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## United States post Gulf-War policy toward Iraq: A systemic assessment

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U.S. POST GULF-WAR POLICY TOWARD IRAQ:  
A SYSTEMIC ASSESSMENT

by

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1992

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree  
Department of Political Science  
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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## Thesis Approval

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **U.S. Post-Gulf War Policy Toward Iraq: A Systemic Assessment**

by

Amanda Christine Ringelberg

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Associate Professor of Political Science  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This thesis proposes that US policy is structurally flawed toward Iraq and the Middle East in general. This structural flaw in US policy-making is a result of ignoring the regional considerations of the Middle East as a subsystem. Current US strategy toward Iraq is doomed to fail because of the unique structural considerations in the Middle East and the failure of policy-makers to recognize them.

The thesis begins with a theoretical examination of the Middle East subsystem, based on principles from international systems theory. Several patterns of regularity that define the subsystem are then outlined. An assessment of US goals and strategies in the region and specifically toward Iraq will be discussed in terms of the systemic nature of the region. Finally, the case of US sanctions in Iraq will be used as an example of a failed US policy that was not in line with the regional considerations of the Middle East.

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## INTRODUCTION

US foreign policy toward Iraq has generally not been hailed a success in the post-Persian Gulf War era. Since the end of Desert Storm in 1991, the US has attempted a number of strategies to achieve its policy goals in Iraq. Primarily, the US has relied on military and economic sanctions as its primary weapons against Saddam Hussein. Sanctions have been implemented to achieve a number of policy goals with regards to Iraq, which will be described more in depth later in this thesis. Some of these goals included ousting Saddam Hussein, preventing further Iraqi aggression against its neighbors, and stopping Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. Yet eleven years after the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein remains firmly in power, United Nations (UN) inspectors are forbidden from continuing their inspections of suspected WMD facilities in Iraq, and international support for economic sanctions is waning. The US, with some help from the United Kingdom, remains the sole enforcer of sanctions against Iraq. This decade-old policy has resulted in significant wear and tear on US military forces and has incurred high diplomatic costs of maintaining support for an increasingly unpopular policy.

US policy toward Iraq since the Gulf War has failed for a number of reasons. Part of the blame lies in the fact that sanctions are an imperfect policy tool. In short, they have not allowed the US to meet its goals toward Iraq

Sanctioning Iraq has hurt the general Iraqi population, not Saddam Hussein's government. Saddam has been able to turn sanctions into a rallying cry to stir up Iraqi citizen hatred against the US. If anything, sanctions have allowed Saddam to consolidate his grip on power in Iraq. Sanctions may have slowed Iraq's development of WMD and stymied Iraq's military growth, but they have not been able to eradicate Saddam's arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, nor his ability to use them against his neighbors. All in all, sanctions have had a very limited effect on Iraq.

Although the key policy tool of the US against Iraq—sanctions—has failed in the decade since the Gulf War, the blame may not lie in the policy tool itself, but rather in the manner in which this particular policy was designed. US policy toward Iraq has been structurally flawed at the domestic, regional, and global level. Policy toward Iraq has not been examined using the context of the Middle East as a whole. This has resulted in an inconsistent foreign policy approach toward different countries in the Middle East. Policies have been created independent of any other regional concerns. This approach is flawed because the Middle East should be treated as an interactive system, defined as one in which actions in one country tend to affect the rest of the countries in that system. To achieve policy goals in Iraq, the US should look at the Middle East as an interactive, regional subsystem, with a set of unique regional considerations (described in Chapter 2). These regional considerations will affect all policy implementation in the region. Implementing policy strategies in Iraq independent of these regional considerations is unproductive and leads to a

systematic failure of foreign policy. Therefore, even if sanctions were theoretically a perfect strategy to achieve US foreign policy goals in Iraq, they are doomed to fail because the policy was created without accounting for the Middle East as a system.

To show how this structural flaw in US policy-making toward Iraq has led to a failure in post-Gulf War policy, this thesis will be presented in five parts. Chapter 1 will examine the theoretical basis of systems theory and focus on regional subsystems and their characteristics. Chapter 2 will review the regional considerations that are unique to the Middle East as a regional subsystem. Chapter 3 will assess US policy in the Middle East in terms of US goals in the region and their incompatibility with the regional considerations discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 will examine the US strategies implemented to meet US policy goals in the Middle East, again examined in terms of the regional considerations unique to the Middle East. Chapter 5 will conclude by bringing the issues together, showing how specific US policy goals and strategy—using the case study of sanctions in Iraq—have failed due to the impact the Middle East subsystem has on US foreign policy in the region.

## CHAPTER 1

### THEORETICAL ASSESSMENT

#### International Systems Theory

To adequately discuss the Middle East as a regional subsystem, a foundation must be laid in general international systems theory. The term "system" describes how units interact with each other. The classic dictionary definition of a system is: a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or organic whole.<sup>1</sup> In the field of international relations, a system construct can be used to examine how foreign policies are formulated and how states or other units interact or relate to each other.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, treating the Middle East as a system allows one to show how the structural aspects of the regional subsystem affect US foreign policy decisions, even though US policy-makers have largely ignored the regional aspects of their decisions. According to structural/systems theory, the actions of individual states when aggregated produce patterns of behavior that may be fundamentally different from the behavior patterns that would exist if the individual actor was part of other structures.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, if Iraq was part of a presumed subsystem in the Middle East, there would be patterns of behavior that apply to Iraq because of its location within that particular subsystem.

One of the most important aspects of systems theory in terms of examining US foreign policy in the Middle East is the framework the theory provides. Discussing the Middle East as a set of regional considerations (or patterns of behavior) provides a framework for analyzing US foreign policy decisions. Iraq, being a part of the Middle East subsystem, will behave typically in certain ways, and this behavior has a profound effect on the foreign policy decisions made by the US and especially on the policy's outcomes. Therefore once the patterns are identified, it becomes easier to analyze not only past policy decisions, but also to plan the effects of future policy decisions with more accuracy to some degree. Work to identify these regional patterns has occurred at both the international and regional level.

At the international level, Morton Kaplan defined a system as a set of variables (or actors) so unique that regular patterns of behavior can be noted both internally (among the variables) and externally (groups of variables interacting with other groups).<sup>4</sup> Kaplan focused his study of the international system on defining a set of "rules" that could be used to describe different systems. Kaplan came up with six different models of international systems and each model had its own set of "rules." The following is an example of each of his model's rules of behavior (in the interest of brevity, not all rules are included in this summary).

**Balance of Power model:**

- 1) States act to increase capabilities but negotiate rather than fight.
- 2) States fight rather than pass up opportunity to increase capabilities.
- 3) States stop fighting rather than eliminate an essential national actor.
- 4) States act to oppose any coalition or single actor that tends to assume a position of predominance with respect to the rest of the system.<sup>5</sup>

Example: This model existed in the nineteenth century to pre-World War I with England, France, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian empire and the United States as key national actors.<sup>6</sup>

#### Loose Bipolar Model:

- 1) Blocs (of which there are two) strive to increase their relative capabilities.
- 2) Blocs tend to be willing to run at least some risks to eliminate rival blocs.
- 3) Blocs tend to engage in major war rather than to permit rival blocs to attain predominance.
- 4) Non-bloc actors tend to act to reduce the danger of war between blocs.
- 5) Universal actors (such as the United Nations) are to reduce the incompatibility between the blocs.<sup>7</sup>

Example: This would describe a system with two blocs (such as the Soviet bloc and US bloc during the Cold War), but where other non-bloc countries and organizations such as the United Nations still exert influence on the two blocs.

#### Tight Bipolar model:

(Same rules as the loose bipolar model, with rules pertaining to non-bloc actors and universal actors deleted)

- 1) Blocs (of which there are two) strive to increase their relative capabilities.
- 2) Blocs tend to be willing to run at least some risks to eliminate rival blocs.
- 3) Blocs tend to engage in major war rather than to permit rival blocs to attain predominance.<sup>8</sup>

Example: This may have described the Cold War or parts of the Cold War period, if one believes that organizations such as the United Nations were powerless and that all national actors were firmly entrenched in one bloc or the other.

#### Universal International System model:

- 1) All national actors will attempt to increase their rewards and access to facilities.
- 2) All national actors will attempt to increase the resources and productive base of the international system.
- 3) All actors will tend to use peaceful methods to obtain their objectives and not resort to force.<sup>9</sup>

Example: There is no historical example, but this system could develop out of a loose bipolar system with a universal actor that assumes more functions within the system.<sup>10</sup>

#### Hierarchical International System model:



This model assumes an integration of functions between national actors, thus the main rules are that the system will legitimize the structure and functions of the hierarchical system. The system will link rewards and access to facilities according to the criteria of the system.<sup>11</sup> This system could be imposed by force upon a bipolar or universal system, leading to a directive (authoritarian) hierarchical system. Or this system may evolve from a universal system, in which case the system will more likely be non-directive.<sup>12</sup>

Unit Veto International System model:

Some basic rules of this system are that all national or bloc actors will possess the capability to destroy each other; no universal actors will exist; and the system will be stable only if all actors are prepared to resist threats and to retaliate in case of attack.<sup>13</sup> This model corresponds to the Hobbesian state of nature, in which all interests are opposed, but each actor obeys the golden rule—he will not do to others what he would not have them do to him.<sup>14</sup>

Kaplan's international models and rules of conduct can prove to be useful in describing, theorizing about, or even predicting a state or group of states' behavior. As one moves from looking at the international system as a whole (and trying to discern patterns of behavior), and examines regional behavior patterns, it becomes apparent that Kaplan's framework can be useful at other levels of analysis besides the international level. If regional subsystems such as the Middle East have some of the same characteristics as international systems (i.e., they are composed of states that together form a larger whole), then one should be able to come up with patterns of behavior or informal rules of conduct for the Middle East. Out of Kaplan's six models, the balance of power model would generally be the most applicable to the Middle East. The other five models deal with blocs, a hierarchical system, or a situation in which all states have the power to destroy each other. While all of these elements are present to some degree in the Middle East, the balance of power model is the best fit for this

region. More importantly, one must identify the specific “rules” that govern the Middle East rather than try to apply Kaplan’s international models to a regional subsystem. These specific regional patterns will be examined in Chapter 2.

### Regional Subsystem Theory

A regional subsystem, as the words imply, can be defined as a system of states that is less significant in scale than the global systems such as those defined by Kaplan. These regional subsystems by definition will also have less “power” than the international systems such as the US-USSR bipolar system during the Cold War. Following criteria developed by Michael Brecher for identifying boundaries between regional clusters of states, Michael Haas identified subsystems in terms of three elements:

- 1) Scope is delimited, with primary stress on a geographic region.
- 2) There are at least two actors.
- 3) There is a relatively self-contained network of political interactions between the members, involving such activities as goal attainment, adaptation, pattern maintenance, and integration, and dealing with power relations and military interactions.<sup>15</sup>

The word integration conjures up an entire body of literature based on integration theories regarding regional subsystems. This thesis does not assert that the Middle East is an integrative system, but rather proposes that looking at the Middle East as a subsystem provides a useful tool for policy analysis.

Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel felt the study of regional international politics was important for empirical, theoretical, and most significant for this thesis, for policy reasons. They recognized the study of regional politics as being important for “accurately understanding the dynamics of the region as part of the

objective of stabilizing the international system.”<sup>16</sup> A policy aimed at stability, such as US policy in the Middle East, must begin with local issues and local balances of power. “A regional focus encourages the surgical use of the scalpel rather than the destructive wielding of the meat cleaver in foreign policy.”<sup>17</sup>

Cantori and Speigel defined a regional subsystem as “one state, or of two or more proximate and interacting states which have some common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, and historical bonds, and whose sense of identity is sometimes increased by the actions and attitudes of states external to the system.”<sup>18</sup> Cantori and Speigel defined the nature of a subordinate system (or a subsystem, as it will be called in this paper) based on its cohesion, communications, level of power, and the structure of relations.<sup>19</sup> A subsystem could be further delineated into three subdivisions: the core sector, the peripheral sector, and the intrusive sector. In the Middle East, Cantori and Speigel defined the core sector as comprised of Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, and the smaller Gulf states, the peripheral sector contained Israel, Iran, Turkey (and Afghanistan), and the intrusive sector was made up of the US, Russia, Western Europe and China.<sup>20</sup>

Based on their research, Cantori and Speigel found the Middle East to be a “coherent” subsystem, in which relatively low levels of cohesion, communications, power, and cooperation were identified as compared to other subsystems.<sup>21</sup> Other coherent subsystems were South Asia, East Asia, West Africa and Central Africa. The next level of subsystem was classified as “cohesive,” and this group included Latin America, North Africa and Southern

Africa. They classified the Middle Eastern core (excluding Israel, Turkey and Iran) as a “cohesive” system, defined as having a high element of one of the pattern variables, usually cohesion, but where conflict is still possible. The next level up was “consolidative” and this group included Western Europe, Southwest Pacific, and Eastern Europe. Finally, the highest level of subsystems was the “integrative” subsystems of North America and the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

They found the level of social cohesion in the Middle East to be very high, organizational cohesion, moderate, and economic and political cohesion, low overall. Communications (via the mass media and among the elite) were only moderate, but power was small and the level of conflict was very great. The core did not have the cooperative elements such as those found in the Latin American core, for example.<sup>23</sup> Bringing the Middle East peripheral states into the equation blurred the cohesiveness of the Middle Eastern core even further. Conflict between the core and periphery then became the main reason the Middle East ranked the lowest on Cantori and Speigel's four levels of subsystem integration.<sup>24</sup>

For this thesis, it will be imperative to treat the Middle East core and peripheral sectors as one system when examining the characteristics of the region. An analysis of US foreign policy toward Iraq requires the examination of the outcomes of US policies as they are applied to Iraq and as they are perceived by the entire Middle East subsystem. This subsystem is heavily influenced by the ongoing conflict between the core and peripheral sectors, thus making it important to analyze both sectors of the Middle East subsystem when conducting policy analysis. The Middle East subsystem will be defined for this

paper as including Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar.

While Cantori and Speigel emphasized the level of cohesion between various world subsystems, and the relation of their core, periphery and intrusive sectors, other work in this field has concentrated more on identifying patterns of regularity among the states of a subsystem. William R. Thompson defined a regional subsystem in terms of these patterns of interaction. His definition was: "necessary and sufficient conditions for a regional subsystem include: regularity and intensity of interactions so that a change in one part affects other parts; general proximity of actors; internal and external recognition of the subsystem as distinctive; and provision of at least two, and probably more, actors in the subsystem."<sup>25</sup>

Thompson conducted an empirical study of the Middle East as a subsystem from 1946-1975 and found evidence of an increasingly larger network of Arab states that managed to sustain interaction throughout the period of study. He found that communication and interaction among the Arab states were greater than the amount of their interaction with non-Arab states. Therefore, although the structure of Middle East subsystem was found to be fluid, it was consistently Arab in its character.<sup>26</sup>

The Middle East has thus been established as a regional subsystem that is made up of Arab (and non-Arab) states that consistently interact with one another and where the actions of one state have a good chance of affecting

another state or states. This cohesiveness will be important in examining US policy toward Iraq because of the tendency for US and/or Iraqi actions to have an effect on other states because of the Middle East's inherent nature as a subsystem. Therefore, US policy must be evaluated not only based on its effect on Iraq, but also based on its effect on the Middle East as a whole, and that reciprocal effect on future US policy in the region. Policy designed with regard to the Middle East as a subsystem may have a greater chance of success than policy designed without factoring in the regional considerations of the Middle East.

In addition to examining the cohesiveness of the Middle East subsystem, it is also important to conduct a thorough review of the specific attributes of the subsystem before evaluating US policy toward a member of the subsystem. As mentioned previously, Cantori and Speigel found the Middle East to have relatively low levels of cohesion as compared to other subsystems, and specifically the Middle East had less political and organizational cohesion than it did social and economic.<sup>27</sup> Thompson found the Middle East to be a fluid system, consistently Arab in its character, with greater internal communication than external communication.

Leonard Binder came up with a set of variables that defined the Middle East. He noted first of all the importance of common membership in the Ottoman Empire for countries in the Middle East because the Ottomans left similar institutions and social networks. He also pointed out the importance of Islamic

culture, pan-Arabism, common language, and ease of communication as being important to the identification of the Middle East subsystem.<sup>28</sup>

Similar to Binder, Tareq Y. Ismael studied the Middle East as a regional subsystem to identify “consistent patterns of interaction that give a characteristic structure to the internal and external relations of the area.”<sup>29</sup> Ismael placed more emphasis on domestic and regional factors than on international influence as a determinant of Middle East nation’s behaviors. As with Kaplan’s models of international behavior, Ismael outlined several “rules” that apply to the Middle East. He listed three critical realities of the Middle East subsystem:

1) Domestic politics define the discourse of contemporary Middle Eastern foreign policies.

Culture, ideology, politics and economics all play a crucial role in defining foreign policy goals and state behavior in the Middle East. More importantly, domestic patterns of variation can be discerned such as a tendency for countries to integrate, sharing a common language, the pervasive Arab-Islamic culture, and a history of Western rule. These patterns all serve to shape the foreign policy goals among the Middle Eastern nations.<sup>30</sup>

2) Processes and structural arrangements of forces at the regional level are extremely important.

When the nations of the Middle East are focused on an issue, such as the Palestinian struggle in the 1970s, the subsystem is able to generate a considerable amount of power on the international scene. Ismael pointed to the ability of the Arab states to cooperate on oil issues in the 1970s and how they subsequently were able to exert considerable influence on the global system.<sup>31</sup>

Conversely, when the system is unfocused (or states are strongly focused on individual issues), the power of the regional subsystem declines, and the system becomes fragmented.<sup>32</sup>

3) The Middle East occupies an intermediate position in the global system, and as such both receives and exerts influence.<sup>33</sup>

The Middle East is a region of strategic importance to most of the major nations in the global system. Western Europe, the US, Russia, and China all have considerable systemic influence on the Middle East, yet the region is also able to generate its own influence on the international players.<sup>34</sup> For example, while the US maintains a significant military, economic, and political presence throughout much of the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to affect domestic political concerns in the US.

### Policy Analysis in the Middle East

To adequately analyze US policies in the Middle East, and specifically toward Iraq, some domestic and global constraints on US policy-makers must be addressed in addition to the regional considerations of the Middle East highlighted in Chapter 2. Some of the domestic considerations facing US policy-makers are the strong Jewish lobby fighting for the security of Israel at all costs, and the politics surrounding oil issues where everyone from environmentalists to multi-national corporations has an opinion. On the global scene, the US must temper its policy-making based on international support, especially the influence of Western Europe and Russia on relations in the Middle East. US policy in the Middle East is affected by domestic, regional and global concerns. The domestic



and global constraints on US policy-makers will be touched upon in Chapter 3 during the discussion of US goals in the region. However, the primary focus of this thesis is on the regional considerations of the Middle East and how they affect US policy-making.

