

ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT 1947-1967:  
A VIEW THROUGH THE PUBLIC SPEECHES OF U.S. SECRETARIES OF STATE

A Senior Honors Thesis

by

MATTHEW ZANE HAWTHORNE

Submitted to the Office of Honors Programs  
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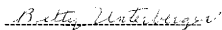
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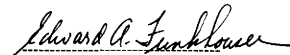
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**ABSTRACT**

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A VIEW THROUGH THE PUBLIC SPEECHES  
OF U.S. SECRETARIES OF STATE. (April 2004)

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This project is a re-visitation of the 20-year period of Arab-Israeli conflict immediately following the United Nations' creation of the state of Israel. It focuses on U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli dispute by examining the public speeches of the U.S. secretaries of state. When necessary, the scope of documents is widened to include internal State Department papers, the memoirs of the secretaries of state, public speeches by other Department of State officials, and general historical accounts of Arab-Israeli and Middle Eastern events. The written materials are used to determine the different pressures that cause U.S. policy shifts, to evaluate any static or evolving policy trends, and to generate an historical sketch of U.S. involvement. The pressures on U.S. policy that are examined include communism, the United Nations, the economic effects of Middle Eastern oil, arms shipments to Arab and Israeli interests, the Palestinian refugees, and the domestic political influence on U.S. officials.

After the initial establishment of U.S. policy in 1947 and 1948, the secretaries of state attempted to maintain a consistent tone towards Arab-Israeli issues. The role of the Cold War, however, made this endeavor increasingly difficult as the U.S. and the Soviet Union inched closer to armed conflict. This factor would weigh just as heavily as economic concerns on U.S. policy in the Middle East over the twenty year span. The other factors examined, while important in the overall scheme, did not substantially impact U.S. policy as much as the Cold War and economic interests. While each secretary of state and subsequent presidential administration did try to make progress in resolving the Arab-Israeli disputes, the consistency of the pressures on U.S. policy produced a stagnant atmosphere not conducive to change or improvement. All of these pressures, with the exception of the role of communism, still exist today, along with a newer, more intense threat of Arab resentment towards the United States; their existence continues to plague U.S. policymaking towards the Arab-Israeli conflicts.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take the opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for my wonderful advisor, Dr. Betty Unterberger. Without her guidance through this whole process, especially the amount of effort she put in at the last minute, this project would still be unfinished. I wish her the best of luck in her retirement. Also, the organizational effort from Dr. Amy Earhart and the motivation from Dr. Finnie Coleman have been a tremendous help to completing my thesis. Their hard work made the entire Fellows process an enjoyable experience. I would also like to thank my former professor Dr. Douglas Brooks; he inspired me to continue writing and gave me the confidence to realize my abilities. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my parents for their years of guidance and love. Their support provided me with a solid education for which I am thankful. There is no way that I can ever repay them for all they have done and all they do on my behalf.

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## INTRODUCTION

At approximately 5:45 p.m. on May 14, 1948, Warren Austin, the United States Representative to the United Nations, simply muttered “the hell with it”, packed up his things, and went home.<sup>1</sup> What could cause such a reaction from an experienced diplomat in the middle of an intense debate on the U.N. General Assembly floor? The answer was the order from President Harry S. Truman to recognize the newly declared State of Israel immediately. President Truman’s unilateral decision for recognition did not sit well with key members of the State Department, most importantly the Secretary of State George C. Marshall.<sup>2</sup> Marshall squarely stated that because of this decision, he would vote against Truman in the next election.<sup>3</sup> The rift amongst U.S. policy makers would ebb and flow in time, but over the years, no topic has caused more frustration and debate than the Arab-Israeli conflict that resulted. Israel’s creation became the proverbial genesis for U.S. involvement in more than sixty years of political debate and intermittent war.

This project will study the public statements of U.S. Secretaries of State in order to examine the United States’ role in the Arab-Israeli conflicts from Israel’s birth in 1948 to the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967. The purpose is to provide a historical basis for evaluating the present-day Arab-Israeli conflict and determine any changes in

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*This thesis follows the style and format of the Journal of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.*

<sup>1</sup> Rusk, Dean, *As I Saw it* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Brands, H.W., *Into the Labyrinth: The United States and the Middle East, 1945-1993* (McGraw-Hill, 1994), pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, T. G., *The USA and the Middle East Since World War II* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1989), p. 47.

or pressure on the United States' Arab-Israeli policies. The secretary's public speeches tend to offer the most concise representation of this policy. Although they are the "official line" that foreign nations scrutinize to determine U.S. intentions, the public record does not always offer a complete history of U.S. policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. To amplify this, I have examined internal State Department documents, the memoirs of the Secretaries of State, recent written accounts of the conflict, and other applicable documents. The main thrust of the research has relied on primary sources, not secondary accounts which were often prone to opinion and bias.

U.S. policy making is also fragmented, and this presents a problem when comparing the intended policy with the actual events. The chain of command in the State Department becomes important, as do the desires of the president and his White House staffers. The two factions, as the record shown, did not always agree on the correct course of action in many arenas, not only in relation to Arab-Israeli issues. In addition, each faction sometimes contained sub-factions that held dissenting views, thus creating an atmosphere that J. Garry Clifford described as "bureaucratic politics."<sup>4</sup> The problem is that the policy makers do not have a large degree of control over policy enforcement, nor do they control the actions of other nations that cause policy shifts. As a result, studying U.S. foreign relations is always contentious, but my proposal to examine the official statements of the Secretary of State and other ranking State Department officials simplifies the analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> Clifford, J. Garry, "Bureaucratic Politics and Policy Outcomes," in Dennis Merrill and Thomas G Paterson, eds., *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p. 26.



The strength of this study relies on the proven ability of the Secretary of State and his immediate subordinates, but this is not always a constant. After World War II, the U.S. emerged as a major international force, both militarily and economically; this new role forced U.S. involvement all over the globe. International issues became more numerous and complex, and at times, U.S. policy makers had to maximize all available resources. Few conflicts received unwavering attention for long periods of time and the State Department and White House were often spread too thin at the highest levels. This condition became more apparent in the 1960s as the U.S. entered the Vietnam conflict and continued to expand efforts to defeat international communism. This issue will be discussed in depth later, but it is important to see that the secretary of state could not monopolize decision-making. It was too great a task. He could, however, consistently communicate U.S. policy and this is a part of the reason for studying the public statements.

Several factors are important in understanding the Arab-Israeli conflict. They include the strategic reality of the Middle East, which weighed heavily on the U.S. policy-making process. The Middle East is the land bridge between Europe, Africa, and Asia, and it contains abundant natural resources in the form of massive oil fields. Second, domestic pressures on the U.S. government and the political implications of not responding to the unrelenting Zionist lobby created a sense of urgency and obligation that U.S. policy makers could not ignore. Thirdly, the economic success of the entire Middle Eastern region affected the world economic climate. Oil is the main reason for the global implications, but more generally, an impoverished region perpetuated

discontent, something that the U.S. government hoped to avoid after World War II. As the world became more interconnected and polarized in the Cold War, a small problem could erupt into a wider conflict and affect the military and economic world order. Additionally, U.S. policy makers had to determine how best to utilize the newly formed United Nations.

