand a security guarantee.²⁹³ The British, Secretary Dulles also worried, "have taken" the Baghdad Pact "over and run it as an instrument of British policy."²⁹⁴ Joining would only suit their interests, not American.

To make matters worse in June of 1956 Soviet Foreign Minister Dimitri Shepilov visited Egypt. While there he conveyed another offer. The USSR would loan Egypt the funds necessary to build the long cherished Egyptian plan of building a new dam on the Nile River at Aswan. Many Egyptians considered the project a panacea for the country's problems. It promised to push Egypt and its economy into the twentieth century.

²⁹² First quotation in Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 41; second in Anthony Nutting, *No End of a Lesson: the Story of Suez* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1967), 34.

²⁹³ Memorandum of Conversation, January 13, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 219-220; Memorandum of a Conversation with Sir Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandums, Box 1, folder "General A-D (3)," DDEL.

²⁹⁴ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between the President and the Secretary of State, April 7, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 270.

Building it would reclaim 1.3 million acres of agricultural land, generate electricity, and encourage industry. The Soviet offer would make this possible, and on generous terms. It volunteered to loan Egypt four hundred million dollars to be repaid over sixty years at zero percent interest. Additionally the Kremlin offered to write off all existing Egyptian debt to the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe, to purchase all Egyptian cotton exports, and to build a steel mill in the country.²⁹⁵

The RCC declined the offer. Regardless, news that the Soviets had made it incensed Eisenhower administration officials. Initially administration officials tried to place the news in a positive light. Secretary Dulles reasoned that financing the Aswan dam was a “terrible headache” for any country that attempted it. “The building of the dam was bound to place a heavy burden on the Egyptian economy and standard of living, and the Egyptians would blame the austerities they suffered on the nation which” was financing the construction of the dam.²⁹⁶

Soon the administration decided to upgrade its participation in the Baghdad Pact from observer to liaison. It also took the important step of establishing a joint working group with the British to reformulate American policy. The group’s objective was to create a “situation which would lead to the unseating of Nasser as soon as possible through actions of an economic and political character rather than by force.”²⁹⁷ With

²⁹⁵ Memorandum of Discussion at the 289th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “289th Meeting,” DDEL.

²⁹⁶ Memorandum of Discussion at the 289th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “289th Meeting,” DDEL.

²⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between the United Kingdom and the United States, October 1, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 36, folder “Omega Syria,” NA.

this statement administration policy had come full circle, from courting the new Egyptian government to actively trying to destroy it.

Why did the administration turn against Nasser and the RCC in 1956? “Arabs,” President Eisenhower fumed, like Nasser who accepted “major consignment of arms from the Soviets” are “daily growing more arrogant and disrespectful of Western Europe and of the United States.”²⁹⁸ Nasser he charged “embodied the emotional demands of the people of the area for independence” and was now irrationally “slapping the white Man down.”²⁹⁹ The inferior was no longer accepting his subordinate position.

The irrational Arab’s actions, whether “intentional or not,” wrote the State Department’s Francis Russell, were “aiding the USSR.”³⁰⁰ “Soviet penetration is facilitated,” charged the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, by “the ambitions of Nasser and the willingness of Nasser” to “work with the Soviets, especially to obtain arms.”³⁰¹ Nasser, Secretary Dulles concluded, had “become a tool of the Russians.”³⁰²

Such thinking, of course, was not new. The administration had long believed that the RCC and Nasser were irrational, emotional, and that this benefitted the Soviets. Something, however, had changed. “Nasser’s tidal wave,” distressed the Operations

²⁹⁸ Diary Entry by the President, March 13, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 342-3.

²⁹⁹ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 64.

³⁰⁰ U.S. Policy in the Near East, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 36, folder “Memos, etc from March 24 to April 23 1956,” NA. NA.

³⁰¹ Program to Counter Soviet Penetration in the Middle East, December 5, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 383.

³⁰² Memorandum of Conversation Between the United Kingdom and the United States, February 7, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 59 D518 (box 6 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 33, folder “Alpha Memos, etc During Eden Talks Dec 11 to Feb 15 ‘56 folder 2 of 2,” NA.

Coordinating Board, is “engulfing the area.”³⁰³ Nasser, the Secretary of State believed was trying to “create a core uniting the Arab world from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf.”³⁰⁴

As long as the stakes were limited to Egypt the administration had been willing to take a risk. They were willing to gamble that they could talk rationality into the irrational Arab, that they could convince Nasser and the RCC to subordinate their irrational understanding of nationalism and regional security to the rational American understanding. By 1956, however, they were no longer willing to take this risk. The stakes were too high. Nasser, they believed, was working to extend his influence throughout the region. They could not allow this to occur. As a “tool of the Russians,” any expansion of Nasser’s power was now an extension of Soviet power. Nasser needed to be contained. And as we shall see the administration spent the majority of the rest of its time in office trying to accomplish just this.

³⁰³ Operations Coordinating Board Memorandum for the Director, White House Office Files, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, OCB Series, Subject Files, Box 4, folder “NE – Radio Broadcasting (1),” DDEL.

³⁰⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, February 7, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files 59D 518 (Box 6 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, Box 33, folder “ALPHA- Memos, etc during Eden Talks, Dec 11 to Feb 15 ’56, folder 2,” NA.

CHAPTER V

EVEN THE BEST LAID PLANS: OPERATION OMEGA, THE SUEZ CRISIS, AND
CONTAINING NASSER, 1956-57

Having made the decision to contain Nasser, the question that now confronted the administration was how? Policymakers had no difficulty developing, and even implementing, strategies to accomplish this, successfully executing these strategies, however, proved more difficult. Throughout 1956 and 1957 events intervened to cause even the best laid of these plans to go awry.

Administration efforts to contain Nasser commenced in late 1956. Planners at the State Department developed a program to “reduce Nasser’s power,” eliminate him “as a force in the Middle East and Africa,” and to “undermine” his “regime at home.”³⁰⁵ This plan was Operation OMEGA.

OMEGA would apply progressively escalating amounts of political, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Nasser and his government. Why a gradual approach? Secretary Dulles wanted to keep the possibility of bringing “Nasser around” open.³⁰⁶ While he thought that the likelihood of “swinging” the Egyptian leader “away from the

³⁰⁵U.S. Policies Towards Nasser, August 4, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 37, folder “OMEGA – Developments Misc. 1956, folder 2,” NA ; Possible Courses of Action in the Near East, March 14, 1956, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518, Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, NA.

³⁰⁶Memorandum of Conversation, 1 April 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, box 36, folder “OMEGA-Syria, Misc. STRAGGLE 1956, folder 1”, NA.

present course of action” was “slight.” He did not want to foreclose the possibility entirely.³⁰⁷

Consequently phase one of OMEGA would begin by embargoing all military exports to Egypt, delaying funding of the Aswan dam, delaying PL 480 and CARE aid, jamming Radio Cairo broadcasts, dispatching U.S. military officials to Baghdad Pact meetings, impeding Egyptian cotton exports, lending U.S. support to Egypt’s rival in the Sudan, and combating Nasserist influence in Libya, Yemen, and Ethiopia.³⁰⁸

Once the administration implemented all of these measures it planned to pause and observe whether Nasser had, as Secretary Dulles phrased it, learned that “it was just not lucky to flirt and cooperate with the Russians.”³⁰⁹ If he did, the administration would welcome him back into the Western fold, but only if he paid the price for his penance. The Secretary wanted Nasser to prove that he realized the error of his ways. To do so he would have to either issue a radio statement proclaiming that he desired friendly relations with the United States, put an end to anti-Western Radio Cairo broadcasts, cooperate with the United Nations on the Arab-Israeli settlement, or use his influence in other Arab capitals to convince these states to participate in the administration’s plan to develop the Jordan River Valley.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ U.S. Policy in the Near East, March 28, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 36, folder “OMEGA-Syria, Misc. STRAGGLE 1956, folder 1,” NA ; United States Policy in the Near East, March 14, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 37, folder “OMEGA – Memos, etc from April 24, 1956 – June 30, 1956, folder 1,” NA.

³⁰⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 36, folder “OMEGA-Syria, Misc. STRAGGLE 1956, folder 1,” NA.

³¹⁰ Secretary of State to Cairo, April 25, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 5 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 32, folder “ALPHA – Outgoing

If the Egyptian leader remained obstinate the administration would proceed on to phase two of OMEGA. In phase two the administration would cancel all economic aid to Egypt, encourage other states in the region to join the Baghdad Pact, expand U.S. military aid to Iran, and detach Saudi Arabia from the ESS Pact.³¹¹

If these heightened measures still produced no results, the administration would proceed on to the third and final phase of OMEGA. It would deny import-export loans to private Egyptian companies, freeze Egyptian sterling assets, discourage Western tourists from visiting the Nile state, manipulate U.S. cotton exports to Egypt's detriment, cease selling spare parts to the Egyptian military, enforce the Battle Act (which allowed the administration to cut off aid or economic assistance to any nation which traded strategic materials with the Soviet Union or its allies), and side with Sudan in its dispute with Cairo over the Nile waters.³¹²

The administration began implementing phase one of OMEGA in late 1956. It delayed CARE and PL 480 aid. It also dispatched military advisors to participate in Baghdad Pact meetings and let its offer to finance the Aswan dam "wither on the vine."

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Telegrams," NA. This was the administration's latest effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. Under the plan the United States would build a series of dams to reclaim 300,000 acres of Jordanian, Syrian, Israeli, and Lebanese land. The dams would also generate enough electricity to provide industrial employment for Palestinian refugees.

³¹¹ U.S. Policy in the Near East, March 28, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 36, folder "OMEGA-Syria, Misc. STRAGGLE 1956, folder 1," NA.

³¹² U.S. Policy in the Near East, March 28, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects Alpha, Mask, and Omega, 1945-1957, Box 36, folder "OMEGA-Syria, Misc. STRAGGLE 1956, folder 1," NA.

³¹³ Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London: Cape, 1978), 68-69.

Some have claimed that the administration proceeded further during this period. The CIA's Wilbur Eveland claims that Secretary Dulles instructed the CIA to work with the British to directly "bring down Nasser."³¹⁴ Declassified documentation does not support this contention. This does not mean, however, that the claim is untrue. As many historians have shown President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles were willing to use the CIA to forcibly overthrow regimes they found wanting. The President approved covert agency efforts in Iran and Guatemala. He also ordered the CIA to develop a plan to overthrow the Castro government in Cuba. Eisenhower left office before the plan could be implemented. But his successor, John F. Kennedy, eventually approved the operation: the ill begotten Bay of Pigs Invasion.³¹⁵ This author, however, finds Eveland's contention unlikely. The administration labored tirelessly throughout this period to avoid taking any action which would alienate the Arab world and push it into the Soviet camp. Assassinating Nasser would surely have done just that.

Regardless, administration pressure seemed to have begun producing results. In January Nasser intimated to the British that he would stop opposing the Baghdad Pact if they admitted no other Arab states to join the pact.³¹⁶ The next month Egypt's foreign minister Mahmoud Fawzi conveyed a similar message to London.³¹⁷ In March Egyptian representatives informed British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd that they would end

³¹⁴ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 248.

³¹⁵ See: Stephen Ambrose, *Ike's Spies Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981); Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 1982); Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the CIA Coup In Guatemala* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982); Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979); Trumbull Higgins, *The Perfect Failure: Kennedy, Eisenhower, and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987).

³¹⁶ Humphrey Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution* (Boston, MA: 1970), 58-59, 61-62.

³¹⁷ See: Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt*, 81.

their propaganda attacks on the Baghdad Pact if the West halted further expansion of the pact.³¹⁸ In good faith Egypt followed through on its end of the proposal. British intelligence noted that references to the Baghdad Pact were “markedly absent” from Radio Cairo broadcast following the meeting.³¹⁹

Nasser’s cooperative mood, however, soon dissipated. The Egyptian leader learned of Operation OMEGA. According to journalist, and Nasser confidant Mohammad Heikal, he learned from Iraqi sympathizers attending a Baghdad Pact meeting in Tehran that the U.S. planned to withdraw its pledge to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam.³²⁰ Soon after learning of this the Egyptian leader found himself in an argument with Ahmad Hussein, his American leaning ambassador to the United States. The Ambassador tried to convince Nasser that the administration wanted to fund the construction of the dam, but that the U.S Congress was blocking its efforts. In order to demonstrate to Hussein that he was mistaken Nasser told him to “go and tell Dulles that you accepted all his conditions and watch his reaction.”³²¹ An exuberant Ambassador Hussein departed for Washington. This set in motion a chain of events which would interrupt Operation OMEGA and which would strain Egyptian-Western relations to the breaking point.

After a stopover in London the Ambassador arrived in Washington. This turn of events left the administration in a precarious position. It no longer wished to finance the Aswan dam. They were letting it “wither on the vine” before they officially retracted the

³¹⁸ Lloyd, *Suez*, 45-48 ; Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, March 10, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 252-258.

³¹⁹ See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 81.

³²⁰ Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 64

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

offer. Providing the funding at this point, without having secured any change in Nasser's behavior, would jeopardize OMEGA's future success.

Funding the dam at this point would also raise other difficulties. Southern Senators, fearful that construction of the dam would undermine southern cotton production, were blocking efforts to finance the dam. They passed a resolution in the Senate appropriations committee which declared that "none of the funds provided" in appropriations bills "shall be used for assistance in conjunction with the construction of Aswan Dam." The committee also decreed that the White House could not use funds from the Mutual Security Act to fund the construction of "this dam without prior approval of Congress."³²²

Backed into a corner of its own making, the administration decided to disclose to Ambassador Hussein that the United States was officially rescinding its offer. Secretary Dulles informed Hussein at a meeting held at the State Department. The Secretary listed several reasons for the administration's decision: Egypt's dispute with Sudan over the Nile waters, the U.S. Senate's opposition to the proposal, Egypt's less than friendly attitude towards the United States in recent months, and the belief that the project would place a "heavy burden" on "the Egyptian economy." (Even with American, British, and IRDB aid Egypt would have had to raise nearly 90,000,000 dollars in order to complete the project)³²³

In addition to informing the Egyptian Ambassador in person the administration released a press statement. The release included the administration's contention that

³²² Memorandum for the President, July 16, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 7, DDEL.

³²³ See: Takeyn, *The Origins of*, 121.

Egypt's economy was incapable of supporting the project. As Hugo Black, chairman of the IRBD later stated, this was as "if a bank, in refusing a perspective borrower," broadcast "that he has a poor credit rating." If a bank were to do this, Black continued, "the customer is likely to become angry."³²⁴ And Nasser did. After reading the press release Nasser raged "this is not a withdrawal" this "is an attack on the regime and an invitation to the people of Egypt to bring it down."³²⁵

Now it was Nasser who found himself in an awkward position. He, like many Egyptians, believed that the dam was crucial to Egypt's future. It promised to propel the nation and its economy into prosperity. If the United States was no longer willing to provide the funds necessary to build the dam, however, there seemed to be no other way to finance it. Under normal circumstances Nasser could have turned to the IRBD. But the Eisenhower administration was using its influence to block any such efforts. Normally Nasser could also have turned to the Soviet Union. But this too proved problematic. Shortly after the Eisenhower administration announced it was rescinding its offer the Soviet Union's foreign minister, Dimitri Shepilov, revealed that the Soviet Union would not consider funding the dam. Heartened by the improvement in relations which followed the Geneva Summit the Soviet government had decided to avoid any act which might antagonize the West. Nasser was, seemingly, out of options.

³²⁴ Hugo Black Oral History, John Foster Dulles Oral History Collection, John Foster Dulles Papers, Princeton University.

³²⁵ Mohammed Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tale: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London: Deutsch, 1986), 114-116 ; Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 86-89.

Yet there was one option that few had foreseen. Instead of obtaining the funds from an outside source, Nasser could procure the funds from a source which lie within Egypt's own borders: the Suez Canal.

The Suez Canal has a long history. Napoleon first dreamed of cutting a canal between the African mainland and the Sinai desert in the 1790s. Building a canal at this strategic location promised to slash the time and distance between Europe and Asia. Once built, the journey from Liverpool to Calcutta would shrink from 11,600 miles to 7,900 miles. As a result the cost of goods travelling from Asia to Europe would plummet. Early efforts to build the canal, however, ran into difficulties. French politics during this period were highly unstable; these years saw the rise and fall of the Directory. Additionally, the British did everything within their power to complicate French administration of Egypt. Consequently it would not be until 1869 that the Suez Canal would become a reality.

The man most responsible for this was Ferdinand De Lesseps. De Lesseps was a French diplomat stationed in Cairo. There he befriended the Egyptian monarch and convinced him to grant the French a concession to build a canal at Suez.

The terms of the concession established the Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez. The company was jointly owned. The Egyptian government owned forty four percent. De Lesseps and other French investors owned the remainder.

Egypt's stake in the company, however, did not last long. The Egyptian monarch fell into debt. To pay off his creditors he sold his nation's share to a British government that was desirous to link the metropole with its vast global network of colonies. Egypt

did, however, continue to receive fifteen percent of the canal's net profit. This too, however, quickly slipped from Egyptian hands. In 1880 a destitute Egyptian government sold its share of the canal's profits to a conglomerate of French investors.³²⁶

By the 1950s the Suez Canal had become one of the world's most important transportation routes and also one of the most profitable. It generated a large and stable revenue stream. In 1955 alone it produced a 100 million dollar profit. This sort of revenue stream, Nasser realized, could easily finance the construction of the Aswan dam. Regaining control of the canal of course also brought with it another benefit: it would undo what many Egyptians considered a historical wrong, the fact that the Egyptian government exercised no control over an artery which slashed through its territory.

Nasser officially nationalized the Suez Canal in July of 1956. He did so in dramatic fashion. On the 26th he traveled to Alexandria to deliver a speech to commemorate the anniversary of King Farouk's abdication. The speech, like many of Nasser's was long (nearly three hours), critical of the West, and enthralling. Nasser's rhetorical style, as one historian has written, "blended classical with colloquial Egyptian Arabic, humor with vitriol, and candor with sloganeering."³²⁷ The affect of this complex linguistic brew was a speech which proved intoxicating to the ear.

A rapt crowd grew jubilant as the speech reached its climax shortly after the two hour mark. It was at this point that Nasser first mentioned the name of the canal's patron Ferdinand De Lesseps. Eleven more such references followed. This was no rhetorical flourish. Unbeknownst to the crowd De Lesseps was a codeword. As Nasser delivered

³²⁶ See: Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, especially his prologue.

³²⁷ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 31.

the speech Egyptian officers listened in anticipation. Upon hearing the name De Lesseps they unsealed their orders and Egyptian troops descended upon the Suez Canal and its facilities. After sufficient time had passed Nasser informed the crowd, and the world, that Egypt had nationalized the canal. Cheers erupted in Alexandria and across Egypt.

An equally heated reaction emanated from Paris and London over the course of the next several days. An irate French Foreign Minister likened the seizure of the canal “to the seizure of Rhineland by Hitler.”³²⁸ British Prime Minister Anthony Eden called it “another Munich.”³²⁹ Nasser’s nationalization, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer Harold Macmillan predicted, threatened “the destruction of Great Britain as a first-class power and its reduction to a status similar to that of Holland.” This, he vowed, he would never allow to occur. He would rather Britain “be destroyed by Russian bombs,” than be “reduced to impotence by the disintegration of its entire position abroad.”³³⁰

Nasser’s action provoked a similarly visceral response from Washington. Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Arthur Radford proclaimed that Nasser is “trying to be another Hitler.” “Nasser’s aggressive statements,” President Eisenhower stated, “seemed much like Hitler’s in ‘Mein Kampf,’” and he worriedly questioned how could Europe “be expected to remain at the mercy of a whim of a dictator?”³³¹

³²⁸ Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, July 27, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 8

³²⁹ Message from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower, July 27, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 9.

³³⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, August 1, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 108.

³³¹ Discussion at the 292nd Meeting of the National Security Council Staff, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers as President, NSC Series, box 5, folder “292nd,” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conversation, 12 August

The western leaders had cause for concern. Two thirds of Britain and France's oil passed through the canal. A nationalized Suez Canal, as the French Foreign Minister elucidated, would have left them "totally dependent on the goodwill of the Arab powers."³³² This was unacceptable to the European Allies. Nasser could, at will, interrupt Western Europe's oil supply and most of its trade with the East. This would weaken Western Europe's economy and leave it vulnerable to the Soviet Union.

Nasser's decision also raised other potential problems. Secretary Dulles feared that nationalization of the canal threatened the American economy. If, Dulles rationalized, Nasser closed the canal the U.S. government would need to ration oil, this could, he feared, cripple American car production. The administration also feared that Nasser's action might set a precedent for the Panamanians, through whose territory the American administered Panama Canal ran.³³³ The French, meanwhile, worried that Nasser's action might further inspire dissidents in its African colonies of Tunisia and Morocco, who were already in revolt.³³⁴

1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 192 ; Discussion at the 292nd Meeting of the National Security Council Staff, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 5, folder "292nd," DDEL.

³³² Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, July 27, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 8.

³³³ Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State August 4, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 133 ; Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, August 8, 1956, *ibid.*, 163-4 ; Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, July 30, 1956, *ibid.*, 49 ; Memorandum of a Conference With the President, July 31, 1956. *Ibid.*, 65-66 ; Memorandum of a Conversation Between Prime Minister Eden and Secretary of State Dulles, August 1, 1956, *ibid.*, 99 ; Memorandum of a Conversation, August 12, 1956, *ibid.*, 190-196.

³³⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 101; Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State July 29, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 7, folder "Dulles, John Foster July '56," DDEL.

To guard against these eventualities the Western allies immediately began formulating a response. Britain and France planned for military action.³³⁵ They also froze all of Egypt's sterling assets and decreed that all canal tolls must be paid to banks in Britain and France and not to the canal authority.

While the administration supported these later actions, it did not support the use of military force. Secretary Dulles believed that "Nasser must be made to disgorge his theft," but he did not believe that using force was the best way to accomplish this.³³⁶ President Eisenhower believed there was "unwisdom" in even "contemplating the use of military forces at this moment."³³⁷

There were practical reasons for this concern. If the U.S. decided to use force President Eisenhower would have to obtain a declaration of war from Congress. The President did not think he would be able to obtain such a declaration.³³⁸ Using force would also bring with it serious economic risk. Any military action would wreak havoc on canal traffic, which might, the Secretary of State feared, weaken the economies of Western Europe "virtually beyond repair."³³⁹ Moreover, the President worried that military intervention would cause oil to "dry up" in Europe. If this occurred the

³³⁵ Discussion at the 298th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "292nd," DDEL ; Telegram from London to the Secretary of State, July 29, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 7, folder "Dulles, John Foster July '56," DDEL.

³³⁶ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 64.

³³⁷ Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, July 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 70.

³³⁸ Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, July 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 70 ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 63.

³³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation with the President, August 30, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder "Meetings with the President August- December 1956 (6)," DDEL.

administration would have to divert Western hemisphere oil, the lifeblood of the American economy, to its European allies.³⁴⁰

The most important reason why the administration opposed using force, however, was because it feared that doing so would turn the other states in the region against the West. Using military force, Secretary Dulles believed, threatened to embitter the entire Middle East and much of Africa against the West.³⁴¹ The President feared that using force “might well array the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us.”³⁴² Such an outcome was unacceptable. It would cause, Dulles estimated, the “influence of the West in the Middle East and most of Africa” to be “lost for a generation, if not a century.” If this was not troubling enough, the Soviet Union, he predicted, would ultimately “reap the benefit.”³⁴³

The White House’s reticence, however, did not mean that they had changed their mind about Nasser. In September Eisenhower wrote to Anthony Eden that the United States still wanted to “isolate Nasser and gain a victory.”³⁴⁴ Later he stated that he believed that “Nasser had indicated dangerous tendencies that needed to be curbed.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 63.

³⁴¹ Memorandum of Conversation with the President, August 30, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meetings with the President August- December 1956 (6),” DDEL.

³⁴² Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, July 31, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 70 ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, , *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 63.

³⁴³ Memorandum of Conversation with the President, August 30, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meetings with the President August- December 1956 (6),” DDEL. See also: Message from the Secretary of State to the President, October 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 648 ; Special National Security Estimate, September 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16 , 390-1.

³⁴⁴ Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, September 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 436-7.

³⁴⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, October 2, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 626.

And they still wanted to do so for racial reasons. Nasser's decision to nationalize the canal, if anything, only intensified these concerns. Policymakers believed that the Egyptian leader's decision to nationalize the canal was part of his larger plan to expand his power and to challenge the West. The Secretary of State prophesized that Nasser's decision to seize the canal was an "integral part" of his "long-term program" to "reduce Western Europe to subservience to Arab control."³⁴⁶ "The canal seizure," he stated, "was one of a series of steps towards" Nasser's ultimate dream "of a great build-up of Arab power and a corresponding diminution in the power of the West."³⁴⁷

Nasser, the administration believed, could only accomplish this by preying upon his fellow Arabs' irrational emotionalism. He, Francis Russell stated, was a "leader of the Hitlerian type" who wanted to "merge the emotions and resources of the entire Middle East and Africa into a single onslaught against Western civilization."³⁴⁸ While the American Ambassador in Egypt warned of Nasser's "emotional hold over the Middle East."³⁴⁹

This was completely unacceptable to the West. Because Nasser, like the people he was preying upon, they believed, was an irrational emotional Arab. Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr. proclaimed that "Nasser's actions are not based on reasoning

³⁴⁶ Discussion at the 292nd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "292nd," DDEL.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Paper by the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Russell), August 4, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 142.

³⁴⁹ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, August 1, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 106.

but are irrational and emotional.”³⁵⁰ While Dulles charged that the Egyptian leader exercised “fanatical Egyptian control of the waterways.”³⁵¹

The Soviets, the administration believed, would exploit this irrational emotionalism. Elbert Matthews of the Policy Planning Staff wrote “whether or not by deliberate intent” Nasser “is the advanced agent of Communist influence in the Middle East.”³⁵² A Special National Intelligence Estimate estimated that Nasser “probably believes that he can pursue indefinitely an ‘independent foreign policy’” and accept “heavy economic commitments” from the Soviet Bloc “if he takes reasonable precautions.” But “in so doing, he probably overestimates his own unaided ability to retain genuine freedom of action.”³⁵³

Nasser could not, the administration believed, be allowed to nationalize the canal. “The whole situation,” Dulles concluded, “was made to order for the USSR to move in on.”³⁵⁴ If the West did not undo Nasser’s action it would only embolden him. He would expand his reach further and this, the administration believed, would prove disastrous for the West. The Egyptian leader was a “tool of the Russians,” any territory he gained the Soviets gained as well.

³⁵⁰ Memorandum of a Conference With the President, July 27, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, , 6.

³⁵¹ Discussion at the 292nd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, box 8, folder “292nd,” DDEL. See also: U.S. Policies Towards Nasser, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Misc Lot Files, Lot File No. 59 D 518 (box 10 of 12), Documents on Operations ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, Box 37, folder “OMEGA Documents Misc1 – 1956 – folder 2 of 2,” NA.

³⁵² Basic Element of a US Program for the Middle East, RG 59, General Records, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, 1954-62, Box 109, folder “Near and Middle East TS,” NA.

³⁵³ Special National Intelligence Estimate, July 31, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 88. See also: Paper by the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant, August 4, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 141-2.

³⁵⁴ Discussion at the 298th Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “298th,” DDEL

But using force simply raised too many difficulties. It might push the entire region into the Soviet camp. This realization led Eisenhower to conclude that “he did not think that the Canal issue was the one on which to seek to undermine Nasser,” but “he felt there was promise” in other strategies which “offered greater hope than a frontal attack on Nasser on the Canal issue.”³⁵⁵ Even the Secretary of State conceded that as “regrettable as it might be to see Nasser’s prestige enhanced even temporarily,” it was better to let Nasser have a temporary victory than to make “bitter enemies of the entire population of the Middle East and much of Africa” and possibly lose the region to the Soviets.³⁵⁶

And a temporary victory was all that the administration believed it would be. The West would regain control of the canal, but they would do so, as President Eisenhower confided to Eden, in a “bloodless” way. Such a solution, the President believed, was preferable. It, he estimated, would be “more far reaching in its ultimate consequences than...anything brought about by force of arms.” An acceptable solution, he continued, was, “best assured by slower and less dramatic processes than military force.”³⁵⁷

The slower and less dramatic process the administration had in mind was to convene an international conference. This, the administration believed, was a win-win

³⁵⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, October 2, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 626 .

³⁵⁶ Memorandum of Conversation with the President, August 30, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meetings with the President August- December 1956 (6),” DDEL.

³⁵⁷ Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, September 8, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meeting with the President Aug-Dec ’56 (6),” DDEL ; Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, September 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 436-7. See also: Memorandum of a Conversation, September 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 440.

proposition. If the convention succeeded it would resolve the crisis without bloodshed and without pushing the Middle East into the Soviet camp. If it did not work, it would provide the administration with time and cover. It would provide time to formulate a peaceful solution and, if they could not devise a peaceful solution, it would provide cover for later military action. As the Secretary of State rationalized, if a conference could garner “unanimous backing for an international regime to operate the Canal,” and Nasser rejected it “it would then be possible to take armed action if it became necessary with a good chance of retaining a large measure of world support.”³⁵⁸

This approach, however, failed to satisfy either the British or the French. They agreed to participate, but only because, as British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Selwyn Lloyd noted, the conference “was a virtual ultimatum.” If Colonel Nasser refused to accept it, Harold Macmillan stated, “military operations could then proceed.”³⁵⁹

London made no secret of its ulterior motives. Throughout the conference process it labored to convince the administration to support its use of force. In late July Anthony Eden informed President Eisenhower that in six weeks the United Kingdom planned to “use force” to “break Nasser” and install a “regime less hostile to the

³⁵⁸ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 31, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 63 ; Message from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden, September 8, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series Box 4, folder “Meeting with the President Aug-Dec ’56 (6),” DDEL. See also: Memorandum of Discussion at the 295th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “295th,” DDEL.

³⁵⁹ Lloyd Quoted in Hahn, 216 ; Horne, *MacMillan*, 405.

West.”³⁶⁰ At a National Security Council meeting in August Secretary Dulles disclosed that the British and the French were “continuing their military preparations to deal with the Suez Crisis” and that by the “10th of September, the British government would have to make” an “irrevocable” decision.³⁶¹

Under these less than promising conditions the conference opened in London on August 16th. The representatives of twenty four nations attended. Present were the representatives of the top sixteen users of the canal and the signatories of the 1888 convention which regulated use of the canal. Noticeably absent, however, was Egypt. Nasser had initially expressed interest in sending a representative. He had previously proposed a similar solution. But, his cooperation evaporated after Anthony Eden made a statement declaring that “Colonel Nasser is the enemy, we have no quarrel with the Egyptian people.” This was the last straw for Nasser. It seemed as if Eden was reaching above him, appealing directly to the Egyptian people, which he was.³⁶²

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Secretary Dulles achieved some success at the conference. He convinced eighteen participants to agree to establish an international company to operate the canal. Four nations opposed Dulles’ proposal: the Soviet Union

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Hahn, *The United States*, 213. See also: Telegram from Embassy in United Kingdom to the Secretary of State, July 29, 1955, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 7, folder “Dulles, John Foster July ’56,” DDEL.

³⁶¹ Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, July 29, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meeting with the President Aug-Dec ’56 (6),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, July 29, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 314 ; Discussion at the 295th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “295th,” DDEL ; Telephone Call from Dillon Anderson, August 6, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Memo Telephone Conversations- White House January 3 ’56-August 31 ’56,” DDEL.

³⁶² Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 99-100.

and three members of Nasser's unaligned bloc, India, Indonesia, and Ceylon. The proposal passed despite their opposition.

This did not, however, mean that the situation had been resolved, far from it. The proposal was non-binding; Nasser did not have to accept it. To overcome this hurdle Secretary Dulles arranged for a group of representatives, led by Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, to travel to Cairo to "explain the purposes and objectives" of the compromise to Nasser.³⁶³

The mission did not go well. Menzies was hardly an impartial arbiter. After explaining the proposal to Nasser he ominously intimating that "it would be a mistake for you to exclude the possibility of force from your reckoning."³⁶⁴ After being threatened, Nasser refused to accept the conference's solution, calling it "collective colonialism in a regulated form."³⁶⁵

The conference a failure, the British wasted no time resuming military planning. They informed Washington that they intended to retake the canal militarily.³⁶⁶ The administration, however, continued to oppose the use of force. Instead Secretary Dulles proposed convening a second conference which would establish a User's Association. The eighteen nations who had voted with the United States in the first convention would attend a second conference, also in London, and establish an international body to collect

³⁶³ Quoted in Hahn, *The U.S.*, 217.

³⁶⁴ Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968), 164.

³⁶⁵ Heikal, *Cairo Documents*, 98-100.

³⁶⁶ Letter from the British Ambassador (Makins) to the Secretary of State, September 10, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 473.

tolls. The international body would also employ pilots to guide ships through the canal. The pilots would be stationed on vessels at each end of the waterway.

With this proposal the administration was again stalling for time. Few believed a User's Association would solve the crisis. Instead, as Eisenhower stated, they hoped that it would allow "the United States "to "just keep the lid on a little longer," and allow "some kind of compromise plan" to "be worked out."³⁶⁷

The British continued to have a different understanding, however. As Harold MacMillian explained the "user's organization is a step toward the ultimate use of force."³⁶⁸ The conference's chances of success plummeted further after Nasser refused to participate.

Given the Western nations' differing understandings of the conference and its objectives and Nasser's refusal to attend, it should come as no surprise that the second conference, like the first, failed to resolve the crisis. The participants, comically, had a difficult time even settling upon a name for the User's Association. Secretary Dulles proposed calling it the Cooperative Association of Suez Canal Users or CASU. The Secretary hoped the name would prove auspicious. It sounded similar to *casu belli*, Latin for the cause of war now far removed. The Dutch delegate, however, objected. "It," he complained, is "an easy and not so funny joke." He instead proposed CASCUS. The Portuguese delegate, however, objected to this, noting that in Portuguese CASCUS "is something which really is not mentioned," a testicle. French President Pineau raised

³⁶⁷ Memorandum of a Discussion at the 300th Meeting of the National Security Council, October 12, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 703.

³⁶⁸ Quoted in Takeyh, *The Origins of*, 134.

a similar concern. In French CASCU roughly translated to “ass breaker.”³⁶⁹ Eventually the delegates settled upon the Suez Canal User’s Association or SCUA.

SCUA went into operation in October, but as one historian has concluded, it was “impotent” from the start.³⁷⁰ The participating parties failed to establish how it would collect tolls or how or to whom ships using the canal should pay them to.

With the second peaceful attempt to resolve the crisis a failure, Washington’s European allies again resumed military planning. This time the French spearheaded the effort and they brought in a new partner: Israel. Paris had begun selling jet aircraft to the Jewish state several months earlier. In mid-September future Israeli President and Prime Minister, and then member of the Israeli Defense Ministry, Simon Perez arrived in Paris to arrange for further purchases. While there the French presented him with a proposition: Israel join the French and the British in their effort to retake the canal. Intrigued, discussions continued at Sevres outside of Paris. On October 22nd British representatives arrived. All sides soon agreed upon a plan. The Israelis would launch an attack against Egypt in the Sinai and the French and British would use this attack as pretext to intervene and “protect” the canal.

As its European allies conspired the Eisenhower administration worried. U-2 flights uncovered large troop movements, an Israeli call up. They also detected an

³⁶⁹ Transcript of Suez Canal Users’ Association, John Foster Dulles Papers, MC016, Duplicate Correspondence, Stuart Campbell to Suez Canal Users’ Association – 1956, box 110, folder “Re: September 17-22, 1956 Suez Canal Second Conference – London,” John Foster Dulles Papers Princeton University (Hereafter JFD).

³⁷⁰ Hahn, *The U.S.*, 221.

Israeli air force alert.³⁷¹ This activity concerned the administration, but policymakers failed to connect the dots. Instead they came to the conclusion that the Israelis were mobilizing for an attack on Jordan.³⁷²

Other U-2 flights revealed British convoys bound for Malta and Cyprus. This was worrying, as the CIA's Richard Bissel sarcastically noted at the time, these ships were not "gathering in the Mediterranean for a regatta."³⁷³ Other equally disturbing reports arrived. The French, the CIA discovered, had sold several Mystere fighter aircraft to Israel and the British were amassing bombers and troop transports on Cyprus.³⁷⁴ The Secretary of State began to fret that the British and the French were "deliberately keeping us in the dark."³⁷⁵ Despite this he did not panic. He believed that he still had time to devise another peaceful solution to the crisis. He was "confident that the British and the French would not resort to any of these measures before" the upcoming Presidential election. The Secretary did not believe America's allies would blindside the administration before an American Presidential election.³⁷⁶ He was mistaken.

³⁷¹ Memorandum from the Director of the National Intelligence Indications Center (Hitchcock) to the Intelligence Advisory Committee, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 799.

³⁷² Memorandum of a Conversation With the President, October 27, 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 16, 793-4 ; Message From President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Ben Gurion, October 27, 1956, *1955-57*, vol. 16, 795 ; Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, October 27, 1956, *1955-57*, vol. 16, 796-7.

³⁷³ Quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, 353.

³⁷⁴ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Under Secretary of State (Hoover), September 20, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 542-3 ; *Annex* to Watch Committee Report No. 320, 20 September 1956. *Ibid.*, 543-4.

³⁷⁵ Editorial Note, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 745.