A lot of work has previously been accomplished in the field of international relations that describe the Middle East as a regional subsystem, with its own set of unique characteristics and informal rules of conduct. There has not been a lot of work using a systems theory framework to analyze foreign policy effectiveness. However, use of the subsystem theoretical construct has been useful in describing relations internally among the Middle Eastern countries, and showing linkages of the Middle Eastern region to the global system. The system construct can also be useful when describing the behavior of a specific state within the Middle East subsystem and possibly predicting the future behavior of that state. One intention of this thesis is to show that the subsystem construct can also be a useful framework in analyzing the success of foreign policy goals and strategy as they are interpreted within the subsystem. This thesis plans to use the regional subsystem as a theoretical framework for describing and analyzing US foreign policy toward Iraq since the Persian Gulf War.

A general characteristic of a regional subsystem (as stated earlier by Thompson) is that the actions of one country will affect other countries in that system. Also, a subsystem is defined by a set of informal rules or patterns of behavior that should be expected to remain relatively consistent across the subsystem. This being the case, US foreign policy decisions made toward one

Middle Eastern country should 1) be expected to affect more than just the target country, and 2) be hindered or enhanced by the patterns of behavior found in the Middle East. Analysis of a particular policy can then be conducted and that policy can be shown to be either compatible or incompatible with the systemic nature of the Middle East (i.e. compatible/incompatible with the broader regional considerations of the policy). However, one key limitation to the use of systems theory in this manner is that it assumes that countries in a subsystem are homogenous and will behave in the same way. There are great differences between many nations in the Middle East, especially politically and economically. The Middle East subsystem can be a very fragmented one, and thus does not conform nicely to the general regional considerations that will be described in Chapter 2. Despite this shortcoming, looking at the Middle East in a systemic manner does have some positive applications, especially in the realm of US foreign policy-making.

This thesis strives to examine US foreign policy toward Iraq in terms of the regional considerations of the Middle East from the perspective of the US policy-maker. Using a theoretical framework of six particular regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem (explained in Chapter 2), US policy goals and strategies in the Middle East will be assessed in terms of these regional considerations (Chapters 3 and 4). Finally, the structural problems of US policy toward Iraq will be explained using the sanctions policy tool as an example (Chapter 5).

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> College Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc, 1988), 1359.

<sup>2</sup>Raymond Tanter, "International Systems and Foreign Policy Approaches: Implications for Conflict Modeling and Management," in *Theory and Policy in International Relations*, eds. Raymond Tanter and Richard A. Ullman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Little, "Structuralism and Neo-Realism," in *International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory*, eds. Margot Light and A.J.R. Groom (London: HarperCollins Academics, 1991), 76.

<sup>4</sup>Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957), 4.

<sup>5</sup>Morton A. Kaplan, ed., *Great Issues of International Politics* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970), 9.

<sup>6</sup>Kaplan, 1957, 22.

<sup>7</sup>Kaplan, 1970, 11.

<sup>8</sup>Kaplan, 1957, 44.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>15</sup>Michael Haas, "International Subsystems: Stability and Polarity," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 64 (1970), 101.

<sup>16</sup>Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel, "The Analysis of Regional International Politics: The Integration Versus the Empirical Systems Approach," *International Organization* (1973), 465.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>18</sup>Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Speigel, *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 6-7.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>25</sup>William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly*, 17(1) (March 1973), 101.

<sup>26</sup>William R. Thompson, "Delineating Regional Subsystem: Visit Networks and the Middle East Case," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13(2) (May 1981), 219.

<sup>27</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>28</sup>Leonard Binder, "The Middle East as a Subordinate International System," *World Politics* 10(3) (April 1958), 408-429.

<sup>29</sup>Ismael, 6.

<sup>30</sup>Ismael, 18.

<sup>31</sup>Ismael, 13.

<sup>32</sup>Ismael, 42.

<sup>33</sup>Ismael, 12-13.

<sup>34</sup>Ismael, 13.

## CHAPTER 2

### REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

#### Introduction

A regional subsystem such as the Middle East will have general characteristics and a set of informal rules or patterns of behavior that define it as a subsystem. The Middle East shares some general characteristics with other regional subsystems in the world, such as being a group of interacting states with ethnic, cultural, social, historical and linguistic bonds.<sup>1</sup> What happens in one part of the subsystem will affect other parts of the subsystem due to the interaction between nations of a subsystem.<sup>2</sup> But beyond the general characteristics of a regional subsystem, the Middle East subsystem has some specific patterns of behavior that are unique to it. This Chapter will explore the historical basis for these patterns, which will be used to analyze US policy in the Middle East in Chapters 3 and 4.

Just as Morton Kaplan came up with a set of rules to govern his international models, the Middle East subsystem is based on a set of regional considerations. These considerations are useful to understand from a policy-making standpoint, since they will affect the outcomes of policies enacted in the region. This set of regional considerations will also help shape US policy positions in the region. When the US creates a policy to reach a certain goal

with Iraq, these regional considerations will affect the nature of Iraq's response to the policy as well as the regional responses.

Six regional considerations will be considered in this chapter. First, the Middle East nations are traditionally non-democratic in nature, leading to very limited foreign policy inputs from the population in the decision-making process. Second, pan-Arab and pan-Islamic themes are prevalent in many of the policies and decisions made by leaders in the Middle East. Third, there is a culture of anti-imperialism and anti-Westernism among the population in the Middle East. Fourth, the Arab-Israeli imbroglio has polarized the region, along with the larger global system, and has forced nations to take sides in this highly volatile conflict. Fifth, the Middle East has been economically under-developed compared to the West, largely because the government elites are unwilling to change the economic structure and due to the Gulf nations' reliance on oil exports. Sixth, the Middle East subsystem is largely a fragmented system, which weakens the subsystem as a whole.

No single list of considerations for the Middle East could ever cover all the possible patterns of behavior for the region. However, the six considerations listed above are designed to cover the substantive areas of economics, culture, religion, politics, and social issues that bond nations of a region together into a subsystem. They also cover the most salient issues that characterize the Middle East and are the most pervasive issues in the region. The six considerations offered in this thesis build on the patterns in the Middle East previously noted by Thompson, Binder and Ismael (discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis).<sup>3</sup>

## Non-Democratic Governments

The typical Middle Eastern government is non-democratic, which is to say that the governments are not elected by the people, and not held accountable for their actions to the people in the form of regular, open elections. Of the 16 countries considered in this thesis, seven are monarchies (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia), three are essentially autocratic (Iraq, Syria, and Libya), three are republics (Egypt, Yemen, and Lebanon), two are parliamentary democracies (Turkey and Israel), and Iran is an Islamic republic with elected officials.<sup>4</sup> While there is variance among the degree of popular input allowed by each of these forms of government, the monarchies and autocracies have the least amount of orderly input by their populations into the process of government. With the exception of Turkey and Israel, one could argue that as many as 14 nations in this region exclude large portions of their populations from policy-making. However, there is also a certain degree of disorderly participation that happens throughout the Middle East in the form of riots and protests. This increased mobilization of the population has been on the rise in recent years. As a result of modernization, the lower strata of the population has rising expectations and the newer middle classes are demanding greater participation in government.<sup>5</sup> In general though, this demand for change has not caused a significant increase in the amount of participation allowed by governments, especially when it involves foreign policy decisions.

This lack of orderly political input from the general population in the Middle East means that heads of state have a lot of power to make unilateral decisions

on behalf of their country. Ultimately, the leader of a country becomes the sole foreign policy-making body of that country. Traditionally, foreign policy establishments are generally weak and there is virtually no input from the non-elite segments of the typical Middle Eastern population.<sup>6</sup> In some states such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, the religious clerics attempt to assert considerable impact on the government and influence its foreign policies. The Islamic leaders espouse policies that are more often anti-West and against the rapid pace of modernization than the secular leaders.<sup>7</sup> This is not to imply that there are no other inputs from within or outside the government in making foreign policy decisions, just that the Middle Eastern leaders typically have far more latitude in decision-making than those in the Western-style democracies.<sup>8</sup> It is also important to note that the type of decision being made affects the source of the policy-making. In matters of "high" politics such as national security, the Middle Eastern leader has more power to make decisions unilaterally than in domestic concerns. This is even true in Israel, a democracy, where the prime minister is granted more freedom to act independently when military action is called for.<sup>9</sup>

Another example of a leader not consulting the population or even his own government with matters of foreign policy was Anwar Sadat's decision to make peace with Israel in 1978. Many of his top officials reported that Sadat circumvented the foreign policy process and acted independently to reach a peace agreement with Israel at Camp David.<sup>10</sup> Sadat reportedly "surprised" his security council and foreign minister with a verbal notice of his intentions just 24 hours prior to his departure to Camp David.<sup>11</sup>



The perils of massing so much decision-making power in one person, or a small elite group of people, are many. Foreign policy decisions are subject to the whims and fancy of the leader in power, and once that leadership has changed (whether through peaceful transition or not), the nation could take a completely different course. This is not only unsettling for the nation's citizens, but also for the outside countries trying to carve out diplomatic agreements with the nation in flux. Another peril is that foreign policy decisions are sometimes made to legitimize governments or leaders in the Middle East, without any sound basis to the decisions.<sup>12</sup> For example, Saddam Hussein made an almost unilateral decision to engage his country in a war with Iran based on reasons that many would say were personally motivated and unsound.

The Ba'th Party in Iraq and its leader Saddam Hussein form a compelling example of a Middle Eastern nation where the government acts independently of its people and where foreign policy decisions are essentially at the discretion of the head of state. The Iraqi nation is a plural one, made up of five nationalities, six religions and four languages.<sup>13</sup> As a result, successful leaders have had to dominate the diverse groups through centralized control of the government. The Ba'th Party established firm control over the nation in 1968 (after a failed attempt to do so in 1963), and set up a party apparatus with a cellular composition, designed to promote loyalty and limit participation at the highest levels of the government. Once Saddam Hussein assumed full control of the party in 1979, he surrounded himself with a "clique" of loyal followers, mostly men from his hometown of Tikrit.<sup>14</sup>

In 1980 when Iraq (i.e. Saddam) decided to attack Iran, the decision was not made in response to actual provocations on the Iranian side. Although a complicated issue, part of the reason Saddam decided to go to war with Iran was that he felt his regime was being threatened by the rise of the radical Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>15</sup> Saddam saw an opportunity to safeguard his regime and settle some long-standing disputes in the Shatt al-Arab waterway through a war with Iran. After the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam thought he was invincible as an Arab leader and again took a foreign policy gamble by invading Kuwait in 1990.<sup>16</sup> Once again, the decision made by Saddam was unilateral, with little to no input from even his elite top advisers.

The Iraqi case is a good example of the non-democratic nature of the Middle East, especially with regards to foreign policy-making. This regional consideration is important to keep in mind when examining the effects of US foreign policy in the region. Understanding the political leadership of the country in question is crucial in the Middle East because that leader is probably the sole proprietor of any future policy reactions from that nation.

### **Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamic Ideals**

The second regional consideration is the notion of a pan-Arab and/or a pan-Islamic ideal that is aspired to by many government leaders, religious clerics, and intellectuals in the Middle East. The notion that “we are all Arabs” or “we are all Muslims” began to take hold in earnest as the decline in Western colonialism

was occurring. In fact, the rise in Arab nationalism was an important factor in the decline of Western influence in the Middle East following World War II.<sup>17</sup>

The idea that cooperation between Arab states was necessary for progress became an increasingly popular objective of foreign policy in the Middle East after World War II, especially after the creation of the common Arab enemy-Israel. Pan-Arabists strove to unify the Arab nations of the Middle East and achieve strength through common foreign policy decisions. Two founding movements took hold during the 1950s with President Nasser of Egypt's call for Arab unity and the Ba'th movement in Iraq and Syria. Nasser called for military prowess and physical struggle to achieve the goals of a modern Arab world, and he believed the Arabs needed a strong leader to rally behind.<sup>18</sup> After his death in 1970, an Arab leader with Nasser's charisma and vision was not to be found, and the call for Arab unity shifted to an emphasis on nationalism. However, one lingering pan-Arab institution was the Arab League, which continues to promote cooperation among the Arab nations and stands in opposition to the state of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Iraq and the Ba'th Party also stand out as prominent examples of the push to achieve pan-Arab ideals. The Ba'thist ideology has influenced groups from Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, as well as smaller groups from Sudan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Libya.<sup>20</sup> The pan-Arab movement such as the doctrine subscribed to by the Ba'th Party was able to bring non-Muslims into the call for unity, and in the case of Iraq, even the definition of an "Arab" was loosened up to be able to include more nationalities into the movement.<sup>21</sup> Ba'thist

ideology centered around Arab unity, with the theoretical goal of breaking down national borders among Arab states and creating one unified Arab nation. In practice however, the larger pan-Arab goal quickly broke down after a split in the Ba'th Party between Syrian and Iraqi officials. Now both claim to be the true heirs to the Ba'thist ideology.

In Iraq the Ba'th Party now has three socio-political and economic goals: Arab unity (tempered by the reality that national borders are here to stay), freedom from external dominance, and socialism (economic development of public projects).<sup>22</sup> There was also a cultural campaign in the 1970s to reinvigorate Arab nationalism based on history—going all the way back to pre-Islamic Mesopotamia to stir up patriotic feelings about the country's roots.<sup>23</sup> Saddam Hussein sees himself today as the torchbearer for Arab nationalism, both as the leader of Iraq's Ba'th Party and as a self-appointed successor to Egypt's President Nasser, who had called for Arab unity in the 1950s and 60s.<sup>24</sup> Hussein even tried to politically “spin” the invasion of Kuwait as being motivated by a pan-Arab goal of liberating Jerusalem from the Jewish population in Israel. Saddam then used a withdrawal from Kuwait as leverage to bargain (unsuccessfully) for the withdrawal of Israel from Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup> During the Persian Gulf War he also tried to drum up Arab support for his cause by showcasing Western “atrocities” on worldwide TV broadcasts and portraying his struggle as the West vs. the Arab world.<sup>26</sup>

After World War II, there was also a concurrent rise in pan-Islamic movements. This movement was led early on from outside the Middle East by

Pakistan which sponsored a number of conferences to promote cooperation between the Muslim states.<sup>27</sup> A number of Islamic organizations were also founded, the most influential of these being the Islamic Conference Organization which was started in 1969.<sup>28</sup> The concept of Islamic unity or an Islamic nation has had major political impact in the Middle East. Prime examples of this have been the Islamic revolution in Iran and the role of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the call for Arab unity, which has waned in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pan-Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism have been on the rise. Much of this resurgence has been due to the lower and middle classes (especially the disenfranchised youth) in the Middle East who are increasingly disaffected and have embraced Islam as the religion of the oppressed.<sup>30</sup>

The pan-Arab and pan-Islamic movements have become part of the cultural fabric of the Middle East, especially in the last 50 years or so. These movements transcend national boundaries and provide a common bond for people to relate as "Arabs" or "Muslims." As a result of this cultural phenomenon, outside nations have had a difficult time penetrating the region with any broad success. This is especially true for Western nations that are home to small Arab populations and espouse primarily Judeo-Christian values. The pan-Arab and pan-Islamic culture of the Middle East presents a formidable challenge to the US, largely because it drives Middle Eastern countries to make foreign policy decisions that may not fall in line with US policy goals. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that if the US pursues a policy that is difficult for Middle Eastern leaders to accept, they may pursue pan-Arab or pan-Islamic goals and hence,

the US policy is more likely to fail. The persistence of pan-Arab or pan-Islamic movements in the Middle East means that this will remain an important regional consideration for US policy-making for some time to come.

### Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Westernism

Closely linked with the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic movements is the presence of anti-imperialist/anti-Western attitudes found in the Middle East. These attitudes are a direct result of a shared history of Western colonialism and interference in this region. The nationalist struggles to gain independence from the Western powers in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were precursors to the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic movements that surfaced toward the end of the century. The strong desire to be free from Western influence is an important consideration in the Middle East, and one that creates unique policy concerns for the US in particular.

The prevalence of anti-imperialist and anti-Western attitudes in the Middle East has its origins in the demise of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire began to lose economic and political ground to its European rivals.<sup>31</sup> As the Ottoman Empire was steadily weakened, the door opened for Europeans in pursuit of raw materials and open markets in the Middle East. By the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had become essentially a semi-colony of Europe, providing an agrarian reserve for the expanding capitalist economies.<sup>32</sup> Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the US colonized the Middle East for

several decades. A central component of the rivalry among the Western nations was control of the vast oil reserves in the region.

After World War II, oil remained the primary natural resource of interest among the Western powers, but the US emerged from the conflict with newfound power and influence in the region. The US now dominated the economies of its capitalist rivals as well as those of the Middle East nations.<sup>33</sup> Ex-British mandates from Palestine to Iran fell under the US sphere of influence and a series of pro-US neocolonial states were set up throughout the Middle East. Rivalries in the region between the US and the USSR during the Cold War forced the US to pursue the establishment of a series of pro-US governments. The US strove to maintain dominance in the region by committing large transfers of weapons to the nations under its influence.<sup>34</sup>

This history of imperialism and dominance by the Western powers (and to a lesser extent Soviet imperialism) has affected and continues to affect foreign policy in the Middle East. Obviously, there is an element of mistrust in relations between the West and the Middle East stemming from decades of economic and political exploitation. Also, anti-imperialism has led to policies of "positive neutralism" by many nations in the Middle East. Positive neutralism is a policy of non-alignment with the major powers and a commitment to aid the less developed countries in the Middle East.<sup>35</sup> This policy of non-alignment was started by President Nasser of Egypt in the 1950s, and was continued by nations such as Iraq, South Yemen, Syria, Algeria and Sudan in the 1960s.<sup>36</sup> The Ba'th Party in Iraq still officially subscribes today to positive neutralism in its foreign

policy, with an obvious anti-Western flavor. The second of the Ba'th Party's three social goals, freedom, (unity and socialism are the other two) has been interpreted to mean that Iraqi citizens should be free from external dominance and reduce dependence on other states.<sup>37</sup> Positive neutralism can have a significant impact on Western nations trying to influence foreign policy outcomes in the Middle East. However, since the Persian Gulf War, the doctrine of positive neutralism has been on the decline in the region. Nations have been more concerned with improving their own economic situation, and less interested in achieving pan-Arab goals.