The U.N. had great potential for achieving an unprecedented level of world communication and peaceful coexistence, but in order to be effective, the U.S. had to relinquish some of its superpower capabilities. The problem of when to use the U.N. and when to skirt its mechanisms factored heavily into U.S. policy during this time period. Finally, the threat of communism at times hijacked Arab-Israeli issues and threw U.S. policy into a spin. The idea of monolithic communism grew during the forties, fifties, and sixties, evolving over time just like the Arab-Israeli dispute. It seemed that no matter what transpired, the perception of communist activity crept into the U.S. consciousness and tended to corrupt chances for a peaceful Arab-Israeli settlement.

For these main reasons, the United States' Arab-Israeli policies were never fixed. They evolved as new people and new events affected the international structure. As one Department of State official put it, the "pendulum of American public opinion on the Middle East swung between high hopes and dire forebodings."<sup>5</sup> The same phenomenon applied to U.S. policy-making decisions. The analogy of a pendulum seems to best fit the historical events and public reactions over the twenty-year period we are examining. Whatever description is best, this focus on the public statements of U.S. policymakers

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office), Volume 46, Jan-June 1962, p.765. (Hereafter abbreviated as *DSB*).

will reveal the trends of economic influence, the perception of communism, the role of oil, and a slew of other factors important to a better understanding of the pendulum of Arab-Israeli conflict.

## FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONFLICT: MARSHALL AND ACHESON

The British Government's Balfour Declaration of 1917 serves as the official starting point for Arab-Israeli conflict, although in reality, the battle for Palestine has much deeper roots. In this declaration, the British pledged to work towards a national Jewish home in Palestine while protecting the rights of non-Jewish peoples in the region.<sup>6</sup> Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish biochemist living in England and future president of Israel, along with other Jewish leaders in Great Britain were instrumental in obtaining such a commitment. The declaration was written into the British held mandate over Palestine and served as a guiding principle for British policy decisions; despite the guidelines, debate surrounded the actual establishment of an all-Jewish state.<sup>7</sup> Initially, the U.S. response was less than ecstatic. President Woodrow Wilson and his Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, were "cool toward Zionism" and refused to make a public pledge of support for the movement.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Congress did not officially declare its support for the Zionist program until 1922, and even then it did not make firm commitments for U.S. action.<sup>9</sup> It was clear from the beginning that the U.S. did not want to be heavily involved in the dispute, especially in the aftermath of World War I.

The Arab nations of the Middle East were vehemently against any artificially created Jewish state, or even the importation of Jews to Palestine. A young British military officer, T.E. Lawrence, had organized a great Arab uprising against the Turks

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<sup>6</sup> Stookey, Robert W., *America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1975), p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Brands, p. 3.

during the war; in return for Arab support, he pledged to reserve Palestine for the Arab states and their peoples.<sup>10</sup> The uprising had little strategic success and the pledge did not carry the official weight of the Balfour Declaration. As a result, the Arabs felt that Great Britain had broken a promise, and it caused a great deal of Arab resentment towards the British officials in charge of the mandate over Palestine. Essentially, the situation in the Middle East between World War I and World War II involved an impotent League of Nations, a legitimate claim by both the Arabs and Jews for British support of their respective causes in Palestine, and a vague notion of self-determination. Although the U.S. government supported the vague self-determination, it actively avoided involvement in the Middle Eastern dispute. Clearly, the issues were complex during the British mandate's existence.

With two legitimate claimants to Palestine, the end of World War II was to be a turning point for settling the dispute; unfortunately, this was not to be the case. The United Nations, a newly created international organization to replace the ineffective League of Nations, attempted to become the main arbiter of peace in the region. At this early juncture, the United Nations was an untested entity. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter served as the basic ideological framework for the U.N. while the procedures for international conflict resolution developed over the course of the war.<sup>11</sup> The United States' role in the U.N. was unavoidably raised, not only because of the primacy of Roosevelt's ideals, but also because of the primacy of the U.S. as a

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<sup>10</sup> Stookey, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Paterson, Thomas G., J. Garry Clifford and Kenneth J. Hagan, eds., *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895*, Fifth ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), pp. 174-177. (Hereafter abbreviated as *AFR*).

new world leader. Essentially, the rest of the world needed the U.S. to help pick up the pieces after a protracted and devastating war. This resulted in placing the Palestine problem in the hands of a United Nations that depended upon U.S. initiative and support. The logical connection inexorably linked the U.S. to the resolution of the Palestine question.

World War II also served to change American public opinion towards Jews, an important consideration with the U.S. and U.N. charge for resolving the Palestine problem. Four-fifths of the American public surveyed in 1938 opposed admitting Jewish refugees into the United States.<sup>12</sup> This survey marked public opinion before the Nazis developed a “final solution” for exterminating Jews in 1942; as the news of the holocaust filtered into the U.S., many were skeptical. Secretary of State Cordell Hull seemed indifferent and refused to explore options for admitting Jewish refugees to the U.S. while President Roosevelt had trouble “grasping the full reality” of the situation.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, at the war’s end when the full reality became apparent to the American public, the Zionist lobby gained considerable strength in the minds of U.S. policy makers. Henry Byroade, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, would publicly admit in 1952 that one reason the U.S. became deeply involved in the issue of Jewish statehood was to try and make up for the Nazi atrocities committed during World War II.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hunt, Michael, “Racism in American Ideology,” in Dennis Merrill and Thomas G Paterson, eds., *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p 21.

<sup>13</sup> *AFR*, pp. 198-200.

<sup>14</sup> *DSB*, Volume 27, July-Dec 1952, p. 931.

The initial thrust of United Nations efforts involved a proposed partition for Palestine. Each group, the Arabs and the Jews, would control a specifically defined territory. Jerusalem would be an international zone under the control of an ill-defined United Nations committee. In mid-1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was saddled with the task of deciding the best boundaries for a Jewish state.<sup>15</sup> President Truman, in an attempt to allow UNSCOP and the U.N. to decide impartially, directed the Department of State leadership to stay out of the debate as much as possible. This directive came in spite of the fact that future Secretaries of State Dean Rusk and Dean Acheson, Ambassador Warren Austin, and current Secretary of State George Marshall all agreed that a U.N. trusteeship and subsequent commonwealth, not a partition, would be the best solution for Palestine.<sup>16</sup> Truman remained temporarily firm in his decision. After all, this was the U.N.'s first major action, and the appearance of U.S. meddling would undermine the decision's legitimacy.

The Jewish lobby pressed hard for President Truman to take a more active role in the UNSCOP process. Chaim Weizmann, a man that Truman greatly respected as a statesman, Rabbi Abba Silver, the head of the American wing of the Jewish Agency, and other Jewish supporters unleashed a storm of propaganda aimed at the White House in hopes of altering Truman's restraint.<sup>17</sup> The lobbyists did not fail to remind Truman that 1948 was an election year and that Jewish support might help to ensure reelection. Another pressing date was May 15, 1948, the proposed day for the British to end their

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<sup>15</sup> Fraser, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

mandate over Palestine, the time pressure, along with intense lobbying, created a sense of urgency for a solution to the Palestine debate.

On March 19, Ambassador Austin delivered a speech to the U.N. that essentially declared the partition plan for Palestine dead while pressing for a United Nations trusteeship over the region.<sup>18</sup> President Truman was furious because he had just assured Weizmann of U.S. support partition the day before.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Truman began to snub the Department of State and rely more heavily on his White House advisers, a decision that contributed to the chaos surrounding Israel's declared statehood in mid-May.

