

ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia and the United States' Plan for Middle East Defense

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The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration's Cold War concerns shaped the United States' policy in the Middle East during the 1950s. Relations with Saudi Arabia proved critical as the U.S. pursued its interests in the region. At first, the administration did not recognize the importance of Saudi Arabia and later it over evaluated the kingdom's significance. Saudi Arabia proved decisive in the politics of the region throughout Eisenhower's time in office. This study examines the U.S.-Saudi relationships, the environment in which it developed, and results that were derived from it. Primary sources, published and unpublished, as well as secondary sources in the form of monographs and periodicals were utilized in the research of this study.

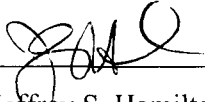
Saudi Arabia and the United States' Plan for Middle East Defense

by

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A Thesis

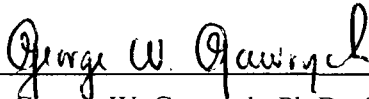
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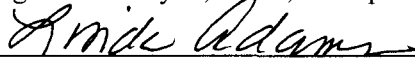
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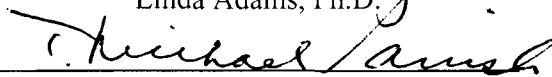
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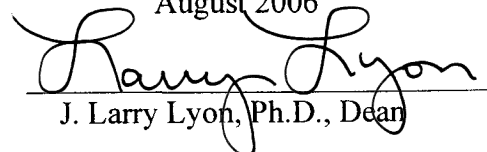
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	v
Acknowledgments	vi
Chapter	
1. Historical Background to the U.S.-Saudi Relations and Middle East Security	1
2. The United States' First Moves toward the Baghdad Pact	11
The Administration's Final Effort to Implement the Middle East Defense Organization	11
The Administration Looks to Alternatives to MEDO and Egypt	19
United States Turns to the Northern Tier	22
The United States Still Included Egypt in Northern Tier Plans	29
Nasr No Longer Considered for Role in the Baghdad Pact	32
Saudi Arabia Considered for the Baghdad Pact	35
3. Saudi Arabia Rebuffs the Baghdad Pact	38
Saudi Arabia's Perception of U.S. Loyalty Pushed It Away the Pact	39
Saudi Arabia's Fear of the Hashemites and its Impact on the Baghdad Pact and U.S. Relations	45
Domestic Pressure Pushes Saud from the U.S.	51
Saudi Arabia Moves to Egypt for Mutual Defense	53
Saudi Arabia's Efforts to Weaken the Baghdad Pact	60
Saudi Arabia Manages to Avoid Severing Relations with the U.S.	65
4. Rapprochement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia	70
A Move in U.S. Policy to Saudi Arabia	70
The U.S. Desire to Utilize Saud	71
Attempt to Split Nasr and Saud	77
Saud Grows Disillusioned with Nasr	83
Rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iraq	91
U.S. Performance in the Suez Crisis Brings Saud to the U.S.	93
5. The U.S. Moves to the Eisenhower Doctrine	96
Eisenhower and Dulles Look Away from the Baghdad Pact	96
The U.S. Considers Bilateral Relationships to Oppose Soviet Advances in the Region	105
The U.S. Seeks Saud as an Indigenous Champion of the Eisenhower Doctrine	108
Saud Champions U.S. policy throughout the Middle East	113
Saud's Weakness Exposed	119

Evaluation of Saud's Leadership Performance	125
U.S.-Saudi Relations Under Faisal's Leadership	128
6. Conclusion	131
Bibliography	137

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
CASCO	California Standard Oil Company
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ESS	Egypt-Syria-Saudi Arabia Pact
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MEDO	Middle Eastern Defense Organization
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study will examine the developing relationship of the United States and Saudi Arabia from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration's first effort to champion mutual defense in the Middle East through the implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, chronicling Washington's developing estimation of Saudi Arabia and its importance to achieving U.S. aims in the region. This study will also analyze the impact of regional politics on the relationship and explore the Saudi leadership's estimation of itself and how the U.S. could facilitate Saudi Arabia's own ambitions in the Middle East.

From the beginning of its first term, the Eisenhower administration understood that Saudi Arabia was strategically important to achieve the United States' aims in the Middle East, of which opposing communist advance was paramount. Initially, however, the administration did not appreciate the depth of Saudi Arabia's significance in the region and never pressured the Saudi leadership into joining its initial concepts for Middle Eastern mutual defense. Only after its initial schemes for regional defense were thwarted by Riyadh did the United States appreciate how important Saudi Arabia was to obtaining its objectives.

When the administration introduced a new strategy for regional defense, the Eisenhower Doctrine, the U.S. aggressively pursued Saudi Arabia to embrace and champion the administration's policy, which it did. Saudi Arabia, even though it was

significant in Middle East politics, was unable to win the region over to the U.S. policy. Due to the belated timing of the rapprochement, many of the benefits, such as regional stability, that could have been garnered from a Saudi backed Baghdad Pact, were not achieved in the Eisenhower Doctrine. A very significant benefit though was derived from the U.S.-Saudi collaboration on the Eisenhower Doctrine. This was the solidifying of the U.S.-Saudi relationship. The relationship that was forged in this period had become strong because of both nations' desire to contain communism and the increasingly important, yet secondary concern for Saudi oil. The bilateral relations that developed during the period examined in this study provided the alliance with the flexibility it needed to endure, allowing both partners to flirt in fields loathed by the other without threatening the long term relationship.

Historical Background to U.S.-Saudi Relations and Middle East Security

By the 1950s the United States already had a long history of cooperation with Saudi Arabia. Just one year after officially establishing his kingdom in 1932, King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud awarded a concession to develop his kingdom's oil resources to the American company Standard Oil of California.¹

In doing this, he looked past the British, who had made a significant contribution to the king's consolidation of power in Arabia. (This concession would be joined by several other U.S. oil companies in forming the Arabian American Oil Company [ARAMCO] in 1944). Although both Japanese and German corporations offered the Saudis more favorable offers, Abd al-Aziz turned to the California oil company because

¹Texas Oil Company joined Standard Oil of California the following year and the company was renamed Caltex. For more on early U.S. strategic interest in Saudi Arabia see Anthony Cordesman, *The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 92.

he believed an alliance with the U.S. offered the best means for preserving the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia.² The king strategically decided to utilize his kingdom's oil as a cement to bind his kingdom to the U.S. Ibn Saud considered this an essential move because Saudi Arabia found herself surrounded by the British during this period. To the north the U.K was the patron of the Hashemites in Jordan and Iraq,³ whom the Saudis had successfully ejected from the Hijaz a decade earlier. On their eastern boarder, the British also loomed, protecting the small Gulf States.⁴ The small emirates of Oman and Aden (both relied on Britain for their defense which gave significant influence to the U.K.) to the south sealed Saudi Arabia's virtual encirclement.

Prior to World War II, the U.S. government hesitated to officially enter into the politics of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. In the period from the signing of the oil concession up to the war, the Roosevelt administration left it to the private American oil companies and the British Foreign Office to forge policy in regard to Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula. The war, however, dramatically altered Washington's perspective on the kingdom. New realities concerning petroleum surfaced during the war, which increased the significance of Saudi Arabian oil. These new realities were mainly related to the increased demand for oil by the global market, and they prompted the Roosevelt

²John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 196-199 and Benson Lee Grayson, *Saudi-American Relations*. Washington: University Press of America, 1982, p. 8 and *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939*, vol. 4. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 824-827.

³Britain had created both kingdoms following World War II. In Iraq the British military intervened three times in order to assure the Iraqi monarchy's hold on power. In Jordan the British were very active in training the small Jordanian army as well as supplying the financially desperate government annual aid. The British used their influence in both countries to shape policy in both countries so it would conform to London's interests.

⁴David W. Lesch, ed., *The Middle East and the United States*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 302-303.

administration to reconsider its approach to Saudi Arabia. The accelerated wartime demand and indications about possible declines in domestic reserves had stirred the administration to view the oil resources of Saudi Arabia as one Roosevelt aide would later term, “a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes of world history.”⁵

In fact, Saudi Arabia was deemed of such importance that it needed to be protected by direct U.S. involvement and not left to even Washington’s closest ally, Britain. Not only was the war weakening Britain’s ability to secure the region, but additionally, to some extent, London’s interests in Saudi Arabia began to stand at odds with the administration’s long term designs. Also, the war in the Pacific had made Arabia a strategic military concern as well. In 1943 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that Saudi Arabia was “vital for the defense of the United States of America.”⁶ This made ARAMCO’s ongoing efforts to help Ibn Saud qualify for the American Lend-Lease fund easier. Funding soon began to reach the Saudi kingdom, which was desperate for the assistance because oil revenues from the fledgling industry, which had just recently begun impacting the Saudi economy, had slacked because of war-induced difficulties in production and exportation.⁷ In 1944, additional minor U.S. aid was allocated to Riyadh in return for granting the U.S. Air Force basing rights at the Dhahran Air Base.

⁵ “Draft Memorandum to Truman,” Aug. 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945*, vol. 8. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 45-48.

⁶ “The Secretary of State to the Lend-Lease Administrator,” 9 Jan. 1943. *Ibid.*, 1943. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 854-855.

⁷ Madawi Al-Rashid, *A History of Saudi Arabia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 94.

On the heels of the basing agreement, the first major meeting between the two nations took place in February 1945 when Franklin Roosevelt and Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud met on the USS Quincy in the Great Bitter Lake.⁸ Ibn Saud welcomed the meeting because he desired to improve his standing in Washington. The U.S. was important to the king because it offered protection from British ambitions and because the advantages his concession with ARAMCO brought the kingdom. ARAMCO increased production in 1944 to 7.8 million barrels that brought in revenues of approximately eight million dollars to the Saudi government.⁹ ARAMCO also made direct contributions to Saudi Arabian society. It was responsible for almost all of the improvements in infrastructure during the 1940s from building roads and ports to improving education and health. By World War II most departments of the Saudi bureaucracy relied on the oil company in some manner in order to function properly.

Roosevelt, for his part, hoped the meeting would assure Ibn Saud of Washington's long range interest in his kingdom, so as to prevent the British, who were behaving aggressively in the region, from encroaching on its position in Saudi Arabia.¹⁰ The president's intense five and one half hours with the Saudi king was extremely cordial and beneficial to both leaders.¹¹ Roosevelt also sought to obtain the king's cooperation in

⁸ William Eddy, *F.D.R. Meets Ibn Saud* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East), 1954.

⁹ Roy Lebkicher, *ARAMCO Handbook* (Netherlands: Arabian American Oil Company, 1960), p. 171.

¹⁰ "Eddy to Secretary of State," 3 Mar. 1945. *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 8 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 7-9.

¹¹ "The Minister in Saudi Arabia to the Secretary of State," 12 Feb. 1945. *Ibid.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 847.

seeking a settlement in Palestine between the Arabs and Israelis.¹² The President attempted to allay Arab fears by promising to consult with the Arabs on any resolution, that the West would not impose a solution on them. Ibn Saud though was staunchly opposed to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which obviously precluded his assistance in mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict, since a homeland was a corner stone of U.S. resolutions to the problem.

Following the summit, the administration decided that addressing Saudi Arabia's economic problems was essential to maintain the U.S. dominant position in Saudi Arabia. Secretary of State Dean Acheson drew up a loan package to assist Saudi Arabia financially until its oil royalties returned to their pre-war levels.¹³ In order to assure Ibn Saud's acceptance of the package, the Americans went as far as including \$300,000 to Ibn Saud's private accounts in New York in addition to providing the king with a Douglas DC-3 aircraft and permitting Saudi Arabia to open an official mission in the U.S.¹⁴

When Harry Truman became president, Ibn Saud pursued the U.S. to make a formal alliance because of his fears of King Abd Allah's regional ambition for Trans Jordan. Ibn Saud failed to obtain a formal alliance and instead accepted a less official mutual defense agreement with the U.S. Truman attempted to reassure Ibn Saud of this new arrangement and of America's commitment to the security of Saud's regime by

¹² "Landis to Roosevelt," 17 Jan. 1945. Ibid. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 680-682.

¹³ "Byrnes to Eddy," 4 Jan. 1946. Ibid. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 999 and Aaron David Miller, *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 131-149.

¹⁴ Anthony Cave Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), p. 119.

writing him a letter in October 1951.¹⁵ Truman's letter promised that the United States would use its military to defend Arabia from any perceived threat to its territorial integrity.

Throughout the post-World War II years, oil production continued to increase from 21.3 million barrels in 1945 to 308 million barrels in 1953, as did American economic activity in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.¹⁶ By the time Eisenhower came to office, the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf contained America's largest foreign investment.

Following the Second World War the Soviet Union was perceived as a direct threat to the oil fields of Arabia. This threat was a part of a perceived pattern of communist aggression around the globe. The West's main bulwark against Soviet influence in the Middle East was Britain, but the U.K.'s postwar, financial troubles were limiting its effectiveness, and in 1947 the British acknowledged their inability to stave off Soviet pressure in Turkey and Greece and sought assistance.¹⁷ President Truman responded by promising these two nations and any other people world wide who were resisting Soviet pressure financial and military aid, in what became known as the Truman Doctrine. With China falling to the communists in 1949 and the Korean War erupting a year later, the West feared the Middle East would be the next target for the communist movement to attempt to make gains. This prompted interest in creating a mutual security pact in the region. The British attempted to bring Egypt into a mutual security concept

¹⁵ "Letter from the President to King Saud," 5 June 1953. Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/6-253.

¹⁶ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*. (London: Saqi Books, 1998), p. 319.

¹⁷ David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*. (London: Longman, 1991), p. 145-179.

called the Middle East Command (MEC) on behalf of the Americans. London and Washington also envisioned France and Turkey joining the MEC. Cairo, though, refused to join because admission was contingent upon signing an agreement of the basing of British troops in the Suez Canal Zone, and the already unpopular King Farouk could not afford to appear close with the publicly despised British.¹⁸ With Egypt's rejection, the West looked to a new scheme, the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), which would be comprised of Western nations along with Egypt, and Turkey and would seek to include the other Arab states in some form of participation.

The U.S. had been supporting the MEDO scheme, which had originally been proposed by the British starting in the late 1940s, as a means to directly involve the U.S. in the region's defense. The Western nations determined that MEDO would be a planning and liaison organization only and would not be attached to NATO. It was to facilitate co-ordination between the two distance anchors of western policy: Turkey and Pakistan. In this scheme, Egypt served as the essential pivot of the Arab region between the two countries. MEDO was designed to counter the Soviet Union threat, both militarily and ideologically. The Truman administration had accepted the plan, but the 1952 overthrow of King Farouk in Egypt had stalled the plan's implementation. The pact was to be led by the U.S., U.K., France, Turkey, and Egypt. Cairo was to be the only leading Arab member, with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia as associate members. King Saud and the other potential associate members expressed interest in joining the agreement because of fear of Soviet aggression.

¹⁸ "The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary of State," 15 Aug. 1951. *FRUS, 1951* vol. 5 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), 372-375. "Draft memorandum Prepared by John Ferguson of the Policy Planning Staff," *Ibid., 1951* vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), p 552-554.

None of the rulers of the Arab states which had the potential to enter the proposed league felt they had the political strength though to enter a pact with the U.S. and U.K. while anti-imperial sentiment raged across the Middle East.¹⁹ This fact reinforced to policy planners in Washington the need to gain Egypt's acceptance of an agreement if the U.S. was 1) to achieve active cooperation of the Arab capitals in the West, and 2) to succeed in its attempt to find a solution to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute (Britain's close association with the U.S. in the face of the unresolved Suez dispute created a general antipathy to Washington in the region).²⁰ When the Free Officers overthrew the monarchy and the Revolutionary Command Council seized power in Egypt, the leading members of MEDO decided in March 1953 to postpone plans to move ahead with the defense pact in hopes that the new regime might develop a favorable attitude toward the security proposal. Egypt was viewed as critical to the plan because no other nation could match 1) Egypt's position as leader in the Arab world, 2) its strategic facilities and assets, and 3) its role as a cultural and religious center.²¹

The new government in Cairo, shortly after coming to power, made it clear that it would oppose joining a security pact with Britain and other western powers until the Suez basing dispute was resolved. Administration officials hoped that Egypt would be induced to join MEDO earlier by releasing a long-promised military aid package, although many U.S. diplomats in the region were pessimistic as to the impact of an assistance program. The consensus among these diplomats was that shipments of equipment would need to be

¹⁹ "Negotiating Paper Prepared in the Department of State," 4 Jan. 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984) p. 168-170.

²⁰ "Prospects for an Inclusive Middle East Defense Organization," 17 Mar. 1952, *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²¹ "Secretary of State to Department of State (from London)," 27 June 1952, *Ibid.*, p. 252-253.

coupled with an agreement with Britain on Suez in order to get Naguib to consider a defense agreement with the West.²²

In the months following the July 1952 Revolution in Egypt, an agreement on MEDO was becoming more likely. The Truman administration warmed to the MEDO proposal in the wake of the July 1952 revolution in Egypt. The new government headed by General Muhammad Naguib had shifted its stance slightly on MEDO and secretly informed Washington that it would be willing to join MEDO in exchange for economic and military aid.²³ Yet the U.S. continued to insist that it could not assume the complete defense burden for the entire region, which Truman still at that point believed to be of a greater national interest to Britain than it was to the U.S.

In Truman's Middle East policy, Saudi Arabia was completely overlooked for a leadership role. The Truman administration's regional aspirations were all channeled through Egypt and thus became bogged down in the final days of Truman's presidency, as Egypt began distancing itself from the Western power.

²² "Ambassador in Egypt to the Department of State," 21 Oct. 1952. *Ibid.*, p. 252-253.

²³ "The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Egypt," *Ibid.*, p 310-311.

CHAPTER TWO

The United States' First Moves toward the Baghdad Pact

The Administration's Final Effort to Implement the Middle East Defense Organization

During the first decade of the Cold War, the United States' primary objectives in the Middle East were to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining influence in the region while also preventing the Soviets from obtaining control of the area's petroleum supplies. When Eisenhower came to the White House in 1953 he continued many of the Truman administration's policies in the Middle East. He believed the most advantageous means to accomplish these twin objectives was through a mutual defense treaty anchored by Egypt. "We feel that Egypt now has the leadership which could cause Egypt to set an example to the other Arab states, where there has been so much weakness during the past few decades," Dulles stated.¹ In looking to Egypt, the administration attached itself to a long held belief in U.S. foreign policy that Egypt was the key to obtaining consensus in the Arab world. Egypt was essential because it had the largest Arab army. It also was the most populated Arab state that served as a cultural and religious hub of the Arab world.

After only several months into his position as Secretary of State, Dulles prepared a Middle East tour in order to better ascertain the situation in the region and lobby for cooperation with the U.S. This visit would prove to be pivotal to the secretary's

¹ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 12 May 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 19-25.

perception of the region and the means for the U.S. to achieve its objectives there. As preparations for his visit were underway, Egyptian diplomats in Washington confirmed what U.S. intelligence reports had been suggesting since the Revolution Command Council came to power in 1952: Egypt was not inclined to join the contemplated regional defense treaty as it was proposed by the United States.

The new Egyptian regime was hesitant to enter the MEDO defense pact. The regime's reservations to join were primarily due to the domestic situation in that country, as it was still consolidating power. To the Egyptian public, the defense proposal resonated of British domination from which the country had just recently begun to free itself from with the overthrow of the monarchy. The Cairo street at that moment sought to extricate itself further from European control by removing the British troops that remained in the Suez Canal Zone. The last thing many officials in Egypt wanted was to involve themselves in a defense agreement like MEDO in which the British were a principal member.

An informal deal appeared impossible as long as the Anglo-Egyptian dispute persisted over the British basing of troops in the Suez Canal Zone. In an attempt to relieve domestic pressure in Cairo and London, both governments regarded this particular issue as the litmus, testing the strength of their leadership and the prestige of their respective nations. Egypt viewed the removal of British troops as a signal to the rest of the region of its independence and its ability to pursue its own interests. The British, on the other hand, were determined not to lose another inch of their ever-shrinking empire. Winston Churchill's statement in December 1953 represented much of the sentiment in the British parliament "our action will be based on a careful study of the merits of the

problem and the solution will not be dictated either by the violence of our foreign enemies or by the pressure of some of our best friends.”² Churchill believed that he had to appear tough in the Suez Canal dispute in order to convince the Conservative Party in London that the evacuation of the Suez Canal Zone conformed to British interests and prestige.³ Eventually the prime minister would be convinced of the utility of withdraw, but even then he needed to defend that action against a block of Conservatives in the House of Commons called the “Suez group” who vehemently opposed evacuation.⁴ The negotiations had dragged on as neither side was inclined to back down since the conflict had become an issue of honor to both nations. Neither government believed it could afford to appear weak, and therefore, any compromise appeared impossible. This diplomatic impasse obviously worked counter to Washington’s desire to institute a regional defense scheme, as two key members of its proposed alliance were now broiled in a major dispute.

To demonstrate the critical role the U.S. had envisioned for Egypt in regards to its regional plans, Dulles scheduled Cairo as the first destination on his tour. The Secretary of State landed in the Egyptian capital on May 11, 1953. In three successive meetings with Egyptian officials, the State Department’s speculation about MEDO's viability quickly was confirmed. Mahmoud Fawzi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his meeting with Dulles informed the Secretary of State that while Egypt shared in many of Washington’s aspirations for the region, due to the domestic mood, the fledgling regime

² *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1953.

³ Ritchie Owendale, *Britain, the United States and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East*, London: Leicester University Press, p. 76.

⁴ Lord Moran, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966, p. 612-615.

would not be inclined to enter a formal deal with the Western powers, and most certainly not while Britain remained intractable on the Suez basing dispute.⁵

After his discussion with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dulles met with the Egyptian Prime Minister, Muhammad Naguib. Naguib at the time was both consolidating power following the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy and at the same time attempting to keep rivals in his own junta in line. Naguib reiterated Fawzi's message that his own tenuous hold on power precluded Egypt from entering a formal agreement with the United States, claiming he would "lose all of my supporters" if he was to pursue such a regional policy. Naguib did not completely rule out future Egyptian participation with the U.S. in a regional defense system. He alluded to a hope that when his domestic position improved, he could then consider formal cooperation with the administration. Throughout this discussion Naguib attempted to assure Dulles of Egypt's opposition to communism and its commitment to resist Soviet influence in the Middle East.⁶

⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 11 May 1953, 4 pm *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, vol. 9 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984) p. 3-8.

⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 11 May 1953, 5pm Ibid., p. 9-16.

Dulles, for his part, attempted to impress on the Egyptian prime minister, the United States' anti-imperialist credentials, as he revealed U.S. intentions in the area. Dulles made clear that the United States recognized the dynamic situation which existed in the region and said that all U.S. policy was under review. Whatever course of action was finally adopted by the U.S., Dulles asserted, "it will be based on the Communist threat," and it would not be directed against Jews or Arabs. In regards to Washington's obvious petroleum interest in the Middle East, the Secretary of State claimed that even U.S. ambitions in this regard were a result of its Cold War aims. The claim that the U.S. concern in the region was due to the Cold War and not energy needs had considerable credibility because at the time the United States had surplus oil from Venezuela that caused it not to be dependent on the region's valuable deposits. Still, future access to the region's petroleum was certainly important to the U.S. and carried significant influence. Yet, since at the time it did not need oil, the primary aim of the U.S. was to deny it to the Soviet Union, whether the Soviets sought to acquire access by diplomatic or aggressive means.⁷ In a telegram to the State Department summarizing these first meetings with the Egyptians, Dulles concluded he was coming increasingly to feel that the original MEDO proposal no longer effectively addressed the region's present realities, calling MEDO "outdated," as he noted a belief that a better scheme could be found.⁸

Sensing that Egypt was on the verge of embarking on a new policy that would threaten Cairo's close relations with the U.S. and its traditional policies, Dulles abandoned his advocacy of MEDO before his final meeting in Cairo with the Egyptian

⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸ Ibid., p. 17-18.

leadership. Instead, the U.S. Secretary of State pursued a new track and pushed for Egypt to engage in a more general and less public cooperation. Abandoning MEDO was in no way a rash decision and had been a contingency long considered by the administration. For the MEDO defense concept, since its conception, had been met with resistance by many in Egypt. Even King Farouk I was hesitant to join, due to his precarious control of the country. In the last months of his reign he had not been in a position to appear to have too close of ties to Britain and the West.⁹ It seems that this development was an eventuality the administration was hoping it could be stave off by Dulles' visit, but nonetheless, one the U.S. was willing to accept.

Dulles' abandonment of MEDO was a move that had been contemplated in the State Department for several months. Since April the U.S. had been receiving intelligence that Egypt did not intend to join or cooperate in a western driven defense organization, which was further confirmed by public statements made concerning neutrality on April 24.¹⁰ In response to these reports that MEDO might be unworkable, the State Department sent to its Middle East missions a message titled *An Alternative Approach to Middle East Defense Arrangements*.¹¹ A final signal which had suggested to Dulles that it was time to pursue a different course was a conversation that Henry Byroade, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, took part in earlier in the month with Ahmed Hussein, Egypt's Ambassador Designate in Washington. Hussein had said that acceptance of MEDO would be "suicide" for the regime, as the RCC needed

⁹ "Secretary of State to Department of State (from London)," 27 June 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984) p. 251-254.

¹⁰ "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Egypt," 30 Apr. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 363-364.