³⁷⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation Among the President, the Secretary of State, and the Under Secretary (Hoover), October 21, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder "Meetings with the President Aug-Dec '56 (6)," DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation Among the President, the Secretary of State, and the Under Secretary (Hoover), October 21, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*,

On October 30th Israeli forces invaded the Sinai. Soon after the French and British issued an ultimatum to both sides—all belligerents must withdraw at least ten miles from the canal and allow British and French forces to enter and secure it. They had twelve hours to comply. If they did not, British and French would invade. The ultimatum shocked Washington. Dulles called it “as crude & brutal” as anything he had ever seen.³⁷⁷ The President was particularly upset. When asked if the administration should begin making arrangements to provide its European allies with oil from the Western hemisphere he barked that the Europeans “should be left to work out their own oil problems—to boil their own oil.”³⁷⁸

Eisenhower and the rest of the administration were upset for several reasons. First and foremost the administration continued to believe that using force was a mistake. The invasion, Dulles believed, would cause the United States to be “forever tied to British and French colonialist policies.” And it would prompt “all of these newly independent countries” to “turn from us to the USSR.”³⁷⁹ Administration officials were also infuriated that their allies had deceived them. Most of all they were incensed by the timing. The British and French action occurred just as American voters headed to the polls to vote for President. The timing of the ultimatum also robbed the administration of, what it believed, was a golden opportunity. As British and French forces prepared to

vol. 16, 764 ; Memorandum of Conversation with the President, October 21, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 4, folder “Meetings with the President August – December 56 (6),” DDEL.

³⁷⁷ Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, October 30, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 863.

³⁷⁸ Memorandum of Conversation by Goodpaster, October 30, 1956, Ann Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 19, DDEL.

³⁷⁹ Discussion at the 302nd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “302nd,” DDEL.

invade Egypt Soviet tanks rolled through the streets of Budapest brutally suppressing a nationalist rebellion. Eisenhower had wanted to exploit this opportunity. The U.S. government managed to obtain film of “Soviet tanks killing Hungarians in the streets of Budapest” and the United States Information Agency (USIA) planned to disseminate these pictures throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East.³⁸⁰ President Eisenhower believed that the film would conclusively demonstrate to the Arab world “what can be in store for it once it falls under the domination of the Soviets.”³⁸¹ The actions of his allies, however, deprived the President of the moral high necessary to do this.³⁸²

For all these reasons the administration took the unprecedented step of opposing its cold war allies. On October 30th the White House introduced a United Nations Resolution calling for a cease fire. The British and French managed to frustrate this effort. They used their veto power in the Security Council to block the resolution. The administration countered by introducing the proposal to the General Assembly, where the French and the British had no such veto power. The administration also offered to provide Egypt with fifteen million dollars in IMF aid if it agreed to enter into negotiations with the French, British, and Israelis. It also supported a Canadian proposal to create and deploy a United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNEF) to the region.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “303rd,” DDEL.

³⁸¹ Memorandum by the President, November 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, 16, 1088.

³⁸² Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, November 8, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Papers as President, NCS Series, Box 8, folder “303rd,” DDEL.

³⁸³ Holland, *America and Egypt*, 115.

The administration did not relish having to take these actions. Administration officials did not want to, seemingly, reward Nasser, but as President Eisenhower stated, the United States needed to “redeem our word about supporting any victim of aggression.” If the United States did not come to the aid of Egypt, a clear victim of aggression, “Russia is likely to enter the situation in the Middle East.”³⁸⁴

These administration efforts, however, failed to prevent a European invasion. When Egypt, predictably, rejected the British and French ultimatum more than 200 British and French ships descended upon the Egyptian coastline. U.S. naval forces in the area were at a loss as to what to do. U.S. Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Charles R. Brown contacted the Commander of Naval Operations, Arleigh Burke, and asked “who’s the enemy?” Admiral Burke opaquely replied “Don’t take any guff from anyone.” The truth was, Burke later admitted, “I didn’t know who the damn enemy was.”³⁸⁵

The invasion commenced as 13,500 British paratroopers descended upon Port Said and 8,500 French soldiers landed at Port Faud. Surprised, the Egyptians scrambled to respond. They scuttled several ships loaded with cement, beer bottles, and iron at narrow points in the canal to deprive the invaders of their prize: a usable canal.³⁸⁶ The Egyptians also accepted the UN ceasefire, as did the Israelis. This placed the European allies in a difficult position. With a ceasefire in place, their forces no longer had a reason to be there. There was nothing left to “protect.” In the end the Europeans’ desire

³⁸⁴ Memorandum of a Conference With the President, October 29, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 839.

³⁸⁵ Quoted in Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, 21

³⁸⁶ Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 113 ; Memorandum of a Conversation with Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (3),” DDEL.

to retake the canal outweighed their need for a plausible cover story. The operation continued.

The situation grew tenser as the Soviet Union inserted itself into the situation. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev offered to send Soviet “volunteers” to Egypt to protect the canal and in a letter to the leaders of France and Great Britain Soviet Prime Minister Nicolai Bulganin threatened to “rain” nuclear missiles down on Paris and London.

Washington’s worst fears seemed to be coming true. Their allies’ actions had given the Soviet Union an opportunity to interject itself and its forces into the region. This explains how the administration reacted to what happened next.

There was a run on the pound. Britain and France’s actions had alarmed investors worldwide, especially in the currency markets. British gold reserves plummeted by 50 million dollars in the first two days of November.³⁸⁷ Soon they threatened to settle below the 2,000 million pound mark. If this occurred the British government would no longer be able to maintain the pound at the preferred 2.78 exchange rate, nor could it meet its upcoming debt service payment of nearly 180 million pounds on the Anglo-American Financial Aid Agreement of 1945.³⁸⁸

A desperate London soon turned to its ally in Washington. The administration, however, had little sympathy. Not only did it turn a deaf ear to British pleas, it also blocked their efforts to withdraw funds from the International Monetary Fund. The

³⁸⁷ Diane Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 131.

³⁸⁸ Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy*, 136

Eisenhower administration, however, did offer to provide London with a 1.5 billion dollars loan. But only if it accepted a ceasefire. The administration was using economic blackmail against its ally.³⁸⁹

With little choice, but complete economic collapse, Britain acquiesced to Washington's demands. On November 6th London accepted a United Nations ceasefire, but only on its terms. It would withdraw its forces, but only after the United Nations deployed a peacekeeping force to protect and administer the canal and only after the canal had been cleared of all blockages.

This solved one problem, but, seemingly, created another. The withdrawal of British, French, and Israeli forces, the administration believed, left a "vacuum" in the region.³⁹⁰ A vacuum which, they feared, the Soviets would fill. Khrushchev's offer to provide Egypt with 250,000 Soviet "volunteers" haunted administration officials. The offer, Secretary Herbert Hoover feared, was part of a Soviet plan "to put themselves in the position of liberators."³⁹¹ To guard against this possibility the administration focused

³⁸⁹ Harold MacMillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956-59* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 164 ; Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: the Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Sir Anthony Eden* (London, Cassel, 1960), 662.

³⁹⁰ Discussion at the 304th Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "304th," DDEL; US Policy in the Middle East, July 18, 1956, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Misc. Lot File No. 59D 518 (box 10 of 12), Documents of Projects APLHA, MASK, and OMEGA 1945-1957, Box 37, folder "OMEGA – Egypt, dam, misc1, 1956, folder 1 of 2," NA. See also: Memorandum from the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency to the Acting Secretary of State, November 10, 1956, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1945-63, Box 11, folder "Middle East Crisis 1956," NA.

³⁹¹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, November 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1079 ; Memorandum of Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, November 17, 1956, *Ibid.*, 1141 ; Memorandum for the Record by the President's Staff Secretary (Goodpaster), November 7, 1956, *Ibid.*, 1044 ; Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "303rd," DDEL

its attention on efforts to deploy United Nations peacekeepers as soon as possible.³⁹²

The peacekeepers finally began arriving on November 15th.

With the crisis over and UN peacekeepers in place the administration could finally return its attention to Nasser. The Suez crisis had interrupted Operation OMEGA, but it had not fundamentally changed the administration's thinking. As before the crisis, the administration wished to "utilize all appropriate opportunities" to "reduce Nasser's prestige and influence." The Secretary of State even raved from his hospital bed that "the British having gone in should not have stopped until they had toppled Nasser."³⁹³

But such drastic action, the administration came to believe, might no longer be necessary. In the aftermath of the crisis it appeared as if Nasser would have no choice but to do as the United States wished. American officials believed that their evenhanded approach to the combined British, French, and Israeli invasion had earned it goodwill in Cairo and throughout the Arab world. Moreover, they believed that the Soviet Union's brutal crushing of the Hungarian uprising had "served throughout most of the world to convict the Soviet of brutal imperialism."³⁹⁴

Nasser's actions in the immediate aftermath of the crisis seemed to support this reading of the situation. The Egyptian leader sought a reapproachment with the U.S. He

³⁹² Memorandum by the Director of the Executive Secretariat, November 7, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1047-8; Memorandum of a Conversation, November 7, 1956, *ibid.*, 1069-70; Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "303rd," DDEL; Memorandum of Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, November 12, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1112-4.

³⁹³ Memorandum from the Acting Secretary of State to the President, November 21, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 350; Memorandum of Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, November 12, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1114.

³⁹⁴ Bipartisan Legislative Meeting, November 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Dwight David Eisenhower Diary Series, Box 20, folder "November 1956 Miscellaneous (3)," DDEL.

went so far as to apologize through back channels. He informed the administration that he “realizes that he must make a choice” between the USSR and U.S. and that he “has chosen the course of full cooperation with the United States.”³⁹⁵

Sources of friction, however, soon reappeared. Radio Cairo continued to blast Iraq. Nasser, the administration believed, also stepped up subversion activities in Libya and Lebanon.³⁹⁶ He also negotiated to buy additional arms from the Soviet bloc. In addition he impeded U.S. efforts to reopen the canal and deploy UN peacekeepers. He had valid reasons for doing so. The UN initially wished to use British and French ships, which were part of the invasion armada, to clear the canal. For obvious reasons the Egyptian leader found this objectionable. The UN peacekeeping force, meanwhile, was to have initially included Canadian forces. Canada was still a member of the British Commonwealth and Nasser stated that he would not allow the peacekeepers into the country if they contained Canadian forces.³⁹⁷ All these actions caused the Secretary to grumble that Nasser “was still playing both sides against the middle.” Soon the Director of the Policy Planning Staff and Director of the CIA Allen Dulles advocated that the administration should turn “all possible heat” on the Egyptian leader.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Memorandum for the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant for Intelligence (Armstrong), November 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1087.

³⁹⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Syria, November 24, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1191-2.

³⁹⁷ Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State in Washington and the Representative at the United Nations, December 26, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1333 ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) and the Counselor of the Department of State (MacArthur), November 29, 1956, *ibid.*, 1209-10 ; Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, December 11, 1956, *ibid.*, 1295-6 ; Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, 169.

³⁹⁸ Discussion at the 305th Meeting of the National Security Council, August 9, 1956, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, box 8, folder “305th,” DDEL.

The question was how to apply the “heat?” The Suez crisis had interrupted the carefully orchestrated choreography of OMEGA. Reimplementing it seemed impossible. Instead the administration began formulating new strategies to undermine Nasser.

They developed three new approaches. Under the first the United States would officially join the Baghdad Pact. With the second the administration would “submerge” the Baghdad Pact into a larger defense grouping. This new and expanded security pact would link Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Jordan together to, as the Policy Planning Staff elucidated, “circumscribe Nasser’s power and influence.”³⁹⁹ The United States itself would not join the new pact. But it would “consult with them” in the event of “any threat by international Communism against the independence or territorial integrity of the participating states.” The United States would also provide pact members with “substantially increased” economic and military assistance.⁴⁰⁰

It is important to note that the authors of this strategy recommended that the administration invite Egypt to participate in the new pact. This did not mean, however, that its target was not Nasser. Administration officials did not believe that Nasser would participate in the pact. In a Machiavellian stroke, they believed, that his rejection would “serve to isolate” Egypt “from the rest of the area and to emphasize” its “close ties with the Soviet bloc.” And “in the unlikely event” that Egypt “accepted the invitation,” they

³⁹⁹ Program to Counter Soviet Penetration in the Middle East, December 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 384 ; Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, December 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 378-9.

⁴⁰⁰Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State, December 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 380.

consoled the White House, “this in itself would constitute a rebuff for the USSR.” As far as planners at the State Department were concerned the second option was a can’t lose proposition.⁴⁰¹

The third and final option proposed adopting a bilateral approach. Instead of creating a formal multilateral defense organization the administration would conclude agreements with individual states in the area. As Eisenhower later stated it would provide these states with economic and military assistance of up to 400 million dollars to help them maintain their “national independence.”⁴⁰² The U.S. would also provide participating nations with a security guarantee. As the President later vowed he would use the military to “secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of” participating states “against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.”⁴⁰³

The third strategy’s official goal was to protect the region from Soviet influence, but its true target was Nasser and his influence. The phrase “controlled by International Communism” was purposefully chosen to allow the United States to intervene if Nasser, the “tool of the Russians,” or Syria (another state the administration believed was controlled by the USSR) attacked any nations in the region. As a National Security Council document stated one of the strategy’s main goals was to “counterbalance Egypt’s preponderant position.”⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State, December 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 378-9.

⁴⁰² President’s Message to Congress, January 5, 1957, *Public Papers, 1957*, 7-10.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Statement by the National Security Council of Long-Range U.S. Policy towards the Near East, *FRUS, 1958-60*, vol. 12, 29.

Settling on one of these strategies proved difficult. The first option had powerful advocates within the administration. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Radford, the Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, and the American ambassadors in the Baghdad Pact countries all supported it, as did the British government.⁴⁰⁵

While it had powerful proponents, it also had powerful opponents. Secretary Dulles in particular worried that it could be “interpreted as being anti some of the anti-communist Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia.”⁴⁰⁶ Dulles did not want to alienate Saudi Arabia, an important American ally, and opponent of the pact.⁴⁰⁷

Administration officials opposed it for other reasons as well. U.S. membership in the pact would require Senate ratification. Obtaining this threatened to raise difficulties for the administration. Eisenhower and Dulles feared that the pro-Israel wing of the Senate would demand that the administration either include Israel in the alliance or provide the Jewish state with a security guarantee. The White House wanted to avoid either eventuality. Israeli involvement would kill the pact. No Arab state

⁴⁰⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation with Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (3),” DDEL ; Telephone Call to the President, December 6, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Memorandum Telephone Conversations-White House September 4 ’56-December 31 ’56 (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, November 30, 1956, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 1, folder “Department of Defense, volume 1 (3),” DDEL.

⁴⁰⁶ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, December 20, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 415 ; Memorandum of a Conversation with Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (3),” DDEL.

⁴⁰⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, December 10, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 399 ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, December 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 396 ; Memorandum of a Conversation with Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (3),” DDEL.

would voluntarily remain in a defense pact with Israel.⁴⁰⁸ Providing the Jewish state with a security guarantee would have much the same affect. The administration also worried that the pact had come to be “regarded by the non-member states of the area as in large part UK-dominated.”⁴⁰⁹ If the U.S. joined such an organization, the President predicted, it would lose its “influence with the Arabs,” particularly with King Saud in Saudi Arabia.⁴¹⁰

Many of the same concerns also beset the second option. Administration officials worried that it would also alienate Saudi Arabia. King Saud, the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs fretted, along with “other Muslims,” might “well regard the proposal as a projection of American power politics.”⁴¹¹ Opponents

⁴⁰⁸Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, December 5, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 378-9 ; Memorandum of Conversation with Sir Harold Caccia, December 24, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandums, Box 1, folder “General A-D (3), DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation, December 10, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 399-400 ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, December 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 396 ; Telephone Call From President, December 8, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Memo Telephone Conversations-White House Sept. 4 1956- Dec. 31 1956,” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation with Senator Knowland, December 9, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum Series, Box 1, folder “Memo Conversation General J-K (2),” DDEL ; Telephone Call from Mr. Hoover, December 8, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Mem. Telephone Conversations-White House September 4 ’56-December 31 ’56 (1),” DDEL.

⁴⁰⁹Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Acting Secretary of State, November 18, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 335-36 ; Memorandum of Conversation with Senator Knowland, December 8, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum Series, Box 1, folder “Memorandum Conversation General J-K (2),” DDEL.

⁴¹⁰Memorandum of a Conference with the President, November 21, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 341 ; Telephone Call from the President, December 8, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Mem. Telephone Conversations-White House September 4 ’56-December 31 ’56 (1),” DDEL ; Telephone Call from Mr. Hoover, December 8, 1956, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 11, folder “Mem. Telephone Conversations-White House September 4 ’56-December 31 ’56 (1),” DDEL.

⁴¹¹Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) and the Assistant Secretary’s Special Assistant (Burdett), December 3, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 368 ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, December 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 396.

also worried that this option, like the first, might precipitate congressional calls for a U.S. security guarantee for the Jewish state. This, once again, would be counterproductive to administration interests in the area.⁴¹² Administration officials also had one final concern. Secretary Dulles “did not have much faith in the ability of the Arabs to unite for any constructive purpose.” They, he believed, “were only unified” in “their hatred of Israel and, temporarily, their opposition to France and the UK.”⁴¹³ He could not see them unifying into such a large and productive pact.

For all these reasons the administration ultimately settled on the third and final option, what came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine. Before the administration could implement its new policy, however, it needed to obtain Congressional approval. This proved more difficult than expected. Congressional Democrats were in no mood to cooperate. Their defeat in the 1956 Presidential election had left wounds that still had not healed. The doctrine reopened these wounds. Many Democrats believed that President Eisenhower’s handling of the Suez Crisis had cost them the election. Senator Hubert Humphrey charged that the President had made “every attempt” to keep Congress “deceived about the critical situation there.” Consequently when news of the crisis broke Democrats were blindsided and a stunned electorate rallied around the flag and the sitting President.⁴¹⁴ Adlai Stevenson expressed a similar sentiment. The

⁴¹²Ibid ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation, December 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57, Near East Region; Iran; Iraq*, vol. 12, 396 ; Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, December 8, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 396.

⁴¹³Memorandum of a Conversation, December 10, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 400.

⁴¹⁴Quoted in Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 92.

Democratic candidate in that election, scorned that voters had displayed a “sudden rush of support for the author of their anxiety.”⁴¹⁵

Now, Humphrey believed, once the “peace slogans” had begun “to die out a bit,” the President had presented Congress “with an ‘urgent’ proposal—to address what the administration had suddenly decided was a grave crisis in the region.”⁴¹⁶ This seemed like proof to Humphrey that Eisenhower had know that the Middle East situation was grave all along and that he withheld this information from Congress in order to reap electoral victory.

Despite this rancor the house quickly approved the President’s new policy in January of 1957. Eisenhower and the doctrine proved too popular with voters to oppose. According to a poll in the *Wall Street Journal* the American people supported the Eisenhower Doctrine by a three to one ratio.⁴¹⁷

Obtaining passage in the Senate proved more challenging. The Senate eventually passed the bill in March of 1957, but only after heated debate and the addition of several amendments. The most important of these amendments was the Mansfield amendment. The text the White House originally submitted to Congress authorized the President to “employ the Armed Forces of the United States” against “overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.” Senator Mike Mansfeld from Montana, however, worried that this language suggested that the President needed congressional approval to employ military force. Mansfield also worried that by only

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 1957,

authorizing the President to use armed force in the Middle East the U.S. was sending the message that the President did not have the authority to use military force elsewhere. Mansfeld's amendment changed the bill to address these two issues. The doctrine now stated that "the United States is prepared to use armed forces" to protect the region from International Communism. The amendment also made one other, seemingly, superficial change. It changed the first line to read that "the United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East."⁴¹⁸ This seemingly innocuous line would later justify U.S. involvement in Lebanon.

The Eisenhower Doctrine was now official U.S. policy. But it was meaningless unless the administration convinced Middle Eastern states to participate in it. To assure their participation President Eisenhower dispatched former Senator James P. Richards, who *Newsweek* dubbed "the traveling salesman" of the doctrine, to the region.⁴¹⁹

Richards' mission produced mixed results. Syria publically denounced the new policy. It took offense to a passage which proclaimed that a "vacuum" existed in the region, but did not officially reject it. Other nations, including Israel and Morocco, expressed interest in the doctrine, but failed to unconditionally endorse it. Richards did, however, manage to convince Lebanon, Libya, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey to unconditionally accept the doctrine. But only after plying them with American aid. In exchange for their support Lebanon received 10 million dollars in

⁴¹⁸Committee Report, "To Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East." February 14, 1957, *Executive Sessions*, 778-780 ; TIME Magazine, February 1957, 18.

⁴¹⁹Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 120.

economic aid and another 2.2 million in military equipment, Libya received 4.5 million in aid, Iran received 13 million in military aid and 6 million in aid for railroad and telecommunication projects, Iraq received more than 14 million in military aid and roughly 2.5 million in aid for police, telecommunications, and railroad projects.⁴²⁰

Finally there was Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government's stance on the doctrine remained more cryptic. Before unveiling the doctrine King Saud had indicated that he had "high hope" for the proposal.⁴²¹ But later, under pressure from other Arab states, he signed a memorandum highly critical of the doctrine while attending conference in Cairo. While Saud privately assured the administration that he supported the plan, the best he could offer in public was as opaque reassurance that he believed that the doctrine was a "good one which is entitled to reconsideration and appreciation."⁴²²

Nevertheless the administration had garnered enough support to proceed. It now had a new strategy to contain and undermine the combined Soviet, Nasserist, Arab Nationalist onslaught. It would protect and defend those states who openly aligned with the United States in the cold war. All of these states, however, were not created equal in the administration's eyes. Saudi Arabia reigned first among equals. The administration

⁴²⁰Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State , April 4, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 484-6 ; Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State , April 4, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 486-6 ; Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State , April 4, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 488-89 ; Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Secretary of State, April 16, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 493.

⁴²¹ U.S Consulate , Dharan, to DOS, tel #315, 3, January 1957, reel 2, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Saudi Arabia*.

⁴²² Memorandum of Conversation, Eisenhower, Saud, et al, January 30, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 13, 422. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, January 31, 1957, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 5, folder "State Visits 56-57 (3)," DDEL.

believed, as the Secretary of State stated, that “Saud is the only figure in the area” who could “serve as a counterweight to Nasser.”⁴²³ If the administration could, the President predicted, “build him up as an individual to capture the imagination of the Arab World, Nasser would not last long,”⁴²⁴ To understand why they believed this we must now turn to religion and American beliefs about it in the 1950s.

⁴²³ Memorandum of a Conversation With the President, December 20, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12, 415.

⁴²⁴ Message From the President to the Secretary of State, December 12, 1956, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 16, 1297.

CHAPTER VI

BELIEF IN BELIEF: AMERICAN VIEWS OF RELIGION AT MID-CENTURY

It was late January 1952 on the campus of the University of Oregon. In many ways it was quite an ordinary day in Eugene. The crush of students returning from winter break had passed. Textbooks had been purchased, dorm rooms filled, and the spring semester was still alive with promise.

In other ways, however, this winter day was extraordinary. The university was celebrating its seventy-fifth year of existence. Commemoration of this took many forms, including the convening of a weeklong Parliament of World Religions. Present at the Parliament were representatives of the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Eastern Orthodox faiths.

Religious weeks such as this had occurred before in Eugene, but never quite like this. Students cut classes to attend. They inundated the proceedings. Some meetings drew nearly a thousand undergraduates. Sessions, in some instances, ambled on for two to three hours and could, by all accounts, have lasted longer.

These proceedings had a unique quality to them. This quality was perhaps best expressed by Bashir Ahmad Minto, president of the Moslem Society of the U.S.A., at the conference's closing remarks. "Whether He is Allah, Jehovah, or God," Bashir exhorted, "He is the same God. To reach Him the paths are different, but they are all the paths of truth for those who believe in them."⁴²⁵

⁴²⁵ "Oregon and Religions," *Newsweek*, February 4, 1952, 71.

Religion boomed in the 1950s. In 1953, 55% of Americans belonged to a specific church, that number climbed to 62% in 1956, and by decade's close 69%. Denominations also registered impressive growth rates.⁴²⁶ The Methodist Church recorded its largest gain in decades, membership in the Southern Presbyterian Church increased by nearly a third, the United Presbyterian Church recorded a 23% rise in membership, and the Seven Day Adventists expanded by 33% during these years.⁴²⁷ These increases in membership doubled the nation's population growth.⁴²⁸

The distribution of scripture also increased exponentially. In a four year period scripture sales rose by 140%, while bible sales reached an all time high.⁴²⁹ The new Revised Standard edition of the bible alone sold over 26 million copies in its first year in print.⁴³⁰

Polls revealed a similar ubiquity of belief. One poll disclosed that 90% of Americans prayed, 86% believed that the bible was the divinely inspired word of God, 75% believed in life after death, 87% were "absolutely certain of God's existence," and 80% believed in the divinity of Christ.⁴³¹ Another poll revealed that an astonishing 99% of Americans believed in God.⁴³²

⁴²⁶ Whitfield, *The Culture of*, 83. See also: "Dr. Peale: An Articulate Leader of Christianity," *Newsweek* December 28, 1953, 43.

⁴²⁷ "The Story of Religions in America: the Presbyterians," *Look*, June 9, 1959, 74 ; "The Story of Religions in America: the Seven Day Adventists," *Look*, June 24, 1958, 75.

⁴²⁸ "Resurgent Protestantism: At Easter, the Wave of New Christian Orthodoxy," *Newsweek*, March 28, 1955, 55.

⁴²⁹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 1-2 ; Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 37.

⁴³⁰ Whitfield, *The Culture of*, 84.

⁴³¹ Wuthnow, *Restructuring of*, 11-17.

⁴³² "I Believe..." *Newsweek*, October 20, 1952, 106.

Religious construction also boomed. In 1946 religious organizations spent a mere 68 million dollars on new buildings. By 1950 that sum had skyrocketed to 336 million and the figure continued to rise throughout the decade.⁴³³ The Catholic Church alone built 125 new hospitals, 1,000 schools, and 3,000 parishes.⁴³⁴ All told, churches and temples spent between 700 and 800 million dollars a year on construction during the 1950s, a sum nearly as large as the entire British budget before the First World War.⁴³⁵ The church pipe organ industry even enjoyed its greatest success in over a hundred years. Production more than doubled.⁴³⁶

Across the country colleges held religious emphasis weeks and college administrators added religiously themed courses to their catalogs. The University of Oregon introduced a course entitled “The Psychology of Religion.” The University of Texas added a course on “The Life and Teachings of Jesus.”⁴³⁷

In several local communities thousands called daily into “dial-a-prayer” services to receive spiritual guidance.⁴³⁸ The Ideal Toy Company even marked a doll with flexible knees, so that it could be made to “kneel in a praying position.”⁴³⁹

Religious symbols and themes inundated popular culture. On the radio listeners turned up the volume to “I Believe,” “It is No Secret What God Can Do,” “The Man Upstairs,” “Counting Your Blessings,” “Open Your Heart,” “Vaya Con Dios,” and “Big

⁴³³ Wuthnow, *Restructuring of*, 27.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*, 36-37.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid*, 20.

⁴³⁶ James and Marian Skardon, “Every Church Needs an Organ, *Colliers*, November 25, 1955, 78.

⁴³⁷ J. Ronald Oakley, *God’s Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: Dembner Books, 1986), 320 ; “Religion in our Colleges,” *Newsweek*, April 22, 1957, 115.

⁴³⁸ “Dial-a-Prayer” *Newsweek*, July 4, 1955, 23 ; “Dial Trinity 5-7561” *Newsweek*, September 3, 1956, 56.

⁴³⁹ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 320.

Fellow in the Sky.”⁴⁴⁰ In darkened movie theaters Americans sat entranced by biblically themed blockbusters like *The Robe*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *Quo Vadis*.

Moviegoers also flocked to religiously themed films such as *A Man Called Peter*, *The Next Voice You Hear*, and *Red Planet Mars*.

At home millions tuned in each week to watch Bishop Fulton Sheen and his program *Life is Worth Living*. Sheen’s program became the most popular television show during its run, regularly beating out Milton Berle’s immensely popular Texaco Comedy Hour in its timeslot.⁴⁴¹

In print Norman Vincent Peale’s religiously themed self-help book *The Power of Positive Thinking* dominated the bestsellers’ list for 112 weeks. In 1954 alone it sold more copies than any other book, except, of course, the bible. Eventually it went on to sell nearly 10 million copies.⁴⁴² Peale’s success was not exceptional. *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* sold over a 100,000 copies.⁴⁴³ A book publishers’ audit revealed that four out of the five best-selling non-fiction titles in the 1950s were religious books.⁴⁴⁴ Religious themes also surfaced in the decade’s novels. There was Fulton Ourler’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, Henry Morton Robinson’s *The Cardinal*, and Thomas Costain’s *The Chalice*.⁴⁴⁵

It was also during these years that a young evangelist named Billy Graham first captivated audiences. Tens of thousands flocked to attend his revivals, not just in the

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.* See also: “Is the Religious Boom a Spiritual Bust?” *Look*, April 5, 1955, 28.

⁴⁴¹ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 320.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 323.

⁴⁴³ “In the Best Seller Class,” *Newsweek*, October 1, 1956, 60.

⁴⁴⁴ Eugene Exman, “Reading, Writing, and Religion,” *Harpers Magazine*, May 1953, 82.

⁴⁴⁵ Ourler’s book alone went through an astounding 48 printings in the decade.

deep south, but in places like California and New York City. Over 1.5 million people attended his series of “Crusades” at Madison Square Garden. Nearly a 100,000 packed Yankee Stadium to hear him preach.⁴⁴⁶ During these years Graham also hosted a weekly television show and wrote a column, which appeared in 152 newspapers.⁴⁴⁷ Faith healer Oral Roberts achieved similar success. His services were broadcast on over a hundred television stations and over four hundred radio stations in the fifties.⁴⁴⁸

Religion also crept into public life. In President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s inauguration parade the lead float was entitled “God’s Float.” It contained a churchlike building bejeweled with pictures of American churches. Script reading “In God We Trust” and “Freedom of Worship” surrounded the pictures. Dozens of states banned atheists and agnostics from serving as notary republics. Other states made it illegal for agnostics to adopt children.⁴⁴⁹ The Supreme Court ruled it constitutional for local school districts to provide students with “released time” for private religious instruction during school hours.⁴⁵⁰ Congress, meanwhile, passed legislation which added “under God” to the pledge of allegiance and which emblazoned “In God We Trust” on all of the nation’s currency.⁴⁵¹ A Senator even—unsuccessfully—attempted to amend the constitution to read that America “devoutly recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ Savior and Ruler of Nations, through whom are bestowed the blessing of Almighty God.”⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁶ Billy Graham, “New York and I,” *Look*, October 15, 1957, 37.

⁴⁴⁷ Whitfield, *The Culture of*, 79.

⁴⁴⁸ “Thrill of My Life,” *Newsweek*, October 24, 1955, 104.

⁴⁴⁹ Whitfield, *The Culture of*, 87.

⁴⁵⁰ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 321.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, 321. See also: “Nation ‘Under God,’” *Newsweek*, May 31, 1954, 25.

⁴⁵² Oakley, *God’s Country*, 321.

Historians, and other commentators, have offered numerous explanations for this burst of religiosity. Church construction, many argue, boomed due to pent up demand. Churches, like all other individuals and institutions faced lean times during the Great Depression. They also endured rationing during the Second World War. After the war ended, the argument goes, this pent up demand spilled forth.⁴⁵³ According to others, the atomization of suburban existence encouraged churchgoing. New suburbanites recently separated from their extended families felt isolated in the fifties and many joined a church to find a “sense of belonging” and to establish an “identity in a secular, troubled, impersonal, and increasingly homogenized world.”⁴⁵⁴ Americans, others argue, equated “faith with individual success and prosperity” during these years. The 50s were a time of great prosperity and many Americans came to assume “that national well-being was a sign of divine approval.”⁴⁵⁵ Sociologist William Herberg argued that religion exploded in the 1950s because it allowed assimilating ethnic groups to retain an aspect of their ancestors’ culture. Americanization, Herberg posited, forced second and third generation Southern and Eastern European immigrants to turn their backs on their ancestors’ language, culture, and way of life. America’s long history of religious freedom, however, guaranteed that no such sacrifice would be required when it came to their religion. Maintaining, or in many cases, reconnecting, with the religion of their ancestors, Herberg asserted, provided these immigrants with a method of maintaining a sense of connection to their pasts and to their families.⁴⁵⁶ Americans also turned to

⁴⁵³ Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of*, 11.

⁴⁵⁴ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 115, 324.

⁴⁵⁵ Whitfield, *The Culture of*, 83.

⁴⁵⁶ Herberg, *Protestant*, 27.

religion, some have argued, in order to secure a sense of national unity. As one historian has noted “the need for national unity and harmony during World War II became obvious; religious forces supplied much of this.”⁴⁵⁷ This need for unity only intensified “from 1945 to 1952,” as “the Cold War developed,” and produced “a need for common symbols and energies.”⁴⁵⁸ The fact that America’s cold war foe, the Soviet Union, preached a Godless atheistic ideology, others have elucidated, only increased faith’s attractiveness as a unifying force during these years.⁴⁵⁹

Anyone who studies religion understands that it is complex. Religion serves many anthropological, sociological, psychological, spiritual, and exegetic purposes. This wideness of purpose explains religion’s constancy and also its vitality within the human experience. Consequently, it is not difficult to accept that all of these factors contributed to America’s re-embrace of religion in the 1950s.

Another factor, however, contributed to Americans’ return to religion in the 1950s and the particular form it took. Americans in the fifties viewed religion as good, good for the individual, for society, and for the world. They did not believe that the particulars of a person’s beliefs mattered, as long as they believed. Americans in the 1950s, to paraphrase Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, believed in belief.

While belief in belief defined how Americans viewed and understood religion in the 1950s, the roots of this understanding trace further back into the American past. For much of the nation’s history many considered America to be a covenanted nation.

⁴⁵⁷ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 4.

⁴⁵⁸ Marty, *Modern*, 4.

⁴⁵⁹ Whifield, *The Culture of*, 83.

According to this understanding, the nation, and the people in it, entered into a compact with God. God bestowed his blessing upon America, making it his chosen nation. With this blessing, however, came an obligation, the obligation to remain faithful and to spread his message. Beginning in the 1930s, however, many came to fear that the nation was failing to honor this obligation. At home, and abroad, secularism seemed to prevail. At home church attendance ebbed, evolution and scientific thought spread, and materialistic concerns abounded. Abroad, secularism, in the guise of totalitarian nationalism, reigned supreme. The enormity of this combined secular threat, many Americans came to believe, demanded drastic action. The religious needed to join together to form a common front. The religious needed to unite.

* * *

The idea of America as a covenanted nation predates the formation of the nation itself. Many American believers in the covenant theology were initially English believers. Many Britons had long considered their nation to be covenanted nation. As one historian has written, they held that “England had inherited the role of God’s elect champions” after the Jews, God’s original chosen people, had killed his only begotten son, Jesus.⁴⁶⁰

When these covenant believing Englishmen and women settled American shores they brought this belief with them. As early as 1630 John Winthrop, the governor of the

⁴⁶⁰ Winthrop Hudson, ed., *Nationalism and Religion: Concepts of American Identity and Mission* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), xxvii.

Massachusetts Bay Colony, proclaimed that the colony's Puritan settlers had entered into a compact with God to serve as a "city upon a hill" for the rest of the world to emulate. According to one historian, these settlers understood "the continent" as "the Promised Land" and the American colonies as "Israel." They, like the Israelites, had escaped from bondage by crossing "a forbidding sea" to live "a wilderness life, until, by God's grace and their own faithfulness, the wilderness became a new Canaan."⁴⁶¹

This understanding of America as a covenanted nation persisted well into the twentieth century and, indeed, into the twenty-first. The 1950s were no exception. Billy Graham proclaimed that Americans were "God's people."⁴⁶² Then former President Harry S Truman pronounced that "I have a feeling that God has created us and brought us to our present position of power and strength."⁴⁶³ As God's people, however, Americans bore a divine duty. In exchange for God's blessing and favor, they needed to remain faithful and spread God's word. As General Lucius D. Clay wrote in the popular series *This I Believe* (which collected Americans' conceptions of faith) God "had been good to us as a people" and the only way "we can return thanks for the position of leadership which we now hold in the world" is by exercising "this leadership to obtain freedom and peace" for the rest of the world.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ Hudson, *Nationalism and Religion*, xxxii-iii. For more information on the covenant in later periods of American history see: Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995) ; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: the Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968) ; Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of a Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006).

⁴⁶² Quoted in: Marty, *Modern*, 153. See also: "Americans and Religion: State of the New Revival," *Newsweek*, December 26, 1955, 44.

⁴⁶³ Quoted in Marty, *Modern*, 302.

⁴⁶⁴ Edward R. Murrow, *This I Believe, volume 1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 30.

Why did these Americans believe that the nation was a covenanted nation? Because it was, they believed, a Christian nation. “Protestants came to America,” declared the authors of the popular book *Protestant Panorama*, and “made America after the likeness of their” own religious ideal.⁴⁶⁵ “Some call our civilization a Christian civilization,” wrote the President of the New York City Council, “others call it a democracy. When it succeeds,” he concluded, “it is a little bit of both.”⁴⁶⁶

Christian ideals, many believed, provided the very basis for democracy. “If I were a dictator,” proclaimed the editor of *United Nations World*, “the first book I would burn would be the Bible. I’d burn it because I’d realize that the whole concept of democracy came out of that book.”⁴⁶⁷ President Eisenhower’s special assistant for Economic Affairs, Dr. Gabriel Hauge echoed this sentiment. “The structure of a democracy like ours is, of course, political, but its foundation is moral.”⁴⁶⁸

These Americans believed that Christianity provided the foundation not only for democracy, but for the entire notion of freedom. As Francis McMahon reasoned, Christianity preached “the inherent dignity of the individual person, the essential equality of all men, the emphasis upon love and friendship” and “the idea of freedom” from “spiritual oppression.” All of these Christian principles, McMahon argued, constituted “the truth that made men free.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁵ Clarence Wilbur Hall, *Protestant Panorama: the Story of the Faith that Made America Free* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Young, 1951), 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 124.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, =147.