Austin's speech characterized the Jews as cooperative while portraying the Arabs as militant to any U.N. decision.<sup>20</sup> The Jewish side had no reason not to cooperate in the matter; any route that the U.N. took would be a step forward in the direction of Jewish statehood, especially in the case of partition. A U.N. trusteeship and eventual commonwealth scenario was not as attractive, but from the Zionist point of view, all roads in the U.N. led to progress. The Arab interests, on the other hand, were backed into a corner. At that time, Palestine was occupied by traditionally Islamic Palestinians, not Jews. Any loss of Arab sovereignty anticipated at the end of the British mandate or any influx of foreign Jews would be a slap in the face of Arab peoples. The main influence in U.N. decision-making was the Zionists' ability to organize and apply pressure. Austin clearly stated that the Arab resistance, both politically and militarily, was multi-faceted and unorganized.<sup>21</sup> The Jewish Agency could speak as an organized

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<sup>18</sup> *DSB*, Volume 18, Jan-June 1948, p. 402.

<sup>19</sup> Fraser, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> *DSB*, Volume 18, Jan-June 1948, p. 402.

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



group while the Arab Higher Committee was accountable to a multitude of established Arab states with a range of opinions. The bureaucratic processes involved in the United States and the U.N. highly favored dealing with a known, measurable Jewish entity rather than a potentially chaotic and explosive group like the Arabs.

General Marshall assumed his duties as secretary of state in January 1947 with great optimism for reconstructing the post-war world; by June, he was pessimistic on the Palestine problem. He wrote to Ambassador Austin that “an agreed settlement no longer appears possible.”<sup>22</sup> Most of Marshall’s success as Secretary came from his European Recovery program, not in the Middle East, but the fact that six months into his term he saw the Palestine problem as intractable did not bode well for the future. Nonetheless, Secretary Marshall pledged his support for a U.N. solution in Palestine and committed his government not to act unilaterally in the matter.<sup>23</sup>

President Truman had been notoriously ambiguous on how to resolve the Palestine problem. He supported allowing one hundred thousand Jews into Palestine but did not clarify how it could be done. Additionally, he wanted this mass immigration to go forward without pledging any U.S. troops to the effort.<sup>24</sup> With Truman’s new initiative to avoid using the State Department as a policy-making resource and the impending end of the British mandate, the plot started to thicken. On May 14, 1948, President Truman informed Secretary Marshall of his decision to recognize Israel immediately after it declared its statehood. He did not clarify many of the details, but he

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<sup>22</sup> Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 180.

<sup>23</sup> *DSB*, Volume 18, Jan-June 1948, p. 408.

<sup>24</sup> Acheson, p. 172.

had set U.S. policy for the next 60 years. This forced the State Department to fall in line with the new U.S. policy and try and make the best of a worsening situation. This debacle was one of the many situations that highlighted the Department of State's limited ability to influence and enforce policy; Truman made sure to emphasize that he held the power and the secretary and staff could only offer bits of advice.

The consequences of the Israeli declaration rapidly came to fruition. The one positive consequence was the Soviet Union's quick recognition of Israel, which temporarily calmed the fears of a superpower showdown with the U.S.<sup>25</sup> Otherwise, chaos ruled. The War for Independence in Palestine (now Israel) erupted into violence. The Arab states involved kept pouring troops into Palestine, but the Israelis were better armed with better training. The U.S., having just recognized Israel's provisional government, stated that the Arab states were violating international law.<sup>26</sup> King Abdullah of the Kingdom of Transjordan immediately criticized American hypocrisy. He pointed to the United States' immediate recognition of Israel while it still had not recognized Transjordan, a qualified country for two years.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, the U.S. desire to help Israel was viewed as anti-Arab. No matter the American desire, U.S. officials called for an immediate ceasefire of hostilities under U.N. auspices, a move that favored Israel by giving it time to organize an effective resistance.

The ceasefire did come in early June 1948, but it was not destined to last. Secretary Marshall, even as the violence in Palestine stretched into the fall and winter,

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<sup>25</sup> *AFR*, p. 244.

<sup>26</sup> *DSB*, Volume 18, Jan-June 1948, p. 695.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.

continued to support the U.N. peace machinery. He recognized that the U.N. moved slowly and deliberately and that Americans would have a hard time accepting it, but the U.S. was firmly committed to supporting the U.N. and its peacemaking processes.<sup>28</sup> In September 1948, he indicated that the “passions of the moment must not be permitted to dim the great fundamentals of our system.”<sup>29</sup> Marshall was undoubtedly a believer in the cause of internationalism and its attempts to maintain world peace.

One complication in the search for a lasting settlement came with the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte, the U.N. mediator in Palestine. His charge was to try and organize successful peace treaties between the Israelis and the surrounding Arab states. Early on, Count Bernadotte had recognized the need to resolve the growing refugee problem created by the state of war, and he reported this finding to Secretary Marshall in mid-August 1948.<sup>30</sup> Marshall replied by communicating his desire that non-government organizations provide the services and funding for the refugees. This stance indicated an early non-recognition of the refugee problem that continued for the duration of the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Nonetheless, Israeli extremists killed Count Bernadotte less than a month after his note to Marshall and one day prior to the release of his seven-point plan for peace. His recommendations included the internationalization of Jerusalem and the creation of a Palestinian Conciliation Commission to report directly to the U.N.<sup>31</sup> Secretary Marshall, while saddened by Bernadotte’s death and notably quiet

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<sup>28</sup> *DSB*, Volume 19, July-Dec 1948, p. 400.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

in condemning any group for his murder, embraced the plan.<sup>32</sup> Marshall wanted the entire issue to remain in the United Nations in order to minimize the appearance of U.S. domination of the problem.

Secretary Marshall created his legacy in Europe, not the Middle East. The Marshall Plan helped rebuild a continent torn apart by war and set a precedent of economic rebuilding as instrumental to world stability. He desired to keep his decision-making away from the political arena; he made it a point not to vote, which made his comment about voting against Truman in the 1948 election that much more shocking. Marshall was, however, committed to the machinery of the U.N. As a general in the U.S. Armed Forces, he knew the devastation of war, and he sincerely hoped that the U.N. could keep World War III from breaking out. His efforts in the Middle East were notable, but not outstanding. Marshall relied heavily on his Department of State staffers, but it does not diminish his ability as a diplomat and statesman. He resigned as secretary of state on January 3, 1949 after refusing to stick around for President Truman's first elected term.<sup>33</sup>

Dean Acheson started his term as Secretary of State under Truman immediately after former Secretary Marshall stepped aside. Acheson was a respected member of the Department of State staff, and he had served in a capacity to be well informed on the nuances of Arab-Israeli issues. Personally, he was an anti-Zionist and did not agree with President Truman's immediate recognition of Israel. Despite this fact, Secretary Acheson did attempt to continue Marshall's reliance on the U.N. as the mechanism for

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 399.