¹¹ "The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions," 1 May 1953. *Ibid.*, p. 365-369.

to appear to be pursuing nationalistic goals. Hussein reminded his American counterpart that public opinion was the primary force behind Egypt's current regional defense policy. He also repeated his country's opposition to communism. Hussein further illustrated why Egypt thought the agreement was unnecessary, as he pointed out that connections to the West could be more easily obtained by the Arab nations through means such as existing treaties and other less prominent channels.¹² Egypt ruled out coordinating security with the West, because it was not interested in playing a servile role in carrying out Western objectives.¹³ The new regime had higher ambitions.

Apparently the administration had interpreted the tactful and diplomatic approach which Egypt was using to reject MEDO as a sign that Egypt was not completely opposed to a defense pact. It had decided that it would utilize Dulles' visit as the last chance to appeal to Naguib and Nasr to save MEDO, instead of taking the opportunity to introduce a new possible plan for regional security. Yet, going into his final meeting with the Egyptians, Dulles clearly understood the folly of the rescue effort and switched courses.

Even though the prospects for MEDO were apparently fading, Dulles still hoped to see Egypt lead the Arab states in resistance to the Soviet Union no matter the form. This was his agenda when he met with Colonel Gamel Abd Al Nasr, in his final meeting with Egyptian officials. Nasr by this time had become the true source of power in the Egyptian leadership. Dulles shared with Nasr his own misgivings about the MEDO concept. Thus, signally to Nasr that Dulles was considering scrapping the MEDO plan.

¹² "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Affairs," 4 May 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 373-375.

¹³ "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Affairs," 4 May 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 373-375.

He proceeded to tell Nasr that the administration was open to other formulations for a defense accord. The key for Dulles was to obtain Egypt as a driving force behind a defense arrangement of regional allies determined to meet the Soviet threat.¹⁴ No matter the precise formulation, the U.S. desperately sought to oppose the Soviets through a defense alliance. Egypt, Dulles understood, was critical in this effort.

Nasr responded to Dulles' change in tact by assuring the U.S. Secretary that he and Dulles had similar objectives and that Egypt viewed organized defense as essential.¹⁵ Yet, Egyptian and the United States' views on Middle East defense diverged precisely because Egypt sought regional security with other Arab states but under the auspices of the Arab League. This minimized the West's influence and presence. Nasr believed that the U.S. and the United Kingdom's treaties with individual members obviated the need for a defense pact. The West by bilateral means could seek its Cold War aims in a less public and encumbering manner. But at its core, the defense concept Nasr introduced sought to provide Cairo with an even higher profile in the Arab world.¹⁶ Egyptian leaders had made it clear to Dulles that regional security was important, but they considered the greatest communist threat not to be amongst them in the region. Instead, they viewed it as emanating the considerable distance of 5,000 miles away, in Moscow.¹⁷ The great distance between Russia and Egypt served as a large buffer that provided Cairo with a sense of security that gave it the option to rebuff MEDO.

¹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 12 May 1953, Ibid., p. 19-25.

¹⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 12 May 1953, Ibid., p 21.

¹⁶ "Ambassador in Egypt to Department of State," 13 May 1953, Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁷ Gamel Abd Al-Nasser, "My Side of Suez," *The Sunday Times*, 24 June 1962. Sec. Magazine p. 21-22.

Since the State Department was well aware of the unlikelihood of the Egyptians accepting the plan, it seems Dulles should have been prepared with one of the department's alternative defense concepts. So he could offer Nasr a definitive alternative option. Instead, Dulles had nothing to offer and was forced to end the meetings without accomplishing any positive gains in regards to his mutual defense objectives. This failure to achieve a positive outcome led the U.S. to begin pursuing alternatives other than Egypt.

When the Secretary of State left Cairo empty handed, the U.S. felt it had no choice but to pursue a new plan with fresh partners. As Dulles left Egypt, he began the process of scrapping MEDO. The administration started to consider new conceptions that were not dependent on Egypt, for collective security. In a communication back to Washington with Under Secretary of State Walter Smith, Dulles said that MEDO under the current conditions was not feasible and imposing the plan on Egypt in his estimation would be a "complete failure." "MEDO," he concluded, "at the present does not have a chance."¹⁸

The Administration Looks to Alternatives to MEDO and Egypt

Dulles' tour of the region brought him to Saudi Arabia after visits to Israel and Iraq, knowing that the MEDO concept was in doubt. In Riyadh, he attempted to solidify the kingdom's commitment to some form of mutual defense in the Middle East. The secretary was greeted by King Ibn Saud who briefly expressed an interest in Eisenhower's policy of resisting the Soviet Union in the region. But, from there, the discussion turned to Saud's concern about the boundary dispute with Great Britain over

¹⁸ "Ambassador in Egypt to Department of State," 13 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 28.

the Buraimi Oasis. The oasis was a long disputed territory between Saud and the small Persian Gulf states, which the United Kingdom had pledged to defend. Britain, much like its dispute over the Suez, believed it could not make any concessions in order to maintain its prestige. For, London believed that if it did not faithfully defend the Gulf states' claims its integrity would be weakened and similar attempts to chip away at its empire would be attempted world-wide. Ibn Saud also viewed the border dispute as a matter of honor, which he placed an inflated amount of importance on. The king expressed a hope that the U.S. would come to Saudi Arabia's assistance militarily and oppose what Ibn Saud considered military aggression by Britain. Ibn Saud believed that U.S. help in this instance was in accordance with the nature of the U.S.-Saudi relationship and in line with the latest U.S. promises given in President Harry Truman's 1951 letter¹⁹ in which the President guaranteed military protection for Saudi Arabia.²⁰

The focus of Dulles' next meeting that morning with Crown Prince Ibn Abdul Aziz al Saud was very similar to his earlier meeting with the king. The Saudi representatives again dominated the conversation and they focused their entire discussion on the border dispute while questioning Washington's allegiance to its Arab friends.²¹ Finally, the next day his third and final meeting with Saudi officials, this one with Foreign Minister Prince Faisal, was the secretary able to broach the subject of regional

¹⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation, prepared in the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 18 May 1953 9am, *Ibid.*, p. 96-99.

²⁰ The Saudis had taken great consolation in this assurance. This promise by Truman seems to have given Saud confidence to carry out aggressive actions along the nation's borders. While for the Americans the letter was not an active force for formulating Middle East policy. It seems to have been of little consequence as few in the Eisenhower administration seem to be familiar with its existence.

²¹ "Memorandum of Conversation, prepared in the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 18 May 1953 10am, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 99-105.

defense. Dulles communicated the U.S. interest in encouraging collective security because it provided for the most efficient means of regional security and the best mechanism for the distribution of American military aid. Faisal, with his personal sympathy for Nasr and his Pan-Arab ideals, responded by making it clear that Saudi Arabia's first instinct was to seek an Arab approach to collective security. Echoing the sentiments Dulles heard in Cairo, Faisal mentioned that the Arab League had recently decided to execute the Collective Security Pact²² as a means to address its members' security needs.²³ This route, Faisal claimed, would be the track he would advocate for, even though the king was not of the same mind on this issue. This was the extent of the discussion about regional security in Dulles' meetings with the Saudis.

That Dulles did not pursue the topic of collective security deeper with Faisal at this point indicated that the U.S. did not view the kingdom as having a significant role in regional defense. Saudi backing did not seem to warrant the effort that would be required to obtain it. This seems to be due to three conclusions Dulles arrived at during his trip. First, the Saudis had a distinctively insular approach to Middle East affairs. They were deeply engrossed in regional politics, but only to the extent in which they affected the Saudi Kingdom directly. This was evident in their great concern for the Buraimi border dispute and their ongoing rivalry with the Hashemite Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq, which will be more fully discussed later. King Ibn Saud was acutely aware of the

²² The Arab League Collective Security Pact was already in place by the 1950s, but the U.S. and U.K. decided not to encourage it because their influence would be mitigated since as non-Arab nations they would not be permitted as members. Also, they believed that the ALCSP was ineffective due to parochial concerns of its members, which precluded them from gaining the proper appreciation of the Communist threat to the region.

²³ "Memorandum of Conversation, prepared in the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 19 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 105-112.

security threat that the Soviets posed to his kingdom and accordingly was extremely anti-communist. But his opposition to the USSR was born out of a local concern and not from the perspective of the larger ongoing Cold War. Saud was not angling for a larger role as an Arab leader and for now the U.S. would not pursue him to champion its broader containment objectives. Second, it appeared to the U.S. observers, that much like Egypt, there was enormous domestic appeal to Arab nationalism in Saudi Arabia. Due to this fact, the monarchy would be unable to publicly participate in additional coordination with the West. Finally, the State Department was particularly aware of the limitations and diminutive size of the Saudi military. The U.S. dismissed any possibility of Saudi Arabia making significant military contributions to a collective defense scheme, believing them to be rather limited both in terms of manpower and military capabilities. Instead, it categorized Saudi Arabia as merely a beneficiary of the regional defense treaty and not a contributor. This pessimistic analysis of Saudi military capabilities, however, overlooked the burgeoning Saudi oil coffers, which provided the Saudi Arabian defense forces with an excellent opportunity to expand.

Dulles returned to Washington having been rebuffed by Nasr on MEDO. Further more, his meetings with the Saudis convinced the Secretary of State that Saudi Arabia would not serve as a suitable replacement for Egypt. His tour of the Middle East had made it apparent to him that the U.S. would need to look toward the borders of the Arab world in its quest to secure the region from the Soviet threat. In his analysis of the regional situation the Secretary of State failed to appreciate the influence Saudi Arabia held in the Middle East at that time. Riyadh was in a position to tilt the balance of

opinion among the remaining non-committed Arab states to favor or oppose U.S. plans for mutual defense in the region. But, this was lost on the administration.

United States Turns to the Northern Tier

Shortly after Dulles returned from the Middle East the National Security Council introduced the Northern Tier concept as the most viable option for Middle East defense and MEDO was no longer pursued. The NSC cited the following reasons for the need to look for a new defense scheme 1) Britain's falling prestige in the region, 2) because the inability to attract indigenous nations, and 3) that much of the military power behind MEDO resided in the Turkish army. This last point was a stumbling block, because the Middle East's past experience of being part of the Ottoman Empire made much of the region suspicious of Turkish ambitions which had the effect of impacting the expansion of MEDO into the Arab states.²⁴

In broad terms, the Northern Tier concept which the NSC proposed would be anchored by two of the U.S.'s staunchest allies in the region, Turkey and Pakistan. It was planned that this pact would be joined by other countries that were cognizant of the danger the Soviet Union presented to the region.

By July 1953, after Dulles' trip to the region, American policy makers no longer considered any plans that had Egypt as the nucleus of area defense. National Security Council memorandums suggest that at this stage the Northern Tier states had supplanted Cairo in American planning for Middle East defense. Dulles made the observation that Egypt was too engrossed in its own problems to be the cornerstone of a Near East

²⁴ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council," 1 June 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 385.

structure.²⁵ The U.S. intended only to approach Egypt bilaterally until domestic stability returned to Cairo. This mode of relations with its lower profile still provided for dialogue between Egypt and Washington while it was also less likely to upset public sentiment.

Dulles claimed that during his trip to the region he began to appreciate that the other Arab countries not on the northern edge of the Middle East were too focused on local disputes to realize the international situation.²⁶ The Arab states had extensive domestic and local issues that needed to be resolved before they could effectively champion U.S. Cold War strategy. While it was regrettable to the administration that it was unable to recruit Egypt or even enlist Saudi Arabia into its regional containment plan, the U.S. needed to move forward on its other initiatives to best defend the region. The Northern Tier could function without any Arab state, but the administration did think Arab countries should be added to the defense agreement over time.

The United States realized that even if the Arab states were not to be the foundation of its policy, it was essential to maintain cordial relations with the regional powers and began to explore the means to assist these nations economically. At the meeting of the chiefs of American Missions in the Arab states in Cairo in late August 1953, the ambassadors suggested that a series of aid programs would be very beneficial to maintaining U.S. influence among the Arab states. These U.S. diplomats sought to ease the process for the Arab states to eventually join the new defense scheme through proposed aid programs. Their proposal was to grant two-thirds of the aid designated to this effort to go to Syria and Iraq (the first two Arab nations they believed should be

²⁵ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 153rd Meeting of the National Security Council," 9 July 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 394-396.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

pursued to join the Northern Tier).²⁷ They designated five million dollars to go to Saudi Arabia. This assistance to Saudi Arabia was primarily targeted at ensuring U.S. basing rights at the Dhahran Air Base instead of attempting to allure Saudi Arabia into joining the Northern Tier. Egypt was to receive aid through an additional reserve of \$50 million to be split with Pakistan and possibly Iran,²⁸ thus financial commitment to Egypt denoted that Cairo had not completely escaped U.S. calculations. The proposal set forth by the ambassadors would soon be adopted as official U.S. policy in the region.²⁹

Even after the Dulles trip, there seemed to be hope within the administration that Egypt was not a complete lost cause. So, Egypt in particular drew considerable attention in the developing assistance effort. Eisenhower went on to approve a series of grants that would be the basis for the Point Four development program.³⁰ The program called for ten million dollars in aid for Egypt, which Congress approved and eventually raised to \$11.7 million.³¹ Not long after implementation, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Jefferson Caffery noted that the development projects which the aid from Washington had funded improved U.S. standing with the Egyptian public and government. So, in an attempt to further

²⁷ "The Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense," 8 Sept. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 417.

²⁸ Robert Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1953-1954*. (Washington: Historical Division Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1986), p. 340-343.

²⁹ "Report to the National Security Council by the national Security Council Planning Board," 30 Sept. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 2. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984) p. 508.

³⁰ The Point Four Program was designed by the State Department as a means to implement the Truman Doctrine in 1947. In 1951 Saudi Arabia was included in the program to receive technical assistance.

³¹ "Memorandum by the Administrator of the Technical Cooperation Administration to the Deputy to the Director off the Mutual Security Agency for Program and Coordination," 3 Mar. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2005-2007.

ingratiate itself to Egypt, the U.S. began expressing interest in funding the Aswan Dam project.³²

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, however, led the United Kingdom's campaign to restrict U.S. aid to Cairo until an agreement could be reached on the Suez basing issue. The British effort proved very successful in stalling the delivery of the majority of the proposed aid. Churchill hoped to use the anticipated Point Four assistance as leverage to use against Cairo to advance the British position in the Suez dispute. Eisenhower understood the significance of Egypt and was reluctant to antagonize Cairo by blatantly siding with the United Kingdom.³³ Yet, his loyalty to the U.S. ally Britain and his desire to appease London superseded other consideration. This led the U.S. to begin a process of delaying the delivery of the aid package, which began in May 1953 and lasted through 1954.

The administration though viewed Cairo's drift toward neutralism with such concern that by late 1953 the administration earmarked a new package worth more than \$25 million to Egypt in an attempt to reverse Nasr's moves, despite heavy pressure from London.³⁴ Yet, Churchill temporally thwarted this U.S. action by making an additional appeal at the Bermuda Conference in December by effectively influencing Eisenhower to override his Secretary of State's drive to transfer the aid immediately.³⁵ The move

³² "Caffery to Dulles," 10 July 1953, RG 59, 774.5MSP and "Memorandum of Conversation by Broade," 16 Sept. 1953, RG 59, 874.00.

³³ "President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Churchill," 8 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2061-2062.

³⁴ "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Secretary of State," 12 November 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2160-2162.

³⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 247-8. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 254-259. "Prime Minister

angered Egypt and confirmed to Nasr that U.S. allegiance ultimately rested with the United Kingdom and that he had made the right decision to part with the U.S. on mutual defense. This episode demonstrated to Nasr that the West could not be relied on. The following year he struck out on a bold policy of non-alignment.

When a conference of American ambassadors in the region was held the following year in May 1954, in Istanbul, support by the attendees for the Northern Tier concept had gained momentum. The participants, by consensus, approved of moving forward with the pact and believed that the four primary members (Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Britain) would be able to provide stability and security in the region. It was also viewed as important to have the Arab countries behind the Northern Tier to participate in regional defense. They believed, however, that the time was not right for more Arab participation. They advised to pursue the Arabs at a later date. The conference decided that Saudi Arabia would not be heavily pursued because it would be unable to make a significant contribution to area security.³⁶ These leading regional diplomats, much like Dulles, were primarily focused on the size and effectiveness of the kingdom's military without recognizing 1) Saudi Arabia's emerging economic power and 2) the stature the country held in the region. These diplomats failed to properly appreciate how Saudi Arabia could influence the establishment of the new defense concept. While Saudi Arabia did not have the standing to singularly make U.S. policy work, it did possess the ability to create or halt momentum in favor of the U.S. plans.

Churchill to President Eisenhower," 19 Dec. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2177. "President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Churchill," 20 Dec. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2178-2180.

³⁶ "Conference Conclusions on Regional Security in the Middle East," 14 May 1954, *Ibid.*, p. 506-510.

While from a strictly military view the ambassadors' evaluation not to place emphasis on persuading Saudi Arabia to join an alliance had some credence, but other intangibles made Saudi Arabia essential to the success of any potential defense alliances in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia itself did not have the ability to effectively propagate or oppose U.S. policy in the region, but these ambassadors failed to consider that in the political environment of the time, the kingdom as a crucial constituent in regional politics that possessed the power to tip the scales in favor of its allies. Also, how effective the kingdom could be as an antagonist was not appreciated by the diplomatic chiefs. The failure to predict the zeal in which Saudi Arabia would oppose the Northern Tier resulted from not understanding how threatened Saudi Arabia was by the Hashemites. Saudi Arabia's antagonism would prove to go a long way in undermining the pact. Saudi Arabia's ability to frustrate Washington's plans was made even more pronounced when he coordinated with the military and cultural power of Egypt. The U.S. would eventually understand the importance of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh's significance became further augmented when Iraq became isolated as the only Arab member of the western defense agreement. Saudi Arabia could have provided a very important service of insulating the Iraqi regime from regional propaganda attacks. But the administration was unable to foresee this role for Saudi Arabia and it accepted the ambassadors' advice to discount Saudi Arabia.

By mid summer 1954 an Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the Suez Canal and stationing of British troops appeared imminent. This eased regional misgivings about Western intentions and gave the U.S. more room to work on formalizing the Northern Tier. The U.S. proceeded to work with Turkey and Pakistan on finalizing their own defense treaty. The two nations signed an "agreement of mutual cooperation" in

February 1954. The U.S. also proceeded to lobby Iran and the agreement's first Arab member, Iraq, to join the defense treaty on terms that kept with U.S. interests³⁷

With the apparent imminence of a resolution of the Suez dispute, the U.S. strategically made the long stalled aid packages available to Egypt in a bid to induce Cairo to support U.S. designs on Middle East defense. Washington was even willing to accept very subtle support in exchange for the assistance it provided. Hopes that aid would have a significant impact became tempered when Nasr announced in late July 1954 a new regional policy in which the Arabs would pursue mutual security alone. Nasr asserted, the "aim of the revolutionary government is for the Arabs to become one nation. The weight of defense of the Arab states falls first and foremost on the Arabs and they are worthy of undertaking it."³⁸ Nasr viewed the Arab League's Collective Security Pact as the primary means by which regional defense should be handled.

The United States Still Included Egypt in Northern Tier Plans

Despite Nasr's public proclamations, the Eisenhower administration did not view Nasr's new policy completely congruent with the Northern Tier concept and it did not realize the inherent incompatibilities between the two. Dulles continued to urge Nasr to consider pursuing U.S. regional policy, pointing out that the U.S. plan provided the best opportunity for a military collaboration of significant strength in the region.³⁹ Nasr, in a

³⁷ Gail E. Meyer, *The United States and Egypt: The Formative Years* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1980), p. 87-90 and *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 2. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 738-739.

³⁸ British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts: Part IV, The Middle East*, London, July 21, 1954, p. 4.

³⁹ "The Secretary of State to the embassy in Turkey," 7 Oct. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 506-510.

move that indicated openness on his part, said Egypt was willing in November to cooperate in negotiations over the American-Egyptian economic and military aid plan worth \$40 million.⁴⁰ As the negotiations transpired, however, Nasr placed several impediments in the way of progress. He demanded the removal of the mission that the U.S. Congress had insisted would administer the weapons program, because he felt the mission gave the U.S. undesired influence in Egypt. Later, Nasr would later interrupt the negotiations by attempting to convince the administration to grant the aid to Egypt without making Cairo formally sign a deal. Even though many in Washington found this request unreasonable, Ambassador Cafferey urged Dulles to try to placate Nasr, stressing that “our stake here surely justifies employment of maximum flexibility.”⁴¹

Understanding the strategic significance of Egypt, Dulles took Cafferey’s advice and attempted to appease Nasr. First, the State Department, in violation of U.S. law, was willing to allow Egypt to use five million dollars of the economic aid package to purchase weapons (the previous packages did not include weapons).⁴² Second, when it could not find a way to circumvent the Congressional mandate for the mission, the administration proposed that the mission wear civilian clothes to avoid the appearance of U.S. advisors being associated with the British advisors in the Suez. The British advisors, who wore their military uniforms, had recently become a hotly and publicly contested issue in Egypt. Nasr pressed hard and made a campaign to remove all British influence

⁴⁰ RG 59, 641.74; RG 59, 774.5 MSP; Dulles to Eisenhower, 6 Aug. 1954, Whiteman File: International Series, box 8.

⁴¹ “Caffery to Dulles,” 16 Sept. 1954, RG 59, 774.5 MSP.

⁴² “Editorial Note, by Byroade,” 16 Nov. 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2317-2318.

from Egypt and was not in a position to accept additional Western advisors.⁴³ When these tactics proved unsuccessful, the U.S. sent an informal military mission to Cairo led by two Central Intelligence Agency officials to offer Nasr an additional \$10 million in military aid to obtain his cooperation.⁴⁴ When Nasr still insisted on having the mission removed from the original deal, the CIA sent a three million dollar bribe to the Egyptian leader in an attempt to entice him to sign the military aid pact. Nasr did not back down though, and instead of moving to the American position, he used the CIA carrot to build the Cairo Tower.⁴⁵

It was during this period, at the end of 1954, when it first became apparent to the administration that Nasr's new policy might indeed preclude any involvement with collective security measures directly involving the West. Until this point it seems that the administration had attributed Nasr's reluctance to joining the pact to the non-aligned and Arab nationalistic pressures at home. But as the year drew to a close it became clear that Nasr's policy had been calculated to 1) avoid being isolated from the rest of the Arab world by opposing Arab membership to the U.S. sponsored defense concept and 2) and to unite and lead the Arab world under his leadership. Contrary to U.S. analysis, Nasr had not simply been reacting to these domestic currents. Instead, he was the force behind them.

Nasr came out criticizing the Northern Tier concept in December although just several months earlier when Nuri and Nasr met the Egyptian leader had not voiced any

⁴³ "Colonel Gerhart (in Cairo) to Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Department of Defense," 29 Nov. 1954, *Ibid.*, p. 2319-2322.

⁴⁴ Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p. 145-149.

⁴⁵ Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*. (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 44-46.

objections to Iraq joining the alliance. When Iraq signed the defense pact with Turkey on February 24, Nasr rallied his fellow Arab leaders against the newly formed Baghdad Pact, calling Nuri an “Anglo-American stooge.” A series of Cairo inspired propaganda attacks ensued in broadcasts and newspapers throughout the region. Nasr viewed the foiling of the alliance between Turkey and Iraq as essential because he felt that the pact threatened to isolate Egypt. This sense of vulnerability resulted in Nasr fueling his rivalry with Nuri Said, who had his own plans to lead the Arab world. Nuri’s plans included uniting Iraq with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon in what he called the “Fertile Crescent” scheme. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden would go on to have talks with Nasr in which the Egyptian leader expressed that when Iraq joined the pact Nasr had felt that Nuri had been picked over himself. This personal jealousy would further explained the viciousness of the diatribes that would be carried out against Iraq in the years that followed.⁴⁶

Nasr No Longer Considered for Role in the Baghdad Pact

When Nasr returned from the Asia-African Conference in Indonesia in April 1955 he had placed Egypt solidly and publicly in a neutral position with regards to Cold War politics. Yet he still sought military aid assistance from the West. He requested a \$28 million package which included B-26 airplanes and tanks, along with other equipment from the United States.⁴⁷ Ambassador Byroade urged his superiors back in Washington to grant Nasr’s request for fear that Egypt in its determination to acquire its desired arms would turn to other sources if the U.S. did not concede. Nasr’s need for weapons was

⁴⁶ “Telegram From the Secretary of State to the Department of State,” 24 Feb. 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 14, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 71-72. “Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State,” 1 Mar. 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.

⁴⁷ “Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State,” 2 July 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 274.

particularly acute after a recent embarrassing performance by the Egyptian military when two platoons of Israeli paratroopers attacked Egyptian defenses in the Gaza Strip on February 28, 1955. In the raid Egyptian incompetence had allowed the Israelis to kill 38 people while only suffering eight losses of their own.⁴⁸ Nasr's situation was so dire that many U.S. observers felt that if no other option was found, Egypt would be willing to turn to the Soviet Union in order to obtain weapons.⁴⁹ The U.S. ambassador in particular viewed the arms request as another litmus test, this one by Nasr of U.S. to gage American good faith. Byroade saw disastrous consequences for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East if the request was denied.⁵⁰

Eisenhower understood that the package did not pose any real military threat to others (namely Israel) in the region and favored the package as part of a concerted effort to "woo" Nasr.⁵¹ But in July at the Geneva Summit, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev assured Dulles that the Soviet Union had no intention of supplying Egypt saying, "Soviet aid is out of the question." So Dulles disregarded CIA reports and the urgings of his ambassador in Egypt and rebuffed Nasr's appeal for the weapons, which resulted in Nasr turning to the Soviet camp. Nasr's move was a reversal on all of the Egyptian government's previous public anti-communist statements, but given his defense needs, it should have come as little surprise in the Middle East. Despite his misgivings to the

⁴⁸ Owendale, *Britain, the United States and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East*, p. 117.

