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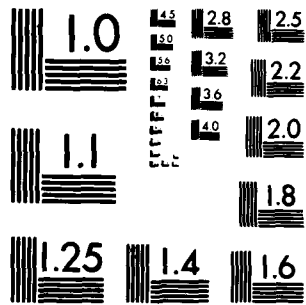
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THE ARABIAN PENINSULA
AND AMERICAN SECURITY**



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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**TWIN DILEMMAS:
THE ARABIAN PENINSULA
AND AMERICAN SECURITY**

by

Woolf P. Gross

20 December 1981



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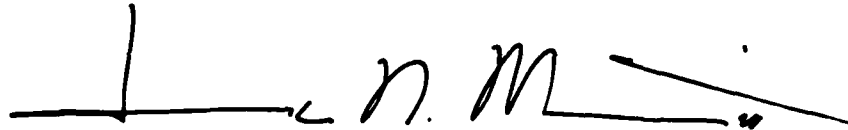
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FOREWORD

This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "US Strategic Interests in Southwest Asia: A Long Term Commitment?" which was sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute in October 1981. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum considers one of these issues.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in areas related to the author's professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. N. Merritt", is written over a horizontal line.

JACK N. MERRITT
Major General, USA
Commandant

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

MR. WOOLF P. GROSS has been Manager of International Programs for the Northrop Corporation, Washington, DC, since his retirement from the US Army in mid-1981. An 18-year member of the Foreign Area Officer Program, he served as politico-military adviser to the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Department of State before retirement. In previous assignments, he was country director for South Asia in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs; current intelligence and estimates officer for the Indian Ocean area in the Defense Intelligence Agency; and assistant Army attache in New Delhi during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. Mr. Gross earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his master's degree in South Asia regional studies from the University of Pennsylvania.

SUMMARY

Basic American and Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula revolve around dependable access to the area's oil and maintenance of regional stability and peace. The first is highly dependent upon success in the second. Despite an almost 8 year succession of events which has subjected the region to ever-closer scrutiny, none of the three US administrations in office during the period have evolved a workable strategy supporting these interests.

US policymakers have been cognizant of, but have not come fully to grips with two dilemmas, solutions to which must be found before our interests will be effectively served. The first problem is the US/regional "dialogue of the deaf" concerning the major threat to Arabian peninsular stability. The American position has been and remains that the Soviet Union constitutes the principal threat, either directly or through surrogate organizations. Most if not all area governments, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with solving the Arab-Israel impasse, regaining lost land and establishing firmly the principle of Palestinian self-determination.

The second dilemma for US planners is American capability and credibility as an ally, regardless of the quantum and direction of the threat. The lessons of Vietnam as well as perceived US "abandonment" of Iran and Pakistan are not lost on the regionals. More importantly, what the United States seeks to do in furtherance of its concerns for Soviet encroachment—the creation of a credibly viable rapid deployment force—is hindered by years of preparation for a different sort of war including significant current shortages of air and sea lift, and increasing financial constraints on its ability to rectify the problem.

The regional powers, whose natural bent is to seek to avoid involvement in superpower rivalries, are strengthened in this fixation by concern over US capabilities and intentions. American attempts over the last 2 years to gain access to regional military bases—essential as a stopgap pending reinforcement of US rapid deployment capabilities—have (except in the case of Oman) fallen largely on barren ground. Discussions of strategic frameworks may only have aggravated the situation.

A short term solution to these dilemmas seems achievable only by pressing forward to assist the regional states in improving their

own self-defense capabilities, letting them take the lead in such cooperative efforts as may develop, and by accepting the imperative of a solution to the Arab-Israeli confrontation as a necessary first step in focusing attention on Soviet pressures. Meanwhile, American strategic planners will have to make the hard decisions on trading off current and planned heavily mechanized forces for lighter, more easily transported ones.