Another factor leading to the anti-imperialist/anti-Western attitudes that are prevalent in the Middle East has been the perceived inconsistency and self-interestedness of foreign policy decisions by the Western powers, especially the US. One example of this inconsistency was during the Iran-Iraq War. The US had previously not supported the Ba'th regime in Iraq, but when Iraq began fighting the Revolutionary government in Iran, the US decided to provide intelligence information to Iraq in order to prevent Iran from achieving a victory over Iraq.<sup>38</sup>

An example of self-interested (and unpopular) policy-making by the US occurred in Iran. In 1953 the US supported a coup to overthrow the National Front Party leader Mossadeq because he wanted to reduce foreign influence in Iran and nationalize the oil fields.<sup>39</sup> The US supported this coup despite the fact that Mossadeq was anti-Communist. In 1979, in the middle of the Cold War, the US then opposed the Iranian Revolution (although the revolutionaries were anti-



Marxist and anti-Soviet) based largely on the fact that the US would lose control of the Shah's pro-US regime and Iran's oil.<sup>40</sup> In both cases the US acted in its own best economic and political interest, yet attempted to couch its decision in terms of what was best for the Iranian people. Many in the Middle East could readily see the contradiction of supporting a brutally repressive regime under the Shah for purely self-interested motives such as access to oil in Iran.

Inconsistent policies have caused many in the Middle East to believe the US makes foreign policy decisions based on purely selfish economic or political reasons, at the expense of what may be the best decision for Middle Eastern nations. This deepens the mistrust of Western powers and especially the US, making it very difficult for the US to influence events in the region, especially at the popular level. This legacy of anti-Western attitudes in the Middle East significantly impacts policy-making in the region. Understanding this consideration about the Middle East, and attempting to minimize the concerns it brings up, will help to ensure the US makes successful policy decisions toward the Middle East.

### Economic Structure

Another regional consideration that influences policy outcomes in the Middle East is the relationship between the Arab elite and the West, and the economic structure brought about by this relationship. Just as the prevalent anti-imperialist/anti-Western attitude took its roots from the colonial past of the Middle East, the contemporary economic patterns in the Middle East also have ties to

the colonization of the region by the Western powers. There are prevailing economic patterns that still define the region today. One pattern is that small groups of Arab elite almost single-handedly control the national economies. Another characteristic is the region is significantly less developed as compared to the West. Also, there is a division of "have" and "have-not" countries within the Middle East, broken out along oil producing and non-oil producing lines. All of these patterns have substantial impact on foreign policy in the region. US policy-makers need to understand these patterns in order to better predict the outcome of their policy decisions in the Middle East.

The colonization of the Middle East by the Western powers set up a "transnational system of privilege" in which the privileged few joined forces across national borders and set up a system defined by inequity, dependence, and exploitation.<sup>41</sup> The dominant (in this case Western) countries controlled the subordinate countries by establishing a cozy relationship with the domestic elites. The domestic elites remain detached from the broader population in their country, and they continue to strive to maintain this arrangement because it personally benefits their own group of elite citizens.<sup>42</sup> In the Middle East, this ruling elite was initially made up of sherifs (those who claim to be descendants of Muhammad), traditional tribal sheikhs, religious leaders and the subsidiary groups of merchants after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Although many would later quarrel with the Western powers, in the beginning all were willing servants of the British and the French, at the expense of the ruled classes.<sup>43</sup>

The West continues to support these elite ruling cliques even today because of the great economic benefit derived from the arrangement such as access to oil and military arms sales. The West overlooks the legitimacy of these ruling groups and continues to support them as long as the ruling elite is pro-West.<sup>44</sup> The US will work with the legitimate, modernizing elite—the Arab leaders who buck the traditional, religious political structure—if those leaders are pro-US. If not, the US will establish a relationship with the illegitimate governments anyway. This relationship between the West and the Arab elite has kept the West in control of relatively cheap oil prices and has maintained the ability to act almost unilaterally in this region since the 1970s. This feeds into Johan Galtung's theory of imperialism and the relationship of the core and the periphery states. Galtung believed the privileged few would join forces across borders, thus leading to a structure that allowed economic, political and social imperialism to exist.<sup>45</sup> The West and its relationship with the Arab elite may be to blame for the continued underdevelopment of the Middle East as compared to the West.

The West accepts a centralization of power under dictatorial regimes in the Middle East, as long as those regimes use their power in predictable ways that serve Western economic interests.<sup>46</sup> The initial scramble for Arab oil in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created Middle Eastern kingdoms that did not question the West's plans to exploit the oil. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, not much has changed from this general pattern as the small oil-rich nations continue to strengthen their governments created by the West, oftentimes at the expense of the ruled in those countries.<sup>47</sup>

Iraq is a good example of a dictatorial regime controlling the wealth of an entire nation. Even though Iraq's government is clearly anti-Western, Iraq still demonstrates the standard pattern of a privileged few dominating a country's economy in the Middle East, whether pro- or anti-West. Iraq's economy supports a clique of Sunni Army officers, most of whom hail from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit. It is believed that more than 15% of the national budget for the past 20 years has been spent sustaining this elite group of Army officers.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to a well-established pattern of small ruling groups dominating national economies in the Middle East, there is also a historical pattern of underdevelopment with the West. This is partially due to the type of political regimes found in the Middle East. There is centralized control of the national economies, and Arab leaders realize that economic progress brings with it threats to political stability. The developmental process can produce social dislocation and strain due to urbanization, can breed alienation among large segments of the population, and creates pressure for more political participation.<sup>49</sup> Also, the Middle East may remain underdeveloped as compared to the Western countries due to the historical pattern of external intrusions into their region. For example, the Western dominance of Middle Eastern oil fields until the early 1970s could also have contributed to the region's slower economic progress.<sup>50</sup> Today, multinational corporations wield substantial influence in the region, and many would accuse them of perpetuating Western economic domination of the Middle East.

Capitalist development of the Middle East has also exacerbated the pattern of a small group of Arab rulers controlling the economies of a particular

country. There remains a firmly entrenched set of elites in the region unwilling to change its behavior. Because the region was underdeveloped to begin with, capitalist development has required that governments and businesses rely on foreign investment to expand their production sector of raw materials. This has placed these underdeveloped countries a permanent “step behind” since they get bogged down in a cycle of debt and in a subordinate position as compared to the highly industrialized capitalist nations.<sup>51</sup> The Middle Eastern nations who chose a path of socialist development rather than capitalism such as Libya, Iraq, and Egypt (under Nasser) have also found progress to be slow due to bureaucratic competition and inefficiency.<sup>52</sup>

The inequitable distribution of oil and to a lesser extent the different approaches to economic development (socialist vs. capitalist) have led to a division in the Middle East of “have” and “have-not” nations. Table 1 shows the disparity between the countries of the Middle East in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (in year 2000 US dollars).<sup>53</sup> Not only is the division between rich and poor nations obvious, but these numbers also show that even the richest Middle Eastern nation (the UAE) is nowhere near the economic development and purchasing power of the US.

Table 1

## Disparity in Average Incomes in the Middle East

| <u>Country</u> | <u>2000 GDP per capita</u> |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| UAE            | \$22,800                   |
| Qatar          | \$20,300                   |
| Israel         | \$18,900                   |
| Bahrain        | \$15,900                   |
| Kuwait         | \$15,000                   |
| Saudi Arabia   | \$10,500                   |
| Oman           | \$7,700                    |
| Turkey         | \$6,800                    |
| Iran           | \$6,300                    |
| Lebanon        | \$5,000                    |
| Egypt          | \$3,600                    |
| Jordan         | \$3,500                    |
| Syria          | \$3,100                    |
| Iraq           | \$2,500                    |
| Yemen          | \$820                      |
| United States  | \$36,200                   |

Source: CIA World Factbook 2001

The capital-rich oil nations that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) have become increasingly isolated from the rest of the region as a result of their economic success and close ties with the West. They are now faced with two choices: a more equitable sharing of oil revenues among the Middle Eastern nations, or a continued reliance on outside assistance (mainly from the US) to maintain the regional status quo.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the disparities between average income in the Middle East, there is also maldistribution of income within countries. In Egypt, nearly a third of their population (about 19 million people) live below the poverty line, which is

defined as \$30/month.<sup>55</sup> So while the average income in Egypt is \$3600 a year, close to a third of the population actually only makes less than \$360 a year. This inequitable distribution of income results from a cumbersome bureaucracy, rising inflation, poor education and overpopulated urban areas. Egypt is not alone with its problems of income distribution. Much of the wealth in the Middle East is concentrated in the hands of a few elite leaders and businessmen.

The economic structure of the Middle East can be simplified into a couple of patterns of behavior that will affect US foreign policy-makers. One is that there are core groups of elites that control Middle Eastern countries both economically as well as politically. This is a very significant pattern to identify because in general, foreign policy decisions made by the US will be interpreted and acted upon by the Arab elite, not by the general populace. Arrangements or decisions between the US and a particular Middle Eastern country can be controlled by the ruling elite and then they can turn around and mislead their own population about the arrangement. This is aided by the use of state-run media in many Middle Eastern countries. One example of this is Iraq's ability to take the heat off of Saddam Hussein and his clique of officers for the economic disaster that US sanctions have caused. While Saddam and his military still enjoy economic luxuries, the population is swayed to believe that the US is single-handedly to blame for their economic hardships. Iraqi leadership works diligently to ensure scarce resources are funneled to the loyalists of the Takriti tribe, security agencies, and the military leadership. At the same time, Saddam completely cut off the northern part of the country (Kurdish region) to save resources.<sup>56</sup> The rest

of the population suffers heavily under sanctions (discussed further in Chapter 5) however, the state-run media and internal security forces ensure that the population is led to believe their troubles come from the Americans, not from Saddam's actions.<sup>57</sup>

The other patterns that are important for US policy-makers to keep in mind are the division of oil-rich and oil-poor nations in the Middle East, and the underdeveloped nature of the Middle East population as a whole. US support for oil-rich nations at the expense of the oil-poor nations further divides the region as well as solidifies the perception that US foreign policy in the region is solely based on economics without any regard for the Middle Eastern people. This perception of US foreign policy in the Middle East continues to plague policy-makers today and is partially to blame for the rise of anti-US terrorist groups.

### Arab-Israeli Imbroglio and Polarization in the Region

Another key reason for the rise of anti-US terrorist organizations and a general anti-Western attitude in the Middle East has been the US role in the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. This longstanding conflict has polarized the region and continues to be an important regional consideration for US policy-makers when analyzing foreign policy decisions in the Middle East. The emotions surrounding this issue are so volatile and resonate with so many people throughout the region that one cannot make a foreign policy decision that is not affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict in some way. The issue is so important that US policy-makers



must be aware of how the US is perceived in this conflict and what effect that has on US foreign policy.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has its origins with World War I, after which the British promised both the Arabs and the Jewish population in the region an independent homeland in Palestine. British policy in Palestine from the beginning was unclear, and conflict was inevitable. When the British were still grappling with the contentious Palestinian situation after World War II, they let the matter be decided by the fledgling United Nations. The UN, through a partitioning of Palestine, created the State of Israel in 1948. Israel became a colonial foothold in the Middle East for the Western powers, in close proximity to the world's largest source of oil. More significantly, the creation of Israel caused the displacement of 750,000 Palestinians, who became exiles from their own land and fled into neighboring Arab countries.<sup>58</sup> The displacement of Palestinians in turn spawned the rise of radical political organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and became the single most important rallying point for Arab states in the Middle East. Several major wars broke out between the Arabs and Israelis—the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Six Day War in 1967, and the October War in 1973. The Camp David Accords of 1978-79 were an attempt at peace between Egypt and Israel, but they failed to resolve the underlying contradictions of the Arab-Israeli conflict such as a solution to the Palestinian problem, and thus failed as a comprehensive peace plan.<sup>59</sup> The Palestinian "intifada" launched against Israel in December 1987 began an ongoing series of

low-level yet still deadly clashes between the two sides that continues to this day.<sup>60</sup>

The Arab-Israeli imbroglio has been a key factor in shaping the structure of the Middle East regional subsystem. Up until the 1970s, the conflict helped to focus the pan-Arab movement. Even nations not directly involved in the conflict formed a “cooperative core” of states that conducted high-level summits and worked together to redistribute wealth and push for Arab unity.<sup>61</sup> For example, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) were both created around this time. The Arab-Israeli conflict provided structural focus for the Middle East subsystem into the 1970s. Later in that same decade however, the regional subsystem began to fragment (discussed in the next section) and the scope of the Arab-Israeli conflict became more localized. The balance of power shifted more towards Israel, and Arab support for the Palestinian cause began to wane. Despite the decline in regional focus, the Arab-Israeli conflict still remains one of the most enduring patterns in the region today.<sup>62</sup>

The West’s involvement in this imbroglio, and specifically US involvement, has almost single-handedly shaped public opinion of the West by Arabs in the Middle East. The US uses its alliances with “friendly” conservative Arab regimes to undermine broader Arab efforts against Israel.<sup>63</sup> Unabashed support for Israel (discussed further in Chapter 3) at the expense of the Palestinians or other Arabs has led to a serious perception problem for US policy-makers. The perception of the US is that of a “ruthless and arrogant” superpower biased against Islamic

values. A recent Gallup poll (December 2001/January 2002) found that 53% of Muslims polled had an unfavorable opinion of the US, and only 22% had favorable opinions (residents of Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were polled). Sixty-one percent felt that Arab groups did not cause the September 11 terrorist attacks, leading a majority of Muslims in those countries (77%) to condemn US military action against Afghanistan as “morally unjustified.” Moreover, 15% of those polled claimed the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the US were morally justified.<sup>64</sup>

This Muslim perception of the US as a world leader with goals opposite those of the Middle Eastern nations stems in large part from the Arab-Israeli imbroglio and US support for the Israeli cause over the Palestinian cause. This perception is of course an unhelpful one when the US is trying to achieve foreign policy goals in other countries in the Middle East. US policy-makers need to understand the significance of the Arab-Israeli pattern in the region and the effect it has on many other issues in the Middle East. Oftentimes the special relationship between the US and Israel undermines US credibility with the Arabs, thus making diplomatic negotiations difficult. As a result, the Arab-Israeli imbroglio remains one of the most important regional considerations for US policy-makers in the Middle East.

### **A Fragmented System**

Just as the Arab-Israeli dispute divides the Middle East into different camps, the region is also fragmented within the Arab and Muslim community by

conservative and radical regimes. The fragmented nature of the region affects foreign policy actions conducted by the US because the conservative and radical camps will interpret foreign policy decisions differently. The Middle East subsystem is also less capable of exerting power on the global scene because of the fragmentation in the region.

This divisiveness in the Middle East had its origins at the beginning of the Cold War. The cleavage between the conservative and radical regimes is a political, not religious, one that was exacerbated by the division between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War.<sup>65</sup> When the Cold War ended in the 1990s, the ideological differences of the two Middle Eastern camps lingered on. The "conservative" camp is defined by the monarchies, sultanates and emirates created in the colonial era. They have a vested interest in promoting traditionalism, and promoting Islamic orthodoxy.<sup>66</sup> Although conservative regimes are anti-secular, they maintain close ties with the secular West to aid in their economic development and for security purposes. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE fit the mold of a conservative regime.

The "radical" nations are usually secular, run by revolutionary regimes, with significant influence by the military. They are also defined as promoting socialism and using Islam as a tool of the state. Currently Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Iran (although it is not secular), and to some extent Egypt are considered radical regimes.<sup>67</sup> In the post-Cold War era however, Egypt and Yemen are making a concerted effort to revise their relations with the West, especially the US. For example, Yemen has been extremely cooperative in working with the US in

searching for terrorists in their country after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. This cooperation includes potentially sending US troops to Yemen to train their military forces in counter-terrorism tasks, as well as intelligence sharing efforts.<sup>68</sup> Egypt under President Mubarak has also improved relations with the US, to include conducting ever-expanding military exercises with US and other regional military forces every two years.<sup>69</sup> Vice President Dick Cheney remarked during a recent visit to Egypt: "There is a close friendship between our two countries. Egypt is a vital strategic partner for the United States...Americans are grateful for the assistance our coalition has received from Egypt."<sup>70</sup> The remaining countries—Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan—do not neatly fit into the ideological division of conservative or radical states, but rather have characteristics of both sides.

In the 1950s and 60s, the Middle East was full of ideological fervor from pan-Arabism to socialism. The ideological divide fell between pro-Western republics and monarchies and the progressive, military regimes. Most inter-Arab conflict from 1945-81 was between the two camps, but the ideological divide did serve to soften the differences of countries within each camp.<sup>71</sup> By the late 1970s and 80s, the Middle East had disintegrated into local subsystems loosely connected to one another within a regional subsystem.<sup>72</sup> There was a brief period in the 1970s when cohesion among the Arabs was created by the boycott of Israel and the oil embargo, but the aggregated power in the region did not last long. By the end of the 1970s, the Middle East subsystem had fragmented. The loss of focus was caused by the leadership gap left by Nasser's Egypt.

Moreover, support for the PLO was waning, local issues began to eclipse regional ones, and the economic gap between oil and non-oil producing countries widened.<sup>73</sup>

The effects of the fragmentation of the Middle East subsystem are many. First, it weakens the ability of the region to resist external intrusions and has led to an increase in the presence of external powers (mainly the US) in the Middle East. For example, today there are US military forces stationed in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and other countries. Second, there is a regional loss of power in the ability to influence the policies of other states and regions. The division in the Arab world has led to a decline in African support for the Arab position in Palestine.<sup>74</sup> Third, regional fragmentation has inadvertently boosted Israel's position because the Western powers have been able to concentrate on narrow commercial interests in the region as a result of the divided Arab position rather than get involved with the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. And finally, there has been a decline in regional dialogue on economic and political issues. For example, the Arab League's "Afro-Arab Dialogue" and the "Euro-Arab Dialogue" were frozen in the 1980s.<sup>75</sup>

For Iraq specifically, the fragmented Middle East subsystem drove them away from the rest of their Gulf neighbors. Even before the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq felt isolated from the pro-West conservative Gulf oil monarchies and Iran (since Iran was a pro-West regime at the time too).<sup>76</sup> The Ba'th Party goals of socialism, pan-Arabism, self-sufficiency from the West, and their support of the Palestinians led them in a different foreign policy direction from the rest of the Gulf states. At

the same time, the Gulf monarchies were distancing themselves from Iraq and its military regime under Saddam Hussein. Saddam drove the ideological divide even further by accusing the conservative regimes of being weak in their support of the PLO, and he frightened the Gulf states with talk of Iraq becoming the "protector" of Arab interests in the Gulf.<sup>77</sup>

The feud between Iraq and its Persian Gulf neighbors underscores the divisive nature of the Middle East over the last few decades. The conservative vs. radical regime division fundamentally shapes the region today and must be a consideration for US policy-makers. Although fragmented, the Middle East is still a subsystem; thus US policies will affect the system as a whole rather than an isolated part. Understanding how the conservative camp and the radical camp will both interpret policies is equally important for predicting a policy's success.

### Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, no list of regional considerations for the Middle East could ever be all-inclusive. The six discussed in this chapter are some of the most pervasive patterns and those that most affect US policy-making. However, the region is not homogenous and there are significant differences among the countries that make up the subsystem. In short, the Middle East regional subsystem is made up of non-democratic societies, shares notions of pan-Islam and pan-Arab cultural advancement, is decidedly anti-Western and anti-imperialist, is economically disparate both within the region and with the West, has an Arab-Israeli imbroglio that overshadows

many other issues, and is a fragmented system split between conservative and radical regimes. These regional considerations have persisted in the region for the last 50 years or more, and it is important that policy-makers examine these regional patterns and analyze how they affect policy decisions made in the Middle East.

Chapters 3 and 4 will examine US policy goals and strategy in the Middle East, and will look at how these six regional considerations have affected past policy decisions by the US. Then in Chapter 5 the case study of US sanctions in Iraq will show how US policy is doomed to fail when policy-makers disregard the broader regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem.



## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup>Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Speigel, *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 6-7.

<sup>2</sup>William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly*, 17(1) (March 1973), 101. See also Cantori and Speigel, pgs. 10-20 for more on the interaction of states within subsystems.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* See also William R. Thompson, "Delineating Regional Subsystem: Visit Networks and the Middle East Case," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13(2) (May 1981), 219; Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 8; and Leonard Binder, "The Middle East as a Subordinate International System," *World Politics* 10(3) (April 1958), 408-429.

<sup>4</sup>Central Intelligence Agency (2001), *The World Factbook 2001*. Retrieved February 2002, from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>.

<sup>5</sup>Naji Abi-Aad and Michel Grenon, *Instability and Conflict in the Middle East: People, Petroleum and Security Threats* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 23.

<sup>6</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 35-36.

<sup>7</sup>James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 46.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Christine Moss Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984), 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 180.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 138-39.

<sup>16</sup>Miron Rezun, *Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars: Ambivalent Stakes in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 51.

<sup>17</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, ed., *The Middle East in World Politics: A Study in Contemporary International Relations* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1974), 17.

<sup>18</sup>Abi-Aad and Grenon, 42.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>20</sup>Helms, 64.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 108-124.

<sup>23</sup>Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-89* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), 25.

<sup>24</sup>Karsh and Rautsi, 241.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 227-228.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>27</sup>Ismael, 1986, 31.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>Helms, 63.

<sup>30</sup>Bill and Leiden, 68.

<sup>31</sup>Berch Berberoglu, *Turmoil in the Middle East: Imperialism, War and Political Instability* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 7.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>35</sup>Ismael, 1986, 32.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Helms, 116-117.

<sup>38</sup>Rezun, 39.

<sup>39</sup>Mansour Farhang, *U.S. Imperialism: The Spanish-American War to the Iranian Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 1.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>43</sup>Said K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship: The West and the Arab Elite* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 22.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>45</sup>Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 111-112.

<sup>46</sup>Aburish, 69.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>49</sup>Ismael, 1986, 19.

<sup>50</sup>Ismael, 1977, 44.

<sup>51</sup>Ismael, 1986, 24.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>53</sup>Central Intelligence Agency report.

<sup>54</sup>Abi-Aad and Grenon, 119-120.

<sup>55</sup>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sustainable Livelihoods Egypt Workshop report (2002). Retrieved March 2002 from [http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Country\\_specific/Egypt\\_Wkshp/egypt\\_wkshp.htm](http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Country_specific/Egypt_Wkshp/egypt_wkshp.htm).

<sup>56</sup>David E. Reuther, "UN Sanctions Against Iraq," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George A. Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 130.

<sup>57</sup>Anthony Arnove, ed., *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 72.

<sup>58</sup>Berberoglu, 96.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>60</sup>Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 280.

<sup>61</sup>Ismael, 1986, 47-48.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>63</sup>Aburish, 32.

<sup>64</sup>Cable News Network, "Poll: Muslims call U.S. Ruthless, Arrogant," (February 26, 2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/02/26/gallup.muslims/>.

<sup>65</sup>Abi-Aad and Grenon, 44.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>Cable News Network, "U.S. May Send Troops to Yemen Soon, Officials Say," (March 12, 2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/03/12/ret.yemen.troops/index.html>.

<sup>69</sup>United States Central Command, Bright Star History (2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.centcom.mil/exercises/BrightStar2001/history.htm>.

<sup>70</sup>United States Embassy, Cairo, Egypt, Vice President Cheney's Press Availability with President Mubarak (March 13, 2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://usembassy.egnet.net/usis/pr031312.htm>.

<sup>71</sup>Ghassan Salame, "Inter-Arab Politics: The Return of Geography," in *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David*, ed. William B. Quandt (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), 320.

<sup>72</sup>Salame, 321.

<sup>73</sup>Ismael, 1986, 62-63.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Helms, 138.

<sup>77</sup>Karsh and Rautsi, 63.

## CHAPTER 3

### US GOALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

An assessment of US goals in the Middle East is now required in order to show how the systemic nature of the region has impacted US policy-making. This thesis asserts that US policy in the Middle East has not been successful because US policy-makers do not account for the Middle East as a system when setting policy goals and designing strategies to achieve those goals. This chapter will examine US goals toward the Middle East in general as well as toward Iraq and will show how the regional considerations discussed in Chapter 2 have affected these goals.

The US has a number of generalized goals in the Middle East as well as specific objectives towards particular countries, in this case Iraq. The primary US goals in the Middle East have generally been accepted as securing oil supplies for US industry and the protection of Israel as a Jewish homeland.<sup>1</sup> A third goal of containing “rogue” or radical regimes has also been proffered.<sup>2</sup> In the Cold War this goal took the form of containing communist or pro-Soviet Union governments, but since the collapse of the Soviet Union, US policy-makers are more concerned with containing anti-US regimes. A less defined goal that encompasses the three mentioned above is to preserve stability in the region,

which would in turn secure oil, protect Israel, and contain radical regimes simultaneously. Preserving stability will be treated as an underlying objective to all US goals in the region, and will therefore not be examined independently of the three main goals.

### Securing Oil from the Region

Preserving access to oil in the Persian Gulf is central to US global strategy. Bruce Reidel, special assistant to President Clinton, said in 1998 that:

The Gulf region has been recognized by every American President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt as an area of absolute vital strategic importance for the United States. Not only is it the energy storehouse of the world—home to two-thirds of the proven oil reserves of the globe—but it is also the nexus where three continents come together....<sup>4</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, oil prices have remained stable and prices have been relatively low. The Middle East produced 27% of the world's oil in 1986, and this increased to 35% by 1996.<sup>5</sup> However, since the oil crises in the 1970s, the US has encouraged the development of oil fields in other parts of the world. Most of the Persian Gulf's oil now goes to Asia (Gulf oil is 80% of Japan's supply). Meanwhile the US imports oil mainly from Africa and South America and only 16.1% from the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the relatively low percentage of oil actually imported from the Middle East to the US, maintaining an uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to Europe and Asia remains in the scope of American "vital interests." Keeping a steady flow of oil from the Persian Gulf ensures that worldwide oil prices stay relatively low and stable, which is clearly important for the US

economy. Oil was a primary reason for the US involvement in ousting Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. While President Bush couched US involvement in terms of the preservation of “our very way of life,” he would have been more correct to add “our very way of life which depends on oil.”<sup>7</sup>

There were, of course, other reasons for US involvement in the Persian Gulf War. Many in the US were concerned that Israel might preemptively strike against Iraqi threats, sending the region into a major Arab-Israeli war. Many were worried about Iraq's WMD capabilities, including the possibility of possessing nuclear weapons. There were domestic pressures on President Bush such as a severe recession and high unemployment that might be overlooked during a war.<sup>8</sup> There was also a need for the US to restore the population's hope in its own military after years of “failures” such as the Vietnam War, the botched rescue of the Iranian hostages, and the bombing of the Beirut embassy.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the other reasons for waging war against Iraq in 1991, the US primarily got engaged to protect the flow of Persian Gulf oil to the world. One high official in President Bush's administration summed up the objectives like so:

The occupation of Kuwait (by Iraq) isn't, in itself, a threat to American interests. The real threat lies in the power Iraq would have in possessing 20 percent (Iraq + Kuwait) of the world's resources of oil, controlling OPEC, dominating the Middle East, threatening Israel and wanting to acquire the atomic bomb.<sup>10</sup>

American forces had been sent to Saudi Arabia in 1990 to protect the world's access to oil, since Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq sat on 40% of the planet's proven oil reserves.<sup>11</sup> It is highly unlikely President Bush would have risked



another military failure and put his re-election on the line for a country that was not located in one of the most strategically important places to the industrialized world.

The goal of protecting the oil supply to the West is affected by several of the regional considerations that make up the Middle East subsystem. First, the economic structure of the region causes a division between oil producing countries and non-oil producing countries. Obviously, the US will need to spend more time maintaining close ties with the oil-producing nations, often at the expense of the non-oil producers. This feeds into the overall negative perception that the US has in the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> These ties with friendly oil-producing regimes will be examined later in this chapter.

Historically, a small number of ruling elites in the Middle East make the majority of the economic and political decisions for their nations. This situation is actually quite beneficial for the US in trying to secure oil flow because the ruling elites personally benefit from close ties with the US just as much as the US benefits from close, friendly ties with those elite groups. It is a win-win situation for both sides, as long as the ruling elites can keep popular input to a minimum in foreign policy decisions. Examples of cozy US ties with oil producers are Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti government uses its total control of the economy to buy more weapons from the West than it actually needs because it is relying on Western help to survive.<sup>13</sup> In Saudi Arabia, the kingdom pays for Western political support by keeping the price of oil low. The West guarantees the

continuance of the House of Saud in exchange for cheap oil and sales of huge quantities of American, British and French military hardware.<sup>14</sup>

While the economic structure of the region makes the US goal of securing oil easier, the fact that the majority of the people in the Middle East tend to be predominantly anti-Western/American and anti-imperialist does pose a threat to US oil goals. If these sentiments result in regime changes in the conservative Arab world, then oil prices could swing out of control and the West will have a difficult time stabilizing oil prices without the help of non-Arab and non-Muslim OPEC nations. Fortunately for US policy-makers, the fragmented nature of the subsystem in the last 20 years or so has allowed the US to maintain a steady flow of relatively low-priced oil prices. The conservative regimes follow Saudi Arabia's lead on oil pricing, to the benefit of Western interests.<sup>15</sup> But this situation is always subject to change with ever-fluctuating political and economic events in the Middle East. Shifts in oil prices have historically also been tied to another regional consideration—the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. As the subsystem focuses more on this issue, the region becomes more cohesive. Middle Eastern governments may find it easier to assert their ability to raise oil prices as they form a “united front.” Recent escalations in violence between the Palestinians and Israelis could potentially lead to trouble down the road for US policy-makers trying to maintain a steady flow of cheap oil from the region.

## Protecting Israel

Another major US goal in the Middle East is the protection of Israel. Every US president as far back as Harry S. Truman has felt a special commitment to Israel that has not been matched by a comparable commitment to any other single state in the region or the world.<sup>16</sup> Intense domestic pressure on US policy-makers by the six million Jewish citizens in the electorally vital states of New York, California and Florida largely explains the determination of US support to Israel.<sup>17</sup> Zionist organizations have the best-organized and most influential lobby in the country and they are almost completely responsive to the suggestions of the Israeli government.<sup>18</sup> The US Jewish lobby is described in more detail later in this chapter.

The US preference toward Israel is continued through the extensive underwriting of Israel's security, including economic assistance, military equipment, and public subsidies and tax deductions for private donations to Israel.<sup>19</sup> Israel receives generous amounts of US aid every year. Table 2 shows the amount of non-military aid that Israel is slated to receive in 2002, as compared to the other Middle Eastern nations. These numbers represent US foreign aid provided by the Agency for International Development (AID) through the US State Department.<sup>20</sup> This aid is intended to improve economic growth, agriculture, health programs and promote democracy.

Table 2

## 2002 Congressional Budget for Aid to the Middle East

| <u>Country</u> | <u>2002 US Aid</u> | <u>Population</u> | <u>Aid per capita</u> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Israel         | \$720 million      | 5.9 million       | \$122.00              |
| Egypt          | \$655 million      | 69.5 million      | \$9.40                |
| Jordan         | \$150 million      | 5.1 million       | \$29.41               |
| West Bank/Gaza | \$75 million       | 3.1 million       | \$24.19               |
| Lebanon        | \$32 million       | 3.6 million       | \$8.88                |
| Morocco        | \$10.8 million     | 30.6 million      | \$0.36                |
| Yemen          | \$5 million        | 18.0 million      | \$0.27                |

Source: US Agency for International Development website<sup>21</sup>

Most notable is the fact that Israel has the third highest GDP per capita (see Table 1 in Chapter 2), yet receives the most US aid in the region. The poorest country in the region, Yemen, receives only 7% of the US aid given to Israel, and the West Bank/Gaza area receives only 10% of Israel's total non-military aid from the US. Israel receives foreign aid from other countries, but approximately 75-80% of their total foreign aid comes from the US.<sup>22</sup> Aid from the US to Israel increased significantly after the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the adoption of the Nixon Doctrine in 1971. The Nixon administration decided that the safest course for the US was to enhance Israel's military capabilities so the Arab states would be forced to accept a settlement. In 1971, total US aid to Israel was increased to five times the prior year's amount, equaling \$600.8 million (of which \$545 million was in the form of military assistance).<sup>23</sup> The US also had been supplying Israel with sophisticated military weaponry since 1967 (after the Six Day War) such as air defense missiles, tanks, and modern A-4/Skyhawk and F-4/Phantom fighter aircraft.<sup>24</sup>

Israel's dependence on US military and economic aid should give the US significant leverage over Israeli policy. However, oftentimes domestic politics preclude the US government from restraining Israeli actions that they publicly disapprove of, and the Arab states are frustrated by this dichotomy. The special US-Israeli relationship has thus undermined relationships with other allies in the region. There is a perceived US bias toward Israel in the Arab world. The fact that Israel continues to occupy territory originally populated by the Palestinian Arabs (until their eviction in 1948), has led to varying degrees of hostility toward Israel by the Arab states in the region. The US refusal to criticize Israel's tight closure of the West Bank and Gaza has led to a growing sense that Washington has lost its sense of morality and sown the seeds of popular anger among even its moderate Arab partners.<sup>25</sup> The US has tried to overcome this dilemma by supporting several moves toward peace and reconciliation between the Arabs and the Israelis. However, Israel still receives diplomatic priority, and Israeli support for the peace process usually involves US financial aid.<sup>26</sup>

Since US policy has also been to maintain Israel's military advantage over its Arabs neighbors, it has become exceedingly difficult for the US to defend a "neutral" position in the Arab-Israeli peace process.<sup>27</sup> Some insist that US policy is justified by the fact that Israel provides the US with a strategic, democratic ally in the region. Others believe the preferential treatment of Israel threatens the other US priority in the region: oil supply. The US commitment to Israel is often in conflict with the cultivation of friendly Arab regimes to facilitate access to oil.<sup>28</sup> US support for Israel has brought increased pressure from the Muslim world on

the conservative Gulf states, which in turn jeopardizes the US presence among them.<sup>29</sup>

To sum up, the US bias toward Israel in the Middle East has been evident for at least the last 35 years.<sup>30</sup> Israel has received an inordinate amount of US aid, both direct and indirect, for decades. Despite the billions of dollars in aid and military equipment, Israel is often not willing to comply with US demands. One notable exception to this was during the Persian Gulf War when Israel was convinced by the US that retaliating against Iraq (for launching SCUD missiles into Israel) was not in the best interest of US policy goals in the region. However, in the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace process, Israel has frequently refused to comply with US suggestions for peace. Most recently, during the April 2002 Israeli incursion into the West Bank, Israel ignored several US requests to immediately withdraw from the occupied Palestinian towns. The preference of US policy-makers toward Israel does not make sense strategically. Israel does not have strategic resources that the US depends on, such as oil. The US does not have forward operating bases in Israel from which to launch strikes against Iraq and wage the war on terrorism. Instead, it is the Arab world in which the US does rely on for oil and strategic military bases. However, the US relationship with Israel damages its relationships with the rest of the Arab world.

The Arab Middle East is traditionally anti-Western/American and espouses pan-Arab or pan-Islamic goals. From a systemic perspective, the US protection and support of Israel directly confronts these two regional considerations. This makes it more difficult for US policy-makers to achieve success in their other two

primary goals in the region: securing oil and containing radical regimes. The Arab-Israeli imbroglio automatically puts the US at odds with the Arab majority in the Middle East because of the US support for Israel. However, because the region is currently fragmented, nations are more often concerned about their own self interests than greater pan-Arab unity. This mitigates some of the negative aspects of US support for Israel. Also, the non-democratic nature of the region aids the US in continuing its goal of protecting Israel because the Middle Eastern governments can maintain friendly relationships with the US, despite a lack of popular support for this friendship.

### Containing Radical Regimes

In addition to the protection of Israel and threatening US access to Middle East oil, the US pursues a third goal of “containing” radical or uncooperative regimes. This goal originally stemmed from the Cold War as the US was forced to recruit non-communist regimes into the pro-West camp. After World War II, the US conducted policy in the Middle East loosely based around several guidelines: maintain access to the regional resources, preserve stability and peace, protect the new Israeli state, prevent Soviet expansion and establish cooperative relationships with as many Middle Eastern nations as possible.<sup>31</sup> These last two “guidelines” resulted in the East vs. West tug-of-war that occurred in the Middle East as each side tried to recruit countries into its camp. The Truman Doctrine set the ideological blueprint for US involvement in the Middle East. The doctrine had two objectives: contain the revolutionary movements in

the underdeveloped world and maintain order and stability within the traditionally class-oriented societies.<sup>32</sup> In 1958 this led to the Baghdad Pact, or formation of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). CENTO was a collective security pact between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain (the US was not mentioned by name in the pact). CENTO became part of the “worldwide warning system” of security agreements designed to contain the revolutionary or openly pro-communist regimes in the Middle East.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s it was clear that the US must support the “moderate” Arab elites instead of the radical nationalists, both to prevent Soviet expansion and to maintain access to Middle Eastern oil fields. This meant the radical nationalists in the region must be put on the defensive, and any new revolutionary challenges must be contained.<sup>34</sup> Even after the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, the US still considered it an important goal in the region to contain the radical regimes that potentially threaten access to oil or preservation of the state of Israel. However, the reasons provided to contain these regimes have changed: now the US must stop these radical regimes from producing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or acting aggressively against their neighbors.