⁴⁹ "Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State," 9 June 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 14, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 237-240.

⁵⁰ "Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State," 20 July 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 304-306.

⁵¹ "Under Secretary to Secretary of State," 11 July 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 274 and Department of State, Central Files, 611.80/7-1155.

moral effect of dealing with communists and his preference to conduct an arms deal with the U.S., when no U.S. offer materialized, Nasr eventually turned to the Soviets.⁵² The announcement of the Czechoslovakian arms deal ended all possibility of any cooperation with Nasr in the short term. The United States was then forced to commit itself and its Middle East security aims to the still congealing Baghdad Pact.

The United States Seeks Arab States to Compliment Baghdad Pact

For some time the U.S. had understood that the military power of the pact's two most pro-American members (Turkey and Pakistan) needed to be complimented by the weaker but regionally valuable Arab states. Since the summer of 1954, the administration realized it needed to induce Iraq into joining with Turkey and Pakistan as a means to pave the way for other Arab states to join.⁵³ Iraq had long been open to a mutual security agreement. As early as his 1953 trip to the region, Dulles noted that Iraq was more willing than other Arab countries to join a defense alliance.⁵⁴ This receptivity can be attributed to its proximity to the Soviet Union, its leadership ambitions in the region, and its need for funds to contain domestic opposition. Iraq was attractive to the U.S. because since it did not border on Israel and U.S. weapons would be less likely to escalate Arab-Israeli tensions. Also, Iraq appeared to the State Department to have the ability to influence neighboring countries to join the regional defense initiative. The

⁵² "Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State," 17 June 1955, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 14, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 255-256.

⁵³ "National Intelligence Estimate," 22 June 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2319-2322.

⁵⁴ Gail E. Meyer, *Egypt and the United States*. p. 90 and "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Iraq," 18 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984, p. 90-94.

“effect it [Iraq] would have on the other Arab states” was the primary reason Dulles felt the U.S. needed to pursue Baghdad.⁵⁵

In January 1954, Eisenhower agreed to grant aid to Iraq, with a provision that the nation would later join the pact.⁵⁶ In a July meeting with Churchill, Dulles informed the British Prime Minister that U.S. aid was to begin flowing to Iraq with the intention of securing its allegiance to the western defense alliance.⁵⁷ Iraq’s entrance though would be difficult with Nasr using the Arab League as a platform to oppose the pact. Nasr’s rising popularity among the Arab public made Iraqi ascension to the pact with Turkey a challenge for Baghdad. Nasr’s prestige in the region continued to grow after the announcement of the Soviet arms deal. Nasr gained such acclaim that even, Nuri Said, the staunch British ally, was compelled to publicly endorse the sale.⁵⁸

Dulles turned to Iraq and its pro-western Prime Minister Nuri Said to bulk up the Baghdad Pact and as a means to lessen the influence of Nasr in the Arab League. This was done in the hopes that Iraq could bring the King of Jordan, a fellow Hashemite, into the agreement, along with Syria and possibly Lebanon. Nuri’s struggle for supremacy in the region with Nasr led him to be used by the West as a means to split the Arab League and create a following for himself among the Arab states.⁵⁹ Despite a possible conflict

⁵⁵ W.J. Gallman, *Iraq under General Nuri*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. xiii.

⁵⁶ “The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Iraq,” 28 Jan. 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 474-475.

⁵⁷ PREM 11/941, FOS 24-5, Record of meeting at the White House on 25 June 1954 between Churchill, Eisenhower and others.

⁵⁸ Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, p. 151-153.

⁵⁹ Evelyn Shuckburg, *Descent to Suez, Diaries 1951-1956*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), p. 224-225.

with Nasr, the U.S. continued to encourage Nuri to associate with the Turkish-Pakistani pact.⁶⁰

Saudi Arabia Considered for the Baghdad Pact

Saudi Arabia also began to factor in more heavily in defense concepts designed by the United States. But American policy makers continued to fail to understand the valuable contribution Saudi Arabia could make to a regional security pact. Although they had a great appreciation for the strategic importance of Saudi relations, U.S. policy makers during this period considered Saudi Arabia essential only because of the Dhahran Air Force Base and because of the kingdom's petroleum resources. In fact, Saudi oil was beginning to factor heavily in all U.S. policy in the region.

The administration, however, publicly attempted to downplay the strategic significance of Saudi oil deposits to the U.S. by asserting that the U.S. was not dependent on Saudi oil (which was accurate as very little of American energy needs at the time were met by Saudi Arabia).⁶¹ In reality, defense of the kingdom's resources was a major motivation for the American push for a mutual security agreement in the region. While it was true that the U.S. was not a consumer of Saudi oil, its main allies in Western Europe acquired nearly 25 percent of their petroleum products from Saudi Arabia. In the United States' post World War II role as caretaker of Europe, Washington found it a strategic imperative to keep the oil supply line to the continent open. Saudi Petroleum was of an

⁶⁰ "The Secretary of State," 31 Dec. 1954, *FRUS, 1952-54*, vol. 9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 2402-2404.

⁶¹ "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Cairo," 11 May 1953, 5pm, *Ibid.*, p. 16.

additional American concern because the U.S. economy benefited immensely from ARAMCO's exclusive propriety of the kingdom's main land petroleum rights which netted \$127.4 million after taxes in 1950.⁶² This factor doubtlessly contributed heavily in the formation of the administration's Middle Eastern policy.

Although the U.S. viewed Saudi Arabia as a strategic asset in the region to be defended, strategists overlooked the critical role it could play in consolidating a defense pact. The main reasons it was overlooked were the 1) limitations of the Saudi defense forces and 2) disputes between the kingdom and its neighbors⁶³ which preoccupied Saudi Arabia and seemed to preclude it from joining them in a defense pact or even influencing other states toward this end.

The U.S. at this point committed itself to the Northern tier concept which it wanted Saudi Arabia to join. The administration though under evaluated the importance of the Saudi kingdom and did not pursue King Saud diligently enough. Saud, for his part, was facing very real deterrents from entering a Western backed defense treaty. Without additional American inducements to join, the king swung away from the Baghdad Pact as result of the political situation in the Arab world and into the arms of U.S. adversaries.

⁶² Zuhayr Mikdashi, *A Financial Analysis of Middle Eastern Oil Concessions, 1901-1965* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 122, 184 and Irvine Anderson, *ARAMCO the United States and Saudi Arabia*. (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1981), p. 121.

⁶³ Saudi Arabia had difficulties with both the Hashemites and the British backed Persian Gulf states.

CHAPTER THREE

Saudi Arabia Rebuffs the Baghdad Pact

Despite not appreciating the Saudis as possible defense partners, the Eisenhower administration gave considerable attention to relations with Saudi Arabia from the earliest days of the administration. This was primarily due to the kingdom's petroleum resources, the Dhahran air base, and a belief in the administration that since Saudi Arabia was home to Islam's most holy sites it held a special role in Middle East politics. It seems that the U.S. should have also pressed Saudi Arabia to be a partner in the Baghdad Pact, but early on in the process, the State Department determined Ibn Saud would oppose sanctioning the defense alliance because of Iraq's likely presence in the league. The Saudis viewed the Hashemites as an aggressive rival. Therefore the king believed the pact threatened his kingdom. The administration did not want to push Saudi Arabia on this issue so it could avoid damaging repercussions to the U.S.-Saudi relationship. The State Department accurately determined that Saudi Arabia would respond negatively to forceful pressure by the U.S. to join. It feared that if the Saudis were forced to publicly reject association in the pact that ties between the two countries would be impaired. The U.S. decided not to pursue this cause with Saudi Arabia, so it could still cultivate cooperation in other important areas.

Saud Arabia's Perception of U.S. Loyalty Pushed It Away the Pact

In 1953, when Dulles returned from his Middle East visit he concluded that the relations between Washington and Riyadh were “poor.” The main reason for this assessment was Ibn Saud’s perception of U.S. commitment to Saud Arabia. The king felt that the U.S. was not providing him with sufficient support in his border disputes with the United Kingdom and its protectorates in the region. Dulles concluded that Ibn Saud might “decide to throw away his alliance with the United States, cancel the oil concession and the air base, and throw his lot with some other nation” if he felt the U.S. was not a staunch enough ally.⁸⁷ Saud began expressing that he expected increased American support, particularly over the Buraimi Oasis dispute with Britain. The administration quickly responded to the king by shifting its policy in an attempt to mend the conflicts between the United Kingdom and Saud while paying particular attention to strengthening its own position with Saudi Arabia.⁸⁸

Yet, through 1954 Saudi Arabia remained discontented about the lack of overt U.S. support in the Buraimi dispute. Anti-American sentiment in the kingdom correspondingly grew.⁸⁹ Frustration in the kingdom continued to mount as it perceived that the U.S.-United Kingdom alliance was so strong that it precluded impartial U.S. intervention on the kingdom’s behalf. This reached its zenith when the Saudi Council of Ministers resolved not to seek U.S. assistance in resolving the dispute, while canceling its involvement in some American aid projects in the kingdom.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 1 June 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54*, vol. 9 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 382.

⁸⁸ “Statement of Policy of the National Security Council,” 14 July 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 399-402.

⁸⁹ Department of State, Central Files, 780.022/5-2954, National Archive.

The deterioration of relations that culminated in June 1954 seems to have been fomented by the Saudi government's financial difficulties. Although oil revenues were souring, lavish spending during the lean production years of World War II had incurred large debts which in the 1950s still hampered the kingdom. Riyadh's weak monetary position placed it in a position to seek additional aid that the U.S. was unable to grant. The U.S. had given Saudi Arabia a military assistance grant but the Saudis were not satisfied with the grant's many conditions and its paucity of real arms. The Saudis were further disappointed with the package because it did not provide for extensive military training by the U.S. military.⁹¹ In addition, some U.S. officials had publicly criticized the government's profligacy. This criticism was not received well by the king, who held the most positive disposition to the U.S. of all the palace officials.⁹² So when he soured on the Americans the relationship seemed doomed.

U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Wadsworth and other American diplomats in the region misunderstood what was happening in the royal diwan and concluded that the king was still an ally of the U.S. They credited the king's move to distance himself from U.S. policy as a reactionary ploy brought on by the extreme pressure he was receiving from his advisors. They did not view it as a permanent shift in the king's policy.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Ambassador in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 1 June 1954, *FRUS, 1952-54*, vol. 9. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984, p. 2452.-2453.

⁹¹ "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Arabian Peninsula-Iraq Affairs," 1 Apr. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2529-2530.

⁹² "Memorandum of Conversation, by Donald C. Bergus of the Office of Near East Affairs," 25 Sept. 1954, *Ibid.*, p. 2453-2455.

⁹³ "Ambassador in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 1 Oct. 1954, *Ibid.*, p. 2455.

Contrary to the Saudi skepticism about U.S. support, the administration diligently lobbied the British on behalf of Saudi Arabia in regards to the border dispute. New State Department analysis gave credence to previous Saudi complaints over the oasis and helped to shift the administration's outlook on the oasis dispute. As early as April 1953 the U.S. had begun a long evaluation process that ended in determining that British actions in Buraimi were primarily motivated by concerns for their national honor, as opposed to their vital interests or for western security reasons. American analysts explained the inflexibility in the United Kingdom's position as resulting from its concern with prestige.⁹⁴ This interpretation would gain increased acceptance in the State Department over the following year. In Britain, concern about recent loss of prestige in the world became an issue among Conservatives who had come to power through criticism of the former government's apparent failure to maintain a powerful presence abroad.⁹⁵ Thus, their campaign promises compelled the Conservative government to take a hard and aggressive stand on Buraimi.

Britain's stubborn and aggressive actions in Buraimi made it difficult for Washington and placed it in a difficult position between its two allies. The Saudi king requested the U.S. to prove its friendship to Saudi Arabia by taking a more proactive and effective role in restraining its close Atlantic friend.⁹⁶ In June, British troops attacked the Buraimi Oasis and seized control of the area in a move to counter aggressive moves that had recently been made by Saud's representative in the oasis. This British action gave

⁹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Officer in Charge of Arabian Peninsula-Iraq Affairs," 3 Apr. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2533-2534.

⁹⁵ "Memorandum of Conversations, by the First Secretary of the Embassy in the United Kingdom," 16 Apr. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2535-2538.

⁹⁶ "President Eisenhower to King Ibn Saud," 15 June 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2541-2542.

the Saudi grievances about the ineffectiveness of American intervention efforts more credibility. The aggressive British military action made it more difficult for the U.S. to accept the British line on its oasis maneuverings.

Eisenhower's own prestige was now on the line. The president had offered promises to intervene on Ibn Saud's side in situations in which Saudi Arabia's position was threatened, in accordance with assurances Truman had previously offered.⁹⁷ Additionally, the U.S. had a direct interest in the border dispute, for if the British-backed Gulf states were deemed to be the proper owners, the disputed territory would not be available for ARAMCO to develop. If the oasis area were determined to be the territory of the other Persian Gulf states, the oil fields there would be exploited by British oil companies as per their concessions with those states.⁹⁸

It became increasingly more difficult for the U.S. to remain neutral and Saudi Arabia began to warm to the idea of resolving the conflict through international arbitration. Since coming to office, the administration had been pushing Ibn Saud to accept arbitration, but the king had long resisted. The British, too, had been pressing Saudi Arabia to submit to arbitration as a means to resolve the dispute. But as this eventually came closer to reality, London suddenly began placing many conditions on their own participation in the arbitration process, in an obvious gambit to stall the entire process.⁹⁹ This demonstrated that the British believed their own claims on Buraimi were weak.

⁹⁷“King Ibn Saud to President Eisenhower,” 28 June 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2544-2545.

⁹⁸ “The British Foreign Office to the Embassy in the United Kingdom,” 15 Feb. 1954, *Ibid.*, p. 2576-2577.

⁹⁹ “The Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom (Salisbury) to the Secretary of State,” 27 July 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2559-2560.

Sensing that its best regional interests lay with the Saudis, U.S. policy began to reflect a more even handed approach to the disputes of the Gulf region. Dulles signaled this slight move by refusing to push Saudi Arabia to meet the British preconditions for entering arbitration. The secretary claimed that the U.S. was responsible for moving Saudi to accede to arbitration in the first place. This Dulles believed, was only achieved by placing great strain on the relationship. He staunchly opposed putting any additional stress on U.S.-Saudi relations and refused to heed British requests for help with Ibn Saud.¹⁰⁰ Instead of pressing Riyadh, Dulles increased the pressure on London and urged the British to back down from their position by appealing to their own national interest. He was thoroughly convinced that in the Gulf region Saudi Arabia would be of greater long term importance than the United Kingdom's standing among its Gulf client states. Dulles wrote the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Robert Salisbury saying, "In the days ahead of us it will be of paramount importance to both of us to have the friendship and confidence of the ruler of Saudi Arabia."¹⁰¹ British intractability became a source of frustration for the administration resulting in additional sympathy for the Saudi side in their dispute with Britain. While Dulles' assessment on the importance of the kingdom to the West was based on its petroleum and basing capabilities, his words about Saudi significance would prove to be very accurate as it additionally applied to Saudi Arabia's importance as a partner in regional security.

¹⁰⁰“The Secretary of State to Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom,” 28 Aug 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2565-2566.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2566.

Saudi Arabia appreciated the new perspective it sensed from Washington, and kept pressing the U.S. to increase its participation in resolving the Buraimi affair. Prince Feisal, who was traditionally very skeptical of Western ambitions in the region, led this campaign. He impressed on American officials that the king's relationship with the U.S. was a risky proposition for the monarch. The king faced considerable pressure from his advisors to shift his allegiance, and, at the same time, his Arab nationalist colleagues taunted him about his relationship with the U.S. This dynamic was exacerbated by the fact that the Saudi public had doubts about the benefits of a relationship with the U.S. because of the administration's inability to effectively influence the United Kingdom to concede Buraimi.¹⁰²

U.S.-Saudi relations improved considerably through the spring of 1954 as U.S. pressure on Britain brought about tangible results. The two feuding countries signed an agreement to begin the arbitration process over Buraimi. But U.S. officials never took advantage of these improved relations to push Saudi Arabia to join in a Western backed security agreement. It seems that U.S. foreign policy in Saudi Arabia was firmly focused on two primary objectives, oil and the Dhahran air base. The desert kingdom still did not receive any serious consideration to be an essential element in regional defense schemes. This policy would prove to be very shortsighted, as Saudi Arabia did prove to be very important in influencing Arab participation in the Baghdad Pact.

Without the support that Saudi Arabia denied, the pact never fulfilled its expected potential. The failure of the Baghdad Pact forced the Americans to pursue another means of mutually security (the Eisenhower Doctrine), which would only be arrived at after

¹⁰² "Memorandum of Conversation, Prepared in the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 6 Oct. 1953, *Ibid.*, p. 2567-2568.

considerable trouble, instability, and effort, all of which could have been avoided had Saudi Arabia initially endorsed the Northern Tier defense concept.

Saudi Arabia's Fear of the Hashemites and its Impact on the Baghdad Pact and U.S. Relations

The most prominent impediment to Saudi support for the Baghdad Pact was its rivalry with the Hashemite Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq. Throughout the early 1950s, U.S. officials' conversations with King Saud were always occupied with discussion about the king's concern for what he considered an extremely vulnerable position vis-a-vis the British and the Hashemites.¹⁰³ A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate predicted that Saudi Arabia's preoccupation with "parochial concerns," particularly Iraq, would outweigh any inclination to join the effort to strengthen the area as a whole.¹⁰⁴

Saudi Arabia refused to join the American plans for regional defense, despite the historically strong ties between the two countries, which were considerably amiable following the moves to arbitration by Saud. The primary reason for the Saudi divergence was the role the Hashemites would play in regional defense schemes.

From the moment Saud succeeded his father Ibn Saud in 1953, American diplomats in the Middle East, marked him as having a very favorable disposition to the United States and its regional intentions. But as early as March 1954, reports began to indicate that the new monarch was deeply disturbed to discover that the U.S. was considering granting military assistance to Iraq. This aid was an attempt by Washington to induce Iraq to adhere to an agreement with Turkey, but it also was threatening Saud's

¹⁰³ "Embassy in Jidda to Secretary of State," 4 Jan. 1950, *United States Records on Saudi Affairs, 1945-1959*, vol. 2. Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997, p. 1-3.

¹⁰⁴ "National Intelligence Estimate," 21 June 1955, *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 87.

disposition to U.S. ambitions. U.S. Ambassador in Lebanon, Raymond Hare, informed the State Department that Saud viewed the U.S. military aid as bolstering the Hashemite position in the Arab world at his country's expense.¹⁰⁵ This assessment was based on contacts in the Lebanese government close to the Saudi king¹⁰⁶ and a report from ARAMCO. The ARAMCO report characterized the status of U.S.-Saudi relations as "very grave" and that Washington's build up of Baghdad threatened Saudi-American relations.

The Saudi Council of Ministers, which had traditionally been skeptical about the relationship with Washington, received the news about the U.S. overtures to Iraq by hardening their cynical sentiments. Stribling Snodgrass, an American consultant to the Saudi Arabian Government, reported to U.S. officials that only King Saud on the high council was not "anti-American."¹⁰⁷ This skepticism about the West among the king's advisors had previously prevented King Saud from even considering joining the proposed Baghdad Pact. The king had informed the pact's leading regional advocate Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said that the situation in Saudi Arabia would not permit him extensive Western connections. The king indicated to Nuri that the pressure from his Council of Ministers and not the rivalry between the two kingdoms was the main factor shaping Saudi policy on the Baghdad Pact. Saud felt that he had to limit his connections with the

¹⁰⁵ "Raymond A Hare, Embassy in Beirut to Department of State," 17 Mar. 1954, Dispatch No. 578. Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/3-1754, National Archive.

¹⁰⁶ These same contacts in the Lebanese Government were Prime Minister Abdullah Yafi and Ex-Prime Minister Saeb Salaam who only months earlier had reported to Hare that the new monarch had an "exceedingly friendly attitude to the U.S." See: Raymond A Hare, Embassy in Beirut to Department of State," 3 Dec. 1953, Dispatch No. 294. Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/12-355, National Archive.

¹⁰⁷ "Mr. Hart to Mr. Eakens," 4 May 1954. Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/5-454.

West and that he needed to choose between his current relationship with the U.S. and the new pact in order to appease his advisors.¹⁰⁸

Snodgrass's report on the Royal Diwan's opposition to the West was further confirmed by U.S. Charge d'Affairs in Jidda, J. Jefferson Jones who informed Washington that after a conversation with the Saudi Minister of Commerce, that what Snodgrass reported was indeed the "current emotional state of a number of top level Saudi officials." This consternation toward the U.S. was caused, in Jones' estimation, by what the Saudis perceived as U.S. encouragement to Iraq to enter the Turco-Pakistan accord.¹⁰⁹ Nuri Said offered an accurate analysis: "The fact is that the Saudis still think they are conducting a Sherifan tribal feud of a past generation. They forgot those days are past."¹¹⁰ At this point the Saudi leadership was still allowing its insular view of the regional situation to dictate its policy.

As difficult as it was for American officials to believe, the Saudi leadership feared the Hashemites (primarily Iraq) still had designs to retake Arabia. The U.S. began its dealings with Iraq by callously overlooking this important notion. The Hashemite threat was very real to the Saudis. Amen al-Mumayiz, an Iraqi diplomat in Saudi Arabia, recorded in his memoir that the Saudis viewed Iraq and the specter of it joining the western backed defense treaty as the greatest danger the country faced.¹¹¹ The Saudis had been anxious about Iraq's territorial design in the region since the British had enthroned Faisal as King of the new state in 1921. Previously, while Faisal had been

¹⁰⁸ Muhammed Hasanayn Haykal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*. New York: Arbor House, 1987, p. 53.

¹⁰⁹ "J. Jefferson Jones III, American Embassy, Jidda to Department of State," 15 May 1954. Dispatch No. 377, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/5-1554, National Archive.

¹¹⁰ Lord Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said* (London: Cassell, 1959), p. 238.

¹¹¹ Amen al-Mumayiz, *al-Mumlika al-Arbaya al-Sudaya*. (Beirut: 1963).

consolidating the Arab nation's power in Damascus following the Arab revolt against the Ottomans in World War I, Ibn Saud had pushed Faisal's father, Hussein, out of the family's seat of power, in the Hejaz (the Hejaz was composed of western Arabia which was home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina). Faisal was subsequently ousted from greater Syria by the French, after which the British set Faisal up as the monarch of Iraq. Since their expulsion of Hussein, the Saudis had lived in some trepidation that the Hashemites would attempt to recapture the Hejaz.¹¹²

Since the assassination of the Jordanian kingdom's founder King Abd Allah in 1951, Jordan's rulers had been in a struggle just to maintain power thus the Saudis no longer viewed Jordan as an expansionist threat. Iraq, on the other hand, was still ambitious and virulent in Saudi estimations. Relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia following a brief period of rapprochement, had entered a stage of hostility. The poor state of their relations was brought on by a series of Iraqi diplomatic snubs. These slights included a cold reception given to Crown Prince Saud at King Faysal II's coronation in Baghdad in 1953, which was followed by Iraq not sending representatives to neither Ibn Saud's funeral nor Saud's coronation.¹¹³

Saudi Arabia's opposition to Iraq's entrance into the Baghdad Pact was primarily from fear of Iraqi expansion and not the diplomatic gaffs. The pact aimed to eventually include both Jordan and Syria, which the Saudis feared would assist Nuri in his long held desire to have these countries unite in alliance under Iraqi leadership, in his "Fertile

¹¹² Prior to petroleum's advent in Arabia, the Hejaz and its pilgrimage sites had generated the majority of Ibn Saud's income, thus making it additionally attractive to Hashemite eyes.

¹¹³ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 9 Mar. 1956. *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p.349.

Crescent” scheme.¹¹⁴ The Saudis were particularly wary of the moves of Iraq’s Regent, Abd al-Allah. Throughout his time in power, the regent had sought to extend Iraqi influence in both Syria and the Hejaz. Seeking to ascertain if the local population would support a Hashemite effort to gain control of the region, Abd al-Allah had asked Mumayiz to inquire if the people of the Hejaz “like us and want us.”¹¹⁵ Even after he ceded power to his nephew Faisal, Abd al-Allah still intrigued to gain control of the Hejaz. In 1954 he met with King Saud’s private secretary to inquire if the Saudis would be interested in returning the territory in exchange for a monetary reimbursement.¹¹⁶ Saud refused the offer, but the proposition confirmed the king’s suspicions about Iraqi intentions. With such strong Saudi misgivings about Baghdad’s regional ambitions it was almost inevitable that the Saudi Kingdom would oppose any plans that might possibly expand Iraqi influence in the region.¹¹⁷

As a signal of its displeasure, the Saudi government ended its participation in the U.S. Point Four program at the beginning of June. The Point Four Program, a foreign aid project, aimed at providing technological skills, knowledge, and equipment to poor nations throughout the world from which the U.S. utilized to improve its standing with these governments and their populations. The cancellation of the plan was an attempt by the Saudis to grab the administration’s attention. As previously mentioned, it was primarily motivated by a perceived lack of U.S. support for Saudi Arabia on the Buraimi issue. Additionally though, growing American support for Iraq also factored in to this

¹¹⁴ Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia the Quest for Security* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1985), p. 97

¹¹⁵ al-Mumayiz, *al-Mumluka*, p. 33.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 624.

¹¹⁷ al-Mumayiz, *al-Mumluka*, p. 323.