TWIN DILEMMAS: THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND AMERICAN SECURITY

In the 40 years since World War II began, American policy and popular interest have been increasingly internationalist in focus responding in direct proportion to the quantum leaps in worldwide transportation and communications capabilities. Interest has been directed somewhat erratically, however, reflecting our natural crisis-management orientation, our cultural biases and, simply, our inability to encompass the variability of the world body-politic in one fell swoop. The identifiable phases have included European, then Northeast Asian, then Southeast Asian foci, always growing from our great power rivalry with the Soviet Union. Until 8 years ago, if collectively we thought of the Middle East at all, it was from the bias of the Arab-Israel confrontation.

It was, in fact, the response of the nations of the Arabian Peninsula to the Yom Kippur War in 1973 that forced the first glimmer of reorientation of American thinking. Even then, despite the gasoline lines of the mid-1970's, it took the collapse of the Shah's Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to crystallize US strategic concerns with this vital region. This is not to say that until recently the Arab Middle East, or the Gulf region or Southwest Asia—whatever appellation appeals—has been "terra

incognita'' at various working levels of our military establishment, our Foreign Service and academe. To be sure, there has been a small, but highly qualified and dedicated coterie of specialists accumulating a wealth of knowledge on the subject. It is clear, however, that decision-makers in government as well as commerce have a good deal to learn about the region and the professional watchers of the area have their work cut out for them in providing the needed education.

Basic American and Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula are easy enough to discern. First and foremost is access to the area's oil at prices which do not damage or destroy the now delicately poised world economic order. The other prime interests—a corollary of the first as well as critically important in its own right—is the maintenance of stable, moderate governments and the prevention of conflict.

The oil interest has become so vital to the industrialized world and, indeed, to the rest of the world as well—and so often discussed—that it seems almost platitude to mention it here. The United States itself is heavily and, until recently, increasingly dependent upon foreign energy resources. In 1950, American oil imports represented 13 percent of national consumption and totalled less than a million barrels per day. Last June, we were importing about six million barrels daily or 37.5 percent of total consumption.¹ While this figure represents a decrease from the average eight million barrels of overseas oil we were bringing in 4 or 5 years ago, based on both conservation efforts and the economic slowdown, it nonetheless underscores the breadth of the problem. Throughout the recent period, moreover, Saudi Arabia alone has been supplying 20 percent or more of our import needs from its proven reserves which may comprise a quarter of the world's remaining supply.

Under the Carter Administration, military planners, at least, had clearly delineated the Soviet threat as the most significant menace to US interests on the northern littoral of the Indian Ocean basin.² The Reagan Administration has codified this viewpoint as a basic tenet of its foreign policy. Whether it is called a "Southwest Asian security framework" or a "strategic consensus" in the Middle East, the goal has been the galvanization of disparate defense efforts toward this self-evident common threat. To be sure, the more traditional and moderate regional governments are concerned

over Soviet inroads and Islam is antithetical to Marxism-Leninism. Recently, a visionary Saudi analyst likened the march of Soviet involvement in the area to a brush fire ringing the Arabian Peninsula—southern Africa, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Yemen already aflame and sparks threatening to ignite Iran and other susceptible countries in this tinder-dry area. Saudi Arabia, the metaphor went on, was wetting down its roof-tops, but without the support of its friends, the inadequate water supply of this arid country could eventually run dry.

THE THREAT—PERCEPTIONS DIFFER

While this visualization, hyperbolic though it may be, is not uncommon among realistic Middle Easterners, it does not reflect the Arab view of the immediate or priority threat. Muslims from Pakistan to Morocco are concerned first with solution of the Arab-Israel equation: not only Israel's yielding up of territory it has occupied since the 1967 war, but also adjudication of the sovereign rights of several million disenfranchised Palestinians. Four instances of open warfare between the confrontation states and Israel over the last 35 years, not to mention the 1970 crisis in Jordan over control of refugee camps that almost precipitated war with Syria, and the continuing turmoil in South Lebanon is evidence too convincing to ignore in this respect. Some analysts, painting the threat in bolder strokes, see the Soviets as increasing their influence in the area on the crest of this unresolved turmoil. While overly simplistic, even wishful, a common regional logic views solving the Arab-Israeli equation as the key in unlocking efforts to defuse Moscow's pressures. On the other hand, no less an interlocutor than Jordan's King Hussein has pronounced the US effort to build a Middle East policy around an anti-Soviet "strategic alliance" as equally simplistic.³

