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A Lion in the Path of Oman's Nationalization: Insurgency in Oman from the 1950s through the 1970s Examined through Social Movement Theory

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Introduction

Can a social science theory assist governments in their quest to end disruptive social uprisings? In this work I will show how a basic understanding of social movement theory can assist both those who study insurgencies and those who are conducting counterinsurgency operations by revealing the causes and dynamics of the mobilization of the insurgents. My case for this study is the social mobilization that led to and sustained the Dhofar Rebellion against Sultan Said Taimur and his son Sultan Qaboos in Oman. I argue that people who can recognize the social movements, mobilization of insurgents, framing of issues, political opportunities or lack thereof, and the repertoires used by the insurgents can eventually take ownership of the causes of the insurgency and reduce the power of the social movement to acceptable levels.

My findings from this study are that the meddling of neighbor states, a long-standing feud between the Imamate and Sultanate, and the repressive regime of Sultan Said Taimur helped to create and sustain an enduring rebellion; and that the changes in the counterinsurgency strategy and regime made by the new Sultan, his son Qaboos, helped to decrease support for and defeat the insurgency. The changes Sultan Qaboos made allowed the government to understand and resolve the issues that had been framed by the insurgent leaders as rallying points for the rebellion. Additionally I found that the inability of the rebels to adapt to the new government strategy and the insurgents continual repressive acts towards the neutral Dhofari people drove the remaining insurgency supporters into the Sultans camp.

Additionally this article will highlight the importance of understanding a movement's goals and grievances when designing a counterinsurgency campaign; that the application of military force without civil re-construction of institutions and infrastructure is self-defeating; and that understanding the role and extent of outside influences and removing them is critical in order to isolate an anti-government movement.

The article begins with a short background on the rebellion. Next I describe the situation of Oman and the key players in the struggle. After highlighting some events leading up to the formation of the social movement, I detail the formation of the movement, the struggles of the Dhofar rebels and the response of the government in the main body. Next I analyze the movement when compared to current theory about social mobilization under authoritarian regimes. Finally I discuss some lessons learned from the Dhofar Rebellion that may apply to other insurgencies.

Background

Oman was the site of intense regional and international involvement from 1963 to 1975. The Sultanate of Oman experienced one of its most determined anti-government social mobilizations. The mobilization; an insurgency, was inspired at first by the desire for political change by a few anti-government leaders and later by a Marxist ideology. The rebels, who were partially backed by the People Democratic Republic of Yemen and Saudi Arabia, fought the Omani Sultan's Armed Forces to a standstill on numerous occasions. The Sultan at many times relied on the militaries of Britain and Iran to assist him in his efforts. When the insurgency finally ended the Omani people had a new leader who was moving the country towards a more equitable prosperity.

Figure 1: Map of Oman and surrounding States.

The rectangle shows the approximate location of the Dhofar Rebellion. The oval encompasses the areas where the northern revolts took place.



(Artwork by Michelle Howk, 2007)

The Situation leading to the rise of the Dhofar Rebellion

In this section I will describe how the Saudis assisted the opposition forces by taking advantage of the murky borders between the two states. Next I will explain how regional economic migrations introduced the radical ideology of the region to the future leaders of the Dhofar Rebellion. Later I will describe how the movement leader's resolve was hardened by the domestic power struggles between the Imam and the Sultan. Finally I note the role of Sultan Taimur in driving supporters towards the insurgency through his repressive and peculiar actions.

Oman is geographically located on the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, where the borders between Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates in the 1940s and 50s were still undetermined. This border confusion will assist the rise of a social movement in Oman, because it allows the Saudis to incite and assist the rebels through ease of movement and confusion over the ownership of certain oasis towns. At the southern end of Oman's 1,700 kilometers of coastline is the Dependency of Dhofar. The main stage for the Dhofar Rebellion will take place in this portion of Oman near the border with Yemen. [1] Through most of the Dhofar region's history it was considered a dependency of Oman, but was not officially a part of Oman until 1879. This fact will also benefit the anti-government movement.