Saudi maneuver.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, according to an Egyptian friend of Nasr, the Egyptian leader had actually urged King Saud to “take a more reasonable attitude towards the U.S.” and not disrupt his relations with Washington.¹¹⁹ Nasr’s advice¹²⁰ seems predicated on his own experience dealing with the Americans and the positive U.S. treatment he received when he reached an agreement with the British on the basing of troops in Suez. It seems that as late as the early summer of 1954 Nasr did not perceive the Baghdad Pact as a threat in which he required Saudi support to oppose. By the end of the summer, relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia returned to their previous cordial form as the Saudis cautiously tolerated U.S. support for Iraq and the pact. It should be noted though as Ambassador Wadsworth observed in a telegram to Dulles, this improvement in the countries’ relations was more due to Nasr’s advice to Saudi Arabia to engage the U.S. than out of a conviction by Saudi leaders that the U.S. view was correct and that the Baghdad Pact and Iraq were truly benign.¹²¹

By 1956, after several years of fruitless dealings with Saudi Arabia, the U.S. finally factored into its calculations the Saudi perception of the Hashemite threat, even though the Saudis had considered the Iraqi Hashemites a threat throughout the period leading up to early 1956. Once the Americans fully understood the significance of these

¹¹⁸ “Ambassador Wadsworth in Jidda to Secretary of State,” 4 June 1954. Dispatch No. 495, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/6-54, National Archive.

¹¹⁹ “Ambassador Caffery in Cairo to Secretary of State,” 16 Aug 1954. Dispatch No. 211, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/8-1654, National Archive.

¹²⁰The Egyptians the following year would also claim that they were advising the Saudis against jeopardizing their relations with the U.S. But, these claims are less credible since by this time Nasr clearly perceived the U.S. backed Baghdad Pact as a threat on his position as leader of the Arab world. See: “Byroade in Cairo to Secretary of State,” 23 June 1956. Dispatch No. 2557, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/6-2356, National Archive.

¹²¹ Ambassador Wadsworth in Jidda to secretary of State,” 25 Aug. 1954. Dispatch No. 74, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/8-2554, National Archive.

fears, they were able to address this Saudi concern and helped bring the two feuding monarchies together.¹²² But that would only take place after a threatened Saudi Arabia took part in hostile attacks on the Baghdad Pact and Hashemites throughout 1955 and 1956 that wreaked havoc on the U.S.'s initial plans for regional security.

Domestic Pressure Pushes Saud from the U.S.

Political intrigue in the fight for local influence in the Middle East and frustration with the U.S., indeed weighed heavily in Saud's decision to rebuff the Baghdad Pact and distance itself from Washington, but there were also domestic considerations influencing Saud. First of all, most of his advisors admired Nasr while harboring disdain for the West, which included the new comer to regional politics: the U.S. This will be developed further in the next section. As has been previously discussed, many reports emanating from the inner circles of Saudi power indicated that Saud alone had a favorable view of the U.S. and the West.¹²³ Faisal was one of the leading opponents to the United States and his disposition had grown increasingly worse throughout the period leading to the signing of the Turk-Iraqi pact. In February 1955, after an interview with the Saudi Prime Minister, *Time* magazine reporter Chris Collins described a diatribe by Faisal against the U.S., as the most bitter he had ever heard from anyone in his entire career as a reporter.¹²⁴

¹²² "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State," 19 Jan. 1956. *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p.317-321.

¹²³"Mr. Hart to Mr. Eakens," 4 May 1954. Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/5-454.

¹²⁴ Ambassador Wadsworth in Jidda to secretary of State," 10 Feb. 1955. Dispatch No. 385, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/2-1055, National Archive.

Faisal told the U.S. Ambassador George Wadsworth that the pact and the U.S.'s support of it would set back Arab relations with the West by 30 years.¹²⁵

The chief cause of Faisal's disgruntlement with Washington was its policies toward Israel.¹²⁶ He also, of course, harbored strong feelings regarding the Hashemite issue. Nuri Said informed the U.S. that the entire royal family was agitating about the Hejaz, but Faisal in particular was the "key man" that needed to be dealt with to gain Saudi cooperation in the defense treaty.¹²⁷ There was a general feeling among the members of the Council of Ministers that the U.S. was callous to Saudi Arabia's needs and would never fully appreciate the kingdom and therefore never provide the support or respect that the kingdom merited.¹²⁸

This perception of the West by the Council of Ministers also explains why Saud was the lone figure in the Saudi Government that opposed receiving aid from the Soviet bloc.¹²⁹ Saud for the most part was able to prevail over his brother Faisal, but often the king found himself in a precarious position as the only pro-American voice in the royal diwan, which would lead to further conflict and intrigue in the royal court in the following years. Faisal was just one of many of Saud's advisors against the West. This

¹²⁵ "Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 27 Feb. 1955 *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 23.

¹²⁶ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 7 Mar. 1955. *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p.257-259.

¹²⁷ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 9 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 349-350.

¹²⁸ "Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State," 15 May 1954. Department of State, Central Files.

¹²⁹ "Embassy in Jidda to the Department of State," 23 Jan 1956 Department of State, Central Files.

included foreign advisers who did not have a portfolio such as Jamal al-Husayni, nephew of the ex-mufti of Jerusalem, and Werner Otto von Hentig, who was a key figure in the Axis nations' espionage effort in the Middle East during the Second World War and had obvious strong feelings to his former enemies.¹³⁰ Distancing the kingdom from the U.S. was a political maneuver by Saud meant to placate Faisal and the rest of the royal councilors. There was a particular need to appease these officials after Saud went against all of their wishes and refused several communist advances for cooperation.¹³¹

Saud also had to contend with a population that was increasingly beholden to Nasr and his Arab nationalist ideology. Demonstrations and strikes, which had been very rare events in the kingdom, had begun to occur. This further pushed the king to back away, at least temporarily, from the very unpopular western policies.

Saudi Arabia Moves to Egypt for Mutual Defense

In February 1955, in the days leading up to the signing of the Turk-Iraq Pact, the Saudi and Egyptian governments conferred in Cairo on how to respond in the event the pact was signed. By early 1955 both nations firmly opposed Iraq, joining the Northern tier countries in a defense treaty. Egypt was adverse to it because Nasr sought to implement his own defense pact among local Arab countries through the auspices of the Arab League. In this formulation, Egypt would have a prominent leading role. Nasr viewed the Northern Tier concept, which included Iraq, as a rival treaty that would compete for influence among members of Nasr's potential defense group. If the Arab

¹³⁰ "Saudi Arabia: A Disruptive Force In Western-Arab Relations," Intelligence Report No. 7144, 18 Jan. 1956. Division of Research for Near East, South Asia, and Africa, p. 4.

¹³¹ "Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 25 July 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p.317-321.

League's grouping shrank in influence it would jeopardize Nasr's pact's effectiveness and prestige. To the Egyptian leader this was a zero sum gain scenario.

Furthermore, Nasr perceived the Baghdad Pact as an attempt by the West to allure nations, like Iraq, away from their Arab commitments, reconfirming Nasr's fear that the pact was a pretext for the West to meddle in Middle East's affairs. This meddling he believed benefited these powers to the detriment of the Arab nations who were not being given the opportunity to run their own affairs, guided solely by their own national interests. Nasr's opposition also stemmed from his own rivalry with Iraq and Nuri Said for predominance in the Arab world. Unlike Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Baghdad, which was based on historical disputes and on Saudi skepticism that the Hashemites had territorial ambitions in Saudi Arabia, Nasr's antagonism toward Iraq was rooted in a rivalry born out of a contest for influence amongst the Arabs. Nasr was chiefly concerned about improving his position in Syria and Lebanon as he ultimately sought to be the premier voice in the Arab League. With all this in mind, it is obvious that neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt wished to see Iraq gain a cozy relationship with the West and obtain all the benefits those relations would accrue. So, the two had strong mutual interests in seeing the Baghdad Pact fail.

While in Cairo during his February visit, Saudi Prime Minister, Prince Faisal had negotiated with Nasr about entering a bilateral defense agreement which was to take effect if the Turk-Iraqi Pact was consummated.¹³²

It appears that the Saudis entered these talks out of genuine fear of the Turk-Iraqi Pact. These talks were not a ploy to demonstrate to America its opposition to the pact, in

¹³² "Telegram From the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 27 Feb. 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 23.

hopes that the U.S. would frustrate the treaty between Turkey and Iraq. For the U.S. had not realized the talks had been going on and only found out about them when the American ambassador paid Prime Minister Faisal a courtesy call on the day of the signing of the Turk-Iraqi Pact. While the Saudi officials did voice their opposition to the Pact harshly, they were quick to remind their U.S. counterparts that they did not view them as enemies and reminded them of the common opponent they had in communist Russia. Faisal regretted the Baghdad Pact tremendously. He bitterly claimed that the signing of the treaty had inflamed the atmosphere in the region against the U.S. The Arab-Western cooperation that their nations had previously discussed could not possibly be implemented in such an atmosphere. It is likely though, that in reality, he lamented the advancement of his Iraqi rival much more than the set back in Arab-U.S. relations.

Despite now fully understanding Saudi opposition to the pact, the administration viewed the defense treaty as more important than the appeasement of Saudi Arabia. Even though Iraq's inclusion was unpopular with the Saudis, its participation in the pact was essential because of the possibility of it bringing Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon with it. It does not seem that the administration believed the decision would cause irreparable damage in its dealings with Saudi Arabia even when it discovered the Saudi treaty with Egypt. Ambassador Wadsworth attributed the vehemence with which the Saudis opposed the pact to jealousy rooted in its rivalry with the Hashemites and saw serious problems ahead that "boded ill for future Saudi-American relations."¹³³ This serious concern over relations with the Saudis did not temper the positive official U.S. response to news of the completion of the treaty. American reaction to Iraq's signing of the pact is well reflected

¹³³ Ibid., p 24.

in Dulles message to Nuri Said: "I have received news of the conclusion of the Iraqi-Turkish Mutual defense pact with much pleasure and I ask you accept my felicitations and all good wishes in your endeavors."¹³⁴

The administration never acted to prevent Saud from going over to Nasr. If anything, Washington instigated Saud's union with Nasr. For the U.S. government decided not to halt its support of Iraq's adherence to the mutual defense treaty. On top of that, it also began to publicly down play the importance of its long relationship with the Saudis at this juncture. Although the State Department noted that the violent Saudi objections to the Turk-Iraqi pact, would negatively impact US- Saudi Arabian relations¹³⁵ the administration choose not to make outwardly conciliatory gestures to the Saudis. Nor did it adjust policy in deference to the Saudis. The State Department was fully aware that its recent aid program for Iraq and its support for the Northern Tier defense concept, had alienated the U.S. from Saudi Arabia. Under Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover termed the state of U.S-Saudi relations as an "unfavorable drift" that was "not unexpected."¹³⁶ Although U.S. officials recognized that relations between the two governments were at a "crossroads" the administration was unwilling to change its policy on mutual defense and the border disputes.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ "Department of State to the Embassy in Baghdad, 2 Mar. 1955. Telegram 551. Department of State, Central Files, 682.87/2-2455

¹³⁵ "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political affairs," 3 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p. 251-254.

¹³⁶ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 5 Mar. 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 254-256.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 254-256.

This inflexibility appears to be an attempt by the U.S. not to look weak before the Saudis, because it was widely held in the State Department that the Saudis might attempt to use “threat or bluff” to improve their position in negotiations with the Americans over the Dhahran air base and the ARAMCO concession.¹³⁸ The U.S. proceeded with a gambit to improve its positions in those negotiations by determining to put on its poker face and not provide any indication of the true magnitude of its interests in Saudi Arabia. This ploy was an attempt to convince the Saudis that no positive result would come from the Saudi government resorting to extreme measures in negotiations. By this means, the U.S. attempted to demonstrate that it did not view Saudi Arabia essential enough to justify meeting increased Saudi demands.

Not only did the U.S. decide not to respond conciliatorily, but the administration also decided to move forward by attempting to convince the Saudis that the Northern Tier concept was indeed in Saudi Arabia’s best security interests.¹³⁹ This effort again overlooked the depth of antipathy between the Saudis and the Hashemites and failed miserably. Additionally, the American effort itself appears only to have been half hearted.

On March 6, the governments of Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia announced that their armed forces would be placed under a unified command. The announcement of what subsequently became known as the Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi or ESS Pact marked the moving of Syria and Saudi Arabia to a position under the influence of Egypt. Cairo’s influence became so great over Saudi Arabia that by 1956 some 10,000 Egyptians were

¹³⁸ “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political affairs,” 3 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

working in the kingdom. A thousand of these workers the State Department estimated held “influential positions.”¹⁴⁰ While this move did not threaten the long term relationship of the U.S. with the Saudis, it did place the desert kingdom in an antagonistic posture against the Baghdad Pact.

The ESS Pact also marked the loss of Syria to increased Egyptian influence. Once under Nasr’s influence the West’s attempts to win over Syria to the pact proved fruitless. The ESS Pact left Iraq facing greater exposure and isolated as the lone Arab member of the Northern Tier. In early March 1955, the U.S. did not perceive the potency of the ESS and many American officials still hoped the ESS pact could be manipulated to advance western interests.¹⁴¹

Saud was driven to Nasr due to his fear of any alliance that included the Hashemites and disappointed with an apparent lack of loyalty from the Americans. Saud indicated to the Egyptian leader that he was willing to follow the Egyptian lead in foreign affairs and establish a committee of representatives from the two nations that would make foreign policy recommendations.¹⁴² Not long after Iraq’s adherence to the Baghdad Pact, Saudi Arabia joined Egypt in aggressively opposing the western backed agreement. Egypt and Saudi Arabia bolstered their ties further by placing their armed forces under a unified command.¹⁴³ The U.S. quickly came to appreciate that Saudi Arabia at that point

¹⁴⁰ Eli Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995) p. 206.

¹⁴¹ “Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State,” 8 Mar. 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 29-32.

¹⁴² “Ambassador Caffery in Cairo to Secretary of State,” 16 Aug 1954. Dispatch No. 211, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/8-1654, National Archive.

¹⁴³ Kemal, p. 91. “Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State,” 11 Mar. 1955. *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 32-34. . “Telegram from the

had become a major obstacle to the West developing defense ties with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.¹⁴⁴ Soon U.S. officials noticed that the Egyptian-Saudi alliance accomplished more than disruption to the Baghdad Pact. The administration soon realized that the ESS proved detrimental to Washington's already tenuous relations with the Saudi leadership, as they saw Cairo pushing King Saud to demand greater concessions from the U.S. in its negotiations over the Dhahran Air Base.¹⁴⁵ Nasr was now very hostile to the Baghdad Pact, yet still somewhat ambivalent to Eisenhower and the Americans.

Saud at this point went on an offensive against the Baghdad Pact and it soon became apparent how costly Saudi opposition to the pact would be. As early as March 11, Saudi authorities threatened the Lebanese business community in Dhahran that it would cut off their business ventures in the kingdom, in a hostile attempt to influence Lebanon to consider joining the ESS and further isolate Iraq.¹⁴⁶ Turkey also complained about significant Saudi pressure on Lebanon. Not only was Turkey fearful of the isolation of Iraq, but it also perceived Lebanon linking to the ESS as weakening the Baghdad Pact with Iraq by frustrating the pact's plans for expansion.¹⁴⁷

Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State," 21 May 1955. *FRUS, 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴ National Intelligence Estimate," 21 June 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁵ "Byroade in Cairo to Secretary of State," 23 June 1956. Dispatch No. 2557, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/6-2356, National Archive.

¹⁴⁶ "Telegram From the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State," 11 Mar. 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 32.

¹⁴⁷ "Telegram from the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State," 20 May 1955. Telegram 1461 Department of State, Central Files, 780.5/5-2055.

Saudi Arabia's Efforts to Weaken the Baghdad Pact

It appears that Saudi Arabia pursued isolating Iraq more intently than the other ESS partners. This appearance may simply reflect a better concealment by Egypt of its role in efforts to oppose the Baghdad Pact. Saudi Arabia and Egypt believed that without additional Arab participation the pact would wither and die. So they pressed the Arab states not to join the pact and punished Iraq in an attempt to dislodge it from the pact and also to provide a threatening example to other Arab nations considering entering the pact.

Jordan became a particular focus of the campaign to cut off Iraq and stymie any Hashemite ambitions that could possibly be realized through a functioning Baghdad Pact. In Jordan, King Hussein reported that Saudi Arabia had become the “most disturbing government” opposing it and Jordan’s possible entrance to the Turk-Iraqi Pact. The king recorded that even Egypt was no longer pressing Jordan as vehemently as the Saudis were resisting American requests to join Iraq in the pact.¹⁴⁸

Despite the blow which would be incurred by Iraq if Jordan was prevented from joining, the Iraqi leadership remained apparently disinterested in helping its neighbor and fellow Hashemite relative in its defense against the ESS onslaught. Jordan at the time appeared to be on the verge of joining the Baghdad Pact. But, during the first wave of the Saudi propaganda attack in Jordan, Iraq’s leadership told a British military attaché that the ministry of defense was too busy to send a team to Jordan to coordinate efforts between the countries concerning preparations for Jordan to enter the Baghdad Pact.¹⁴⁹ This hesitance on the part of Nuri to assist Jordan was a result of his suspicions that

¹⁴⁸ “Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State,” 16 Mar. 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ Elie Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, p. 193.

Jordan's Foreign Minister was complicit with Saudi Arabia as result of bribes (this was of heightened concern, because King Hussein was spending a great deal of time during this period outside of his kingdom leaving the foreign minister a more influential personage).¹⁵⁰ As a result of this concern, Iraq made no move to aid Jordan.

Saud's uncontested assault on Jordan proved devastating to King Hussein's government, and both Britain and Hussein entreated Nuri to help his own cause by defending Jordan from this barrage. Eventually, after a meeting between King Faysal of Iraq and Jordan's King Hussein, Iraqi's suspicions were addressed and Iraq started to supply funding to help Jordan respond to the debilitating propaganda campaign. Iraq even sent troops to aid in countering Saud's attempts to destabilize Jordan and pry it away from Baghdad's influence.¹⁵¹ The Iraqis also began funding their own propaganda broadcasts from Amman in an attempt to counter anti-Baghdad Pact propaganda.¹⁵² The Iraqis, however, could not match the ESS propaganda machine. Ambassador Gallam attempted to come to Jordan's assistance by requesting more powerful broadcasting equipment from the State Department. Washington though did not grasp the significance of the battle being waged over Jordan and delayed in responding to Gallam's request.¹⁵³ The American contribution to aid in the radio effort characterized its involvement with the rest of the Baghdad Pact, as it came too late. By the time Iraq had taken the initiative, the advantage that Saudi Arabia and the ESS had gained in shaping the domestic situation in Jordan proved insurmountable. This left many to wonder why Iraq did not employ

¹⁵⁰ Waldemar J. Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Said* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1964), p. 41.

¹⁵¹ Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 386.

¹⁵² Kennet Love, *Suez: The Twice Fought War* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 1969), p. 207.

¹⁵³ Gallam, *Under General Nuri*, p. 49-50.

some of its new found oil wealth (its oil concession were bringing in \$200 million annually)¹⁵⁴ to defend Jordan earlier.¹⁵⁵

Of all the Arab countries, the ESS efforts were primarily focused on Iraq. After a year of Saudi led assaults to isolate Iraq, Nuri Said accurately assessed the effectiveness of their endeavor stating, “The entire success of the Baghdad Pact depends upon stopping Saud. He may be anti-communist, he is nevertheless doing more harm than are the Communists. Nasr could do nothing without Saudi money.”¹⁵⁶ Although some American intelligence suggested that Saudi Arabia had colluded with leftist elements,¹⁵⁷ in using its extensive resources to oppose additional Arab states joining the Western-sponsored collective security arrangements, Saud remained staunchly opposed to aiding the Communist cause in the region. Yet at the same time he firmly opposed to the Administration’s primary tool to deal with communist advances in the region.

The Iraqis grasped the significance of Saud’s contribution to the ESS attacks on their country. In a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, Nuri claimed that all the aid the U.S. gave to the pact was nullified by Saudi activities in Syria, Jordan and other Arab countries.¹⁵⁸ Crown Prince Abdul Ilah of Iraq told Dulles that Saudi money fueled Egyptian propaganda efforts. The Crown Prince asserted that this effort

¹⁵⁴ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, p. 200.

¹⁵⁵ Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said*, p. 239.

¹⁵⁶ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 1 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 252-258.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Secretary of State,” 4 Jan, 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 309.

¹⁵⁸ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 1 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 255.

was threatening his hold on Iraq and it was also the reason for the Jordanian King's perilous position in his country.¹⁵⁹ The situation became even worse for the western powers when Saudi Arabia agreed to supplant the United Kingdom in Jordan by agreeing to provide Amman the twenty million pounds of funds that the British had previously supplied annually. This made joining the Baghdad Pact almost impossible for Jordan as considerable influence accompanied the Saudi aid package.¹⁶⁰

Abdul Ilah requested that the U.S. pressure Saud to end his hostile propaganda efforts in Jordan and Lebanon. The British too, in a letter by the Prime Minister as well through other means as well sought American help to restrain the use of the Saudi's money in the region.¹⁶¹ The U.S. responded to these injunctions from Iraq and the U.K. in a low-key manner. The administration requested Ambassador Wadsworth in Jidda to inform the king that the U.S. had received reports of Saudi activity in Jordan and Iraq.¹⁶² But the U.S. did very little to influence Saud's spending.

The effects of the Saudi-Egyptian propaganda efforts quickly proved quite significant. These results forced the administration to seriously contemplate direct action to halt them. Iraq's position became so grim that Dulles and Eisenhower considered making a deal with Nasr to ensure he ceased the assaults. The State Department authorized Robert Anderson to seek a settlement with Nasr. Anderson was in the region as a special White House emissary on a mission to pursue a secret peace proposal aimed

¹⁵⁹ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State" 5 Feb. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 1032.

¹⁶⁰ "Letter from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower," 16 Jan. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 313.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.314.

¹⁶² "Telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in Jidda," 24 Jan. 1956. Telegram 352, Department of State, Central Files, 780.002/1-2456.

at resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict. Anderson managed to obtain a proposal in which the U.S. would willingly agree to no longer recruit additional Arab states for “further accession” into the Baghdad Pact in exchange for Egypt 1) ending its campaign against the Baghdad Pact, 2) accepting the Johnston water plan, and 3) at least giving private assurances about a settlement on Palestine.¹⁶³ This deal was never fully implemented, but that the U.S. even considered such a desperate action shows how effective the propaganda had been against the supporters of the pact in the region. It had been so debilitating, that just to have it end was considered better than all the advantages to be gained from the addition of other Arab states to the defense alliance.¹⁶⁴

Saudi Arabia Manages to Avoid Severing Relations with the U.S.

Although the split between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia over the Baghdad Pact was very real, both sides handled the crack in relations tactfully and it occurred without completely severing Saudi-American relations. This made future reconciliation possible. Ambassador Wadsworth later looked back on the difficult period with his Saudi colleagues and claimed the U.S. never lost faith in King Saud, even while the relationship was strained in 1955-1956.¹⁶⁵ Although reports of intense attempts by Saudi to sabotage the U.S. sponsored Baghdad Pact had been received from all corners of the Middle East, the Saudis were very careful not to publicly oppose the Americans themselves. When Saudi frustrations about U.S. policies manifested themselves to the world community,

¹⁶³ “Karachi to Cairo,” 6 Mar. 1956. Kahi 2629, Department of State, NEA Files: Lot 59 D 518 Alpha-Anderson talks with British Government and Nasser.

¹⁶⁴ Although the U.S. probably calculated that by this point no additional Arab states would be able to join the Baghdad Pact anyway.

¹⁶⁵ “Ambassador Wadsworth in Jidda to secretary of State,” 31 July 1956 Dispatch No. 46, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86A/7-3156, National Archive.

Saudi diplomats were quick to reassure the U.S. of the kingdom's friendship and to remind the western power of their mutual interests in an attempt to preserve amiable relations. Saudi Arabia, after publicly parting from the traditional alliance, put forward the greater effort of the two countries. It went to great lengths to assure Washington that its long-term interest did indeed lie with the U.S. This attention to the relationship paid dividends for the Saudis as the U.S. often turned a blind eye to its attacks on the Baghdad Pact members. During this period a bewildered Nuri Said had asked why if the U.S. "favored the pact, did it allow Saudi Arabia to act the way it does?"¹⁶⁶ The answer to the Prime Minister's question was three-fold, yet simple: the U.S.'s petroleum interests, U.S. concerns about the Dhahran air base, and Washington's desire for future cooperation with Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the administration feared that if it staunchly opposed King Saud he might feel exposed and could open himself up to communist influence in an attempt to fortify his position.

At the height of the American-Saudi dispute, the Americans did their part to prevent relations from worsening by maintaining the activities of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (the U.S. military aid commitment to the desert kingdom). The U.S. went on to sell three B-26 aircraft in 1955.¹⁶⁷ Dulles pushed the rest of the administration to make an additional 18 M-41 tanks available saying, "the tanks will help maintain or even enhance our position in the eyes of the Saudi Arabian government."¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶⁶ "Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State," 1 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 255.

¹⁶⁷ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 6 May 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p. 259.

¹⁶⁸ "Letter from the Secretary of State to Secretary of Defense," 4 Aug. 1955. Department of State, Central Files, 786A.5-MSP/8-455.

Secretary of State recognized that arms was the area which Saud was most vulnerable to Soviet influence and desperately wanted to prevent the USSR from obtaining a toe-hold in Saudi Arabia.