⁴⁶⁸ “In the Christian Image,” *Newsweek*, November 12, 1956, 125. See also: Hall, *Protestant Panorama*, 50.

⁴⁶⁹ Francis E. McMahon, *A Catholic Looks at the World* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1945), 14. For more examples see: Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, 79.

The founding fathers, these Americans believed, recognized this and wrote these beliefs into the nation's founding documents. As the authors of *Protestant Panorama* wrote "the Declaration of Independence is not only one of the world's great political documents," it is also "a religious Magna carta—written and signed by men to whom religion was all-important as the basis of lasting freedom. Its glowing principles were written 'with a firm reliance upon the protection of divine Providence.'"⁴⁷⁰ Bishop Fulton Sheen agreed. "According to our Constitution and the Declaration of Independence ... God" is "the ultimate source of" our nation's "political power."⁴⁷¹

As a Christian nation, as God's chosen nation, America, and its people, many believed, possessed a divine mission in the world. America, McMahon proclaimed, was "stamped" with a "providential mission in the family of nations."⁴⁷² The United States, Bishop Sheen lectured, had a "Providential destiny."⁴⁷³ Americans, Sheen continued, "are destined, under Providence, to be the secondary cause for the restoration of the freedom and liberties of the peoples of the world," the primary cause, of course, was God. The Lord, sermonized the Reverend Peter Marshall, "made and preserved our nation" so that "this Republic" might "save the rest of the world, by giving back to them the new life that was forged from the anvil of sacrifice and daring adventure in this country."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Hall, *Protestant Panorama*, 18. See also: "Catholics and US Democracy," *Life*, December 21, 1959, 30.

⁴⁷¹ Sheen, *Life is*, 211. See also: Hall, *Protestant Panorama*, 18; "Endowed by Their Creator," *Newsweek*, December 27, 1954, 68; Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, 3.

⁴⁷² McMahon, *A Catholic*, 257.

⁴⁷³ Fulton J. Sheen, *Life is Worth Living* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 241.

⁴⁷⁴ Catherine Marshall, *Man Called Peter: the Story of Peter Marshall* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 291. See also: "Third National Study Conference on the Churches and World Order," John Foster Dulles

As the twentieth century progressed, however, many Americans came to fear that the country was failing to honor its divine responsibilities. Americans, Bishop Sheen chastised, were fleeing from the “responsibility on which freedom rests.”⁴⁷⁵ “These days,” criticized Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, “I see America drifting from the Christian faith, acting abroad as an arrogant, selfish, greedy nation,” no longer interested “in people and their hopes and aspirations.”⁴⁷⁶

Why did Sheen and others feel this way? The American people, these observers believed, were no longer sufficiently religious. They were not honoring the covenant by remaining faithful to God. While the 1950s was a decade of great religion, “it is also a day,” mourned James B. Moore, “of considerable religious complacency.”⁴⁷⁷ People may have been attending church, but, as sociologist Peter Berger cautioned, “the person listening to the minister in church is a radically different one from the person who makes the economic decisions the next day.” “In this second life,” he continued, “the church is totally absent.”⁴⁷⁸ The title character in the anti-communist 1952 film *My Son John* warns a group of college graduates that many have “substituted faith in man for faith in God.”⁴⁷⁹ “It” has “become customary,” lamented Frederick Lewis Allen “among larger

Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 41, Folder “Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in American, 1949,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Princeton University. (JFD Papers hereafter).

⁴⁷⁵ Sheen, *Life is*, 93-4.

⁴⁷⁶ Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 44. See also: McMahon, *A Catholic*, 120.

⁴⁷⁷ James B. Moore, “Why Young Ministers are Leaving the Church,” *Harpers Magazine*, July 1957, 66.

⁴⁷⁸ Peter Berger, *Noise of Solemn Assemblies Christian Commitments and the Religious Establishment in America* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1961), 37.

⁴⁷⁹ *My Son John*, dir. Leo McCarey, 122 min., Paramount Pictures, 1952.

and larger numbers of Americans to sleep late on Sunday mornings and the grapple with” the “Sunday paper.”⁴⁸⁰

What was causing Americans to become religiously complacent? Secular materialism. “In our times,” admonished psychologist Arthur Link, “the people and their leaders” are “breaking the Ten Commandments themselves, all in the name of a more abundant life.”⁴⁸¹ “These days,” fretted William O. Douglass, “I see American identified more and more with material things” and “less and less with spiritual standards.”⁴⁸² Americans, chastised historian Arnold Toynbee, are worshipping “Mammon” the “god of industrial prosperity and worldly success.”⁴⁸³ “Christians today,” sermonized Bishop Henry Knox Sherill, “are beset by powerful forces of materialism.”⁴⁸⁴ Even in the churches, one observer lamented, the “blight of secularism” prevails.⁴⁸⁵

Materialistic secularism at home, these Americans believed, was preventing the nation from carrying out its divine mission abroad. America’s “unfulfilled moral duties,” chastised Bishop Sheen, made it “responsible” for the “slavery” of the

⁴⁸⁰ Frederick Lewis Allen, “The Spirit of Our Times,” *Harpers Magazine*, July 1956, 69. See also: Arnold J. Toynbee, “Man Owes His Freedom to God,” *Colliers*, March 30, 1956, 78 ; Catherine Marshall, *Man Called Peter*, 288.

⁴⁸¹ Henry C. Link, *Return to Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1936), 173.

⁴⁸² Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 44.

⁴⁸³ Arnold J. Toynbee, “Man Owes His Freedom to God,” *Colliers*, March 30, 1956, 81.

⁴⁸⁴ George B. Leonard, Jr., “What Change Christian Unity?” *Look*, July 21, 1959, 19.

⁴⁸⁵ “Why Are We Here?” *Life*, March 30, 1959, 26. See also: Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, xviii, Peter Marshall, *The Prayers*, 152-3 ; Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 44 ; Catherine Marshall, *A Man Called Peter*, 303 ; Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 43 ; Peter Marshall, *The Prayers*, 44-45, Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 44. Instead of relying on religion, many noted, people were relying on secular science for answers to life’s questions. See: Peter Marshall, *The Prayers of Peter Marshall* (Carmel, NY: Guidepost, 1954), 64 ; Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, “The Temptations,” *Colliers*, January 8, 1954, 21 ; Frederick Lewis Allen, “The Spirit of the Times,” *Colliers*, March 30, 1956, 67 ; Morrison, *Can Protestantism*, 33, 36-7, 39, 41 ; Tom Dooley, *Edge of Tomorrow*, 104-5, Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, 47.

“countries behind the Iron Curtain and the Bamboo Curtain.”⁴⁸⁶ “Materialistic poverty,” concluded one American in *This I Believe*, was preventing the United States from defeating “the jet plane ‘rising in the world’ of totalitarian enslavement.”⁴⁸⁷

To these citizens secular materialism and the “‘rising in the world’ of totalitarian enslavement” were linked. Totalitarian powers, they held, were materialistic powers. “The leaders of Germany, Japan and Italy,” asserted Bishop Sheen, had “gambled all on the supremacy of the material.”⁴⁸⁸ Totalitarianism, McMahon proclaimed, is the “idolatry of the state or the group.” It “attained explosive force among the peoples of the Axis powers.”⁴⁸⁹ Soviet totalitarianism too, many believed, was the offspring of secular materialism. “Soviet thinking,” McMahon asserted, “proceeds from a materialistic premise.”⁴⁹⁰

Totalitarian regimes, many Americans and particularly many Catholics, believed represented God’s judgment and punishment for America’s moral failings. “Whenever a civilization begins to die, morally or spiritually,” harangued Bishop Sheen, “vultures appear, and they are” a “judgment on corruption. Such is the mission of Communism in the world.” It brings “judgment on” countries, like America, who “have lost faith in God and morals.” “Communism,” he continued, “came out of our Western civilization;

⁴⁸⁶ Sheen, *Life is*, 258.

⁴⁸⁷ Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, 47,

⁴⁸⁸ Sheen, *Life is*, 407.

⁴⁸⁹ McMahon, *A Catholic*, 37.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 226. This, they believed was part of a larger problem, the deification of the state. “Modern statism,” as the National Study Conference on Churches and the International Situation lectured, “is a form of secularism.” In modern statism, the authors continued, “the State, in one form or another” is “deified and made an object of worship.” McMahon echoed this view. According to McMahon, to the “great masses of mankind their personal state is, in effect, their god.” It “represents the supreme object of their devotion; its power and dominion are, to them, sacred.” See: McMahon, *A Catholic*, 62, 36. See also: Sheen, *Life is*, 275.

it was produced out of what was putrid, foul, and rotten in the atheism and materialism of the nineteenth century.”⁴⁹¹ “In the sight of all that blood” of WWI and WWII, counseled another American, “shall we not ask ourselves” if “God even intended us to live in a world of constant hemorrhage? It is,” he continued, “because we invoke not the blood of Christ that we shed one another’s blood.”⁴⁹²

All, however, was not lost. Americans could still redeem themselves and honor the covenant. But, instead of merely washing their hands “Pilate-like of guilt,” advised Bishop Sheen, they must “make up for” their lapsed faith with “some kind of penance and atonement and repartition.”⁴⁹³ Americans needed to regain their faith. “If America’s leadership is to deserve the confidence of the world,” lectured the Federal Council of Churches, America “must be characterized by a righteous and dynamic faith.”⁴⁹⁴

Regaining faith, however, many feared, might not be enough. Secular materialism at home and secular totalitarianism abroad constituted imposing threats. Specific denominations standing alone could not defeat these threats on their own. To meet the enormity of this challenge the religious, many believed, needed to clasp hands and form a united front. The question which vexed these efforts, however, was how broad should this front be?

⁴⁹¹ Sheen, *Life is*, 264.

⁴⁹² “And Resurrection,” *Colliers*, January 22, 1954. See also: Sheen, *Life is*, 251.

⁴⁹³ Sheen, *Life is*, 258.

⁴⁹⁴ “Third National Study Conference on the Churches and World Order,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 41, Folder “Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in American, 1949,” JFD Papers. See also: “Moral Responsibility and United States Power,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 41, Folder “Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1949,” JFD Papers.

Some Americans believed that the faithful needed to forge the broadest front possible, all the world's religious needed to unite. The enormity of the threats demanded it. What made this possible was these Americans' belief that all religions were essentially the same. They shared the same moral basis. As Ward Wheelcock pronounced in *This I Believe*, "I talked with Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists, Jews and Christians and with people of many other religions" and "all that was said in these talks emphasized that the basic, underlying moral and spiritual teachings of all religions are virtually the same."⁴⁹⁵ "I am convinced that any religion in which man is good," sermonized another man, is "a good religion."⁴⁹⁶ Historian Arnold Toynbee rationalized that the "Israelite-Christian-Moslem" religions along with the "the Buddhist-Hindu half of Mankind" all recognize the "Ultimate Reality," that "man owes his freedom to God; he is free because God has made him so."⁴⁹⁷ In recognizing this "ultimate reality," these Americans held, all were fit to battle secularism at home and abroad.

Others were not as sure. Religious conservatives, within Judaism, Catholicism, but, especially within Protestantism, denounced such catholic efforts.⁴⁹⁸ To them, not all

⁴⁹⁵ Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, xv.

⁴⁹⁶ Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 45. See also: Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 20.

⁴⁹⁷ Arnold J. Toynbee, "Man Owes His Freedom to God," *Colliers*, March 30, 1956, 80. See also: Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 1, 183, 75-6, 43, 71, 125, 24, Murrow, *This I Believe*, volume 2, 22. At Harvard University, where Protestant ministers were previously required to supervise private weddings and funerals, campus officials allowed for "an official of an individual's own religion" to conduct the services, as long as said officials recognize the "church's essentially Christian character." See: "Harvard and a Crusade," *Newsweek*, May 5, 1958. Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* is another example. Peale, while he occasionally mentions Christ, labors to remain non-denominational and open to any faith, speaking constantly of putting your faith in a "higher power." See: Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

⁴⁹⁸ For more information on conservative Catholics and conservative Jewish response see: Marty, *Modern*, especially chapters 23 and 24.

faiths were equal. They believed, as Charles Morrison wrote in *Can Protestantism Win America?*, that “Christianity is the only religion which has the dynamic of universality, the spiritual resources, the adaptability, and the inherent sense of moral responsibility for the character of civilization which world community requires.”⁴⁹⁹ For this reason many opposed uniting with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, but also with some fellow Christians. Some conservative Protestants attacked liberal Protestant denominations, especially liberal Protestants in the Ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical movement has a long history in American Christianity. As early as 1800 Christian denominations pooled their efforts to accomplish certain specific tasks. They worked together to conduct missionary efforts (both at home and abroad), to distribute scripture, to organize and operate Sunday schools, and to cooperate on numerous other tasks.⁵⁰⁰ These efforts gained strength as the nineteenth century progressed. Disparate denominations united to battle slavery, alcohol use, and to achieve world peace. During the Progressive era Christian reformers united behind organizations such as Josiah Strong’s Christian Endeavor Society, which preached the Social Gospel and strove for Progressive goals. Christian laymen also united to form the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA).

⁴⁹⁹ Charles Clayton Morrison, *Can Protestantism Win America?* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1948), 60-62.

⁵⁰⁰ Samuel McCrea Cavert, *The American Churches in the Ecumenical Movement, 1900-1968* (New York: Associated Press, 1968), 20.

The Ecumenical movement, however, only assumed its mature form at the turn of the century when the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) formed.⁵⁰¹ The FCC initially united 9 denominations. At the height of its power it encompassed 29 denominations and boasted a membership of over 33 million.⁵⁰² The FCC began as an effort to pool Christian resources on specific issues, such as, evangelizing, conducting missionary work, providing higher education, promoting temperance and family life, and ameliorating labor conditions.⁵⁰³ Overtime, however, the FCC became more than that. Largely as the result of its administration of the military's chaplain program and its role assigning radio time for Protestant programs during World War I, it became "the" voice of American Protestantism.⁵⁰⁴

This engendered resentment, especially among conservative Protestants. The emergence of evolutionary thought, historical theology, and comparative religions had long since driven a fissure within American Protestantism. On one side stood liberal Protestants who accepted many of the new revelations and on the other stood conservative Protestants who resisted.⁵⁰⁵ This schism engendered bitter resentment on both sides, but particularly on the "loosing" conservative side. The creation of the FCC, which was dominated by liberal Protestants, fanned these sectarian flames.⁵⁰⁶

Conservative Protestants did not believe that liberal Protestants and the FCC spoke for

⁵⁰¹ Other such organizations included Life and Work, Faith and Order, the International Missionary Council, the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the National Conference of Christian and Jews.

⁵⁰² Cavert, *The American Churches*, 209.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 53-56.

⁵⁰⁴ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2004), 889.

⁵⁰⁵ See: Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, chapter 46.

⁵⁰⁶ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, especially chapter 48.

them. They also resented FCC actions, such as cavorting with the “suspect” Eastern Orthodox Christians, their tendency to support liberal political causes, and their fraternization with pacifists during the world wars.⁵⁰⁷

For these reasons many conservative Protestants opposed uniting with liberals in the Ecumenical movement. Throughout these years conservative Protestants attacked the FCC, waging what one conservative Protestant called “the battle of the century.” Conservatives accused the FCC of being a “sort of neo-Catholic Church.”⁵⁰⁸ Others, like Carl McIntire of the conservative American Council of Churches, accused it of being rife with communists.⁵⁰⁹ John T. Flynn similarly accused the FCC of “standing for State Socialism and tending toward Communism.”⁵¹⁰ A 1940 book asked *How Red is the Federal Council of Churches?*⁵¹¹ Others, such as the Interstate Evangelical Association (IEA) denounced the Federal Council of Churches for theological reasons. The IEA condemned the FCC for its distribution of sex education material. They accused the council of spreading “indecent literature designed under false colors to poison the minds of our youth.” According to the IEA, this material was “so filthy as to pass belief” and a “shame to all decent people.”⁵¹²

Conservative Protestants, and others, also hesitated in aligning with Catholics. These Protestants expressed concern over the Catholic “doctrine of [papal]

⁵⁰⁷ Marty, *Modern*, 105.

⁵⁰⁸ James Forrest DeMurch, *Cooperation without Compromise: a History of the National Association of Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, IA: Eerdmans, 1956), 19-21, 28, 31-43.

⁵⁰⁹ Cavert, *The American Churches*, 185.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵¹¹ Marty, *Modern*, 123.

⁵¹² *Newsweek*, October 13, 34

infallibility.”⁵¹³ They also derided Catholics for their “cultic worship of Mary.”⁵¹⁴ Many also attacked Catholics for their, alleged, suppression of free will. Catholics, charged one American, preferred “censorship to free discussion.”⁵¹⁵ The Papacy, charged Charles Morrison, was a “perfected dictatorship.”⁵¹⁶ In these Protestants’ eyes the Catholic Church had negated the free will God had given man when it established a religious hierarchy. Instead of thinking and acting for themselves, many American Protestants believed, Catholics blindly obeyed the Pope and the church hierarchy.⁵¹⁷ Of particular concern to these Protestants was the belief that this repression applied not just to ethereal matters, but to temporal matters as well. As one Protestant warned “we must remember” that “the principle of the Pope’s authority over earthly rulers has never been renounced by Rome.”⁵¹⁸ As the same author cautioned his readers. The Pope had recently issued a proclamation preventing Sicilians from voting for a specific political party.⁵¹⁹ Many came to fear that Catholics would extend this to the United States. Paul Blanshard warned in his 1948 polemic *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, that a “world wide strategy” was “directed from Rome” to impose the Pope’s autocratic rule on America.⁵²⁰

⁵¹³ George B. Leonard, Jr., “What Chance Christian Unity?” *Look*, July 21, 1959, 21.

⁵¹⁴ Wuthnow, *The Restructuring*, 74.

⁵¹⁵ James B. Nichols, “What Disturbs Protestants About Catholics?” *Look*, May 18, 1954, 43.

⁵¹⁶ Charles Clayton Morrison, *Can Protestantism Win America?* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1948), 76-77.

⁵¹⁷ It is also important to note that these views of Catholics and Catholicism are simplistic, reductionist, and quite frankly, ignorant. Catholics, American and otherwise, do and did not blindly accept what the Pope told them. Catholics decided for themselves what to believe and often voiced disapproval of Papal interpretations by “lapsing” or by withdrawing from Catholicism altogether.

⁵¹⁸ Reverend James A. Pike, “Should a Catholic be President?” *Life*, December 21, 1959, 19.

⁵¹⁹ Horace M. Kallen, “The Predicament of the Tolerant,” *Harpers Magazine*, July 1958.

⁵²⁰ Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1949), 269-70. See also: James B. Nichols, “What Disturbs Protestants About Catholics?” *Look*, May 18, 1954, 43.,

This was only part of a larger and deeper current of anti-Catholicism which coursed through some quarters of American Protestantism in the 1950s. In 1952, over 40% of Americans worried that Catholics wielded too much power in society.⁵²¹ In 1949 the Episcopalian Church adopted a resolution barring members of its flock from marrying Catholics.⁵²² Distrust of Catholicism can also be seen in 1950s magazine articles such as “Should a Catholic Be President?”⁵²³

While some conservative Protestants opposed uniting with fellow Christians, even they called for a forging united front against the onslaught “of atheism, humanism, communism ... statist ... secularism, sectarianism, pharisaism and liberalism.”⁵²⁴ Conservatives, like Carl McIntire, formed groups like the International Council of Christian Churches. As McIntire disclosed, he formed the group because he and many “Conservative Christians felt increasingly that without some such effort they could not effectively confront the Federal Council’s liberal orientation” or “the insidious dangers of modernism” and Roman Catholicism.⁵²⁵ The only difference between these conservative ecumenical efforts and those of liberals was that conservatives proposed uniting with only the theologically “pure,” with fellow conservative Protestants.

Marty, *Modern*, 108. Critics also often cited Catholic efforts to boycott irreligious films as proof of their preferring censorship to free discussion. See: James B. Nichols, “What Disturbs Protestants About Catholics?” *Look*, May 18, 1954, 43.

⁵²¹ Wuthnow, *The Restructuring*, 93.

⁵²² Wuthnow, *The Restructuring*, 73. See also: Morrison, *Can Protestantism*.

⁵²³ Reverend James A. Pike, “Should a Catholic be President?” *Life*, December 21, 1959, 79. Also see: Marty, *Modern*, chapter 13 for the controversy concerning the naming of a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

⁵²⁴ DeMurch, *Cooperation*, 19-21, 38.

⁵²⁵ Carl F.H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologians: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 105-107 ; Carl McIntire, *Modern Tower of Babel* (Collingswood, NJ: Beacon Press, 1949), 230-31.

While some Americans advocated forming a united front of all faiths and others proposed forming a front solely of the theologically pure, most Americans supported something in-between. Most Americans advocated creating a united Judeo-Christian front. “Protestantism, Catholicity, and Judaism,” urged MacMahon, must unite to face their “common foe in secularism.”⁵²⁶ “The church and the synagogue alike,” counseled Joshua Liebman, can “help men everywhere to resist the economic and political slavery threatening to engulf human dignity and freedom.”⁵²⁷ The Federal Council of Churches’ Commission on a Just and Durable Peace decreed that it would “co-ordinate its efforts with ... other moral forces in the world, notably ... Roman Catholics and Jews.”⁵²⁸

This call for a Judeo-Christian front built off of the existence of the Judeo-Christian ethic. According to the ethic, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews shared a common spiritual heritage. As McMahan explained “the Judeo-Christian religion has given form and shape to our lives. It” designated a “particular moral and intellectual climate.”⁵²⁹ According to proponents of the ethic, Christians and Jews shared a similar belief system and this belief system provided the foundation for the American state. As sociologist Peter Berger wrote at the time, “American society possesses a cultural religion that is vaguely derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition and that contains the

⁵²⁶ MacMahon, *A Catholic*, 294.

⁵²⁷ Joshua Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 174.

⁵²⁸ “Draft for J.F.D. Opening Statement,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 30, Folder” World Council of Churches, 1946,” JFD Papers.

⁵²⁹ MacMahon, *A Catholic*, 17.

values generally held by most Americans.”⁵³⁰ As the author of a piece in *Look* magazine decreed, Americans “have a common Judeo-Christian core of belief.”⁵³¹

The widespread acceptance of the Judeo-Christian ethic can be seen in the magazine articles of the day. During the 1950s *Harpers* ran a series in which Protestants, Catholics, and Jews explained their beliefs. In the series the three faiths were portrayed on equal footing.⁵³² *Look* magazine ran a similar series, “The Story of Religions in America.” It contained pieces on numerous Protestant denominations, along with pieces on Judaism and Catholicism.⁵³³ The editors of *Look* also published an article entitled “Catholic, Protestant, Jews: the Conflicts that Divide Us” during these years.⁵³⁴ Movies like 1947’s *Crossfire* and *Gentlemen’s Agreement* also promoted the ethic by railing against anti-Semitism and also, to a lesser extent, anti-Catholicism.⁵³⁵ Even the popular children’s show *Howdy Doody* endorsed the ethic. Every episode

⁵³⁰ Berger, *Noise of*, 63.

⁵³¹ Richard Schickel, “Catholic, Protestant, Jew: the Conflicts that Divide Us,” September 30, 1958. See also: “Norman Vincent Peale Answers Your Questions, *Look*, February 18, 1958, 88. Carl Sandburg, “Psalm of the Blood Bank,” *Colliers*, September 2 1955, 25.

⁵³² Arthur A Cohen, “Why I Choose to be a Jew,” *Harpers Magazine*, April 1959, 61 ; William Warren Bartley III, “I Call Myself a Protestant,” *Harpers Magazine*, May 1959, 49 ; Phillip Scharper, “What a Modern Catholic Believed,” *Harpers Magazine*, March 1959, 40.

⁵³³ Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: the Methodists,” *Look*, September 15, 1957, 85 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Mormons,” *Look*, January 21, 1958, 57 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Lutherans,” *Look*, April 1, 1958, 77 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Episcopalians,” *Look*, May 12, 1959, 85 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Presbyterians,” *Look*, June 9, 1959, 65 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Disciples of Christ,” *Look*, October 27, 1959, 107 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Congregationalists,” *Look*, December 8, 1959, 83 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Christian Scientists,” *Look*, December 9, 1959, 87 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Seven Day Adventists,” *Look*, June 24, 1958, 75 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Baptists,” *Look*, October 28, 1959, 93 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Catholics,” *Look*, November 12, 1957, 118 ; Hartzell Spence, “The Story of Religions in America: The Jews,” *Look*, May 13 1958, 75.

⁵³⁴ Richard Schickel, “Catholic, Protestant, Jew: the Conflicts that Divide Us,” September 30, 1958, 102.

⁵³⁵ *Crossfire*, 1947, dir. Edward Dmytryk, RKO Radio Pictures, dvd ; *Gentlemen’s Agreement*, 1947. dir. Elia Kazan, Twentieth Century Fox, dvd.

concluded with the character Buffalo Bill urging children to “worship at the church or synagogue of your choice.”⁵³⁶

In the 1950s, many, if not most, Americans in the 1950s believed that the religious needed to unite. One of these Americans was the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Dulles espoused a modified version of the Judeo-Christian ethic while in office. His path to arriving at this understanding, however, was a long and winding one.

The future Secretary of State hailed from a family with deep religious roots. Missionaries and ministers dot his family tree. His grandfather, John Welsh Dulles, braved a 132 day open-boat journey to Madras, to spread the Gospel. He later died and was buried on Ceylon while evangelizing.⁵³⁷ Dulles’ sister also heard the calling. She became a missionary in Lebanon. Dulles’ father, Allen Macy Dulles, served as a minister in the Presbyterian Church. He also possessed a doctorate in divinity and in his later years held the Chair of Apologetics at Auburn Theological Seminary.

As a preacher’s son Foster, as everyone referred to the future Secretary of State, matured in a home steeped in religion. Each morning began the same. He rose, sang a hymn, and read a verse of scripture. The morning ritual concluded as he and the family congregated and knelt as the reverend led them in prayer.⁵³⁸

Dulles’ Sunday’s were particularly religious. Each holy day he attended Sunday school and also his father’s three sermons. During these sermons he took notes. When he returned home his father quizzed him on the sermons’ content. His father also

⁵³⁶ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 320.

⁵³⁷ Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1973), 9.

⁵³⁸ Mark Toulouse, *The Transformation of John Foster Dulles: From Prophet of Realism to Priest of Nationalism* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1985), 5.

required him to memorize ten verses from Psalms or the New Testament and two verses of a hymn every Sunday and recite them.⁵³⁹ On his own accord, the young Dulles once memorized the entire gospel of St. John.⁵⁴⁰

On Mondays the future Secretary of State attended the young people's service. On Wednesdays he participated in a weekly prayer meeting, and on Friday nights he partook in communion.⁵⁴¹

While the future Secretary of State's early life was steeped in religion, it was also steeped in more earthly matters. His mother was the daughter of an American ambassador. She spent much of her youth abroad. Her high society "debut" occurred in St. Petersburg. Her father, John W. Foster, served as President Grant's Minister, first to Mexico, and later to Russia and Spain. He later became William Henry Harrison's Secretary of State.⁵⁴² Dulles' uncle, Robert Lansing, also served as a Secretary of State for Woodrow Wilson.

Dulles' life vacillated between these two poles of religion and statecraft. Early on it appeared as if the more worldly side had triumphed. The young Dulles attended Princeton in 1904. Three years later, while still enrolled in school, his grandfather secured him a position on the Chinese delegation to the Second Hague Conference. After graduating, he departed for France, where he studied under philosopher Henri Bergson at the Sorbonne. Dulles' secular path continued when he returned from his

⁵³⁹ "Address by John Foster Dulles at the First Presbyterian Church, Watertown, New York, Sunday, August 28, 1959," John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 30, Folder "Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1949," JFD Papers. See also: Hoopes, *The Devil and*, 10.

⁵⁴⁰ Mildred Comfort, *John Foster Dulles: Peacemaker ; a Biographical Sketch of the Former Secretary of State* (Minneapolis, MN: T.S. Denison, 1960), 14.

⁵⁴¹ Comfort, *John Foster Dulles*, 13-14.

⁵⁴² Toulouse, *The Transformation*, 28.

studies. He informed his parents that he would not follow in his father's footsteps and become a man of the cloth. Instead he would go into law, where, he confided to his mother, he believed he "could make a greater contribution as a Christian lawyer and a Christian laymen than" as a "Christian minister."⁵⁴³ Soon thereafter he moved to Washington D.C. to attend George Washington Law School. While there he lived with maternal grandparents. His neighbors during this time included the Mexican and Chinese ambassadors and the future Secretary of State regularly attended parties thrown by Washington's elite. He rubbed shoulders with Senators, ambassadors, and was reportedly particularly friendly with the children of President William Howard Taft.

After completing his studies at George Washington University, Dulles went to work for the prestigious law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell in New York City. His grandfather had—once again—used his connections to secure him this sinecure. The future Secretary of State did well for himself. By 1914 he had become full partner and by 1926 he was the managing partner and the highest paid lawyer on Wall Street.⁵⁴⁴

In addition to submerging himself in jurisprudence, Dulles continued to involve himself in foreign affairs. During World War I he served as Special Council in Regard to Central American Affairs. He also participated on the War Trade Board and held a position in the State Department's Russian Bureau. When the war concluded he served as both a spokesman and a draftsman on the Reparations Committee at the Versailles conference.

⁵⁴³ Ronald Pruessen, *John Foster Dulles: the Road to Power* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 10.

⁵⁴⁴ Richard Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10-12

During these early secularly minded years the young Dulles seemed to have lost his faith. His close associate Thomas Dewey recalled that he spent these “years as an atheist.”⁵⁴⁵ More conclusively, he confided to his father at the time that he did not know “how much religion” he “had left.”⁵⁴⁶

This estrangement from the spiritual, however, did not last long. The destructiveness of World War I disturbed Dulles. Throughout the course of the next several decades he devoted his time and energy to securing a permanent peace for the world. These efforts would eventually lead him back to religion.

Dulles’ early thinking, however, was highly influenced by the thoughts of his mentor Henri Bergson. Bergson stressed the importance of “dynamic” forces. They, according to Bergson, always overcame “static” forces. Dulles used these ideas to interpret international relations. Dulles theorized that the overriding force in history was change. Change was inevitable. It, he lectured, “is the law of life.”⁵⁴⁷

The key to ending international conflict, Dulles believed, was to devise a mechanism to allow for “peaceful change” in the international system.⁵⁴⁸ Contriving

⁵⁴⁵ Hoopes, *The Transformation*, 35.

⁵⁴⁶ Letter from John Foster Dulles’ Mother, John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 62, Folder “Dulles, Mrs. Allen Macy, 1918,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁴⁷ John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 18. See also: “The Christian Citizen in a Changing World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 35, Folder “Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1948,” JFD Papers ; “The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Article: ‘The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,’ Religion in Life, Spring 1937,” JFD Papers ; “Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, and Press Releases, Box 289, Folder “Speech: ‘Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations,’ Stafford, Little Foundation Series, Princeton University, March 19, 1936,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁴⁸ “The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Article: ‘The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,’ Religion in Life, Spring 1937,” JFD Papers. For Dulles’ thoughts on why the international system did not allow for peaceful change see: “The Road to Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 14, Folder “Article by John Foster Dulles; ‘The Road to Peace,’ Atlantic Monthly,” JFD Papers. See also: Statements, and Press Releases,

such a solution, however, bedeviled Dulles.⁵⁴⁹ In his search for a solution he attended two conferences in 1937. The first, held in Paris, was sponsored by the League of Nations. The second, held at Oxford, was organized by the Universal Christian Council for Work and Life. The stated goal of both was the same: to secure international peace. The spirit and the results of these conferences, however, Dulles found, could not have been more different.

The Paris conference to study “peaceful change” was “wholly barren.” “Extreme nationalism,” Dulles deplored, permeated the proceedings. The attendees were “obsessed with the belief in their own national virtues and in the vices of others.” Consequently “it was impossible to secure any open-minded discussion of the great problem of how, in a world which is living and therefore changing, change could peacefully be effected.” At Oxford, however, Dulles found a “Christian atmosphere.” This, he recollected, made it “possible to discuss frankly and see the way to solve problems which the Paris conference had not even admitted to exist.”⁵⁵⁰

Box 289, Folder “Speech: ‘Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations,’ Stafford, Little Foundation Series, Princeton University, March 19, 1936,” JFD Papers ; “Remarks of John Foster Dulles at the Biennial Meeting of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America at Atlantic City, December 10, 1940,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, and Press Releases, Box 290, Folder “Speech: Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, Atlantic City, New Jersey, December 10, 1940,” JFD Papers ; Dulles, *War, Peace, and Change*, 138, 591 ; Dulles, *War or*, 18.

⁵⁴⁹ Dulles believed the ideal solution was to create a world government. Unfortunately, Dulles believed, such a solution was highly unlikely. For his thinking on this subject see: “The Road to Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 14, Folder “Article by John Foster Dulles; ‘The Road to Peace,’ Atlantic Monthly,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,” Duplicate Correspondence, Box 15, Folder “Van Dusen, Henry P., 1936,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁰ “Christianity—Solvent of World Conflict,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Folder “Article: ‘Christianity-Solvent of World Conflict,’ Social Progress,” JFD Papers. See also: “As Seen by a Layman,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series, 4, Articles, box 281, Folder “Article: ‘As Seen by a Layman,’ Religion in Life, Winter 1938,” JFD Papers ; Untitled Speech, John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, and Press Releases, Box 290, Folder “Speech: Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, October 21, 1941,” JFD Papers.

Oxford was an eye-opening experience for Dulles. Afterwards he came to appreciate the utilitarian value of religion. The religious owed their allegiance to a power higher than the state. Consequently, religion broke down national barriers. Religion, Dulles came to believe, could play a crucial role in securing peaceful change and a lasting peace.

For this reason the future Secretary of State became deeply enmeshed in church affairs in the years which followed. In 1939 he served as a delegate for the International Conference of Lay Experts and Ecumenical Leaders at the World Council of Churches' conference held in Geneva. The following year he accepted an offer to chair the Federal Council of Churches' Council on a Just and Durable Peace.

The Council on a Just and Durable Peace provided Dulles with a forum to develop his ideas on "peaceful change." During his tenure as council chair he developed several potential solutions to the problem, including creating a federal world organization modeled on the U.S. government.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵¹ For Dulles' thinking on this subject see: "The Problem of Peace in a Divided World," John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 15, Folder "Van Dusen, Henry P., 1936," JFD Papers. There was a moral aspect to this solution. See: "Article by John Foster Dulles for the New York Sunday Times Magazine," John Foster Dulles Papers, Articles, Papers, Reports, etc..., Box 283, Folder "Article: Dallas Morning News, August 13, 1945," JFD Papers, ; "The Churches Opportunities in World Affairs," John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press, Conferences, Box 294, Folder "The Churches Opportunities in World Affairs,' World Convention of Churches of Christ, Buffalo, New York, August 6, 1947," JFD Papers. See also: "Christian Responsibility in World Affairs: a Symposium," John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 40, Folder "Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1949," JFD Papers ; "Moral Force in World Affairs," John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder "Moral Force in World Affairs,' Presbyterian Life," JFD Papers, "The Importance of Spiritual Resources," John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder "Speech: 'The Importance of Spiritual Resources,' Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950," JFD Papers.

⁵⁵¹ "Moral Force in World Affairs," John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder "'Moral Force in World Affairs,' Presbyterian Life," JFD Papers.

Religion or morality during these years was merely a means to an end for Dulles. It provided a method to secure world peace and stability. As he stated after attending the conference at Oxford “that conference led me to conclude that there was no solution to the great international problems which perplex the world” other than “by bringing to bear ... the force of Christianity.”⁵⁵² There is no evidence to suggest that the future Secretary of State believed in religion during these years. Rather he believed in religion’s usefulness, its utilitarian value. This, however, slowly, began to change.

By 1937 Dulles had, he proclaimed, regained a “generalized faith.”⁵⁵³ His faith only deepened over the coming years and decades as he hurled himself into church affairs. He continued his work on behalf of the Federal Council of Churches. He also served as a Trustee of the Brick Presbyterian Church and Union Seminary. He worked with the National Council of Christians and Jews and served on multiple lay committees. During these years he also delivered between four and five dozen speeches annually on religion and international affairs.⁵⁵⁴

As Dulles’ faith deepened, he, like many Americans, conflated religion with national identity and mission. Initially Dulles was more catholic in his thought than most. He believed that God’s divine blessing extended to all of Christianity, to Western civilization, to Christendom, not just to the United States. “The western democracies

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵⁵³ “The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Article: ‘The Problem of Peace in a Dynamic World,’ Religion in Life, Spring 1937,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁴ Frederick Marks, *Power and Peace: The Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 5 ; Hoopes, *The Devil and*, 51-55.

are,” Dulles declared, “so-called Christian democracies.”⁵⁵⁵ They had “politically translated” the Christian “belief in the spiritual nature of man” into their founding documents, into “the Magna Carta, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and our own Declaration of Independence.”⁵⁵⁶ As a result the Western Christian democracies, Dulles believed, “became the instruments” of “moral law.” They became “God’s chosen instruments.”⁵⁵⁷ As God’s chosen instruments “French, the British and the American nations,” transformed “the face of the Western World” and inspired “the birth of democratic processes.” Faith, Dulles concluded, had made the West a “dynamic” force in the world.⁵⁵⁸

This, however, Dulles decried, was no longer the case. The West had exhausted its “spiritual springs” after the First World War. It “no longer” seemed to “be the expression of a great faith.” It “had nothing to give,” it had “no fire to impart.”⁵⁵⁹ The

⁵⁵⁵ “Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “‘Moral Force in World Affairs,’ Presbyterian Life, August 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁶ “The Moral Initiative,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 75, Folder “Speech by John Foster Dulles: ‘The Moral Initiative,’ Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, November 18, 1953,” JFD Papers. See also: Department of State Press Release, November 29, 1951, John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 305, Folder, “Speech: ‘The Free East and the Free West,’ National Council of Christians and Jews, Cleveland, Ohio, December 2, 1951,” JFD Papers ; “The Churches Opportunities in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, et... Box 294, Folder “Speech: ‘The Churches Opportunities in World Affairs,’ World Convention of Churches in Christ , Buffalo, New York, August 6, 1947,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁷ Untitled Speech, John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 293, Folder “Speech: Riverside Church, New York,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁸ “A Righteous Faith for a Just and Durable Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 282, Folder “Article: ‘The American People Need Now Be imbued with a Righteous Faith,’ Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace, Federal Council of Churches, October, 1942,” JFD Papers. See also: Press Release, April 21, 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, and Press Conferences, etc... Box 354, Folder “Speech: ‘Dynamic Peace,’ Associated Press Annual Luncheon, New York, April 22, 1957,” JFD Papers ; “A Righteous Faith,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 282, Folder “Article: ‘A Righteous Faith,’ Life Magazine, December 28, 1942,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁵⁹ “A Righteous Faith for a Just and Durable Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 282, Folder “Article: ‘The American People Need Now Be imbued with a Righteous Faith,’ Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace, Federal Council of Churches, October 1942,” JFD Papers.