The international affairs of the world during the rise and fall of the insurgency will become more polarized by the cold war. The Soviet support of pro-Marxist regimes in the Middle East and the Nasserist influenced regional politics play a part in the Dhofar Rebellion. This is also a time of the rapid expansion (excluding Oman) of the oil industry which leads to a massive movement of labor throughout the region. Omanis for the first time will begin to move outside of their closed society and come in close contact with other social movements in the Middle East; this is a critical event for the rebels.

The violent feud between Imamate leadership and the Sultan in Muscat came to a settlement with the agreement of al-Sib in 1920. It stipulated that the interior (tribes loyal to the Imamate) would have de facto autonomy. Order was nominally in place until the undefined border issue between Saudi Arabia, the Trucial Coast and Oman near the Buraimi Oasis was compounded by the oil exploration of 1950s, this led to an armed conflict in the Omani interior once again. Saudi Arabia launched troops into the Oasis in 1952 that were not ejected until 1955 due to British and American support and advice for each side of the crisis.[2] The final outcome in Buraimi left Oman and Abu Dhabi back in control of the oasis and Saudi Arabia waiting for the next opening. Meanwhile in the Omani interior on 3 May 1954 Imam Muhammad bin `Abdullah al-Khalili died. The tribes loyal to the Imamate elected Ghalib bin `Ali al-Hina'i to replace him. Ali with official or unofficial backing from Saudi Arabia and ARAMCO continued the Imamate tradition of attempting to segregate his followers from those of the Sultan of Muscat. Amidst the Buraimi crisis the Imam even declared the Interior of Oman independent from coastal Oman and applied for membership in The Arab League. The Imamate faction was received and supported by the Soviet bloc within the League and went so far as to set up an office in Cairo and list the Imamate demands to create an independent Omani interior forcing the withdrawal of all forces from Muscat and Britain back towards the coast.

Ali and his brother Talib were defeated during the time of the Buraimi Oasis struggle, despite the flow of Saudi arms into the Imamate loyalist's hands. The event that triggered the rise and fall of Imam Ali was the British-run Petroleum Development Organization explorations of 1954 into the interior. The Imam and his supporters complained that the Sultan and British were breaking the agreement of Sib and stood against the Sultan. The British decided that the Sultan needed to control all of Oman including the interior. After the British retook the Buraimi Oasis the Sultan's forces were finally able to fully occupy the interior. Ali was captured and chose to retire from his rebellion. Meanwhile Talib escaped into Saudi Arabia.[3]

It was not long before Talib organized a new rebellion. In 1957 the Interior rose again and fought very well against the British and Sultan's forces until 1959 when they finally collapsed. According to Halliday the failure was because "the imamist movement was incapable of leading a mass struggle against imperialism because of its own class interests and because it relied on a traditional tribal military system. It failed and was discredited..."[4] The Imamate failure provided some positive and negative lessons to the Dhofaris that would enable them to develop a resistance that would be even harder to thwart. By 1959 the Imamist anti-Sultan activities were limited to diplomacy and had three main offices in Cairo, Baghdad, and Damman (Saudi Arabia). The self-proclaimed Imam, Ghalib bin Ali, set up his headquarters in the latter where he continued to rail against the Sultans legitimacy.[5]

The role of Britain in Oman is a key part of the narrative of the Dhofar Rebellion. The Sultan in Oman relied heavily on outside advisors to run his government and guide his military. This was a major cause of resentment for the Sultan by the interior tribes. The issue of the not-so-invisible hand of Britain was brought to the U.N. in 1957 and the General Assembly adopted a resolution asking Britain to curtail its influence on the Sultan and end its domination of Oman. These resolutions continued to be adopted until the British did officially leave the region.

