Search for Security:
A Path-Dependent Analysis of the Eisenhower Doctrine

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General Introduction

American foreign policy in the post 9/11 Middle East is often critiqued as heavily

militarized. Scholars evaluating the outcome of foreign policy ventures large and small

are almost universal in their criticism of an American tendency to leverage hard power in

pursuit of any number of objectives in the region (Lockman 2004). In fact, whether the

unit of analysis is military personnel and bases, arms exports, or military engagement, it

is almost a truism that "hard power" and "militarized" seem to be the dominant

descriptors of America's approach to a region that is just as quickly understood to be one

of intractable conflict (Yaqub 2004). Such a generalization of the region may at first

glance appear rational, but only if one's historical timeline extends only from the Cold

War to the present.

Repeatedly divided and subdivided among the great powers of history, the Middle

East has certainly known no end of foreign intervention and influence, but America has

been a relative newcomer to this strategic region. Though involved in the Middle East

since its founding, the United States had a limited role in the region for several decades

due to its unwillingness to upset other European powers then vying for control (Little

2007, 514). It was thus, only when those powers had retreated from the scene in the mid-

twentieth century that America found itself in the unenviable position of being the

hegemonic power in the Middle East (515). This frame of reference must be set against

the backdrop of the Cold War and America's response to the aggressive export of the

communist revolution from Russia in the aftermath of World War II. Essentially, the

American people, and their leaders, believed communism to be an existential threat to the

United States and all their foreign interests (Dulles 1950).   It did not help that it appeared

as though Western power was in decline as the European powers began to lose their overseas empires due to revolutions and economic recessions. America, untouched by the scourge of the Second World War, thus emerged as the champion of the free world, and the inheritor of all its burdens. These burdens included the Middle East as France and Britain withdrew from their holdings there, placing America at a unique crossroads in her relation to the region.

Though Harry Truman oversaw the initial American response to the Cold War with his doctrine of containment, in terms of the Middle East, it was Dwight D. Eisenhower who built American policy in that region as a hegemonic power. In response to a rapidly decolonizing region that housed precious resources for the United States and a rebuilding Europe, Eisenhower recognized the need to formulate a containment policy specifically for the Middle East and thus proposed the Eisenhower Doctrine as America stepped into the role vacated by France and Britain. Within this doctrine can be found three key conceptions concerning the Middle East that have continued to influence American policy in the region: First, the Eisenhower Doctrine sought to define America's role as the region's new hegemonic power. Second, parameters were placed around America's use of hard and soft power to prevent a broader superpower war in the region. Third, the doctrine defined relationships between the US and key allies primarily through the provision of military and economic aid (Campbell 1958). Though this doctrine was never supposed to be a set policy – and historians in fact argue against its influence as such- this paper argues that the doctrine, in fact, became the cornerstone of American Middle East policy through much of the Cold War as presidents coming after Eisenhower were beset by crises outside the region and defaulted to the doctrine's basic

tenets in order to maintain a regional balance of power in America's favor (Polk 1969, Hippler 1987).

The Eisenhower doctrine thus provided a framework upon which other presidents worked, building a comfortable status quo that was rocked by the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1991 (Kinsella and Tillema 1995). The decade that followed saw a mad dash to redefine American foreign policy in a suddenly unipolar world. This posed a problem in the Middle East where America now found itself alone in a region awash in Cold War hardware and weapons, and a growing anti-American sentiment (Makdisi 2002). The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 brought the need for a new Middle East doctrine to the fore as old Cold War assumptions and policies outlived their usefulness. However, as often as regional experts called for a fresh strategic approach to the region, the 2003 Iraq invasion, and the heavily militarized responses to Arab Spring uprisings in Libya, Syria and Lebanon make it clear that the Eisenhower Doctrine has done more than cast a shadow. Its basic tenets have been "locked in" to American foreign policy thinking at the institutional level. This paper addresses itself to analyzing the great influence of the Eisenhower Doctrine in shaping the American Middle East policy for the better part of the last four decades. In the search for an American doctrine in the Middle East, the Eisenhower Doctrine looms large as the seminal strategic statement of the United States as a newly arrived regional hegemon, influencing the actions taken by future presidents in the years following its enactment (Pierson 1993, Greenstein and Immerman 2000, Melanson and Mayers 1987) . Any new doctrine on the Middle East must consider the influence of the Eisenhower Doctrine, its failures and successes, if any headway is to be made in developing a dynamic policy for the Middle East.

Literature Review

   Traditional, more empirically based international relations theories have a rather spotty record when it comes to assessing American foreign policy in the Middle East. Huntington's (1996) "clash of civilizations" thesis, and before that his wave theory of democratization (1991), both recognized the difficulty of fitting the region into the existing empirical frameworks. Said's critical approach in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981, 1997) both seek to locate this Western (particularly American) struggle to accurately assess the region in a certain veiled bigotry. Oren (2007) and Hudson (1977, 2009) generally, and more cogently, blame the problem on an ignorance of history and political culture respectively. The ongoing struggle to analyze the region and American policy in it within existing IR theoretical frames became jarringly evident in a general failure to anticipate the events of the so-called Arab Spring in 2010 and the following years (Cammet, Diwan, Richard and Waterbury 2015, Gause 2011). So, while the literature on American foreign policy in the Middle East is immense, its ability to forecast outcomes and assess causes often founder on theoretical shortcomings and blind spots. This raises a particularly challenging prospect for the study of a specific presidential doctrine such as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

   Analyzing the influence of a presidential doctrine requires a more nuanced theoretical approach than more traditional international relations (IR) theories may allow. IR theory, whether of a realist, liberal, or constructivist lens focuses largely on locating states within a certain environment and describing the contours of that environment (Snidal 2004). This traditional approach to evaluating international relations generalizes a state's foreign policy as more or less a homogenous process rather than the outgrowth of

a complex set of political, social and cultural interactions (Beasley and Kaarbo 2012). Such generalization may be necessary for the purposes of forming empirical theory, but the shortcomings of empirical IR theory to offer more nuanced country or region-specific insight are fairly well documented, and would incline one to look to case study analysis as an alternative methodological approach (Gerring 2012). However, the literature on case study analysis, which this paper essentially is, is similarly beset by analytical shortcomings (Kay 2003, 2005). I will discuss how to overcome those analytical shortcomings in my methodology section. In this literature review, however, it is necessary to first locate the literature on the Eisenhower Doctrine within the context of foreign policy decision-making literature, and the methodological debates therein, in part to explain the lack of scholarship on the Eisenhower Doctrine as well as to develop a point of departure for this study.