Western people, Dulles concluded, were a “burnt-out peoples” who had lost their spiritual dynamism.⁵⁶⁰

The cause of the West’s moral collapse, the future Secretary of State believed was secular materialism. The West, Dulles lamented, had begun to exhibit a “growing dependence on material things” and was focused more on secular issues, such as “security.”⁵⁶¹ “We have waxed greater in material power and material possessions,” Dulles bemoaned, but “have lost many of the qualities which in the past made us truly great.”⁵⁶²

While the future Secretary of State initially possessed a more international understanding of the traditional American covenant ideology, as the years passed, he came to adopt the more parochial American understanding. As the cold war set in

⁵⁶⁰ “A Righteous Faith,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 282, Folder “Article: A Righteous Faith,” *Life Magazine*, December 28, 1942,” JFD Papers. See also: “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶¹ “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “A Righteous Faith for a Just and Durable Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 282, Folder “Article: ‘The American People Need Now Be imbued with a Righteous Faith,’ Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace, Federal Council of Churches, October 1942,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶² This, Dulles believed, held security implications. See: “Address by John Foster Dulles at the First Presbyterian Church, Watertown, New York, Sunday, August 28, 1959,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 30, Folder “Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1949,” JFD Papers, “Address by John Foster Dulles,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 39, Folder “World Council of Churches, including papers concerning the Amsterdam Assembly, August 22-September 5, 1948,” JFD Papers. See also: “World Brotherhood,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “Article: ‘World Brotherhood,’ Presbyterian Tribute, February 8, 1947,” JFD Papers ; “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers ; “The Christian Citizen in a Changing World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 35, Folder “Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1948,” JFD Papers.

Dulles came to believe that America, not all of Christendom, served as “God’s chosen instrument.”

The future Secretary of State, like many, believed that the nation was founded as “a Christian nation.”⁵⁶³ America, he asserted, “was founded” in the “belief that all men had their origin and destiny in God.”⁵⁶⁴ “Our institutions,” he pronounced, “were primarily molded by the Christian belief of our founders. They believed that there was such a thing as moral law” and “they believed there was a Creator who endowed men with unalienable rights.”⁵⁶⁵

The founding fathers, Dulles believed, had infused their Christian faith into the new government they created. With “the Bill of Rights” the founders put “into our supreme law the concept . . . that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³“Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “‘Moral Force in World Affairs,’ *Presbyterian Life*, August 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶⁴“A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc. . . . Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “Our Christian Witness in a World at War,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Paper: Our Christian Witness in a World at War,” JFD Papers, “Christian Responsibility for Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc. . . . Box 295, Folder “Christian Responsibilities for Peace, General Conference, Methodist Church, Boston, Massachusetts,” JFD Papers ; “Faith of Our Fathers,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 58, Folder “Church Activities, 1952,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶⁵ “Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “‘Moral Force in World Affairs,’ *Presbyterian Life*, August 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶⁶ “Faith of Our Fathers,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 58, Folder “Church Activities, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Spiritual Bases of Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc. . . . Box 301, Folder “‘The Spiritual Bases of Peace,’ Council of Churches, Seattle, Washington, January 9, 1950,” JFD Papers ; “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc. . . . , Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers ; “Religion in American Life,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc. . . . Box 305, Folder “Speech [NBC Broadcast]: ‘Religion in American Life,’ National Council of Churches of Christ in American, New York, New York, November 4, 1951,” JFD Papers ; “The Churches and World Order,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press

As a Christian nation, Dulles believed, America had a duty. “A great burden,” he cautioned, “rest[s] upon us. ‘For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required.’”⁵⁶⁷ It has “been reserved to the American people,” Dulles eulogized on another occasion, “to show the possibilities of a free society” not “merely for ourselves but for the benefit of mankind.”⁵⁶⁸ Americans must, he chastised, spread the word of God. As he wrote on another occasion, Jesus “told the disciples to go out into all the world and to preach the gospel to all the nations. Any nation which bases its institutions on Christen principles,” he reminded, “cannot but” do the same.⁵⁶⁹

But Americans, the Secretary of State came to believe, were not “doing the same.” God’s chosen people, he mourned, had “fallen far short of that which was

Conferences, etc... Box 291, Folder “‘The Churches and World Order,’ Princeton Theological Seminary Commencement, Princeton, New Jersey,” JFD Papers ; “Christian Responsibility for Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 295, Folder “Christian Responsibilities for Peace, General Conference, Methodist Church, Boston, Massachusetts,” JFD Papers. ; “Freedom Through Sacrifice,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 293, Folder “Speech: ‘Freedom Through Sacrifice Presbyterian Restoration Fund, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” JFD Papers,

⁵⁶⁷ “The American Churches and the International Situation,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Pamphlet: ‘The American Churches and the International Situation,’ Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, Atlantic City, New Jersey, December 1940,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶⁸ “The Moral Initiative,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 320, Folder “Speech: ‘The Moral Initiative,’ Congress of Industrial Organizations, Cleveland, Ohio, November 18, 1953,” JFD Papers. See also: “Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “Moral Force in World Affairs,” *Presbyterian Life*, August 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁶⁹ “Faith of Our Fathers,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 58, Folder “Church Activities, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “To Save Humanity from the Deep Abyss,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Articles, Papers, Reports, etc... Box 285, Folder “‘To Save Humanity from the Deep Abyss,’ Concerning Korea, *New York Times Magazine*, July 30, 1950,” JFD Papers ; “The Churches and World Order,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 291, Folder “‘The Churches and World Order,’ Princeton Theological Seminary Commencement, Princeton, New Jersey,” JFD Papers ; “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers.

required.”⁵⁷⁰ Americans, he grieved, no longer possessed “the faith of our fathers.”

They had become “disconnected from” their “religious faith” and “lost” their “sense of mission in the world.”⁵⁷¹ They were losing their “spiritual power.”⁵⁷²

Instead of relying upon the spiritual, Americans, Dulles chortled, were relying on the secular, the material. The “national mood,” he railed, had become “materialistic.”⁵⁷³ God, the Secretary propounded, “was challenging America with “the test of material prosperity.” He was tempting “our society” with “material fruits.”⁵⁷⁴

America was not only failing God’s test at home, Dulles feared, but also abroad. Overseas, he lectured, a “grave peril came. It came from foreign leaders and parties who held irreligious beliefs. They rejected the Christian concept of the nature of man and

⁵⁷⁰ “The American Churches and the International Situation,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 281, Folder “Pamphlet: ‘The American Churches and the International Situation,’ Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, Atlantic City, New Jersey, December 1940,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷¹ “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷² “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Churches and World Order,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 291, Folder “‘The Churches and World Order,’ Princeton Theological Seminary Commencement, Princeton, New Jersey,” JFD Papers ; “Christian Responsibility for Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 295, Folder “Christian Responsibilities for Peace, General Conference, Methodist Church, Boston, Massachusetts,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷³ “The Spiritual Bases of Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 301, Folder “‘The Spiritual Bases of Peace,’ Council of Churches, Seattle, Washington, January 9, 1950,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷⁴ “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers. See also: “Address by John Foster Dulles, August 24, 1948,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 295, Folder “Speech: World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, Holland, August 24, 1948,” JFD Papers ; “Religion in American Life,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 305, Folder “Speech [NBC Broadcast]: ‘Religion in American Life,’ National Council of Churches of Christ in American, New York, New York, November 4, 1951,” JFD Papers ; Dulles, *War or*, 255.

they deified race or class. The danger first took a fascist form. Now the danger is greatest in its communist form.”⁵⁷⁵ God, Dulles held, was testing his people with secular materialism at home and secular totalitarianism overseas.

But America, the Secretary of State believed, could still prove its worthiness. It could still pass God’s test, honor the covenant, and defeat secularism. “Soviet Communism,” he asserted, could “be peacefully thwarted in its grand strategy for world conquest if our free nation is a dynamic moral force in the world.”⁵⁷⁶ “The Communist political structure,” he urged on another occasion, “is over-extended, over-rigid and ill-founded. It can be shaken by a moral offensive.”⁵⁷⁷

The question which confounded Dulles, and one which he never seemed to satisfactorily resolve even in his own mind, was who should take part in this moral offensive? On the one hand, the Secretary seemed convinced that all faiths should participate. The world, he proclaimed, needed “a united effort by all Americans of every

⁵⁷⁵ “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers. See also: “America’s Spiritual Heritage,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 285, Folder “‘ America’s Spiritual Heritage,’ *The Southern Weekly*, January 11, 1950,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷⁶ “A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 307, Folder “Speech: ‘A Dynamic Moral Force-America’s Opportunity,’ Johns Hopkins University Commencement, Baltimore, Maryland, June 10, 1952,” JFD Papers. See also: “Address by John Foster Dulles Before the Federal Council of Churches March 5, 1946 Columbus, Ohio,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondences, Box 29, Folder “Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America-Commission to Study a Just and Durable Peace,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷⁷ “The Spiritual Bases for World Peace,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 301, Folder “‘ The Spiritual Bases for Peace,’ Council of Churches, Seattle, Washington, January 9, 1950,” JFD Papers ; “The Importance of Spiritual Resources,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc..., Box 301, Folder “Speech: ‘The Importance of Spiritual Resources,’ Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island, New York, January 27, 1950,” JFD Papers.

faith”⁵⁷⁸ All faiths could take part in the moral offensive because they were all based on the same moral law. “There is,” he wrote, a “general, world-wide agreement about ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in their broad outlines.”⁵⁷⁹ “Experience in the United Nations,” he wrote, had shown “that there is considerable agreement about what is right. That is particularly true between those who are influenced by one or another of the great religions. All the great religions reflect to some degree the moral or natural law, and that makes it possible to find many common denominator of right and wrong.”⁵⁸⁰

On the other hand, however, the Secretary of State occasionally professed a belief in Christian exceptionalism. As Dulles stated, while “the moral principles that need to be put to work are implicit in all the great religions,” Christians were especially qualified because they “believe that moral truth was uniquely revealed by Jesus-Christ.”⁵⁸¹ This made Christians, especially Protestant Christians, Dulles believed,

⁵⁷⁸ “Address by John Foster Dulles Before the Federal Council of Churches March 5, 1946 Columbus, Ohio,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondences, Box 29, Folder “Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America-Commission to Study a Just and Durable Peace,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁷⁹ “The Christian Citizen in a Changing World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 35, Folder “Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁸⁰ Dulles, *War or*, 187. See also: “Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “‘Moral Force in World Affairs,’ *Presbyterian Life*,” JFD Papers ; Untitled Speech, John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 291, Folder “Speech: re: Fellowship, NBC Radio Broadcast, October 6, 1943,” JFD Papers ; “Freedom Through Sacrifice,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 293, Folder “Speech: ‘Freedom Through Sacrifice Presbyterian Restoration Fund, Atlantic City, New Jersey,’ JFD Papers ; “Address by John Foster Dulles at the National Council of Presbyterian Men, Chicago, Illinois, February 2, 1952,” Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 306, Folder “Speech: ‘Putting Moral Force to Work,’ National Council of Presbyterian Men, Chicago, Illinois, February 2, 1952,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁸¹ Dulles,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 39, Folder “World Council of Churches, including papers concerning the Amsterdam Assembly, August 22-September 5, 1948,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Churches and the United Nations,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Speeches, Statements, Press Conferences, etc... Box 294, Folder “Speech: ‘The Churches and the United Nations,’ Presbyterian Church Broadcast, June 24, 1947,” JFD Papers.

“especially qualified to form moral judgments.”⁵⁸² Christians were also preeminently qualified because they recognized that “it is only individuals who have souls to be saved.” This, the Secretary believed, translated to foreign policy, where “Christians tend[ed] to prefer the free society” and more vehemently opposed totalitarianism.⁵⁸³

President Dwight D. Eisenhower shared many of his Secretary of State’s beliefs about America, religion, and the need for united front. He, however, harbored none of his Secretary of State’s doubts about other religions. The President’s certainty seems to have sprung from his own personal religious history.

Dwight D. Eisenhower grew up in a home in Abilene, Kansas that was, according to the President, “a religious one.”⁵⁸⁴ His parents were devout followers of a Mennonite sect known as the River Brethren. “The Bible,” the President later reminisced, was a “daily and vital influence” in his parents’ lives.⁵⁸⁵

When the future President departed Abilene he appeared to have left religion behind. Once in the Army he drifted from organized religion. He failed to join a church and only sporadically attended non-denominational church services.⁵⁸⁶ Many historians and Eisenhower biographers have taken this to mean that religion and faith were not important factors in Eisenhower’s life. Nothing could be further from the case. As

⁵⁸² “Moral Force in World Affairs,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 284, Folder “‘Moral Force in World Affairs,’ *Presbyterian Life*,” JFD Papers. See also: “The Living Church,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Series 4, Articles, Box 287, Folder “Paper: ‘The Living Church,’ May 13, 1941,” JFD Papers

⁵⁸³ “The Christian Citizen in a Changing World,” John Foster Dulles Papers, Duplicate Correspondence, Box 35, Folder “Church Activities, Miscellaneous, 1948,” JFD Papers.

⁵⁸⁴ Telegram, September 5, 1952. Ann Whitman File. Papers as President, Campaign Series, Box 7. Folder “Religion,” DDEL.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ Oakley, *God’s Country*, 153.

Eisenhower once remarked, “I am one of the most deeply religious men I know.”⁵⁸⁷

Throughout his years in the Army and in the White House Eisenhower held a deep, private, faith. One fellow soldier recalled that as zero hour for the Allied invasion of Sicily approached the future President watched in anticipation on a hill high over Malta harbor and “bowed his head in a short silent prayer” and remarked that “there comes a time when you have done all that you can possibly do, when you have used your brains, your training, and your technical skill, when the die is cast, and events are in the hands of God—and there you have to leave them.”⁵⁸⁸

Once in office the President opened every cabinet meeting with a silent prayer.⁵⁸⁹ He also had his private residence in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania blessed and once distributed copies of a sermon that particularly moved him, entitled “The Mastery of Moods,” to over fifty government employees.⁵⁹⁰ The President’s personal secretary, Ann Whitman, meanwhile, recorded that one day “the President preached religion to me all the day long.” It began, she recalls, when she “took in a copy of the Dartmouth Bible, which had been given to him.” The President asked her “what difference there was between this and an ordinary Bible.” When she answered that she did not know, he

⁵⁸⁷ “Press Conference with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, May 3, 1948,” Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 156, folder “Press Statements and Releases 1947-52 (4),” DDEL.

⁵⁸⁸ Ellwood Cecil Nance, *Faith of our Fighters* (New York: Bethany Press, 1944), 198-9.

⁵⁸⁹ “Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, February 6, 1953,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Cabinet Series, Box 1, folder “Cabinet Meeting February 6, 1953,” DDEL. See also: “Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, November 5, 1954,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Cabinet Series, Box 4, folder “Cabinet Meeting November 5, 1954,” DDEL.

⁵⁹⁰ “Memorandum for Mr. Moore, February 9, 1954,” Central Files, President’s Personal Files, Box 913, folder “53 BI – National Presbyterian Church (1),” DDEL ; “Letter from Reverend L.R. Edward Elson, February 5, 1954,” Central Files, President’s Personal Files, Box 913, folder “53 BI – National Presbyterian Church (1),” DDEL. The President also requested a copy of, at least, one other sermon. See: “Letter to Dr. Elson, November 4, 1955,” Central Files, President’s Personal Files, Box 913, folder “53 BI – National Presbyterian Church (1),” DDEL.

went on to assert “that an atheist is a stupid person, he is one who won’t think.” At this point the President’s secretary, obviously overwhelmed, meekly interjected “in a small voice” that she was not an atheist. Regardless, the President continued, proclaiming that “our democracy was founded on religion on the thesis that all men are created equal. He said ‘I know I am better than lots of men’ but on what else do you base this democracy of equal rights” except on the belief that “in sight of God they are equal.” “Later in the afternoon he came back to the subject.” After Mrs. Whitman informed the President that she believed that “religion was a crutch for many,” the President agreed, but stated, that even when you have everything in the world, “the most expensive foods,” the “one you love,” this still “isn’t enough.” At this point someone interrupted the conversation, but later in the day the President “again came back to the subject.” He stated “that he could except the theory that earth was created by fiery volcanoes, but,” he continued, “we had always been taught scientifically that intense heat destroys life, the first protoplasm,” he concluded, “must have come from somewhere.” The President continued, that “he did not conceive of God as any being—that he abhorred the trappings of the church as much as anyone—but.” And at this point the letter abruptly ends. The succeeding pages are sadly missing from the archive.⁵⁹¹

Regardless, these examples reveal that Eisenhower was a deeply religious man. What distinguished him from his contemporaries, however, was that he held no allegiance to any specific church or denomination. As he remarked in a Presidential

⁵⁹¹ Letter from Ann Whitman to her Husband, Personal Papers of Ann C. Whitman, Box 1, folder “Correspondence—Whitman, E.S.,” DDEL.

press conference, I don't "necessarily adhere to any particular sect or organization."⁵⁹²

To Eisenhower, faith was a personal matter. One did not need to attend a church to be religious. One simply needed to believe.

Eisenhower, like many religious Americans at mid-century, conflated faith with America and its form of government. "Free government," he asserted, "cannot be explained in any other terms than religious."⁵⁹³ "Democracy," he proclaimed on another occasion, "is the political expression of a deeply felt religion"⁵⁹⁴ "I do not believe," he once bluntly stated, that "Democracy can exist without religion."⁵⁹⁵

For Eisenhower, the foundation of freedom and democracy was spiritual. "Spiritual values," he proclaimed, "are the ultimate source of every freedom"⁵⁹⁶ As the President questioned, "If we have not" the faith "that man is more than an animal, that

⁵⁹² "Press Conference with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, May 3, 1948, Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 156, folder "Press Statements and Releases 47-52 (4)," DDEL.

⁵⁹³ Untitled Document, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Campaign Series, Box 7, folder "Religion," DDEL.

⁵⁹⁴ "Notes for Chapel Talk," Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 195, folder "Kansas State, October 24-25 1947," DDEL. 769. See also: "Remarks of the President to a Luncheon Meeting of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, November 18, 1953," Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 5, folder "National Council of Churches of Christ 11/18/53," DDEL.

⁵⁹⁵ "Press Conference with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, May 3, 1948, Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 156, folder "Press Statements and Releases 47-52 (4)," DDEL. See also: "Speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Warsaw, Indiana, Sept. 15, 1952," Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder "9-15-52 Warsaw, Indiana," DDEL ; "Address by the President to the World Council of Churches Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois, August 19, 1954," Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 8, folder "World Council of Churches 8/19 (1)," DDEL ; Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder "Speech, American Crusade," DDEL.

⁵⁹⁶ "Speech Given by the President at the American Legion Convention, New York City," Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder "8-25-52 NYC, American Legion Convention," DDEL. See also: "Remarks by the President on Film Recorded in Conjunction with the 'Back to God' Program of the American Legion," Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 11, folder "Back to God 2/20/55," DDEL.

he possesses a soul” then “why should any of us admit that any other is born equal, with rights equal to himself?”⁵⁹⁷

It was only because Americans possessed spiritual beliefs, Eisenhower argued, that the founding fathers had enough “faith in man” to turn him “loose ... on his own.”⁵⁹⁸ Americans’ faith, Eisenhower reasoned, assured the founding fathers that the citizenry understood that “man was made in the image of God—was first of all a spiritual being”⁵⁹⁹ Only because Americans had faith and recognized that they were created in God’s image, Eisenhower believed, did the founders trust them with freedom. It assured that Americans would voluntarily sacrifice for the common good.

So important was religion to the founding fathers and to their understanding of democracy, Eisenhower asserted, that “our forefathers,” could conceive of no other “way of explaining this new free government except by saying “we hold that all me are endowed by their Creator with certain right.”⁶⁰⁰ With their belief in “unalienable rights,” Eisenhower stated, the founding fathers “wrote their religious faith into our founding

⁵⁹⁷ “Notes for Chapel Talk,” Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 195, folder “Kansas State College, October 24-25 ’47,” DDEL.

⁵⁹⁸ Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL.

⁵⁹⁹ Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL. See also: “Speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Warsaw, Indiana, Sept. 15, 1952,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder “9-15-52 Warsaw, Indiana,” DDEL ; Untitled Document, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Campaign Series, Box 7, folder “Religion,” DDEL ; Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL, “Notes for Chapel Talk,” Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 195, folder “Kansas State, October 24-25 1947,” DDEL. See also: “Speech Given by the President in Boston, Mass. November 3, 1952,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “11-3-52 Boston, Mass.,” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁰ “Speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Warsaw, Indiana, Sept. 15, 1952,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder “9-15-52 Warsaw, Indiana,” DDEL.

documents.” They also “stamped” it in the form of the phrase “in God on the face of our coins and currency.”⁶⁰¹

This spiritual foundation bestowed upon America, Eisenhower believed, “a continuing purpose.” This purpose, Eisenhower continued, “was clearly stated for us in our founding documents.” Lincoln,” he continued, “defined it.” The United States was fated to bring hope to the world.⁶⁰² America, as he stated on another occasion, was “blessed as no other people on Earth,” it was “the hope of the world.”⁶⁰³ “The Power that had made and preserved us a nation,” he declared, had bestowed this mission upon the nation.⁶⁰⁴

Unfortunately, Eisenhower waxed, while “one hundred years ago, fifty years ago, America was the wonder of humanity and the symbol of man’s hopes and goals everywhere,” it no longer represented “the spiritual and material realization of the dreams.”⁶⁰⁵ America, he fretted, had abandoned its “basic concepts.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰¹Untitled Document, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Campaign Series, Box 7, folder “Religion,” DDEL. See also: “Following is the Talk to be Delivered by the President for the ‘Back to God’ Program Sponsored by the American Legion,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 6, folder “Back to God 1954,” DDEL ; “Remarks by the President at the Dedication of the Washington Hebrew Congregation Temple,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 12, folder “Washington, Hebrew Temple, 3/6/55,” DDEL ; “Remarks by the President on Film Recorded in Conjunction with the ‘Back to God’ Program of the American Legion,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 11, folder “Back to God 2/20/55,” DDEL.

⁶⁰²Telegram, September 5, 1952, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Campaign Series, Box 7, folder “Religion,” DDEL.

⁶⁰³Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁴“Following is the Talk to be Delivered by the President for the ‘Back to God’ Program Sponsored by the American Legion,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 6, folder “Back to God 1954,” DDEL. See also: Speech, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 4, folder “Role of the Republican Party 9/21/53, Boston (1),” DDEL ; Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁵Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder “8-25-52 NYC, American Legion Convention,” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁶Speech, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 4, folder “Role of the Republican Party 9/21/53, Boston (1),” DDEL. See also: Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder

At home, Eisenhower sermonized, America was “tending too much to the material.”⁶⁰⁷ We are “too ready,” he decried, “to adhere to and to place our trust in material values.”⁶⁰⁸ “We give far too much attention,” he cautioned, “to material values.”⁶⁰⁹

Secularism also, Eisenhower believed, challenged America abroad. Overseas, he admonished, we are “confronted by a militant atheism and a brazen materialism.”⁶¹⁰ The enemy that America faced abroad, “Godless communism,” was, cautioned Eisenhower, above all a “moral enemy.”⁶¹¹

This moral enemy, however, Eisenhower believed, was weak. As he confided to Jordan’s King Hussein, the “free world” has “a common bond of dedication to spiritual values.” We “value human dignity and freedom.” This is something that communists, the President judged, “do not have.” This made them weak. To defeat communism, he

“Speech, American Crusade,” DDEL. For further examples of America’s moral failings see: Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “10-23-52 Buffalo, NY (1),” DDEL ; “Inspirational-Uplift-Spiritual Value Speech,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, Folder ‘Speech, Spiritual Value,’ DDEL.

⁶⁰⁷ Letter to Emmet, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, Box 37, folder “DDE Dictation- Nov ’58,” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁸ “Address by the President to the World Council of Churches Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois, August 19, 1954,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 8, folder “World Council of Churches 8/19 (1),” DDEL.

⁶⁰⁹ Conversation with Queen Fredericka of Greece, December 9, 1958,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, Box 38, folder “Staff Notes Dec ’58 (2), DDEL. See also: Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “10-23-52 Buffalo, NY (1), DDEL.

⁶¹⁰ Letter to Lt. Gen. Willard S. Paul, March 27, 1954,” Central Files, President’s Personal File, Box 913, folder “53 BI-National Presbyterian Church (1),” DDEL. See also: Memorandum, August 27, 1954, White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 00.3[Rel] (File 1) (1),” DDEL ; Press Release, February 1, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 3, folder “American Legion 2/1/53,” DDEL.

⁶¹¹ “Second Draft – End of the Campaign-Jackson-Hughes,” Stephen Benedict File, Box 7, folder “11-3-52, Boston, Mass.,” DDEL. For other examples of Eisenhower framing the cold war as a moral war see: “Speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Warsaw, Indiana, Sept. 15, 1952,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder “9-15-52 Warsaw, Indiana,” DDEL.

extorted, the free peoples of the world “must present a common defense against communism.”⁶¹²

In order to do this, however, the administration would first have to battle secularism. At home it needed to rally people back to religion. Americans, he urged, must “will forward under God.”⁶¹³ Because “Faith is the mightiest force man has at his command.”⁶¹⁴

But regaining faith and defeating secularism at home, the President believed, would not be enough. To defeat secularism abroad the religious in America also needed to unite with the religious worldwide. The President was willing to do this because he, like many Americans, believed that all religions shared a common spiritual basis. As he rationalized even the “Mohammedans, the Buddhists and the rest” of the world’s religious “strongly believed that they achieve a right to human dignity because of their relationship to the Supreme Being.”⁶¹⁵ For this reason they could be trusted to stand

⁶¹² Memorandum of Conversation with King Hussein of Jordan March 25, 1959, White House Office Files, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 9, folder “Jordan (1),” DDEL. See also: “Remarks of the President to a Luncheon Meeting of the General Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, November 18, 1953,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series Box 5, folder “National Council of Churches of Christ 11/18/53,” DDEL ; “Following is the Talk to be Delivered by the President for the ‘Back to God’ Program Sponsored by the American Legion,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 6, folder “Back to God 1954,” DDEL. For examples of Eisenhower’s views on religion and the dignity of the individual see: “Speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Warsaw, Indiana, Sept. 15, 1952,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 1, folder “9-15-52 Warsaw, Indiana,” DDEL.

⁶¹³ “Second Draft- Buffalo 10/2/52,” Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder “10/23/52 Buffalo NY,” DDEL.

⁶¹⁴ “Address by the President to the World Council of Churches Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois, August 19, 1954,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 8, folder “World Council of Churches 8/19 (1),” DDEL.

⁶¹⁵ “Extemporaneous Remarks of the President to a Delegation from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, September 9, 1959,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 31, folder “National Council of Churches 9/9/59,” DDEL.. The President’s understanding seemed to have sprung from his service in World War II. He once remarked that during the

united with American Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Eisenhower's goal was "nothing short of inviting every single person, in every single country in the world, who believes in the power of a Supreme Being, to join in a mighty, simultaneous, intense act of faith."⁶¹⁶ The President wanted to lead "in a moral regeneration throughout the world."⁶¹⁷

The President himself would lead this regeneration. As he confided to Billy Graham, "one reason I was elected President was to lead America in a religious revival."⁶¹⁸ He led by personal example.⁶¹⁹ After his inauguration he joined a church, the Presbyterian Church in Washington. He also underwent an adult baptism, the first President to do so while in office.⁶²⁰ He began his inaugural address by asking the crowd to bow their heads while he read a prayer he had written for the occasion.⁶²¹ His inaugural speech itself was tinged with religious language. "We sense with all our faculties that forces of good and evil are amassed and armed and opposed as rarely before in history." His fellow Americans must, he urged, "give testimony" to the entire

war the soldiers "were of diverse faiths. But they were all American." Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, Folder 10/23/52 Buffalo NY (1)," DDEL.

⁶¹⁶ "Address by the President to the World Council of Churches Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois, August 19, 1954," Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 8, folder "World Council of Churches 8/19 (1)," DDEL. See also: "President Eisenhower's Statements on Religion," Central Files, Office File, Box 688, folder "Peace (5)," DDEL.

⁶¹⁷ "Remarks at Luncheon of General Commission on Army and Navy Chaplains, April 24, 1956," Pre-Presidential Papers, Principle File, Box 192, folder "Speeches Nov '45-April '46 (1)," DDEL.

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in William McLoughlin, *Billy Graham: Revivalist in a Secular Age* (New York: Ronald Press, 1960), 128.

⁶¹⁹ Untitled Speech, Stephen Benedict Papers, Box 7, folder "Speech: American Crusade," DDEL.

⁶²⁰ "Certificate of Baptism," Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Name Series, box 14, folder "Elson, Dr. Edward L..R (1)," DDEL ; Whitfield, *Culture of*, 88. The President determined which denomination to join by soliciting the advice of Billy Graham. Eisenhower described his religious background to Graham and asked him which church he thought he should join, noting that "I don't believe the American people are going to follow anybody who's not a member of a church." Graham selflessly recommended that the President join the Presbyterian Church, despite the fact that Graham himself was a Southern Baptist. Whitfield, *Culture of*, 88.

⁶²¹ Oakley, *God's Country*, 147.

world of “our faith.”⁶²² His administration also included only the second minister in American history.⁶²³ In addition the President supported Congressional efforts to add the phrase “under God” to the pledge of allegiance and to place the motto “In God We Trust” on all federal currency. He also supported the American Legion’s “Back to God” campaign and the release of a new stamp bearing the phrase “In God We Trust.”⁶²⁴ In 1956 he decreed that all mail had to be canceled with a stamp that read “Pray for Peace.”⁶²⁵ The President also called for a National Day of Prayer and his State Department promoted the National Day of Prayer by mailing promotional materials to the national press, but also to 50 major religious press services and periodicals.⁶²⁶ He also lobbied for the construction of a non-denominational prayer room in the Capital. The room, when completed, stood as an altar to the common front. It was purposefully non-denominational, all-embracing; it contained a “large, plain oak altar, below a blue and white colored stain-glass window. The window” had “several motifs. An open book symbolizing the Book of Law, a scroll which represents the Sermon on the Mount, and a candle.”⁶²⁷

Administration efforts to encourage religion were often done with a soft touch, by design. The administration only made “suggestions” to religious leaders. They did

⁶²² Inaugural Address, January 20, 1953 *Public Papers of President Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Washington, DC, 1954), 1-6.

⁶²³ “White House Parson,” *Newsweek*, January 6, 1958, 64.

⁶²⁴ Press Release, February 1, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 3, folder “Back to God ’54,” DDEL ; Memorandum for Nelson Rockefeller, March 5, 1955, Central Files, Office File, Box 565, folder “115 Finances and Monetary Matters,” DDEL.

⁶²⁵ Whitfield, *Culture of*, 89.

⁶²⁶ National Day of Prayer, 1953, Central Files, Office File, Box 737, folder “OF-144-I National Day of Prayer (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum, October 8, 1957, Central Files, Official Files, Box 737, folder “OF-144-I National Day of Prayer (1),” DDEL.

⁶²⁷ “Room for Meditation” *Newsweek*, January 10, 1955, 82-3.

so because they wanted the “influence of government” to be “insignificant or unnoticed” so religious organizations would “have the impression that activities are undertaken at their own initiative.”⁶²⁸ Moreover, while Eisenhower wanted to encourage belief, he did not want to “establish” a state religion. As he related to his staff in a pre-inaugural meeting “I don’t want to deliver a sermon. It’s not my place.” But, he continued “I firmly believe that our Government” is “deeply imbedded in religious faith.” The founding fathers included the phrase we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights for a reason. And “Unless you accept that sentence,” Eisenhower sermonized, “our form of Government makes no sense”⁶²⁹ Throughout his presidency Eisenhower walked this fine line at home between encouraging belief, but not establishing a state religion.

Abroad the President would be more blatant. He unleashed a “spiritual offensive.”⁶³⁰ “Our over-all objective” with this spiritual offensive, Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) wrote, was to use “religion as a cold war instrument” for “the furtherance of world spiritual health.” The administration did so because it believed that “the Communists could not exist in a spiritually healthy world”⁶³¹ As another OCB document elucidates “belief in theism” is the “basis for individual liberty of conscience

⁶²⁸ “Progress Report of the Ideological Sub-Committee on the Religious Factor, July 18, 1955,” White House Office File, National Security Council Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 00.3[Rel] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

⁶²⁹ Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Cabinet Series, Box 1, folder “1/12/53,” DDEL.

⁶³⁰ “A Proposal: A Spiritual Offensive in Southeast Asia,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Re] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

⁶³¹ “Religious Factors in OCB,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 00.3 [Re] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

and consequent human rights.”⁶³² Religion, in short, the administration believed, was synonymous with freedom, liberty, and human rights. This was a force, they believed, that communists could not resist. As one United States Information Agency (USIA) documents stated the “worlds’ 1 thousand million religious” are “so great a force” that it “could frighten the Kremlin into” peace.⁶³³

The administration’s “spiritual offensive” took many forms. The USIA tailored its propaganda to stress “faith for freedom.”⁶³⁴ The agency planned to devote between 100,000,000 and 200,000,000 words to “moral-spiritual values in American life.”⁶³⁵ It also increased coverage of “religious, moral and spiritual and moral events, and public statements.”⁶³⁶ It distributed moral books and pamphlets. On average it released six leaflets and one picture story on the topic every month.⁶³⁷ It also distributed 32 books on the moral basis of freedom.⁶³⁸

The Operations Coordinating Board also utilized “the religious factor,” especially in Southeast Asia. It provided seed money to local Buddhist leaders to fund

⁶³² “The Religious Factor and OCB,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Re] (File 1) (1),” DDEL. See also: “A Proposal: A Spiritual Offensive in Southeast Asia,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Re] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

⁶³³ “Continuing IPS Campaigns: The Eisenhower Concept, Moral-Spiritual Values in American Life, the President’s Trade-Tariff Study,” Records As President, White House Central File (Confidential File), Subject Series, Box 67, folder “State, Department of (through Sept ’53 (7)),” DDEL.

⁶³⁴ “Progress Report of the Ideological Sub-Committee on the Religious Factor,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File1) (2),” DDEL.

⁶³⁵ “Continuing IPS Campaigns: The Eisenhower Concept, Moral-Spiritual Values in American Life, the President’s Trade-Tariff Study,” Records As President, White House Central File (Confidential File), Subject Series, Box 67, folder “State, Department of (through Sept ’53 (7)),” DDEL.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ “Progress Report of the Ideological Sub-Committee on the Religious Factor,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File1) (2),” DDEL ; “U.S. Information Agency Output Highlights,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

the distribution of “documentary and devotional materials.”⁶³⁹ It provided Buddhist groups with “anti-communist pamphlets and posters” and broadcast daily Buddhist prayers in Laos.⁶⁴⁰

Administration agencies also worked tirelessly to frame the cold war as a moral struggle. USIA propaganda portrayed the cold war as a conflict between the religious and atheistic communists.⁶⁴¹ In furtherance of this goal the USIA gave prominent coverage to the Soviet Union’s anti-religion campaign. It also distributed material which highlighted America’s religiosity. It distributed a “Background and Action kit on Religion in the United States.”⁶⁴² It gave particular attention to “interfaith cooperation” in the United States in order to demonstrate that Americans recognized the importance of faith, regardless of what religion that faith was in.⁶⁴³ In furtherance of this USIA film

⁶³⁹ “Proposals to OCB by the Committee for Religious Action,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, Folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File 1) (1),” DDEL. All of these activities are only recommended in this document, but it appears from other documents, including “Informal Memorandum of Meeting: Ad Hoc Working Group on Islam,” White House Office Files, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File #w) (1),” DDEL., ““Outline Plan Regarding Buddhist Organizations in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia,” White House Office, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] [File #2] (1),” DDEL, that the OCB carried out these actions.

⁶⁴⁰ “Courses of Action Taken or Being Taken by U.S. Officials or Private Agencies Directed to or Through Buddhist Clergy or Lay Organizations,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3[Rel] (File #2) (1),” DDEL.

⁶⁴¹ “USIA Report on Coverage of World Council of Churches in Evanston, Ill.,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3[Rel] 0File 1) (1),” DDEL. See also: “Continuing IPS Campaigns: The Eisenhower Concept, Moral-Spiritual Values in American Life, the President’s Trade-Tariff Study,” Records As President, White House Central File (Confidential File), Subject Series, Box 67, folder “State, Department of (through Sept ’53 (7)),” DDEL.