To most of the world at large the Sultan of Oman was not viewed favorably. In the region his friends were few and his enemies bitter. In Oman he was discredited by the interior and marginally supported by the coastal people. His restrictive and isolationist temperament led to many bizarre rules, such as outlawing sunglasses and requiring all subjects to wear only the traditional national costume (which was not the Dhofari traditional garb). The extent and enforcement of the various prohibitions is often debated by pro and anti-Sultan researchers. Regardless of the debate his rule had made the Omani state (as it might be called) quite an enigma to the outside world. To the Dhofaris he was just another leader in a long line of rulers who did not care about the people as much as he did the resources of the lands.

The Dhofaris and Social Mobilization: Towards the Dhofar Rebellion 1950s-67

“We never had to deal with wilder men in our lives”

—J. Theodore Bent, fondly recalling his Dhofari guides in 1894[6]

We now turn our attention to the role of terrain in the retardation of unification between Dhofar and the rest of the country. Next I highlight that varied sources of membership provide both strength and weakness for the social movement, because it eases recruiting and hastens desertion during group disagreements. Finally I will describe how the repressive and unresponsive regime of the Sultan provided daily-life issues that the rebels used to frame their movements ideology and goals.

The Dhofar region, about the size of West Virginia, has a long turbulent past. It is the famous frankincense source of Arabia and has been subject to numerous rulers to include the Persians, Portuguese, Yemeni and finally Oman. The British government, securely entrenched in South Arabia, assisted the Omanis in gaining control of Dhofar for sea route safety. Oman, until the 1980s had the same lack of success as the other rulers in controlling the Dhofari people. The terrain and language of Dhofar has played a key role in the lack of unification with Oman. Much of the Dhofar hills and plains are as green as Ireland because of the monsoon rains, while other craggy hills look like the surface of the moon. The rains fill the lakes in the Mountains and provide a precious resource to the mountain or jebali people and their cattle in Dhofar.[7] The non-Arabic language of the nomadic hill people in Oman is called Shahri or Jabali. This possible remnant of the Mahri group may be a Semitic offshoot and provides a linguistic link to the Yemenis living closest to Oman’s border.[8] The language and terrain creates a natural split between the coast and hill people of Dhofar that will factor in to these decades of turbulence.

Most authors agree that the roots of the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman began shortly after the Omanis that had left the country to work abroad during the 1940s began to come home in the 1950s. The workers had often come in personal contact with ideological organizations in Cairo, Baghdad, and Kuwait that exposed the Omanis to a larger regional understanding. As Peterson explains there were six major sources of movement members resulting from this time period; I will highlight the most important.[9] The Arab Nationalists Movement (ANM) which operated throughout the region taught the Omanis about Marxism and would develop many leaders in the Rebellion. Omanis from this source had often joined al-Ba`th party or some other communist leaning group. A second source of members was the Dhofar Benevolent Society (DBS); they acquired funds for the rebels and provided a legitimate cover for the ANM. The third source of

rebels was from a shaykh of the Bayt Kathir tribe. Shaykh Musallim bin Nufal bin Sharfan al-Kathiri was a disgruntled ex-member of the Sultan's military. He and his brother struck the first violent blow against the Sultan in Dhofar in April 1963 when they fired upon an oil company truck. The strength in this large assortment of membership methods was that it made recruiting easier; the drawback was that when splits occurred large parts of the membership could leave en masse.

Once these related organizations were united they began to actually frame their goals and attempt to recruit more members to the new Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF). Their message was anti-imperialist, specifically anti-Sultan and anti British. They used the oil company exploration as a symbol of the imperial and colonial tendencies of the Sultan who was in their eyes a British puppet. The DLF merger provided regional contacts to the mostly tribal membership of the movement; it also gave the group a broader scope for its belief in liberation. The DLF started to view the entire gulf not just Dhofar or Oman as an area under siege, and requiring liberation.