Today there are five “rogue” regimes in the region that have anti-US/anti-West ideologies and objectives: Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and Sudan. The US strategy to contain the most notorious of these regimes is encapsulated by the “dual containment” policy for both Iraq and Iran. In 1999, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs defined dual containment as:



Needed to shift away from our earlier policy of relying on one of these regional powers to balance the other, a policy we had followed throughout the previous decade with disastrous results. Rather, we would now focus our efforts on containing Saddam Hussein's threats to his neighbors and his own people, while at the same time pursuing multilateral efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring and developing weapons of mass destruction and the ballistic missiles necessary to deliver them.<sup>35</sup>

The US open hostility toward these regimes and stated policy goals to "contain" them, especially Iraq, have antagonized even the closest US allies in the region.<sup>36</sup> For example, after the US missile attack on Iraq in 1996, there were significant splits in the coalition between the US and conservative or "cooperative" Arab regimes. Saudi Arabia withheld public support for the attacks, and there was widespread criticism elsewhere in the Arab world. The criticism was based on the fact that the strikes were a violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign Arab nation. The strikes were also causing further suffering of the Iraqi people, who were already struggling because of economic sanctions.<sup>37</sup> More recently, President Bush called Iraq, Iran, and North Korea the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address:

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.<sup>38</sup>

This statement makes it even more difficult for the conservative regimes to publicly proclaim a pro-US stance without simultaneously rejecting their Arab and Islamic neighbors in Iraq and Iran.

US pro-Israeli and anti-radical policies have increasingly alienated one of the most important allies of the US in the Middle East—Saudi Arabia. Strikes on Iraq, along with increased Israeli attacks on the Palestinians have turned the Saudi public against the US to some extent.<sup>39</sup> As a result, Saudi leaders have felt the need to distance themselves from the US and have recently begun to turn down certain US demands (such as launching aircraft from Saudi airbases to strike Iraq). A senior Saudi official said: “We are not American lackeys. We have good relations...but we are not Guatemala.”<sup>40</sup>

Containing the radical regimes in the Middle East has been affected by several of the regional considerations that make up the Middle East subsystem. First, recruiting the conservative Arab regimes while alienating the other Arab regimes directly confronts the sense of pan-Arab and/or pan-Islamic loyalty that is pervasive in the Middle East. The US is essentially asking for Arabs to support or at least abstain from the US effort to contain radical Arab regimes, which includes dropping bombs on Iraq. This is a difficult thing to ask the conservative regimes to do, especially when their populations are increasingly voicing anti-US opinions. As mentioned in the other sections, the continued fragmentation of the Middle East subsystem works in favor of the US because the region is not aggressively pursuing pan-Arab or pan-Islamist goals at this time. However, the longer the US continues to pursue the radical regimes, especially Iraq and Iran, and the more it continues to do so unilaterally, the greater the chance is of the traditionally conservative regimes being forced to break with US policy goals.

### Goals Toward Iraq

In addition to the overarching policy goal of containing radical regimes, the US has specifically constructed policy goals for Iraq since 1991. In addition to simply "containing" Iraq, a more specific objective under this goal for Iraq since Desert Storm has been the prevention of further Iraqi aggression against its neighbors.<sup>41</sup> Initially this was the most important goal for US military forces after Desert Storm, especially since it seemed that Iraq remained committed to regional domination despite its defeat in the Gulf War. Another goal was preventing a buildup of Saddam Hussein's WMD programs. This goal has been slowly elevated to the top of the US' concerns regarding Iraq. Referring to Iraq, President Clinton declared in 1998: "...their (WMD) proliferation constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."<sup>42</sup> In the 2002 State of the Union, President Bush said:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, a third goal of US policy toward Iraq has been to topple Hussein's regime. While this goal is not usually openly discussed for fear of backlash among the Arab allies, the US has focused on Saddam Hussein himself as a threat to the region.<sup>44</sup>

Preventing Iraqi aggression and controlling Iraq's WMD programs are goals that are generally in line with the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. In general, the Middle Eastern nations do not want to see Iraq attack an Arab or Muslim neighbor, nor would they support Iraq's use of WMD. However, the US goal of toppling Saddam's regime is definitely affected by the systemic nature of the Middle East. Changing the government in Iraq could radically alter the subsystem. A post-Saddam Iraq could result in an Arab nation more in line with the conservative Gulf states and their goals. A post-Saddam Iraq could result in a regime that resumes a threatening posture against Kuwait or Iran and reinvigorates old hostilities. A post-Saddam Iraq might be pro-West, or anti-West, or neutral. The bottom line is that a change in Iraqi leadership would produce significant changes in the Middle East subsystem, especially from the viewpoint of US policy-makers.

This uncertainty has led to some degree of anxiety on the part of the conservative Middle Eastern states and other countries outside the region. In large part this is due to the popular reactions opposing a US attempt to oust the leader of an Arab nation. Saudi Arabia is also concerned that a new government in Iraq might increase Shiite Muslim influence and further destabilize the region. Turkey is suspicious of plans that might increase the military capabilities and political strength of the region's Kurdish population.<sup>45</sup> Russia and China are very sensitive to any US efforts to foster internal unrest in Iraq due to each country's fear of recognizing and legitimizing insurgents.<sup>46</sup> Overall, many nations are

fearful of the unknown consequences a new Iraqi regime may bring, and many get nervous when the US publicly discusses wanting to oust Saddam Hussein.

### Global and Domestic Constraints on US Goals

There are other constraints on US policy-makers in addition to the regional impact on US goals in the Middle East. Constraints occur at both the global and domestic levels of analysis. These constraints are worth describing in this thesis because of the impact they have on US policy-making. However, international and domestic pressures are more likely to be taken into account by policy-makers than are the regional considerations. US policy-makers will usually be well versed on how much support a certain policy has in Washington D.C., among important lobbying groups, or what the major international players' position is on the policy. The policy may be studied to a lesser extent at the regional level, especially in the Middle East where the US has enjoyed almost hegemonic power since the end of the Cold War.

Globally, it is much harder for the US to operate unilaterally in the post-Cold War environment. When the international system was bipolar, the US could make policy decisions that affected the Western camp with much less regard to the positions of other Western countries than in today's post-Cold War world. After all, the US was one of only two superpowers and shouldered much of the burden of defending the Western world on its own. US politicians did not consider it as imperative to seek and obtain UN approval before taking action against another country such as Vietnam. This is not to say that the US was able

to act with impunity or did not concern itself with the opinion of the international community. However, in today's world the US must compromise with many more nations participating in international politics and many of these nations are not adverse to publicly diverge from US policies. It must sway the four other permanent members of the UN Security Council—Russia, China, France, and Britain—as well as a multitude of nations with interests in the Middle East. The most recent violence in 2002 between the Israelis and Palestinians underscored the fact that many European nations are not afraid to differ publicly with US policies in the Middle East (the EU was openly much more critical of Israeli actions than the US).

Although traditionally allies with the US, Western European policies in the Middle East have diverged from US policies in recent years. France has been a vocal opponent of sanctions in Iraq since the mid-1990s. France, Germany and the rest of the European Union have called for a possible arms embargo and trade sanctions against Israel due to the April 2002 Israeli incursion into the West Bank.<sup>47</sup> This is a much tougher stance against Israel's actions than the US has been willing to make. Germany and Japan have also been searching for a surrogate oil power in the Gulf to latch onto, thus allowing them to bypass the traditionally dominant position US oil companies have in the region.<sup>48</sup> In the post-Cold War world, Western Europe (and Japan) will continue to compete with the US for access to oil, thus placing a constraint on US policies in the Middle East.

Domestically, the US is constrained by several factors, one of which is the strength of the US Jewish lobby. Jewish lobbying groups such as American

Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), B'nai B'rith, and the United Jewish Appeal have been active in every election campaign, and have a well-coordinated national network. Each member of Congress is certain to receive regular visits from prominent rabbis and laypersons from his or her district or state. Politicians in the highly populous states of California, New York and Florida have to focus their attentions on garnering the influential Jewish vote. These Jewish groups have great capacity to shape the legislative agenda and to promote in both houses resolutions for pro-Israeli positions.<sup>49</sup> The Israeli embassy in Washington is also very adept at maintaining close relationships with members of Congress, and is considered to be one of the most effective diplomatic missions in the US.<sup>50</sup> The Arab embassies have not had as much success as Israel's, and pro-Arab lobbying groups are much smaller in terms of financial backing and the capacity to influence US policy-makers. Part of this is due to the shorter tenure of the pro-Arab organizations, smaller memberships, and the inability to reach as many citizens and lawmakers as the larger, well established Jewish lobbies.

Another constraint on US policy-making in the Middle East is the influence of public opinion (shaped by the media). Instead of analyzing the region and acting in terms of actual options and constraints, many politicians base their positions on what they think the public or the media would prefer and consider reasonable.<sup>51</sup> The result is that popular policies can be passed, with little regard to the actual consequences in the region. This leads to policy decisions that may

not be well thought-out and are subject to change as the administrations changeover in Washington.

### Conclusion

In short, US goals in the Middle East have been threefold. One goal is to preserve the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the US, Europe, and Asia. The second goal is to protect the security of Israel as a strategic ally of the US. The third goal is to contain radical or rogue regimes in the Middle East, which have the ability to directly threaten either of the first two goals. Ultimately all three of these goals are interconnected in the region. For example, the Persian Gulf War was fought to contain and eradicate Iraq's hostile intentions toward Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The war was also fought to keep an uninterrupted flow of oil to Europe, Japan, and the US. And the war was fought to protect Israel from Saddam Hussein's threats and menacing WMD program. Another example is the pivotal relationship the US pursues with Saudi Arabia. This policy attempts to achieve two goals simultaneously: securing oil from the largest oil exporter in the world and containing radical regimes such as Iraq and Iran through the support (or at least non-interference) of Saudi Arabia. Recently the Saudi government has taken a harder policy stance against any unilateral US hostilities toward Arab countries such as Iraq. However, US politicians still recognize the important role Saudi Arabia plays in the US ability to achieve its policy goals in the Middle East.



Overall, the US seeks to maintain stability in the region, and has found it necessary to use many different strategies in order to accomplish this, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. All of these goals, however, are affected by global and domestic constraints as well as the unique regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. Some of these regional patterns are helpful to US policy-makers, and some are hindrances to achieving US goals. The more US policy-makers understand how these regional characteristics affect US goals, the more likely the US will be able to achieve its policy goals in the Middle East.

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup>Eric Watkins, "The Unfolding US Policy in the Middle East," *International Affairs*, 73(1) (1997), 1.

<sup>2</sup>David Mosler and Bob Catley, *Global America: Imposing Liberalism on a Recalcitrant World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 84.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Anthony H. Cordesman, "Percentage of Total US Petroleum Imports from the Gulf: 1973-1996," *Monthly Energy Review* handout (April 1997), 130-131.

<sup>7</sup>Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1990), 216.

<sup>8</sup>Miron Rezun, *Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars: Ambivalent Stakes in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 76.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>10</sup>Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 248.

<sup>11</sup>Miller and Mylroie, 220.

<sup>12</sup>Cable News Network, "Poll: Muslims call U.S. Ruthless, Arrogant," (February 26, 2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/02/26/gallup.muslims/>.

<sup>13</sup>Said K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship: The West and the Arab Elite* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 69.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>16</sup>William Quandt, "New U.S. Policies for the Middle East?" in *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*, ed. David W. Quandt (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 414.

<sup>17</sup>Mosler and Catley, 91.

<sup>18</sup>James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1984), 367.

<sup>19</sup>Mosler and Catley, 90.

<sup>20</sup>US Agency for International Development, Asia and Near East Overview (text taken from FY02 Congressional Budget Justification) (August 8, 2001). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.usaid.gov/country/ane/index.html>.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. Source of population size: Central Intelligence Agency (2001), The World Factbook 2001. Retrieved April 2002, from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>.

<sup>22</sup>Bill and Leiden, 366.

<sup>23</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 149.

<sup>24</sup>Bassam Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East, 1967-91: Regional Dynamic and the Superpowers* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 100.

<sup>25</sup>Watkins, 2.

<sup>26</sup>Mosler and Catley, 90.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>ibid., 91.

<sup>29</sup>Watkins, 2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ismael, 140-141.

<sup>32</sup>Mansour Farhang, *U.S. Imperialism: The Spanish-American War to the Iranian Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 126.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 126-129.

<sup>35</sup>Mosler and Catley, 87.

<sup>36</sup>Watkins, 3.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Cable News Network, "Bush State of the Union Address," (January 29, 2002). Retrieved March 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/index.html>.

<sup>39</sup>Watkins, 6.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Daniel Byman, "After the Storm: US Policy Toward Iraq Since 1991." *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(4) (2000), 496.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Cable News Network, January 29, 2002.

<sup>44</sup>Byman, 497.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 512.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 513.

<sup>47</sup>Cable News Network, "EU Body Seeks Sanctions on Israel," (April 10, 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/04/10/eu.israel.sanctions/index.html>.

<sup>48</sup>Berch Berberoglu, *Turmoil in the Middle East: Imperialism, War and Political Instability* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 117.

<sup>49</sup>William Green Miller, "The Changing Role of Congress in U.S. Middle East Policy," in *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, eds. Judith Kipper and Harold H. Saunders (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 135.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>51</sup>Ismael, 161.

## CHAPTER 4

### US STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

In addition to US policy goals in the Middle East, the strategies and actions used to achieve those goals are also affected by the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. In many cases, the systemic characteristics of the region have a more profound effect on US policy-making during the implementation stage of the policy. Strategies are implemented in order to produce an effect that US policy-makers hope will ultimately lead to the attainment of policy goals. Understanding the effect that regional considerations in the Middle East have on these policy strategies is vital to ensuring policy success. This chapter will outline the salient US policy strategies in the Middle East over the last 25 years, and will examine how regional considerations have affected these strategies.

In pursuit of the US goals toward Iraq and the Middle East in general, there have been a number of different strategies employed to reach these policy goals. One way the US has attempted to reach its goals is through the appeasement of unsavory regimes that are still favorable to US interests in some way, such as being the enemy of an enemy (Iraq in the 1980s). Another strategy has been to undertake close cooperation with the conservative Arab Gulf states

such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, etc. A third strategy has been economic and military sanctions, which are used to force recalcitrant regimes such as Iraq to comply with US or international community objectives. Finally, a fourth strategy has been to commit US military forces in order to achieve US goals, such as the Gulf War and continued patrolling of the no-fly zones over Iraq.

### Appeasement

One way the US has tried to achieve its policy goals in the Middle East is through appeasing regimes that are undesirable with the US in terms of the type of government or policies they embrace, but useful in fighting a common enemy. For example, US strategy toward Iraq in the 1980s was one of appeasement due to Iraq's involvement in a war against America's newest enemy, Iran. In the 1970s and early 1980s, US-Iraqi relations were very hostile. But after the rise to power of an anti-US regime in Iran, the US needed to rethink its relationship with Iraq, which ushered in a period of appeasement between the US and Iraq. While there are other less significant cases of the US appeasing undesirable or even hostile regimes in order to achieve policy objectives, a more detailed look at the US appeasement of Iraq in the 1980s is warranted for this thesis.

Traditionally, the US had played the strategic triangle in the Gulf (Iran, Iraq, and Gulf monarchies) off one another to achieve its policy goals. Between 1958-1978, Iraq's radical pro-Soviet regime was a nemesis of the West, and the fundamental differences between the US and Iraq made a clash seem

inevitable.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the US courted Iran and the Gulf monarchies, primarily Saudi Arabia, to keep Iraq's Ba'thist regime in check. The situation changed radically, however, when the Ayatollah Khomeini took over power in Iran.

The fall of the Shah of Iran in 1978-79 allowed Iraq to play a more prominent position in both the Gulf and the Arab world. First of all, the most formidable obstacle to Iraqi ambitions in the Gulf had been removed (the Shah), and second, the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini brought Iraq and the Arab Gulf states closer together.<sup>2</sup> Also, as a result of the peace treaty signed by Israel and Egypt in 1978, de facto leadership of the Arab League had passed to Iraq.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile Iraq continued to harshly criticize US policy in the region such as support for Israel, and it had lingering suspicions about US support for the Kurdish insurgencies in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

The fundamental differences between Iraq and the US seemed to be put aside by many US policy-makers after the Iranian Revolution during which an anti-US government was installed in Iran. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, said that America and Iraq wanted the same thing, "a secure Persian Gulf." *The Wall Street Journal* also softened its approach to Iraq: "The rhetoric shouldn't obscure the fact that Iraq, probably more than any other Mideast nation except Israel, is embracing Western values and technology."<sup>5</sup> US commercial interests also encouraged a new approach toward Iraq. After Iraq's oil income zoomed upward in the mid-1970s, American business headlines read, "Iraq Starts to Thaw" and "The Dramatic Turnaround in US-Iraq Trade." Brzezinski announced in April 1980, "We see no fundamental

incompatibility of interests between the US and Iraq,” thus giving Saddam Hussein the impression that the US might remain neutral if Iraq attacked Iran.<sup>6</sup>

Once Iraq was embroiled in a war against Iran the US began backing up its softer rhetoric toward Iraq with actions as well. The US realized that it shared a similar goal with Iraq despite their differences—the prevention of an Iranian victory over Iraq. As a result, Iraq was removed from the list of terrorism supporters in 1982, and full diplomatic relations were restored by 1984.<sup>7</sup> Also in 1984, the US began sharing intelligence information from US satellites and Saudi AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft with Iraq, which made a huge difference in Iraq’s ability to bring the war to a successful conclusion.<sup>8</sup> When Israel preemptively struck Iraq’s fledgling nuclear reactor at Osiraq in 1981, the US uncharacteristically condemned Israel’s action as “not in keeping with international standards.”<sup>9</sup> Trade between the US and Iraq increased as well, including the sale of Boeing aircraft, dump trucks, and food to Iraq. Iraq became the second largest export loan recipient and the seventh largest subsidy recipient, receiving about \$4 billion in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, Iraq made few concessions to America during this time, and it even accused the US of conspiring to prolong the war and weaken Iraq through arms sales to Iran. US and Israeli covert arms shipments to Iran in 1985 and 1986 overshadowed the improvements in US-Iraqi relations. Although the US was openly discouraging other nations from providing arms to Iran (especially after Iran had rejected a UN ceasefire proposal in 1983), this secret US policy was obviously seen as a betrayal by Iraq.<sup>11</sup> Later President Reagan admitted the



arms sales to Iran were intended to help bring the Iran-Iraq war to an end, although many analysts believe the US was also very concerned about a total Iranian defeat by Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

Iraq escalated the war in 1985 by attacking Iranian oil tankers and facilities, in the hopes of forcing the US to intercede since the flow of oil from the Gulf was being threatened. Iran struck back at Iraq's allies, namely Kuwait, so the US sent warships to help protect Kuwaiti oil tankers transiting the Persian Gulf. As Iraq had hoped, this show of US strength against Iran was matched by diplomatic efforts to end the war.<sup>13</sup> Iran increasingly grew convinced that there was a US-Iraq military alliance developing (especially after a US warship accidentally shot down an Iranian airliner), and thus decided to agree to a ceasefire in July 1988.<sup>14</sup>