⁶⁴² “Continuing IPS Campaigns: The Eisenhower Concept, Moral-Spiritual Values in American Life, the President’s Trade-Tariff Study,” Records As President, White House Central File (Confidential File), Subject Series, Box 67, folder “State, Department of (through Sept ’53 (7)),” DDEL.

⁶⁴³ “Progress Report of the Ideological Sub-Committee on the Religious Factor, July 18, 1955,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, Folder “OCB 000.3[Rel] (File 1) (2),” DDEL ; “U.S. Information Agency Output Highlights,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3 [Rel] (File 1) (1),” DDEL.

crews attended the World Council of Churches meeting in Evanston, Illinois. Agency propaganda gave the conference “heavy and comprehensive coverage.”⁶⁴⁴

The government also labored to convince foreign peoples of Americans’ religiousness and their religious tolerance with its person to person program. Government agencies brought foreign religious leaders to the United States to “draw” them “closer to America.” It also dispatched religious Americans to foreign counties to impress upon foreign peoples Americans’ religious piousness.⁶⁴⁵

The administration also reached out to foreign leaders to convince them to use morality as a weapon in the cold war. In a letter to the Greek Queen, President Eisenhower proposed “getting an organized effort to get out governments—all governments—to direct attention of the people” to “spiritual values.”⁶⁴⁶

A final component of the administration’s moral or spiritual offensive was to support morally dynamic leaders throughout the world. One such leader, as the next chapter will reveal, was King Saud of Saudi Arabia.

⁶⁴⁴ “USIA Report on Coverage of World Council of Churches in Evanston, Ill.,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB 000.3[Rel] 0File 1) (1),” DDEL.

⁶⁴⁵ “Moral And Religious Content in the IIA Programs,” RG 59, International Information Agency, Deputy Director for Field Programs, Subject Files, Box 3, Folder “IPO – Moral and Religious Content,” NA. 695

⁶⁴⁶ Conversation with Queen Fredericka of Greece, December 9, 1958,” Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, Box 38, folder “Staff Notes Dec ’58 (2), DDEL .

CHAPTER VII

AMERICA'S MIRACLE MAN IN THE MIDDLE EAST: KING SAUD AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO CONTAIN NASSERISM AND COMMUNISM

Saud bin Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Feisal al Saud, more commonly known as King Saud, ascended to the Saudi throne in November of 1953, after the death of his father, Emir Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman Al Feisal Al Saud, or Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud forged the modern Saudi state. The Saudi dynasty, however, traces further back, to 1744. In that year Muhammad ibn Saud, Shaikh of two small villages near Dar'iyya concluded an alliance with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the Wahhabii branch of Islam. This collaboration proved most successful. Fortified by religious passion and conviction the forces of Muhammad ibn Saud conquered the Najd, the central region of the Arabian peninsula. Over the course of the next two generations Saudi influence extenuated further, as far north as Aleppo in modern day Syria and as far south as the ports of modern Yemen. This first Saudi state, commonly referred to as the First Realm, collapsed under Ottoman pressure in 1819. A Second Saudi Realm rose in 1824 under the guidance of Muhammad ibn Saud's grandson. By 1891, however, it too had succumb. In this instance to dynastic strife and the forces of a regional rival, Muhammad ibn Rashid.

Defeated, the Saud clan fled, first to the Rub al'Khali, or the Empty Quarter, the barren deserts of southern Arabia, and later to the coastal sheikdom of Kuwait. Ibn Saud spent his early years here, the reluctant guest of the Shaik of Kuwait. This would not

last. Ibn Saud had aspirations. He dreamt of reclaiming his family's realm. In 1902 an opportunity presented itself. The Shaik of Kuwait had entered into battle with Rasheed. After failing to capture Kuwait City Rasheed led his forces north, to regroup and confer with his Ottoman allies. Riyadh was left scarcely defended. Ibn Saud struck. He gathered sixty men and launched a—seemingly—futile raid. To the surprise of many, it succeeded. Ibn Saud founded the third and final Saudi state. Over the course of succeeding years and decades ibn Saud expanded Saudi reach further. Doing so brought him into conflict with the Ottoman Turks and also with rivals on the Arabian Peninsula. Initially he compromised with the militarily superior Ottomans. He accepted their suzerainty and became a provincial governor. He, however, continued to expand his realm whenever possible. This accelerated after the First World War sounded the death knell for the Ottoman Empire. In the years that followed ibn Saud battled and defeated both of his Arabian rivals. In 1921 he vanquished Muhammad ibn Rashid, his rival in the north, and in 1924 he defeated Hussein ibn Ali, the Hashemite Asheriff of Mecca, his rival in the west, who controlled the Hejaz, home of the Muslim holy places of Mecca and Medina. This left the Saudi state the predominant power on the Arabian peninsula and this was the position that his son inherited when he ascended to the throne.⁶⁴⁷

Throughout much of its early years in existence the third Saudi state was of little consequence to the United States. This changed in the late 1930s when oil was discovered. On June 1, 1932 a crew from the Standard Oil Company of California, or

⁶⁴⁷ For more detailed recounting of early Saudi history see: Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1981) ; David Holden and Richard Jones, *The House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981) ; Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), especially chapters one and two.

Socal, struck oil on the island of Bahrain, just off the Saudi coast. Believing that oil could similarly be found across the sea in the Kingdom, Socal concluded an agreement with ibn Saud in May of 1933. Prospecting soon commenced and in 1938 the number 7 well at Damman paid out. A close relationship between the American oil company, later renamed the Arabian American Oil Company or Aramco, and the Saudi state soon emerged.⁶⁴⁸

American business interests in the Saudi state attracted the attention of the American government. But, it was not until World War II that the U.S. became truly interested in or involved in Saudi affairs. Domestic American oil production steadily declined during these years. While western hemisphere production could still fulfill American needs, it could not, officials fretted, supply America's allies in Europe. Under these circumstances the discovery of vast Saudi oil reserves proved a godsend. Saudi and other Middle Eastern sources, officials believed, could supply America's desirous European allies.⁶⁴⁹

American policymakers in the years that followed labored to assure the continued flow of oil from Saudi Arabia to Western Europe.⁶⁵⁰ The U.S. government courted the King. In January of 1943 the American government declared Saudi Arabia eligible for Lend Lease aid. Shortly thereafter the first shipment of eighty trucks arrived.⁶⁵¹ In 1945 the U.S. military began constructing an air base at Dhahran. And in February of that

⁶⁴⁸ See: Irvine H. Anderson, *ARAMCO, the United States, and Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy, 1933-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) ; Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom*, part 4 ; Holden and Jones, *The House of Saud*, chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11.

⁶⁴⁹ Benson Lee Grayson, *Saudi-American Relations* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 35.

⁶⁵⁰ Irvine H. Anderson, *ARAMCO*, 3.

⁶⁵¹ Grayson, *Saudi-American*, 19.

year President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with ibn Saud. The President sought the King's assistance in resolving the Palestinian problem. This would prove a fool's errand, but the quixotic task did produce one of the strangest meetings in the history of American foreign relations. President Roosevelt met with ibn Saud on his return voyage from the Yalta conference. The President's ship steamed into the Suez Canal and laid anchor in the Great Bitter Lake. Another warship, the *USS Murphy*, sailed to Jeddah to collect ibn Saud. When the *Murphy* docked the captain found the King waiting—with an entourage of 48, several dhows laden with rice and vegetables, and 100 live sheep. Despite the protests of the captain, the King adamantly refused to leave without some of the sheep (He maintained that a pious Muslim could not consume meat killed more than 24 hours previous). Once aboard ibn Saud declined a cabin in the ship's quarters, instead, he, and his retinue, pitched tents on the deck. Seven sheep were tethered to the destroyer's fantail and the King presented every sailor aboard with \$40 and officers with gold daggers and swords.⁶⁵²

When President Truman succeeded Roosevelt he continued his predecessor's policies. Truman dispatched a military survey team to the Kingdom in September of 1949. He also provided Saudi Arabia with Point Four aid, and pledged that the "United States is interested in the preservation of the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia" and that "no threat to your Kingdom could occur which would not be a matter in immediate concern to the United States."⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² Holden and Jones, *The House of*, 135-38.

⁶⁵³ Truman to 'Abd al'Aziz, October 31, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, vol. 5, 1190-91.

By the time Dwight D. Eisenhower became president in 1953 the U.S. had become firmly committed to the Saudi state. A confluence of interests had cemented this relationship. As one historian has written, “the military wanted increased production to conserve Western hemisphere strategic reserves; the Department of State wanted economic stability in the area to guard against the spread of communism” and American oil companies wanted increased markets and an additional source of supply.⁶⁵⁴ Despite this, U.S.-Saudi relations did not constitute a priority for the new administration. Across the globe more pressing matters (Soviet expansion, the ongoing Korean War, and the rise of the RCC in Egypt) demanded American attention. Relations with Saudi Arabia represented, at best, an afterthought.

This, however, slowly began to change. As relations with Egypt and Nasser cooled the Eisenhower administration began searching for a regional alternative, for a Middle Eastern leader who could oppose both Soviet Communism and Nasserism. King Saud, the administration came to believe, could fulfill this role.

The Eisenhower administration labored to promote King Saud as a regional alternative to Nasser. The administration’s conceptualization of religion, along with its racialized assumptions about Arabs elicited this decision. President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles viewed faith, regardless of in what religion, as a potent weapon in the cold war. They believed that it imbued leaders and peoples with the dynamism necessary to successfully confront communism. King Saud, they became convinced, possessed such faith. Racialized assumptions of Arabs’ religiousness and despotism,

⁶⁵⁴ Anderson, *ARAMCO*, 178.

meanwhile, convinced them that King Saud, as keeper of the Muslim holy places, could rally Muslims throughout the Arab world against both atheistic Soviet communism and Nasserism. King Saud, in short, they believed, could work miracles.

U.S.-Saudi relations under Eisenhower, however, began more modestly. The Kingdom ranked relatively low on the administration's list of priorities. U.S.-Saudi interactions throughout these early years consisted largely of the Saudis pressing for American aid and assistance and the administration attempting to ignore these appeals. Throughout 1953 and early 1954 Saudi officials lobbied for American aid and military equipment. The new administration attempted to anticipate these concerns. During negotiations to renew the American lease for the air base at Dhahran the administration "implied" a "quid pro quo" of arms for renewal.⁶⁵⁵ None, however was immediately forthcoming. In March, Prince Faisal traveled to Washington to meet with President Eisenhower. In a meeting held later in the visit the Prince informed Secretary Dulles that the Kingdom requested military and economic aid, which had been first promised by the Truman administration.⁶⁵⁶ Later that month the administration followed through on its earlier implications. It offered Saudi Arabia 5 million dollars in Mutual Security Act aid. The King, however, refused to sign the agreement, believing, as Shaikh Yusaf explained, that if he agreed to the terms enumerated in the agreement "anything" the Saudi state possessed "both economic and military" would be "under US control and

⁶⁵⁵ The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Hare) to the Department of State, February 14, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-4, vol. 9, 2434.

⁶⁵⁶ Memorandum of Conversation by Fritzlund, March 2 and 3, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, 9: 2520-22.

dictation.” If this occurred, the King feared, the whole “country would be under” American “control.”⁶⁵⁷

In addition to requesting aid during these years, the Saudis requested U.S. assistance in their dispute with the British over the Buraimi oases. Buraimi consists of ten villages, with a collective population of nearly 10,000 people, located in the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula.⁶⁵⁸ Their springs support the nomadic Bedouins who traverse the area. They also serve as an important regional communications hub. Buraimi lay far afield of Saudi territory. Today the oases reside in Oman, nestled near the border with the United Arab Emirates, which at the time was known as Abu Dhabi, over a 100 miles from Saudi territory. The Saudis, however, contended that the tribesmen in the area had in the past paid tribute to the Saudi monarchy, which they had for two short periods of time in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵⁹

Buraimi was of importance to ibn Saud for several reasons. Controlling the oases provided power and prestige. As one historian has written “only by controlling access to Buraimi could a sedentary dynasty hope to impose its authority over the regions’ inhabitants.”⁶⁶⁰ Tribute also factored into the decision. The Saudi King, as one

⁶⁵⁷ The Counsel at Dharan (Hackler) to the Department of State, January 18, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2450-1. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, January 5, 1954, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, folder “Staff Notes January-December 1954,” DDEL.

⁶⁵⁸ Eden Talks, Buraimi Dispute (Talking Brief) January 11, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Buraimi Dispute – Chrono. File 1956 – Jan-June,” NA.

⁶⁵⁹ For information on this early Saudi involvement see: John C. Wilkinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers: The Story of Britain’s Boundary Drawing in the Desert* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), 6-8, 51, 54-56, 114 and for information on the Saudi claims see: Wilkinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers*, xxv, xxvii, 194, 197, 227, 250-51, 294, 306 ; Holden and Jones, *The House of Saud*, 145-47.

⁶⁶⁰ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 20.

historian has written, used “largesse to the tribes to sustain his own prestige.”⁶⁶¹ Ibn Saud’s dynastic power and authority rested upon tribesmen’s pledged loyalty. Largesse, money and gifts flowing outward from Riyadh secured this loyalty. The problem which confronted ibn Saud in the 1940s and the early 1950s, however, was that he was perennially short on cash. The King lavished his generosity on anyone and everyone: tribesmen, his family (which by this point, due to his legendary prowess, numbered nearly a thousand), and those who approached his palace door hungry in search of food.⁶⁶² The Kingdom’s revenue, however, was still relatively modest. It came from collecting fees from pious Muslims conducting their hajj, the pilgrimage to the Muslim holy places required of all Muslims who can afford it. It also came from oil. But oil production during these years was still relatively modest. In 1946 the Kingdom produced a mere 60 million barrels of crude oil and it collected just 10 million dollars in oil revenue.⁶⁶³ Ibn Saud only met his considerable obligations by accumulating massive amounts of debt.⁶⁶⁴

In order to raise additional capital, maintain the loyalty of the tribesmen upon which his Kingdom rested, and to aggrandize his power and prestige, ibn Saud dispatched tax collectors to Buraimi in 1928. Rebellion at home, however, soon forced the King to abandon the endeavor.⁶⁶⁵ At this point, however, Buraimi became

⁶⁶¹ Safran, *Ceaseless Quest*, 60.

⁶⁶² Lacey, *The Kingdom*, 280.

⁶⁶³ Lacey, *The Kingdom*, 277.

⁶⁶⁴ For information on ibn Saud’s finances see: *ibid.*, 228, 229, 234, 238, 239, 263, 277-78, 279-80, 289.

⁶⁶⁵ Wilksinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers*, 150, 155.

intermeshed in the larger issue of delineating the borders between the Saudi state and the British supported Shaikdoms which surrounded it.⁶⁶⁶

The Shaikdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain, Muscat, Oman, Abu Dhabi, and Aden were ruled by local Shaiks, local rulers, who made their fortunes from trading, pearling, and piracy.⁶⁶⁷ It was this last vocation which drew the attention of the British. Arab pirates operating out of this “pirate coast” imperiled Britain’s naval lifeline to India. After intervening in the area London convinced the rulers of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial states (which included Abu Dhabi and Dubai), to enter into protective alliances with it. The Shaiks conceded control of their foreign policy in exchange for protection. The British also became the arbiters of the Sultanate of Muscat’s foreign policy.⁶⁶⁸

The exact borders of these shaikdoms, and of the Saudi state, however, remained nebulous. For what mattered in the Arabian desert was securing the loyalty of the nomadic Bedouins who roamed it, not of assuming physical control of the—largely—valueless desert. Britain, however, accustomed to Europeans conventions of clearly demarcated borders, required fixed borders for the states it had committed to defend. This drew the English into negotiations with the Saudis.

The existence of oil added urgency to these efforts. Oil companies required sovereign owners to establish contractual agreements with.⁶⁶⁹ Until sovereignty over

⁶⁶⁶ For a recounting of this long complicated story see: Wilkinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers*.

⁶⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers*, xv.

⁶⁶⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, January 26, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Buraimi Dispute – Chrono. File 1956 – Jan-June,” NA ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 21.

⁶⁶⁹ Wilkinson, *Arabia’s Frontiers*, xx.

these areas was resolved oil companies could not exploit the resources which lay under the region's shifting sands.

Negotiations to fix the region's boundaries commenced in 1935 and met intermittently after that. The issue of Buraimi first emerged during negotiations held in Damman in 1952. When the Saudis claimed Buraimi. The British maintained that the Saudi state, as a "successor state" to the Ottoman Empire, was subject to a convention signed by the Ottoman Empire in 1913. This agreement established the so-called "blue" and "purple" lines, which demarcated the southern and eastern reaches of the Empire. These borders stopped well short of the disputed oases. The Saudis considered the contention that they were bound by this agreement rubbish.⁶⁷⁰

As early as 1951 the Saudi government asked the United States to support its claim to Buraimi. Events on the ground, however, soon added urgency to the request.⁶⁷¹ In mid-1952 Saudi officials protested the presence of British officials in the area.⁶⁷² When said officials refused to depart, the Saudis took action. In late August, Amir Turki Ibn Abdullah Ibn Utayshan, along with 40 men, accompanied a local chief into the area.⁶⁷³ Once there Turki established Saudi control over Buraimi and eight surrounding settlements.⁶⁷⁴ The rulers of Muscat, Oman, and Abu Dhabi, all of whom claimed the

⁶⁷⁰ For information on the Blue and Purple lines see: Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers*, xx-xxiv, xxvi, xxviii, 24, 26-28, 61-66, 86-100, 120, 123, 126-29, 133-42, 145-47, 150-151, 154-55, 157-160, 162-65, 171, 177-180, 182, 201, 214, 225, 254, 296-98, 314, 318, 155-56, 360, 362.

⁶⁷¹ Memorandum of Conversation by Awalt, March 19, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, vol. 5, 286-7. See also: Memorandum of Conversation by Awalt, June 20, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, vol. 5, 318-21; Memorandum of Conversation by Awalt, September 25, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, vol. 5, 330-32.

⁶⁷² The Charge in Saudi Arabia (Abbey) to the Department of State, May 14, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2468-2469.

⁶⁷³ Memorandum of Conversation, by Robert Sturgill September 18, 1952, *FRUS*, 1953-54, vol. 9, 2471-72.

⁶⁷⁴ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 19-21.

area for themselves, protested to the British, their protector. Pressured by its protectorates, Britain reacted. It threatened to man a series of fortifications in the area.⁶⁷⁵ In response the Saudis too, turned to their protector, the United States. Riyadh inquired whether the U.S. would uphold President Truman's pledge to guarantee the nation's territorial integrity.⁶⁷⁶

Tensions continued to escalate. In late September British officials detained a Saudi car. Royal Air Force planes began overflying the oasis and British forces blockaded the movement of food into the area. The British also restricted access to the oases. They impelled those traveling to and fro to produce passports. One can only imagine the look on a nomadic Bedouin's face when an English official stopped him and asked him to produce a valid passport!⁶⁷⁷

Again the Saudi government asked the United States for assistance. It pleaded for the Truman administration to "work quietly behind the scenes." It wanted the administration to support the creation of a tripartite commission. Under the proposal the commission would visit the disputed area and question the inhabitants, asking them who they desired to pledge their loyalty to.⁶⁷⁸ To compel U.S. support the Saudis threatened

⁶⁷⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, by Robert Sturgill September 18, 1952, *FRUS*, 1953-54, 2471-72.

⁶⁷⁶ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, September 19, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 2473.

⁶⁷⁷ The Consul General (Bishop) to the Department of State, October 6, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 2480 ; NEA (Byroade) to the Acting Secretary, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Box 19, folder "Saudi Arabia Boundaries – Buraimi June-Dec 1952," NA.

⁶⁷⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, by Robert Sturgill, September 19, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2477-78 ; The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, November 11, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2496-7 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 31. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, October 10, 1952, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder "Saudi Arabia Boundaries – Buraimi June-Dec 1952" NA.

to take the issue to the Security Council.⁶⁷⁹ The outgoing Truman administration, however, was reluctant to get involved in the dispute. As the Acting Secretary of State concluded, ibn Saud's request put the United States "in [a] very uncomfortable position."⁶⁸⁰ It trapped America between two allies. Serving as a moderator only promised to disappoint one, if not both of them. Additionally, the administration did not completely trust Saudi motives. As the Acting Secretary of State warned, the "latest Saudi moves" were an "attempt" to "enhance" and obtain a "perhaps undeservedly favorable settlement" in "ways not compatible with maintaining" smooth relations with Britain.⁶⁸¹ If at all possible, the administration wanted to, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated, "remain aloof" from the matter."⁶⁸²

As the administration prevaricated the situation worsened. In October Saudi Arabia dispatched 700 men to al-Khaj. Muscat responded, it mobilized 8,000 troops and deployed men from their army, the Trucial Levies, to the forts in the area.⁶⁸³

Finally the Truman administration responded. It recommended that the two sides enter into direct negotiations.⁶⁸⁴ They did so and on October 26th the two sides

⁶⁷⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, by Robert Sturgill, September 29, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2477-78.

⁶⁸⁰ The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, November 11, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2496-7.

⁶⁸¹ The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, November 1, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2492-3.

⁶⁸² Acheson to Gofford, March 24, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2462-63. See also: Bilateral Talks December 12 in Paris, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder "Saudi Arabia Boundaries – Buriami June-Dec 1952," NA.

⁶⁸³ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 27.

⁶⁸⁴ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, January 10, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2513.

concluded a “standstill agreement.” The forces of each side would remain in place, receive supplies, but, receive no further reinforcements.⁶⁸⁵

When Dwight Eisenhower assumed office in January of 1953 the Saudis had just rejected a British offer to enter into formal arbitration.⁶⁸⁶ In March, Prince Faisal asked Secretary Dulles if the new administration would honor President Truman’s pledge and provide active “intervention in the Buraimi dispute.”⁶⁸⁷ While the new administration valued Saudi Arabia, it too, was reluctant to get involved.

Once again, however, events on the ground precipitated action. In March, the British government delivered an ultimatum to ibn Saud: agree to arbitration or they would evict Turki. Ibn Saudi responded by dispatching tax collectors to the oases.⁶⁸⁸ This prompted the Trucial States to deploy their army to blockade the region. The Trucial States also declared that they would no longer honor the “standstill agreement.”⁶⁸⁹ At this point the Saudis agreed to consider some sort of “middle course” between their proposed tripartite commission and the British offer of arbitration, if the British agreed to abide by the pre-April 2nd status of affairs.⁶⁹⁰

In May, Secretary Dulles embarked upon his whirlwind trip of the region, which included a visit to Riyadh. There the Secretary informed the Saudis that President

⁶⁸⁵ Hare to Department of State, October 28, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2491 ; Memorandum from Byroade to the Acting Secretary, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Saudi Arabia Boundaries – Buraimi June-Dec 1952,” NA.

⁶⁸⁶ Memorandum of Conversation by Plitt, December 2 and 4, 1952, *FRUS*, 1952-54, 2498-2503.

⁶⁸⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, by Fritzlan, March 2, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2516-17 ; The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, April 20, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2538-39 ; Memorandum of Conversation, by Fritzland, March 23, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2439-40.

⁶⁸⁸ Memorandum of Conversation by Fritzlan, April 1, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2529-30 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 46.

⁶⁸⁹ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 46.

⁶⁹⁰ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 46.

Truman's pledge did not apply to Buraimi. It, Dulles later stated, was only an "assurance against external threat" not a "cloak for Saudi expansion."⁶⁹¹

By this point even Secretary Dulles was forced to acknowledge that U.S. relations with the Kingdom were "poor" and he began to worry that ibn Saud might "throw away" the alliance with the U.S. The administration, he concluded, could not allow this to occur. Saudi Arabia, with its "great oil concessions" and "air base," was of "particular importance." But, there was not anything, he believed, the administration could do to improve relations as long as ibn Saud remained alive. The King, as Dulles colorfully phrased it, was "old and crotchety" and unreasonable.⁶⁹²

In the meanwhile, events on the ground continued to worsen. What exactly occurred next is difficult to ascertain. But it appears that a faction within the Bani Kaab tribe loyal to Muscat requested British assistance. As British forces entered the area and began patrolling tribesmen from the same tribe, loyal to Saudi Arabia, began attacking British patrols and checkpoints.⁶⁹³ The British responded, the Saudis alleged, by deploying armored cars and aircraft against civilian homes containing "peaceful women and children" and by threaten to "burn all the houses with their people" unless they surrendered within fifteen hours.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹¹ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, April 2, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2531-32.

⁶⁹² 147th National Security Council Meeting, June 1, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 4, folder "147th," DDEL.

⁶⁹³ Memorandum for the President, July 7, 1953, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder "Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57(1)," DDEL ; The Consul at Dhahran (Bishop) to the Department of State, June 30, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2547-48 ; The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Dhahran, July 4, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2549-50.

⁶⁹⁴ Letter from King Saud to the Dwight D. Eisenhower, July 2, 1953, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, folder "Dulles April '53," DDEL ; King Ibn Saud to President Eisenhower, June 28, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2544-45.

After this incident the Saudis again appealed to their American sponsors. They requested that the United States “mediate” the dispute.⁶⁹⁵ The U.S. government again, however, insisted that the two sides instead agree to arbitration, conclude a new “standstill agreement,” and agree to neutral supervision for the area.⁶⁹⁶ Negotiations temporarily stalled. The two sides had difficulty agreeing whether their forces would be required to withdraw before negotiations commenced. Eventually, however, the two sides agree.⁶⁹⁷

In November of 1953, however, the aged ibn Saud died. The King had discerningly planned for a transition of power. He designated that his son, referred to in the west as King Saud, to serve as his successor. Saud indeed became King, but only after much excitement. Prince Faisal, another of ibn Saud’s many heirs, resisted the transition. After a protracted dispute the two brothers reached a compromise. Saud became King, Faisal became Prime Minister, and also retained his title of Viceroy of the Hijaz. A side-note to this affair, one which would take on later significance, is that in an attempt to create a non-royal power base King Saud began importing non-Saudis into the country and appointed them to important positions of power. One of these men was Yemeni entrepreneur Shaykh Muhammad Bin Ladin, father of Osama.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ King Ibn Saud to President Eisenhower, June 28, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2544-45.

⁶⁹⁶ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 52.

⁶⁹⁷ The Charge in the United Kingdom (Penfield) to the Department of State, October 13, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2569 ; The Charge in Saudi Arabia (Jones) to the Department of State, October 18, 1953, *FRUS*, vol. 9, 2579 ; Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Chairman of the National Security Council Planning Board (Cutler), June 24, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2543; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 60.

⁶⁹⁸ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 65.

Despite the ascension of King Saud relations between the Kingdom and the United States remained strained. The Buraimi situation continued to fester and in May the new King added fuel to the fire when he requested that Aramco dispatch an expedition to Buraimi to survey for oil. Soon after arriving RAF aircraft overflew the caravan and dropped leaflets on them warning that they were “committing trespass.”⁶⁹⁹

In July the two sides finally agreed to reopen arbitration.⁷⁰⁰ And they made quick progress. They conceded to the creation of a joint police force to patrol the area. They also agreed that the area would become a “no-oilman’s land,” that there would be no oil exploration in this area.⁷⁰¹ And in August Prince Turku finally left. As he departed he refused a British escort. Shortly thereafter he got lost in the desert. A British detachment eventually rescued the woe begotten Prince. When they came upon him, they reported, he was “in a state of collapse from heat exhaustion.”⁷⁰²

Despite this progress the Eisenhower administration began to have concerns about U.S.-Saudi relations. The administration worried that the Saudis were unhappy with American aid and support. They came to fear that the royal family may have come to “believe that they might have backed the wrong horse” in aligning with the United States over Great Britain. As the old saying goes, hindsight is twenty-twenty and Eisenhower administration officials came to see that they had been overly critical of the

⁶⁹⁹ The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Wadsworth) to the Department of State, March 9, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2581-82 ; The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Wadsworth) to the Department of State, June 6, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2611-2612

⁷⁰⁰ The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Wadsworth) to the Department of State, July 31, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2614.

⁷⁰¹ Editorial in Note, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2613-14 ; The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Wadsworth) to the Department of State, July 31, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2614-15 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 73.

⁷⁰² Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 73.

Saudis. President Eisenhower conceded that there had been “some degree of justice in the grievance felt by the Saudi Arabians.” He went on to question “whether we ought not to take some action against the British.” Who, he believed, “had been “behaving in a very high-handed fashion.” The Secretary of State, however, disavowed him of this notion. As Dulles counseled, the “arbitration agreement” was “virtually ready for signature” and the United States, he believed, should do nothing to rock the boat.⁷⁰³

Perhaps Dulles should have listened to the President, instead of vice-versa. For discontent was indeed mounting within the Kingdom. Prince Faisal, frustrated with the United States’ unwillingness to help in the Buraimi dispute, concluded that “there is no difference between a useless friend and a harmless enemy.”⁷⁰⁴

But, it would not be Buraimi which further complicated U.S.-Saudi relations. It would be two new issues. In January of 1954 King Saud concluded an agreement with Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis.⁷⁰⁵ According to the agreement Onassis would provide the Saudis with a tanker fleet. In exchange he would receive a share of the lucrative trade of transporting Saudi oil. The deal distressed U.S. oil companies. It stated that Saudi crude could only be transported by Onassis oil tankers or by tankers in service before 1954. As competitors’ tankers aged and were pulled from service only Onassis’ ships would remain and he would possess a monopoly over the transportation of Saudi crude oil. The oil companies also feared that the agreement established a

⁷⁰³ 199th Meeting of the National Security Council, May 27, 1954, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 5, folder “199th,” DDEL.

⁷⁰⁴ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 74.

⁷⁰⁵ The agreement was first agreed upon orally in December of 1953. See Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 66.

worrying precedent, which might later be used to justify nationalization of the entire oil industry.⁷⁰⁶

Concerned, the oil companies lobbied the administration, which was also troubled by the agreement.⁷⁰⁷ The Joint Chiefs of Staff predicted that if it went into effect the United States could “expect all other oil-producing countries” to “follow the lead,” which, the JCS counseled, would leave the United States at a “disadvantage.” Administration officials also worried that the deal would force Aramco to suspend operations in Saudi Arabia and that it might eventually force the U.S. reserve tanker fleet out of business. All of this led the President to conclude that the U.S. “could not afford to sit around and get blackmailed.”⁷⁰⁸

At a National Security Council meeting Eisenhower questioned if the United States could simply allow the deal to go into effect and then, afterwards, “break” Onassis. Secretary Dulles, however, cautioned against his. He noted that Onassis was a “dangerous and slippery character.” During the course of the meeting officials proposed several other solutions. The President questioned if the United States could simply buy Iranian oil as an alternative? He also asked if the U.S. could have its European allies close their ports to Onassis’ ships. The Secretary of the Treasury, however, counseled the President that this would not work because “Greeks were notoriously mobile.”⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation, February 9, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 250.

⁷⁰⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, February 9, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 250.

⁷⁰⁸ 207th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 22, 1954, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 5, folder “207th,” DDEL.

⁷⁰⁹ 207th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 22, 1954, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 5, folder “207th,” DDEL.

In the end the administration adopted a carrot and stick approach. The U.S. government applied pressure. It counseled King Saud to cancel the deal. Secretary Dulles also instructed the Attorney General to file suit against Onassis in an unrelated case in which he concealed foreign ownership of a company seeking to purchase American ships. Oil companies, meanwhile, dangled the carrot. They offered the King 70 million dollars in retroactive royalties if he rescinded the agreement. King Saud eventually obliged.⁷¹⁰

The formation of the Baghdad Pact also complicated U.S.-Saudi relations. The prospect of “Hashemite encirclement” had long preoccupied Riyadh.⁷¹¹ The term Hashemite refers to the family of Hussein ibn Ali, the Hashemite Asheriff of Mecca. The British had installed his two sons as rulers of the newly formed states of Jordan and Iraq. The Saudis feared that these Hashemite rulers might one day attempt to reacquire their ancestral homeland in the Hijaz, home of the holy places of Mecca and Medina. The formation of the Baghdad Pact only heightened these concerns. As one historian has noted, the Saudi government “saw in Iraq’s participation in the Baghdad Pact “a most violent form of the old Hashemite threat.”⁷¹²

Saudi opposition to the pact pushed the Kingdom into common cause with the man it was designed to contain: Gamal Abdel Nasser. Throughout 1955 the Saudi state moved closer to Nasser and Egypt. As mentioned earlier the King concluded the ESS Pact with Egypt and Syria in early 1955. In addition, in January of 1955, 200 Egyptian

⁷¹⁰ The Ambassador in Saudi Arabia (Wadsworth) to the Department of State, October 1, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 2455-56.

⁷¹¹ After the British installed Abdullah in Jordan and Feisal in Iraq ibn Saud lamented that the British “have surrounded me with enemies.” Quoted in Lacey *The Kingdom*, 162.

⁷¹² Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, 78.

military advisors arrived in the Kingdom. Egyptian bureaucrats and teachers also flooded the country and Saudi propaganda began vehemently denouncing the pact.⁷¹³

This, and the Onassis affair, prompted the administration to begin reviewing “the whole complex of our relations with” the Saudi government, studying whether the United States should continue to support the Saudi state.⁷¹⁴ Despite their concerns with the King’s recent actions, however, officials concluded that they needed King Saud as an ally. They could not afford to alienate him. Any American strategy to contain Nasser in the Middle East must try, Secretary Dulles pronounced, to win King Saud away from Nasser. If the United States did not, it would, he concluded, be very “difficult to counter the combined Nasser + Saud [*sic*] alignment.” King Saud could use his oil money to “stir up trouble in the area.”⁷¹⁵

As part of the second phase of Operation OMEGA, the administration’s plan to contain and undermine Nasser, the administration initiated a “sustained effort to detach Saudi Arabia from Egyptian orbit.”⁷¹⁶ The administration’s plan for King Saud, however, went far beyond just “detaching” the King from Nasser. The President wanted to build him up as a “spiritual leader” who the U.S. could use to exercise “political

⁷¹³ Lacey, *The Kingdom*, 311-12 ;Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Action (Murphy), March 3, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 251.

⁷¹⁴ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Action (Murphy), March 3, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 251 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, March 5, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, 255.

⁷¹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “Syria, Misc- Straggle 1956,” NA.

⁷¹⁶ Plan of Action, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “OMEGA – Memos, etc, from April 24, 1956, to June 30, 1956 folder 1 of 3,” NA. See also: Diary Entry by the President, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 326-7.

leadership” in the region.⁷¹⁷ The administration chose to, as Secretary Dulles admitted, win “King Saud away from Nasser, and” use him to “give important anti-Communist leadership in the Arab world.” Saud, in short, was to be “built up” as a “counter to Nasser” and to communism in the Arab world.⁷¹⁸

Why did the administration have such faith in King Saud? He had done nothing previous to inspire it and as the President candidly admitted he did not even “know the man.”⁷¹⁹ The answer lay in how the administration conceptualized religion. Administration officials believed that the King’s Muslim faith imparted to him the dynamism necessary to confront both atheistic communism and Nasserism. The administration held that faith, regardless of in what religion, was necessary to confront and defeat communism. This was particularly true, the President believed, of Islam. The “Arabs’ religion,” he later confided to Jordan’s King Hussein, “was so incompatible with atheistic Communism that,” he believed, “Communists could never get a hold of the common people in Arab lands.”⁷²⁰ “Islam, Christianity, and Judaism,” he affirmed on another occasion, are “natural allies against atheistic communism.”⁷²¹

⁷¹⁷ Diary Entry by the President, March 28, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 425.

⁷¹⁸ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 351 ; Memorandum of Conversation, December 10, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, 1954-62, folder “Near and Middle East,” NA. See also: Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 404-05, Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 413-14.

⁷¹⁹ Diary Entry by the President, March 28, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 425.

⁷²⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, March 25, 1959, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary Records, 1952-61, International Series, Box 9, folder “Jordan (1),” DDEL.

⁷²¹ Inventory of U.S. Government and Private Organization Activity Regarding Islamic Organizations as an Aspect of Overseas Operation, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1946-61, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB000.3[Rel] [File #2] (1), DDEL. These positive views of Islam were shared by others in the administration see: Inventory of U.S. Government and Private Organization Activity Regarding Islamic Organizations as an Aspect of Overseas Operation. White House Office Files, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Secretariat, Box , folder “Islamic Organizations,” DDEL ; Inventory of U.S. Government and Private Organization Activity Regarding Islamic Organizations as an Aspect of

King Saud, the administration believed, was important not just because he was a pious Muslim, but also because his kingdom contained the holy places of Islam. This, administration officials were convinced, imparted great power. Power they wished to harness. As the President confided to his diary, as keeper of the holy places of Islam, the King could “disrupt the aggressive plans that Nasser is evidently developing.”⁷²² Because of this, he, as Secretary Dulles stated, “represented the key” to the Middle East. He “was in a position to exercise religious influence in the area.” He was in the position to rally the Arab masses against both communism and Nasser.⁷²³

It is important to note that Secretary Dulles, while he delivered the administration line, seemed less enthusiastic about this new strategy than the President. The plan to promote King Saud as a regional counterweight was Eisenhower’s initiative.⁷²⁴ The Secretary seemed to have merely gone along with it. In large part this stemmed from the Secretary’s ambivalence toward other religions. While the Secretary believed all the religious should unite, he also occasionally espoused a form of Christian superiority. He did not believe that all faiths were created equal. This seems to have been especially true in regards to Islam. Throughout the 1930s and 40s Dulles made continual

Overseas Operation, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1946-61, OCB Central File Series, Box 2, folder “OCB000.3[Rel] [File #2] (1), DDEL.

⁷²² Diary Entry by the President, March 28, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 425.