<sup>33</sup> *DSB*, Volume 20, Jan-June 1949, p. 86.

lasting peace. In other words, he took on the challenge of upholding past U.S. policy commitments on the Arab-Israeli dispute even though many years later he regretted in his memoirs that Israel had been created in the first place.<sup>34</sup>

Immediately after Secretary Acheson filled his post, the situation in the Middle East began to cool down. Ralph Bunche, a U.S. diplomat, replaced Count Bernadotte as chief mediator in Palestine. An American as mediator, while not instrumental, did heighten the U.S. role in the coming agreements more so than if Bernadotte were still alive.<sup>35</sup> By the end of January 1949, the tenuous ceasefires were evolving into a series of armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Although all the agreements were not signed until midsummer 1949, the process was well on its way. The separate armistice agreements later became roadblocks to a permanent peace settlement, but for the time being, they served their purpose of creating U.N. sanctioned peace machinery and curbing widespread violence. The agreements created a series of separate Mixed Armistice Commissions whose purpose was to assist the Palestinian Conciliation Commission (PCC) and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in maintaining peaceful dialogue. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan all pledged to utilize the Mixed Armistice structure to facilitate peaceful conflict resolution.

The armistice agreements were intentionally vague in order to promote discussion through the U.N. machinery; in actuality, the lack of definition created more violent debate and eventually led to a long series of violent border clashes between Israel

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<sup>34</sup> Memorandum for the Record, 17 November 1968, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-1968* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office), vol. XIX, p. 287. (Hereafter abbreviated as *FRUS*).

<sup>35</sup> Brands, p. 32.

and its Arab neighbors. Initially, both sides tried to utilize the new framework for peace. As early as mid-1950, Israel had issued four complaints against Egypt and Jordan while Egypt and Jordan each issued a separate complaint against Israel.<sup>36</sup> Most of the time, small clashes between military forces and civilians precipitated the complaints; a Syrian/Israeli skirmish in April 1951 was the earliest major incident.<sup>37</sup> Each side tended to have different interpretations of the armistice agreements in relation to water arrangements, public services, and development of demilitarized border zones. The UNTSO and the Mixed Armistice Commissions were supposed to clarify the interpretation process, but from the start, they were largely ineffective at quelling violent outbreaks. They could not sanction, only investigate and negotiate.

Israel did very well in its war for independence. It gained approximately forty percent more territory than it was slated to control under the failed U.N. partition plan. This included the Gaza strip in the southeast, the coastal Mediterranean region north of Haifa, and a large chunk of land in central Israel that allowed for access to Jerusalem. Count Bernadotte's plan before his assassination called for an internationally controlled Jerusalem to ensure access for all peoples to sacred religious sites; this did not develop after Israel's military success. The major consequence of Israeli victory was the displacement of more than 750,000 Palestinian refugees. Bernadotte recognized that the refugees would create serious problems for neighboring Arab states if not taken care of

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<sup>36</sup> *DSB, Volume 23, July-Dec 1950, p. 870.*

<sup>37</sup> *DSB, Volume 24, Jan-June 1951, p. 797.*

immediately.<sup>38</sup> The U.S. and the U.N., however, were slower in publicly drawing the same conclusion.

In January 1950, President Truman addressed Congress and referred to the Palestinian refugees as an immediate problem.<sup>39</sup> Over the next few months, in conjunction with Secretary Acheson and the Department of State, Truman announced the Point Four Program, an economic and technical assistance program intended to improve the quality of life in developing countries. The Middle East was one area due to receive funding from the program although the details and signatures required from Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria did not come until Spring 1951.<sup>40</sup> Point Four was ambitiously modeled after the success of the Marshall Plan for European recovery, and one of its primary goals was to prevent communist subversion in poor, undeveloped countries. The White House and the Department of State began to sense that international communism would seek to apply pressure wherever its propaganda had even the slightest chance of taking hold.<sup>41</sup> As a preventative measure, the Point Four program hoped to lessen the effectiveness of communist pressure by eliminating the poverty. Secretary Acheson firmly believed that the Soviets would target the displaced Palestinian refugees in hopes of gaining a foothold in the strategically vital Middle East.

Even before Point Four developed, 1949 was an extremely eventful year with respect to communism. In August, the U.S.S.R. conducted its first nuclear weapon test,

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<sup>38</sup> *DSB*, Volume 19, July-Dec 1948, p. 436.

<sup>39</sup> *DSB*, Volume 22, Jan-June 1950, p. 260.

<sup>40</sup> *DSB*, Volume 24, Jan-June 1951, p. 500 & p. 826.

<sup>41</sup> *DSB*, Volume 22, Jan-June 1950, p. 552.

many years ahead of the timetable U.S. experts had predicted.<sup>42</sup> In early October, Chairman Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists seized control of mainland China, forcing the American-backed Jiang Jieshi and the Chinese Nationalists into exile on the island of Formosa.<sup>43</sup> The Cold War was developing into an all-encompassing dilemma for Secretary Acheson and the entire U.S. foreign policy mechanism. The mentality that international communism attacked on all fronts took hold during his term as Secretary and did not lessen until the mid-1970s. One of these supposed fronts to battle against communism was the Middle East.

The 1947 Truman Doctrine was an attempt to stem the tide of communist advances. It only mentioned Greece and Turkey, two “northern tier” nations in the Middle East, but these two states, along with Iraq and Iran, created a buffer separating the USSR from the oil reserves to its immediate south; Truman developed his doctrine to give funding and supplies to prevent communist intrusion in the wake of Greek and Turkish revolutions.<sup>44</sup> The concept of mutual security against the communists took hold, via the Truman Doctrine, and worked its way southward to include the states directly involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute, specifically Egypt. King Farouk roundly rejected Secretary Acheson’s proposed Middle Eastern Command in October 1951, and this became the concrete start of Egyptian antagonism toward the West.<sup>45</sup> Despite the Egyptian rejection, mutual security in the Middle East did not die. The Mutual Security Act, signed by Congress on October 10, 1951, authorized economic and military aid to

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<sup>42</sup> *AFR*, p. 248.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>44</sup> Stookey, pp. 92-93.

<sup>45</sup> *DSB*, Volume 25, July-Dec 1952, p. 647 & p. 702.



defend against communist subversion all over the world.<sup>46</sup> For the Middle East's northern tier nations, this act gave the impetus to create the Baghdad Pact and eventually the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959 (minus Iraq).

It is extremely difficult to gloss over the effects of the Korean War in 1950 and 1951. This was the first real test of American resolve in the face of communism's supposed monolithic takeover. Managing this war occupied most days for Secretary Acheson and his staff. The Korean conflict also siphoned valuable U.S. policy-making manpower and resources away from the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially since the U.N. peace mechanisms were supposedly in control. More than any other event, the Korean War helped to solidify the U.S. policy-making mentality in the Cold War. From this point forward, no event, big or small, in any corner of the world could be examined without factoring in the role of international communism. This was especially true in the Middle East. Any interests that the U.S. or Western Europe had related to oil, transit, trade, or overall friendliness with the Middle East became tainted with the lens of communism. Even before the Korean War broke out, Secretary Acheson and his staff could not hold a press conference or make a speech without somehow referring to mutual security, defending against aggression from without, or the Soviet Union's subversive intentions.