Every American administration since Truman's has taken adjudication of the Arab-Israeli conflict as an article of faith. None has used as *primary* justification for this goal the prevention of Soviet inroads. Nor can the United States accept the somewhat naive viewpoint that solution of this conflict will ipso facto assure the rectification of a host of other security threats in the region as is often stated by Arab interlocutors. Other crises—the South Yemeni involvement with Oman in the Dhofar in the mid-1970's, the

North-South Yemeni cross-border incidents of 1979 and the current Iran-Iraq war to name but a few—have had nothing whatever to do with Israel's confrontation with its Arab neighbors. On the other hand, and probably of overriding importance for the United States, a settlement acceptable to the bulk of the belligerents would remove our government from its unenviable position in the middle among a number of its close and necessary friends. The absence of a solution has clouded and will continue to color to some adverse extent everything the United States seeks to do vis-a-vis its friends in the Muslim world including attempts to forge a consensus or unified front against Soviet encroachment.

The seeming inability of the United States to arbitrate a settlement only strengthens other latent negative forces at work in the region to the detriment of American interests. Throughout the area in varying degrees there remains a mistrust of "exploitative" Western intentions reinforced by (1) the fear that outside military forces, no matter how benign and well-intentioned, are focused on seizure of the region's oil; (2) concerns emanating from the announcement of an evolving US-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement; (3) their own vulnerabilities to immediate pressures from neighbors and from internal opposition; (4) apprehensions over the consistency and staying power of American support in times of real crisis (the "abandonment" of Pakistan and Iran is often cited as grounds for concern in this respect); (5) the desire to avoid Great Power rivalries and in some states, to substitute Islamic and nonaligned ties for close association with the United States or Soviet Union; and, (6) a cultural pride and ethnocentrism which reinforces a desire to progress within value systems often at variance with those common in the industrialized world.

Some of these constraints are susceptible to improvement with the passage of time. Suspicions of western neocolonial designs may recede as education, economic stabilization, political institution-building and the integration of modern technology synthesize self-confident societies in which tradition and progress do not seem so apparently in conflict. An essential corollary here is the reduction of political strains both within and among the nations of the region.

Of almost equal concern is the question of the longer-term stability and staying power of the governments the United States aims to protect. The question is all-the-more legitimate given the

demise of the Shah and the chaos still plaguing Iran 2 years later. Its central geographic position in the area and the criticality of its oil to Western strategic calculations make Saudi Arabia the principal focus of this concern.

President Reagan's recent statement that "Saudi Arabia we will not permit to be an Iran"⁴ provides a clear if somewhat defective visualization of the potential for intraregional unrest and disruption. The defect, of course, is the invidious suggestion that the fall of the Shah and the manner of his collapse may be a useful gauge of future directions in Saudi Arabia. While some vague similarities may suggest themselves to the casual observer—autocratic forms of government, Islam as the state religion, oil wealth—the differences far outweigh the similarities. The pressures upon the House of Saud and, more importantly, how the Saudi royal family responds to these pressures bear little resemblance to the Iranian milieu in the decade of the 1970's.