The existing literature generally views the Eisenhower Doctrine as a failed policy of limited duration within the broader context of the Cold War and an American grand strategy of containment (Yaqub 2004 and Takeyh 2000). Though offering different interpretive frameworks on the Eisenhower Doctrine, Yaqub and Takeyh agree on this point, and it will be this common narrative that will inform the analysis here. Yaqub and Takeyh's respective works represent to most recent book-length treatments of the Eisenhower Doctrine, but primary sources aplenty also exist in terms of the writings of Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, as well as other official documents. However, Middle Eastern affairs are certainly of secondary importance in the primary record, rising in priority in relationship to the larger geostrategic concern of counteracting the Soviet Union. Eisenhower's storied career as a military officer also

obscures the Eisenhower Doctrine as well since it is Eisenhower's military career that forms the bulk of his own published writings. Dulles book *War or Peace* (1950) provides the greatest insight into the Secretary of State's foreign policy thinking in general, and here, too, global communism is the primary foe. However, Dulles offers some tantalizing clues regarding his approach to the Soviet Union that could inform analysis of the doctrine he would help shape. It would appear, then, that historians have generally taken their cue from the decision-makers themselves and concluded that the Eisenhower Doctrine is of secondary or tertiary importance in the political history of the Cold War. Certainly, the doctrine's mixed results also contribute to a general dearth of analysis in IR and foreign policy literature preoccupied with the global scale of the Cold War and its attendant nuclear concerns.

In contrast to the more global, geostrategic concerns of the Cold War, the Eisenhower Doctrine's main objectives *vis a vis* the Middle East are described as being focused on containing the influence of Gamal Abdel Nasser's brand of Arab Nationalism, checking Russian expansion in the region, and reinvigorating British standing after the disastrous Suez Crisis (Takeyh 2000, xi-xiii). Insofar as the Doctrine did not achieve its region-specific objectives, it is largely considered a failure in realist terms. To the degree that the Doctrine led to a close alignment and cooperation with non-democratic regimes, it is considered a failure in liberal terms (xiv). However, key elements of the Doctrine persist as standard operating procedures (SOPs) for American foreign policy in the region in the form of the forward deployment of American forces in the region and the supply of military hardware at the request of local governments (Pruessen 1990). This presents something of a counterfactual to the more commonly accepted IR theories that would

assume such a failed policy would lead to a rejection of its future use, grounded as they are in the assumptions of rational actor theory (Zagare 1990, Houghton 2013). However, arms transfer data indicates that no such outright rejection has taken place.[1] Counterintuitively, in fact, arms exports data and the historical record suggest that far from rejecting the main tenets of the Eisenhower Doctrine, American foreign policy institutions appear to have adopted and adapted those tenets as SOPs in its regional diplomacy (Neumann 1995).

Foreign policy decision-making literature supplies a helpful, but imperfect, layer of analysis to address this somewhat awkward, counterintuitive reality. Graham Allison's (1969, 1971) classic work on the Cuban Missile Crisis popularized the idea that foreign policy is not made in the homogenous state-centric environment favored by more empirical theoretical approaches, but is shaped by several actors whose choices and activities (of commission and omission) form the policy outcome. Allison and Halperin (1972) sought to develop a method towards understanding the role of institutions in such a dynamic policymaking environment. Somewhat in parallel, Houghton (2013) characterizes these models as *homo psychologicus*, *homo bureaucraticus, homo sociologicus* in contra distinction to the more common *homo economicus* (also known as rational actor theory). Bender and Hammond (1992), following others (Art 1973 and Ball 1974), critique Allison's model, particularly Models II and III (*homo bureaucraticus*) as being underspecified and difficult to empirically evaluate, though Houghton (2013) argues that this hardly discredits the model as Allison himself understood this did not work well in the specific context of the Cuban Missile Crisis. What seems to be wanting in the debate over Allison's paradigm of bureaucratic influence on decision-making and

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[1] This paper will use arms exports data from the Stockholm International Peace Institute.

policy adoption is an agreed upon theoretical framework to guide the analysis, as well as a standard methodological approach for evaluating said framework (Houghton 2007).

In sum, realist interpretations of American foreign policy will focus on characterizing the Middle East as one of strategic importance and combative local politics which necessitate a militarized U.S. posture (Campbell 1958, Barrett 2007). By contrast, more critical approaches argue that such an approach exacerbates the region's conflicts rather than the other way around (Said 1978, 1981, 1997, Takeyh 2000, Lockman 2004). Perhaps it is the frequency of armed conflict in the region that keeps the eyes of analysts and academics firmly fixed in the present and recent past, but that would be a mistake. To analyze American foreign policy in the Middle East only in terms of the last 20 or even 30 years is to miss the important historical and path-dependent roots of current Middle East conflicts and U.S. entanglements in those conflicts. In fact, the U.S. approach to the region was not always military-centric but shifted in that direction at a critical juncture in time, namely, as the Cold War got under way in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Hudson 2009). This paper contributes to the literature by formulating just such a path dependent approach to reanalyzing the Eisenhower Doctrine as a causal mechanism to America's militarized approach to Middle East policy. Taking such a path dependent approach can explain the disconnect between historical reality and traditional IR theory, while supplying a more clearly defined outline of how Allison's Models II and III (Houghton's *homo bureaucraticus*) functions not just in the moment of policy formulation, but over time as well . This case study thus functions as an entry point for refining elements of IR theory commonly taught and referred to despite flaws in their explanatory power and

aims to revitalize the Eisenhower Doctrine's place as a seminal moment in US foreign policy in the Middle East.

Methodology

This paper presents a path dependent framework for analyzing the Eisenhower Doctrine as a critical juncture that decisively shifted American foreign policy in the Middle East to one dominated by hard power. It argues that the effect of the Eisenhower Doctrine over time has been its elevation from a context-specific policy to that of a standard operating procedure, or policy template, for future administrations due to the positive feedback loop the doctrine generated among American partners and allies in the region who recognized that claiming to be the target of a common enemy could open the flood gates of American military and economic aid, thereby ensuring their hold on power while giving U.S. administrations their desired strategic military placements to counter Soviet influence.