By the time the first DLF congress met in June 1965 the group was functioning with little external support. The Saudi links were less dependable for assistance as were the Iraq and Egypt channels. The DLF began by organizing an 18-man executive committee that would encapsulate all the various views into a governing body. They agreed that an armed struggle was the best way to achieve the group's goals. They also felt that the tribal divisions in southern Oman could be overcome to allow easier recruitment by dividing Dhofar into three geographical sectors, West, Center and East. Issues for exploitation included unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and disease to rally the Dhofaris and hopefully other Omanis to join them.

The Marxist intelligentsia in the organization could still be heard in the Rebellion even though the tribal element made up the majority of the group. The congress's manifesto makes clear the intent of the DLF.

- a) *The poor classes, the farmers, workers, soldiers and revolutionary intellectuals will form the backbone of the organization.*
- b) *The Imperialist presence will be destroyed in all forms-military, economic, and political.*
- c) *The hireling regime under its ruler, Said bin Taimur, will be destroyed.*[\[10\]](#)

The primary violent actions of the rebels during this early stage were sniping, ambushing and sabotage. They were cautious as well, as many of the men were from the lower caste tribes and were unfamiliar with this type of behavior. The Sultan reacted as we would expect an authoritarian to. To restore order he began search and destroy patrols, had his forces construct barriers to isolate the rebels, and utilized collective punishment for the entire area. As you might suspect the opposite goal was realized by the Sultan. The rebels were now hungry and angry, this made face-to-face recruiting effortless. The DLF leadership could not have unified the various tribes as fast as the Sultan had done. Some of the declarations of the DLF listed below show some of the messages they wanted their people to grasp.[\[11\]](#)

Arab People of Dhofar! A revolutionary vanguard has emerged from among you...[with] the task of liberating this country from the rule of the despotic Al Bu Said Sultan...identified with the hordes of the British imperialist occupation.

...In the name of the free martyrs...we appeal to the true Arab spirit in you to close ranks against corruption and rally around the fighters of the FLF.

The government of the stooge Said Bin Taimur has enlisted the services of an army of Shu'bi mercenaries to frustrate the goals of the Arab liberation in this country...we shall

teach this army a lesson it will never forget-the same lesson taught to the imperialist armies in Egypt, Algeria, Iraq and Yemen.

Change in Rebel Leadership and Change in Frames 1967-70

Here I will highlight the ability of outside elements to influence the insurgency by providing means and motivation to be successful on the battlefield. We will also see the tipping point for the insurgency reached when the rebels start to treat their supporters in the region in the same manner that the government used to or worse.

1967 brought many profound changes to the region and their affect on the DLF was no less weighty. The Arab loss in the Arab-Israeli 1967 war, the withdrawal of the British from Aden and the failed assassination attempt in 1966 on the Sultan brought the DLF to a period of introspection. The scrutiny focused on the Arab Nationalist motives of the movement. The result was a more radical political platform, leaning closer to the Marxist ideas of its new ally in South Yemen, the National Liberation Front (NLF). The second congress met on 1 September 1968 and the mantle of leadership moved to Mohammad Ahmad al-Ghassani, a pro-Marxist. The early tribal leaders such as shaykh Musallim parted ways with the organization because of the shift, but the organization grew in strength because of its new alliances in the region and continent.

Now with the support of South Yemen, China, Iraq, some Palestinian groups and even the Soviet Union the rebels were ready to officially expand their goals. They changed their name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) to emphasize their intentions to remove the imperialist nations from the entire gulf. They published this change in their resolutions along with their intent to extend the revolution and to “adopt organized revolutionary violence.”[\[12\]](#)

The rise in strength was matched by an increase in military prowess. The Sultans forces were pushed back from the rebel strongholds and the supply lines from South Yemen were laid open to assist the rebels. This time period marked the peak of the rebel movement. They capitalized on their military success with economic and social services for the Dhofari people. Education, food and medical aid all flowed from the PFLOAG. The education was of course political but it was a school environment and the Dhofaris having so long been denied education by the Sultan, absorbed the lessons of Mao, Marx and Guevara. At this point the movement tried to re-ignite the Northern Oman anti-Sultan resistance but the group was not as successful militarily and failed to aid the south by distracting the Sultan’s forces.