The point is, however, that while Saudi Arabia may remain relatively stable for the immediately foreseeable future, this is a volatile region. The US Government's record for clairvoyance in anticipating crises in the area, moreover, has not been particularly good. It cannot, therefore, delude itself that any state in the Middle East is immune to the clearly evident variety of disruptive internal and intraregional cross-currents.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

The central—and still unresolved—issue facing the current administration and its predecessor has been the crystallization of a strategy to protect critical Western security interests. The collapse of imperial Iran as the "linchpin" of the network of anti-Soviet alliances in the region lent impetus to the then already recognized need for broadened American presence and involvement. The reasonable and viable step-by-step approach which marked the effort from late summer 1978 until early 1980 gave way, however, to a hasty and not very credible "talk loudly even if—especially if—you do not have a big stick to carry" tactic following the twin blows of the second seizure of our embassy in Tehran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The ringing rhetoric of President Carter's January 1980 warning of US military response to further Soviet military adventurism in Southwest Asia was—and largely remains—built on a foundation of sand.

Three basic premises form the substructure for a viable US retaliatory strategy in the Indian Ocean basin: (1) the support and determination of the American body-politic to meet force with force in an area geographically remote from our shores; (2) availability of manpower, equipment and transportation to respond rapidly and in force to provocation; and, (3) the hospitality and enthusiasm of a reasonable number of adjacent countries for such an endeavor. What follows will attempt to deal briefly with the wherewithal considerations and in greater detail with regional reactions and viewpoints since they are so inextricably linked.

Administrations going back over a decade have each embraced the "one-and-a-half war strategy." All have been in firm agreement concerning the full scale conflict contemplated by the strategy: an involvement on the plains of Central Europe. Never clear until January 1980 was the identity of the extra half war. Consequently, procurement strategy as well as battle plans emphasized forces on the scene, massive mechanization and stockpiling of nuclear as well as conventional stores focused upon a temperate zone conflict. American efforts were keyed to participation of modern armies of kindred Western industrial states.

When the identity of the extra half war finally crystallized, American planners faced the realization that we had only an alarmingly limited capability to fight, never mind deploy to a potential war in the Middle East. The main problem has been an almost total lack of air and sealift having the capacity and 10,000-mile endurance to reach a threatened area in the Indian Ocean with more than a token force. The problem better defined is a mismatch between lift capabilities and the equipment extant in the force which must be moved. The high volume of the C-5A transport, for example, is rendered useless when the requirement is the movement of tanks—only one M-60/M-1 can be hauled at a time in a C-5. The whole current C-5 fleet would be required to transport a single medium tank battalion, given normal aircraft operational rates. The costly dilemma for force planners is a choice between vastly increasing our air and sealift capabilities and reconfiguring a meaningful percentage of our ground forces as "light infantry/cavalry" which can be deployed in current inventory aircraft and ships. Competing demands for such strategic exotica as

MX, a replacement manned bomber, perhaps an ABM system and the like further constrain the resources which can be focused on the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), however the eventual decision on configuration is resolved. In any case, the effort will take 5 or 10 years to complete. Meanwhile, US credibility suffers with the very Middle Eastern states we seek to reassure.

AN AMERICAN RESPONSE—UNDERWRITING A US PRESENCE

American concerns with the imminence of the Soviet threat in the Gulf area and the relative geographic isolation of US military assets from the scene of potential confrontation place defense planners clearly on the horns of the first of two dilemmas. An interim solution to the shortage of air and sealift to rush forces to the region *in extremis* requires basing of tactical units or, at least, stockpiling of material within or in close proximity to it. This alternative, in fact, has been conscientiously, if quietly pursued by our government over the last several years with some success to date. Agreements have been reached covering access to host nation facilities in Oman, Somalia, and Kenya. Details of a similar access agreement are being worked out with Egypt. It is important to note, however, that none of these understandings constitute base rights in the accepted sense and all are contingent upon the occurrence of a regional emergency identified as such by the relevant host country.

The Reagan Administration, thus far, has not pressed either for expansion of these agreements or for the addition of other countries; wisely, it seems, preferring first to flesh out its policies toward the Middle East. One is led to hope that the former approach of taking microtactical decisions in response to short-term situational stimuli has given way to a macroestablishment of longer-term goals which largely predetermines tactics.