During this entire period, King Saud was regularly approached by the Soviets about pursuing various forms of cooperation. The Saudi king was fully aware that acceptance of any of these Soviet efforts would make rapprochement with the U.S. impossible. This indicates that Saud was gaining a greater sense of the implications of the Cold War as it affected the global sphere. With this in mind he pursued a delicate balance of maintaining relations with Nasr, while rebuffing Soviet advances. Saud managed this tightrope walk in the face of strong encouragement, as previously mentioned, from his counselors to accept Soviet aid. Saud indicated his desire for future cooperation with the U.S. by prohibiting Prime Minister Faisal from accepting an invitation for an official visit from the Chinese and then later, he denied a Chinese request to establish diplomatic representation in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶⁹ He followed this by refusing a Soviet arms deal that would have been similar to the one which Nasr had earlier accepted. Sensitive to the ongoing debate over communism in the halls of Saudi power, Ambassador Wadsworth urged the administration to permit the previously mentioned tank sale. He claimed that it “might tip the scales in our favor in what today must be a great debate in the highest Saudi court circles: shall they in turn accept the Soviet arms offer?”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia,” 25 July, 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 263-264.

¹⁷⁰ “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State,” 5 Oct. 1955, *FRUS 1955-57*, Ibid., p. 275-277.

While the debate over Communism was going on in Saudi Arabia British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's announcement that the United Kingdom was withdrawing from the long negotiated arbitration of the Buraimi dispute nearly destroyed the fragile diplomatic situation.¹⁷¹ The arbitration proceedings had been in their final stages and most observers felt they were going badly for the British. After this British action Saud came under extreme pressure to turn to the Soviets as many in the Saudi government felt that their country had already gone beyond reasonable measures to secure an agreement with the British and that at the late October date, the British were only pulling out of the arbitration process because London believed it was on the threshold of losing the ruling. The CIA interpreted this British move as an attempt to sabotage the entire arbitration proceeding. The administration was incensed as it saw years of negotiation efforts destroyed. Simultaneously, it feared the communist cause would be strengthened.¹⁷² Although many in the diplomatic corps urged the administration to condemn the British action, the president, hesitant to criticize his British ally, did not offer any such statement.¹⁷³

Many Saudis considered it an insult and betrayal that the Americans would accept this behavior from their Atlantic partner. It took all of Saud's staying power to keep his kingdom from turning to the Soviets at such an hour. Throughout this entire episode, Saud maintained an incredibly cordial rapport with American diplomats in his

¹⁷¹ Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State," 26 Oct. 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 280-281.

¹⁷² "Message from the Director of Central Intelligence to the Secretary of State," *Ibid.*, p. 281-282.

¹⁷³ Telegram from the Consulate General in Dhahran to the Department of State," 30 Oct. 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 283-285.

kingdom so as not to give even the smallest doubt about his intentions with the communists.¹⁷⁴

Although Saud for regional and domestic reasons had abandoned working with the U.S. in regional defense, he had not completely severed ties with Washington. Despite the damage he had inflicted on the Baghdad Pact, the U.S. for its part was very receptive to keeping channels open to Riyadh. So, even in the tensest days in the battle over the Baghdad Pact the possibility of rapprochement seemed conceivable. Not long after this period rapprochement between the two nations would be inevitable and Saudi Arabia would once again back U.S. plans for regional defense without much change in Washington's positions. This fact seems to indicate that Saudi Arabia could have been won over to the Baghdad Pact if the U.S. had committed itself to seriously recruiting Saudi Arabia in the early days of its regional defense planning. Avoiding the increased Soviet influence and the fractured and destabilized state of the Middle East which resulted from the conflict over the Baghdad Pact would have made a successful effort to obtain Riyadh's association with the pact. Especially because the issues that prevented Saud from entering the mutual defense agreement were well within Washington's ability to address.

¹⁷⁴ Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State," 6 Nov. 1955, Ibid., p. 286-288.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rapprochement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia

A Move in U.S. Policy to Saudi Arabia

Soon the U.S. and Saudi Arabia would entertain ideas of rapprochement.

Interestingly, neither government significantly altered its policies. Instead, the primary development which made improved relations possible was that the two countries better understood how vital their mutual relationship was. The political situation was a major factor in the new alignment between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Alterations both nations made in relations with third parties were also important to opening both Washington and Riyadh to consider rapprochement.

One major impetus for the Eisenhower administration to pursue Saudi Arabia about returning to more normal relations proved to be Iraq's precarious position and the overall desperate state of the entire Baghdad Pact. Dulles and the State Department had become convinced that without some form of U.S. action on behalf of Iraq, Nuri would not be able to sustain his hold on power for very long. The Joint Chiefs of Staff confronted the president in March with the possibility that the pact might "disintegrate" without some form of intervention by the United States. The JCS suggested that the U.S. should find a figure to lead the struggling defense pact. Eisenhower speculated that perhaps Saud could be that person, but Chairman Admiral Charles Radford thought that the leaders of Pakistan and Turkey would make better considerations. The JCS believed that the best remedy for the pact's situation was for the U.S. to strengthen it by joining

the mutual defense organization.¹⁷⁵ Over the following month the JCS on several occasions expressed the view that a swift adherence to the pact provided the best solution.¹⁷⁶ The British also continued to urge the Americans into a “dramatic move” toward the Baghdad Pact.¹⁷⁷ The State Department, however, believed for a series of diplomatic and political reasons that will be examined later that it was not in the country’s best interests and convinced the president to keep the U.S. out of the pact.

The U.S. Desire to Utilize Saud

The administration was increasingly attracted to King Saud. It began to view Saud as a figure who could not only protect the ailing Baghdad Pact, but could prove to be a potential moderating force against both extreme nationalism and communist influence in the region.¹⁷⁸ The administration viewed these two phenomena as synonymous with each other and opposed both. Additionally, the president hoped the king would extend the Dhahran basing agreement and draw closer to Iraq and thereby advance the Western interest in mutual defense. As this policy developed over the following weeks, the president became convinced that in order to win Saudi Arabia to the U.S. side, the British had to make territorial concessions in Buraimi that they had long opposed.

¹⁷⁵ “Memorandum of a Conference with the President,” 15 Mar.1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 258-259.

¹⁷⁶ “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense,” 23 Mar.1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 261.

¹⁷⁷ “Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State,” 26 Mar.1956, *Ibid.*, p. 262-4.

¹⁷⁸ “Memorandum from the Acting Secretary of State to the President,” 1 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 346.

Eisenhower began to see a further benefit of the developing policy of rapprochement. He held that without Saudi Arabia, Nasr would be isolated, thus threatening his leadership position and he would be unable to continue his close association with the Soviets.¹⁷⁹ The president put emphasis on the desirability of Saudi taking a prominent leadership role among the Arabs. “I suggested to the State Department that we begin to build up some other individual as a prospective leader of the Arab world-in the thought that mutually antagonistic personal ambitions might disrupt the aggressive plans that Nasr is evidently developing,” he wrote in his diary. “My choice of such a rival is King Saud.”¹⁸⁰ The president believed a staunch Saudi friendship would isolate Nasr and threaten his position, “certainly Egypt would no longer be regarded as a leader of the Arab world.”¹⁸¹ While the U.S. effort to develop a rival to Nasr had a degree of success, it also brought the Egypt leader for the first time in direct confrontation with the U.S.

Another reason that the president was drawn to the idea of building up Saudi was his concern for Europe. The continent had increasingly grown dependent on Middle Eastern oil, receiving more petroleum from the Arabs than any other source. “The economy of European countries would collapse if those oil supplies were cut off,” he wrote.¹⁸² Saudi, Eisenhower knew, was important to keeping the supply line open.

¹⁷⁹ “Diary Entry by the President,” 13 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 342-343.

¹⁸⁰ “Diary Entry by the President,” 28 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 425.

¹⁸¹ “Diary Entry by the President,” 28 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 425.

¹⁸² “Diary Entry by the President,” 13 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 343.

One final benefit the president believed would result from better ties to Saud would be the possible opportunity to reduce Arab-Israeli tensions. Eisenhower reasoned that bringing Saud in the American camp while simultaneously providing Israel with the necessary assurances could “greatly minimize if not practically eliminate” the possibility of trouble in that region.¹⁸³

He further believed Saudi Arabia could assist in frustrating Egypt’s attempt to lead a non-aligned movement. The U.S. president viewed the movement as counter to U.S. objectives in the Third World. He confided in his diary, “I am certain of one thing. If Egypt finds herself thus isolated from the rest of the Arab world, and with no ally in sight except Soviet Russia, she would very quickly get sick of that prospect and would join us in search for a just and decent peace in the region.”¹⁸⁴

Dulles shared the president’s desire to strengthen relations, yet he appeared not entirely convinced that Saud was the individual to challenge Nasr, especially because the two were still in a functioning alliance.¹⁸⁵ Dulles feared that if the U.S. was seen by Nasr as threatening his position, it might threaten the chances of Egypt considering a peace plan with Israel and the Johnston water plan¹⁸⁶ for the Jordan Valley.¹⁸⁷ Dulles also was

¹⁸³ “Tedul 27 to Colombo,” 10 Mar 1956, Department of State, Central Files, 110.10-DU/3-1056.

¹⁸⁴ “Diary Entry by the President,” 8 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 326-327.

¹⁸⁵ “Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President,” 28 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 419-421.

¹⁸⁶ “Telegram from the Delegation at the SEATO Council Meeting to the Department of State,” *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 251.

¹⁸⁷ Eisenhower dispatched Eric Johnston to the Middle East in an effort to get the regional parties to agree on how to utilize the resources of the limited Jordan Valley. The plan was backed by the State Department, financed by the U.N. and conducted by the Tennessee Valley Authority with its long experience in hydro development.

less optimistic about the benefits that could possibly be derived from improved relations with King Saud.

The British initially shared Dulles' apprehensions about building up Saud.¹⁸⁸ The Americans and the British had discussed the possibility of a counter to Nasr since 1954. The British wished to build up Iraq and Nuri Said, over whom they had much influence, as a means to strengthen the Baghdad Pact but the Americans looked to promote King Saud, and the two nations in these early discussions could not agree on who the figure to lead a campaign against Nasr.¹⁸⁹ Some within the British Foreign Office believed an attempt to counter Nasr would fail because they perceived the Egyptian leader's position as too strong to be successfully rivaled.¹⁹⁰ The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs John Selwyn Lloyd was apprehensive about Saud because he was uncertain about the king's attitude toward Britain's Middle East endeavors. London was also reluctant about backing the Saudi king, because of the impact a strengthened Saud would have on the ongoing negotiations in the United Kingdom's disputes with Saudi Arabia. The British did not recognize the opportunity Saudi Arabia represented. Instead they viewed it as a threat to their regional aspirations.¹⁹¹ Lloyd believed that rapprochement with Saud would bring the rest of the scorned ESS in greater conflict with Britain and its allies

¹⁸⁸ "Letter from the British Ambassador to Secretary of State Dulles," 5 Apr. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 467.

¹⁸⁹ Nigel John Ashton, *Eisenhower, MacMillan and the Problem of Nasser*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 60.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁹¹ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia," 25 Apr. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 363.

in the region.¹⁹² Less than a year later though, in the spring of 1957 with Nuri extremely weak because of the Arab attacks, and no other options, Lloyd advised Eisenhower that Saud was “clearly” the best man for the West to back in the region.¹⁹³

At their meeting in Karachi in March 1956, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs shared with Dulles that the United Kingdom was still considering a policy of bolstering of a rival to Nasr.¹⁹⁴ Yet, at this point, the British perceived national interests had left them with less than a positive outlook on Saud.¹⁹⁵ Fearing the U.S. would leverage the U.K. into renouncing its claims in Buraimi, Llyod labored to convince Dulles that a Buraimi settlement would not successfully pry Saud loose from Nasr.¹⁹⁶ The British would go on for several months to stall and maneuver to preclude surrendering any territory.

In the early days of the development of his plans for Saud, Eisenhower himself had to admit, “I do not know the man, and therefore do not know whether he could be built up into the position I visualize. Nevertheless Arabia is a country that contains the holy places of the Muslim world, and the Saudi Arabians are considered to be the most deeply religious of all the Arab groups. Consequently, the King could be built up,

¹⁹² “Letter from Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles,” 23 Jun. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 377.

¹⁹³ Memorandum of a Conversation,” 21 Mar. 1957, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 27. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 712-7167.

¹⁹⁴ “Telegram from the Delegation at the SEATO Council Meeting to the Department of State,” *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 251.

¹⁹⁵ Evelyn Schuckburg, *Descent to Suez, Diaries 1951-1956*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), p. 355 and Keith Kyle, *Suez*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), p. 100.

¹⁹⁶ “Letter from Foreign Secretary Lloyd to Secretary of State Dulles,” 23 Jun. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 377.

possibly, as a spiritual leader. Once this was accomplished we might begin to urge his right to political leadership.”¹⁹⁷

Expectations in the administration ran high about Saud’s capabilities and all that remained was a successful effort to bring Saud over to the American side. Many of these expectations were based on the president’s analysis, which suffered from only a basic understanding of the region that was significantly weaker in his appreciation for the inter-workings of the Middle East than Dulles and his State Department staff possessed a better understanding of Saud and were more cautious about this policy. Nonetheless the White House’s evaluation drove the administration’s actions. So, in the spring of 1956 the idea of building up Saud by the Americans in order to moderate Nasr and to help provide relief to Iraq and the Baghdad Pact quickly transformed into a plan to detach Saud from Nasr.

By the end of March when it had become obvious that efforts to bring Nasr to adopt a policy of conciliation toward Israel were unlikely to succeed, Dulles and the State Department were ready to launch this newly developed Middle Eastern Policy.¹⁹⁸ On March 28, the president endorsed the new strategy that was based on the following three main points: 1) weakening Nasr by stalling on grain and arms shipments as well as slowing U.S. participation in assisting with the Aswan Dam project. 2) Strengthen the U.S. position in Saudi Arabia by more fully addressing Saudi military needs. 3) Plan drastic action in contingency. This plan was aimed at modifying Egyptian and Syrian

¹⁹⁷ “Diary Entry by the President,” 28 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 425.

¹⁹⁸ “Memorandum Prepared in the Bureau of Near eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs,” *Ibid.*, p. 409-418.

policies through increased American backing of the Baghdad Pact and strengthening ties to friendly Middle East nations. Saud was one of the strategy's cornerstones.¹⁹⁹ This policy became known as the Omega Plan.

British fears that the proposal to build up King Saud would likely result in the U.S. calling them to back down in the Buraimi dispute were quickly realized. Only two days after the president endorsed the Omega Plan, both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department concluded that in order to entice Saud, Britain needed to make concessions on the bitter oasis issue. The following day Dulles informed the British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Roger Makins, of this evaluation, telling the ambassador that Saud was at that point providing important anti-communist leadership but would only be won over from Egypt if Britain was willing to accommodate the king on Buraimi. The Secretary said that a settlement was of "vital importance" for the West to counter Soviet influence through Nasr. While Dulles was unambiguous that the U.S. desired a final settlement, he also acknowledged that a mutually agreed upon indefinite postponement of a final decision might obtain the required outcome.²⁰⁰ This understanding between the U.S. and the United Kingdom would leave the Buraimi issue unresolved for years. But as Saud began to obtain a greater handle on the larger regional and global situation, the oasis dispute became less important to Saudi Arabia.

Attempt to Split Nasr and Saud

Since the idea of Saud heading the anti-Nasr coalition in the Middle East was introduced by the Americans in 1955, British policy makers and military strategists had

¹⁹⁹ "Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President," 28 Mar. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 421.

²⁰⁰ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 1 Apr. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 435.

begrudgingly began backing such a plan. The U.K. had long preferred that Saud be induced by other means than Buraimi. This insistence gradually lessened as tensions had steadily grown with Nasr over the Suez Canal. Finding an answer to Nasr at this point became a priority. Air Marshal Sir William Dickson, the Chairman of the British Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited Washington in early April, at which time the air marshal spoke of the urgency of opposing Nasr. Dickson suggested that splitting Egypt from Saudi Arabia was essential to obtaining their goal.²⁰¹ Lloyd too began to view the “weaning” of Saud from Nasr as extremely important.²⁰² Nasr’s recognition of Communist China at the end of April 1955 pushed Dulles and Eden into agreeing that their chief concern in the region was the removal of Nasr’s influence. The British Prime Minister, for the moment at least, was willing to consider some flexibility in the border dispute if it meant solidifying American commitment to the very pressing British objective of dealing with Nasr. So when Dulles requested immediate action on the oasis, the British quickly agreed to work on the settlement.²⁰³ Although the British devoted much energy to discussing and arranging the format and location of the negotiations with the Saudis, real talks were very slow to materialize. This seemed to be the result of the stalling strategy by the British.

Nuri Said welcomed the new policy and fully endorsed the plan, sensing an opportunity not just to end Saud’s harassment of Iraq, but the Iraqi Prime Minister also saw the possibility of gaining an ally against Nasr. Saud could possibly tilt the scales in the power struggle in the Middle East to Iraq’s side. Nuri suggested though that the

²⁰¹ Ritche Owendale, *Britain, the United States, and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East, 1945-1962* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 150.

²⁰² “Letter from the British Ambassador to Secretary of State Dulles,” 5 Apr. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 468.

²⁰³ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 1 Apr. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 440-441.

initiative for such a separation must appear to come from Saud.²⁰⁴ This would make it easier to convince the Saudi public that the move was made in Saudi Arabia's national interest. Nuri recognized Saud's role as protector of the Muslim holy sites afforded him a special degree of esteem among the Arab public. It is likely though that Nuri did not share the West's hopes for Saud's success as a rival to Nasr, since this was a role he coveted for himself. But after he was so weakened by the attacks from the ESS, Nuri was not in a position to successfully challenge Nasr or oppose an attempt by Saud.

The British introduced the proposal to the other members of the Baghdad Pact when the pacts council met in April 1956 in Tehran. The United Kingdom's representative introduced the idea as an alternative to launching a publicity war against the ESS.²⁰⁵ There was general agreement among the delegates that an effort should be made to drive a wedge between Nasr and Saud.²⁰⁶ This seemed the best prospect to save the beleaguered defense agreement. Although territorial concessions and other inducements were significant in the U.S. and British strategy for winning Saud over from Nasr, the two nations also intended to convince Saud that Nasr actually stood as a threat to the Saudi kingdom.²⁰⁷

Nasr's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956 briefly shuffled interests in the Middle East, but it would ultimately prove to be an agent to move Saud into alliance with the U.S. Initially though, the crisis had strengthen Nasr's position in the Middle

²⁰⁴ Eli Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), p. 208.

²⁰⁵ "Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State," 18 Apr. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 290.

²⁰⁶ Podeh, p. *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, p. 208.

²⁰⁷ "Memorandum from Roundtree to Dulles and Hoover," 31 Mar. 1956. Department of State, NEA Files: Lot 59 D 518, Omega.

East. When Robert Anderson was sent again to the Saudis to discuss the American plan to oppose Nasr, the royals expressed a desire to confront Nasr since the Egyptian leader at that point was held at an unprecedented esteem by the Saudi public because of the nationalization.²⁰⁸ Saudi reticence though did not affect U.S. planning and as the administration continued to pursue its plan unabated in a manner that reflected a solution looking very similar to its plans prior to the Suez crisis.²⁰⁹

President Eisenhower wrote Dulles at the NATO summit affirming his conviction to back Saud despite the temporary set back posed by Nasr's popularity. At a meeting of the National Security Council a little over a week later the administration decided to support Saud instead of joining the Baghdad Pact. This was due primarily to the administration's belief that Nasr was a communist threat, one which the pact was not conceived to oppose. So, a regional rival to Nasr needed to be created. In exchange for Saud's leadership, the Americans were willing to promise the king that the U.S. would not longer pursue joining the pact.²¹⁰

As important as the Middle East situation was to the president, Eisenhower was more concerned about the reconstruction of Europe. This concern seems to have fueled the administration to make a concerted effort to improve relations with Saudi Arabia. The circumstance of Western Europe prompted the U.S. to seek out Saudi Arabia more than the worsening situation in Iraq. The British, French, and Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal following Nasr's nationalization of the waterway had negatively affected the

²⁰⁸ Ray Takeyh, *The Orgins of the Eisenhower Doctrine*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 130ff.

²⁰⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation" 21 Nov. 1956, Eisenhower Library, Whiteman File, DDE Diaries.

²¹⁰ Ashton, *Eisenhower, MacMillan and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 107.

already struggling European economies. Arab anger over the invasion had caused threats by the oil producers in the region to cut off oil supplies to Europe. Saud though was moving toward Washington and secretly assured the Americans he would be willing to cooperate with the U.S. on supplying oil to Europe. Eisenhower's prime motivation in building up King Saud as a major figure in the Middle East was his concern to guarantee greater access to Middle Eastern oil for Western Europe. The president was convinced that the dissolution of Western Europe due to economic difficulties could be avoided by an infusion of Saudi petroleum.²¹¹ The Saudis were crucial because the administration's economic advisors had counseled the president to avoid increasing U.S. production in support of Europe because it would be very difficult to cut back when the crisis subsided. In light of this advice, the U.S. itself could directly alleviate Europe's dependence on the Middle East to meet its energy needs.

In order to keep Europe fully supplied, the president proposed to ingratiate the U.S. to Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the president redirected the attention of U.S. policy once again to the Buraimi dispute and using U.S. influence to satisfactorily resolve the boarder dispute for Saud.²¹² The attempt to win over Saud by means of Buraimi was a very interesting move, as the primary regional concern of King Saud at the time was not Buraimi, but his opposition to the Baghdad Pact. Nonetheless, the prospect of a breakthrough in the oasis dispute proved very effective in satisfying three divergent interests of the U.S. involving Saudi Arabia 1) it brought the State Department closer to dealing with its concern for Nuri's isolated position in Iraq. 2) Improved relations with

²¹¹ "Memorandum of a Conference with the President," 21 Nov. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 340-341.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 340-341.

Saud would help Eisenhower in his desire to prop up the ailing European economic situation and 3) it gave Saud a foreign relations victory in the region which simultaneously proved Washington's loyalty and marked a rapprochement between the two nations.

By the end of November, as the Suez crisis was simmering down, the administration believed it had a unique opportunity to achieve the improved relations it desired with Saudi Arabia. The president knew that Britain's policy in the region would play a critical role in the success of U.S. attempts to draw in Saud. Under Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover, noted that withdrawing French and United Kingdom troops from the Suez would go far in relaxing tensions. Eisenhower, on the other hand, did not believe such a positive local reaction should be assumed and desired to pursue a more intentional plan for working out an understanding with Saud. The president and his advisers understood that the difficulty with Saudi Arabia went deeper than the King, down to Saud's very skeptical advisors. Eisenhower deemed it paramount to push the British once again into an agreement with Saud over Buraimi. There were even hopes in the administration that this resolution would prompt Saudi support for the Baghdad Pact.²¹³ The prospect of Saudi Arabia entering the pact was leverage the administration choose to exploit in its attempt to get London to yield to Saud. The United Kingdom had long been lobbying the U.S. to enter the pact. The new possibility of additionally bringing Saudi Arabia with it, the administration thought, might be a big enough of an enticement to get the British to end their intransigence on the oasis issue.

On November 21, Secretary of Treasury George Humphrey pointed out that possibly an even more effective point of leverage existed for the U.S. as they approached

²¹³ Ibid., p. 341.

the British about Buraimi. Humphrey noted that London was facing a severe financial crisis that would have to be resolved in ten days. The treasury secretary claimed that the U.K.'s need for economic support provided the U.S. with an excellent opportunity to press Britain on the issues relating to Saudi Arabia.²¹⁴

Saud Grows Disillusioned with Nasr

In addition to the situation in the United Kingdom, the moment was propitious also because of a new openness in Saudi Arabia to the United States and the Saudi prospect of aligning with the West in Middle East defense. One of the key contributions to this new openness to the West was Saud's disillusionment with Nasr that would prove to rupture the king's alliance with the Egyptian revolutionary.

Officials from the Standard Oil Company who had sources in the Saudi palace had been reporting that Saud sported a "fear of Egyptian activities and intentions in the area."²¹⁵ King Saud indeed did have concerns about the general philosophy of Nasr and its long-term implications. The king seemed very disturbed by Nasr's recognition of China in 1955.²¹⁶ Dulles believed that exploiting these anxieties was crucial in breaking up the Saud-Nasr alliance.²¹⁷ The Secretary of State's analysis proved correct, but it is difficult to gauge what role the U.S. played in causing the fracture.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 342.

²¹⁵ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 31 Jan. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 337.

²¹⁶ Asher Susser and Aryeh Shmuelevitz eds., *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*. (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 93.

²¹⁷ "Memorandum of a Conversation by MacArthur," 1 Apr 1956. Department of State, NEA Files: Lot 59 D 518, Omega.

The possible threat posed by Nasr was not a new concern for Saud. The king had confronted the danger posed to his throne by Nasr's improved access to the political situation in the kingdom after allying with Cairo in 1955. That year a scheme developed by a group of senior army officers, to overthrow Saud was discovered. These officers aimed to assassinate Prince Faisal in a move that they hoped would force Saud to abdicate.²¹⁸ The movement behind the plot possessed an undeniable resemblance to Nasr's Revolutionary Command Council in both composition and intentions. Saud had no illusions or doubts about the source that had prompted the movement's formation.²¹⁹ When the coup was uncovered, the participants faced harsh punishments and the movement was cruelly stamped out, but Nasr's influence had already strongly taken root in irreversible ways.

Also that year several tribes staged uprisings against the central government. Although their grievances were not of socialist or communist concerns, there was great suspicion in the Saudi court that Egypt had played a role in agitating the tribes.²²⁰ After government forces were unable to subdue the rebel sheikhs, the government was forced to negotiate a settlement with them.