By utilizing a path dependent approach to analyzing US arms exports over the course of the Cold War, we can see the emergence of hard power as the defining element of US policy in the region stemming from a singular point: the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine. As noted above, the literature on the Eisenhower Doctrine has focused on its place in the Cold War context and America's post-World War 2 rise to global preeminence. However, such analysis does not lend itself to informing contemporary foreign policy analysis, and as noted earlier international relations literature cannot explain the Doctrine's persistence as a policy template given its perceived initial failure.[2]

That gap between the Cold War and the present is in part filled by analysis based more in critical theory approaches that characterize American foreign policy in the region

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[2] As recently as the end of 2019, an issue of the influential magazine *Foreign Affairs* contained no less than eight articles on American foreign policy in the Middle East and not one of those articles made mention of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

in imperialistic or neo-colonial terms, but these analyses are focused more on describing

historical characteristics that may identify patterns, but fail to offer much in terms of

explanations particularly in terms of the consistency of those patterns over time, nor can

they explain specific policies (Lockman 2004). There is a presumption that such a foreign

policy is a necessary product of superpower status rather than a result of the complex

interaction of choices, circumstances and institutional dynamics, information more useful

to policymakers and decision-makers.[3]

A path dependence approach, however, seeks to understand its subject within a

rich context of overlapping actors, institutions or interests (Goldstone 1998, Mahoney

2000, Leithner and Libby 2017). Ian Greener's (2005) approach to path dependence

analysis seeks to set out three core criteria that form the analytical foundation in order to

prevent the researcher from picking and choosing evidence:

> **First, path-dependent processes begin with multiple equilibria situations**. We must be able to demonstrate that a number of viable alternatives existed for the development of the policy in question, or for the development of the institutions we are examining. Leading on from this is the second element: **contingent events must be shown to have played a substantial role in establishing the particular policy or institutional form that emerged**. Third, we must **specify the conditions in which we would expect path-dependent systems to reproduce their form and 'lock-in' to occur.** (emphasis added)

Greener's approach is based in realist social theory, specifically Archer's (1982,

1995) morphogenetic framework that seeks to understand institutions within their cultural

and historical contexts (Willmott 2000). Greener's framework is helpful in two unique

ways to deepening our understanding of the Eisenhower Doctrine. First, it provides a

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[3] Salim Yaqub makes this point in contrast to scholars like Lockman and Takeyh. Yaqub's argument is essentially that cultural interpretations and other various critical theoretical perspectives overplay poorly defined cultural differences without reference to more readily identifiable political and institutional components.

theoretically sound framework to ground analysis of the historical narrative. Morphogenesis, as articulated by Archer, seeks to analyze human institutions as being dynamic exchanges between institutions and individuals (Arch 1982). In this, Morphogenesis seeks to balance the scholarship derived from historical institutionalism on institutional and individual decision making, which has often divided the foreign policy analysis field (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, Christensen and Redd 2004, Chollet and Goldgeier 2002, Orfeo 2011, Shearman 2000). Second, scholarship on the decision-making of Eisenhower specifically identifies his approach to the National Security Council, and institutionalization of a stable decision-making policy process as being significant developments in his presidency that contributed to future administrations adopting and adapting Eisenhower's methods and policymaking processes (Falk 1964, Melanson and Mayers 1987, Sloan 1990). Given the uniqueness of the Eisenhower administration on institutionalizing a systematized policy process, analyzing a signature foreign policy initiative through a methodological framework tailored to evaluating institutional influence of critical decisions over time makes eminent sense.

The process of this research, then, would be to first construct a general narrative and sequence of events leading up to the adoption and implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. That narrative can then be analyzed through the path dependence criteria listed above in order to answer the question of the influence and effect of the Eisenhower Doctrine over time. In this sense, the Eisenhower Doctrine acts as a dependent variable, and arms exports act as an independent variable. By overlaying the historical timeline of the Eisenhower Doctrine and subsequent American military involvement in the Middle East, a determination can be made on the probability of the Doctrine's influence on

contemporary foreign policy thereby indicating new directions in foreign policy analysis related to the influence of bureaucratic institutions.

Multiple Equilibria: The Context of the Eisenhower Doctrine

An assertion made in the introduction was that, at the time of Eisenhower's presidency, America stood at a unique crossroads in its interaction with the Middle East. This is an essential element of satisfying the condition of multiple equilibria. In order to establish the presence of a path dependent process stemming from the Eisenhower Doctrine to the present, it first needs to be demonstrated that the critical elements of the doctrine, namely it's focus on hard power via military and economic aid provided at the request of a given country were not standard practice in American diplomacy and foreign policy prior to 1957, the year of the doctrine's adoption. In fact, an overview of American foreign policy in the region in general and among Arab nations specifically demonstrates that not only was hard power rarely exercised as a policy option, but soft power policy options were preferred.

In the 150 years prior to World War I, American interest in the Middle East had been largely limited to commerical and humanitarian interests, and even those undertakings were relatively small. Especially in the early years of the republic Americans were almost entirely reliant upon the good graces of other foreign powers for the protection of its commerce in the region. The story of the ill-fated merchant ship *Betsey*, its capture by Barbary pirates and the imprisonment of the crew is a tragic illustration of the American government's lack of influence in the region (Oren 2007, 22). Even when warships were finally dispatched to the region, they were often conned into becoming courier ships for local rulers attempting to ingratiate themselves with the

Ottoman rulers (52). From a political perspective there emerges a picture of one

humiliation after another until American honor was restored, to a certain extent, with the

largely successful prosecution of anti-piracy campaigns in the first half of the 19th

century. Despite the diplomatic impotency demonstrated by the American government,

American civilians were able to penetrate the region effectively as merchants,

missionaries, and other professionals. These individuals are largely credited with

bringing modern medicine, education, and economic production to the region (Makdisi

2002).

The disparity between the early successes of the private and public undertakings

in the Middle East should be noted when considering the newness of America's role as a

political power in the region and the outcomes of its foreign policies. Walter Russell

Meade's (2004) use of Joseph Nye's definition of hard and soft power clarifies this

situation:

> [H]ard power (military and economic power) works because it can make
> people do what you want them to do. Soft power – cultural power, the
> power of example, the power of ideas and ideals – works more subtly: it
> makes others want what you want (24).