Efforts in this respect, over the first 9 months of 1980, concentrated on reinforcement of time-proven methods of reassuring America's friends in the region. During the last three decades, the US Navy has maintained its small but symbolically important Middle East Force in and around the Gulf. Responding to the disturbances in the Horn of Africa, the Yemeni hostilities

and the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States has demonstrated its heightened interest in regional security via the continuous deployment of two full aircraft carrier or surface warship battle groups reinforced repetitively with a ship-borne Marine Corps amphibious force. With some notable exceptions, the regional states quietly have supported these "over-the-horizon" deployments primarily because they clearly indicate an active US security involvement without encroaching upon these nations' sovereignty. Parenthetically, the beginning of the 1982 fiscal year has yielded a rather confusing reversal of this trend. The regular naval presence has been cut back to only a single aircraft carrier reflecting current financial constraints.

The lifeline for this latter-day version of the Great White Fleet is, however, disquietingly long and perilously thin. Soviet naval forces, while not demonstrably in their own back yard, are much closer to their sources of supply, especially if one considers their current access to the port of Aden. This unbalanced situation is clearly central to security calculations in Arabian Peninsula capitals. Leaving aside considerations of lingering xenophobia, concerns for the vulnerability of the oilfields and the desire to avoid making the area the next cockpit for great power confrontation, none of the regionals can feel comfortable with the unequal arithmetic of American spatial isolation from their shores.

US security policy concerning the Arabian Peninsula, however, has not evolved solely based upon the concept of the "Seventh Cavalry" arriving at the critical moment to save potentially beleaguered Gulf oil producers. An equally important facet of our strategy has been a responsiveness to regional desires to improve these nations' own defensive capabilities, and this may be the real strength of the American approach. Properly executed, a reasonably balanced and forthcoming arms transfer policy underwrites a sustained dialogue with some of the major regional players and provides for the exercise of some influence over the direction of events in the area.

AN ARAB RESPONSE—THE GULF COUNCIL

The US Government should not delude itself, however, on the level of influence this security assistance relationship generates. One objective of its regional arms transfer policy has been the

fostering of some degree of joint defense effort and cooperation among states whose individual populations are too small to yield more than token security. Frustrated for years in this effort, it appeared that the Gulf states had taken the initiative themselves in their creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, announced last February. The council, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain, had among its *raison d'être* collective security, and thus appears in concert with the aims of US policy toward the region. Any euphoria which may have been generated by the agreement as directly supportive of American goals was, however, significantly diminished by the thrust of the conclave's charter communique which expressly condemned the presence "of foreign troops and bases in the region." The council's first chairman, UAE President Shaykh Zayid spoke more pointedly a few months later, saying,

Our concept of security in the Gulf is that the Gulf states should be left alone to live in security and stability without the help of foreign forces, without interference by the big powers or any other power to determine the fate of this area, and without having this area viewed by anybody as their zone of influence.⁶

In a similar vein, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Rashid al-Rashid described the council's goals:

First, full neutrality toward this (superpower) conflict because we are not a party to it and because it concerns none of our interests. By logic, this calls for refraining from embarking on any kind of political or military alliances with any of the two parties to the conflict, for not permitting either party to the conflict to set up any kind of military bases and for denying either side military facilities that may motivate the other side to acquire the same thing in the area because such action will, in turn, escalate the conflict which all are supposed to exert efforts to avoid.⁷

The Saudis have been more cautious in their condemnation of outside military involvement in the region while nonetheless dedicated to the council's objectives in this respect. The three pages devoted by a Riyadh newspaper to the Rashid al-Rashid interview quoted above, coverage which receives close government scrutiny, provides useful inferential evidence of Saudi adherence to this principle.