One of the greatest fears in the Middle East at this time was that an arms race would break out amongst the disputing nations, especially with the heightened stakes in the Cold War world. To remedy this, the U.S., the United Kingdom, and France entered

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 809.

into the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. Dean Acheson later recalled in his memoirs that this was one of the most puzzling declarations made on Middle Eastern relations.<sup>47</sup> Essentially, the declaration pledged the three powers to prevent an Arab-Israeli arms race by not supplying either side with an inordinate amount of weaponry. Also, it promised that Britain, France, and the U.S. would take immediate action within and without the U.N. to prevent any violation of armistice boundaries or frontiers. Secretary Acheson, many years later, questioned its effectiveness and timing. He pointed out that it had a “short-lived effect”, especially since the three powers were soon involved elsewhere suppressing communist advances and defending Western Europe.<sup>48</sup> It was a U.S. attempt to demonstrate an even-handed policy, a task that was often impossible in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Some side always seemed to benefit from any policy decision. The one major effect was to limit the amount of Western arms flowing to the Middle East; the agreement did not, however, restrict Soviet arms deliveries. This set the stage for violence later in the decade.

It is shocking to read Acheson’s optimistic public statements as secretary in comparison with the pessimism of his later memoirs. In October 1949, he was clearly hopeful for a peaceful outcome in Palestine.<sup>49</sup> Of course, he gave this speech shortly after the separate armistice agreements were signed, and he no reason not to be optimistic. The Arab-Israeli dispute, in his mind, was on its way to a quick resolution. His memoirs, written in 1969, sing a different tune. “Having no desire to recall and

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<sup>47</sup> Acheson, p. 396.

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

<sup>49</sup> *DSB*, Volume 21, July-Dec 1949, p. 654.

inflict on the reader a long record of failure, this book will not detail the time and effort spent on Arab-Israeli conflict, the inherent difficulties of the problem (such as providing in these barren lands for large and growing populations), and the intractability of opposing attitudes and emotions.”<sup>50</sup> These were the words of a man jaded by consistent frustration with little hope for change.

Towards the end of Acheson’s term as secretary, the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to impartiality and helping the Palestinian refugees. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine, created in 1949, came under review in January 1952. The U.S. delegation to the U.N., despite the recognition that the UNRWA had not yet succeeded in solving the refugee problem, suggested that it continue for three more years.<sup>51</sup> On January 26, 1952, the U.N. approved the suggestion in the form of a three-year, 250 million-dollar extension. In July of the same year, the Israeli government announced that it intended to move its foreign offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> The proposed move put the U.S. in a minor dilemma. Jerusalem was still a territory under dispute between Israel and Jordan after the 1948 War for Independence. The U.N., following Count Bernadotte’s suggestions that Secretary Marshall had supported, proposed that Jerusalem remain an international city. To be as impartial as possible and not create an international incident with the increasingly anti-Western Arab states, the U.S. politely condemned the move and pledged to not transfer U.S. foreign offices from Tel Aviv.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Acheson, p. 259.

<sup>51</sup> *DSB*, Volume 26, Jan-June 1952, p. 224.

<sup>52</sup> *DSB*, Volume 27, July-Dec 1952, p. 181.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Philip Jessup, a member of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, summed up the overall feeling about the on-going Arab-Israeli peace talks in November 1952 with two words: “general frustration.”<sup>54</sup> In the three years since the separate armistice agreements, the proper climate for negotiations still did not exist. The Palestinian Conciliation Commission (PCC) remained largely ineffective, and this spurred the idea that direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors might improve the overall atmosphere. Whatever the situation, the U.S. itself was undergoing its own transition at the highest levels following the 1952 elections, and for the time being, a new look at the Arab-Israeli dispute had to wait a few months.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 953.

## JOHN FOSTER DULLES TAKES THE REINS

In a radio address to the nation only days after President Dwight Eisenhower's inauguration, John Foster Dulles, the new secretary of state, summed up his views of American foreign policy: "in the Middle East, we find that Communists are trying to inspire the Arabs with a fanatical hatred of the British and ourselves."<sup>55</sup> This negative view of communism was the foundation for Dulles' thought in his time as Secretary of State. In the same speech, he referred to the moral rightness of the American cause in contrast to the evils of international communism.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, Dulles was an ardent Cold warrior who firmly believed in defeating communist aggression through nearly any means possible. The U.S., according to Dulles, symbolized justice and freedom while the Soviets represented oppression and torment.

When Dulles referred to communism in the Middle East, it was often unclear if he meant the northern tier states, the nations involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute, or both. With the Palestinian refugee problem and the changing leadership in Egypt, it became evident that Dulles saw communism in all corners of the Middle East. While transitioning to his new role, Dulles praised the loyal public servants in the Department of State, but most importantly, he pledged to maintain consistent foreign policies from the past administrations.<sup>57</sup> This pledge was a solemn promise from a moral and upright man, and Dulles would do anything not to make himself a liar. As a consequence, he

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<sup>55</sup> *DSB*, Volume 28, Jan-June 1953, p. 212.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *DSB*, Volume 27, July-Dec 1952, p. 949.

tyed U.S. policymakers to the same policies and the same ineffective U.N. peace mechanisms of the past.

Dulles, however, was not entirely tied to past U.S. policies. To spur new ideas, Dulles took a trip to the Middle East in May 1953; through it, he gained a better personal sense of the Middle East's leadership and the overall situation. This trip also provided Dulles with some form of legitimacy on Middle East policy decisions for the rest of his time as Secretary. He met face to face with General Muhammad Naguib and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Lebanese President Camille Chamoun, Saudi Arabia's King Ibn Saud, Jordan's King Hussein, and a host of Israeli representatives. He reported his six conclusions from the trip in a radio address on June 1, 1953.<sup>58</sup>

First, he saw that the U.S. had to support our British and French allies, but avoid the perception of colonialism at all costs. The U.S. could not afford to be labeled as just another imperialist power bent on Arab exploitation. Second, Dulles hoped to raise the living standards of all people in the region. He felt that continued technical assistance and additional funding from the Mutual Security Program could help achieve this goal. Third, he saw the need to rebuild Arab goodwill with the U.S. after the creation of Israel. Dulles also recognized that Arabs feared Zionism and militant Israeli expansion more than communism, although he could never seem to put communism completely out of his mind. Fourth, Dulles wanted peace in the Arab-Israeli dispute and Israel's acceptance as a permanent part of the region. Fifth, he proposed an expanded Middle Eastern mutual defense organization. This seemed unusual given Dulles' recognition of Arab

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<sup>58</sup> *DSB*, Volume 28, Jan-June 1953, p. 212.

fears about Israel, but he declared that the Arabs' lack of focus or concern over communist subversion made the Arab states perfect targets for a Soviet takeover. Finally, Dulles declared that he wanted to make friendship, not faultfinding, the basis for President Eisenhower's foreign policy in the Middle East. These six points were not much of a departure from past U.S. policies, but Dulles' initiative went a long way in establishing good will in the area.

The effects of the trip, however, did not last long. When Israel followed up on its declaration to move Israeli foreign offices to Jerusalem in July 1953, Dulles did not offer any harsh criticism by simply reiterating Secretary Acheson's concerns.<sup>59</sup> This move set an unfortunate precedent because it showed that Israel was willing to antagonize Arab states and create problems for the U.S. and U.N. if it led to an Israeli political victory. As if the move were not enough, October 1953 saw one of the first major Israeli military responses to an Arab terrorist strike. On October 14, 1953, Israel launched a massive counterattack on Qibya, a small Jordanian border town; the attack was in response to a Jordanian terrorist strike that killed an Israeli mother and her two children.<sup>60</sup> The Jordanian death toll reached 69 people dead and nearly 40 homes destroyed.