The US policy of appeasing Iraq did not end with the conclusion of the war. While Iraq issued anti-American statements and repressed its own population, US policy-makers avoided confronting Iraq. As Barry Rubin eloquently stated, "The merchants of ignorance preached that any criticism of Iraq would bring a united Arab world to Baghdad's defense...why go looking for trouble?"<sup>15</sup> When Iraq broke its promise not to use the Bell transport helicopters it bought from the US for military purposes, the US didn't criticize Iraq and sold it 60 more Hughes helicopters. As evidence surfaced of Iraq's schemes to defraud American banks to purchase weapons, the State Department cautioned the Justice Department not to be too tough on the perpetrators.<sup>16</sup>

The Reagan and Bush administrations also resisted sanctioning Iraq for human rights violations. The CIA provided the US State Department a report showing Iraq's use of chemical weapons against the Iraqi Kurds in 1988. Secretary of State George Schulz publicly confirmed that the US had evidence of Iraqi forces using nerve agents and mustard gas against the Kurdish population within Iraq. There was a push in the US Congress to impose sanctions on Iraq for these human rights violations, but with presidential elections around the corner and US-Iraqi business interests budding, the White House watered down the sanctions proposal. The White House claimed that sanctions would be "terribly premature and counterproductive, (endangering) billions of dollars of business for US companies."<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, even though Saddam Hussein continued to attack the US verbally, US policy-makers sent signals of appeasement to Baghdad. Saddam believed the US was behaving in a manner that showed it did not want confrontation with Iraq. Barry Rubin summarized the impact of US policy as such: "Each act of appeasement increased Iraq's boldness without ever convincing it the United States wanted friendship."<sup>18</sup>

The US engaged in the concept of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" with Iraq in the 1980s. This policy ended in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. There were some valuable lessons to be learned from this period of US foreign policy in the Middle East, as outlined by Bruce Jentleson in his 1994 book.<sup>19</sup> One, standards of reciprocity need to be set and enforced to prevent an endless chain of concessions with a potentially hostile regime. Two, proportionality should be

maintained to ensure a balance between the support given and the threat faced. Third, deterrent credibility must be maintained during appeasement.<sup>20</sup>

Appeasing the Iraqi regime, for example, or any hostile regime in the region is a policy strategy that will be affected by some of the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. The non-democratic nature of the Middle East makes it easier for the US to implement inconsistent policies with the touted US goals of democracy, territorial integrity and human rights. Popular opinion in the Middle East is often negative towards the US for its appeasement of hostile regimes for narrow economic or political purposes. Limited popular input in the governments of the Middle East, however, prevents this negative opinion from affecting US policy strategies. As long as favorable arrangements can be made between the US and the regime in question, popular opinion can largely be ignored. However, this consideration does appear to be waning, as the amount of popular unrest increases in the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> It is conceivable that in the not-so-distant future, regimes in the Middle East will be more inclined to listen to their own public opinion. This situation would make it much more difficult for the US to implement policy strategies with hostile regimes (and friendly ones too—perhaps even more so) based on narrow self-centered interests.

The fragmented nature of the Middle East also allows the US to create inconsistent policy strategies and appease hostile regimes. If the region were more cohesive, there might be a better chance that even the cooperative regimes would not stand by and let the US implement inconsistent strategies that go against regional pan-Arab or pan-Islamic goals. The region's fragmented and

non-democratic nature helps US policy decisions such as the appeasement of Iraq succeed. However, in the end, policy strategies such as appeasing hostile regimes do end up feeding into the popular anti-American attitude that is prevalent in the Middle East. This in turn may have a negative overall effect on all US policy decisions in the region.

### Close Ties with Conservative Regimes

The US strategy of appeasing Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s to achieve its policy goals ran concurrent with its strategy of maintaining close ties with the conservative Gulf states in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The US has had ties with the Gulf monarchies since before World War II, when the US controlled the oil fields of Saudi Arabia. Since then the US has attempted to strengthen its conservative allies such as Saudi Arabia in the region with political, economic and military assistance, while attempting to contain the radical regimes.

This has been a mutually beneficial strategy between the Gulf “petro-monarchies” and the US. In 1970, the Nixon Doctrine became the strategy for beefing up the military capabilities of US allies in the Middle East in order for them to shoulder more of the burden of defending their territories from the Soviets and the radical Arab states.<sup>22</sup> This also provided a convenient way for the US to ensure that petro-dollars from the Gulf states were recycled back into the US economy. This meant increased arms sales to Saudi Arabia (and the Shah’s

Iran) in the 1970s, to include selling them advanced aircraft such as AWACS and F-15 fighter jets, as well as newer ground equipment.

A close relationship with the conservative Arab states has enabled the US to secure oil from the region and to a lesser extent, protect Israel through the preservation of stability in the region. These informal alliances have also allowed the US the opportunity to contain the radical regimes through the use of the conservative states' military bases and political support. However, the maintenance of ties with non-democratic regimes such as Saudi Arabia (and Iran until the revolution) has caused an inconsistency in US strategy. On the one hand, the US espouses the principles of national self-determination, democracy, and popular sovereignty. On the other hand, its closest ally is the Saudi government that does not embody those principles.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century it seems to be more difficult for the US to maintain solid ties with even its oldest allies in the Middle East (with the exception of Israel). US commitment to Israel at all costs and ten years of bombing Iraq has forced even the conservative regimes to back away from US support. Conservative and radical Arab states alike now oppose the robust US military presence in the Gulf.<sup>24</sup> Many Arab states, along with France, China, and Russia, are now calling for a "shift from an active (search-and-destroy) phase of disarmament to long-term monitoring" in Iraq, thus ending any hopes of maintaining an international coalition against Iraq.<sup>25</sup> In Saudi Arabia, public hostility against the US is growing, and officials have begun to distance themselves from the US. This growing hostility is a product of increased Israeli

attacks on Palestinians throughout the 1990s, and a concurrent growth in the anti-US Islamic community throughout the region.<sup>26</sup>

As with appeasement, close ties with cooperative regimes in the Middle East have historically been aided by the fragmented and non-democratic nature of the regional subsystem. These considerations allowed the US to enact policy strategies while largely ignoring popular opinion in the Middle East. However, negative public opinion of US policy is beginning to take its toll on the conservative Gulf regimes, who see their own power base potentially threatened by remaining "too friendly" with the US. If the region becomes more unified (possibly centered around solutions to the Arab-Israeli violence in the early 2000s) the US may be forced to change its policy strategies or risk losing some conservative allies in the region. An increasingly anti-US Middle Eastern population searching for pan-Arab or pan-Islamic solutions to the Arab-Israeli imbroglio will make it more difficult for the US to maintain close ties with the conservative Arab states in the future.

### Sanctions

The loss of support from conservative Arab states to the US also stems from the effects of a third US strategy in the region, economic and military sanctions. The sanctions against Iraq that have been in place since 1990 were intended to bring Iraq into compliance with United Nations resolutions, but the disastrous effect on Iraq's population has incensed many Arab nations.

Economic and military sanctions against Iraq began in earnest with UN Resolution 687, enacted once the US and an international coalition had defeated Iraq. Resolution 687 retained the provisions of Resolution 661, which had imposed an international economic embargo on Iraq after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The embargo allowed Iraq to import supplies for civilian needs upon approval of the UN Sanctions Committee.<sup>27</sup> Resolution 687 demanded four things: 1) Iraq's WMD capabilities had to be identified and destroyed, 2) Iraq had to agree with Kuwait's territorial integrity and sovereignty, 3) Kuwaiti and other nationals held by Iraq were to be repatriated, along with any stolen property, and 4) a Compensation Committee was established for war claims. Additionally, Iraq was subject to a ban on all imports of weapons and weapons technologies until the UN Security Council decided otherwise.<sup>28</sup> After Iraq's non-compliance with Resolution 687, and the expulsion of UN weapons inspectors from Iraq, the UN passed Resolution 1284 in 1999. This Resolution called for the reinstatement of weapons inspectors to Iraq in exchange for a lifting of the ceiling on the amount of oil Iraq is allowed to export for "humanitarian" reasons.<sup>29</sup>

The plight of the Iraqi population suffering under the strain of economic sanctions for the past ten years has caused the loss of Arab and international support for this particular US strategy in the region. Some estimates have stated that 500,000 Iraqi children have died since 1991 as a result of sanctions, and others estimate the lack of food and medicine results in approximately 5,000 children dying each month.<sup>30</sup> Iraq has been deprived of some \$140 billion in oil

revenue, resulting in hyperinflation, contributing to mass poverty, unprecedented social and economic dislocation, and an extremely high rate of unemployment.<sup>31</sup>

The US placed economic sanctions against Iraq ostensibly to force it to comply with UN Resolutions. The first Bush administration then also added that sanctions will remain in place until Saddam Hussein is ousted from power.<sup>32</sup> However, the result has been the unintentional punishment of the weakest and most vulnerable members of Iraqi society since Saddam Hussein ensures that the elite in Iraq receive all the resources they need or want. Saddam has also been able to deflect blame for his country's economic problems back on the US as a result of sanctions. This has allowed him to keep a tight grip on power domestically, and he has garnered wider Arab support by vilifying the US. United States Congressman John Conyers, in a hearing before Congress, stated that sanctions are "reducing the possibility of the people (in Iraq) from ever becoming organized and increasing their resistance because obviously they are blaming us (the US)."<sup>33</sup> Thus, sanctioning Iraq has made it exceedingly difficult for the US to achieve its goals toward Iraq since the Gulf War, one of which is the ultimate removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Sanctions against Iraq will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Saddam's ability to deflect blame for the hardship sanctions cause his people is indicative of the non-democratic nature of the Middle East subsystem. Because of limited, orderly popular input and a centrally controlled government, the Iraqi people have little choice but to support their government and its explanation for why the US is to blame for their hardships. Thus, the non-



democratic nature of the region makes sanctions a less effective policy strategy because of their limited use in changing a government's behavior.

The struggle for pan-Arab or pan-Islamic unity and the anti-Westernism prevalent in the region also can be detrimental to the success of US sanctions in the region. Sanctions will ultimately affect the general population of a country, contributing further to the already anti-US attitude of the region. And as in the case of Iraq, leaders can then attempt to rally Arab or Muslim support for help in fighting the imperialist West. Finally, economics will also impact the effectiveness of sanctions. Due to the tightly controlled national economies run by the Arab elite, sanctions will most likely impact the general population before hurting the elite.

## War

The final strategy employed by the US in the Middle East and in Iraq specifically has been the use of military force. The most obvious example of this strategy being used was in Desert Storm when the US used military force to evict Iraq from Kuwait. Another example of this is the US and UK enforcement of military sanctions in Iraq, or patrolling the no-fly zones. The US has used military force against other Middle Eastern countries, but this thesis examines US policy toward Iraq in a regional context, thus warranting a closer examination of the Persian Gulf War.

The US relied on a strategy of appeasement with Iraq up until Saddam's forces invaded Kuwait in August 1990. The period preceding the invasion was

full of signals from Saddam regarding his intentions to attack Kuwait, but the US did not appear to be listening. In February 1990, Saddam Hussein asked the leaders of Jordan and Egypt to inform the Gulf states that Iraq was not only adamant on a complete moratorium on its Iran-Iraq War loans, but urgently needed an immediate infusion of additional funds (\$30 billion). "Let the Gulf regimes know that if they did not give this money to me, I would know how to get it," he added.<sup>34</sup> In April 1990, five US senators traveled to Iraq and ended up lionizing and pampering Saddam based on his victory over Iran.<sup>35</sup> This only served to further prove to Saddam that the US did not want a confrontation with Iraq. Then in July 1990 Saddam accused the oil-producing countries, specifically Kuwait, of exceeding quotas set by OPEC in a deliberate attempt to keep the price of oil low. Iraq's economy had been devastated after the Iran-Iraq War, so Saddam perceived this as an economic war against Iraq.<sup>36</sup> The US, still trying to reach out to Iraq through appeasement, did not interpret the signals that Saddam was sending about his plans to invade Kuwait. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, there was a meeting between Saddam and the US ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie. While Saddam angrily talked of being threatened by Kuwait, Glaspie did not explicitly tell him that the US would not sit by and watch him invade Kuwait. Saddam misread her cautious reply to him as a green light to invade Kuwait.<sup>37</sup> On August 2, 1990, he sent his forces into Kuwait, which resulted in the condemnation of the US and the entire international community against Iraq. Less than six months later, Iraq was facing the most impressive coalition of military firepower assembled since World War II.

Once the war started, the US committed its military wholeheartedly to the attack against Iraq and brought a preponderance of military equipment and troops to the international coalition that had been formed. US aircraft flew as many as 3,000 to 4,000 sorties a day, using advanced aircraft such as the F-117 stealth fighter and high-tech precision-guided munitions. Overall, the US sent 75% of its active tactical aircraft, 42% of its tanks, 46% of its Marines, 37% of its army, and 46% of its aircraft carriers.<sup>38</sup> The US deployed the most ground troops, 250,000-300,000, with Saudi Arabia providing the second highest number of troops, 75,000.<sup>39</sup>

After the victory, many believed the US did not go far enough to topple Saddam's regime. The coalition leaders assumed that the combination of military defeat and internal unrest as a result of the war would be enough to end Saddam's regime. In fact, for many years after the Gulf war, the US tried to foment a coup in Baghdad.<sup>40</sup> Sanctions and the US strikes on Iraqi forces in the no-fly zones were also intended to discredit Saddam's regime and weaken his personal protection forces. But as discussed earlier, it is much more difficult to influence change in the Middle East due to its non-democratic nature.

The no-fly zone aircraft patrols were another example of the US strategy to use military force against Iraq. The no-fly zones were set up under UN Resolution 688 in April 1991, to restrict Iraqi military movement and protect the civilian population of Iraq, especially the Kurds in the north.<sup>41</sup> For the past ten years, the US has flown thousands of sorties using rotating US fighter and bomber units that deploy to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait to patrol the northern

and southern no-fly zones in Iraq. Iraq has remained for the most part defiant of the no-fly zones, and US missiles and bombs routinely strike Iraqi air defenses. In 1999, there were over 600 reported violations of the no-fly zones by Iraqi military forces.<sup>42</sup> Patrolling the no-fly zones has entailed having a significant US military presence in the Gulf. For example, in 1999 alone, US and British forces flew more than 6,000 sorties, dropped more than 1,800 bombs, and hit more than 450 targets in Iraq. The 200 airplanes, 19 warships, and 22,000 troops it took to accomplish this cost the US taxpayer \$1 billion that year alone.<sup>43</sup>

Once again, using military force to implement policy is going to be affected by the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. Overall, the US is working against some significant systemic characteristics when the decision to drop bombs on a country is made. Obviously the decision to use military force will not be greeted with blanket approval by an anti-American, anti-imperialist region that still struggles to maintain a sense of pan-Arab unity. In the case of the Gulf War, where an Arab country invaded another sovereign Arab country, many in the region supported US military action. However, the continued US bombing of Iraq over the past decade has caused support for this strategy to wane among many Arab nations. The Arab-Israeli imbroglio also negatively affects the US' ability to wage war in the region without negative repercussions. Unabashed US support of Israel makes most US actions in the region subject to intense scrutiny and reluctant public acceptance.

## Conclusion

The US has implemented many types of policy actions in the Middle East to achieve its policy goals. Some or all of the unique regional considerations that make up the Middle East subsystem have affected these strategies. In general there are some summary effects the region has had on US policy goals and strategies. First, the fact that the subsystem is fragmented (into conservative and radical regimes) has a positive effect on the implementation of US policy in the region. Fragmentation weakens the relative power of the system from US intrusions and unilateral policy decisions. This in turn decreases the second effect of the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic nature of the subsystem on US policy. A fragmented system is less prone to pursue pan-Arab goals that may deviate from US policy goals. Third, the anti-imperialist/anti-American nature of the subsystem has a harmful effect on US policy-making because of negative public opinion toward the US. This ties into a fourth consideration regarding the Arab-Israeli imbroglio and its dominant effect on the subsystem. US support for Israel at the expense of the Palestinians also contributes to negative public opinion toward the US, thus making policy implementation more difficult. A fifth consideration is the economic structure of the region. The fact that small groups of Arab elite make the economic decisions for their nations can have a positive or negative effect on US policy-making. When it comes to securing oil or establishing close ties with cooperative regimes, this structure can be very helpful for the US. However, in terms of implementing sanctions, this can have a negative effect because the population is made to suffer, not the governing elite.

Finally, the non-democratic nature of the regional subsystem generally has a positive effect on achieving US policy goals. This consideration allows US policy-makers to concentrate on winning over the governments in the region, not the general population, because of the limited amount of orderly participation in government. Once again though, implementing sanctions is actually harmed by this regional consideration since the effects of sanctions are less able to penetrate the general population and promote change in the government.

This thesis has attempted to establish that the Middle East operates as a regional subsystem, of which there are several regional considerations that can be taken into account regarding that subsystem. These systemic regional considerations will affect both the attainment of US policy goals and the implementation of strategies to reach those goals. Failure to recognize or adequately adapt to these regional considerations will probably lead to an unsuccessful policy outcome for the US. Chapter 5 examines the US strategy of sanctioning Iraq and look at the global, regional and domestic factors that affect this policy. The examination will show that the regional considerations of the Middle East and US policy structure are incompatible, thus contributing to failed policy strategies.

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup>Barry Rubin, "The United States and Iraq: From Appeasement to War," in *Iraq's Road to War*, eds. Amatzia Baram and Barry Rubin (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 256.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick W. Axelgard, *A New Iraq? The Gulf War and Implications for US Policy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>5</sup>Rubin, 256.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Axelgard, 15.

<sup>8</sup>Miron Rezun, *Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars: Ambivalent Stakes in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 39.

<sup>9</sup>Rubin, 257.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Axelgard, 16.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>13</sup>Rubin, 259.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 260.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 261.

<sup>17</sup>Rezun, 45.

<sup>18</sup>Rubin, 261.

<sup>19</sup>Bruce W. Jentleson, *With Friends Like These: Reagan, Bush and Saddam: 1982-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>21</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 162.

<sup>22</sup>Mansour Farhang, *U.S. Imperialism: The Spanish-American War to the Iranian Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 142.

<sup>23</sup>David Mosler and Bob Catley, *Global America: Imposing Liberalism on a Recalcitrant World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 86.

<sup>24</sup>Liora Lukitz, "The Search for Logic: Contradictions in the Delineation of US Policy toward Iraq," *American Foreign Policy Interests*, vol.20 (1998), 2.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Eric Watkins, "The Unfolding US Policy in the Middle East," *International Affairs*, 73(1) (1997), 6.