Granting that the Gulf Council's creation has been a major step in weaving together six peninsular neighbors that have been able to

agree on very little in the recent past, (even on the price of oil), there is much scope for additional progress in the search for regional security. Each signatory came to the council with demonstrably different emphases and viewpoints for the organization's *raison d'être*. Shaykh Zayid saw it as "an additional protective shield for the Arab nation." Others, notably Kuwait, down-played the military aspect. Oman seized the timely opportunity to renew its tarnished image in peninsular circles stemming from its having broken ranks when it signed the facilities access agreement with the United States. In point of fact, a dispatch from the council's charter meeting quoted "Gulf officials" as having said that the "Oman-US Agreement is the main obstacle to joint action on defense by Oman and five other states in the new Gulf Cooperation Council." Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah was quoted by the same dispatch as asserting that Muscat "has promised to consider cancelling (the) agreement granting the United States military facilities."⁸ To date, of course, there is no such cancellation.

The point of all this is that despite action toward consensus in the Gulf region exceeding what has gone before, the differences still measurably outweigh the similarities. Joint defense action will depend upon the members achieving some consensus on threats and strategy. Effective response to a threat—assuming arrival at such a consensus—will, in turn, require limiting the now highly diversified sources of hardware supply. In the area of armored vehicles alone, members currently operate equipment of US, United Kingdom, French and Italian origin. Air defense material comes from the United States, United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union.

A purely regional mutual security arrangement—one in which no external power and, certainly, no superpower takes an active role—is the most acceptable to the present and potential Gulf Cooperation Council membership. The disparate aims of those now involved and the various equipment incompatibility problems, however, render achievement of a meaningful mutual defense rather a chimera for the indefinite future. On the other hand, the sort of external threat against which such an alliance would be focused does not seem to loom large in regional calculations, at least for now. Many influential observers within the area, in fact, are highly skeptical of the US Joint Chiefs worst-case threat projection of a major Soviet air-land assault to seize the area's oil.

While conceding that such an invasion cannot be ruled out entirely, it is clearly subordinate in their appreciation to regional eruptions, stemming from conflicting nationalisms, Islamic revolutionary fervor or rekindled Arab-Israeli hostilities; that is, eruptions that could occur with, or, as easily, *without* Soviet aid or incitement. This consensus appears to be widely shared among outside analysts as well.

In fact, a majority of US military planners may accept that the Arabian Peninsula is primarily threatened by regional or internal forces. The problem arising from active acceptance, however, is that conventional forces now being structured to deal with the threat of a traditional armed invasion are not appropriate to deal with regional and/or internal subversion. The twin problems created by subordinating the Soviet menace to regional security threats are: the planned, heavily mechanized force mix does not adequately address subversion or insurgency; and, more important, neither the United States nor any other outside power probably has any legitimate business intervening militarily in local upheavals.

IN SEARCH OF MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS

The US military planner thus finds himself facing his second considerable dilemma. Acquiescence to the majority regional view of the threat does critical damage to the basic rationale for a heavy, conventional rapid deployment force. Construction of a predominantly Middle East-focused RDJTF, however, requires him to cling steadfastly to a worst-case threat assessment and to continue to seek bases and support facilities within or in close proximity to the region. This, in turn, contravenes the wishes of the same regional states whose goodwill would be required to make any sort of interventionist strategy work. The vicious cycle thus created seems almost inescapable.

While the thesis proposed here is that, barring a mutually acceptable and broad-based solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, US strategic planning must proceed using alternatives to basing in the region, acquisition of base rights cannot be ruled out altogether. Threat perceptions are fluid and could change rapidly. Different grouping permutations could arise among the various peninsular neighbors.

Assuming that some sort of basing were possible, American planners would need seriously to consider the effects of these actions. Peacetime presence on land in this volatile region, while signaling US resolve to deter Soviet adventurism, has certain drawbacks with respect to intraregional affairs. The very tripwire mechanism which may be effective in deterring the Soviets may, in fact, destabilize the region by our being drawn unavoidably into purely internal squabbles and by our support of unpopular regimes in the region with our forces. The US Government could face the dilemma of committing to combat troops already on the scene or withdrawing them to the detriment of its image of consistency.