The U.S. government was officially mum in its criticism of Israel. Neither Dulles nor any U.S. representative in the U.N. condemned the Israeli counterattack, but behind the scenes, Dulles was furious.<sup>61</sup> A few days after the Qibya attack, Dulles announced the U.S. withholding of 26 million dollars in water diversion funding for

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<sup>59</sup> *DSB, Volume 29, July-Dec 1953, p. 90.*

<sup>60</sup> *Fraser, p. 64.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Israel because it had violated the suggestions of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).<sup>62</sup> The timing of the announcement seemed to connect the U.S. actions with the Israeli attack on Qibya; pro-Israeli lobbyists started a firestorm of protest and propaganda aimed at the State Department because the lobbyists knew that Israel was highly dependent on any sort of foreign aid.<sup>63</sup> Dulles, while resenting the political pressure, proved that U.S. intentions were not to punish Israel for Qibya. Once Israeli officials complied with the UNTSO, the 26 million in aid was released to fund the Israeli project.<sup>64</sup> As T.G. Fraser points out, “this was the first serious rift between the two governments.”<sup>65</sup> Dulles and the State Department were starting to get their fill of Israeli actions, both in the U.S. political scene and in the intensifying conflicts of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

In the November following the Qibya incident, Dulles gave a speech entitled the “Moral Initiative.”<sup>66</sup> He was addressing a Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) meeting, but he brought up the topic of impartiality and non-partisanship in foreign relations. He said of the basic dilemma of U.S. foreign policy: “there are good and sufficient reasons why the U.S. desires, in the U.N. and elsewhere, to show unity with its Western allies, but we have not forgotten that we were the first colony to win independence. And we have not given a blank check to any colonial power.”<sup>67</sup> He did not mention the Middle East in his speech when he spoke of the “orderly transition from

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<sup>62</sup> *DSB*, Volume 29, July-Dec 1953, p. 589.

<sup>63</sup> Fraser, p. 64.

<sup>64</sup> *DSB*, Volume 29, July-Dec 1953, p. 675.

<sup>65</sup> Fraser, p. 65.

<sup>66</sup> *DSB*, Volume 29, July-Dec 1953, p. 741.

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



colonial to self-governing status,” but he easily could have. Dulles did not realize it at the time, but the same issues of U.S. support for colonial and imperialist powers would rear its head in only a few years.

Egypt had long been a quasi-protectorate of Britain. The Suez Canal was a vital resource for Western Europe since it was the main thoroughfare for Middle Eastern oil bound for France and Britain. The British had an interest in protecting Egypt for a long time, or to be more specific, their interests centered on the canal. In July 1952, General Mohammad Naguib took control of Egypt after King Farouk abdicated his throne under extreme duress.<sup>68</sup> Naguib had theoretical control of Egypt for a short time, but Lt. Col Gamal Abdel Nasser was the real power behind the scenes. Nasser served as Minister of the Interior until he ousted Naguib in November 1954.<sup>69</sup> Before Nasser took complete control, he developed a platform of Egyptian nationalism; it dealt with Egyptian national pride, which could not reconcile the presence of foreign troops on Egyptian soil or the limiting of Egypt’s internal and international options.<sup>70</sup>

In response to Egyptian nationalist demands, Great Britain and Egypt negotiated a peaceful settlement in which the British troops defending the Suez Canal slowly packed up and left.<sup>71</sup> This was a great victory for Dulles and for diplomacy. It seemed that finally the Arabs were toning down their violent overtures towards Western nations and consistently working to mend fences and make real progress towards peace. Colonel Nasser even thanked the U.S. for their participation in the negotiations; the tone

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<sup>68</sup> Stookey, p. 134.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>71</sup> *DSB*, Volume 31, July-Dec 1954, p. 198.

of his gratitude seemed hopeful for further interaction with the West, despite the intensely nationalistic rhetoric.<sup>72</sup>

Henry Byroade, the straight shooting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, predicted a different outcome in the Middle East. He pointed out in May 1954 that both sides in the Arab-Israeli dispute saw the U.S. as legitimately partial to the other side.<sup>73</sup> In addition, he predicted an increased Soviet concern with the Arab-Israeli conflict because the Soviets were stymied in every other arena. Also, the fact that Soviets had recently exercised two U.N. Security Council vetoes on Arab-Israeli issues after being dormant for 6 years did not bode well. Byroade called on Israel to change its belligerent attitude and to make assurances to its Arab neighbors that it would not heed the political pressure to expand. Only then, according to Byroade, would tensions truly cool down and allow for constructive peace talks. This speech, while critical of the Israelis, showed a departmental lean towards the Arab nations as a response to intense pro-Israel lobbying in the U.S. Byroade concluded his talk by cleansing the U.S. of any true responsibility for a peaceful settlement, saying “the difficulties in solving this issue do not lie in the techniques of approach by outside powers, however imperfect they may be, but in the substance of the problem itself.”<sup>74</sup>

Colonel Nasser, despite recent overtures towards the West and the successful withdrawal of British troops from Egyptian soil, proved that he was a cunning leader. He did anything to get an advantage for Egypt; this meant playing both sides in the Cold

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234

<sup>73</sup> *DSB*, Volume 30, Jan-June 1954, p. 708.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

War. With a decidedly neutral posture, Nasser and Egypt began to cause problems for Dulles and U.S. policymakers. Starting in 1953, the World Bank studied the possibility of building the Aswan High Dam intended to generate power and create more arable farmland in Egypt.<sup>75</sup> The U.S. supported the proposal and even started to work out the funding options for the Dam's construction; Dulles and Eisenhower hoped that the increased farmland would help alleviate some of the structural pressure the Palestinian refugees caused. The whole deal slowly fell apart after a September 1955 arms deal between Egypt and Czechoslovakia, a Soviet satellite state.<sup>76</sup>

The Czech arms deal officially brought the Soviets into the Middle Eastern picture. Nasser, with Soviet prodding, accused the U.S. of imperialism in the Middle East and claimed that any Western attempt to reduce imperialist control was offset by U.S. support of Israel.<sup>77</sup> Dulles could only reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 and pledge not to send weapons to Israel to balance out Soviet shipments to Egypt.<sup>78</sup> The Secretary was doing the best he could to demonstrate U.S. impartiality while at the same time trying to avoid a Soviet or Egyptian diplomatic victory. Even the U.S. Congress confronted Dulles, demanding to know why the U.S. did not ship arms to Israel; Dulles stuck to past U.S. policies and weathered the political storm. He could only say that "the problems of the [Middle East] must be studied in the

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<sup>75</sup> Stookey, p. 139.

<sup>76</sup> *DSB*, Volume 33, July-Dec 1955, p. 604.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 683.