The new movement’s propoganda included collective land efforts, formation of agriculture committees and ending the tribal feuds in the region. Foolishly the movement next planted the seeds for its own destruction though its methods for dealing with Dhofaris that did not want to take part in the rebellion. The PFLOAG used cruel and violent tactics to gain obedience that imitated and surpassed the Sultans techniques. For the tribals who had never believed in the Marxist doctrine wing of the rebellion this change was not acceptable. Besides economic sanctions on the unruly tribesman the movement leaders allowed for the murders of those who would not cooperate.

The Rise of Sultan Qaboos—The Fall of the Rebellion, 1970-Present

Now we will look at the positive effect that Sultan Qaboos’ regime change had on defeating the insurgents, through his willingness to understand the problems in Dhofar and develop short and long term solutions. We will also find that the limited repertoire of the Northern Rebels severely restricted their ability to mobilize beyond an initial start-up, thus hampering their capacity to assist the Southern Rebels by distracting the Sultans forces. Finally we will see the military success of

the Sultan's counterinsurgency operations multiply by his emphasis on a sustained offensive and a far-reaching civic rehabilitation strategy.

The most effective decision made by Sultan Taimur during the Rebellion was his acceptance of the decision that he be deposed. The Sultan's son, from his marriage to a Dhofari bride, succeeded easily when he attempted a coup of his father on 23 July 1970. This was a decision that would have impacts on the Dhofar rebellion, the nationalization of Oman, and the establishment of a unified Gulf Regional Arab Bloc.

For the purposes of this article we will not discuss the many theories behind the rise of Sultan Qaboos, but will look at his impact on the Dhofar Rebellion movement. His rise to power quickly followed the failure of the Northern Liberation forces to capture the key cities around Muscat and Nizwa. Under the title of the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (NDFLOAG) the northern movement was never able to overcome its weak repertoire of movement actions. Many times the people were organized and present but not capable of mobilized action. This failure in northern mobilization allowed the new Sultan to concentrate on the southern front.

The PFLOAG absorbed the northern movements but was still not able to revive the political and military campaign after Sultan Qaboos took the helm. Despite the rise in insurgent schools and teachers the education was not enough to retain the numbers necessary to maintain the rebellion. Young men and women also attended the Revolution Camp to learn military basics and guerilla theory, but their indoctrination would not sustain them. The Sultan and the British forces were able to capitalize on the new secular language and domestic changes away from ancient tribal traditions. The propaganda coming from the government included claims that the rebels were atheists and that the domestic changes were against the tribal teaching of their ancestors.^[13] The defections from the movement that the Sultans forces had hoped for were beginning to increase. The Marxist propaganda and heavy handedness of the movement was now driving Dhofaris towards the new Sultan. The Sultan changed his tactics towards a counterinsurgency campaign. He stepped up patrolling focused on rounding up people and resources affiliated with the rebellion. The Sultan also employed Civic Action Teams in the contested territory in an attempt to assert for the first time a government assistance presence in Dhofar.

As the military and political tide began to turn, the movement met once again to determine its best course of action. The official fourth congress yielded little in the way of policy, but an informal meeting led to a change six months later. The informal meeting of August 1974 led to yet another name change, this time the movement would be called the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO). The major policy shift was to become more political and less military focused. They tried once again to get the north to join the rebellion through the United National Front (UNF) but even with some immediate success the movement could not match the southern operation. The Northern movement was however able to show that the Sultans government could be infiltrated.