The question of a US force presence also requires consideration of the Soviet response. More than 85,000 Soviet troops now occupy Afghanistan within close proximity of the Pakistan border. Some 11,000 to 15,000 Cubans are currently stationed in Ethiopia; Soviet advisers, both military and civilian, are present in substantial numbers in Syria, Iraq, Iran (civilians only), North and South Yemen. An expansion of a direct US presence in the area will create increased Soviet pressures on its client states, such as South Yemen, to accept an enlarged Soviet presence and to grant additional facilities and bases. The Soviets may also step up their carrot-and-stick tactics with countries like North Yemen, increasing external military and political pressure while holding out prospects of increased arms deliveries. The Soviets will, of course, also increase their efforts to polarize the area, and to undermine regimes cooperating with the United States.

The search for ways to spin out of the vicious cycle just described does yield a few quick-fix concepts. One such approach leads back inexorably to the hypothesis that a reasonable capability for self-defense is a necessary substructure for the governmental stability identified as common goal of moderate regional states and the West. The Reagan Administration's more realistic arms transfer policy has provided a broader basis for US participation in this effort.⁹ The approval of AWACS surveillance aircraft for Saudi Arabia and of F-16 fighters for Pakistan amply demonstrates the scope of this policy. The timing of this liberalization, however, is curiously juxtaposed with both Administration and congressional pressures for fiscal restraint.

A review of Arabian peninsular economics provides a useful

microcosm of the problem facing the US Government in translating theoretical policy pronouncements into a practical program. To be sure, neither Saudi Arabia nor Kuwait nor the UAE require financial assistance in acquiring their defense needs. North Yemen and Bahrain, however, and to a lesser extent Oman are all fiscally constrained in the reinforcement of their security structures. Peninsular outsiders such as Pakistan, Sudan and Jordan, whose self-defense capabilities are important if not essential to the oil lifeline, are similarly restricted. In fiscal year 1982, few of these nations would benefit from substantial US arms aid even if the Reagan budget request were approved in toto.¹⁰ Absent the required appropriation, a fiscal continuing resolution would underwrite fewer military acquisitions than in the preceding year with inflation considered.

Not well-articulated but implicit in the Administration's effort to compensate for US budgetary inadequacies in this respect has been the hope that Arab "haves" will underwrite arms purchases by Islamic "have-nots" to solidify regional defensibility. To date, however, these hopes have glimmered fitfully. Not since Saudi Arabia underwrote Morocco's \$250 million aircraft package almost 2 years ago has there been substantial Arab financial support for a major regional purchase of American weaponry. Pakistan's quest for F-16's languishes without a firm asset commitment. Sudan cannot buy even a basic air defense as it faces increasing Libyan provocation. Bahrain awaits financing for a surface-to-air missile defense it decided was necessary to protect its ports and refineries about 2 years ago. Oman has been unable to pursue a major reinforcement of its capabilities vital to its ability to secure the Strait of Hormuz and the peninsula's seaward approaches lacking the required budgetary aid.

The petrodollar tight-fistedness implied by the limited recent Saudi and other moderate producers military aid financing does not square with either prior security outlays or current economic assistance disbursements. In years past, Saudi Arabia generously underwrote Jordan's Improved Hawk air defense and North Yemen's crisis acquisitions in early 1979. The UAE carried a large burden in financing Pakistan's purchase of French Mirage 5 fighter aircraft a decade ago. A variety of explanations for this apparent volte face by the petroproducers hint at a rationale, but none provides a coherent explanation.

The Saudi Government itself has demurred on some recent requests for arms aid by other area nations citing a desire to avoid being a party to intra-Arab disputes (e.g. Tunisia-Libya, Jordan-Syria), but it did not shy away from Sanaa in that government's face-off with Aden. Termination of Saudi aid to Egypt following Sadat's signing of the peace treaty with Israel is more easily understood and may at least partially explain Riyadh's recent reluctance toward Sudan. But what of Saudi caution vis-a-vis Pakistan and that country's defense needs?