⁷²³ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 352 ; Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “Syria, Misc- Straggle 1956,” NA ; Biographical Sketch of King Saud, Records as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “State, Department of (Jan-Feb ’57),” DDEL. See also: The Outlook for Saudi Arabia, RG 59, General Records, Subject File Relating to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East 1955-56,” NA.

⁷²⁴ Diary Entry by the President, March 28, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 425 ; Cablegram to the Secretary of State, December, 1956, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, folder “Dulles, John Foster, August ‘56(1),” DDEL.

references to the “threat of Islam,” which in the Middle Ages threatened to “overrun Christendom.”⁷²⁵ The Secretary seemed to have viewed Islam as some sort of competitor to Christianity and Christian civilization. If he ever voiced his apprehensions concerning Islam, however, they are not documented in the record and he loyally carried out the new initiative.

The administration’s plan to utilize King Saud, and his religious position in the Arab world, sprung not only from officials’ beliefs about religion, but also from their racialized understanding of Arabs. Egyptian actions conjured associations of Arab irrationality and gullibility in officials’ minds. Saudi actions, however, invoked other racialized assumptions, the assumption that Arabs were despotic and overly religious. Administration officials often spoke of the “puritanically religious majority of the” Saudi “population.” They also referenced King Saud governing “in practice in traditional totalitarian ways,” and Arabs’ “traditional authoritarian ways.”⁷²⁶

This difference arose from the context. Egyptian opposition to U.S. policy triggered associations with Arab irrationality because how else could one explain Egyptian leaders’ rejection of American policy, which in the administration’s mind was

⁷²⁵ Reference Paper: Communist Threat to the Middle East, Confidential Files, Records as President, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “State, Dept of (Jan-Feb ’57 (Briefing Book-King Saud Visit (4))),” DDEL ; 366th Meeting of the National Security Council, May 23, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSS Series, Box 10, folder (366th,” DDEL ; Address by the Honorable John Foster Dulles Secretary of State Before the United Nations General Assembly, September 19, 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum Series, Box 1, folder “Memo Conversation-General A-d (4),” DDEL.

⁷²⁶ “Saudi Arabia: A Disruptive Force in Western-Arab Relations,” January 18, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East 1955-56,” NA ; “The Outlook for Saudi Arabia,” RG 59, General Records, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East 1955-56,” NA. See also: Reference Paper: King Saud and his Court, Records as President, White House Central Files, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “State Dept. of (Jan-Feb ’57 (Briefing Book – King Saud Visit (4))),” DDEL.

always “right?” Saudi actions, while they occasionally coerced a reference to the Saudi’s “highly emotional” state, more frequently bred associations with despotism and religiousness.⁷²⁷ There are three important reasons for this. First, the Saudis, at least privately, consistently supported American initiatives in the region. They were therefore, in the minds of policymakers, rational. Second, Saudi leaders presented themselves as religious. King Saud consistently emphasized his faith. He made reference to his “position” as “servant to [the] Holy Shrines” and decreed that he was a man devoted to “religious belief and Islamic principle.”⁷²⁸ Third, the Saudi government was a monarchy, where one man ruled.⁷²⁹ These three factors elicited assumptions of Arabs’ religiousness and despotism instead of their irrationality and gullibility.

These racialized assumptions undergirded the administration’s strategy to promote King Saud as a regional power. The plan assumed that all Arabs were religious. It also assumed that all Arabs would blindly obey an authority figure, that they were used to being ruled despotically.

The administration now had its new strategy to contain Nasser and communism, in order to employ it, however, officials needed to repair relations with King Saud. To

⁷²⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, January 30, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 332. See also: Saudi Arabia: A Disruptive Force in Western-Arab Relations, January 18, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East 1955-56,” NA.

⁷²⁸ Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, July 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 262. See also: Message from King Saud Transmitted Orally Through Ambassador Wadsworth, April 10, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia-King Saud ’52-56 (2),” DDEL ; Dairy Entry by the President, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 15, 45.

⁷²⁹ American assumptions of Arab despotism can also be seen in references to Saudi Arabia’s “feudal” government. See: Discussion at the 237th Meeting of the National Security Council, February 17, 1955, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 6, folder “237th,” DDEL ; Intelligence Estimate No. 99: The Crisis of Modernization in the Middle East, White House Office Files, NSC Staff, OCB Secretariat, folder “Dr. Lilly-Misc (3),” DDEL.

do so the administration labored to resolve two issues. First it would provide the Kingdom with arms.⁷³⁰ Second, it worked to resolve the Buraimi dispute. As Dulles confided to the British ambassador, “we believe the winning away of the Saudis from Egypt depended upon the UK reaching an accommodation with the Saudis on Burami.”⁷³¹

In May the Eisenhower administration took the first step towards resolving the first of these issues when it conceded to sell 3 B-26 bombers to the Kingdom. The administration also pledged to consider a Saudi request to purchase several M-47 tanks.⁷³²

This token sale, however, was insufficient. King Saud demanded more arms. In July he applied pressure. He informed Washington that the Soviets had offered to sell him arms in exchange for full diplomatic recognition. He intimated that he might accept the offer.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ Plan of Action, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “OMEGA – Memos, etc. from April 24, 1956, to June 30, 1956 folder 1 of 3,” NA ; Message from King Saud Transmitted Orally Through Ambassador Wadsworth, 10 April 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia- King Saud ’52-56 (2),” DDEL ; Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 365-66.

⁷³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “OMEGA – Syria, Misc – Straggle 1956 folder 1 of 2,” NA. See also: Plan of Action, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “OMEGA – Memos, etc. from April 24, 1956, to June 30, 1956 folder 1 of 3,” NA. ; Memorandum of Conversation, March 26, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “OMEGA – Syria, Misc – Straggle 1956 Folder 1 of 2,” NA ; Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 365-66.

⁷³² Telegraph from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, May 5, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 25961 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 80.

⁷³³ Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, July 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 261-63 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, July 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 263-64 ; Cabell to Dulles, August 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 14, 395-96 ; Armstrong to Dulles, September 23, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 14, 507-8.

The administration did not like being “blackmailed,” but in July it agreed to sell Saudi Arabia 18 M-41 tanks.⁷³⁴ This still proved insufficient. Riyadh requested additional military and economic aid.⁷³⁵ And again King Saud applied pressure. During negotiations to renew the lease for the Dhahran air base Saudi officials informed their American counterparts that in exchange for renewing the lease the U.S. government would have to provide sufficient arms to raise a 13 regiment army or pay 50 million dollars a year in rent.⁷³⁶ As the King rationalized, you “use our airfields and” as a result you should “help strengthen our Armed Forces by supplying military equipment.”⁷³⁷

The administration offered a counterproposal. They pledged to provide an air training program, to build a new terminal at Dhahran, to provide 35 million dollars in aid, and to possibly approve up to 85 million dollars in future arms sales.⁷³⁸ The Saudis held fast. King Saud informed the administration that he did “not really see anything new” in the offer and he delivered an ultimatum. The United States must provide 25 million dollars in aid and 85 million dollars in arms grants, or he would let the lease expire.⁷³⁹ The administration refused.

⁷³⁴Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 263 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, September 15, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 269 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, September 3, 1955, *FRUS* 1955-57, vol. 13, 265.

⁷³⁵Memorandum of a Conversation, October 5, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 275.

⁷³⁶“My Diary of Pertinent Events,” January 3, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-76, Box 1, folder “DAF Negotiations, 1955 and Earlier,” NA ; Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 373

⁷³⁷“My Diary of Pertinent Events,” January 3, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-76, Box 1, folder “DAF Negotiations, 1955 and Earlier,” NA

⁷³⁸Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 31, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 398.

⁷³⁹Telegram from the Consular General in Dhahran to the Department of State, September 13, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 400.

The administration also labored throughout this period to alleviate Saudi concerns regarding Buraimi. Progress had been made on the matter. Arbitration meetings commenced in September of 1955 in Geneva. But just six days into talks the British member of the committee resigned. He claimed that the Saudis had violated the terms of arbitration by supporting a *coup d'état* in Abu Dhabi, by bribing members of the Abu Dhabi royal family, by smuggling weapons into the region, and by attempting to influence the Pakistani member of the committee.⁷⁴⁰ The British allegations failed to convince the administration. CIA director Allen Dulles asserted that he believed the British had purposefully “sabotaged arbitration” when it “appeared to be going against them.”⁷⁴¹

After withdrawing from the talks the British took a series of aggressive actions in the region. Their forces overran a small Saudi police station and occupied the oases.⁷⁴² Days later an Aramco crew reconnoitering the area reported being “buzzed” by a RAF plane and in November British officials arrested several local Shaiks and imprisoned them in Dubai.⁷⁴³

Great Britain’s actions left administration officials exasperated. They were sabotaging administration efforts to court King Saud. Administration officials began to fear that the Saudis would take their case to the United Nations Security Council. If this

⁷⁴⁰Editorial Note and Memorandum of a Conversation, October 5, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 274-5 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 82.

⁷⁴¹Message from the Director of Central Intelligence (Dulles) to the Secretary of State, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 281

⁷⁴²Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State, October 26, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 280 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 84.

⁷⁴³Telegram from the Consulate General in Dhahran to the Department of State, October 30, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 284 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, November 6, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 287.

occurred it would prove a boon to the Soviets, who were scheduled to assume chairmanship of the council.⁷⁴⁴

Throughout this period the administration attempted to persuade its allies to, as the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs informed his British colleagues, “consider broadening the discussions and seeking a general agreement on the boundaries.”⁷⁴⁵ This suggestion, however, met with only icy silence. A similar reaction occurred every time the administration attempted to convince the British to settle their dispute in order to “win King Saud away from Nasser” and have him exercise “anti-Communist leadership” in the region.⁷⁴⁶

This was because the British scoffed at the notion of promoting King Saud as a regional alternative to Nasser. When first informed of the proposal the British Ambassador to Washington reported to London that the Americans wanted to build “up King Saud as ‘monkey monk’ of the Arabs.”⁷⁴⁷ Harold Beeley of the Foreign Office later concluded that “it would be an illusion to imagine” that “King Sa’ud, as guardian of the holy places, could rival the political authority of ‘Abd al-Nasri.”⁷⁴⁸

Instead of building up King Saud the British wanted to maintain their position in the gulf. Saudi Arabia, however, they believed, threatened this. “Saudi Arabia is

⁷⁴⁴ Memorandum from Near Eastern Affairs (Rountree) to the Undersecretary of State, January 19, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1957-60, Box 19, folder “Buraimi Dispute- Chron. File 1956 Jan.-June,” NA.

⁷⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, May 4, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Subject File Relating to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East, 1955-56,” NA.

⁷⁴⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 36, folder “Syria, Misc- Straggle 1956,” NA. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, May 4, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Subject File Relating to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East, 1955-56,” NA ; Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 365-66.

⁷⁴⁷ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 44.

⁷⁴⁸ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 129.

basically hostile,” to the “United Kingdom and its position,” they declared.⁷⁴⁹ “Saudi activity,” the British representative at the United Nations stated in overblown rhetoric, “is entirely consistent with that of the Soviet Union and serves the same purpose.”⁷⁵⁰ The British believed that the Saudis were bent upon further conquest. They, the British Foreign Secretary charged, regarded “Buraimi as a springboard for future expansion.”⁷⁵¹ If allowed to occur, this expansion, they screamed, would threaten the “very existence of the UK economically.” It would imperil the county’s access to gulf oil, which represented the “whole difference to our national survival.”⁷⁵²

Because of these fears the British refused to reenter arbitration talks. They would not, they stated, return to the talks and “submit to Saudi bribery.” At most, they agreed, to offer “minor adjustments” to the existing British recognized border. This did not satisfy the Saudis who delivered an ultimatum to the British demanding that they withdraw from the disputed oases.⁷⁵³

In late 1956 administration efforts to improve relations with Saudi Arabia had stalled. But, it did not appear as if the administration would be able to use King Saud to counter Nasser and the Soviets any time in the near future. Events in the region, however, forced them to try.

⁷⁴⁹ Letter from Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles, June 23, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 377.

⁷⁵⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, January 26, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Buraimi Dispute – Chron. File 1956, Jan.-June,” NA .

⁷⁵¹ Letter from Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles, June 23, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 377.

⁷⁵² Message from British Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles, January 23, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 323.

⁷⁵³ Message from British Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles, January 23, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 323.

In late summer the Suez Crisis erupted. Throughout the crisis the Eisenhower administration attempted to utilize King Saud as a stabilizing force in the region. They encouraged the King to act as a mediator in the dispute. A role Saud seemed more than willing to play, since Nasser had undertaken the action without consulting his alleged ally.⁷⁵⁴ All did not, however, go according to plan.

While Saud dutifully acted as a liaison between Egypt and the west, and counseled moderation, he also took actions inimical to western interests. After the combined British/French invasion he severed relations with the two belligerent powers and embargoed all oil exports to the two countries and also to the British protectorate of Bahrain.⁷⁵⁵

The administration responded by attempting to induce the King's cooperation. It dispatched special envoy Robert Anderson to Riyadh in order to persuade the King to support the administration's planned Users' Association. As Anderson later informed Prince Faisal the administration wanted the Saudis to "urge" Egyptian "acceptance" of the proposal. They envisioned them "lubricating the way" for a settlement.⁷⁵⁶

Convincing the King to do so, however, proved an uphill battle. He was suspicious of plans to internationalize the canal. He questioned why internationalization was only being proposed for the Suez Canal and not for other non-Arab waterways? He

⁷⁵⁴ Report Prepared in the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State, September 27, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 592-93 ; Telegram from Jidda to the Secretary of State, September 4, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder "Saudi Arabia, King Saud 52-56 (2)," DDEL ; Telegram from the Department of State to Dhahran, April 4, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder "Saudi Arabia, King Saud 1958-60," DDEL.

⁷⁵⁵ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 106.

⁷⁵⁶ Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder "Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956," NA .

also cautioned that the internationalization of the canal might provoke the Soviet Union into calling for the internationalization of all waterways.⁷⁵⁷ His Highness also maintained that “Egypt is ready to do anything” to “guarantee the users.” Egypt, he informed them, “has guaranteed international use of the canal” and if the west wanted “more of a guarantee, Egypt is ready.” When pressed the King insisted that “any solution should have due regard for all the sovereign rights of Egypt.”⁷⁵⁸

Anderson and the American ambassador attempted to dissuade the Saudis of their position. Anderson warned that world confidence in the canal had been shaken and that unless it could “be restored” the “people in the world will be turning to other alternatives.” “Canada,” he insinuated, was currently “producing 40% of its potential.” “Large Amounts,” he stated, could also come from the United States and Venezuela. And “because necessity is the mother of invention,” Anderson continued, “there would be a great effort to extract oil from shale.”⁷⁵⁹ CIA agent Wilbur Eveland, who accompanied Anderson, claims that Anderson also made a clumsy attempt to intimidate the Saudis by hinting that the west might abandon Middle Eastern oil all together and

⁷⁵⁷ Memorandum of Audience with His Majesty, King Saud, August 23, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA.

⁷⁵⁸ Memorandum of Audience with His Majesty, King Saud, August 23, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA. See also: Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, September 17, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 52-56 (3),” DDEL.

⁷⁵⁹ Memorandum of Audience with His Majesty, King Saud, August 23, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA.

turn instead to nuclear power.⁷⁶⁰ Anderson also informed the Saudis that if the dispute was not resolved it might damage the Saudi economy. As Anderson noted, Saudi trade with the west demanded an expansion of the facilities at Suez and Nasser did not possess the funds necessary to undertake such an expansion. He also prophesized that Nasser might levy “exorbitant” fees upon Saudi oil shipments.⁷⁶¹ All these threats and pressure notwithstanding the best Anderson could secure from the Saudis was a pledge to dispatch an emissary to meet with Nasser.⁷⁶²

The King did indeed dispatch an envoy to Cairo, and the envoy did work to lessen tensions. As per his instructions, he labored to “persuade Nasser to stop his radio and other propaganda attacks against Western powers.”⁷⁶³ He also, he claimed, “managed to convince Nasser” that the “United States really stood for peaceful settlement.” In addition he urged the Egyptian leader to “search” for an “acceptable compromise,” and to “do everything possible to reduce tension.”⁷⁶⁴

Despite Saud’s less-than-satisfactory performance during the crisis the administration continued to have high hopes for him. Herbert Hoover predicted that

⁷⁶⁰ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 209-13.

⁷⁶¹ Memorandum of Conversation, August 23, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA ; Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA.

⁷⁶² Memorandum of Conversation with his Royal Highness, Prince Faisal, August 24, 1956, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-57, Box 37, folder “Report of Special Mission to Saudi Arabia August 10-27, 1956,” NA.

⁷⁶³ Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Embassy in Egypt, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 299 ; Summary of Special Mission to King Saud, 20-27 August 1956, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia-King Saud ’57 (1),” DDEL.

⁷⁶⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, August 28, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 16, 310-11.

after the Suez Crisis had been resolved the King would serve “as a counter weight to Egypt.”⁷⁶⁵ President Eisenhower continued to believe “that if the King” could “really come along with the West, we will be able to counter Nasser to a great degree.”⁷⁶⁶ As the President argued on another occasion, “if we could build up” King Saud “as the individual to capture the imagination of the Arab World, Nasser would not last long.”⁷⁶⁷

The administration continued to believe that it had found its solution to its Middle Eastern problems. There were several reasons for this. Saud was, as a briefing paper stated at the time, “a moderate Arab leader who has demonstrated will to resist Communism.”⁷⁶⁸ In his willingness to take a firm stance against Soviet communism the administration had finally found, it believed, what it had been looking for since it entered office, an Arab leader who would “stand up and be counted” in the cold war. The administration’s faith in Saud sprung also from another source. In King Saud the administration saw a miracle man of sorts. Historian Seth Jacobs has used the term to describe the Eisenhower administration’s support of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam during this same period. Jacobs argues that Diem’s Catholicism imparted to the administration the conviction that Diem was “the Miracle Man who alone could galvanize an otherwise simpleminded people for holy war against the communists.”⁷⁶⁹ In Saud, the administration seemed to have found its Middle Eastern equivalent. A man, who they believed, could almost magically solve all of its problems in the region, who

⁷⁶⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation, January 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 412.

⁷⁶⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation, February 1, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 445.

⁷⁶⁷ Message from the President to the Secretary of State, December 12, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, 1296-7.

⁷⁶⁸ Briefing Memorandum, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 52-56 (1),” DDEL.

⁷⁶⁹ Seth Jacobs, *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

could use his status as keeper of the Muslim holy places to rally the Arab masses against both Soviet communism and the rising tide of Arab Nationalism led by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

As such, King Saud became, to quote Eisenhower, the “‘stone’ on which to build” in the Middle East.⁷⁷⁰ Around King Saud the administration assembled a constellation of leaders who pledged to “stand up and be counted” in the cold war and who the administration vowed to protect with the Eisenhower Doctrine. These were the region's conservative rulers, who feared that the rising tide of Arab nationalists would unseat them.⁷⁷¹ Of these leaders, King Saud was clearly the most important. But the administration also wagered on Nuri al-Said in Iraq, Camille Chamoun in Lebanon, and King Hussein in Jordan. This, as the next chapter will reveal, proved a perilous strategy.

⁷⁷⁰ Memorandum of a Conversation, February 1, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 445. See also: Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, July 24, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 230-31.

⁷⁷¹ National Security Council Report, January 24, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 22.

CHAPTER VIII
FOUNDATIONS OF SAND: THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION'S
STRATEGY AND THE NASSERIST "FLOOD"

By the end of 1956 the Eisenhower administration had its new Middle East strategy. It would support those nations who pledged to "stand up and be counted" in the cold war, who vowed to battle both Nasserism and Soviet communism. The Eisenhower Doctrine formalized this commitment in early 1957. It provided aid and protection. The nations who aligned with the U.S. and who accepted this assistance were the conservative or reactionary ones in the region. As a National Security Staff memorandum noted, with its new policy the United States had sided with "the archaic, status-quo, and reactionary regimes" in the Middle East.⁷⁷² The leaders of these state endorsed the doctrine, in large measure, because they feared for their survival. The rising tide of popular Arab nationalism threatened to sweep them from power.⁷⁷³ They clutched the American lifeline.

This would prove a problem. As President Eisenhower once cautioned, "we must remember that we" must "get indigenous peoples as well as governments on our side." If the United States did not succeed in rallying "indigenous" peoples to "our policies," the President prophesized, these policies will "stand on a foundation of

⁷⁷² Memorandum Presented to the National Security Council Planning Board, November 4, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 650.

⁷⁷³ Administration officials themselves described the rise of Arab nationalism as a "flood." See: Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 98-100.

sand.”⁷⁷⁴ Unfortunately for the President he failed to heed his own advice and throughout 1957 and 1958 the rising tide of Arab nationalism eroded the administration’s foundation of sand.

This troubling period began on a high note. In January King Saud visited Washington. Several issues were on the agenda, including renewal of the lease for the American air base at Dhahran and settlement of the Suez Crisis. Briefing papers for the meeting also make it clear, however, that administration officials viewed the trip as an opportunity to again attempt to promote the King as a regional leader.⁷⁷⁵ Difficulties, however, marred these efforts from the beginning. Problems arose before the King ever set foot on American soil. In the weeks preceding the visit Saudi officials informed the administration that the King was considering canceling the visit. He believed that President Eisenhower’s insistence on greeting him at the White House instead of at the airport as he requested represented a slight. A man of his stature, he believed, should be met upon arrival.

This development took White House officials by surprise. Quickly, however, they labored to resolve the misunderstanding. They assured King Saud that the President’s decision did not represent a slight. It was standard protocol for him to greet foreign dignitaries at the White House. He had, they informed the Saudi government, met all previous dignitaries there. Time and security considerations precluded the

⁷⁷⁴ Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL.

⁷⁷⁵ Situation in Yemen, Position Paper, Records as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “(Briefing Book- King Saud Visit) (3),” DDEL ; Contingency Paper, Hungary, Records as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “(Briefing Book- King Saud Visit) (3),” DDEL.

President from doing else wise. It is perhaps a sign, however, of how much the administration valued King Saud that officials informed him that the President would indeed meet him at the airport, if he so desired. But, they pleaded with him, not to demand this. It, they confided, would cause previous dignitaries, who had been met at the White House “embarrassment.” But, when the King arrived several weeks later Eisenhower was indeed there to greet him as he disembarked.⁷⁷⁶ King Saud was no ordinary foreign dignitary.

Another transportation issue marred the King’s visit. Before flying on to Washington the King’ ship docked in New York City. Normally under such circumstances the mayor of New York City would welcome him. The sitting mayor, however, refused to do so. He accused the King of practicing slavery and labeled him an anti-Catholic and an anti-Semitic. Administration officials once again intervened. They arranged for the U.S. military to greet the King. Air Force planes saluted his ship as it entered New York harbor. Ships from the Navy escorted his vessel ashore and a Marine Corps band serenaded his Highness when he disembarked.⁷⁷⁷

After the King arrived in Washington talks commenced. Administration officials had high hopes. They wished to secure the King’s support for the Eisenhower Doctrine, obtain a renewal for the Dhahran lease, and settle the lingering aftereffects of the Suez Crisis. They also hoped to implore the King to exercise his religious influence in the region. They wanted him to “use his influence to dissuade Yemen from establishing” a

⁷⁷⁶ Telegram from Department of State to Dhahran, January 9, 1957, White House Office Files, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 5, folder “State Visits – 56-57 (2), DDEL.

⁷⁷⁷ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 413-14.

“close relationship with the Soviet bloc.”⁷⁷⁸ They also planned to urge the King to exploit the recent Soviet invasion of Hungary by using “his influence among other Arab leaders to emphasize the threat which Communism poses.”⁷⁷⁹

The King did not reject these overtures, but, he had his own agenda. The Saudi government, he informed officials, still required arms. The need was now more pressing than ever. The British, he bemoaned, were “nibbling” at “any number of my borders.” Israeli forces had recently conducted raids onto Saudi territory and the Iranian military had recently occupied two small islands in the Persian Gulf.⁷⁸⁰ To alleviate these pressures the King requested 100 million dollars in military aid, enough to equip 12 infantry divisions, a Royal Guards regiment, expand the air force, and create the “nucleus” of a navy. The King also requested financial aid. He presented the administration with a list of projects he desired funding for. The list included an upgrade to Dammam and Jidda harbors, road projects, railroad projects, mining projects, and television stations.⁷⁸¹ In an effort to elicit American cooperation, his Highness reminded administration officials that he had remained a loyal friend to the United

⁷⁷⁸ Memorandum of Conversation Held with King Saud, January 30, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL ; Briefing Memorandum, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud ’52-56 (1),” DDEL ; Situation in Yemen, Position Paper, Records as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “(Briefing Book- King Saud Visit) (3),” DDEL ; Position Paper: Suez Canal, Papers as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “(Briefing Book- King Saud Visit) (3),” DDEL.

⁷⁷⁹ Contingency Paper, Hungary, Records as President, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 73, folder “(Briefing Book- King Saud Visit) (3),” DDEL .

⁷⁸⁰ Memorandum of Conversation Held with King Saud, January 30, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, January 30, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 425-27.

⁷⁸¹ Memorandum of Conversation February 8, 1957, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Files, State Department Subseries, Box 5, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conversation, February 2, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 451 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 123.

States. He had recently rejected a Soviet military aid offer, which would have provided him with “any amount of arms he desired” at prices lower than anyone else could provide. The message was clear, if the United States did not provide the Kingdom with the assistance it required, the King might be forced to reconsider his loyalty.⁷⁸²

Arms and aid were not the only issues on the King’s agenda.⁷⁸³ He also urged the administration to meet with Nasser, and the Syrian government, and protested the continued Israeli occupation of Sharm al-Shayk and Gaza.⁷⁸⁴ It would be this last issue which would complicate relations with Saudi Arabia throughout early 1957. Following the combined British, French, and Israeli invasion of Egypt Israeli forces had withdrawn from most areas, but a small number remained at Sharm al-Shayk on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula and also in the Gaza strip. This continued presences of Israeli forces, particularly their presence at Sharm al-Shayk, disturbed the King. Sharm al-Shayk overlooked the Gulf of Aqaba, which King Saud viewed as one of the “sacred areas of Islam.”⁷⁸⁵ A continued Israeli presence there, he informed U.S. officials, undermined his standing with his people—and also with the rest of the Arab world.⁷⁸⁶ It also raised

⁷⁸² Memorandum of Conversation Held with King Saud, January 30, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL. For information on the Soviet offer see: Discussion at the 286th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 7, folder “286th,” DDEL.

⁷⁸³ For a full list see: Memorandum of Conversation, January 30, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud, 52-56 (1),” DDEL.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; Memorandum of Conversation Held with King Saud, January 30, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, January 30, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 428.

⁷⁸⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, February 10, 1957, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Saudi Arabia – Chronology of Official Papers Covering Discussions in Washington [King Saud],” NA .

⁷⁸⁶ Conversation with King Saud, February 1, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conversation February 1, 1957, John

security concerns. In the months which followed Israeli forces used control of this strategic locale to open the Gulf. Israeli ships began plying the waters. This was unacceptable to Saud. A Jewish presence in the gulf, he maintained, endangered “the approaches to the Holy Places.”⁷⁸⁷ For this reason the King requested that the administration support Arab efforts to expel Israeli forces from Sharm al-Shayk and to preserve Aqaba as a “closed Arab gulf.”⁷⁸⁸ The administration agreed to the former, but not to the latter. The Gulf of Aqaba, they maintained, was an international waterway.⁷⁸⁹

The Aqaba affair complicated U.S.-Saudi relations throughout much of early 1957, the King even threatened to raise the issue before the Security Council. Consequently frustration emerged. Secretary Dulles grumbled during this period that King Saud “was acting more like the head of the Moslem religion” than as “a head of

Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum Series, Box 1, folder “Memo Conversation Gen T-Z,” DDEL.

⁷⁸⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, February 10, 1957, RG 59, General Records, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 61 D 260 (Box 1 of 2), Subject Files Relating to the Arabian Peninsula, 1952-1960, Box 19, folder “Saudi Arabia – Chronology of Official Papers Covering Discussions in Washington [King Saud],” NA . See also: Briefing Paper for Governor Adams’ Appointment with Saudi Arabian Ambassador, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2 folder “State Department 1957 (April-May) (4),” DDEL ; Telegram from Madrid to the Secretary of State, February 17, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Telegram from Dhahran to the Secretary of State, April 8, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (2),” DDEL

⁷⁸⁸ Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud (2),” DDEL ; Telegram from Bonn to Secretary of State, September 14, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud (3),” DDEL ; Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud, 57(2),” DDEL.

⁷⁸⁹ Aide Memoire, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud, 57(3),” DDEL ; Briefing Memorandum for Governor Adams’ Appointment with Saudi Arabia Ambassador, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Dept – ’57 (April-May (4)),” DDEL ; Conversation with King Saud, February 1, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46 folder “Saudi Arabia (1),” DDEL.

state,” an ironic statement considering this is how the administration had been encouraging him to act. President Eisenhower complained during this period that the “pasha” is “funny-almost childish particularly when he talks about Allah.”⁷⁹⁰ Despite these grumblings, however, administration officials continued to have faith in Saud. The King’s visit, while it did not proceed exactly as planned, did produce some result. The King had extended the American lease at Dhahran for an additional five years and the administration had offered the Kingdom 50 million dollars in training aid.⁷⁹¹ This led Secretary Dulles to conclude that the “Saudi thing” had come “out pretty well.”⁷⁹²

Relations only improved as the months passed. Once the King returned home, he, the President declared, “stood solidly in his support.”⁷⁹³ In response the administration increased its aid proposal. It offered to provide the Kingdom with economic aid. It also offered to sell the Saudis 110 million dollars worth of arms. Administration officials also considered providing more aid in the future, including, a three year armaments credit, a grant to finance the construction of air defenses at

⁷⁹⁰ Telephone Call from the President, June 27, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “Memo Telephone Conversations Mar ’57- Aug 30 ’57 (2),” DDEL. For information on the continued conflict see: See also: Telegram from Cairo to the Secretary of State, February 28, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Translation, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 47, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (2),” DDEL ; Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, May 25, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Telegram from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Telegram from Bonn to the Secretary of State, September 14 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (3),” DDEL.

⁷⁹¹ This offer failed to satisfy the King, but it was a start. See: Message from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 124.

⁷⁹² Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, John Foster Dulles and Allen W. Dulles, February 8, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 6, folder “Telephone Calls—General January 1957-February 28, 1957 (3),” DDEL.

⁷⁹³ Discussion at the 313th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “313th,” DDEL.

Dhahran, 70 million dollars in economic aid, and 20 million dollars in grant money to offset any revenue lost during the Suez Crisis.⁷⁹⁴ That same month the Saudis privately lent their support to the Eisenhower Doctrine. The most welcomed development came when a rift opened up between King Saud and his onetime ESS Pact ally, Nasser. It began in April when Saudi officials uncovered an alleged Egyptian plot to assassinate the King. King Saud took quick action. He expelled Egyptian advisors from the Kingdom.

It was at this hopeful juncture, however, that events in the region began to undermine the administration's strategy. Nasser's popularity began to crest and the rising tide of Arab nationalism began to lap against the administration's foundation of sand. The first state to feel the pressure was Jordan.

The Jordanian government had long been a dependable ally of the west. This was in no small measure due to the fact that the state, and its monarchy, owed their very existence to the western powers. As the Second World War ended, the British "carved" the state of Transjordan out of the "vacant lot" which lay between Palestine and Iraq. On the throne they installed the son of their onetime Arabian ally, Shareif Hussein of the Hejaz. The first Jordanian King, Abdullah, reigned for less than a decade. An assassin's

⁷⁹⁴Untitled Letter, RG 59, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, Office of Arabian Peninsula Office, Records Relating to Saudi Arabia, 1955-74, Box 1, folder "DAF Renewal 1957 Negotiations," DDEL ; Summary of United States Position Regarding Dhahran Airfield and on Saudi Arabian request for Military Assistance, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 5, folder "State Visits - 56-57 (3)," DDEL ; Memorandum from the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Murphy) to the Secretary of State, February 5, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 464-65 ; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 123. Nathan Citino has argued that the Administration agreed to these expenditures in an effort to divert the King's money away from Arab nationalist causes. There is some merit to this contention. In a meeting with British officials the administration spoke of selling arms to the Saudis to "absorb money." It seems likely, however, that such talk was meant purely to mollify their erstwhile British allies who were unshakable in their antipathy towards Saud. See: Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 93.

bullet struck him down in 1951. His son, Talal, fared no better. Less than a year after assuming power, he resigned. Rumors swirled that he suffered from schizophrenia. Afterwards, his son, Hussein, ascended to the throne.

The Jordanian state's prospects did not appear bright in 1957. In less than a decade of existence it had gone through three monarchs. The current King, Hussein, was a mere 21 years of age and was better known for his playboy lifestyle than for his governing abilities. The state was also continually in the red. Only an annual subsidy from the British kept it solvent. Jordan was also divided, politically, and ethnically. The Bedouin tribesmen who inhabited the eastern portion of state supported the monarch. They had loyally supported the Hashemite line in the past. A large Palestinian refugee population, however, resided in the western part of the state—and continued to grow. By 1956 they composed two thirds of the state's population. These refugees possessed no traditional loyalty to the king or to his family. They were also, unfortunately for King Hussein, becoming radicalized. The loss of their homeland in Palestine had made many of them anti-Western and receptive to Arab nationalist calls for unity.

These issues began to come to a head in late 1956. In October the NSP, the Jordanian nationalist party, rode Palestinian resentment to electoral victory. The NSP formed a government. Sulayman Al-Nablusi served as prime minister. The new Prime Minister quickly implemented a nationalist agenda. He moved closer to Nasser and Egypt. In February he signed the Arab Solidarity Agreement with the ESS states, they pledged to provide Jordan with an annual subsidy to replace the one the British

provided.⁷⁹⁵ In March Al-Nablusi called for federation with Egypt and Syria. That same month he provided the USSR and the People's Republic of China with diplomatic recognition.⁷⁹⁶ And in April he demanded that the King dismiss several of his pro-western advisors. King Hussein reluctantly complied with this demand. Three days later, however, al-Nablusi presented the King with another list of advisors he wanted dismissed. On the list was the name of one of King Hussein's closest advisors, Bahjat al-Talhuni, Chief of Royal Diwan. Hussein refused this request. He would not fire his dear friend and trusted confidant. Instead he demanded Al-Nablusi's resignation. The prime minister obliged, believing that the King would be unable to form a new cabinet.⁷⁹⁷

Al-Nablusi was correct. King Hussein had great difficulty forming a new cabinet. As the days passed unrest emerged, particularly within the army. The former Prime Minister, and his ideas, enjoyed a great deal of support within the ranks, particularly with troops who hailed from the Palestinian portion of the country. In April a group of sympathetic officers took action. They ordered the Jordanian first armored regiment to occupy positions around the capital city of Amman.⁷⁹⁸ King Hussein discovered the plot and responded quickly. He ordered these men to return to their barracks and they obeyed. The conspirators, however, did not give up so easily. Several officers stationed at the army base at Zerqa ordered their men to march on the

⁷⁹⁵ Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, February 13, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 85.

⁷⁹⁶ Telegram from the Embassy in Amman to Department of State, March 29, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 88-89 ; Sir Charles Johnston, *The Brink of Jordan* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 46-47.

⁷⁹⁷ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 617. For a full recounting of the Jordanian affair see: Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, chapter 4 and Douglas Little, "A Puppet in Search of a Puppeteer? The United States, King Hussein, and Jordan, 1953-1970," *The International History Review*, vol. 17, no. 3 (August 1995), 514-44.

⁷⁹⁸ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 617

presidential palace. Fortunately for the King, many of these soldiers were Bedouins. They refused the order. Fighting erupted.

The situation threatened to spin out of control. The armed forces of several Arab states were stationed on Jordanian soil. The King had welcomed them after the Suez Crisis erupted. As Zerqa smoldered troops from one of these nations, Syrian, began to move ominously south, towards the capital.

The young monarch reached out to the American government. He asked whether the administration would provide him with assistance under the Eisenhower Doctrine. Administration officials were sympathetic to the King's request. They believed that "Egyptian and Syrian intrigue" were to blame for the crisis.⁷⁹⁹ But, officials failed to see how they could intervene. As they informed the King "the Doctrine was applicable" only "in case of overt aggression by international Communism or by states in the area dominated by international Communism" and "despite its international overtones" the Jordanian crisis was "essentially an internal problem." For this reason they would not, they informed him, honor his request.⁸⁰⁰ Administration officials did, however, dispatch the 6th fleet to the eastern Mediterranean in a sign of solidarity. They also assured the King that if Soviet forces attacked the United States "would intervene militarily."⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation, April 24, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 104-106. See also: Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, April 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 111 ; Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 103.

⁸⁰⁰ Memorandum of a Conversation, April 14, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 92-3.

⁸⁰¹ Memorandum of a Conversation, April 24, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 106.

The King also received support from his Arab neighbors. A sympathetic Iraqi government amassed forces along the border, as did the Turkish government.⁸⁰² King Saud also lent King Hussein his support. A small number of Saudi forces had likewise been stationed in Jordan following the Suez Crisis. King Saud ceded control of these forces to his fellow monarch. He also wired Hussein 250,000 dollars. This was most appreciated. The Jordanian King used these funds to pay his soldiers and maintain their loyalty. Saud also promised to send Hussein the Saudi portion of the ESS subsidiary, nearly 2.5 million pounds.⁸⁰³

Buttressed by foreign support the Jordanian monarch took decisive action. He personally drove to Zerqa, where he rallied loyal Bedouin troops. Men loyal to the King were soon patrolling the capital.