This distinction is very important to note considering America's regional involvement

prior to the Cold War. America largely failed in getting the region to do what

Washington wanted it to do, but the missionaries, teachers, and other professionals that

journeyed there were largely successful in making people in the region want what they

wanted. Michael Oren notes the substantial impact made by these private citizens in the

19th century in planting the early seeds of nationalism through their spreading of

American cultural values (Oren 2007). Thus, a pattern emerged where America was

looked upon with great respect by individuals languishing under colonial rule and corrupt

local rulers, while on the political level America was largely viewed as distant at best, and impotent at worst. And while the American government struggled to find a way forward in the region, apart from recruiting a few missionaries into the diplomatic corps, they largely ignored the successes the missionaries had in penetrating the region (Polk 1969). This seemingly innocuous development would later play a significant role in formulating American policies in the region during the Cold War as the descendants of these missionaries turned diplomats developed a definitive pro-Arab stance that would play a role in influencing the Eisenhower administration's approach to the region's Arab nations (Oren 2007).

Thus, American political involvement in the Middle East progressed at a languid pace into the twentieth century. Even with the conclusion of World War I, Americans mostly viewed the region as part of the European sphere of influence (Little 1994). This was a perception easily believed as the crumbling Ottoman Empire gave way to the French and British mandates. While France and Britain held sway over their mandates, and Britain and Russia battled for influence and oil in Iran, America was largely left out of the picture. However, the United States found greater favor with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the time a land of windswept deserts and wandering nomads. Explorations by American oil companies, however, changed all that. As Saudi Arabia's oil wealth came into focus, the house of Saud chose Americans to build the infrastructure necessary to extract the precious resource (Oren 2007). This business decision not only inextricably tied America to the fortunes of Saudi Arabia, but it also provided America with its first significant economic and political foothold in the region – it's first real hard power leverage.

As World War II spread its destructive net, America remained a peripheral force in the Middle East aside from "stimulating Saudi Arabian oil production and establishing the Persian Gulf-Iran route to Russia" (Polk 1969, 262). America left the defense of the region largely in the hands of the British and French, though Operation Torch involved American troops in recapturing North Africa for the Allied cause (Oren 2007). However, America was slowly being drawn into the centuries-old battlefield of the Middle East as the end of World War II made it abundantly clear that the old powers of Europe had neither the will, nor the capital to maintain their overseas empires. President Truman, however, was slow to respond to the rapidly changing situation in the Middle East, advocating for the use of the United Nations as the region's guarantor of peace rather than the United States (Polk 1969). However, American support of Greek democratic forces, increasing reliance on Saudi oil, and Soviet expansionism forced America to take on Britain's abdicated role as William Polk makes clear:

> It was because of the Soviet Union, then, that America first undertook direct and large-scale responsibility for events in the eastern Mediterranean. It did so in default of Great Britain, to whom it had preferred to leave responsibility for the area. And through its European commitments in Greece, America was drawn into an involvement in the Arab world (263).

Truman's grudging acknowledgement of the situation compelled him to put forward his Truman Doctrine that laid out the classic containment strategy that would define America's Cold War policy towards the Soviet Union. Truman believed that Stalin's aggressive drive to expand the communist revolution to Eastern Europe, in particular Greece, and the Middle East was a direct threat to the United States, and thus used the Truman Doctrine's philosophy of containment to equip and arm regional allies such as Turkey and Iran (Duric and Lansford 2007). Despite the Truman Doctrine's influence on

American foreign policy, it was largely focused on Europe, not the Middle East and even there its influence was peripheral as can be seen by its direct beneficiaries: Turkey was secular and Turkish, while Iran was Persian and geographically separated from the Middle East proper by the Zagros Mountains. Both countries also had relations with Israel, America's other regional ally, which in no way encouraged Arab support. Thus, the effectiveness of the Truman Doctrine for the Middle East was limited in its influence due to its lack of support among Arab nations, America's choice of allies, and Truman's own unwillingness to fill the rapidly growing gap that was being formed by French and British withdrawals.

The situation stood thus in the winter of 1953 when Eisenhower took office amidst global concern over Russian expansion. John Campbell (1958), writing just five years later put the situation in rather bleak terms:

> [T]here was no disguising the fact that in the world balance of power between the Soviet-Communist world and the West a vacuum had been created, and that if American power did not fill it Soviet power would…. Be that as it may, there was no blinking the fact that the United States was now assuming virtually the entire responsibility, on behalf of the West, for the task of holding for the free world a huge area bristling with unsolved problems and too weak to provide for its own defense (126).

Making the situation more complex, control of the Egyptian government had been seized by a young nationalist named Gamal Abdel Nasser who the British and French, in collusion with Israel, attempted to oust from power in what proved to be the French and British swan song as colonial powers in the Suez Crisis. More detail will be added in terms of this important conflict later, it is merely used here to bring this narrative to the point of realization that now dawned upon the Eisenhower administration: the Truman Doctrine had to be amended to consider the Arab countries in the region. It was

imperative that a strong stance be taken on Russian actions in the Middle East as Stalin

sought to take advantage of the in-fighting amongst the Western allies that the Suez

Crisis had created (Campbell 1958, 120). It was to this issue that Eisenhower and his

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles addressed themselves. From the perspective of

multiple equilibria, the pre-Cold War diplomatic playbook for the Arab countries was

thin for the Eisenhower administration, presenting mostly options around developing

commercial ties and promoting cultural exchange and human development. In the face of

an aggressive Soviet foreign policy pressing upon retreating colonial powers, such a

foreign policy appeared almost Pollyannaish. However, what guidance existed in terms of

flexing hard power stemmed from the Truman Doctrine, which had not privileged Arab

nations, and in some cases had even alienated them. This is not to suggest these policy

options were unviable, they were viable in the sense that they had been used or were

being used (Lansford 2009). They just had not been leveraged with great effect in

America's Arab diplomacy, and the rising Arab nationalism of Nasser and others

demanded that the Eisenhower administration think quickly about how best to address

American foreign policy to the increasingly restive and strategically critical Arab

countries in the region.

Contingent Events: Eisenhower and Dulles

Given the general trend of American engagement in the Middle East up until the 1950s as

being one largely composed of soft power, and very limited hard power largely

concentrated in economic ties to oil producers like Saudi Arabia, it is clear that some

major shift would be required to shake a generally complacent America into a more

active application of its military might in the region. This is what is considered to be

"contingent events" – the second criterion in the path dependent framework being developed here. The first criterion of a multiple equilibria situation being present essentially sets the stage for possible outcomes, which events leading up to the adoption to the Eisenhower Doctrine accomplishes. The criterion of contingent events states that given the multiple equilibria situation, a unique event or events must occur to decisively swing an institution towards a particular policy. In the case of the Eisenhower Doctrine, that decisive event was the Suez Crisis.