The short-term answer may lie in something as mundane as temporary oil-Arab cash flow problems brought on by world energy conservation and the current oil "glut" compounded by Gulf financial inputs to the Iraqi war chest. It may relate to diminishing patience with the recurrent demands of less-well-off and importunate regional neighbors. Where US purchase programs are concerned, there may also be an element of reproof for Washington's seeming inability or lack of interest in carrying some of the direct financial burden now that the grant US Military Assistance Program (MAP) is defunct. Whatever the explanation, however, US efforts to support a goal that *appears* to be consonant with regional aims are complicated considerably.

CONCLUSION

Two very disquieting conclusions are suggested by the evidence relevant to the issue of the American security relationships with the countries of the Arabian peninsula and the Gulf. The first is that we seem to be engaged in a dialogue of the deaf: the current and previous US administrations viewing with alarm the Soviet threat to oil production and supply lines, the regional states insisting that the proximate challenge to security in this pivotal area is the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. The second is that, no matter how concerned we may be over Soviet machinations, over the short run we are ill-equipped to project a significant force into the area or to support it once there. This shortfall is recognized with crystal clarity by both the Kremlin and regional states, friend and foe alike.

These concerns, even doubts regarding American capabilities to respond to calls for assistance from our Middle Eastern friends at times and places of their choosing, not ours, make the regionals

extremely wary of expressing open support for American security aims and efforts in the area. Discomfited by their own realistic assessments of regional vulnerabilities, the tendency is to call a pox upon both the great power houses and to turn inward, inward to fundamentalist rhetoric and ideologies and to wish the modern and complicated world would go away.

Regional doubts, however, seem to be balanced here and there by a genuine desire to trust that the United States will sooner rather than later "do the right thing." Certainly, a strengthening of US conventional forces projection capabilities will reinforce this viewpoint. Our rational and measured support of improved regional defense capacity, however symbolic, will help providing it fosters the clear perception that there is a Western cushion upon which to land in a real emergency. The United States can hasten the process by quietly providing advice and support where these are desired, by avoiding the appearance of forcing its attentions on our friends and by carefully managing its involvement with unpopular regimes and causes within the area. Over time, if our regional friends perceive that the global equation has changed in favor of Western interests, a closer identification with the United States may prove possible at a more rapid rate than now seems probable.

A short term solution to these dilemmas seems achievable only by pressing forward to assist the regional states in improving their own self-defense capabilities, letting them take the lead in such cooperative efforts as may develop, and by accepting the imperative of a solution to the Arab-Israeli confrontation as a necessary first step in focusing attention on Soviet pressures. Meanwhile, American strategic planners will have to make the hard decisions on trading off current and planned heavily mechanized forces for lighter, more easily transportable ones.

ENDNOTES

1. Statistics provided by the Energy Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Department of State as of June 30, 1981.
2. Harold Brown, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 1982*, Washington: Department of Defense, pp. 81 et seq.
3. *The Washington Post*, September 23, 1981.
4. President Reagan's news conference of October 1, 1981 as reported in *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1981, p. A12.
5. First communicated by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in his report, *Toward a National Security Strategy of Realistic Deterrence*, March 9, 1971.
6. Interview with Shaykh Zayid in *Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat*, London, May 21, 1981.
7. Interview with Rashid al-Rashid in *Al-Yamamah*, Riyadh, June 5, 1981.
8. Reuters datelined Kuwait, May 3, 1981.
9. The May 11, 1981 White House statement entitled *Conventional Arms Transfer Policy* declared that the United States "views the transfer of conventional arms and other defense articles and services as an essential element of its global defense posture and an indispensable component of its foreign policy."
10. The Administration's *Security Assistance Programs Congressional Presentation FY 1982* requested nothing for Bahrain and FMS credits totalling \$50 million for Jordan, \$40 million for Oman, \$100 million for Sudan, \$15 million for North Yemen and economic aid only for Pakistan.

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