<sup>27</sup>Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd, 1999), 20.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>29</sup>United States Congress House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *US Policy Toward Iraq*, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 23 March 2000, 1.

<sup>30</sup>Daniel Byman, "After the Storm: US Policy Toward Iraq Since 1991." *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(4) (2000), 500. See also US Congress report cited above, pg. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Anthony Arnove, ed., *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 67.

<sup>32</sup>Ivan Eland, "Economic Sanctions as Tools of Foreign Policy," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 31.

<sup>33</sup>US Congress, 4.

<sup>34</sup>Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 204.

<sup>35</sup>Rezun, 60.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*



<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>40</sup>Byman, 497.

<sup>41</sup>Graham-Brown, 106.

<sup>42</sup>US Congress, 29.

<sup>43</sup>Arnove, 9.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **POST-GULF WAR POLICY TOWARD IRAQ: AN ASSESSMENT**

#### **Introduction**

**In the first four chapters of this thesis, the Middle East has been described as a regional subsystem, and the regional considerations that describe the subsystem have been outlined. I have examined US goals and strategy in the region, and looked at how the regional subsystem impacts US policy. This final chapter will take a closer look at one policy in particular: US economic and military sanctions against Iraq since 1991. First, this chapter will show how US sanctions policy has failed to meet the majority of its objectives in Iraq. In addition to failing, the policy has also created additional problems of its own that will be discussed. Finally, it will be shown that sanctions are a failed policy because the policy did not take into account the regional considerations of the Middle East. A systemic assessment of sanctions will show how the Middle East subsystem has had significant impact on the outcome of this policy, and will continue to impact future US policies in the region.**

#### **Sanctioning Iraq**

**Economic sanctions have practically become the default option in US foreign policy since World War II.<sup>1</sup> Sanctions have been an effective tool for**

change in some cases. For example, the case of apartheid in South Africa is one such success story. The US and the rest of the international community began a concerted effort to uphold United Nations (UN) sanctions against South Africa in 1986. Less than five years later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the widely despised policy of apartheid was ended. South Africa's relatively peaceful transition to democracy showed that if given enough time, sanctions can work.<sup>2</sup> However, the effectiveness of sanctions is often difficult to measure. It requires a solid set of assessment criteria that answers the question: what is the real purpose of the sanctions?<sup>3</sup>

Although a much more palatable option than military force, oftentimes sanctions do prove to be ineffective. In some cases, they alter the target country's economy and internal politics in ways that make the country's offensive behavior even more difficult to reverse.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary of the UN Sanctions Committees wrote in 1995:

First, sanctions generally should not be employed as a permanent feature of policy against any targeted country because the damage they are likely to cause to the long-term infrastructure of that country may far exceed the extent of the wrong committed.<sup>5</sup>

For example, Saddam Hussein is still firmly in power and thumbs his nose at UN weapons inspectors after 11 years of US sanctions. So despite a decade of sanctions, Saddam's "offensive behavior" continues. There has also been negative backlash from other Arab countries over continued sanctions in Iraq, which will be addressed below.

Sanctions are basically a punishment tool used by one country to control the behavior of another. However, this tool rests on the assumption that the

target country is an entity capable of rational behavior.<sup>6</sup> The question is, what happens when the target state is controlled by a leader who makes decisions that are arguably irrational in the eyes of those who impose such sanctions? Unfortunately for US policy-makers, the result appears to be that the best intentions of US policy toward Iraq get lost in the translation. But in addition to the effects of sanctions being skewed by Saddam Hussein, the regional considerations of the Middle East also affect US sanctions in Iraq. The subsystem effects on US sanctions policy will be discussed later in this chapter.

### US Aims with Sanctioning Iraq

To assess the US sanctions policy toward Iraq, one must start with the aims of that policy. Although they have evolved over the past 11 years, there have generally been four primary objectives.<sup>7</sup> First, Iraq should be contained from further aggression against its neighbors (and to some extent its own population). Second, Iraq's buildup of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) should be halted, destroyed and prevented in the future. Part of this objective has been to coerce Saddam Hussein into cooperating with the provisions in the UN Resolutions that dealt with WMD. Third, Saddam Hussein's regime should be toppled. Initially after Desert Storm, there was some friction between US politicians and military commanders on whether the US should march to Baghdad and remove Saddam from power. A debate over this objective still lingers today as many Arab countries friendly to the US oppose removing Saddam and disrupting the balance of power in the region. And fourth, regional

stability in the Middle East should be preserved and US interests protected.<sup>8</sup> The next five sections will describe how economic and military sanctions in Iraq have failed to achieve many of the objectives and have led to several negative repercussions for US policy goals.

### **Non-Compliance with UN Resolutions**

The second and fourth objectives (destroy WMD and preserve regional stability) are not being achieved due to Iraq's continued non-compliance with UN Resolutions. UN Resolution 687, enacted at the conclusion of the Persian Gulf War, demanded that Iraq comply with four tasks: identify and destroy its WMD capabilities, respect Kuwait's territorial sovereignty and border, repatriate any POWs, and pay war claims.<sup>9</sup> The first task has proven to be the most difficult for Iraq to comply with. In 1998, Iraq ceased all cooperation with UN weapons inspectors. Iraq continues to defy most sections of Resolutions 687 and 1284 (passed in 1999 to reinstate weapons inspectors) and remains committed to developing WMD and the capability to deliver them.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to the dismissal of weapons inspectors in late 1998, evidence was mounting that Iraq, despite its claims to the contrary, did not destroy its WMD program. From the end of Desert Storm, Saddam was committed to neither declaring his WMD arsenal nor cooperating in its destruction.<sup>11</sup> In 1995 the chief of Iraq's WMD programs defected and revealed that Iraq had manufactured and loaded the lethal chemical agent VX on its weapons. It was only after this defection that it became clear Iraq had also amassed a formidable biological

weapons program, despite four years of intrusive inspections.<sup>12</sup> As these less-than-effective inspections dragged on, Saddam actually forced concessions out of the weapons inspectors by declaring several military sites as “presidential” sites and thus off-limits. He also gained the tacit support of France, China and Russia, which all became highly critical throughout the 1990s of both inspections and sanctions. Therefore, despite the limited progress the UN had in destroying elements of Iraq's WMD arsenal early in the inspections process, there is evidence that Iraq continues to retain much of its arsenal today and is continuing to expand its WMD program.<sup>13</sup> For Iraq, the loss of \$25 billion in revenue (from sanctions since 1991) appears to be a lower priority than retaining its arsenal of chemical and biological weapons.<sup>14</sup> At least for the time being, it appears that Saddam Hussein believes he is better off not complying with the UN Resolutions.

### **Saddam Hussein is Still in Power**

The third and fourth objectives of US sanctions against Iraq (regime change and regional stability) are also not being achieved due to the fact that Saddam still maintains a firm grip on power and continually threatens US military forces in the region. Economic sanctions directed at Iraq have not translated into pressure against Saddam given the level of control he exerts over the population. Saddam rules his country through fear and intimidation and surrounds himself with loyal followers who are afraid to contradict him.<sup>15</sup> In addition to retaining political control, sanctions have enabled Saddam to have more economic control over Iraq as well. Due to the devastating effects of sanctions, Saddam was

forced to institute price controls to counteract hoarding and overcharging. He also changed monetary policy and banned the use of older Dinar notes outside of Iraq. This act claimed to be a fix for a counterfeiting problem, but in reality the majority of older Dinar note holders were his nemesis, the Kurds in the north. So this policy prevented the Kurds from trading across the border with neighboring countries. The government was now able to use this increased control to punish its enemies and potential sources of opposition to the regime.<sup>16</sup> The devastation from sanctions has also forced the Iraqi population to become more economically dependent on the government. This has inadvertently added to a sense of nationalism. One Iraqi told USA Today in 2000, "Any doubts I had about Saddam are gone...Now I want him to stand up to the US for taking away my power, my running water, and my daughter's childhood."<sup>17</sup> Instead of weakening Saddam's grip on Iraqi society, sanctions have actually forced him to re-centralize control over the economy and tighten his hold on Iraq.

Given this assessment of Saddam's grip on power, it would seem unrealistic to hope that sanctions would help to topple his regime. However, this is exactly what many officials in the US government have been hoping for—that sanctioning Iraq will force opposition forces in the country to rise up against Saddam. President Clinton, in a statement presented to the House of Representatives in May 1999, stated:

We are convinced that as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power, he will continue to threaten the well-being of his people, the peace of the region and the security of the world. We will continue to contain these threats, but over the long term the best way to address them is through a new government in Baghdad. To that end, working with the Congress, we have deepened our

engagement with the forces of change in Iraq to help make the opposition a more effective voice for the aspirations of the Iraqi people.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter 3, President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address reiterated his desire to see a regime change in Iraq.<sup>19</sup> The Iraqi government knows that the US favors keeping sanctions in place until there is a regime change; thus there's no incentive for Saddam to work with the US or intrusive inspectors.<sup>20</sup> Publicly tying sanctions to toppling Saddam has given him little reason to cooperate, thus highlighting the futility of designing sanctions to attack a country's fundamental identity or mission, which in this case is wrapped up in Saddam Hussein himself.<sup>21</sup>

### Humanitarian Concerns

There are also some negative repercussions for the US from its sanctions policy toward Iraq. One is the increasing humanitarian concerns for the Iraqi population. The plight of the Iraqi population suffering under the strain of economic sanctions has often been cited as reason enough to stop sanctioning Iraq. There are some estimates that as many as 500,000 Iraqi children have died since 1991 as a result of sanctions.<sup>22</sup> The former UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq observed recently:

In addition to the scarcity of resources, malnutrition problems also seem to stem from the massive deterioration in basic infrastructure, in particular in the water-supply and waste disposal systems. The most vulnerable groups have been the hardest hit, especially children under five years of age who are being exposed to unhygienic conditions, particularly in urban centers. The [World Food Program] estimates that access to potable water is currently 50 percent of the 1990 level in urban areas and only 33 percent in rural areas.<sup>23</sup>



Iraq's health care system, once the most efficient and effective in the Middle East, is now in shambles due to sanctions. Iraq's educational system declined under sanctions and has been decimated by overcrowded classrooms, the lack of school supplies, the lack of medical supplies, no heating or cooling systems, and the lack of a professional teacher base.<sup>24</sup>

The humanitarian concerns that sanctions have produced are eroding international and Arab support for US policies in the region. In response, the US in 2002 cooperated with a UN Security Council resolution that allows the free flow of humanitarian goods into Iraq without oversight of the UN. However, the UN must still review a lengthy list of goods such as telecommunications and information technology equipment. This newest resolution may ease some of the humanitarian concerns related to sanctions, but it is unlikely to stop countries such as France and Russia from pushing for a complete end to sanctions in Iraq.

The humanitarian crisis caused by sanctions has provided Saddam Hussein a cause to rally his people around and a "Great Satan" to blame for his people's suffering. Although lifting sanctions does not guarantee that Saddam will improve the social conditions of Iraq's population, there is evidence that he might. For example, before and after the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq's government worked at investing more resources to raise the standard of living for the average Iraqi citizen (thus ensuring loyalty to the regime).<sup>25</sup> Public spending rose from \$21 billion in 1980 to \$29.5 billion in 1982. The majority of this budget increase was spent on civilian imports to prevent commodity shortages during the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>26</sup> Saddam started various construction projects as he tried to convert

Baghdad from a medieval to a modern city. He could very well choose the same path again if sanctions are lifted.

### Heavy Toll on US Military

Another negative repercussion of sanctions is the heavy toll this policy takes on US military forces. Military sanctions, in the form of two no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq, were instituted under UN Resolution 688 in April 1991 to restrict Iraqi movements and protect the civilian populations in the north (Kurds) and south (Shi'as).<sup>27</sup> With the exception of some help from British forces, the US military has shouldered the majority of the burden of maintaining these no-fly zones for the past 11 years. The US has flown thousands of sorties using rotating US fighter and bomber aircraft units to patrol the northern and southern no-fly zones. In 1999 alone, US and UK forces had flown more than 6,000 sorties, dropped more than 1,800 bombs and hit more than 450 targets in Iraq. The 200 airplanes, 19 warships, and 22,000 troops it took to accomplish this cost the US taxpayer \$1 billion that year.<sup>28</sup> Since the end of the Gulf War, the US has spent over \$8 billion containing Iraq (as of 2000). In addition to the monetary cost, patrolling the no-fly zones provides a tremendous amount of wear and tear on US military forces, especially US Air Force and US Navy aircraft.<sup>29</sup> The continual operations and the regular surges required to deploy to the region have challenged military rotation and leave schedules. The inhospitable welcome often given to Western forces further strains the military. Morale, retention, and overall readiness have fallen as a result.<sup>30</sup>

In recent years, the frequency of Iraqi violations in these no-fly zones has increased as Saddam continues to test the resolve of US military units and whip up Arab support for his cause. In 1999, there were over 600 reported violations of the no-fly zones by Iraqi military forces.<sup>31</sup> Saddam has invoked military reactions from the US on numerous occasions in the past decade, including major confrontations during January 1993, Operation Desert Strike in September 1996, Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, and countless tit-for-tat strikes since 1999.<sup>32</sup>

The high cost of military sanctions and Iraq's recalcitrant behavior in complying with UN Resolutions has caused many US government leaders to ask if the money spent containing Iraq has been worth the effort. The Chairman of the US House Committee for International Relations stated in 2000:

Since (Operation Desert Fox in 1998), Saddam has routinely challenged our aircraft patrolling over the no-fly zones, and we have retaliated each time with air strikes. Again, we are told this policy is a success because it is degrading Saddam's capabilities. Maybe we are degrading his capabilities, but he does not seem to mind too much, because he keeps provoking us to degrade him some more...<sup>33</sup>

Another member of the House Committee may have summed it up best when he drew a comparison between Saddam Hussein's life expectancy and that of his colleague from South Carolina, Senator Strom Thurmond. "If Saddam had anywhere near the same kind of life expectancy (98), you could be looking at say...about \$48 billion in direct cost to continue to maintain these military sanctions. Do you think this approximately \$50 billion expenditure is worthwhile?"<sup>34</sup> The increasing frustration over the high cost of enforcing sanctions and Iraq's continued defiance of UN Resolutions has prompted US

policy-makers to look for a more permanent solution in Iraq. Hence, there is increased discussion in the US news media in 2002 (especially after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks) about finally ousting Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq through military force, if necessary. The underlying message from this discussion is that sanctions have failed to achieve US objectives in Iraq.

### **Loss of International Support for Sanctions**

And finally, sanctioning Iraq has resulted in a loss of regional and international support for US policy, thus making successful policy-making in the region more difficult. The US finds itself increasingly isolated from even the conservative countries in the Middle East over its sanctions policy in Iraq. For example, the governments of Saudi Arabia and Turkey have grown less supportive of military strikes on Iraq in recent years. The Saudis have dictated what types of missions can be flown from their air bases, and Turkey has also occasionally refused the US permission to conduct strikes from its air bases.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, in Saudi Arabia both mainstream and radical dissident groups have been protesting the large US military presence in the Kingdom. Saudis are particularly upset about the cost of maintaining the US presence, arguing the money could be better spent on services and infrastructure. Many Saudis in the business community oppose the US presence because of the decline in government hand-outs to the business sector, in order to pay for the US military presence.<sup>36</sup> The US military presence has also fueled the fire of Muslim extremist groups such as Al Qaeda, led by Osama Bin Laden. One of the key principles of

Al Qaeda is to unite all Muslims, to overthrow all Muslim governments which are viewed as corrupt, to drive Western influence from those countries, and eventually to abolish state boundaries. They advocate the use of force to confront all foreign forces stationed on Islamic land.<sup>37</sup> Removal of the US presence in Saudi Arabia is clearly a number one priority for these Muslim extremist groups. In addition to the trouble caused by a large US military presence, other nations are also concerned with the US objective of toppling Saddam's regime. Saudi Arabia and others are concerned that any opposition success might increase the Shi'a influence in Iraq and further destabilize the region. (Saudi Arabia is primarily Sunni Muslim, as is Saddam's government.)

In general, the policy of retaining economic and military sanctions on Iraq for the past decade has caused a large split among the UN Security Council members. France, China and Russia have increasingly criticized the economic sanctions and on-going bombings of Iraq. As permanent members of the Security Council, they challenge the US and UK positions to retain sanctions.<sup>38</sup> Another open split between the UN Security Council members comes from France and Russia, who have been openly trying to broker a deal between Baghdad and the Kurdish parties in Iraq, something the US has not supported. The US has tried to stay out of Kurdish internal affairs, and only supports the Kurds through its policy of providing humanitarian assistance and protection through the northern no-fly zone.<sup>39</sup>

Proponents of sanctions toward Iraq have argued that Iraq has not attacked its neighbors; therefore sanctions have been an effective policy tool.<sup>40</sup>

While this argument does satisfy the first of the four objectives mentioned above, it does so at an enormous cost, and the other three objectives are left unfulfilled. It is important to try to understand why this policy has not worked in Iraq, and look at the global, domestic, and especially regional explanations for the policy's failure. Now that sanctions have been described as a failed policy, it is important to show that sanctions have been incompatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem since the implementation of that policy.

### **Incompatibility with the Middle East Subsystem**

Sanctions are an incompatible policy choice in the Middle East at all three levels of analysis to some degree: globally, regionally, and domestically. Globally, the diminishing international support of US policy toward Iraq since the end of the Gulf War has politically hindered US ability to promote regional stability and protect intrinsic interests (as discussed in Chapter 3). The US is seen as an imperial enemy by the majority of Muslims, particularly Arab nationalists and Islamic populists, due to its role in the Gulf War, sanctions, and its support of Israel.<sup>41</sup> The US has proven that it can protect its interests (such as access to oil and the protection of Israel) through overwhelming military force. However, it has become increasingly difficult for the US to keep a "coalition" of states together to support its policies such as sanctioning Iraq.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the increased global difficulty for unilateral US actions has contributed to the failure of sanctions in Iraq to a degree.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, it has become apparent that the only reliable US partners in the Middle East are Britain and Israel. As mentioned above, Russia, France and China have taken a softer stance toward Iraq when it comes to sanctions. US policy decisions have diverged from even traditional coalition partners such as Japan or Western Europe as well. There are very real differences among Europe, Japan and the US in terms of national strategic interests, diplomatic priorities, investment and trade interests, and domestic political and economic interests. Japan and Europe have emphasized trade, arms sales, and critical dialogue at a time when the US emphasizes strategic stability, power projection, and counter-proliferation. Also, US ties to Israel are much stronger than those of Japan and any European state.<sup>43</sup> The US emphasizes sanctions and "dual containment," and labels Iraq (and Iran) as rogue states. Britain still supports US policy choices in the region, but the US receives less support from other European countries (most notably France). Japan does not usually differ from the US on policy towards Iraq publicly, but privately has growing reservations that US policy towards Iraq lacks a realistic resolution and may interfere with Japanese economic investment.<sup>44</sup>

The loss of global support for sanctions in Iraq is indicative of the loss of support for US policies in the region in general. If US policy were more in concert with the regional considerations of the Middle East, it seems more likely that US policies would draw more support from the global community. However, the sanctions policy against Iraq, for example, is a policy that is structurally flawed at the regional and domestic level as well as the international level.