The Eisenhower administration had come into office with avowedly anti-communist credentials, having every intention of continuing the Truman policy of containing the expansion of the Soviet Union. In particular, the new Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was adamant that Soviet expansion be halted. Writing in 1950, Dulles expressed the belief that the early stages of the Cold War had been characterized by one Soviet success after another. While he agreed with containment in principle, he also recognized that something needed to be changed in how containment was enacted. What Dulles lacked was a clear cause for policy change in a Middle East still heavily influenced by colonial powers. In other words, he needed a contingent event to justify moving the US towards a stronger hard power stance, traditionally a diplomatic space occupied by Britain and France. The Suez Crisis would be that event.

By 1956, and the advent of the Suez Crisis, American policy in the region was torn between supporting its European allies -and by extension their colonies- and encouraging the nascent nationalist movements that were emerging in the Middle East. Supporting the former promised a sense of stability and dealing with known quantities in terms of diplomatic relations, while supporting the latter promised the emergence of a

new bloc of nations to contain Soviet expansionism. These contradictory pulls upon the Eisenhower administration led to an equally contradictory handling of the Suez crisis. While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had considered Nasser to be little more than a Soviet proxy, he considered being perceived as an abettor of colonial aggression a far worse fate than supporting such a proxy (Oren 2007). Thus, America found itself working with the Soviet Union against its own allies (France and Britain) to end the Suez Crisis before it got out of hand. The result of the crisis was a rift in Anglo-French relations with America, damage to Israeli prestige, and the emergence of Nasser as a hero of Arab nationalism (Popp 2010). More troubling still was the increasing attention the Soviets gave to the Arab nationalist movement, having perceived in the Suez Crisis an opportunity for pushing the Soviet agenda and influence deeper into the region (Duric and Lansford 2007). The whole mess was a major embarrassment for Eisenhower, and it became apparent that the region demanded more specific attention as Britain and France effectively ended their roles as colonial powers.

Eisenhower and Dulles both realized that the Truman administration, while pursuing a policy of Soviet containment, had also been pursuing a Middle Eastern policy of anti-colonialism, which had effectively left America holding the bag of regional strife while at the same time trying to ward off Soviet expansion with very little in the way of political and military resources present in the region (Hahn 2006). Nothing less than a new doctrine was needed to redefine America's goals and interests in the region, and it was left to Eisenhower to formulate a new doctrine for an America newly arrived as a regional hegemonic power.

Some historians, ranging from the academic to the popular, have taken a rather dim view of Eisenhower and Dulles in terms of American foreign policy during their time in office (Danin 2012). Michael Oren characterizes these years of Middle Eastern policy as "meandering" and having little positive impact upon the region (Oren 2007, 516). However, Zachary Lockman (2004) argues that Eisenhower possessed a keen awareness of geopolitical realities:

> As President Eisenhower put it in 1956, "The oil of the Arab world has grown increasingly important to all of Europe. The economy of Europe would collapse if those oil supplies were cut off. If the economy of Europe would collapse, the United States would be in a situation of which the difficulty could scarcely be exaggerated." The United states was thus determined to keep as much of the region as possible – and above all the oil-rich Arab states and Iran – under the control of friendly governments; this would keep cheap oil flowing on the terms advantageous to both the United States and its allies while giving the former considerable leverage over the latter (116).

What Oren and other critics of Eisenhower and Dulles fail to acknowledge is that Eisenhower had essentially been dealt a bad hand by his predecessor in terms of trying to contain the Soviet Union, while simultaneously trying to end European dominance of the region, all the while attempting to keep America out of the simmering regional conflicts. Eisenhower was keenly aware of the dangers of using force to confront Communism in the Middle East and thus attempted to avert such actions as much as possible (Saunders 1985, Hahn 2006). Specifically in terms of the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower quite rightly interpreted the political capital that Nasser stood to gain in the Arab world if European powers resorted to force while also understanding that such capital would also reflect well upon the Soviet Union as Nasser's supporter (Saunders, 101-102). Such perception does not reflect the attitude of a complacent president, but of an individual who

understood the political world he inhabited as well as the ramifications of the different courses of actions that were pursued by the several political actors.

Eisenhower thus began to piece together a broader strategy for the region to repair and untangle the confusing web of alliances that had previously been in place (Lenczowski 1968).

With the Suez Crisis defused, and the Arab-Israeli crisis momentarily in check, Eisenhower now had the opportunity to define America's purpose in the region. As stated above, both Eisenhower and Dulles felt that the goal was to contain communism, and they both realized that they would need broad support from Congress to use the military and other means to do just that in the Middle East. The possibility of an aggressive Soviet policy in the wake of Suez had by the end of 1956 manifested itself in a brutal repression of uprisings in Hungary, and Eisenhower and Dulles now had to counteract that aggression without prompting a greater conflict. Such delicate foreign policy required clear boundaries and congressional support in the use of the military. Eisenhower couched the situation in the language of America's great moral responsibility to protect the free world as he addressed the Congress on January 5, 1957:

> "[A] greater responsibility now devolves upon the United States. We have shown, so that none can doubt, our dedication to the principle that force shall not be used internationally for any aggressive purpose and that the integrity and independence of the nations of the Middle East should be inviolate. Seldom in history has a nation's dedication to principle been tested as severely as ours during recent weeks" (Lenczowski, 280)

Though Eisenhower maintained that force would not be used for aggressive purposes, it is beyond doubt that the purpose of expostulating the Eisenhower Doctrine was to gain broader executive power over use of the military in the Middle East, which the administration felt was needed to protect what was known as the "northern tier" of

nations (Turkey, Greece, Iraq, Lebanon)(269). The key part of the promise to hold the

independence of regional nations "inviolate" was to allay fears that America was a new

colonial taskmaster, though this "inviolate independence" was but a secondary priority to

the implementation of the policy as a check on the spread of communism (Saunders

1985). To this end, Eisenhower outlined three broad objectives as starting points for

American policy:

> (1) authorize the President to employ as he deems necessary the armed
> forces of the United States to secure and protect the integrity and
> independence of any nation or group of nations in the general area of the
> Middle East requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any
> nation controlled by international communism; (2) authorize the Executive
> to undertake programs of military assistance to any nation or group of
> nations in that area desiring such aid; (3) authorize cooperation with any
> nation or group of nations in the development of economic strength for the
> maintenance of national independence (Campbell 1958, 122).