The situation stabilized, the King began to reassert control. He purged the army of Arab nationalists. He also formed a new loyalist cabinet, whose only dissenting voice was al-Nablusi's, who remained as Prime Minister.⁸⁰⁴ The King also cracked down on the general public. Before he did so, however, he labored to secure certain assurances. King Hussein feared that the Israelis might exploit the situation and invade the West Bank. To prevent this from occurring he asked the United States for military support in the event of an attack by either Israel or the Soviet Union. The administration almost immediately pledged to support Jordan if the Soviets intervened and quickly and quietly approached the Israelis and obtained an assurance that they would not intervene.

⁸⁰² Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 99 ; Telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in Baghdad, April 15, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 96-7.

⁸⁰³ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 152.

⁸⁰⁴ Discussion at the 320th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder "320th," DDEL.

Administration officials also encouraged the Turkish government to keep their forces massed along the border. Reassured, the King declared martial law, suspended parliament, and arrested his opponents.⁸⁰⁵ The situation in Jordan was stable—for the time being.

During the Jordanian crisis administration officials were heartened by the actions of King Saud. Administration officials expressed to the King their “appreciation for the very effective measures he” took to “support King Hussein and the King’s actions in the months which followed only reinforced this faith.”⁸⁰⁶ In May the King took the first step towards improving relations with a conservative state in the region, Iraq. King Saud traveled to Baghdad. This was an unprecedented step. The Saudis had long distrusted the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Saudi propaganda had vehemently denounced the Iraqi government when it entered into the Baghdad Pact. While in Baghdad King Saud even proposed that the two countries form a “new alignment” against the forces of Arab Nationalism. Administration officials, needless to say, approved.⁸⁰⁷

More good news arrived in May. Nasser sought a *rapprochement* with the United States. Administration officials attributed this change of heart to the economic sanctions they had imposed on Egypt. Nasser was apparently feeling the pinch. The administration’s strategy to contain and pressure the Egyptian leader into seeing the

⁸⁰⁵ See: Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 133-34 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Beirut, April 25, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 37, folder “Lebanon (3),” DDEL.

⁸⁰⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to Beirut, 25 August 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 37, folder “Lebanon (3),” DDEL.

⁸⁰⁷ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 140 ; Memorandum of a Meeting with the Secretary of State, May 14, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 537-9.

error of his ways seemed to be working.⁸⁰⁸ Administration backslapping, however, did not last long. Another crisis soon erupted, this time in Syria.

The Levant had long been unstable. It, one CIA official pronounced, suffered “from chronic governmental weakness.”⁸⁰⁹ Coups dotted the recent Syrian past. Four occurred in the years leading up to the crisis alone. The last of these coups forced General Abid al-Shishakli, a man administration officials had placed great hope in, from power. Afterwards the Levant state began a slow—halting—drift leftwards. In 1954 the Syrian people elected their first Communist representative. In 1955 Syria concluded the ESS Pact with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In 1956 it sided with Egypt during the Suez Crisis. During the crisis sympathy military officers sabotaged the oil pipeline which cut through Syrian territory. When the crisis concluded the Syrian government continued to support Nasser and his policies. In the United Nations it voted against a resolution which would have compelled the Egyptian leader to stop restricting traffic through the canal.

Communist influence also increased. The Syrian press increasingly portraying the Soviets, and their initiatives, in a favorable light. The Syrian government allowed the Soviets to expand the size of their legation in Damascus. The state also welcomed a

⁸⁰⁸ White House Staff Notes, June 19, 1957, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 25, folder “June ’57 Diary-Staff Memos,” DDEL ; 321st Meeting of the NSC, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “321st,” DDEL ; Telephone Conversation, May 21, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, folder “Dulles, John Foster May ’57,” DDEL ; R.D. Drain to William Macomber, May 22, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “Memorandum Tel. Cov-W.H. March 1957 to Aug. 30 1957 (3),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Telephone Conversation-From President, May 21, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “Memorandum Telephone Call-White House March ’57-Aug 30 ’57 (3),” DDEL.

⁸⁰⁹ Intelligence Report, December 15, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 59 D 518 (Box 6 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-1957, Box 33, folder “Alpha – Middle East Defense and Soviet Objectives in ME, Folder 2 of 2,” NA.

Soviet military attaché. It awarded a Czech firm a contract to build an oil refinery.⁸¹⁰ It also concluded several trade agreements with both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.⁸¹¹

These developments distressed administration officials. Secretary Dulles pronounced that Syria was the “nearest of all the Arab states to becoming a Soviet puppet.”⁸¹² This was not something administration officials believed, they could allow. A Soviet dominated Syria, the Special Assistant for Intelligence prognosticated, “would inhibit the development of the Northern Tier.”⁸¹³ It would also allow, cautioned the U.S. ambassador, “communist poison” to spread to “neighboring states.”⁸¹⁴

To prevent this from occurring, the United States, Secretary Dulles concluded, must demonstrate to the Soviets that “while a Soviet satellite can exist in areas contiguous to the Soviet Union” it “could not exist in a detached area”⁸¹⁵ To demonstrate this to the Soviets the administration apparently undertook extreme action.

⁸¹⁰ Communism in Syria, September 21, 1955, White House Office, National Security Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 55, folder “OCB091 Syria (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy), March 18, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 614.

⁸¹¹ Memorandum from Gustin to Staats, July 19, 1956, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, OCB Central File Series, Box 55, folder “OCB 091 Syria (2),” DDEL ; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 154 ; David Lesch, *Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 118.

⁸¹² Memorandum of Conversation, November 2, 1955, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 59 D 518 (Box 4 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-1957, Box 31, folder “Geneva conference, Oct. 27-Nov. 17, 1955 Memos + Notes,” NA. See also: Memorandum of a Conversation, January 30, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 567; Memorandum, December 21, 1955 RG 59, Subject Files of the Office of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East, 1955-56,” NA.

⁸¹³ Memorandum from W. Park Armstrong Jr. to the Under Secretary of State, December 21, 1955, RG 59, Subject Files of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 10, folder “Near and Middle East 1955-56,” NA.

⁸¹⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State, October 14, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 554-556.

⁸¹⁵ Summary Record of Meeting in Secretary's Office, May 23, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 59 D 518 (Box 10 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-1957, Box 37, folder “Omega – Egypt – dam, Miscl. 1956 Folder 1-2,” NA.

Archival records are less than conclusive, but, it appears that administration officials colluded with their British counterparts to overthrow the Syrian government. During one conversation, for instance, Secretary Dulles agreed to send CIA officials to London to “talk with the British” about “what might be done” in Syria.⁸¹⁶ After Dulles informed him of this, the British ambassador queried if this meant “that the Secretary agreed that if there were means” the two governments “should try to get a more friendly regime in Syria.” The United States government “did agree,” Dulles clarified, if it would not “result in war”⁸¹⁷

The product of this collusion was Operation Straggle. According to CIA operative Wilbur Eveland, Straggle called for the exiled conservative Syrian Parti Populaire (PPS) to seize control of the country.⁸¹⁸ The Agency provided the PPS with funds so that it could bribe key officials and purchase several newspapers. Eveland himself recounts making money drops during this period. He recounts driving into the mountains, reversing his direction until he reached an old French casino where he turned onto a deserted side road transferred a briefcase full of money into a PPS leader’s Chrysler limousine. When the time came PPS sympathizers were to occupy key positions throughout the country.⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, April 1, 1956, RG 59, Miscellaneous Lot Files, Lot File No. 59 D 518 (Box 9 of 12), Documents on Projects ALPHA, MASK, and OMEGA, 1945-1957, Box 36, folder “Omega – Syria, Misc – Straggle 1956 Folder 1 of 2,” NA.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁸ The PPS desired a unified Levantine state, one which encompassed both Lebanon and Syria. This idea, however, had proven unpopular with Syrian leaders. They exiled the PPS and its leadership to the Lebanese mountains on Syria’s eastern border, where they resided when American and British planners devised Operation Straggle.

⁸¹⁹ Wilbur Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America’s Failure in the Middle East* (New York: W.W Norton, 1980), 189, 217, 221-223. Initially the CIA’s plan was more elaborate. Turkish forces were to stage a series of incidents along the Syrian border and the Iraqis were to “stir up” trouble among the Bedouin

Operation Straggle proved an abysmal failure. The British and the French invasion of the Suez Canal occurred mere days before the operation was set to occur. PPS leaders were furious. One enraged leader woke Eveland at his home and chastised him for the “terrible thing you and your government did.” How, he continued, “could you have asked us to overthrow our government at the exact moment when Israel started a war with an Arab state?”⁸²⁰ The PPS leadership called off the operation. But, it was too late. Syrian intelligence had discovered the plot. The government arrested fifty conspirators and put them on trial.

In Straggle’s aftermath the Levant state drifted closer to the USSR. In November it concluded an arms agreement with the communist state. The Soviets agreed to provide the Syrians with more than 20 MIG-15s, 130 T-34 tanks, and 200 APCs.⁸²¹

In August what one historian has called the “battle for Syria” commenced. It began when the Syrian government announced that it had discovered, and foiled, yet another American plot. Syrian officials alleged that American embassy employees approached several officers in the Syrian army and attempted to recruit them to assassinate Nasser. Syrian officials charged that the United States had even secreted ex-President Shishakli back into the country to demonstrate their seriousness.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the Syrian allegations are true. Wilbur Eveland asserts that they are. He claims that the coup was one of several CIA operations in the

tribesmen in the eastern portion of Syria. As this was occurring PPS operatives were to slip across the border and install a new—conservative—government in Damascus. Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 170. For a full recounting of CIA efforts in Syria see: Douglas Little, “The Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958,” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 51-75.

⁸²⁰ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 227.

⁸²¹ 305th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “305th,” DDEL.

region. During this period, Eveland claims, the agency unleashed Operation SIPHONY against Nasser and operations WAPPEN and WAKEFUL against the Syrian government.⁸²² Eveland recalls being present at a meeting held in Lebanon. In attendance were officers from the CIA, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6), and their Jordanian and Lebanese counterparts. According to Eveland, in the middle of the meeting a SIS officer, "drunk as a lord," entered, "took over the meeting" and revealed that "teams had been fielded to assassinate Nasser." Then the inebriated officer "rambled on about the bloody Egyptians who'd planned to turn the Middle East over to the commies." Suddenly, Eveland recounts, his voice trailed off and "he finally sank into his chair and passed out."⁸²³ The plot the Syrians uncovered, Eveland avers, was part of WAKEFUL.⁸²⁴ Archival evidence, unfortunately, does not corroborate Eveland's claim or this colorful anecdote. The relevant files have yet to be declassified.

Regardless, U.S.-Syrian relations only worsened after the revelation. The Syrian government arrested dozens of military officers. It also declared three American diplomatic personnel, at least one whom was a CIA agent, *persona non grata* and expelled them from the country. Army units also surrounded the U.S. embassy in Damascus.⁸²⁵ And in August the Levant state concluded a technical agreement with the USSR.

These latest developments further distressed officials in Washington.

"Communists," President Eisenhower lamented "are taking over" Syria and there was a

⁸²² Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 244.

⁸²³ *Ibid*, 247.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid*, 253-54.

⁸²⁵ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Acting Secretary of State, August 13, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 633.

“serious danger that Syria will become a Soviet satellite.”⁸²⁶ Others seconded his observation. Syria, Dulles judged, had almost “reached the status of Soviet satellite.”⁸²⁷

Administration officials could not allow this to occur. If the Levant state became a Soviet satellite, Secretary Dulles warned, it would become “a base for military and subversive activities in the Near East designed to destroy” other nations’ independence “and subject them to Soviet Communist domination.”⁸²⁸ Of particular concern were the “pro-Western” governments in “Lebanon, Jordan or Iraq.” A The Sovietized Syria, Dulles assured, would commit “armed aggression against” these American allies.⁸²⁹

As these quotations reveal administration thinking had remained essentially unchanged since its first encountered Nasser and Arab nationalism in 1953. Arab states could not, they believed, interact with the Soviet Union and remain independent. Any Arab interaction with the Soviets would lead to eventual domination. As the Secretary of State explained, the Syrians were falling into “a dangerous and classic pattern.” “The Soviets first promise and extend aid.” They then use this aid to position large numbers of “pro-Soviet persons.” The Soviets then place the nation under “the control of

⁸²⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 21, 1957, White House Office Files, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Department – ’57 9April-May (4),” DDEL. See also: Briefing Paper, White House Office Files, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Department – ’57 9April-May (4),” DDEL.

⁸²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, May 4, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, folder “Dulles, J.F. May ’57,” DDEL.

⁸²⁸ Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices, September 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 716.

⁸²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, October 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 733 ; Telegram from Beirut to the Secretary of State, August 28, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, folder “Dulles, John Foster Feb ’57 (2),” DDEL.

International Communism and” make it “a Soviet satellite, whose destinies are directed from Moscow.”⁸³⁰

Racialized beliefs undergirded such thinking. Administration officials attributed the Syrians’ unwillingness or inability to perceive this “reality” as a manifestation of innate Arab irrationality. “The entire basis of the Syrian attitude,” a joint CIA, USIA, and DOD panel concluded, “is emotional . . . rational demonstration[s]” generally make “little impression” on them.⁸³¹ The Syrian government, the Policy Planning Council averred, is “haunted by fears of foreign” subversion “which are driven by emotion rather than guided by reason in determining national interests and objectives.”⁸³² The “Syrians,” cautioned the American Ambassador, are “under emotional pressures” and “have lost” their “sense of perspective vis-à-vis Soviets.” Their “inferiority complex” has caused them to seek out Soviet aid.⁸³³

To save the Syrians, and the rest of the region, from themselves, administration officials encouraged their conservative allies to take action. Most were more than willing to do so. The Turkish government, in particular, needed little encouragement. As early as November of 1956 Turkish officials had warned Washington that the Soviet Union was “systematically” seizing “hold of” its neighbor. Ankara also informed

⁸³⁰ Memorandum for the President, 20 August 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 9, folder “Dulles Aug ’57 (1),” DDEL ; Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, August 21, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 642. See also: Special National Intelligence Estimate, September 3, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 678 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State, May 17, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 618.

⁸³¹ Memorandum, December 10, 1957, RG 59, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, Box 154, Folder “Near and Middle East 1957,” NA.

⁸³² Some Considerations Bearing Upon the US Approach to the Middle East, March 7, 1957, RG 59, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, Box 154, Folder “Near and Middle East 1957,” NA.

⁸³³ Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State, October 14, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 554-556. See also: Letter from the Ambassador in Syria (Moose) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, June 7, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 572.

Washington that they considered it their “sacred duty to take all required steps” to eradicate this threat to “Turkey’s independence and existence.”⁸³⁴ Soon thereafter Turkish forces gathered along the border.⁸³⁵ Clashes erupted.

While Ankara was eager to act, Administration officials were wary of having the Turks intervene alone. A Turkish intervention would, the Secretary cautioned, produce “profound resentment among” the “Syrian people” and “arouse keen opposition in the rest of the Arab world.”⁸³⁶ Bitter memories of Ottoman rule were still too fresh. Moreover, as the Secretary warned, any government “brought into power by Turkish military action” would be suspect and would likely only fall and be “replaced by another government of the same stamp as” the “present one” once Turkish forces withdrew.⁸³⁷

Administration officials instead wanted one of Syria’s Arab neighbors to intercede. As Secretary Dulles reasoned, if the “Iraqis, or Iraqis together with Jordanians” intervened, the “unfavorable political repercussions would not be so great.”⁸³⁸ Consequently throughout 1957 administration officials encouraged the Iraqi government to invade. Officials in Baghdad were receptive. There was, however, a complicating factor. The Iraqis needed a reason to intervene. During talks in Baghdad representatives from the two governments discussed how they could manufacture, as the

⁸³⁴ Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, November 14, 1956, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 8, folder “Dulles, Foster, Nov ’56 (1),” DDEL.

⁸³⁵ Eisenhower, *White House Years*, 203.

⁸³⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to Embassy in Turkey, August 26, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 66 D 123, Executive Secretariat, Records Relating to Project GAMMA, 1957-58, Box 1, NA.

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.* There were other reasons as well. See: Gamma, September 6, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (2),” DDEL.

⁸³⁸ Telegram from the Department of State to Embassy in Turkey, August 26, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 66 D 123, Executive Secretariat, Records Relating to Project GAMMA, 1957-58, Box 1, NA. See also: Telegram from the Consulate General in Istanbul to the Department of State, August 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 654 ; Memorandum of Conference with the President, August 21, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL.

American Ambassador phrased it, an “incident” to serve as “‘pretext’ for an Iraqi military invasion.”⁸³⁹ Iraqi officials proposed instigating a “Druze uprising.” This, they believed, would provide them with the “best and most convincing course.”⁸⁴⁰ The U.S. encouraged this. Days prior Secretary Dulles had assured the Iraqis that if a “plausible cause” could be manufactured and if Iraq “disavowed any political objectives, and obtained a guarantee from Turkey that they would assist if things went badly” then “the administration would support their efforts.”⁸⁴¹

While this was occurring Turkish officials continued to offer their assistance. Administration officials were appreciative. But, they were adamant that Turkish forces should only provide a supporting role.⁸⁴² They should offer “moral, political, and

⁸³⁹ Telegram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State August 31, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 66 D 123, Executive Secretariat, Records Relating to Project GAMMA, 1957-58, Box 1, NA. See also: Memorandum of a Conversation, September 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, folder “S/Miss Bernau,” DDEL.

⁸⁴⁰ Telegram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State August 31, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 66 D 123, Executive Secretariat, Records Relating to Project GAMMA, 1957-58, Box 1, NA. See also: GAMMA, September 6, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (2),” DDEL ; Memorandum for the Record, 28 August 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL.

⁸⁴¹ Memorandum for the Record, August 23, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL. See also: Telegram from the Consulate General in Istanbul to the Department of State, August 26, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 656-57 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey, September 10, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 694-95 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, September 10, 1957, *FRUS*, vol. 13, 698-99. To help with their efforts the administration also sped up arms deliveries to Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. See: Special Staff Note, Prepared in the White House, September 20, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 714-15.

⁸⁴² Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State, August 25, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (2),” DDEL.

logistical” assistance to Arab military action.⁸⁴³ They should only enter militarily “in requested reinforcement of Arab defensive action.”⁸⁴⁴

In addition to encouraging the Iraqis and the Turks, the administration also lobbied King Saud to act. At a National Security Staff meeting President Eisenhower reminded those present “that Saud, after his visit here, had called on all Arabs to oppose Communism.” This memory led the President to conclude that “we should at once send an emissary out to Saud.”⁸⁴⁵ On another occasion Secretary Dulles confided that “we are anxious” to have the “King use his political and moral authority to rally opposition in” the “area to” the “present Syrian regime” and to “isolate” it.⁸⁴⁶ In August the President took action. He urged the “King as Guardian Holy Places and bearer” of a “special responsibility in” the “Moslem world” to “direct his political and moral influence against this alien influence.”⁸⁴⁷ In another message the President encouraged “the King as Keeper of the Holy Places of Islam” to “exert his great influence” to assure “that the atheistic creed of Communism will not” become “entrenched in key position in the

⁸⁴³ Telegram from the Department of State to Embassy in Turkey, August 26, 1957, RG 59, Lot File No. 66 D 123, Executive Secretariat, Records Relating to Project GAMMA, 1957-58, Box 1, NA. The administration also provided both Turkey and Iraq with military advisors during this period, presumably, to help them prepare for military action. See: Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 700-01.

⁸⁴⁴ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey, September 10, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 692 ; GAMMA, September 6, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (2),” DDEL.

⁸⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conference with the President, September 7, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation With the President, September 7, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 688.

⁸⁴⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 27, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 500.

⁸⁴⁷ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 21, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud, ’57 (3),” DDEL.

Moslem world.”⁸⁴⁸ The President, as he himself stated, “worked” on the King “hard” during this period and he appealed to his Secretary of State to do the same, to “make a personal appeal” to the Saudi King.⁸⁴⁹

The King’s immediate reaction left much to be desired. Upon receiving Eisenhower’s first message the King lectured the United States that the crisis could be “traced to Western arms export policies.” By not agreeing to sell Syria arms the United States had pushed the Syrians into the Soviets’ arms.⁸⁵⁰ The King also, in a sign of solidarity, traveled to Damascus. The Saudi government, meanwhile, stated publically that it had never endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine.⁸⁵¹ These actions led administration officials to complain that “Saud is now prepared to blame the U.S. for much of the difficulty in Syria.”⁸⁵² President Eisenhower also complained during this period that King Saud was intervening in an unhelpful way in Lebanon. “We had,” the President

⁸⁴⁸ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in London, August 22, 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence Series, Box 15, folder “Aug ’57 (2),” DDEL. See also: Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 21, 1957, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Dept ’57 (Aug-Oct) (4),” DDEL.

⁸⁴⁹ Telephone Call to the President, August 23, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series Box 12, folder “Memorandum Telephone Calls-White House March ’57-Aug 30 ’57 (1),” DDEL.

⁸⁵⁰ Briefing Paper, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Dept. ’57 (Aug-Oct) (5),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with the President, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL Suggested Message to King Saud, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Department ’57 (Aug-Oct) (4),” DDEL ; Telegram from King Saud to President Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 57 (1),” DDEL

⁸⁵¹ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 133.

⁸⁵² Memorandum of a Conversation with the President, August 28, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 660.

lamented, “high hopes for King Saud.” We believed “that he would prove to be a force for stability and peace in Saudi Arabia”⁸⁵³

As the crisis progressed, however, the King’s actions renewed officials’ faith in him. Syrian actions eventually prompted the King to turn against the Levant state. It began when Damascus launched a propaganda assault on the King.⁸⁵⁴ King Saud retaliated. He ordered all Syrian assets in the Kingdom frozen. Soon the Saudi monarch was confiding to the administration that he was concerned about “Syrian developments” and that he held Nasser “largely to blame” for what was occurring. He also informed the administration that while he did not condone the use of force in Syria he would support the use of “other methods” to “bring about changes.”⁸⁵⁵ Secretary Dulles was heartened during this period by the fact that the King “was prepared to spend money” to exploit internal rivalries within Syria.⁸⁵⁶ Further good news arrives as the crisis wound to a close. The Syrians introduced a complaint before the United Nations. In response King Saud offered to mediate a solution to the dispute.⁸⁵⁷ Administration officials appreciated the King’s efforts, but they did not rely exclusively on them. As the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs explained, the “US did not wish to count too heavily on King Saud’s mediation offer,” if it did and “the Arabs turned from

⁸⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation, February 4, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Lebanon (3),” DDEL. Another discouraging sign appeared in July when the King commenced trade talks with Egypt. See: Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 148.

⁸⁵⁴ Discussion at the 313rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 8, folder “313th,” DDEL.

⁸⁵⁵ Telegram from the Consular General in Istanbul to the Department of State, September 2/3, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 671.

⁸⁵⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation, September 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, folder “S/Miss Bernau,” DDEL.

⁸⁵⁷ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 724.

it” the Syrians” would “be prepare[d] to put in a resolution” and this was “unacceptable to us.”⁸⁵⁸ The stakes were too high to rely on the King alone.

Regardless, administration officials appreciated the King’s offer and were heartened by his words and deeds as the Syrian crisis progressed. The King seemed to recognize the danger that Nasser and Syria posed to the region. He supported American initiatives and took an active role in attempting to resolve the crisis.

In addition to exploiting King Saud’s religious authority administration officials pondered utilizing religion in another way during this period. At a National Security Staff meeting President Eisenhower pronounced that the United States should “do everything possible to stress the ‘holy war’ aspect” of the crisis.⁸⁵⁹ The President’s idea, however, met with a cool reception. Secretary Dulles cautioned the President “that if the Arabs” did “have a ‘holy war’” it would likely “be against Israel.” Heeding Dulles’ advice the administration undertook no major effort to encourage a “holy war,” although USIA propaganda efforts did labor to portray the “Syrian regime as introducing communism, the enemy of religion, into Near East.”⁸⁶⁰

As the administration machinated behind the scenes, Nasser took action. In October he landed 1,500 Egyptian troops at Latakia on the Syrian coast. This effectively ended the administration’s and its allies’ plans. It deterred the Iraqis. Turkish forces

⁸⁵⁸Memorandum of a Conversation, October 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 731.

⁸⁵⁹Memorandum of Conference with the President, September 7, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 48, folder “Syria (3),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation With the President, September 7, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 688.

⁸⁶⁰Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Missions and Consular Offices, September 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 716 ; Original Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Missions and Consular Offices, September 25, 1957, White House Office Files, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Dept 57 (Aug- Oct 1)(5),” DDEL.

remained.⁸⁶¹ But they too would soon depart. In October the Syrian lodged a complaint before the United Nations. It alleged that their neighbors were conspiring to intervene in its sovereign affairs. Exposed, Turkish machinations ceased. Their forces departed from the border.

In addition to dispatching forces to Syria, Nasser reached out to the United States. During a meeting with the American Ambassador he, the ambassador concluded, made it “obvious” that he “very much wanted to talk and that he is” willing to possibly “mend his fences with us”⁸⁶² The Egyptian leader sent further signals. In December an Egyptian envoy informed the administration that Nasser was “convinced” that the Syrian leader was “a communist and that something must be done about it.” Nasser would, he informed the administration, assume the “responsibility” of dealing with the Syrian leader if the United States kept its “hands off Syria for a maximum period of three months.”⁸⁶³

Discussion ensued in Washington. The Egyptian leader’s first approach prompted the President to ask Secretary Dulles whether there was “any percentage in”

⁸⁶¹ The administration attempted at this point to deter Turkish action. The Soviets had been making threatening statements. See: Department of State to the Embassy in Ankara, October 20, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 24, 738-39 ; Embassy in Ankara to the Department of State, October 23, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 24, 740.

⁸⁶² Memorandum of a Conversation, September 2, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 669.

⁸⁶³ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 745. W. Alton “Pete” Jones, a close confidant and poker buddy of the President’s also met with Nasser during this period. As a result of the meeting Jones urged the President to improve relations with Nasser. See: Undated Letter, Jones to Eisenhower, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Name Series, Box 20, folder “Jones, W. Alton (Pete) (3),” DDEL ; Jones to Eisenhower, November 9, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Name Series, Box 20, folder “Jones, W. Alton (Pete) (3),” DDEL.

attempting “to bring back Nasser to our side.”⁸⁶⁴ The Secretary of State, however, remained skeptical. He advised Eisenhower against reaching out to Nasser. The administration, he declared, “did not want in an effort to win good relations with Nasser” to “alienate those who had maintained good relations with us.” There was a “danger that Nasser would be satisfied with nothing less than” for the United States “to treat him as the leader of the Arab world.” This would, Dulles advised, “antagonize King Saud and the other Arab countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq,” who “were somewhat fearful of Nasser.”⁸⁶⁵ Nasser’s later offer to intervene in Syria, however, tempted even the reticent Dulles. It might be good, the Secretary of State concluded, to “avoid impeding Egyptian efforts to bring about change” in Syria.⁸⁶⁶ But, this did not mean that Dulles trusted the Egyptian leader. While he welcomed the fact that Nasser “was not happy about the present situation and wanted to improve” it, the United States could not, he declared, “forget a ‘keystone’ of our policy” the “leadership of King Saud” against Nasser. The administration should not, Dulles concluded, take any “action which would be regarded by King Saud as a blow to his leadership.”⁸⁶⁷ Instead Dulles wanted to have it both ways. Under the Secretary the administration would labor for the “immediate future” to “achieve a degree of degagement” with Syria. Such a policy would allow Nasser to

⁸⁶⁴ Letter from the President to the Secretary of State, November 13, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 5, folder “Meetings with the President ’57 (1)” DDEL ; Letter from the President to the Secretary of State, November 13, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 17, 795.

⁸⁶⁵ Memorandum for the Record by the Secretary of State, November 15, 1957, Papers of John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series, Box 5, folder “Meetings with the President ’57 (1)” DDEL ; Memorandum for the Record by the Secretary of State, November 15, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 17, 796.

⁸⁶⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, December 12, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 746.

⁸⁶⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, November 19, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 12, 658-9. For more proof of the administration’s wariness see: Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, January 10, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 401-02.

intervene in Syria, undisturbed, as he had requested. It would also, however, “permit the moderating influences of Saud and others to be most effective.”⁸⁶⁸

Unfortunately for the administration things did not proceed according to plan. King Saud achieved little success and Nasser, instead of combating communist influence in Syria, absorbed the country. In February the nations of Syria and Egypt combined to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). This was not, apparently, Nasser’s idea.⁸⁶⁹ The Syrians took the initiative. The effort was spearheaded by the Syrian Ba’athist party. The Ba’athists were at the time in a weak electoral position. They were losing ground to the Communist party. The only way to check growing Communists influence, many believed, was to unite with the popular leader of the Arab nationalist movement. In December the Ba’athists introduced a bill before parliament which proposed establishing a federal union with Egypt. The communists responded in an unexpected way. Cognizant of Nasser’s popularity, they attempted to better the Ba’athists. They called for a formal union.⁸⁷⁰

The next month, without first consulting with the civilian government, members of the Syrian military flew to Cairo. There they met with Nasser and requested unification. The offer caught the Egyptian leader by surprise. He prevaricated. He informed the delegation that he would only consider unification if an official delegation

⁸⁶⁸ Letter from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to the Charge in Syria (Strong), October 29, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 737.

⁸⁶⁹ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, February 20, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 429-30.

⁸⁷⁰ Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study in Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-58* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 310-11.

from the civilian government made the request.⁸⁷¹ There is every indication that the Egyptian leader believed this would be the end of the matter. Several days later, however, an official Syrian delegation arrived in Cairo.⁸⁷² Nasser, reluctant, again hesitated. He informed the Syrians that he would accept unification, but only if they met several onerous preconditions. The Syrian military must withdraw from politics. The Syrians needed to dissolve all their political parties and the people of both countries would have to approve the measure with a popular referendum. Nasser apparently did not believe that the Syrian government would agree to these conditions. To his surprise, they did and a reluctant Nasser agreed to unification.⁸⁷³ After signing the necessary paperwork the Syrian President informed Nasser that “you don’t know what you’ve getting yourself into ... you have taken” on “a people” who all “consider themselves politicians, fifty percent of whom think that they are leaders, twenty-five percent of whom think they are prophets, and at least ten percent of whom consider” themselves “divine.” The new leader’s response? “Why didn’t you tell me this before I signed the agreement?”⁸⁷⁴

Whether the UAR was Nasser’s idea or not, news of the union disturbed officials in Washington. Nasser, they believed, was expanding his power and they could not, they believed, allow this to occur. Any expansion of Nasser’s power, administration officials continued to believe, represented an expansion of Soviet power. The UAR, the

⁸⁷¹ Seale, *The Struggle for*, 320.

⁸⁷² For a full recounting of this episode see: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 160.

⁸⁷³ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 20 ; Seale, *Struggle for*, 321-24. Why did Nasser accept? Salim Yaqub theorizes that he accepted because he feared the communists were gaining too much power in Syria. See: Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 186. Jankowski asserts that Nasser acceded in order to “use Egyptian influence to stabilize the situation.” See: Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 95.

⁸⁷⁴ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt*, 114, 104-114.

Secretary of State pronounced, “would not be domination by Nasser so much as domination by the Soviets.”⁸⁷⁵

It was not just Syria, administration officials feared, that was at risk. The formation of the UAR, Dulles warned, created the “danger that Jordan and Lebanon would [also] be absorbed.” This would place “Iraq and Saudi Arabia in peril.”⁸⁷⁶ The formation of the UAR, a SNIE concluded, threatened to provide Nasser and the Soviets a “bridge to Africa and a means of weakening the conservative states” there.⁸⁷⁷ “The whole” region, President Eisenhower prophesized, might “fall into the hands of Communism.” This, the Secretary of the Treasury warned “would be catastrophic.”⁸⁷⁸ Loss of the region would deprive America’s European allies of the oil their economies relied upon.⁸⁷⁹

These fears prompted officials to contemplate drastic responses. Concerned about King Saud’s safety in Saudi Arabia, the President inquired whether the U.S. could safeguard him with military force. The Acting Secretary of State, however, counseled him that this would depend on whether or not the administration could find a reason to invoke the Eisenhower Doctrine. The President then ordered the State and Defense Departments to “get busy at once” examining what it was “these countries wanted by

⁸⁷⁵ Message to King Saud on Egyptian Syrian Union, January 30, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 58-60,” DDEL ; Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State Herter to President Eisenhower, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 36.

⁸⁷⁶ Message to King Saud on Egyptian Syrian Union, January 30, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 46, folder “Saudi Arabia, King Saud 58-60,” DDEL.

⁸⁷⁷ Special National Intelligence Estimate, February 20, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 41.

⁸⁷⁸ 357th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 9, folder “357th,” DDEL. See also: Memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Berry) to the Acting Secretary of State, January, 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 410.

⁸⁷⁹ 357th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 9, folder “357th,” DDEL.

way of support and assistance” and “what our Government ought to do next.”⁸⁸⁰

Administration officials also elicited proposals from allies in the region. According to Secretary Dulles, the administration was “glad to support any feasible common plan they might be able to devise to thwart or otherwise oppose the union of Egypt and Syria.”⁸⁸¹ In the end no such plan was forthcoming and the administration—eventually—officially recognized the UAR.⁸⁸²

Meanwhile, events continued apace in the region. In February a hopeful sign, when two of the America’s conservative allies formed their own union. Iraq and Jordan combined to form the Arab Federation. Officials welcomed this development, but did not place much faith in it.⁸⁸³ The new union, the Directory of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs predicted, would only play “second fiddle” to the UAR, because the rest of the Arab world viewed it with “cynicism and suspicion.”⁸⁸⁴ In March more news reached Washington. In a sensational press release Syrian officials alleged that King Saud

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸¹ Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President, February 8, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 421 ; Memorandum for the President, February 8, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 10, folder “Dulles, John Foster, February ’58 (2),” DDEL.

⁸⁸² Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, February 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 425-26. There was, however, still some hesitation, particularly by the Secretary of State. See: Memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Berry) to the Acting Secretary of State, January 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 409-11 ; 353rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 9, folder “353rd,” DDEL.

⁸⁸³ Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, February 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 425-26.

⁸⁸⁴ Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Near Easter Affairs (Rockwell) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree), March 26, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 282.

bribed Syrian military officers in an effort to persuade them to assassinate Nasser. As proof they even produced a cashier's check drawn on Saudi accounts.⁸⁸⁵

This revelation toppled the Saudi monarch. At home, he was already in trouble. The royal family was not pleased with his rule. His lavish spending was bankrupting the Kingdom and the Syrian revelation was the last straw.⁸⁸⁶ Family members forced Saud to relinquish day-to-day control of the Kingdom to his brother, Crown Prince Faisal. King Saud remained King in title only.

In the blink of an eye the administration's Middle Eastern strategy lay in ruins. Shocked, officials contemplated changing course. Secretary Dulles initially proposed taking outlandish action. He spoke of helping "friendly hands" acquire the waters of the Upper Nile and using them to "threaten Egypt." Dulles apparently envisioned having the Sudanese threaten to divert the Nile's waters, thereby depriving Egypt of its lifeblood.⁸⁸⁷ Ultimately, however, cooler heads prevailed. Instead of threatening Egypt the administration contemplated reaching out to the UAR. An assessment written in conjunction by the NEA, CIA, and Department of Defense concluded in March that it was "unrealistic to believe" that the administration "could reach a full understanding with Nasser." Yet, the authors of the study conceded, the administration should at least

⁸⁸⁵ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern South Asian, and African Affairs, March 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 719 ; Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 196-7.

⁸⁸⁶ The Kingdom was 480 million dollars in debt by mid-1957. See: Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, 138. For a more in-depth recounting of domestic Saudi Arabian affairs during this period see: Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom*, particularly chapters 32, 33, and 34 and Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, particularly chapters 13 and 14.

⁸⁸⁷ Telephone Call to Mr. Rountree, April 3, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Calls Series, Box 8, folder :Memo Telephone Conversations April '58-May 29 '58," DDEL. In the margins next to this, someone, maybe Secretary Dulles, wrote "Action!"

try. It should offer Nasser a “gradual relaxation” of restrictions.⁸⁸⁸ Still wary, however, administration officials did not place all of their hopes into one basket. In addition to reaching out to Nasser the administration would “stiffen the spines of friendly countries in the area” and “encourage them to collaborate in resisting Nasser’s expansionism”⁸⁸⁹

The administration began implementing the first part of its strategy in late March. Secretary Dulles instructed the American ambassador in Cairo to offer “progressive change” to Nasser. The ambassador was to offer Nasser a set of modest inducements, including, the sale of “quasi-military items,” munitions, and the unfreezing of existing road and communication aid. If the UAR leader responded favorably to these offers, and if he moderated his position in the region, the Secretary authorized the ambassador to offer the resumption of CARE aid and the reinstatement of the exchange of persons program. If Cairo reacted favorably to these blandishments and began pursuing a “more friendly and fruitful relationship with” the U.S. the ambassador was authorized to offer PL480 wheat aid and other assistance. Finally, if Nasser became “alive to [the] danger of international Communism” and if he “abandoned efforts to undermine pro-Western Arab regimes” the administration would consider offering the UAR new aid and reinstate the military training program.⁸⁹⁰

In April the ambassador approached Nasser and offered him this first batch of inducements. The Egyptian leader “welcomed our approach.” But, he still did not trust

⁸⁸⁸ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to Secretary of State Dulles, March 24, 1958, *FRUS* 1958-60, vol. 12, 51.

⁸⁸⁹ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to Secretary of State Dulles, March 24, 1958, *FRUS* 1958-60, vol. 12, 51.