Further intrigue in 1955 that prompted Saud to harbor additional misgivings concerning the anti-monarchical character of Nasr's regime included an attempted coup d'état of the Yemeni monarch in April. Saud believed Nasr was behind the attempted takeover because of the known connections between Cairo and the coup plotters who

²¹⁸ Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, p. 206-208 quotes: "U.S. Department of State, Intelligence Brief, "The Cairo-Riyadh Axis: Second Thoughts in Saudi Arabia," 10 Aug. 1956. ES10316/18, 120759.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207-208.

²²⁰ Amen Al-Mumayiz, *Al-Arabaya Al-Sudaya* (Beirut: 1963), p. 422.

were from the Yemeni Unity Movement which had one of its base of operations in Egypt.²²¹

During the spring of 1956, a British intelligence source deep within the Egyptian government revealed the details of a new policy that had been agreed upon in Cairo at the Conference of Egyptian Ambassadors and Ministers on January 30, 1956. In brief, the policy was to unite the Arab states under the leadership of Egypt. The conference also agreed on a plan for accomplishing this goal. First, Egypt would seek the overthrow of the Hashemites, and then move against the regimes of Libya, Tunis, Morocco, and Algeria. Egypt would encourage Saudi participation in these moves, but ultimately it sought to remove King Saud. To this end, Cairo was already in touch with Arabia's most influential sheikhs. To further their plans, Egypt was in the process of sending out educational missions to all the Arab states. Each of these missions would include intelligence officers who would attempt to propagate and coordinate dissident activity in these countries.²²² This and other intelligence reports were funneled to Saud who already had grave concerns over the general philosophy of Nasr's secular revolutionary group.²²³ This particular piece of intelligence gave further credence to the administration's calls on its British ally to improve relations with Saud and pushed the United Kingdom to grant

²²¹ "Saudi Arabia: A Disruptive Force In Western-Arab Relations," Intelligence Report No. 7144, 18 Jan. 1956. Division of Research for Near East, South Asia, and Africa, p. 11.

²²² "Letter from the Prime Minister to the President," 15 Mar. 1956. *Documentary History of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidency*. vol. 2. (New York: Lexis Nexis, 2005), p. 148-150.

²²³ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 1 Apr. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 435-436.

Saud concessions in an attempt to frustrate Nasr's designs in the region.²²⁴ Rising tensions over the Suez basing dispute pushed the British to fully endorse the attempt to exploit Saud's fears of Egyptian ambitions for Arab hegemony in order to improve their own position in their struggle with Nasr.²²⁵

Although Saudi Arabia remained in the ESS alliance in 1956, discontent and disturbing developments continued in the Saudi kingdom at the beginning of the year that appeared to be rooted in Cairo. In May, the king went on a scheduled visit to the ARAMCO facilities. This visit coincided with a period of great debate in the kingdom over the renewal of the lease for the Dhahran air field. Thousands of workers turned out to demonstrate and demanded ending imperial influence in the kingdom. The protesters also insisted that the king permit elected trade unions to operate.²²⁶ In June, the Saudi press, which usually was under the tight control of the royal palace, joined the protest against the base renewal, leaving the royal court seeking the source of this dissent, while heavily suspecting Egyptian involvement.²²⁷

The government eventually suppressed the protests, but tumult raged in the country throughout early June. Tension in the kingdom prompted a decree that banned all strikes and political demonstrations. The ban, however, was unable to prevent a

²²⁴ "Letter from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower," 5 Apr. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 468. "Letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden," 20 Mar. 1956. Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 66 D 204, Eisenhower to Eden Correspondence, 1955-1956. vol. 1.

²²⁵ "Note from the British Ambassador to Secretary of State Dulles," 21 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 383-385.

²²⁶ Nadav Safran, *The Ceaseless Quest for Security*. (London: Belknap, 1985), p. 81.

²²⁷ Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, p. 206.

second major labor strike from breaking out. This second strike lasted weeks and served as proof of the king's tenuous hold on the country.

These protests against Saud's policies were in stark contrast to the reception Nasr received in Dhahran in September in his unannounced appearance in Saudi Arabia for meetings with the other members of the ESS. The welcome was repeated when he later visited Riyadh. The crowd chanted slogans such as "Nasr, savior of the Arab world."²²⁸ It was clear to all observers that Nasr had greater influence than Saud among the public in the kingdom. The severity of the change in heart so threatened the monarchy that even Saud's advisors who had long sympathized with Nasr were now willing to reverse themselves and reconsider their alliance with Egypt. Many in the royal court now desired to isolate and destroy Nasr.²²⁹

Confronted with direct challenges within his own kingdom, Saud went on his own offensive against Nasr. He attempted to destabilize Nasr in Egypt by funding the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts to place a religious leader in the seat of Egypt's power.²³⁰ Saud's scheming both embarrassed and annoyed Nasr. When one of the Brotherhood's plots was uncovered, Saud appealed to Nasr to spare the lives of the six accused.²³¹ Saud's efforts in this direction proved futile and never resulted in Nasr publicly acknowledging them.

Then Nasr's nationalization of the Suez Canal caused a further rift in the relationship, one that ultimately proved fatal. Saud was extremely angry about not being

²²⁸ Safran, *The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, p. 81.

²²⁹ Jose Arnold, *Swords and Pots and Pans*. (London: Gollancz, 1962), p. 134.

²³⁰ "Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State," 7 Mar. 1956, *FRUS 1955-57*, vol. 15. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 323.

²³¹ "Telegram from the Embassy in Cairo to the Department of State," 2 Feb 1956. Department of State, Central Files, 785.13/2-1955.

informed of Nasr's intentions to nationalize the canal. Although the two nations shared a military pact that stipulated the two nations would consult each other on major international moves, Nasr had not informed Riyadh and Saud was insulted that he discovered the nationalization on the radio.²³² This annoyed Saud because Nasr's action could possibly have led to a situation which might have required Egypt to invoke the pact and embroil Saudi Arabia in Cairo's machinations. King Saud was affronted, sensing that Nasr was taking his contribution to the ESS for granted. Saud was also concerned that the action might result in war with the West or an oil embargo. Both maneuvers had the potential to hurt Saud financially. The British ambassador observed that as for Saud's disposition toward Nasr, "The attraction of a ride on the Egyptian band-wagon had largely passed," and Saud would gladly, "ease himself out of his link with Egypt."²³³ Saud realized Nasr's action could only have negative outcome for Saudi Arabia. He confided to Amir Zayd of Iraq that the nationalization of the canal was a double-edged sword: should Nasr succeed, the monarchies in Iraq and Saudi Arabia would be the next place for his conquest, and should he fail, the Arab people as a whole would suffer, which would also undermine Saud's rule.²³⁴ Due to Nasr's popularity being at all-time highs during the crisis, Saud could only air his displeasure in very discrete tones.

By August, Saud's discontent with Nasr was so severe that several palace sources were reporting the king's displeasure with Nasr's action. At this point the king began to

²³² Mohamed H. Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*. (New York: Arbor House, 1987), p. 133, 155-157.

²³³ Podeh, *The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, p. 209.

²³⁴ Susser and Shmuelevitz, *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, p. 94.

signal to the Americans his willingness to oppose the Egyptian president publicly.²³⁵

Nasr's popularity among Saud's advisors and the significant influence the Egyptians had in the Saudi military had to this point prevented Saud from openly challenging Egypt and avenging his loss in prestige.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal not only hurt Saud's pride, but also harmed Saudi Arabia economically, just as Saud had feared. The closure of the canal impeded the transit and export of Saudi Arabia's sweet crude. The king experienced a loss of about \$51 million in oil revenue due to the conflict over the Suez Canal, a decline that would take over 15 years to be reversed.²³⁶ So, the king was further thrust into U.S. arms as he attempted to address some of the crisis' detrimental impact on his country. Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Yasin told ambassador Wadsworth that the Saudis were now seeking out the U.S. in an attempt to protect the nation's oil interests and to counter regional threats at peace that were already impairing the Saudi economy.²³⁷

In response to the Saudi call for assistance, the White House sent Robert Anderson to Riyadh in an effort to help mediate a resolution. Anderson pointed out to Saud that an additional economic incentive existed for Saud to push for a peaceful settlement over Suez. Anderson shared with Saud that if hostilities continued, oil production in Texas, Venezuela and Canada would increase, creating additional

²³⁵ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Secretary of State," 17 Aug. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 16. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 220.

²³⁶ In 1955 Saudi revenue from petroleum exportation rose 44 percent from the previous year to reach \$341 million. It dropped to \$290 million in 1956. It took nearly 15 years to obtain pre-Suez conflict levels in 1961 when revenues rose to \$378 million. OPEC, *Annual Statistical Review*, 1978, table III, p. 162.

²³⁷ "Telegram 69 from Dhahran," 20 Aug. 1956. Department of State, Central Files, 974.7301/8-2056.

competition in the world market.²³⁸ Once the crisis ended Anderson claimed a flooded oil market would mean lower oil prices. This grabbed Saud's attention and provided an additional motive to champion peace.

Besides advancing the peace process, the administration also viewed the Anderson mission as an opportunity to further strengthen relations with Saud. Anderson observed in his brief visit to Saudi Arabia that pro-Nasr sentiments had risen to dangerous levels in the kingdom. The king had confided to Anderson that the situation had become very "critical."²³⁹ Saud also sought U.S. help in achieving a diplomatic solution because he feared the Soviets would gain additional influence in the region and might use the crisis as justification for direct intervention.²⁴⁰ Saud understood that any gains made by Nasr in the crisis directly threatened his rule. He shared with Prince Zayd of Iraq that "if Nasr emerged triumphant, Nasr's ambition was to become the Napoleon of the Arabs and if he succeeded the regimes in Iraq and Saudi Arabia would be swept away."²⁴¹

The king had further reason for concern as a wave of Cairo inspired terrorist attacks occurred in Libya and Lebanon. In Libya, the Egyptian military attaché had used privately funded commandos to carry out attacks against the government and in Lebanon

²³⁸ "Memorandum from the Counselor to the Department of State to the Acting Secretary of State," 20 Nov. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 16. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 1165.

²³⁹ "Telegram from the Consulate General at Dhahran to the Department of State," 23 Aug. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

²⁴¹ "Message from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower," 6 Sept. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 16. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 402.

the military attaché there was implicated in several Beirut bombings.²⁴² Additional Egyptian plots were uncovered in Saudi Arabia in the autumn of 1956 that further cemented Saud's desire to publicly end his alliance with Egypt.²⁴³

Saud's improved relationship with the U.S. manifested itself in his diligent efforts to negotiate a settlement in the Suez crisis. Saud successfully lobbied Nasr to accept an audience with the Suez Committee.²⁴⁴ He also demonstrated his new alignment with the U.S. by pushing Nasr to halt his radio attacks on the United States.²⁴⁵

The public's disdain for Saud's policies continued and in the wake of the attack on Egypt by the British, French, and Israelis in October and November 1956. Saud only managed to avoid continued further unrest by breaking off diplomatic relations with France and the United Kingdom. He also imposed a petroleum embargo on the two invading European nations, in a bid to demonstrate to the public his discontent with the action against Egypt.

Rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iraq

Saud's strained relations with Egypt coincided with a rapprochement with the Hashemites, particularly Iraq. With Saud intending to spurn Nasr, a natural move for him was to embrace Iraq (the other pole in the struggle for hegemony in the Arab world). Saud sought Iraq as a refuge from Nasr. This move made Saudi Arabia's entrance into

²⁴² "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Syria," 24 Sept. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 1191.

²⁴³ "Message from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower," 6 Sept. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 619.

²⁴⁴ The Suez Committee was an international mediation mission.

²⁴⁵ "Report Prepared in the Executive Secretariat of the Department of State," 6 Sep. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 396.

the Baghdad Pact or another Western defense scheme more probable. A few tentative approaches by Saud toward the Iraqis were noted as early as March 1956.

Nuri Said too had understood that rapprochement with Saudi Arabia was very likely to result in weakening the Saudi-Egyptian alliance, which had paralyzed the Iraqi Prime Minister. In a move to improve relations with Riyadh, Nuri informed the U.S. that King Faysal was willing to visit King Saud under several conditions. The Saudis were unable to meet what amounted to extreme conditions the Iraqis set for the visit, and the meeting never materialized. Later that summer, however, the Saudis agreed to accept an Iraqi emissary to Riyadh in an official visit, but the Suez Crisis forced this visit to be postponed.²⁴⁶ The Iraqis initiated a resumption of relations to the Saudis by sending Prince Zayd to Riyadh in August. As the last remaining son of King Hussein, his visit was meant to signal Iraqi recognition of Saudi rule in the Hejaz. King Faisal and Saud met in September and chose not to publicly announce the meeting, but the informal visit confirmed to the two leaders that their nations had much to gain from a *détente*.

The relations between Saudi Arabia and Iraq improved further when in January 1957 the United States announced it had invited representatives from both nations to the White House for separate meetings on the same day in February. The Americans arranged for a meeting between Crown Prince Adul-Illah and Saud while both were in Washington. This very public meeting was soon followed by a meeting in Baghdad. After that summit, Nuri sent Abdullah al-Damaluji as ambassador-at-large to Saudi Arabia, to meet with Saud. The two consulted each other on how to deal with the

²⁴⁶ Susser and Shmuelevitz, *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, p. 92.

Communist threat in the region and Syria in particular.²⁴⁷ The Iraqi representative also secured a promise from Saud to no longer attack the Baghdad Pact as well as a pledge from the king to visit Iraq following Ramadan in May. In May 1957 King Saud made his promised visit to Iraq and consulted with Nuri and agreed to co-host a conference of the Muslim states. One of the key objectives of the proposed conference was to agree upon the collective right of self-defense and show that the Baghdad Pact was advantageous to the Muslim world.²⁴⁸ As 1957 progressed it became clear that Iraq no longer stood as a hurdle preventing Saud from supporting Western policy in the region.

U.S. Performance in the Suez Crisis Brings Saud to the U.S.

Another reason why Saud was able to solidly align himself with the U.S. was the administration's performance in the Suez Crisis. Saud wrote Eisenhower, "I, the Arab nations, and the entire world, will always remember the good efforts of Your Excellency and the United States Government to bring about the present results."²⁴⁹ The U.S. action in the Suez Crisis was significant. It did not simply ingratiate the Americans to Saud because they were able to obtain a result he desired. Rather the U.S.'s actions demonstrated to the entire Arab world that the U.S. could be an honest broker as it established its regional policy. Denouncing the aggression of three of its allies, Britain, France, and Israel (which were also viewed in the region as the three nations with the greatest imperial ambitions in the Middle East) garnered the U.S. great respect in the Arab world. The U.S. went on to force Britain and France to leave Egypt and Israel to

²⁴⁷ W. J. Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 153.

²⁴⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation," 16 May 1957. *U.S. Records on Saudi Affairs, 1945-1959*, vol. 5. (New York: University Publications of America, 1997), p. 293-294.

²⁴⁹ "Embassy in Jidda to Secretary of State," 15 Dec. 1956. *Documentary History of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidency*. vol. 2. (New York: Lexis Nexis, 2005), p. 251-252.

withdraw from Sinai. Even Nasr who would remain an American adversary briefly praised Eisenhower and even considered partnerships in U.S. plans for regional security. The U.S. handling of the crisis also granted American allies and potential allies some room to maneuver and an opportunity to be demonstrative in their cooperation with the United States. Saud would take advantage of this opportunity to wiggle further away from Nasr and accept Eisenhower's plans for defense and the opposition of communism in the region.

Although Saud was clearly more aligned with the Hashemites and the U.S. than Nasr, the Saudi king never broke ties with Cairo. The relationship was severely strained, and Nasr could no longer utilize Saud as a pawn in his Middle Eastern maneuvers, but Saudi Arabia never officially severed diplomatic relations with Nasr. Saud handled Egypt in this instance much as he had the U.S. earlier. Saud seemed restrained from any brash move regarding Egypt because of Nasr's immense popularity which had only grown after he turned the military defeat in November into a huge political gain and emerged as a popular, pan-Arab leader. Saud also was very aware that publicly insulting Nasr, whose public standing was matched by his military prowess, had the potential to bring on Nasr's wrath. The Americans viewed Saud's new alignment as extremely significant for it ended his attacks on the West and its Middle Eastern allies and placed Saud in a position to accept and help implement the administration's next major policy regarding the region that would be launched in the winter of 1957. This shift announced that Saud was in a position to allow international concerns and not only local petty feuds to influence his policy. This also ended the unpredictability of Saudi reaction to

American policy that had taken place from 1955-1956 when at times he propagated American interests and at times played the spoiler.

With the British in no position to challenge Washington's policy following their debacle in the Suez War and their desperate financial situation, the administration made its choice of Saud as the rival to Nasr above any other considerations, such as the U.K.'s preference for Nuri Said. This announcement of sorts was made when the administration granted King Saud his long desired invitation to meet the president in Washington in February. Interestingly, this meeting would not advance the aims of the Baghdad Pact. Instead, it would inaugurate the cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia on the administration's new policy for the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

The U.S. Moves to the Eisenhower Doctrine

Improved relations with the Saudis and the Suez Crisis coincided to form a dynamic atmosphere for the U.S. to address its interests in the Middle East. The confluence of the two events forced the administration to reevaluate its foreign policy. The crisis had seriously tarnished Britain's reputation in the Middle East and placed the administration's primary goal in the region, restraining communism, in jeopardy. Many officials in Washington feared that the Soviet Union would successfully fill the power vacuum created in the Middle East by the United Kingdom's dramatic decline.

Eisenhower and Dulles Look away from the Baghdad Pact

Many of the President's advisors believed the new opportunity for Soviet influence in the region could be thwarted if the U.S. fortified the Baghdad Pact through adherence to the defense agreement. Additionally, they viewed membership in the pact as an opportunity to replace the discredited British (the Muslim members of the pact were quick to shun the United Kingdom following the crisis and operated independently from London for some time). Yet, both Eisenhower and Dulles were reluctant to pursue entering the pact because they questioned the potency of the security arrangement. Additionally, they sought to avoid placing the U.S. in an encumbering and restricting arrangement. Eisenhower was afraid that if the U.S. was pushed into entering the agreement, it would lose much of its influence with the Arab states.

The improving relations with Saudi Arabia gave the administration additional options and latitude as it sought to respond to the vacuum created by the European powers' fall in prestige following the Suez War. Eisenhower now had a willing Arab ally. Saudi Arabia itself was not interested in linking with the pact and made its aversion to the defense agreement clear to Washington. Strong bilateral ties to the Saudi Kingdom presented an attractive alternative to the more confining multilateral approaches such as the Baghdad Pact.

The Suez Crisis altered the realities of the region and provided the administration with an opportunity to reevaluate its involvement in the Baghdad Pact. Eisenhower and Dulles were leaning toward extricating the U.S. from the pact, but the decision to dismiss the pact as the means for the U.S. to address regional defense was not arrived at easily. Both the President and the Secretary of State were under considerable pressure from those within the administration, the military, and U.S. allies to join the pact.

As for their regional allies, the evolving situation in the Middle East in the wake of the Suez invasion had a significant impact on the Muslim members of the pact. They intensified their long sustained campaign to pressure the U.S. into entering into the defense league. With an undermined Britain, these states feared that they would not be able to maintain the pact's efforts without a strong Western patron. They considered the U.S. as the only viable means of ameliorating the dangerous situation in the region. No other entity could shield them from the Soviets. In Tehran, the Shah claimed that Iran enjoyed no security against the Russian threat without the U.S. in the pact. The President

of Pakistan, General Mohammed Ayub, went as far as to assert that had the U.S. adhered to the pact earlier “no troubles would have arisen in the Middle East.”¹

The desires of the Baghdad Pact’s member states were reflected in the emphatic recommendations to enter the pact given to the administration by the American diplomatic representatives to those nations. The U.S. ambassador to Iran insisted that the U.S. needed to adhere to the pact in order to take advantage of the regard the Middle East had for U.S. moral leadership following its denouncing Israeli-Anglo- Franco aggression.² He believed that the Baghdad Pact was the optimal means to exploit Washington’s new standing. Ambassador Gallam in Iraq pushed for adherence and believed “half measures” would not suffice. He considered the pact’s objectives and those of the U.S. to be in unison. The veteran Middle East diplomat could not envision future circumstances in the sensitive political environment of the Middle East that would allow for such a framework.³ These diplomats believed the pact would “slowly die” without U.S. intervention.

The U.S. military also pushed the administration to enter the Baghdad Pact. Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also believed the pact would deteriorate past the point of repair without strong U.S. action. Radford believed that the Baghdad Pact provided opportunities for the U.S. to extend its influence in the region. He speculated that if the U.S. joined the pact, it would provide Washington with further control of the pact’s activities. He thought the defense agreement’s members

¹ “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Acting Secretary of State,” 14 Nov. 1956, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957* vol. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 331-337.

² “Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State,” 14 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.* p. 320-321.

³ “Telegram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 15 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.* p. 325-326.

would likely ask the U.S. to designate an American senior officer as commander in chief of the pact's military responsibilities. He also viewed the pact as a means to establish bases in the region. Finally, Radford believed, adherence to the pact would help stabilize Syria.⁴ Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson also urged entering the pact immediately because developments in the region had created a favorable atmosphere in Washington which would aid in obtaining Congressional approval for U.S. adherence.⁵

Despite the lobbying efforts of its regional allies and the advice of senior officials, Dulles and Eisenhower stood opposed to joining the Baghdad Pact. Their chief concerns were the reaction of Israel, the Soviet Union, and Saudi Arabia to such an action.

Israel's response became a cause of apprehension when a considerable number of U.S. senators began pressuring the administration to make assurances about the Jewish state's security, following an announcement by the White House on November 29 that the U.S. was determined to assist the Baghdad Pact. Ratification by Congress of the U.S. entrance into the pact appeared to be in doubt. Eisenhower did not understand the reason for Israel's concerns. He believed that as a member of the pact, the U.S. would be in a strategic position to guarantee no harm would come to Israel.

Further, Eisenhower became convinced that accession to the Baghdad Pact would have to be accompanied by a bilateral agreement with Israel, assuring its safety, which the President desired to avoid. Intelligence reports asserted that if the U.S. joined the pact, Israeli military leadership would probably view it as a contribution to their security,

⁴ "Memorandum of Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting," 16 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 327-330.

⁵ "Letter from the Secretary of Defense to the Acting Secretary of State," 14 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 324-325.

because of the opposition to Nasr that the pact provided. But, the report cautioned that Israeli politicians would most likely take advantage of the situation to bring increased diplomatic pressure on the U.S. to grant Israel a security commitment.⁶

Moscow also influenced the administration's attitude about the pact. The State Department was well aware of the Soviet Union's strong opposition to the pact. It feared that the USSR might take U.S. membership as a pretext for moves against the West in the region. At the minimum, Soviet-American relations would be damaged as it would increase Soviet fears about the extension of U.S. military influence in the area. The Intelligence Advisory Committee warned that this might be the impetus for Moscow to oppose the U.S. in the region by strengthening its relations with Syria, Egypt, and possibly Jordan.⁷

Finally, placating Saudi Arabia contributed heavily to U.S. calculations regarding adherence to the Baghdad Pact. Saudi Arabia presented a very interesting predicament for the administration. Although the Saudis were warming to the U.S., they still opposed joining the Baghdad Pact. Since King Saud's recent disillusionment with Nasr and his rapprochement with Iraq, the administration believed it might have been able to convince Saud to enter the agreement. But Saudi reservations toward the pact were very real. Saud believed that since no member state had condemned Britain's actions in Suez, the pact condoned the attack. Also, Saud was convinced that the local members of the Baghdad Pact were not primarily utilizing the defense alliance to oppose communism, but for "nefarious ends."⁸ Under these circumstances, Dulles realized that an attempt to

⁶ "Special National Intelligence Estimate," 14 Dec. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

bring Saudi Arabia into the pact would be met with resistance and like earlier, he feared the attempt could strain their relationship. The administration wanted to avoid additional stress on the relationship at all costs. With regional politics in flux after the Suez Crisis, good offices with Saudi Arabia gave Washington the luxury of not needing to join the Baghdad Pact. Yet, it still placed the U.S. in a position to effectively oppose communism and maintain its own interests in the area. The NSC had a special appreciation for the possible result of strained relations with Riyadh. It felt that U.S. adherence might push Saudi Arabia completely away from Washington and force it to reaffirm its allegiance to Egypt and Syria.⁹ Conversely, Dulles believed that if the U.S. did not antagonize Saudi Arabia by joining the pact, there was still a possibility of King Saud filling the role of counter to Nasr that the administration had long sought for him.¹⁰

The Saudi aspect may have been the most influential component that kept the U.S. out of the pact. Dulles later told King Saud that “it was primarily in deference to His Majesty’s views that the U.S. had not joined the pact.” The Secretary of State continued by saying he “hoped that the activities of Baghdad Pact members would become such that the pact would not seem unfriendly to Saudi Arabia. If that should happen, the U.S. might take a different attitude toward the pact.”¹¹

⁸ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 31 Jan. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 439-440.

⁹ “Draft Paper by the NSC Planning Board,” 2 May 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 295.

¹⁰ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 10 Dec. 1956, *Ibid*, p. 399.

¹¹ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 31 Jan. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 439.

In the meantime the Secretary of State did not want the U.S. position on the Baghdad Pact to threaten relations with Saudi Arabia.

The administration eventually decided that the mutual defense concept that the U.S. had been championing for nearly a decade was no longer in the nation's best interest. Dulles told the President that the primary reason why he opposed entering the pact was because it had become broiled in Arab politics, "Nasr opposes it, and more importantly King Saud does also."¹² Once again Saudi Arabia was influencing U.S. policy. Saud expressed his desire for the U.S. not to become embroiled in the Baghdad Pact and the administration acquiesced, highlighting the kingdom's importance to U.S. planning in the region.