Congress not only granted its blessing by appropriating $400 million for the purpose of

bulking up America's Middle Eastern allies, but it also granted Eisenhower power to

freely use "$200 million of already appropriated funds for military and economic aid in

the Middle East, free of restrictions of existing legislation (Oren 2007, 122)." Though

historians like Richard Saunders characterize Eisenhower as a largely peaceful man, they

also note that he was fully aware and ready to use troops when essential American

interests needed protection. His request for such war and spending powers as illustrated

in his speech to Congress clearly proves the point (Saunders 1985).

Lock In: The Eisenhower Doctrine as SOP

At this point it is important to note the immediate outcomes and changes that the

Eisenhower Doctrine caused in America's relation to the Middle East. First, American

aid, specifically military aid, was now made readily available to Arab nations in general

and the monarchies like Saudi Arabia and Jordan specifically. While America had been

establishing a growing relationship with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, up until the

Eisenhower years most Arab nations had been influenced by the colonial powers of

France and Britain. The doctrine specifically targeted those nations with an eye to taking

up the European power's abdicated role as a supplier of military and economic aid

(Barrett 2007). Second, the doctrine downplayed American Israeli collusion in the

broader Arab-Israeli conflict by limiting the sale of arms to Israel. This was essentially a

move to prevent Arab nations from fearing American Israeli designs, something Dulles

himself felt was a greater fear for the Arab states than communism (Lenczowski 1968).

Thirdly, The Eisenhower Doctrine tied the fortunes of America's geopolitical standing to

those of the Middle East in a most indelible way. Though events in the 1960s and 1970s

would turn America's gaze from the Middle East to Asia, the fact that the Middle East is

still of utmost concern to the United States foreign policy picture speaks volumes to the

success of Eisenhower's policy in establishing a new strategic status quo. Essentially,

America now interpreted its role in the region as being a referee of sorts with an eye

towards maintaining security and stability through economic and military aid to those

states not allied with enemy interests (Polk 1969).

Events the following year provided Eisenhower with an opportunity to test the

mechanisms he had set in place as part of his doctrine. The British-American backed

Iraqi government was removed in a bloody coup d'état, while fighting broke out amongst

the diverse and hostile elements of the Lebanese population. Eisenhower had made it a

point to stress that the Eisenhower Doctrine would only be used if a country requested aid

and even then, in a limited manner (Campbell 1958). Though caught by surprise by the

Iraqi coup, Eisenhower stayed true to his word and quickly moved to ensure that the same result did not occur in Lebanon, dispatching over 5,000 Marines to Beirut within hours of an official request from the Lebanese government (Polk 1969). Though Eisenhower emphasized troops were there only to keep order and not to engage in combat operations, Zachary Lockman (2004) notes that Eisenhower's willingness to send in troops set a precedent for future Presidents when it came to utilizing American forces in the region by suggesting that "the United States had come to define almost any threat to the political and economic status quo in the region as a threat to its interests, putting stability and control ahead of all other considerations (120)." Additionally, the Eisenhower Doctrine and its application in Lebanon set a standard for the manner in which troops would be deployed in the region for the next several decades (Hahn 2006, Popp 2010, Gendzier 2006). The manner of these deployments would be largely limited as the mission in Lebanon concluded in a matter of weeks with the withdrawal of Marines and the government of Lebanon preserved. This success, coupled with the small number of casualties, was the outcome of the first major unilateral military engagement of the United States in a region known for stymieing the great military powers of Europe. Such a situation was cause for a certain degree of hubris in the American government and military, if not validating the Eisenhower Doctrine in total, at least validating its application of limited war. Limited war in the Middle East thus became an integral part of military thinking in terms of the Middle East and the broader Cold War conflict, especially in a foreign policy establishment increasingly preoccupied with Asia and Latin America (Campbell 1958)

Despite the early success, real or perceived, of the Eisenhower Doctrine, it must be understood that this doctrine was by no means a stand-alone policy. It essentially served as a statement of principles and purposes for American action in the Middle East, made to justify expanding executive power in terms of using the military to maintain a balance of power in a strategic region beset by chronic security crises. To these ends it largely succeeded, however its bigger influence was upon Middle Eastern policy. Though the administration itself conceived the doctrine as an aspect of a broader policy of security and containment, future administrations would use elements of this doctrine to justify all manner of policies in the region, both useful and counterproductive.

It remains, then, to trace the influence of this doctrine upon the presidents that followed Eisenhower to demonstrate the institutional "lock-in" of a doctrine turned SOP, the third element in our path dependent process. In broad terms, the influence can be seen in the following areas: Executive control over the use of the military, understanding American goals and interests, and the use of limited war to maintain security and contain threats. The episode in Lebanon and, critical to lock-in, the American perception of its success established these three components of the Eisenhower Doctrine as cornerstones for American policy for decades.

First, executive control over the military greatly expanded as a result of the Eisenhower Doctrine. This executive control has a tremendous influence not only in the Middle East, but abroad as well. Ronald Pruessen (1990), writing at the end of the Cold War, suggests such executive control as being a "virtue" of the Eisenhower Doctrine:

> Among the virtues of the Formosa and "Eisenhower Doctrine" resolutions overwhelmingly approved by congress, for example, was the greater latitude allowed the executive to deal with Asian or Middle Eastern problems (31).

In the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson this new executive power was used to

fuel troop buildups in Vietnam without ever really receiving congressional declarations

of war. This was a trend that largely continued throughout the rest of the Cold War and

in its immediate aftermath. Time and again presidents would request funding from

Congress for the use of military adventures in the region without clear statements of

mission or would merely bypass Congress altogether. Excellent examples of such use of

executive military power can be found in Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton authorizing

bombing campaigns in Libya and Iraq respectively; both of the Bush administrations

going to war against Iraq without formal congressional declarations of war; and the use of

covert military operations in the region, most notably the failed Operation Eagle Claw

that sought to free American hostages in Iran. Traditionally, American presidents had

relied upon Congress to not only provide funds, but also to provide the scope of the

military mission. Post Eisenhower Doctrine, scope and purpose of military missions in

the region were largely left to presidential discretion. Though this may be considered a

virtue Pruessen also notes a downside to the Eisenhower Doctrine:

> [T]hat in calculations of "the political economy of power" in these
> regions, [Eisenhower] tended to incur obligations that would
> severely, even tragically, strain the resources of the United States over
> time (42).