⁸⁹⁰ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Arab Republic, March 25, 1958, *FRUS*, vol. 13, 437-38 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Arab Republic, April 16, 1958, *FRUS*, vol. 13, 439-40.

the administration. In the past the Americans had schemed, he stated, to “find some way of affecting removal of himself.” Before he could trust Dulles and Eisenhower he wanted some assurance to feel his “back is safe.” Additionally he informed the ambassador that after the meeting he would leave to attend a pre-arranged meeting in Moscow.⁸⁹¹ This was not the reaction Dulles had been hoping for. Administration officials contemplated what to do next and as Washington weighed its next course of action, the position of another of its conservative allies began to erode. A civil war erupted in Lebanon.

The roots of the war are complex. The Lebanese state contained a heterogeneous mix of peoples, including Lebanese, Syrians, Greeks, and Palestinians. They practice many faiths, Sunni Islam, Shi’ite Islam, Maronite Christian, Greek Orthodox, Druze, and others. The Lebanese National Pact of 1943 addressed this diversity. It established a confessional system. It divided power in the country between these religious or confessional groups. Each group received a share of power representative to its percentage of the population. Maronite Christians, who constituted the majority at the time, received the most power. A Maronite was President. Sunni Muslims, who constituted the second largest group, received the second largest share of power, a Sunni was Prime Minister. And so it went. The Speaker of the Chamber was Shi’ite, his assistant Greek Orthodox. Representation in parliament was similarly divided. The National Pact also stated that in foreign affairs Lebanon would remain neutral. This would preserve the peace at home. A foreign policy which favored either the west or the

⁸⁹¹ Telegram from the Embassy in the United Arab Republic to the Department of State, April 26, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol, 12, 446-49.

Arab states would only enflame confessional groups at home. Lebanese Christians had strong ties to the west, while Lebanon's Muslims felt a strong bond to the other Arab states.⁸⁹²

In 1952, however, Lebanon's second President, Camille Chamoun, flouted the National Pact. He adopted a foreign policy which increasingly favored the west.⁸⁹³ In 1953 he accepted 2.5 million dollars in American economic and technical assistance. By the end of 1956 he had accepted over 10 million dollars in economic aid and 2.7 million dollars in military grants. The American government also provided him with money for the upcoming election. The CIA's Wilbur Eveland recounts traveling "regularly to the presidential palace with a briefcase full of Lebanese pounds," which Chamoun used to purchase influence.⁸⁹⁴

The United States' generosity paid dividends. Chamoun assured administration the United States that "if it ever came to war with the Soviets" his country "would be 100 per cent on the side of the West, our harbors would be open to your ships, our airfields to your planes."⁸⁹⁵ In 1957 Chamoun was also the only Arab leader to publically endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine without reservation. He informed the administration that he supported it "one hundred percent."⁸⁹⁶ Such an endorsement, and Chamoun's pro-western leanings, however, did not come without a cost. Chamoun's

⁸⁹² For a comprehensive history of Lebanon and the crisis see: Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention on Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-58* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁸⁹³ Chamoun was not without reason for adopting this unprecedented pro-western policy. The Lebanese economy was becoming increasingly dependent upon the west. See: Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, particularly part II.

⁸⁹⁴ Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 252.

⁸⁹⁵ Department of State Briefing Paper, "Lebanon," May 5, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol. 9, 211-13.

⁸⁹⁶ Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, January 13, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 196-7.

policies disturbed many. Many Lebanese feared that the President's pro-western policy would enflame Lebanese Muslims and endanger the shaky confessional system. Arab nationalists, meanwhile, opposed Chamoun, they wanted to align with Nasser. Still other opposed him because they did not want to align with the forces of western imperialism.

Concerns increased in 1956 after Chamoun used the aforementioned American money to rig the election. His supporters gained control of two thirds of Parliament. This frightened many. They believed Chamoun would use his new majority to amend the constitution so that he could run for a second term.⁸⁹⁷ In response opposition groups began to form and in 1957 opponents founded the National Front. Protestors soon clashed with government supporters in the mountains.⁸⁹⁸ Soon a second opposition group, the Third Force, formed. Most of the members of these opposition groups were, by and large not, radicals. They were mostly pro-western Christians and Muslims. Many members of the Third Force, for instance, were conservatives who Chamoun had excluded from the government following the 1956 election.⁸⁹⁹

Officials in Washington were aware of the instability Chamoun's policies were causing. The American ambassador warned that if the President utilized "his control of [the] Parliament to amend" the "constitution and succeed himself" it would "invite very

⁸⁹⁷ Erika Alin, *The United States and the 1958 Lebanon Crisis: American Intervention in the Middle East* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 2008), 68. Lebanon's first President, Bishara Khoury, had done something similar. He used his parliamentary majorities to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a second term. See: Eyal Zisser, "The Downfall of the Khuri Administration: A Dubious Revolution," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30 (July 1994), 486-511.

⁸⁹⁸ See: Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 143.

⁸⁹⁹ Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 220; Alin, *The United States and the 1958 Lebanon Crisis*, 55-56.

extensive opposition” and “cause great discord.”⁹⁰⁰ Despite these concerns administration officials continued to support Chamoun. There did not seem to be any other option. The only other appealing candidate, General Chehab, the American ambassador informed them, showed “no interest in assuming presidential office” and no other pro-western Lebanese leader “could defeat Chamoun.”⁹⁰¹ Yet, administration officials were aware that if Chamoun ran for a second term the situation could deteriorate very quickly. Consequently Secretary Dulles ordered the American ambassador to “give Chamoun no reason to assume” that “we will support him if he” decides to run “for re-election.”⁹⁰²

In May, however, Chamoun informed the administration that he would indeed run for reelection.⁹⁰³ Just days later violence erupted. It began after Nasib al-Matni, a reporter for a newspaper critical of Chamoun, was gunned down in the streets of Beirut. Opposition groups quickly blamed the President. The United Front organized a nationwide strike and demanded the President’s resignation. Violent clashes erupted. Angry mobs attacked the Presidential summer palace. Whole regions of the country slipped from Chamoun’s control. Autonomous zones sprung up in Beirut, Triploi, Sidon, the

⁹⁰⁰Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, February 21, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 11.

⁹⁰¹*Ibid.* Not all were sold on Chehab. The American ambassador warned that he was a “neutral legume who would require careful pruning to grow in the right direction.” See: Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, February 21, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 10-13. Yet, the administration felt it had no choice, if it did not find a pro-western alternative, there would be, the ambassador warned, dire consequences. See: *Ibid* ; Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, April 3, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 21 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, February 21, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 12.

⁹⁰²Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, February 27, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 13.

⁹⁰³Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, May 7, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 31.

Shuf, Ba'lbak, and in Hirmil. Wilbur Eveland recalls that one day during this period he saw a gasoline filled truck race down a hill towards the Presidential palace. It exploded just short. When he went to investigate, he saw "Chamoun up on the roof with his hunting gun, looking for someone to emerge."⁹⁰⁴

On May 13th a panicked Chamoun asked the American and British governments "to consider" the "possibility of landing armed forces in Lebanon."⁹⁰⁵ The Lebanese President's request placed the administration in an awkward position. Officials wanted to support Chamoun. If the U.S. did not, President Eisenhower stated, "much larger problems ... would arise." No American ally would take the United States or its commitment seriously.⁹⁰⁶ Yet intervening raised all manner of complications. It would, the Secretary warned, create a "wave of anti-Western feeling" throughout the region. The UAR might cut the oil pipeline which ran through Syria and close the Suez Canal to western traffic.⁹⁰⁷ The administration also had no standing to intercede. It could not, Dulles judged, "invoke the provisions of the" Eisenhower Doctrine. The doctrine only empowered the President to intervene if the forces of international communism, or states controlled by international communism, threatened Lebanon. The administration could not, Dulles believed, prove to Congress that "the United Arab Republic had attacked

⁹⁰⁴ Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 242-45 ; Eveland, *Ropes of Sand*, 280.

⁹⁰⁵ Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, May 13, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 42.

⁹⁰⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, May 13, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 46.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Lebanon and that the United Arab Republic was under the control of international communism.”⁹⁰⁸

Instead the administration decided to attempt to deter Chamoun from requesting U.S. assistance.⁹⁰⁹ The State Department instructed the American ambassador to inform Chamoun that the “U.S. is prepared upon appropriate request” to “send certain combat forces to Lebanon,” but, only if certain pre-conditions were met.⁹¹⁰ These included, filing a complaint before the United Nations alleging “interference from without,” obtaining public support for an American intervention from other Arab states, and agreeing to not to “push his candidacy” for reelection.⁹¹¹

Rather than deterring Chamoun the administration’s message emboldened him. He began laboring to meet its requirements. He convinced Iraq and Jordan to support his claim that UAR agents were machinating the disturbances in his country. He also had his ambassador to the U.N. lodge a complaint alleging that the UAR was fermenting unrest in Lebanon. In response the U.N. adopted a Swedish resolution which established an observation group, UNOGIL, to investigate whether “illegal infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or other material across” was taking place.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* See also: Telephone Call from Ambassador Caccia, May 14, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 8, folder “Memorandum Telephone Calls April Jun2 ’58-July 31 ’58 (2),” DDEL ; Draft of Message to the Embassy in Beirut, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “Memorandum Telephone Calls-White House April ’58-July 31 ’58 (2),” DDEL.

⁹⁰⁹ Although a pre-existing joint British-American military working group did begin preparing military contingency plans. See: Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 60.

⁹¹⁰ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, May 13, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 49.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.* On not running, see also: Memorandum of Conversation, May 13, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 47. To make the message clear Dulles instructed the ambassador to inform Chamoun that “he does not have a blank check” for “sending of Western forces.” See: Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, June 10, 1958, Ann Whitman File, International Series, folder “Lebanon (2),” DDEL.

⁹¹² Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 107.

In June UNOGIL arrived in Lebanon. The mission was supervised by three international dignitaries, Galo Plaza, the former President of Ecuador, Rajeshwar Dayal, an Indian diplomat, and Odd Bull, a Norwegian Major General, who the press delighted in referring to as “Queer Steer.” UNOGIL teams soon began patrolling the border. They could not, however, verify Chamoun’s accusations. But this was far from conclusive. For security reasons ONOGIL only patrolled the portions of the border which remained under Lebanese government control. This amounted to a mere 18 kilometers of the 324 kilometer long border. The group could, and did, ask rebel groups to inspect other portions of the border, but these requests were, often, denied. More frustratingly, UNOGIL teams only regularly patrolled during day light hours. This led Chamoun to sneer that the group spent “their time in social clubs at night” instead of patrolling the border.⁹¹³

Despite the group’s findings Chamoun again asked the administration whether it would intervene?⁹¹⁴ This prompted much discussion. Policymakers again felt like they had no good options. As the Secretary of State elucidated, if the administration responded there would be “a wave of anti-Western sentiment” which would wash “away our friends in Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and turn the Lebanese government against us” and if the administration “did not respond,” Dulles continued, “we would get the same results less abruptly in the Arab countries.”⁹¹⁵ There were also other reasons for and against intervening. Against was the fact that officials had begun to lose confidence

⁹¹³ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 107 ; Memorandum of a Conversation, June 30, 1958, *FRUS*, vol. 11, 185-90.

⁹¹⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, June 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 133.

⁹¹⁵ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 18, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 153.

in Chamoun. His military had proved incapable of dealing with the revolt and he refused to fire the general who oversaw these dismal efforts.⁹¹⁶ In favor of interventions was how other nations would interpret American inaction. Secretary Dulles predicted that if the United States did not come to Lebanon's aid its "friends and enemies" would believe that the United States was "unwilling to come to the aid of its declared ally and friend, and that it had capitulated to Nasser."⁹¹⁷ The "effect on our friends in the countries peripheral to the Arab world," in particular, Dulles continued, "would be very bad" as well. It could cause the United States to lose the "whole periphery of the Soviet Union," along with, Sudan, Libya, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan.⁹¹⁸

In the end Dulles concluded that the United States had "little or no choice, even though every alternative is 'wrong.'" The administration "would have to fulfill our commitment" to Chamoun.⁹¹⁹ "The losses of doing nothing would be worse than the losses from action."⁹²⁰ If the Lebanese President requested assistance, the administration would provide it. Still administration officials hoped to avoid this eventuality. It "put

⁹¹⁶ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 136. See also: Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, April 18, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 23 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, March 5, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 16 ; Memorandum of a Conversation, June 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 136.

⁹¹⁷ Special National Intelligence Estimate, June 5, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 94-95.

⁹¹⁸ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 22, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 166-7 ; Memorandum of a Conversation, June 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 173; Memorandum of a Conversation, June 18, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 153 ; Memorandum of Luncheon Conversation, July 7, 1958, Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, DDEL. See also: Memorandum of Conversation, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 218-26.

⁹¹⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 137.

⁹²⁰ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder "State Department 1958)May-Aug) (4)," DDEL ; Memorandum of Conversation, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 211-15.

every possible pressure on the Lebanese to solve this matter themselves.”⁹²¹ It also encouraged its allies in Jordan and Iraq to assist Chamoun.⁹²²

The only thing the administration did not consider doing was allowing Nasser to broker a solution and the leader of the UAR did offer to do so. Via an intermediary Nasser offered to “use his influence with the opposition leaders” to convince them to allow Chamoun to serve out his term, if, the administration convinced Chamoun to not run for reelection, appointed General Chehab as Prime Minister, and granted amnesty to the rebels.⁹²³ Nasser’s offer fell on death ears. Administration officials held Nasser responsible for what was occurring. It was “very clear,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated, that “the UAR is arming partisans in Lebanon.”⁹²⁴ Nasser’s offer to mediate, Secretary Dulles concluded, was only an attempt “to induce us to join with him in advocating” an “arrangement which would” white-wash his intervention, benefit the opposition, and place an American “seal of respectability upon” his attack on the “legally constituted Lebanese authorities.”⁹²⁵

In the meantime events in Lebanon come to a head. The impetus came not from the United States or from Nasser, but from Jordan. In late June, King Hussein

⁹²¹ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 18, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 153.

⁹²² Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, June 15, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 139.

⁹²³ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, May 20, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, 69.

⁹²⁴ Memorandum for the Record of the State-Joint Chiefs of staff Meeting, May 16, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 59. See also: Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, May 11, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 37.

⁹²⁵ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, June 5, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 1, 92. Although the administration did pass the offer onto the Lebanese. But they only did so “as matter of loyalty to Lebanon and not because we endorse it.” See: Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, June 11, 1958, *FRUS*, vol. 11, 108 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, June 11, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 110-11 ; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Lebanon, June, 10, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, International Series, Box 37, folder “Lebanon (3),” DDEL.

uncovered a conspiracy. Military officers, who opposed the union with Iraq and were sympathetic to Nasser and Arab nationalism, were planning to overthrow the monarch.⁹²⁶ Before reacting the King searched for assistance. He turned first to the United States. He asked administration officials if they would consider providing military assistance if he requested it.⁹²⁷ He also appealed for assistance to his Arab Federation ally, Iraq.

The Iraqi government responded first. It ordered its 20th Infantry brigade to deploy and assist the King. As one historian has written, however, this “measure taken for Hussein’s preservation” instead “became the means of destroying his would be preservers.”⁹²⁸ Unbeknownst to either the Iraqis or to King Hussein, a Free Officers Movement had formed in the Iraqi military. These disillusioned officers sought to overthrow the pro-western Iraqi government. The order to deploy the 20th Infantry brigade provided them with a unique opportunity to do so. The deployment brought the unit within sight of the capital. The officers did not let this opportunity pass. As the brigade neared the capital sympathetic officers ordered their men to occupy key positions in the city, including the royal palace. Upon arriving at the palace the troops opened fire, killing the King and the Crown Prince. Jubilant crowds mutilated the Crown Prince’s body, drug it through the street, and hung it outside the Defense

⁹²⁶ Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, June 30, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 294-96 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 11, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 298.

⁹²⁷ Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 300.

⁹²⁸ Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*, 219.

Ministry.⁹²⁹ Across town Iraq's pro-western Prime Minister, Nuri al-Said, awoke to the sound of gunfire. He fled. Later, however, a frenzied mob caught sight of him, reportedly disguised as a woman. What exactly occurred next is unclear. Either the Prime Minister shot himself or members of the crowd did so, regardless Nuri al-Said was dead and so too were American hopes for a pro-west Iraq.

News of the coup sent shockwaves reverberating throughout the Middle East. After receiving word a frenzied Camille Chamoun officially requested "US military intervention in Lebanon within 48 hours."⁹³⁰ In Jordan King Hussein assumed control of the Arab Union and contemplated marching on Baghdad.⁹³¹ After receiving intelligence from the British indicating that the UAR was planning a revolt, he too requested American and British intervention.⁹³²

American officials' reaction bordered on panic. They feared a Nasserist tidal wave was poised to engulf the region. Nasser, they believed, was directing these disturbances from Cairo. The Jordanian conspiracy, the American ambassador stated,

⁹²⁹ Meeting at the White House with Congressional Leaders, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder "Middle East-Lebanon (1)," DDEL.

⁹³⁰Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 20, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder "State Department 1958 (May-August) (4)," DDEL ; Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 208 ; Briefing Notes by the Director of Central Intelligence Dulles, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 309 ; Telephone Call to the President, July 18, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder "Memorandum Telephone Call-White House April 1 '58-July 31 '58 (1)," DDEL.

⁹³¹ Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 20, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder "State Department 1958 (May-August) (4)," DDEL ; Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, 299-301 ; Richie Owendale, "Great Britain and the Anglo-American Invasion of Jordan and Lebanon in 1958," *The International History Review*, XVI, no. 2 (May 1994), 291.

⁹³² Memorandum of a Conversation with the President, July 16, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 308-9 ; Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 16, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 312-13

“undoubtedly” originated from the UAR.⁹³³ “Nasser and the UAR leaders,” a Special National Intelligence Estimate concluded, were exploiting “the Lebanese crisis to promote the cause of radical pan-Arab unity.”⁹³⁴ In Iraq “the real authority behind the Government,” Dulles stated, was Nasser.⁹³⁵ And the Egyptian leader’s ambitions, officials feared, reached beyond just Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Nasser, the Secretary maintained, would not be satisfied until he achieved “at least a truncation of Israel and the overthrow of” the “present governments in Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunis, Libya, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, etc” and replaced them with “his stooges.”⁹³⁶ “Kuwait, the brightest star in the U.K. oil galaxy,” Dulles feared, was also in the “balance.”⁹³⁷ What was occurring, Dulles concluded, “looks like a plot by Nasser to take over the whole thing,” to take over the entire Middle East.⁹³⁸

⁹³³ Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 11, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 298.

⁹³⁴ Special National Intelligence Estimate, June 5, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 96. See also: Discussion at the 368th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “368th,” DDEL ; Discussion at the 369th Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “369th,” DDEL ; Meeting at the White House with Congressional Leaders, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder “Middle East-Lebanon (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference, 14 July 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department 1958)May-Aug) (4),” DDEL.

⁹³⁵ Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL. See also: Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 20, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-69, vol. 12, 86 ; Discussion at 368th Meeting of the National Security Council, June 3, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “368th,” DDEL ; Briefing Notes, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder “Middle East, Lebanon (1),” DDEL.

⁹³⁶ Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, DDEL ; Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 110.

⁹³⁷ Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with the President, 20 July 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department 1958 (May-August) (4),” DDEL.

⁹³⁸ Telephone Call from Ambassador Lodge, July 14, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone, Calls Series, Box 8, folder “Memo Telephone Calls June 2 ’58-Aug 31 ’58 (2),” DDEL. See also:

And there was, administration officials believed, a strong chance he could do so. Nasser, they believed, was exploiting the Arab public's irrational emotionalism.⁹³⁹ "Nasser, like Hitler before him," Dulles hyperventilated, "has the power to excite emotions and enthusiasm."⁹⁴⁰ The Egyptian leader was, Eisenhower complained, appealing to "the largely illiterate populations in the region" and winning their "enthusiastic, even idolatrous, support."⁹⁴¹ In a meeting with British officials the two allied proclaimed that "Arab mass opinion," has been "been captured by Nasser" who has exploiting it to further his ambitions.⁹⁴² The Egyptian leader has, the Secretary

Memorandum of the Record of a Meeting, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 210 ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 213 ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder, "State Department -1958 (May -Aug) (4)," DDEL ; Memorandum of Discussion at the 374th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 31, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 128 ; Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to Secretary of State Dulles, March 24, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 53 ; Meeting at the White House with Congressional Leaders, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder "Middle East-Lebanon (1)," DDEL ; Telephone Call to Ambassador Lodge, July 17, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 8, folder "Memorandum Telephone Calls June 2 '58 - July 31 '58 (3)," DDEL ; Telephone Call from Senator Knowland, July 16, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 8, folder "Memorandum Telephone Calls June 2 '58 - July 31 '58 (3)," DDEL ; Memorandum for the Record, July 14, 1958, Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, DDEL.

⁹³⁹ For more examples of administration officials asserting that Arabs were irrational and emotional during this period see: Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State, February 8, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 417; Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 99 ; Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder "373rd," DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 99 ; Operations Plan for Lebanon, July 31, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 213-16 ; Telegram from the Embassy in the UAR to the Department of State, April 17, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 13, 442 ; Special National Intelligence Estimate, August 12, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 140-141; Memorandum from Near Eastern Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State, December 10, 1957, RG 59, Policy Planning Council, Subject Files, Box 154, folder "Near and Middle East 1957," NA ; Operational Guidance in Respect to Lebanon, June 6, 1957, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 79, DDEL.

⁹⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 99.

⁹⁴¹ Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister MacMillan, July 18, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 330.

⁹⁴² Memorandum of Conversation, July 17, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 76.

concluded, “whipped up Pan-Arabism. Much as Hitler had whipped up Pan-Germanism, as a means of promoting an extension of his own power.”⁹⁴³

While the UAR leader may have been exploiting Arab irrationality, the real beneficiary, administration officials continued to believe, would be the USSR. Nasser, like the people he was manipulating, they maintained, was irrational. The UAR leader, the American ambassador concluded in late 1957, is an “enigmatic character.” He is both “frank and secretive, straightforward and conspiratorial, bold and irresolute, generous and petty, liberal and dictatorial, wise and foolish, dedicated and egotistical—a veritable Dr. Jeckle and Mr. Hyde.”⁹⁴⁴ If the “inner-sanctum of Nasser’s thinking could be located and illuminated,” the ambassador continued, “it would be found to contain more half-formed ideas than well laid plans.”⁹⁴⁵ This irrationality, administration officials believed, would ultimately allow the Soviets to outwit and subjugate Nasser. “The ultimate heir” of Nasser’s conquests, Dulles predicted, would be the USSR.⁹⁴⁶ The Soviets, the Secretary stated, are using “Nasser to displace the pro-Western elements in the Middle East and” move “in on the heels of his downfall and” take “over the area for

⁹⁴³ Memorandum of a Conversation with Prime Minister Daud, June 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (4),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 99 ; Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 99 ; Operations Plan for Lebanon, July 31, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, vol. 13, 213-16.

⁹⁴⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State, August 24, 1957, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 2, folder “State Department – ’57 (Aug-Oct) (3),” DDEL.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁶ Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, DDEL ; Letter from the Secretary of State to President Eisenhower, July 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 110.

themselves.”⁹⁴⁷ “The real authority,” Dulles concluded, “behind Nasser” was “the USSR.”⁹⁴⁸ Nasser, President Eisenhower decisively remarked the day after the Iraqi coup, was “a puppet, even though he probably think know so.”⁹⁴⁹

This racialized thinking prompted the administration to act. The question was how broadly should it act? Should they deploy troops to “save” Lebanon? Lebanon and Jordan? Iraq? Kuwait? Saudi Arabia? All of the above?⁹⁵⁰

In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait officials contemplated intervening, even they did not have these governments’ permission. They entertained such drastic action because they could not, they believed, allow these nations and their vast oil reserves to fall to Nasser and the Soviets.⁹⁵¹ In the end, however, the administration chose not to intervene immediately. As the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs noted, such an action would have provoked “the most adverse political reactions” from the local population

⁹⁴⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, June 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 173-4.

⁹⁴⁸ Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL. The British were also pushing for intervention in the Gulf. See: Douglas Little, “His Finest Hour? Eisenhower, Lebanon and the 1958 Crisis in the Middle East,” *Diplomatic History* (Winter 1996), 46.

⁹⁴⁹ Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 15, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder “Joint Chiefs of Staff (4),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 245. See also: Memorandum of a Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 98 ; Memorandum of a Conversation with Prime Minister Daud, June 25, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, General Correspondence and Memorandum, Box 1, folder “General A-D (4),” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conversation, June 13, 1958, RG 59, Records of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Lebanon Crisis Files, 1958, Box 2, folder “C87 Lebanon Crisis May 1958 (5) folder 1 of 2,” NA.

⁹⁵⁰ The British were pushing for Eisenhower to intervene throughout the region. See: Report of Telephone Call Between the President and Prime Minister MacMillan, July 14, 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, folder “Telephone Calls July ’58,” DDEL ; Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 15, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 12, folder “Joint Chiefs of Staff (4),” DDEL.

⁹⁵¹ Memorandum of Conversation, July 17, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 776-8.

and from the ruling families.⁹⁵² Instead the administration decided to only intervene if these states requested the United States to do so.⁹⁵³ They also moved elements of the 7th fleet to the Persian Gulf to protect the oil fields.⁹⁵⁴

In Iraq the administration never seriously considered intervening, but it was under pressure to do so. The British pressed for western intervention and the Jordanians spoke briefly of intervening themselves. Administration officials, however, had no interest in interceding in Iraq. It, they believed, was a lost cause. They did, however, inform the British that if they wished to proceed they could do so alone.⁹⁵⁵

British and Jordanian officials also pressured the administration to deploy forces to Jordan. British officials repeatedly pressed for U.S. involvement.⁹⁵⁶ So too did the Jordanians, who wished to avoid having to rely on British forces. They did not, the American ambassador relayed, want to suffer the “curse” of a return of “mandate British

⁹⁵² Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree) to Secretary of State Dulles, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 94.

⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 20, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department 1958 (May-August) (4),” DDEL; Little, “His Finest Hour?,” 49.

⁹⁵⁵ Middle East Situation, July 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, folder “Telephone Calls July ’58,” DDEL ; Telephone Call to the President, July 15, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “MTC-WH April ’58-July 31 ’58 (1),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department-1958 (May-Aug) (4),” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 227.

⁹⁵⁶ Report of Telephone Call between the President and Prime Minister MacMillan, July 14, 1958, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, folder “Telephone Calls July ’58,” DDEL. ; Middle East Situation, July 1958, Ann Whitman File, Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, folder “Telephone Calls July ’58,” DDEL ; Memorandum of a Conversation, July 17, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 319 ; Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL ; Telephone Call to the President, July 15, 1958, Papers of John Foster Dulles, Telephone Call Series, Box 12, folder “Memorandum Telephone Call-White House April 1 ’58- July 31 ’58 (1),” DDEL.

troops.”⁹⁵⁷ Administration officials, however, decided against taking action in Jordan, for several reasons. Some of these were practical. As President Eisenhower informed his British allies, they could not obtain Congressional approval for action in Jordan.⁹⁵⁸ In addition, Eisenhower believed, any effort to save Jordan might be “a ‘beau jeste.”⁹⁵⁹ U.S. involvement would also, the director of the USIA warned, be “difficult to justify before world opinion.” King Hussein was “a monarch with no roots in” a country which was an “artificial creation resulting from World War I, with no history.” If the United States stayed “on this wicket,” he judged, “the USSR will beat us to death in public opinion.”⁹⁶⁰ Instead administration officials delegated Jordan’s fate to the British, although, they did pledge to provide them with logistical support.⁹⁶¹

Ultimately the United States would only intervene in Lebanon. The Levant state was different. It, the Secretary of State noted, contained “a large segment” of people who were “on our side.”⁹⁶² It also had “a very strong community” with an “interest in

⁹⁵⁷ Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, July 21, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 361-2. See also: Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL.

⁹⁵⁸ Report of Telephone Call between the President and Prime Minister MacMillan, July 14, 1958, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, folder “Telephone Calls July ’58,” DDEL. See also: Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister MacMillan, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 378.

⁹⁵⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation with the President, July 20, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department – 1958 (May-Aug) (4),” DDEL.

⁹⁶⁰ Memorandum of the 373rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Ann Whitman Files, Papers as President, NSC Series, Box 10, folder “373rd,” DDEL.

⁹⁶¹ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 227 ; Telephone Conversation between Prime Minister MacMillan in London and Secretary of State Dulles in Washington, July 16, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 11, 314-15.

⁹⁶² Telephone Call, July 15, 1958, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, folder “Telephone Calls July 1958,” DDEL.

stability,” that had “commerce and ties with the West.”⁹⁶³ This did not mean that administration officials were without reservations. The Secretary fretted that it was “easy to get ourselves involved” in Lebanon, but could well be “very hard to get out.”⁹⁶⁴ In the end, however, Dulles decided that the United States needed to combat the “flood” of Arab nationalism, which was “running strongly.” To do so it needed to “put up sand bags around positions we must protect—the first group being Israel and Lebanon.”⁹⁶⁵

On July 15th nearly 15,000 U.S. Marines landed on Lebanon’s coast. They encountered little resistance. They, one historian has written, “waded ashore ... among friendly crowds of late afternoon beach-goers and throngs of peddlers hawking everything from hummus to Coca Cola.”⁹⁶⁶ The same day British forces landed in Jordan, in what Lord Hood called a “necessary complement to action in Lebanon.”⁹⁶⁷

U.S. forces remained in Lebanon for three months. They departed in late October. British forces left Jordan the next month. These were small victories. As 1958 bled into 1959 the administration’s Middle Eastern strategy lay in ruins. Nasser’s influence and prestige had reached new heights. He ruled both Egypt and Syria. He, and his policies, enjoyed unprecedented support amongst the Arab masses. The

⁹⁶³ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department – 1958 (May-Aug) (4),” DDEL.

⁹⁶⁴ Memorandum of a Conference with the President, July 14, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department – 1958 (May-Aug) (4),” DDEL.

⁹⁶⁵ Memorandum of a Conference with President Eisenhower, July 23, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-60, vol. 12, 98. See also: Memorandum of Conference with the President, July 20, 1958, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 3, folder “State Department 1958 (May-August) (4),” DDEL.

⁹⁶⁶ Little, “His Finest Hour?,” 27.

⁹⁶⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, July 15, 1958, John Foster Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, DDEL.

conservative governments the Eisenhower administration had wagered on had either been swept away or marginalized. After U.S. forces departed Lebanon, Camille Chamoun ceded power. The new Lebanese government abandoned the United States and again adopted a neutralist foreign policy. In Iraq the bodies of Nuri al-Said, the King, and the Crown Prince lay cold and the new government had close ties to the Iraqi Communist Party. In Jordan King Hussein survived, but was surrounded by unfriendly neighbors. King Saud, the administration's miracle man, had been stripped of power, reduced to a mere figurehead. Nasser and Arab nationalism had washed away the administration's foundation of sand.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

Was the Eisenhower administration's policy in regards to Arab nationalism an effective one? If one uses the administration's own goals as a benchmark, the answer is clearly no. King Saud, despite brief moments of popularity, never matured into an effective regional leader. By 1957 he failed to lead his own country, let alone the rest of the Arab world. Moreover, the administration did not contain Nasser and the Arab nationalist movement, far from it. By 1958 the Egyptian leader had expanded his reach to Syria and he and his policies enjoyed unprecedented popularity throughout the region.

Yet, does this mean that these policies were wrong or a failure? This answer depends upon which criteria you utilize in defining success. If you place value on American economic growth, the administration's policies could be defined as a success. Eisenhower's decision to promote King Saud deepened the extant American commitment to the Saudi monarchy. This continued commitment helped secure for the United States a cheap and stable supply of petroleum, which helped propel American economic growth throughout much of the rest of the century. Countless common Americans benefitted from this and also from the cheap and abundant gasoline and home heating oil the commitment also provided.

If you place value on moral or ideological consistency in America's foreign policy, however, the Eisenhower administration's policies appear far less successful. Eisenhower administration officials aligned the nation with unresponsive, and in many

cases, repressive Middle Eastern regimes. They also opposed a force in Arab nationalism which desired nothing more than freedom from foreign interference and to create responsive local governments.

The perspective one adopts also influences the answer one reaches. When viewed from the perspective of American business interests the Eisenhower administration's policies were prudent and wise. They secured—relative—political stability in the Arab world. This stability abetted American corporate expansion. The administration's policies also appear successful when viewed through the eyes of Arab elites. The administration's decisions helped these groups retain their preeminent position in society.

Viewed from other perspectives, however, the policies appear very different. As viewed by reform-minded Arabs, American support of conservative or reactionary regimes robbed them of the meaningful sovereignty and the responsive governments they desired. Interrogating the administration's policies through the eyes of religious conservatives produces a similar negative appraisal. Many religious conservatives, particularly in Saudi Arabia, resented the close American-Saudi partnership that President Eisenhower's policies helped produced. They also disliked the growing influence of American culture and ideas that this partnership helped catalyze.

Adjudicating success or failure also depends upon what point in time you render your judgment from. A person rendering an opinion in the late 1990s would likely have viewed these policies as quite successful. During these years the American economy ran hot, awash in cheap oil, with gasoline prices south of a dollar a gallon. Someone

viewing these same policies on September 12th 2001 might have viewed them very differently. 15 of the 19 terrorists who flew airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon hailed from Saudi Arabia. Many of whom cited the United States' continued support of the Saudi monarchy as a primary reason for their actions.⁹⁶⁸ Contemporary realities effects how one interrogates the success or failure of past policies. This is no different in 2011 than it was in 1990 or 2001.

For these reasons I have decided not to deliver a final verdict on the Eisenhower administration's encounter with Arab nationalism. Rendering judgment is not why I wrote this book. I wrote it in order to accomplish four goals.

In this book I have sought to demonstrate that culture decisively influences the making of foreign policy. As Andrew Rotter has noted, there is still a tendency within the field to treat policymakers as "just policy wonks who shed their" cultural beliefs "like raincoats at the office door." Nothing, I hope this work has demonstrated, could be further from the case. Cultural beliefs affect everyone. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz has elucidated, human beings are "incomplete or unfinished animals who complete" themselves "through culture."⁹⁶⁹ Human behavior is "only very broadly controlled by genetic programs or models—intrinsic sources of information." As a result the "particular pattern" a human being's "behavior takes is guided predominantly by cultural rather than" by "genetic templates."⁹⁷⁰ We are all, in other words, cultural animals. It can be no other way. As Geertz lectured, human beings without cultural

⁹⁶⁸ Johnston, David, "Two years later: 9/11 Tactics; Official Says Qaeda Recruited Saudi Hijackers to Strain Ties," September 9, 2003 *The New York Times*.

⁹⁶⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 49.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 217-218.

beliefs “would be unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental basket cases.”⁹⁷¹ No matter what policymakers, or the people who study them, may believe, they are no different. To again quote Andrew Rotter, “even the sophisticated men and woman at the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon” are “affected by long-standing images of the others with whom they” deal.⁹⁷²

I have also sought to establish that culture, state action, and national identity coexist in a complex and entangled relationship. As this work has shown, foreign events affect domestic culture and identity formation. Throughout American history this nation’s encounter with Arab peoples, in both reality and cultural imagination, have helped forge a national “civilized” identity. During the 1940s and 50s the rise of totalitarian powers in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia helped fashion a new understanding of religion in American thought and culture. Conversely, I have shown, that culture and national identity shaped America’s policy abroad. During the 1950s racialized assumptions about Arab peoples compelled the Eisenhower administration into opposing Arab nationalism and American beliefs about religion prompted the administration to promote King Saud as a regional leader.

Past works, like Robert Dean’s *Imperial Brotherhood*, Thomas Borstelmann’s *The Cold War and the Color Line*, Kristen Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood*,

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁹⁷² Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*, xx. Some may disagree with this assertion, insisting that human beings possess agency, that it is possible to exercise objectivity, that humans can overcome or step outside of their culture. This contention, however, fails to appreciate that the very concepts of “agency” and “objectivity” are themselves cultural-intellectual productions of the western tradition. They are beliefs which grew out of a culture which assumed the existence of an omnipotent perspective and free will. They are, in other words, the cultural-intellectual byproducts of a Christian worldview.

Seth Jacobs' *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam*, Jason Parker's *Brother's Keeper*, and Andrew Rotter's *Comrades at Odds*, have all demonstrated how American culture influenced the making of American foreign policy. Other works, such as Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* and Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light*, have established how American interactions with foreign peoples and governments influenced domestic culture.⁹⁷³ None of these works, however, has fully captured the richly intertwined nature of this relationship between culture, foreign policy, and national identity formation. This work endeavors to do so.

“Stand Up and Be Counted” also seeks to fashion a contribution to the growing literature on religion and U.S. foreign policy. During recent years historians, such as Seth Jacobs and William Inboden, have elucidated how American understandings of religion influenced U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union and also towards Vietnam.⁹⁷⁴ No historian has yet, however, successfully demonstrated how domestic beliefs about religion effected policy in the Middle East. Some works have probed the fringes. Matthew Jacobs' article “The Peril and Promise of Islam” and Nathan Citino's *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC* have both demonstrated how Americas' views of Islam

⁹⁷³ Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) ; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) ; Kristen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) ; Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam* ; Rotter, *Comrades at Odds* ; Jason C. Parker, *The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) ; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) ; Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press).

⁹⁷⁴ Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man* ; William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-60: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

effected policy.⁹⁷⁵ Yet neither of these works has investigated how these perceptions of Islam flowed from Americans' larger beliefs about religion. "Stand Up and Be Counted" endeavors to change that.

Finally, this work strives to reveal how the events described in this book continue to define the contours of the Islamic world today. Many of the conservative governments the Eisenhower administration chose to support, and which succeeding American administrations continued to support, rule today. The legacy of the Arab nationalist movement is equally evident. Many of the governments and rulers in the Middle East can trace their genesis back to the Arab nationalist movement and to the forces described in this book. The encounter with Arab nationalism, in short, continues.

⁹⁷⁵ Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC* ; Jacobs, "The Perils and Promise."

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