Dulles had additional reasons for not joining. First, he had begun to question the efficacy of the pact.¹³ Washington's primary concern in the Middle East was to prevent Soviet advances in the region as much as possible. Upon its conception this was the main focus of the Baghdad Pact, but Dulles was concerned that too many parochial issues had begun to distract the pact's members from its primary mission. In a meeting with the President, Dulles reminded Eisenhower (who was less inclined to abandon the pact) that while the pact was formulated as a defense against communism, the pact's members sought to use the organization to achieve various intentions. Dulles concluded by asserting that the pact "had been perverted into an instrument of Arab politics."¹⁴ The

¹² "Memorandum of a Conference with the President," 20 Dec. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 415.

¹³ "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Acting Secretary of State," 18 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹⁴ "Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State," 8 Dec. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 395-396.

State Department believed the Soviets had been exploiting regional tensions to, in effect, hop over the northern tier barrier which the Baghdad Pact had erected. Since U.S. regional objectives transcended mere territorial concerns and dealt also with ideology, it became apparent that the concept of opposing the Soviet advance with a physical boundary, which was the threat the Baghdad Pact concept was built to counter. Providing a physical barrier though was the strength of the pact, so it appeared that the scheme would not completely serve U.S. interests. The pact became all the more dispensable when it appeared to Washington that it had deviated from its initial aims by involving itself in Arab politics in a manner that resulted in the strengthening of Soviet efforts in the region as evidenced in the Soviets' new position in Egypt and Syria.

Dulles also feared that the Baghdad Pact would never be able to shed the perception in the region that it was a Western dominated organization. Furthermore, the administration thought that if it accepted full membership, its new fellow members would heighten their demands for aid from the U.S.

Finally, the State Department wanted to avoid endangering its efforts to stabilize the conflict over the Suez. An intelligence estimate concluded that adherence would make it more difficult to get Nasr to agree to a settlement in the Suez.¹⁵ The department felt any change in its current relationship with the powers in their area might seriously jeopardize these efforts.¹⁶

"Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Secretary of State and senator William F. Knowland," 8 Dec. 1956, *Ibid.*, p.396-397.

¹⁵ "Special National Intelligence Estimate," 14 Dec. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 407.

¹⁶ "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Acting Secretary of State," 18 Nov. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 335.

It is doubtful that many of these barriers that prevented them from joining the pact would have been so pressing if Saudi Arabia had backed the West's designs for Middle East defense several years earlier. When the Northern Tier concept that became the Baghdad Pact was introduced, all of the previously mentioned obstacles had become more potent since the mutual security schemes the U.S. championed had not come to fruition due in part to Saudi opposition. This highlights the significance of the opportunity that was lost when Saudi Arabia had rebuffed U.S. advances about entering the Baghdad Pact.

As 1956 was coming to a close, the administration accepted that entering the Baghdad Pact was impossible. Dulles felt abstaining from the pact would improve U.S. standing in the Middle East. He thought it would free the U.S. from aligning itself against the pact members' regional rivals and thus avoid creating opposition to Washington's policies in the area. He held that the U.S. would also have a better chance of retaining the credit it had won in the Arab world for its handling of the Suez Crisis. Staying out of the pact would further give the U.S. an improved chance of aiding in the resolution of the crisis. Finally, by refusing to make a treaty commitment, the U.S. would retain room to maneuver in dealing with a new phenomenon in the region: the non-aligned movement. Unencumbered by commitments to the Baghdad Pact, the U.S. would be in a better position to seek a comprehensive accommodation with the nationalists and anti-colonialists.

Dulles realized though that Washington's relationships with its allies in the Baghdad Pact were important and must be attended to. The Secretary of State believed that if the U.S. placed representatives on several of the pact's committees and committed

financial support, the U.S. would retain its influence among the member nations.¹⁷ This would simultaneously serve to satisfy U.S. allies in the pact.

At the beginning of December 1956, Dulles told the U.S. ambassadors to the member nations of the Baghdad Pact that the U.S. was determined to support the principles of the defense treaty, but it was not interested in joining. He went on to explain that the creation of the Baghdad Pact was the result of many of his own suggestions for regional defense. Unfortunately though, he claimed the pact had become involved in area politics and was not universally viewed as an instrument created solely to oppose Soviet aggression. He also mentioned how Israel presented problems for the U.S. in joining the pact. The Secretary of State concluded his meeting by assuring the ambassadors that some action by the U.S. would be taken shortly in regards to the Baghdad Pact.¹⁸

The U.S. Considers Bilateral Relationships to Oppose Soviet Advances in the Region

The administration viewed its options in the region as 1) joining the pact, 2) creating a new organization and, 3) dealing with the region on a bilateral basis (interestingly this was suggested by the RCC several years earlier when the U.S. was still attached to an alliance paradigm). Dulles believed the third option would necessitate a Congressional resolution authorizing the President to combat communist infiltration by bolstering the defense capabilities and economies of those regional nations standing firm in their opposition to the Soviets. The administration believed that the bilateral approach would more clearly demonstrate and achieve its anti-communist objectives. The White

¹⁷ "Special National Intelligence Estimate," 14 Dec. 1956, Ibid., p. 408-409.

¹⁸ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 4 Dec. 1956, Ibid., p. 369.

House hoped that this reality would insure greater cooperation for the bilateral approach from Congress than was expected for the Baghdad Pact.

The administration at this point leaned toward pressing Congress for a resolution giving the President authorization to pursue military cooperation and appropriate funds to Saudi Arabia and regional states on a grand scale. While Washington decided not to enter the Baghdad Pact, it did not completely abandon its members. In March, the U.S. announced that it would join the pact's military committee.¹⁹ This move demonstrated that the U.S. was only in agreement with the pact's military goals and kept Washington out of the political fray which might threaten its relationships with Saudi Arabia and verse the Soviets.

Once the administration finally divorced itself from the Baghdad Pact it further considered other options. Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy argued for improving relations with Saudi Arabia: "The approach which seems preferable to me is a bilateral one and I think one of the keys to it is the relationship we build up with Saudi Arabia. I favor an active stand and substantial bilateralism."²⁰ Murphy's counsel was heeded and became the administration's policy. Since Saud was the lone regional leader who could counter Nasr, the Saudi monarch's views would have to be respected in U.S. policy.

Bilateralism was now the course the administration was going to follow. It had learned its lesson about the significance of Saudi Arabia, and the desert kingdom was to become the corner stone relationship for this policy. The dimensions of the policy would force the President to get Congress to approve a resolution giving him the authority to

¹⁹ "Memorandum of a Meeting," 1 Jan. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 438.

²⁰ "Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs," 3 Dec. 1956, *Ibid.*, p. 368-369.

prosecute it. Bilateralism would provide a degree of flexibility that would not have been possible in a multi-nation pact. For Saudi Arabia, flexibility meant the ability to flirt with Egypt and take a hard line on Palestine without threatening the relationship. For the U.S. bilateralism allowed it to support the Baghdad Pact without suspicion on the part of Riyadh.

On January 6, 1957, Eisenhower went before Congress to present his proposal to improve the U.S. position in the Middle East through military and economic cooperation with potential regional allies. In the weeks leading up to Eisenhower's speech at the Capitol, the President had been asserting to Congressional leaders that "the existing vacuum in the Middle East must be filled by the United States before it is filled by Russia."²¹

The outline of the proposal he presented to the U.S. Congress was as follows:

1. Cooperation with and assistance to any nation or group of nations in the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence,
2. Programs of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations in the region that desired such aid,
3. Employment of United States armed forces to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of nations requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism and
4. Employment, for economic and military purposes, of sums available under the Mutual Security Act of 1954. This was to be \$400 million in 1957 and \$200 million in the following years.²²

This proposal would become known as the "Eisenhower Doctrine." In March the Congress authorized the President to use the military at his discretion to protect the

²¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 178.

²² "Memorandum of a Meeting," 1 Jan. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 12. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 438.

territorial integrity of any nation or group in the Middle East resisting communist aggression. The authorization also granted the President the power to grant aid to countries engaged in a struggle to maintain their self-determination in the face of communist aggression.

The U.S. Seeks Saud as an Indigenous Champion of the Eisenhower Doctrine

The administration was quick to invite King Saud to Washington to solidify his support for the Eisenhower Doctrine. The administration had learned just how pivotal Saudi Arabia was to the success of its policy in the Middle East and did not want to appear as if it was taking Saudi cooperation for granted. In November 1956, well before the new policy was announced publicly, President Eisenhower had extended an invitation to King Saud to come to Washington for a “review of problems of common interest.”²³ The king was “delighted to accept” and a state visit for Saud was set for a date that would follow the announcement of the new U.S. policy.²⁴ The President briefed Saud on the particulars of the new policy in a letter on January 3, two days before he had announced the doctrine publicly before Congress.²⁵ Saud received it positively, and although he desired more time to study the letter, the king expressed “general satisfaction” with the president’s policy and on January 7, the White House in a press release announced that the king’s visit would take place from January 30 through February 1.²⁶

²³ “Eisenhower to King Saud,” 16 Nov 1956, Telegram 179. Department of State, Central Files, 684.86/11-1656.

²⁴ “Telegram from the Consulate General in Dhahran to the department of State,” 26 Nov. 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 405.

²⁵ “Letter from Eisenhower to King Saud,” 3 Jan. 1957, Telegram 315. Department of State, Central Files, 786A.11/1-357.

²⁶ “Telegram 382 from Jidda,” 15 Jan. 1957, Department of State, Central Files, 611.80/1-1557.

The U.S. sought to further insure a positive outcome from the talks with King Saud by again pressing Britain on the issue of Buraimi. The British ambassador to Washington assured the administration that the London government had reevaluated its position in Arabia and was now willing to make the concessions that were necessary to help secure Saud as a “counter weight to Egypt.”²⁷

Despite all of the administration’s efforts, two incidents almost sabotaged the state visit. First, the king’s large royal entourage planned to visit New York and then proceed to Washington. But New York Mayor, Robert Wagner refused to provide any of the normal ceremonies that usually accompany a visit of a head of state. The mayor accused Saud of defending slavery and of being anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish.²⁸ Eisenhower deemed the mayor’s reaction as motivated by political calculations. In his memoirs, the President wrote that Wagner’s move was due to the fact that he was “sensitive to the heavy Jewish population in his area.”²⁹ Rebuffed by the city, the administration prepared military ceremonies to greet the Saudi king, and the visit was not negatively impacted.

The second incident that almost upset Saud’s visit was also narrowly avoided. At the beginning of 1957 President Eisenhower was still recovering from a heart attack he suffered in 1955 as well as from a more recent ileitis operation. The president’s physical condition prompted his physician to suggest he curtail all unnecessary presidential

²⁷ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 25 Jan. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 412.

²⁸ Memorandum of the Meeting of the 310th National Security Council,” 24 January 1957. Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records.

²⁹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 115.

activities and ceremonies.³⁰ This included meeting heads of state at the airport when they arrived in Washington. When Saud learned that he would only be received by Vice-President Richard Nixon, he took it as a personal affront and threatened to cancel his trip.³¹ Although this development “annoyed” Eisenhower, he agreed to greet Saud at the airport in order to salvage the meetings.³²

Eisenhower saw these meetings as an opportunity to secure the acceptance of his new program by one of the region’s most strategic countries. This view of Saudi Arabia’s significance was even more acute, because of how pivotal Saudi Arabia had been to the fate of past U.S. policy in the Middle East. It was important to Eisenhower that the king understand the two threats the new program was meant to meet: first, the threat of military aggression and, second, the inability of people to make a living under modern conditions.³³

In conjunction with conferring over the president’s new policy, Eisenhower had two related objectives for his meeting with Saud. First, he hoped to discuss the Middle East’s conflicts with Saud as they related to the larger Cold War. Eisenhower believed that as long as the regional states “used all their time, effort, and substance fighting each other, the overall effect would provide nothing but a happy hunting ground for

³⁰ “To Edgar Newton Eisenhower,” 21 Jan. 1957. *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 18 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 8.

³¹ “Embassy in Saudi Arabia to Department of State,” 9 Jan. 1957. , Department of State, Central File 786A.11.

³² Eisenhower, *Waging Peace* p. 115.

³³ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 30 Jan. 1957, 3 p.m., *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 417-423.

communist oppression-with disastrous results.”³⁴ The President’s second goal was to take advantage of the face-to-face visit to size up the stature of King Saud and explore once again the possibilities of setting up Saud to offset Nasr, as a possible “stone” on which to build.³⁵ The administration also wanted to solidify the relationship with Saud by acquiring a five-year extension on the Dhahran Air Base lease. Dulles expressed concern that if no agreement was reached, “Saud might return home and line up with the Egyptians.”³⁶ So, the administration was willing to grant up to \$50 million in aid in order to obtain Saud’s assent. The administration was willing to make such a large monetary commitment to Saud even though the Joint Chiefs of Staff had advised that the Dhahran base’s utility warranted the U.S. to grant only up to \$35 million, but the political and ideological significance of an agreement determined for Eisenhower and Dulles that a maximum expenditure of \$50 million was justifiable.

At first glance the Eisenhower Doctrine policy was attractive to Saud, and it appeared to have been created with the king in mind, as it met his most pressing need, arms. For throughout the preceding fall, Saud had addressed the weakness of his military position with American diplomats. An exchange with George Wadsworth on December 13 well represented the sentiments the Saudi king had been repeating for months: “The most important subject now is arms. I am ashamed of how my army compares with those of other Arab and Muslim countries. All are better equipped by the United States, Britain,

³⁴ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 115.

³⁵ “Memorandum of a Conversation,” 1 Feb. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 444-445.

³⁶ “Telephone Conversation with Gordon Gray,” 30 Jan. 1957. Eisenhower Library, Dulles Papers, General Telephone Conversations.

or Russia. Saudi Arabia is the only country to adhere only to the United States. Are your delaying tactics a proper way to repay our friendship?"³⁷

Saud's aims for the meetings in Washington most certainly included obtaining arms. In his talks with the President, he cited a growing restlessness that he feared from his people due to their "shameful weakness."³⁸ His objectives for the meeting though also included getting economic aid from the U.S. to improve education, health and transportation for the kingdom's twelve million inhabitants. He wanted to speak at some length about the British who were "nibbling" away at his borders.³⁹ The Arab-Israeli dispute and Israel's occupation of Gaza was also to be dealt with at length in the two leaders' talks.⁴⁰

The meetings began January 30. Even before Eisenhower pitched the new policy, Saud assured the President that "he was convinced the Eisenhower Doctrine would greatly benefit the countries of the Middle East."⁴¹ However, he noted that many uninformed people of the region did not grasp its importance and were wary of the new American policy. By the close of the king's visit, the Saudi king indicated that he would champion the new program among his fellow Arabs.⁴² For his commitment, Saud left Washington with a grant of \$50 million in military aid and about \$25 million for

³⁷ "Telegram 330 from Jidda," 15 Dec. 1956, Department of State, Central Files, 611.86/12-1756.

³⁸ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 116.

³⁹ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 30 Jan. 1957, 4 p.m., *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 423-430.

⁴⁰ "Diary," 21 Jan. 1957. *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 18. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 19-27.

⁴¹ "Memorandum of a Conversation," 30 Jan. 1957, 3 p.m., *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 422.

⁴² "Memorandum of a Conversation," 30 Jan. 1957, 4 p.m., *Ibid.*, p. 430.

economic development, as well as authorization to purchase \$110 million of arms from U.S. manufactures.⁴³ Eisenhower was pleased with the results of the visit. The U.S. gained the extension at Dhahran that it coveted, as well as a promise from Saud to use his influence to persuade other Arabs of the virtues of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Saud Champions U.S. Policy throughout the Middle East

Over the next few months the new understanding between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia yielded much fruit. Both countries cooperated to secure the Israeli pull-out from Gaza at the beginning of March.⁴⁴ The Saudis worked with the Arabs and the United States pressured Israel. Saud also continued his effort to advance the cause of the Eisenhower Doctrine. At the meetings of Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in Cairo at the end of February 1957, Saud had pushed for the acceptance of the new American policy. He reassured the other Arab countries that the Eisenhower Doctrine had altruistic intentions and that the U.S. was intent on “respecting their sovereignty and independence.”⁴⁵ When Special Assistant to the President, James Richards, went to Jidda to check on Saud’s progress in these regards, the king promised him that he was exerting “every possible effort to create understanding and friendship among other countries for America.”⁴⁶

⁴³ “Memorandum from the Deputy Under Secretary of State to the Secretary of State,” 5 Feb. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 464-465.

⁴⁴ “To Ibn Abd al-Aziz Saud,” 14 Feb. 1957. *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 18. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 53-55. Also: “To Ibn Abd al-Aziz,” 28 Feb. 1957. *Ibid.*, p. 72-73. “To Ibn Abd al-Aziz,” 18 Mar. 1957. *Ibid.*, p. 98. “To David Ben Gurion,” 2 Mar. 1957. *Ibid.*, p. 74-75.

⁴⁵ “King Saud to President Eisenhower,” 28 February 1957. Department of State, Central Files, 684A.86/2-2857.

⁴⁶ “Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State,” 11 Apr. 1957 10 a.m., *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 489.

Saud's efforts on behalf of the U.S. obtained their desired effect in Jordan.

Jordan's openness to the Eisenhower Doctrine, however, should be attributed as much to domestic intrigue in Amman as much as to the work of Saud. Jordan moved more firmly into the Western camp by the end of autumn, but that was only after groups sympathetic to the communist cause forced the king's hand by significantly threatening King Hussein's rule. The Jordanian King dismissed Prime Minister Nabulsi because of his leftist stance, which simultaneously opened the door to the West. Saud encouraged Hussein's move by placing two brigades of the Saudi National Guard at Hussein's disposal. That year Saud also paid Saudi Arabia's annual subsidy of \$30 million to Jordan, while Syria and Egypt withheld their payments because of Jordan's new alignment with the U.S.⁴⁷

While Saud had a degree of success in Jordan, he struggled to gain the acceptance of U.S. policy in Syria. Since the Suez Crisis, there were growing indications that Syria was coming under the influence of the Soviet Union. On August 6, 1957, in Moscow, Syrian officials signed a wide-ranging economic agreement. By October, in addition to the economic and financial assistance, Syria accepted vast arms shipments from the USSR that would allow the Syrian government to begin a \$180 million development scheme.⁴⁸ The NSC claimed that an "increased number of positions of leadership in the civilian government and the army have been filled by persons who tolerate if not actively encourage the communists in Syria, and who favor close ties with the Soviet Union."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London: Saqi, 1988, p. 353.

⁴⁸ "National Intelligence Estimate," 8 Oct. 1957. *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 603.

⁴⁹ Ray Takeyh, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 148 quotes: "NSC Staff Study," 31 Jan 1957, NSC Staff Papers: OCB Central Files, Box 55. Eisenhower Library.

CIA intelligence revealed that Western leaning groups in Syria were being overshadowed by “leftist-oriented, extreme nationalist, anti-Western” politicians and military men.⁵⁰

The administration urged Saud to continue to demonstrate his advocacy of U.S. policy by combating this communist advance in Syria. An August 27 telegram from the State Department urged Saud to use his “political and moral authority to rally opposition in the area to the present Syrian regime and to facilitate the generating of pressures designed to isolate Syria and to work toward an improvement of the situation in that country.”⁵¹

Syria strongly opposed the Eisenhower Doctrine. Since the policy’s announcement in January, the Syrian government had derided it. Syria asserted that Eisenhower’s vacuum theory was an artificial premise, and that U.S. presence in the area would mark interference in Middle East affairs. The Syrian leaders also held that the communists did not pose a dangerous threat to their country or the region.⁵²

The U.S. became so alarmed by how open the Syrian leadership was to the Soviet Union that it began to cooperate with Turkey and Iraq in various schemes to bring down the regime in Damascus. On August 13, the leftist Syrian government expelled three U.S. diplomats accused of plotting against the regime. Fearing that Syria might become a “victim of international Communism,” the U.S. responded by deploying the Sixth Fleet to the Mediterranean and called on the Syrian public to overthrow the nation’s

⁵⁰ “National Intelligence Estimate,” 8 Oct. 1957. *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 594-611.

⁵¹ “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia,” 27 Aug. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁵² “Telegram from the Embassy in Syria to the Department of State,” 11 Jan. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 609.

government.⁵³ On September 7, Eisenhower invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine, asserting that “if any of Syria’s Arab neighbors were physically attacked by the Soviet Bloc, the U.S., upon request, would be prepared to use its own armed forces to assist any such nation.”⁵⁴ An airlift of arms to Jordan and plans to reinforce Iraq and Lebanon were quickly announced.

For several months it appeared Turkey and Syria were on the verge of war, but King Saud used his standing to alleviate tensions. After Saud gained assurances from Syria’s neighbors that they would not prompt an attack, he went to Damascus on September 25, to announce the solidarity of all Arab peoples and forestalled the outbreak of hostilities. Saud’s successful mediation held promise that he might be able to prevail in Syria and unite a grouping of Arab states to oppose Soviet influence. This fact was not lost on Nasr who was also vying for Syria’s allegiance, and the Egyptian leader managed to upstage Saud’s efforts by sending several thousand troops to stabilize the country. While the 2,000 troops Nasr sent appeared inadequate to make a serious contribution to the situation in Syria, as Saud noted to U.S. officials, Nasr’s move did work to firmly establish him as the ultimate arbiter of the Syrian question.⁵⁵ Saud had moved effectively, but Nasr’s intervention demonstrated that the king was not a politician of the Egyptian leader’s caliber.

⁵³ Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*. (New York : Oxford Press, 1965), p. 305 and Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, London: Belknap, 1985, p. 84 and Eli Podeh, *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World*, New York: E.J. Brill, p. 234-237.

⁵⁴ Seale, *Struggle for Syria*, p. 297.

⁵⁵ “Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State,” 16 Oct. 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 508-509.

The U.S. sought all possible solutions to the Syrian problem as reports from a “well-informed Arab source” claimed that senior ministers in the Syrian government were working with the Soviet Union and Syrian Communists.⁵⁶ U.S. fears of a communist controlled Syria led Washington to a new pragmatism, which brought the U.S. to work in concert with Nasr. The administration in its dealings with Cairo was very intentional to do nothing that might be seen as “disloyal to King Saud” or assist Nasr in his attempt to position himself as the preeminent leader in the Arab world.⁵⁷ But the two nations did coordinate their actions to thwart Soviet advances in Damascus.

In December, Nasr approached Ambassador Hare about harmonizing efforts in Syria. Nasr viewed Moscow’s increased influence in Syria as frustrating his own attempts at asserting a leadership role in that country. For their mutual interest, Nasr pleaded with the U.S. to “keep its hands off of Syria for a maximum period of three months.”⁵⁸ Nasr wanted to preclude making heroes out of any of Syria’s communist leaders in order to stem the communist tide in that country.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ “Telegram 1628 from Damascus,” 10 Dec. 1957. Department of State, Central Files, 783.00/12-1157.

⁵⁷ Nigel John Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 133 quotes: “Memorandum of a Cabinet Meeting,” 15 Nov. 1957. Eisenhower Papers: Box 5, John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series.

⁵⁸ “Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State,” 11 Dec. 1957. *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 744-745.

⁵⁹ Nasr believed that U.S. involvement in Syria would not benefit either Washington or himself. Instead, Nasr desired to deal with the problem himself.

The Administration responded positively to Nasr's advances with the State Department and told Hare to indicate U.S. willingness to cooperate. The administration told Nasr it did not wish to impede Egyptian efforts to bring about a change in the political orientation of Damascus. Assistant Secretary of State Roundtree said he would welcome action designed to impede the Communist threat to the security of Syria and the entire Middle East.⁶⁰ While Washington and Cairo were collaborating to a limited extent tensions continued between Cairo and Riyadh.

Throughout late 1957, the region's primary concern remained the developments in Syria. The king communicated his continued support of the Eisenhower Doctrine through U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Donald Heath. Saud asserted his firm commitment to guide and restrain Arab nationalism in the region "within reasonable limits" and to bring all Arab states to friendly cooperation with the West.⁶¹

Throughout 1957, as Saud championed U.S. interests in the region, he continued his rapprochement with Baghdad. But, Iraq was not in a position to help Saud advocate for the Eisenhower Doctrine. Since the Suez Crisis, Iraq was on the very edge of upheaval. The State Department was convinced that, "there is a real danger that Iraq may succumb to Nasr's brand of Arab nationalism, overthrow Nuri Said, and declare for neutralism and Arab solidarity."⁶² Iraq during this period shared many of the objectives of the Eisenhower Doctrine, but Nuri was still pushing for the Baghdad Pact as the means

⁶⁰ Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State," 12 Dec. 1957. *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988, p. 746-747.

⁶¹ "Telegram from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State," 16 Oct. 1957, *Ibid.*, p. 508.

⁶² Takeyh, *The Orgins*, p. 149 quotes: "Basic Elements of US Program for the Middle East," 7 Dec. 1956, Lot File 66 D487. National Archive.

to achieve them. A stronger Nuri Said would have doubtlessly ameliorated the process, but his separate vision for reaching the goals that he had in common with Saud might have diminished some of Iraq's contribution (Nuri was still committed to the Baghdad Pact while Saud preferred the Eisenhower doctrine). Regardless, Nuri's position was crumbling, and he resigned his Prime Minister post on June 8. His successor Ali Jawdat al-Ayubi in the early days as Prime Minister while he was still attempting to consolidate his power, was not eager to align his government against the forces of Arab nationalism.⁶³ Saud would need to be the one pillar of U.S. policy. Without Iraq, Saud would need to carry the day alone, but he was simply not capable.