<sup>78</sup> *DSB*, Volume 34, Jan-June 1956, p. 285.

larger context of the free world's unceasing struggle against international communism."<sup>79</sup>

To add to the mounting tension in the Middle East, the Israelis started to get more aggressive militarily in late 1955. Israel launched another large-scale military strike in December, this time against Syria, for supposed border incursions. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. did not issue a strong censure of Israel even though it was clear that the Israelis had approved the counterattack.<sup>80</sup> Lodge called the Israeli response to the terrorist strike "out of proportion with the original provocation" while at the same time recognizing that the U.N. could only censure the action since the Syrian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission was wholly ineffective in investigating the incident.<sup>81</sup> Still, despite the U.N.'s apparent lack of conflict resolution abilities, Dulles still professed that the U.S. was forced to rely first on the United Nations in case of a Middle Eastern war; this time, however, Dulles actually mentioned that to use the U.N. would be difficult because of the Soviet's Security Council veto power.<sup>82</sup> At least Dulles recognized that the U.N. was failing, but no other alternatives were truly explored.

Nasser was right about one thing: American impartiality, with respect to economic aid and other funding, was largely a myth. A chart of cumulative U.S. grants and credits from 1945-1955 revealed a startling statistic. The U.S. had given Israel more than seven times the aid than it gave Egypt (30 million) and Jordan (25 million)

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

combined.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the 370 million given to Israel ranked only behind, in the Middle East, the astronomical 1.3 billion in aid to Greece. Israel received more aid than Turkey (320 million) and Iran (201 million), supposed “northern tier” states that defended the Middle East against communist expansion to the south. What could cause this imbalance? The answer lies in the U.S. Congress. Congress had control over which countries received U.S. aid, and with the growing political pressure and power of the pro-Israel lobby within the United States, no Congressman could afford to cut him or herself off from a fountain of political money and support. Dulles and the State Department consistently pressed for discretionary spending in the Middle East so the amounts of money could fit U.S. policy intentions.<sup>84</sup> A majority of the time, Congress rebuffed State Department efforts and continued to insist on controlling spending; it often created grave dilemmas for U.S. policy makers when they could not deliver on a funding promise.

No matter Congress’ relationship with State Department and the White House over Arab-Israeli issues, disaster was about to strike. On July 26, 1956, Nasser again showed his defiance of the West by nationalizing the Universal Suez Canal Company.<sup>85</sup> Nasser’s gambit put the U.S., the British, and the French on the diplomatic defensive. The Suez canal was a vital international waterway for Britain and France, and Egypt’s sole control of the canal could have been devastating to Western European economies. Dulles, although in South America at the time of the announcement, responded very

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 593.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>85</sup> Stookey, p. 143.

quickly. “To let this go unchallenged would be to encourage a breakdown...the question is not whether something should be done about this Egyptian act, but what should be done about it.”<sup>86</sup> Dulles hoped to be able to use diplomatic means to resolve the crisis, but he refused to commit the U.S. to any preset course of action. It turned out to be an intelligent decision.

The British, with U.S. help, attempted to organize outside of the ineffective U.N. a Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA). It was to be comprised of 24 nations that either relied on or would come to rely on the canal in the future.<sup>87</sup> Nasser roundly rejected the international proposal in September 1956 because he felt that any international organization limited Egypt’s sovereignty, a scenario that a nationalist leader such as him could not afford to tolerate.<sup>88</sup> Nasser did, however, pledge to keep the canal open and free to all users, but he would not submit to any form of international control. As the British and French became more worried about the canal, Dulles kept pushing for some sort of compromise to avoid war. The Secretary did not have great ambitions about using this crisis to form a permanent settlement in the Middle East. He just wanted a temporary stopgap to allow for day-to-day operation of the canal to continue.<sup>89</sup> One thing remained perfectly clear for Dulles: the U.S. did “not intend to shoot [its] way through” the canal.<sup>90</sup>

When U.S. policymakers referred to the strategic importance of Middle Eastern oil at this time, it was not on behalf of American oil needs. The U.S. had its own supply

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<sup>86</sup> *DSB*, Volume 35, July-Dec 1956, p. 259.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 473.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

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

of oil and received less than ten percent of its required fuel from the Middle East; in Europe, however, it was a different story. Europe received ninety percent of its oil from the Middle East. If canal passage were restricted in any way, the Western European economies would take a serious hit. The U.S. had interests in these European economies as well, hence the reason for U.S. involvement. If the European economies failed, a large part of the U.S. economy that was tied to those nations would begin to fail too. Overall, any restriction of oil flow to anywhere in the world would have dire economic effects on U.S. business.

Despite European dependence on the Suez, Dulles recognized that Middle Eastern oil producers were inexorably linked to Western European markets.<sup>91</sup> Oil's value came from where it was sold. Without British and French markets, Arabian oil would lose its value since it could not be converted to currency. This was one of two comforts for the U.S. in regards to Middle Eastern oil. The second involved Dulles' admission that it was economically feasible to send larger oil tankers around the Cape of Africa.<sup>92</sup> The Suez Canal was slowly becoming too small for the bigger ships utilizing newer technology for larger cargoes. These facts, however, did not deter violence over the Suez nationalization.

President Eisenhower summed up the outbreak of violence during his address to the nation on October 31, 1956.<sup>93</sup> He reported that the Israelis mobilized on the 28<sup>th</sup>, penetrated the Sinai peninsula in the direction of the Suez Canal on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and were

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<sup>91</sup> *DSB, Volume 38, Jan-June 1958, p. 726.*

<sup>92</sup> *DSB, Volume 35, July-Dec 1956, p. 476.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid, p. 743.*

joined in attacking Egyptian positions by British and French troops on the 30<sup>th</sup>. He emphasized that the British, French, and Israeli governments did not consult the U.S. government in anyway nor were American troops involved in the attack. His speech, while trying not to forcefully condemn the longtime American allies, did firmly announce U.S. impartiality in the conflict.

Secretary Dulles was deeply affected by the Israeli attack and even more hurt by the subsequent British and French involvement. He addressed the U.N. on November 1 with a self-stated "heavy heart".<sup>94</sup> Two days prior to addressing the U.N. and one day before the British and French attack on the Sinai, Dulles commented, "that this was the blackest day which has occurred in many years in the relations between England and France and the United States."<sup>95</sup> Despite the personal disappointment, Dulles remained committed to fulfilling past U.S. obligations in the area to assist in the case of outside aggression. The Tripartite Declaration weighed on his mind even though the British and French had just broken the agreement. In a meeting with the President, Dulles even contemplated intervening on behalf of Egypt in order to carry out U.S. promises; this idea was shot down rather quickly.<sup>96</sup> Eisenhower and Dulles, however, seemed to be on the same non-political page. Eisenhower commented at the same meeting that he didn't "care if he [got] reelected or not, we must make good on our word."<sup>97</sup>

The U.S. fulfilled its commitment to intervene by utilizing the United Nations, but the U.N. did not bring a quick solution to end the conflict. The British and French

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 751.

<sup>95</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 30 October 1956, *FRUS* 1955-1957, vol. XVI p. 867.