By 1974 the Sultan was receiving support in materiel and men from Iran, Britain and Abu Dhabi; while the PFLO was sponsored by the PRDY, Kuwait, China, and the Soviet Union. The recruiting efforts by the rebel movement continued to be done at an early age through either coercion or invitation.^[14] The change in military tactics and the willingness of the Sultan to stay engaged and to occupy the Dhofar region in all weather was significantly decreasing the material support that was reaching the movement. The movement continued to be heavy handed and the defections continued to increase. The government had the rebels sealed in and continued to use civic programs including wells, schools, clinics, and markets to show the Dhofaris that a new day had started in Oman under the new Sultan. This had a dramatic effect on the Dhofari people and they withstood the intimidation and violence from the PFLO.

By 1975 the Sultan was capitalizing on the civic success so well, that he developed a Civil Aid Department (CAD) that would coordinate the civil construction while the remaining mopping-up operations were taking place. The CAD would divide its efforts towards six activities including; water supply, education expansion, health services, storefronts and markets to facilitate distribution of goods, encouragement of religious practice, and assistance with the cattle that are the staple meat source in Dhofar. Tribal police forces were enacted and a system of government was developed that the Dhofaris would recognize and respond to. The government was now able and willing to help the Dhofaris in ways the rebel movement couldn't. The latest innovations included a flying doctor service that could reach remote villages, roads, and improved schools.^[15]

A cease fire was finally signed with the PRDY in 1976 after cross-border incursions from both sides escalated near the end of the Dhofar Rebellion. The PFLO reluctantly fell as well. Anti-Sultan actions would continue for years but the movement was now poorly organized and hardly mobilized. The Government had succeeded in outmaneuvering the movement leaders though a long struggle. The Sultan would eventually place some of the movement members in his government as part of the reconciliation process and surely to allow him to keep a better eye on their activities. A new day had dawned in Oman and the Sultanate was fully established. It is possible that the lessons the young Sultan learned about building the Dhofari infrastructure as a way to gain allegiance played a part in his decision to rebuild the social and physical infrastructure of the entire nation. His continued interest in the concerns of the people as demonstrated by his annual tour of the Sultanate, allows him to remain one step ahead of any anti-government movements.

Social Mobilization under an Authoritarian Government

The dynamics of social mobilization under an authoritarian government are different than those found under a more democratic system. Here we find that the authoritarian actions of Sultan Taimur and lack of political voice led the rebels to seek outside assistance and ideology to develop a strategy and means to change the status quo in Oman. Further we find that consistent with social movement theory the rebel structure and actions closely matched the Sultan's model which they despised, this would lead to the insurgencies undoing. Also in keeping with current theory violence plays a key role in the insurgency, but the failure of the insurgency to develop a political wing that the violence could drive the government to negotiate with, left no outlet for the government except to defeat the violent wing. Finally I found Sultan Qaboos' political changes that allowed the Dhofaris a chance, or the idea for a chance, in government participation to support the theory that political access can moderate an opposition group.

The political context for the Dhofar Rebellion included many of the traditional aspects of social mobilization under an authoritarian regime. It required and utilized international support in the financial, ideological, and physical realms. There was a reliance on the regional media, mostly radio, because of the absence of media in Oman due to the Sultan's ordinances. There were very few if any links between the Sultan and the affected Dhofari population, which would lead us to expect a higher likelihood of protest. Many of the protesters and organizations were well under the radar of the Sultan's government to escape discovery. Many times the organization was physically located outside of the Dhofar dependency to allow it the freedom to plan and communicate. Finally the ultra-centralized system of the Sultan assisted the movement by offering a very easy target to define and attack.