Saud's Weakness Exposed

At the beginning of 1958, Nasr's ambition to unite with Syria under the auspices of the United Arab Republic (UAR) appeared to be coming to fruition. Despite limited coordination with Nasr the previous year in opposing Soviet influence in Syria, the State Department still viewed Cairo as a threat to its regional interest and urged Saud to improve his relations with Jordan and Iraq as a means to counter Nasr.⁶⁴ Saud, who himself was very concerned about the formation of the UAR, was unable to champion U.S. policy with the determination he did the previous year because the majority of his advisors had once again been affected by Nasr's lure and favored the UAR.⁶⁵ The overwhelming support for the UAR in Saudi Arabia limited Saud's public support for the

⁶³ David Lesch, *Syria and the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 132-134.

⁶⁴ "Telegram 1026 to Jidda," 28 Jan. 1958. Department of State, Central Files, 786.00/1-2758. "Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State," 13 Feb. 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960* vol. 11 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 275.

⁶⁵ "Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State," 3 Feb. 1958, *Ibid.*, p. 270.

Eisenhower Doctrine. Privately, however, the king still worked on an organization to counter the UAR. But, in order to avoid the appearance of collaborating with “American imperialists” Saud preconditioned cooperation with Baghdad on Iraq’s withdraw from the Baghdad Pact, which the Iraqis were at that juncture unwilling to do.⁶⁶ Without Iraq, no credible opposition to Egypt materialized.

Although Saud’s encouragement was critical to Jordan accepting the Eisenhower Doctrine, by the beginning of 1958, the Saudi king was unable to improve on his position in Jordan. Saudi Arabia’s sway in Amman at this point was in decline. This was because back in Riyadh by 1958, Saud’s luxuriant spending habits were under closer scrutiny, which forced him to withdraw the annual support he had been sending to Amman, thus limiting his influence in Jordan.⁶⁷

The UAR deeply troubled King Saud. Eisenhower noted that “King Saud was angry in finding a hostile combination on his flanks”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., 270-1.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 271.

⁶⁸ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 263-264

Saudi-Egyptian relations were still strained from the events of 1956. Due to increased domestic pressure, Saud gave the appearance of working with Syria and Egypt, but behind the scenes he was involved in intrigues against their leaders. His activities were poorly conceived and managed, and many outsiders had learned of the plots he was involved in to remove the Egyptian and Syrian leaders. Those who discovered Saud's schemes included U.S. intelligence services. The CIA warned Saud not to go through with his plans as they expressed "serious doubts about the bona fides" of the Syrians who were plotting with him against the Damascus leadership. The U.S. Consul General Charles Yost feared that the plot was a provocation to discredit Saud.⁶⁹ Despite the warnings, Saud proceeded any way and the plot was soon discovered and aborted, thus giving the king's backers in Washington reason to question the king's discernment and leadership acumen.

The botched coup attempt also negatively impacted Saud's image in the region. If the plot was indeed a trap set to ensnare Saud by his regional opponents, it operated perfectly for their designs. Dulles reported at a National Security Council meeting on March 6 that "King Saud's position is gravely endangered by these developments...Nasr was now in an all-out battle with the remaining pro-Western leaders."⁷⁰ In the wake of the discovery of the plot, Egyptian press and radio attacks against the king began in earnest describing in vivid detail the facts of the affair and Saud's involvement.⁷¹ Furthermore, Cairo removed military and civilian advisors from Saudi Arabia. Dulles

⁶⁹ "Embassy in Damascus to Department of State," 3 Mar. 1958, Telegram 838. Department of State, Central Files, 786.A.11/3-358.

⁷⁰ "The 357th Meeting of the National Security Council," 6 Mar. 1958. Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records.

⁷¹ Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), p. 63.

continued his brief at the March 6 NSC meeting by turning to the President and asserted that this move by Saud had threatened the well being of the regimes in the Near East that had positive orientations to the Eisenhower Doctrine, labeling the situation “extremely grave.”⁷²

Saud’s position had been extremely weakened and soon he succumbed to pressure in the royal house. On March 22, King Saud was forced by the royal family to delegate major responsibilities for formulating the internal, external, and financial policy of Saudi Arabia to his brother, Crown Prince Faisal. This arrangement seems to have been initiated by Prince Abd Allah who had been close to Ibn Saud and was deeply involved in palace affairs. He enjoyed prestige among the kingdom’s tribes and respect among the religious authorities and the rest of the royal court. He convened a meeting in early March, which reached a consensus to force Saud to relinquish his powers to Faisal.⁷³

Saud’s pro-American stance was just one of many elements that led to him being forced from power. The incompetent leadership of his own country was the primary contributor to his fall. The kingdom’s economic situation illustrates his ineptitude very succinctly. Saud consistently failed to demonstrate any fiscal responsibility. Much like his father Ibn Saud, he never differentiated between public revenues and the monarch’s privy purse. Saud had exhausted some of the nation’s budget on development projects. Often though, he preempted funds, which would have contributed to basic social concerns, to instead go to prestige projects. One such undertaking was the \$200 million capital in Riyadh. Eisenhower’s special envoy, James Richards, observed on his visit that,

⁷² “The 357th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 6 Mar. 1958. Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records.

⁷³ Bligh, *From Prince to King*, p. 63-64.

“Saudi Arabia in contrast to Iraq appears to be devoting undue proportion of major effort to showy edifices rather than basic development projects. Oil revenues seem to benefit principally and ostentatiously the royal family and its retainers while only trickling down to the people.”⁷⁴

Saud had also long used the country’s considerable oil profits to underwrite political intrigue throughout the region. These projects were often capricious. For example, in a period of one year he supplied funds to Nasr to launch a propaganda attack on Jordan and the following year he contributed \$30 million to support the Amman government.

Saud’s prolific spending had created a financial crisis. Over the years, while Saud’s spending increased, Saudi oil profits dropped off. In 1956, the government brought in \$50 million less than the previous year and oil prices remained static through 1958.⁷⁵ By late 1957, the national debt reached \$122 million. This figure more than doubled to \$480 million in 1958.⁷⁶ Despite the shortfall in the treasury, Saud continued to issue the royal princes their annual \$32,000 salary, a policy he had initiated in 1953 after the passing of his father.⁷⁷

Secondly, Saud’s poor leadership qualities were also exhibited in his mishandling of politics in the royal house. Prior to Ibn Saud’s death, the monarch named Saud his successor. He also decreed the creation of the Council of Ministers, but how the

⁷⁴ “Telegram from the Embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State,” 11 Apr. 1957, noon, *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 491-492.

⁷⁵ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 p. 107.

⁷⁶ “Faysal’s Financial Reforms March 1958-January 1960,” 28 Jan. 1960, Intelligence Report No. 8215. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

government should operate and the extent of the king's powers were never fully delineated, let alone implemented by Ibn Saud. Saud had an unenviable task of succeeding his father, who had risen to power on the merit of his own shrewd leadership and was the hub from which all authority in the kingdom emanated.⁷⁸ Saud named Faisal Prime Minister in 1954 in a move to demonstrate he was sharing power with the Crown Prince. It also was meant to exploit Faisal's proficiency as a statesman and his understanding of international affairs (these were areas in which Saud was particularly weak). This appointment, however, did not defuse the long rivalry between Ibn Saud's two eldest sons. Saud dealt with opposition in his cabinet by awkwardly tinkering with the balance of Saudi power by replacing his opposition with new princes and even went as far as appointing officials from outside the royal family to positions in the Council of Ministers. These maneuvers also aimed to strengthen the position of his sons within Saudi politics.

Saud's moves created much resentment and many in the royal house were very quick to exploit the opportunities Saud's incompetence provided his detractors. Faisal, while benefiting from this undercurrent, did not appear to incite this sentiment,⁷⁹ however, he did precipitate an internal crisis following the revelation of Saud's plot in Syria. In that instance Faisal responded to the news of Saud's role in the plot by resigning from all his positions in the government, including his role as prime minister.

⁷⁷ Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 107.

⁷⁸ Safran, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 86.

⁷⁹ Bligh, *From Prince to King*, p. 56-61.

Finally, Saud's leadership in Saudi Arabia was weakened by his rivalry with Nasr. The two leaders engaged in a vitriolic propaganda war from the time Saud returned from Washington in February 1957 until Saud's removal from power. This conflict increased the mistrust between the two nations. Both sides were reported to be engaged in intrigues against the other. At the end of April 1957, numerous Egyptians were deported from Saudi Arabia under suspicion of attempting to overthrow the monarchy. Nasr seems to have fared the best in this exchange, and Saudi Arabia was anxious for relief from Cairo's wrath. Easing tensions with Egypt was a major objective in the royal family's move against Saud.⁸⁰

Evaluation of Saud's Leadership Performance

Despite an earnest effort, Saud was unable to pull Egypt or Syria into the U.S. orbit. Thus, demonstrating that while Saudi Arabia did possess an important role as a swing influence, it was restricted to that role. Even with Saud's improved understanding of how the regional situation fit into the larger global picture; the fact was that King Saud did not have the inertia to shift the balance of regional politics alone. His importance was limited. He was the last stone that starts a rockslide, but could not initiate the movement himself. Having seen how important Saud was in frustrating U.S. policy regarding the Baghdad Pact, it seems that the administration overestimated Saudi Arabia's political capabilities in selecting him to propagate the Eisenhower Doctrine.

From the earliest days of the formulation of the strategy to utilize Saud, there had been signals that British hesitance in regards to Saud may have been merited and that he might not be up to the task. London had long doubted Saud's ability and instead

⁸⁰ "King Saud Hands Over," *The Economist*, 29 Mar. 1958, p. 1140-1141.

supported Nuri Said as a rival to Nasr. The U.S. had staunchly supported Saud and questioned the motives of the British in their backing of the Iraqi Prime Minister who was completely dependent on the British to maintain his position in Baghdad.

The British were not alone in their skepticism. The administration had their own doubts that Saud would be able to meet their expectations. The administration continued to support the backing of Saud versus Nasr even when there were indications that Saud might not be the ideal candidate for the role. Dulles who had from the very beginning showed some skepticism toward the scheme acknowledged that “he is not master of his own house.”⁸¹ This denoted the Secretary of State’s recognition that Saud was having trouble dominating the royal court, let alone the entire region.

Even Eisenhower, after his meetings with Saud in February when he had the opportunity to size up the king, had to admit that the king was not the great symbol of strength he had hoped for. The king, he conceded, seemed adverse to large groups and came across as “introspective and shy.”⁸² In addition to the President’s concern about Saud’s stature, Eisenhower was also troubled by the king’s limited worldview. The President found that Saud “is strictly medieval. When he says ‘my people,’ he means just that.”⁸³ Despite these reservations the administration could not find a better option and decided Saud would be “the person we tie to.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 111 quotes: “Meeting between Dulles and Lloyd,” 10 Dec. 1956, PRO FO371/129327.

⁸² Eisenhower, p. 116.

⁸³ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, vol. 2. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 385.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 385 quotes: a phone call between Eisenhower and Dulles on October 26, 1956.

Saud did provide his supporters in the administration with several diplomatic performances that would give credence to their claims that he was held in high position among the Arabs and capable of leading a coalition in opposition of Nasr. Besides his mediation effort between Turkey and Syria and his efforts in securing Jordan's acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine, he demonstrated his regional leadership in his mediation of a feud between Syria and the Hashemites, which threatened to push Syria into an even closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Saud used his personal influence in Damascus to temper the conflict. It was the Syrian leadership's confidence in his character that allowed them to believe Saud's assurances that Iraq did not have ambitions in Syria.⁸⁵ The feud reached such a feverish pitch that Syrian operatives attempted to assassinate King Hussein, and Syria began to take a prominent role in the Egyptian propaganda effort against Jordan. Saud visited between the capitals of both Jordan and Syria and mediated the dispute. His efforts insured the conflict would not threaten Syria's outlook on the West. He would follow that effort with a state visit to Lebanon where he was received by the Lebanese people with a grand welcome, which further backed his credentials as a figure of influence in the region.⁸⁶

Even with his successes, Saud still had critics in the administration who throughout were unconvinced that Saud had the ability to oppose Nasr. Some members of the administration believed Saud had achieved very little in his effort to counter Nasr.

⁸⁵ "Telegram from State Department to Embassy in Baghdad," 28 Sept 1957. *U.S. Records on Saudi Affairs, 1945-1959*, vol. 5. (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997), p. 371-372. "From Embassy in Amman to the Department of State," 1 Oct. 1957. *U.S. Records on Saudi Affairs, 1945-1959*, vol. 5. (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997), p. 377.

⁸⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," 30 Sept. 1957. *U.S. Records on Saudi Affairs, 1945-1959*, vol. 5. (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997), p. 378-379.

As of 1957, this view of Saud gained momentum in Washington. In a November 1957 Cabinet meeting, the administration agreed to keep publicly backing Saud even though it began to see that the Saudi king would not be able to prevail on Nasr. The cabinet members agreed they would have to consider other ways in which to bring Nasr in on the U.S. side.⁸⁷

The palace coup in Saudi Arabia of March 1958 was the ultimate confirmation of the administration's fear that Saud was the wrong figure to moderate Nasr. It demonstrated that Nasr's support in Saud's kingdom was greater than his own. It also pointed out clearly his weakness as a leader and highlighted Nasr's strength. Saud was not able to reassert his authority over his kingdom until December 1960 when he forced Faisal to resign as prime minister.⁸⁸ This is not to say though that Saud was the wrong choice, as he was probably the best candidate for such a role. Rather, it shows the entire concept was flawed. It is doubtful that any ruler in the Middle East no matter his leadership credentials would have been able to successfully stand up to Nasr.

In light of Saud's weak performance at home, the President expressed regret in selecting him to rival Nasr saying Saud "was too weak an individual" and expressed contempt about Saud's negative impact on his own country.⁸⁹ The contrast of Nasr and Saud at that point in 1958 could not have been starker. Nasr at that time had successfully established his regime in Egypt, which was beginning to make key social improvements. Also, Nasr used his charisma and ideology to gain the popular backing for himself and

⁸⁷ Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 133 quotes: "Memorandum from a Cabinet Meeting," 15 Nov. 1957, Eisenhower Papers: Box 5, John Foster Dulles, White House Memorandum Series.

⁸⁸ Benson Lee Grayson, *Saudi-American Relations, Washington: University Press of America*, 1982, p. 93.

Arab nationalism in the majority of the region. In addition, Nasr had inaugurated the UAR with himself firmly ensconced as its leader. By the spring of 1958, he had been cooperating with the U.S. on communist influence in Syria and had just begun coordinating with the U.S. on how to soothe the conflict that had broken out in Lebanon between Christians and Muslims. This was a sign of the easing of tensions between the U.S. and Egypt. In contrast, during the same period, Saud had fallen from power in Saudi Arabia primarily owing to incompetence and abuses of power. Additionally, he had failed to rally the region behind himself or U.S. policy.

U.S.-Saudi Relations Under Faisal's Leadership

When Faisal was in the U.S. during late 1957, he gave the administration assurances that he intended to maintain close cooperation with the U.S., regardless of any public posturing he might be forced to make because of wide spread nationalistic sentiments in the kingdom.⁹⁰ By 1958 U.S. relations with Egypt had improved and the administration no longer pursued a confrontational policy toward Egypt. So, Faisal's conciliatory attitude toward Egypt following his ascension to power failed to alarm the White House. On April 18, 1958, the Crown Prince signaled a new policy toward Egypt when he announced that while Saudi Arabia would not join the UAR, it would also not take part in any rival federation either.⁹¹ Saudi Arabia further improved relations with Cairo by reaching an agreement on their opposition to Israel.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, p. 466 quotes: Ann C. Whitman Diary, 15 Jun. 1958.

⁹⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation," 23 Sept. 1957. *FRUS 1955-1957* vol. 13. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 412.

⁹¹ Grayson, *Saudi-American Relations*, p. 91

Events in the region made it easier for Faisal to both support the U.S. and draw closer to Nasr. On July 14, the monarchy in Iraq was overthrown in a bloody coup and replaced by a military regime that quickly moved to establish relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc States.⁹² The following day the U.S. sent troops into Lebanon at the request of President Camille Chamoun to prevent the Soviets from taking advantage of the civil war that had broke out in Lebanon even though the conflict had been brought on by Chamoun's own trifling with the Lebanese constitution.⁹³ Saudi Arabia supported the U.S. move and saw it as a demonstration that the U.S. would indeed intervene militarily to assist its regional allies. Egypt too, with its ideology of neutralism, took solace in this attempt to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining dominance in the region. Nasr believed this boded well for the situation in Iraq. With Abd al-Kareem Qasim's assumption of power in Iraq, Nasr was anxious that the Soviets might dispatch forces to support the fledgling regime in Baghdad.⁹⁴

By the end of 1958, the U.S. strategy of using King Saud to promote the Eisenhower Doctrine had been largely discredited. And much of the region still had not expressed approval of U.S. policy. Furthermore, the situation in both Iraq and Syria was very unstable and both nations were in close relations with the USSR. But, all was not lost in the region for Washington. The U.S. still enjoyed a general respect among Arab states and Lebanon and Jordan were brought into the U.S. camp. Additionally relations with Cairo looked promising due to a more nuanced understanding of Arab nationalism

⁹² William Cleveland, *The History of the Modern Middle East*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004, p. 328).

⁹³ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, p. 464.

⁹⁴ Grayson, *Saudi-American Relations*, p. 92.

and a common fear of Soviet ambitions in the region. The U.S. though would continue to look on Nasr with a suspicious eye. Even though Saud was unable to meet U.S. expectations an enduring relationship had been forged between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

While the U.S.-Saudi relationship was solid when Eisenhower came to office and was just as robust when he left office, much had happened in the intervening years to develop and deepen the partnership. The Middle East itself underwent considerable change as Britain and France lost their direct influence in the area culminated by the Suez Crisis and accompanied by the toppling of many of the monarchies they had established in the region. These developments provided an opportunity for the rise of the already growing Arab nationalistic sentiment, the possibility of Soviet gains in the region, and general instability. The U.S. was quite wary of all these developments. Additionally during this period, Middle Eastern oil had made its advent as a power shaping commodity on the world stage.

The ongoing Cold War and the situation in the Middle East prompted the Eisenhower administration to take a more active role in regional affairs than former administrations. Previously, the U.S. had allowed private American concerns and the British to direct U.S. actions in the region. The Truman administration had showed increased interest in preventing Soviet advances in the region and had developed several schemes in conjunction with the British for dealing with this concern. These defense concepts proposed were multi-national defense agreements in which Egypt was to have an essential role. This new strategy directly impacted U.S.-Saudi relations. In the early years of the administration this was often to the relationship's detriment.

Dulles' extensive visit to the region shortly after coming to office in 1953 announced the new administration's heightened concern for the Middle East. His trip brought him in contact with all of the region's leaders and the Secretary of State returned from his visit with a new appreciation for the region. His visit also impressed on him that Egypt would be unwilling and unable to assume a prominent role in a mutual defense agreement sponsored by the West. His time with the Saudi leadership convinced Dulles that due to their insular outlook and their paltry military, the Saudis could not possibly be essential to the success of the MEDO plan or the later Baghdad Pact. Yet, the State Department assumed Saudi Arabia would associate with the new pact as a member of secondary influence.

The administration misread Saudi intentions and Riyadh not only refused to join the Baghdad Pact but vehemently opposed it and was drawn into Nasr's orbit. This had less to do with Saudi feelings for that U.S. than it did with the currents of regional politics. It seems that if Washington could have pressured and enticed Saudi Arabia into joining the Baghdad Pact, such as pressuring the British on the Buraimi Oasis. A viable effort, though, was never launched. The administration also failed to appreciate the Hashemite factor in Saudi actions. As a result of these failures Saudi Arabia became a major antagonist to the pact and the administration quickly discovered the significance of Saudi Arabia to the success of mutual defense in the region. Throughout their campaign against the pact, the Saudis were intentional to never direct their fury against the U.S. and thus avoided severing ties with Washington and hurting their mutual interest in oil and U.S. basing rights in Dhahran. Yet, the Saudis still joined the progressive wind from Egypt in opposing the Baghdad Pact.

By 1956, the winds of regional politics had changed once again and King Saud and the other conservative regimes were on the defensive against Nasr and the Arab nationalism which he championed. This caused Saud to reverse course and the Saudi king found himself drawn closer to Washington and very interested in coordinating with the U.S. over regional policy.

The openness by Riyadh coincided with a move by the U.S. to abandon the Baghdad Pact and defend the Middle East from Soviet advances through bilateral agreements. Remembering the critical role Saudi Arabia played in the demise of the Baghdad Pact the U.S. sought to bring King Saud on in favor of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The administration was successful in this effort, and Saud entered an agreement with the U.S. and propagated the doctrine through the Middle East. Saud, however, proved unable to rally the Arab states behind the U.S. policy and failed in a contest with Nasr for the hearts and minds of the Arab world in an atmosphere that was not conducive for the acceptance of Washington's new policy. Saud's failure was partly due to the fact that his kingdom was not of the same stature as Egypt and partly due to his shortcomings as a leader. Saudi Arabia was a significant player in regional politics (one that could not be ignored), but it could not carry a policy for the U.S.

The Eisenhower Doctrine's performance in achieving its stipulated goals was mixed. It proved to successfully deny the region's precious resources to the Soviet Union while keeping oil flowing to the West. But it actually unwittingly aided the Soviets in obtaining influence in the region further. In its association with Saudi Arabia and then Jordan and Iraq, the U.S. choose, by default, to support the conservative stream of politics in the on going regional struggle for leadership of the Arab world. This helped to

polarize the region. Washington looked upon the neutralist and nationalistic regimes such as Iraq after the 1958 Revolution, Syria, and Egypt with suspicion, and therefore rebuffed their requests for economic and military assistance. These nations, in turn, were forced to seek aid elsewhere and cast their lots with the rival side in the global Cold War and turned to the Soviets for aid.

Had the significance of Saudi Arabia as an important regional pivot been appreciated by the administration earlier, and had it made a concerted effort to bring Saudi Arabia into Western mutual defense plans earlier, this polarization and the increased Soviet influence that accompanied it might have been mitigated. In the period of 1953-1955 many of the region's states were uncommitted in the global Cold Wars. Additionally, regional rivalries had not yet coalesced into two political camps. Once Egypt signaled it was not interested in cooperating in Western defense initiatives, Saudi Arabia possibly could have saved the Baghdad Pact.

This study has demonstrated that the administration did not appreciate the role Saudi Arabia would play in the fate of the Baghdad Pact. Saudi Arabia's significant position did not because it was a nation that could rival Egypt with its military strength or political charisma (it lacked both). Rather, it held an important position in the region because its oil wealth and its king's religious mantle as protector of the holiest Islamic sites made it preeminent and influential among the other secondary states in the region's power structure such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. None of these nations was hostile to the pact, but each hesitated to join Iraq as the lone Arab members of the defense scheme because of a fear of Nasr's reaction and because the desire to avoid isolation in Middle East politics. Had Saudi Arabia joined it would have provided Iraq relief from its

isolated position which ended up being one of the fatal blows the pact suffered. Also, it is also possible that Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria would have been influenced by Saudi Arabia's move and also come into the pact. A core of five Arab nations (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) would have insulated the Arab members from Egyptian attacks and the destabilizing influences in their own countries which proved to be a toehold for Soviet influence in Syria and Iraq.

This study further has demonstrated that Saudi Arabia was also important to the fate of the Baghdad Pact because of the amount of effort it committed to opposing the pact once it decided not to join. Saudi Arabia went on to successfully prevent other Arab states from entering the pact as well impairing the one Arab nation that had joined through a barrage of propaganda attacks.

When the Eisenhower administration moved away from the Baghdad Pact and to the Eisenhower Doctrine it had a new appreciation for Saudi Arabia and looked to Saudi Arabia to champion the new American policy in the region. The U.S. also sought to utilize King Saud as a figure to reduce Nasr's influence in the region. The administration, fresh from experiencing the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia's opposition to its former plan, overestimated Riyadh's clout in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia was significant as a pivot, but it was not the primary player in the region. Thus, Saudi Arabia only had limited success in this role and was not able to get the region to back the new U.S. containment policy.

Saudi Arabia was important to the fate of the Eisenhower administration's policies in the Middle East because of its pivotal role in Middle Eastern politics. Its importance was first minimized by the administration when considering the Baghdad

Pact, and then both Eisenhower and Dulles inflated Saudi Arabia's significance when they sought to obtain Middle Eastern backing for the Eisenhower Doctrine. Had they accurately assessed Saudi Arabia as a swing state in the Middle East's electoral college their interests in the region would have been better served.

Despite the administration's inability to properly assess the value of Saudi Arabia, it did develop and deepen the U.S.-Saudi relationship, even though regional dynamics as much as persuasion and national interests set this alliance. This is a collaboration which has endured over fifty years and benefited both partners immensely. While it is true that the Saudi regime's opposition to communism and its oil reserves and the U.S. willingness to protect the Saudi Kingdom and develop its petroleum resources were the cement that held the bond between these two natural allies, it was the diplomatic moves of the Eisenhower administration that brought Saudi Arabia firmly in to the U.S. orbit to inaugurate the steadfast alliance.

The administration discovered that politics in the Middle East could no longer be handled through agreements with leaders of regional states, as the British had before them, because the popular voice carried new weight. It did not emerge from this period with the relationship it had previously desired with Egypt. Instead it emerged tied to Saudi Arabia which became especially strong as the Soviet threat persisted and as Saudi oil grew in global importance.

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