The validity of such a statement can be seen in the number of bases America has been

obligated to establish in the region to maintain security and stability (Boduszynski 2019).

Robert Pauly (2005) connects this aspect of Eisenhower's legacy in terms of the costs

incurred, both political and financial, in the prosecution of the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan.[4]

   A second major area of influence that the Eisenhower Doctrine has had on

American policy in the Middle East has been its role in defining American strategic

goals. At the center of the Eisenhower Doctrine was the policy of containing Soviet

expansion in the region through military means (Campbell 1958). Writing in 2004,

Walter Russell Meade demonstrates how deeply this concept of containing threats in the

region has embedded itself in American strategic thinking:

> [T]he United States sees the Middle East as an area of vital concern, partly
> because we want to secure our own oil supply, but for other reasons as
> well. From the American point of view, there are two potential dangers in
> the Middle East. First, some outside power (like the Soviet Union during
> the Cold War_ can try to control Middle Eastern oil or at least interfere
> with secure supplies for the United States and its allies. Second, one
> country in the Middle East could take over the region and try to do the
> same thing (27).

It can clearly be seen that the fear of a superpower threatening energy supplies easily

translated in the aftermath of the Cold War to a fear of a regional enemy threatening the

same supply (i.e. Iraq, Iran, ISIS). In any case, the goals and responses would be the

same: Contain and confront. This containment and confrontation dichotomy took many

forms, but perhaps the most prevalent was the use of military and CIA aid and support.

From the very outset, the Eisenhower Doctrine was used to justify such actions. Lebanon

is an excellent example of this, not just in the deployment of marines, but also in the form

of CIA support that the Lebanese government was receiving just prior to the outbreak of

the civil war (Lockman 2004). Economic aid has also formed a component of this

containment and confrontation strategy. William Polk (1969) notes that such aid was

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[4] Lansford (2009) also details this element in terms of the Eisenhower administration's approach to
Afghanistan in the 1950s.

used under the auspices of the Eisenhower Doctrine to build relations with Arab nations in order to establish a certain balance of power in the region, or a "static" situation that would preserve the United States from having to engage in a major military operation. The intentional construction of such a "static" status quo necessitates the continuation of those policies that built it in the first place. Within this calculus of preserving a stable environment via economic and military aid, military aid has been greatly expanded in the region. Figure 1 shows the compounding nature of arms exports to Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia (the three principal beneficiaries of the Eisenhower Doctrine) from 1950 to 2018. Note the small bulge in 1957-58, when the doctrine was adopted followed by strong spikes at specific junctures, usually when regimes were faced with some kind of threat and signaled Washington for assistance. For example, spikes in Saudi Arabian arms exports fall around significant dates such as 1990-91 (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm) and 2001-03 (September 11 and Operation Iraqi Freedom), and most recently 2012-2018 (the Arab Spring and Saudi intervention in Yemen).
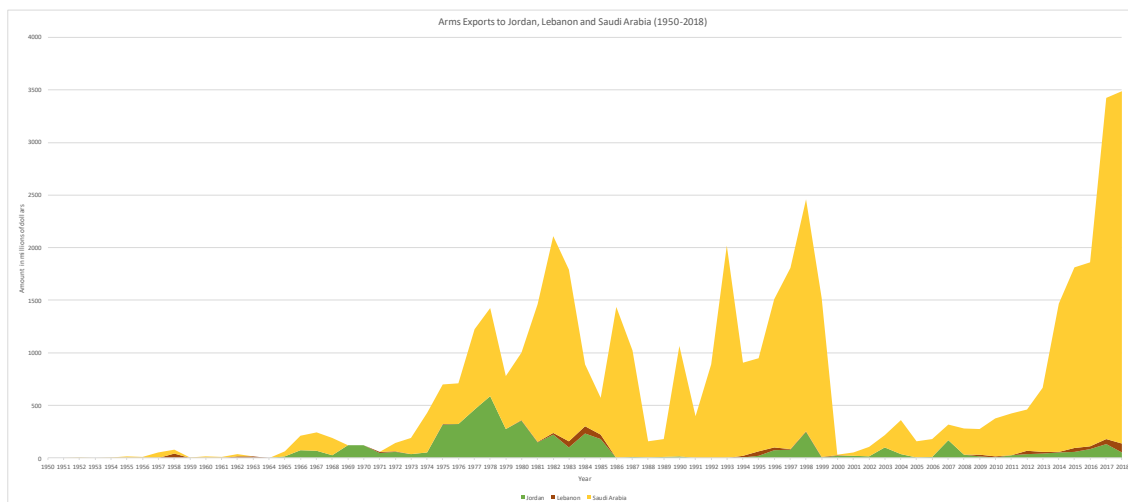

Figure 1: US Arms Exports to Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia (1950-2018)

Indeed, the expansion was so dramatic in the immediate aftermath of the proclamation of

the Eisenhower Doctrine that John Campbell noted in 1958

> that arms are being spread all over the Middle East, adding tinder to the explosiveness of the inter-Arab, Turkish-Arab and Israel-Arab disputes that easily burst into flame (180).

This element forms perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Eisenhower legacy in the

region as the use of such aid has been used to destabilize and undermine, not just the

Soviet Union (in Afghanistan), but also other regional powers as well like Iran and Iraq in

their bitter struggle in the 1980s. More recently, the administrations of George W. Bush,

Barack Obama, and Donald Trump have all approved multi-billion-dollar military aid

package to its Arab allies in the Gulf, the largest such deals in history. Like the chart

above, Figure 2 shows the upward trend of American arms exports to the Middle East

from 1950-2018. While there are certainly significant dips from year to year in the

provision of arms, the trend line is clearly upwards since the late 1950s and the adoption

of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Significantly, spikes in exports are usually seen around years