The mobilizing structures of the Dhofar Rebellion movements reveal more consistencies with social mobilization theories. The organization of the movement, in its many stages, was very similar to the political regime of the Sultan, they were both very demanding of the common Dhofari people and quick to utilize repression and violence. An interesting deviation from this thought was that after Sultan Qaboos took control of the government and changed the regime policies the movement continued to resemble the former Sultan's political structure and outlook. This failure to adapt to the new Sultan's regime enabled Qaboos' forces to quickly gain the upper

hand in attracting uncommitted Dhofaris to his side. The violence usually associated with movements under an authoritarian government was always present during the rebellion; in fact violence was part of the first protest in Dhofar in 1963. Finally the informal organization expected in the movement was present from the beginning; the organization was always comprised of a collaboration of numerous groups and ideologies. Its only formality was the occasional congressional meeting that enabled the group to take stock of its positions and revise its strategy.

The role of violence in the development and sustainment of the Dhofar Rebellion movement is clearly evident. Through the 1950s and 1960s violence was involved in nearly every form of protest, it was valuable to the movement because it proved to the uncommitted Omanis that it was possible to stand up to the government and strike a blow against them. Violence was a way for members to display their solidarity with the movement and inspire others to join. The culture of violence within in the movement did finally come to backfire on them as the Dhofari people tired of intimidation and murder amongst their fellow tribesman. The movement also failed to develop a separate political wing that could take advantage of any possible discussions from the government. By enmeshing the military and political goals so closely with armed resistance the movement was not able to benefit from the usefulness of having a violent wing that can drive the government towards negotiation with the non-violent movement.

The government repression that authoritarian regimes usually apply towards social movements was apparent at most times in the campaign until the ascension of Sultan Qaboos. Repression certainly emboldened the violent activities and left the Dhofaris with little chance or reason to form a non-violent movement. Sultan Taimur's bizarre laws prior to the movement's development were stigmatizing enough to push Dhofaris to the edge of civil disobedience, his collective punishments after the Rebellion began surely pushed many uncommitted people over the edge. Also manifest were the career deviants that were created after the early attacks in the North during the 1950s. These same movement organizers were the main contributors to the southern movement and created links to external resources for the Dhofaris.

Finally the belief that participation in the government, whether through voting, a government position, or developing your own local government agencies will moderate a movement was proven to be valid. The many techniques employed by Sultan Qaboos to bring the Dhofari people into the Sultanate helped to attract uncommitted Dhofaris towards his side. Also by allowing the Dhofaris to establish police-like forces to regulate their affairs and by taking members from the movement itself into his government, he moderated and downsized his opposition.

Conclusion

In summary meddling of neighbor states, a long-standing feud between the Imamate and Sultanate, and the repressive regime of Sultan Said Taimur helped to create and sustain an enduring rebellion. Sultan Qaboos made changes in the counterinsurgency strategy and regime that helped to decrease support for and defeat the insurgency. These changes allowed the government to understand and resolve the issues that had been framed by the insurgent leaders as rallying points for the rebellion. Additionally I found that the inability of the rebels to adapt to the new government strategy and the insurgents continual repressive acts towards the neutral Dhofari people drove the remaining insurgency supporters into the Sultans camp.

This work demonstrated that understanding the theory of social movement can assist in the study of insurgencies and increases the likelihood of success when conducting counterinsurgency operations. The Oman government forces and their allies ability to identify the social movement, understand the mobilization of the insurgents, exploit the framing of the issues motivating the insurgents, alleviate the lack of political opportunities, and to defend against the limited repertoire of action from the insurgents allowed them to take ownership of the causes of the insurgency and diffuse the social movement to acceptable levels.

Some of the lessons I identify are, the importance of understanding a social movement's goals and grievances when designing a campaign; that the application of military force without civil reconstruction of institutions and infrastructure is self-defeating; and that the role and extent of outside influences must be understood and removed in order to isolate an anti-government movement.

Whether the lion in the path of Oman's nationalism was Sultan Said bin Taimur or the Dhofar Rebels, I will leave to the reader to decide. My final reflection is that the nation of Oman was changed for the better when an unpopular ruler was replaced with a more modernizing thinker. At this point Oman stopped tearing itself apart and began to move forward together in compromise.

About the Author

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