Before we examine the regional-level problems with US sanctions policy, it is important to review the incompatibility of the policy at the domestic level as well.

US support for Israel, combined with US domestic politics, makes it difficult to come up with a better policy than sanctions against Iraq to achieve US objectives. The US bias towards Israel (see Chapter 3) prevents a balanced approach in the region. This is especially evident in the Arab-Israeli imbroglio where US domestic politics have precluded an even-handed approach to negotiations between the Arabs and Israel.<sup>45</sup> The strong inclination to reinforce Israel at all costs remains the largest obstacle to a balanced foreign policy approach in the Middle East. As a result of the current US political agenda, which includes not only support for Israel but also a call for the containment of rogue regimes, there has been little domestic pressure to lift sanctions against Iraq. Instead, the demonizing of Saddam Hussein and Iraq (by US politicians and media) has permitted the sanctions policy to be continued, despite the numerous problems mentioned above that this policy has caused for the US at the global and regional levels. Unfortunately, US policy-makers do not usually analyze Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Arab-Israeli problem systematically. It is unclear whether the US population or policy-makers fully understand the ramifications of sanctioning Iraq and wanting to support Israel at the same time. This lack of regional analysis prevents the search for more viable solutions to US policy concerns that would be more compatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East.



Besides the incompatibility of continued sanctions against Iraq at the global and domestic levels, the policy is largely inconsistent with the regional considerations outlined in Chapter 2. First, the non-democratic nature of the region, especially Iraq, skews the effect sanctions will have on a country. Johan Galtung concluded that sanctioning regimes that restrict all aspects of society creates a more significant "rally-around-the-flag" effect than sanctioning democratic societies.<sup>46</sup> Since Saddam Hussein controls the government and the economy of Iraq, he has significant control over whether the average Iraqi citizen will feel the effects of sanctions or not (and whom they will blame). In the Iraqi case, the population is suffering under sanctions, yet Saddam controls the country with an iron fist so that there can be no dissent as a result of sanctions.

Another way US sanctions policy is not compatible with the Middle East regional subsystem comes from the economic structure of the region. The region (and Iraq in particular) is much less developed than the West; therefore the effects of sanctions will not be as harmful to the Iraqi economy as they would be to a Western, industrialized country. The Iraqi economy at the beginning of sanctions was not dependent on imports, which complicated the effects of sanctions policy. There was sufficient domestic production to meet the minimum needs of the population. Also, because of Iraq's experience during the Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi procurement procedures already included buying spare parts and coping with patchwork repairs.<sup>47</sup>

A third way US sanctions policy is not compatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East is the US' role in the Arab-Israeli imbroglio.

Israel's actions against the Palestinians in the occupied territories are inexorably linked to the US due to the tremendous amount of US aid provided to Israel. As mentioned throughout this thesis, US support for Israel precludes any widespread support of sanctions on Iraq by other Arab nations. As an example, at the most recent Arab League Summit (March 2002), two important resolutions were agreed upon. First, that there should be peace between the Arabs and Israelis and that Israel should withdraw its forces back to the 1967 borders. A second resolution proclaimed unanimous opposition (including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) to any further US-led attack on Iraq and "the lifting of the sanctions on Iraq, ending the punishment of the Iraqi people."<sup>48</sup> The resolutions indicate a softer approach taken toward Iraq, which is perceived to be much less a threat to the Arab states now than the escalation of violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis. At the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Malaysia (April 2002), the Muslim nations declared they would maintain a "united front" upholding the struggles of people under colonial domination for national liberation. The OIC also declared: "We reject any unilateral action taken against any Islamic country under the pretext of combating international terrorism, as this will undermine global cooperation against terrorism."<sup>49</sup> These summit resolutions show growing solidarity of Arab and Muslim nations against unilateral US policy decisions.

A fourth area that shows US sanctions policy incompatibility with the Middle East subsystem is that it runs contrary to the pan-Arab ideals that are espoused in the region. As mentioned above, the most recent Arab League

summit resolutions underscore the idea that pan-Arab ideals are making a comeback in the 2000s. Saudi Arabia's peace proposal for the Arab-Israeli imbroglio was the first-ever Arab peace initiative offered to resolve the conflict. Although too early to tell, this peace initiative could be indicative of a new movement among the Arab population in the Middle East to reenergize pan-Arab goals. Either way, the pan-Arabism that has defined the Middle East subsystem is not compatible with the US policy of "punishing" Iraq through economic and military sanctions.

If pan-Arabism continues to rise and the subsystem becomes more focused, the US may find it increasingly difficult to enact policy decisions and protect its strategic interests in the region. The potential for reversing the rising trend of unity among Arabs and Muslims exists, but lately it has become more difficult. Pan-Arabism feeds off the issues of Islamism. Therefore pan-Arabism is more likely to follow the rise and fall of Islamic fundamentalism. The US war on terrorism has angered many radical fundamentalists in the Middle East, who see this war as being waged against Islam in general (refer to the poll data in Chapter 2 that showed a majority of Muslims condemn the US attack on Afghanistan). The renewed violence between Palestinians and Israelis has also served to bring this focal issue back to the minds of the Arab and Muslim population. Unfortunately, many Arabs believe the US has provided preferential treatment to Israel for decades. Thus it will take a major shift in US policy to prove the US can make a balanced approach in the region.

Finally, in addition to the potential rise in pan-Arabism, the rise in anti-Americanism throughout the region highlights the incompatibility between sanctioning Iraq and regional considerations of the Middle East. The anti-US nature of the subsystem implies that most Middle Eastern nations will be reluctant to support US policies in general. And specifically, the harmful effect of sanctions on Iraq's population has increased that reluctance to support US policies. Many in the region and abroad assume that the West (especially the US) utilizes military force and sanctions for mostly economic motives and has no real concern for the general population in the Middle East. This assumption translates into a political cost of an increasingly negative public image among the Arab nationalist and populist communities. This public image is what lays the foundation for a secure future in which the US will be able to protect its own interests while helping to maintain regional security.<sup>50</sup> The anti-Americanism that is prevalent in the Middle East subsystem, and the harmful effects of sanctions on the Iraqi population make sanctions an incompatible policy choice for the US to use in this region.

### Conclusion

This chapter has shown that sanctions in Iraq have failed to achieve the objectives they were designed to achieve (or kept in place to achieve). Saddam Hussein continues his WMD program, is not in compliance with UN Resolutions, and remains firmly in control of the country. Sanctions have not only been unable to achieve US objectives in Iraq, but there have been some serious costs

partially attributable to this policy. Increasing humanitarian concerns in Iraq, the heavy toll on the US military, and the loss of international support for US policies in the region may all be related in part to sanctions in Iraq.

This assessment has shown that sanctions are incompatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East subsystem. Examining US sanctions toward Iraq in terms of the regional considerations showed how the policy was incompatible with five out of the six generalizations about the region. It is not surprising then that sanctions in Iraq have not been able to achieve US objectives for the past 11 years. Due to the nature of the region, sanctioning Iraq may not have been the best policy solution for the US in light of the failure to reach its objectives in this case. This appears to be the view of many within the US government and the general population as there is a renewed call to topple Saddam Hussein since the September 11th terrorist attacks. President Bush said in April 2002, "...the policy of my government is to remove Saddam and...all options are on the table."<sup>51</sup> US public opinion polls have also found that over 75% of those polled favor having US forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power.<sup>52</sup> This recent impetus to permanently "solve" the Saddam Hussein problem demonstrates the failure of US sanctions policy. The policy was incompatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East, and thus was doomed to fail from the beginning.

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup>Zachary A. Seldon, *Economic Sanctions as Instruments of American Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999) 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald V. Dellums, *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George Lopez, foreword by Ronald V. Dellums (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), ix-x.

<sup>3</sup>George A. Lopez and David Cortright, "Economic Sanctions in Contemporary Global Relations," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>4</sup>Seldon, 2.

<sup>5</sup>James C. Ngobi, "The United Nations Experience with Sanctions," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>6</sup>Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), 265.

<sup>7</sup>Daniel Byman, "After the Storm: US Policy Toward Iraq Since 1991," *Political Science Quarterly*, 115(4) (2000), 495.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd, 1999), 58.

<sup>10</sup>Kenneth I. Juster, "The United States and Iraq: Perils of Engagement," in *Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy*, eds. Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 51.

<sup>11</sup>Byman, 504.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 506.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 514.

<sup>14</sup>Graham-Brown, 87.

<sup>15</sup>Seldon, 88.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>17</sup>Anthony Arnove, ed., *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>18</sup>William J. Clinton, Letter to Hon. J. Dennis Hastert in "Public Law 102-1 (Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution) status report," (Washington D.C., May 19, 1999).

<sup>19</sup>Cable News Network, "Bush State of the Union Address," (January 29, 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup>Arnove, 69.

<sup>21</sup>Stone, 276.

<sup>22</sup>Byman, 500.

<sup>23</sup>Arnove, 67.

<sup>24</sup>George Capaccio, "Sanctions: Killing a Country and a People," in *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, ed. Anthony Arnove (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 145-146.

<sup>25</sup>United States Congress House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *US Policy Toward Iraq*, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 23 March 2000, 4.

<sup>26</sup>Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 153.

<sup>27</sup>Graham-Brown, 106.

<sup>28</sup>Arnove, 9.

<sup>29</sup>US Congress, 8.

<sup>30</sup>Byman, 507-508.

<sup>31</sup>US Congress, 29.

<sup>32</sup>Byman, 510.

<sup>33</sup>US Congress, 1.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>35</sup>Byman, 509.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 508.

<sup>37</sup>Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Resource Program report (February 20, 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ladin.htm>.

<sup>38</sup>Arnove, 72.

<sup>39</sup>Graham-Brown, 116.

<sup>40</sup>Byman, 494.

<sup>41</sup>Richard K. Herrmann, "The Middle East and the New World Order: Rethinking US Political Strategy After the Gulf War," *International Security* 16(2) (Fall 1991), 43.

<sup>42</sup>Liora Lukitz, "The Search for Logic: Contradictions in the Delineation of US Policy Toward Iraq," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 20(4) (August 1998), 2.

<sup>43</sup>Anthony Cordesman, "The United States, Japan, Europe and the Gulf: Meeting External Challenges," Center for Strategic & International Studies Online Report (March 1997). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.csis.org/mideast/reports/euusjglf.html#2>.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 162.

<sup>46</sup>Johan Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions, with Examples from the Case of Rhodesia," *World Politics* 19(3) (April 1967), 26-28, 31.

<sup>47</sup>David E. Reuther, "UN Sanctions Against Iraq," in *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, eds. David Cortright and George Lopez (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 129.

<sup>48</sup>Arab Gateway website, Translation of the Beirut Declaration issued by the League of Arab States on 28 March 2002 (March 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league/communique02.htm>.



<sup>49</sup>Organization of the Islamic Conference, Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism (April 3, 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://www.oic-oci.org/>.

<sup>50</sup>Herrmann, 44.

<sup>51</sup>Cable News Network, "Bush: Saddam Hussein Must Go," (April 6, 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from <http://cnn.com/2002/US/04/06/bush.iraq/index.html>.

<sup>52</sup>Americans and the World, Public Opinion on International Affairs, maintained by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (April 2002). Retrieved April 2002 from [http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global\\_issues/terrorism/data\\_iraq.cfm#1](http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/terrorism/data_iraq.cfm#1). (Poll data from Nov 28-29, 2001.)

## **CONCLUSION**

**This thesis has established that the Middle East comprises a regional subsystem and, as such, actions that occur in one part of the region will affect the rest of the region. The subsystem is also characterized by a number of unique regional considerations that generally describe the behavior of countries in the Middle East. By analyzing these considerations, one can examine US policy in the region and begin to measure the policy's success based on those considerations. A policy designed to complement the pan-Arabism or non-democratic manner of the region, for example, is a policy that has a greater chance of success. A policy that opposes these considerations is more likely to fail.**

**Policy-makers tend to overlook the fact that the region must be analyzed as a whole when anticipating responses to US policies. For example, any policy designed to mitigate the fighting between Palestinians and Israelis must take into account the reactions throughout the Middle East. Due to the nature of the region, and the US' prominent role in the region, policies with one country will have spillover effects into other countries. The way the US designs a Palestinian-Israeli policy is affected by its previous and future policies made toward Iraq, Iran, or Saudi Arabia for example. Once the Middle East is**

interpreted as a system, it is easier to understand why some policies are more likely to fail than others.

Analyzing the Middle East in a systemic manner is not only important to ensure successful policy outcomes, but because the failure of US policy damages future credibility. There has been a strong tendency in the US to make foreign policy decisions based on public opinion, strong lobbying tactics, or ideological reasons, without looking at the wider issues in the Middle East. These domestic constraints on US policy-makers have resulted in policies that appear to be inconsistent to many both regionally and globally. This type of ad-hoc policy-making without a long-term plan and solid regional analysis has damaged the credibility of the US in the region.<sup>1</sup>

From a US foreign policy perspective, there are two major issues in 2002 facing the US in the Middle East: the increased violence between Israel and the Palestinians, and what to do with Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Based on systemic analysis of the region as outlined in this thesis, the Arab-Israeli issue should be a top priority for the US. This conflict tends to polarize the region, invigorate the radical regimes and Islamic extremists, and could become the dominant issue for Arabs in the Middle East. The US must be careful in its policy-making pertinent to this conflict because of the anti-US and pan-Arab/pan-Islamic nature of the region, coupled with the perception of a bias toward Israel and historically inconsistent policy-making. A balanced approach in bringing an end to the violence between the Arabs and Israelis would be the first step in finding a policy solution compatible with the Middle East subsystem. However,

based on the current perception of the US as the defender of Israel over the Palestinians, and given the state of US domestic politics, a balanced approach is not very likely in the near future.

The other major issue facing US politicians in the short term is how to get rid of Saddam Hussein. The impetus behind finally ousting Saddam, according to US policy-makers, is that Saddam still poses a risk to the region (and potentially the world) with his weapons of mass destruction. He has also loosely been linked to supporting terrorist organizations, and the US has vowed to wipe out terrorism and those who support terrorists. The most popular policy solution to eliminate the perceived threat Saddam poses is to topple his regime in Iraq. This policy has a number of regional systemic problems. First, there is virtually no support from the conservative Arab states to oust Saddam. An attack on Iraq would likely strain relations between the US and its conservative Arab partners to the breaking point. Second, it would fuel the anti-Americanism that is on the rise throughout the general population of the Middle East and possibly provide a focusing event to rally the Arab population. Third, it could threaten the stability of oil exports and prices, as well as threaten regional stability depending on the nature of a new Iraqi government. Additionally, there is virtually no international support for ousting Saddam, with the exception of Great Britain. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, it has become exceedingly difficult for the US to act unilaterally in the post-Cold War environment, making an attack on Iraq a very difficult policy to uphold.

The Middle East in 2002 is faced with multiple problems that threaten US interests in the region: the alienation of the ruling elites from population, the resurgence of Islamic movements, and increased violence between the Arabs and Israel. US policy-makers need to understand all of these issues from a systemic and regional perspective and make choices that are compatible with the regional considerations of the Middle East. US policy support for Israel especially needs to be reevaluated in terms of whether it is a “national interest” or a “special interest.” The widespread negative effect this one policy has on many US policies throughout the Arab world underscores the importance of taking a closer look at the emphasis the US has placed on supporting Israel. US policy-makers need to understand that whether the policy is sanctioning Iraq, stationing troops in Saudi Arabia, providing aid to Israel, or ferreting out terrorists in Yemen, every policy action by the US is absorbed and reacted to by the Middle East as a subsystem. What is needed is a sophisticated, systemic analysis of the Middle East by US policy-makers to ensure US policies are successful.

### **Systems Theory as an Analytical Tool**

Finally, it is important to examine how valuable the systemic approach has been as a policy analysis tool. The application of systems theory has been somewhat out of vogue since the 1970s in the field of international relations. Tareq Ismael's 1986 book, International Relations of the Contemporary Middle East, used the systems approach to describe the Middle East and current issues in the region. However, systems theory was not used as a tool to analyze

particular foreign policies in Ismael's book. As a tool for examining the issues of a particular region, and the policies made internal and external to that region, the systems approach has its merits. It allows one to use cultural, historical, economic, and ideological as well as political attributes in combination when describing the region. This is a broader, more complete approach than many traditional theoretical international relations approaches that focus on one aspect at a time such as economics or national security.

However, the systems approach does have some weaknesses. Most significantly, its ability to encompass so many attributes of a region is a hindrance as well as an advantage. Although a more thorough approach than concentrating on one variable, there is virtually an infinite amount of inputs and outputs to a system, making it impossible to account for all of the variables. The six regional considerations used in this thesis were selected because they appear to be the most salient features of the Middle East regional subsystem. They also have the most significant affect on US policy-making. However, there may be other regional characteristics that also describe the Middle East accurately.

Despite Kaplan's use of the word "rules" in his models of international systems, there can never truly be any rules about how a system operates (Kaplan does concede however that his rules merely specify "characteristic behaviors" of systems).<sup>2</sup> The variables of a system are too numerous to account for everything that affects a system of states. Additionally, every state in a system will not always act in accordance with the characteristics of that system.

Therefore the systems approach is only useful in making broad generalities about a regional or global system.

The approach taken in this thesis has been an attempt to use theoretical aspects of the systems approach and operationalize the concepts to make a useful tool. In this respect, systems theory provided the framework to analyze current US policy toward the Middle East and its failure in the case of Iraqi sanctions. As Harold Saunders wrote, "...familiar concepts of international relations do not always explain what we see in an area such as the Middle East, and familiar instruments of statecraft do not reliably produce the results we expect of them."<sup>3</sup> Because of this, using a somewhat unique approach to conduct policy analysis (systems theory) has provided a unique perspective on US policies in the Middle East. This perspective could be useful to policy-makers and aid them in formulating sound policies compatible with the region. This in turn would increase the chance of policy success and the attainment of US goals in the Middle East.

### Conclusion Notes

<sup>1</sup>Tareq Y. Ismael, *International Relations and the Contemporary Middle East: A Study in World Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 161.

<sup>2</sup>Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Harold H. Saunders, "A Broader Peace Process for the Middle East," in *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, eds. Judith Kipper and Harold H. Saunders (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 301.



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