that see major security threats to America's regional allies, a key tenant of the
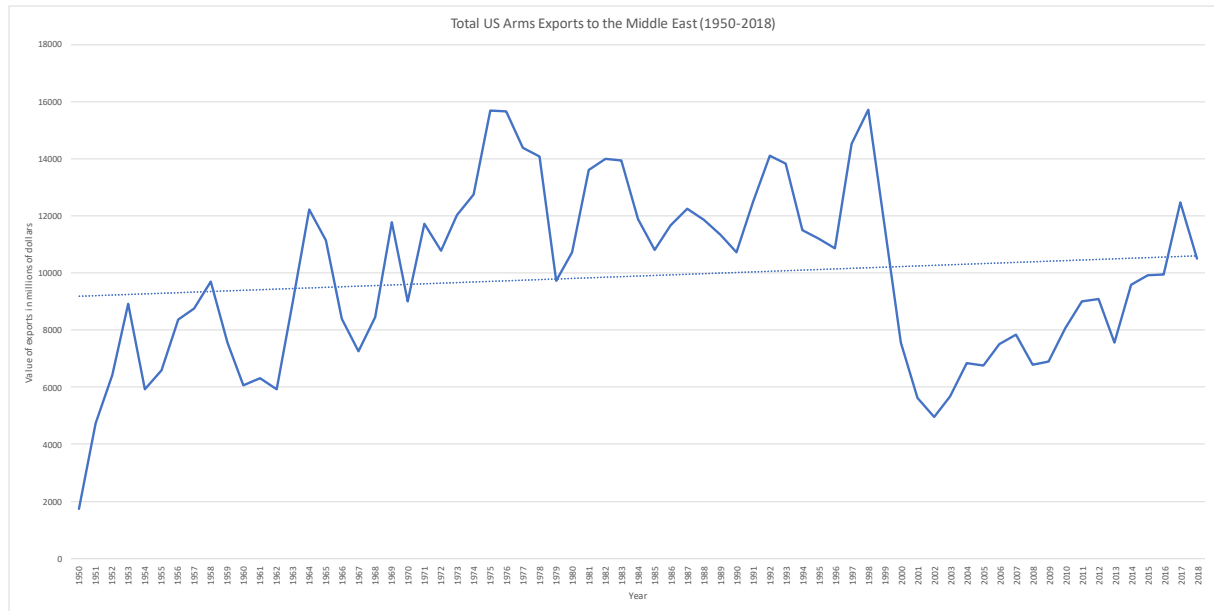
Eisenhower Doctrine.

Figure 2: US Arms Exports to the Middle East (1950-2018)

The legacy of Eisenhower in terms of defining and maintaining American goals and strategy has indeed cast a long shadow in this arena.

Finally, the use of limited war as modeled by the deployment in Lebanon continues to exert its influence upon policy in the region. Initially, the purpose of using limited war techniques in the region was to prevent a broader superpower conflict (Campbell, 166). However, the relative success of the Lebanon mission set a precedent for future presidents as a model military endeavor in which the military could be used to win "small" local victories with fewer casualties. The benefits of such an approach were two-fold. First, the military could leave a smaller footprint while maintaining a global strategy (containment in this case); and second, fewer casualties meant greater public support, or ambivalence, at home. To these ends, limited war has become a major part of Middle Eastern policy. In fact, the Reagan administration used limited war concepts almost exclusively in overseeing the final stages of the Cold War, putting pressure on the Soviet Union on multiple fronts (Hippler 1987). Specific to the Middle East, Reagan's

successor, George H.W. Bush successfully employed a limited war template in the initial

Gulf War by narrowly defining the mission of the American-led coalition as being the

removal of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army from Kuwait. The mission was achieved with

remarkably few casualties building the credibility of limited war doctrine. Bill Clinton

would also use limited war concepts in military operations in Somalia in 1993, Operation

Desert Fox in 1998, and in his initial response to the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and

Osama bin Laden. Indeed, it could be argued that apart from the extended campaigns in

Afghanistan and Iraq, American military endeavors in the region have been almost

exclusively of the Eisenhower Doctrine limited war variety. Each of the missions noted

above were limited in scope and duration and used to maintain regional stability, to

protect American interests, or both. Post Arab-Spring military interventions in Libya,

Syria and Iraq appear to follow similar templates.

The success of these missions in maintaining America's strategic goals can of

course be debated, but the overall purpose of this paper is to merely show these military

endeavors to be, for better or worse, influenced by the Eisenhower Doctrine model of

military involvement and its application in Lebanon in 1958.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate that the Eisenhower Doctrine forms the

cornerstone of American foreign policy in the Middle East during the Cold War and

continues to exert significant influence on American strategic thinking in the region. As

the first American declaration of strategic goals in the post-colonial Middle East, the

Eisenhower Doctrine deserves a place of recognition as a foundational American policy.

Though John Campbell argues that the doctrine was merely a "framework" for a policy,

the public nature of this declaration, its practical application in Lebanon, and the positive feedback loop it created among regional partners elevated it to the status of a standard operating procedure within American foreign policy institutions (347). Its influence upon the presidents that followed Eisenhower only solidifies its position as such. Especially in the case of the three presidents who immediately followed Eisenhower (Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon) the outlined principles of the Eisenhower Doctrine provided an easy policy template for the region as events in Asia preoccupied these presidencies.

Though some historians argue for the unimportance of the Eisenhower Doctrine and the lack of experience in foreign policy that Eisenhower and Dulles brought to their jobs, such an assessment does not fully appreciate the multiple equilibria of the political context in which it was enacted. From a pure policy standpoint, the Eisenhower Doctrine may indeed have appeared to be simple and even heavy handed in places that emphasized military might over diplomacy (Campbell 1958). However, the importance of this doctrine cannot be underestimated. When American policy and alliances were in flux after the Suez Crisis, and when America was just beginning to realize her place as the protector of the free world in the face of Soviet aggression, the Middle East became the proving ground for America's new sense of mission.

The stage was thus set for a superpower showdown in a strategic region awash in natural resource wealth. The stakes could not have been higher and required decisive, if inelegant, action on the part of the United States. Events in Europe and the Middle East demonstrated the aggression of the Soviet Union and the need for a more active American role. Despite what historians may think of him, or his subordinates, Eisenhower was working in a highly charged and complex political context. His answer

was the Eisenhower Doctrine. In the final analysis it must be argued that to the point that America emerged from the Cold War as the victor and dominant power in the Middle East, the Eisenhower Doctrine was at least partially successful. Where it failed, however, was in the entangled obligations America incurred as a guarantor of regional stability at the cost of supporting authoritarian regimes. This abdication of principle helped fan the flames of growing anti-American sentiments that would eventually find a voice in the growing fundamentalist Islamic movements.

Though the Eisenhower Doctrine was foundational to American policy during, and immediately following the Cold War, the emergence of a multi-polar world order and global terrorism demands a reevaluation of strategic goals in the region and a restatement of America's role in the Middle East as new nodes of power emerge. The doctrine that must inevitably take shape to govern America's actions in the near future in relation to the Middle East would do well to consider its predecessor if progress is to be made in developing a positive American presence in the Middle East.

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