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, 29 October 1956, *FRUS* 1955-1957, vol. XVI, p. 833.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*



vetoed an October 29<sup>th</sup> Security Council resolution that would have demanded the necessary ceasefire arrangements.<sup>98</sup> Instead of cooperating, British and French delegates issued an alternative 12-hour ultimatum for a cessation of hostilities as a precursor for their own attack; these two nations had no intentions of staying out of the fight. Dulles then took the proposal to the General Assembly on October 31<sup>st</sup>, trying to find some workable solution to end the violence. Due to stalling techniques and the concurrent Hungarian Crisis in Eastern Europe, the ceasefire resolution did not come to a vote until November 2, four full days after the start of hostilities.<sup>99</sup> The Israeli, British and French forces had delivered a stunning defeat by this time, confirming the intention of their stalling techniques. It was another four days before the ceasefire truly took hold, but it would not have occurred without some behind the scenes maneuvering by Secretary Dulles. He refused to help the British or the French in securing other sources of oil or in firming up their worsening economic situations; the two dissenting nations had no choice but to back down.<sup>100</sup> The Israelis, without Western support, had to follow suit. Over the course of several months and after extensive U.N. action, the Israelis withdrew to pre-war armistice boundaries.

Some interesting circumstances emerged from the Suez War in 1956. The first involved the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) placed in the Sinai peninsula as a military buffer between Israel and Egypt.<sup>101</sup> UNEF was largely a symbolic force with little military capability, but it did ensure Israeli access to the Straits

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<sup>98</sup> *DSB*, Volume 35, July-Dec 1956, p. 747.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Brands, p. 67.

<sup>101</sup> *DSB*, Volume 36, Jan-June 1957, p. 387.

of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba, the only water route to the southern Israeli port city of Eilat. Additionally, UNEF raised the direct involvement of the U.N. as a mediator in border disputes, but the force's role was consistently debated for its entire existence. Heightened U.N. involvement is particularly puzzling in respect to the Arab-Israeli crisis, especially after Secretary Dulles recognized that "it may have been somewhat laggard, somewhat impotent in dealing with many injustices which are inherent in [the] Middle East situation."<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the United Nations remained the only organization with the desire and the historical ties to mediate the conflict.

The Suez War also damaged U.S. relations with Egypt and the other Arab states bordering Israel. In the first day of the Israeli attack on the Sinai, Ahmed Hussein, Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S., commented that the Egyptian government and its people thought that the U.S. had not placed enough restraint upon Israel to prevent violence.<sup>103</sup> The existence of such ideas in the Middle East created two problems for U.S. policymakers before they could even react to the unfolding crisis. First, it demonstrated that Arabs felt the U.S. was a responsible party and able to restrain Israel. The U.S. was now firmly entrenched on Israel's side, despite the numerous attempts to remain impartial in the dispute. Second, the Ambassador's idea showed the Egyptian (and Arab) perception of Israeli influence in U.S. governing circles. In many cases, this perception was not true, especially in a State Department that had come to resent any pro-Israel lobbying or pressure on policymaking. However, that the perception existed at all was problematic for the U.S. cause. It had the effect of driving Arab nations

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 751.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 29 October 1956, *FRUS* 1955-1957, vol. XVI, p. 831.

further away from the U.S. and the West and it left the impression that communism could perhaps win in the Middle East.

Once again, communism and the U.S. perception of communist aggression entered the Middle East in the wake of the Suez Crisis. In January 1957, Secretary Dulles spoke urged Congress to take steps to prevent a communist takeover in the Middle East. He linked the timing of the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolt as evidence of an international communist plot.<sup>104</sup> Also, Dulles pointed to evidence that the communists were targeting the one million Palestinian refugees with propaganda sent via Arab-language radio broadcasts. The Cold War in the Middle East intensified, but Dulles refused to back down. He concluded his speech by asserting that the U.S. did not want to play the role of the observer; it had the decisive assets to counter international communism in the area.<sup>105</sup>

Two things emerged from the renewed U.S. commitment to use its assets to turn back communist advances in the Middle East: a renewal of the UNRWA funding to assist the Palestinian refugees and the creation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The UNRWA funding was coming under increasing fire because it had been ineffective for more than ten years.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, the money kept flowing into the program without any real innovation. The Eisenhower Doctrine of March 1957, however, marked a definite change for U.S. policy in the Middle East. The Doctrine stated that the U.S., if asked, would aid any Middle Eastern nation threatened by an external communist attack.

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<sup>104</sup> *DSB*, Volume 36, Jan-June 1957, p. 170.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *DSB*, Volume 39, July-Dec 1958, p. 775.

At this point, the U.S. was committed to deliver troops to the Middle East in certain situations, a scenario that it tried to avoid in 1948 and 1956. The fear of communist takeover, however, had become so ingrained that further U.S. involvement was the natural next step.

By May 1957, the majority of issues involved in the Suez crisis had been temporarily resolved. Israel had withdrawn to pre-war boundaries, UNEF was in place as a buffer, and overall, world attention began to turn away from the festering Arab-Israeli dispute. Even the Arab states shunned dealing with Israel in favor of grappling with each other for supremacy in the Arab world. Secretary Dulles seemed almost prophetic in a January 1957 speech that referred to the disunity between Arab states and Israel only being matched by the disunity amongst the Arab nations themselves.<sup>107</sup> In February 1958, the U.S. officially recognized the United Arab Republic (UAR), the official merger of Syrian and Egyptian governments under Nasser. Soon afterwards, a short-lived Arab Union formed between Iraq and Jordan. Nasser was apparently upset at Iraq and Jordan for not joining the UAR and it created heightened tension in the region; Dulles could only describe the situation as “evolving” and in need of close monitoring.<sup>108</sup>

All the posturing and name-calling between the Arab states after the Suez Crisis led to U.S. involvement in the Lebanese Civil War. As early as May 1958, Dulles admitted that Lebanese President Chamoun believed that UAR supporters (read communists) were engineering a coup to overthrow the current democratic government

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<sup>107</sup> *DSB*, Volume 36, Jan-June 1957, p. 126.

<sup>108</sup> *DSB*, Volume 38, Jan-June 1958, p. 602.

in Lebanon.<sup>109</sup> While at the time Dulles did not seem too concerned with Chamoun's allegations, the situation changed in mid-July. On July 14, 1958, UAR supporters seized the Iraqi government in Baghdad and murdered its top officials. For Eisenhower and Dulles, this changed the entire situation in Lebanon; they promptly followed up the Eisenhower Doctrine's promises and sent 15,000 troops to Beirut to keep the peace and protect American citizens.<sup>110</sup> The situation normalized shortly after U.S. troops arrived, but the Lebanon crisis clearly displayed a heightened American role in the Middle East along with the fact that Arab-Israeli concerns were now secondary to Arab unity issues.

Near the end of Dulles time as Secretary, his health began to decline rapidly. He was forced to take a brief sick leave for medical treatment shortly after the Suez Crisis in 1956, but by 1959, the cancer had taken over. Dulles resigned his post on April 15, 1959 and died less than two months later on May 24, 1959. Assistant Secretary of State Christian Herter was promoted to take Dulles place. Fortunately, "Herter's term produced virtually nothing" as there were no major emergencies to handle.<sup>111</sup> To be fair, he was thrown into a demanding position at the end of Eisenhower's second term; the conditions for effective leadership were not ideal.

The end of Dulles life was the end of an era for U.S. involvement in the Middle East. The ten years after 1956 were relatively quiet for Arab-Israeli matters as the Arab nations turned increasingly on each other. The UNEF served its purpose as a buffer between Israel and Egypt by preventing any major hostilities between the two nations.

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 942-950.

<sup>110</sup> *DSB*, Volume 39, July-Dec 1958, p. 181.

<sup>111</sup> Marks, Frederick W., *Power and Peace: The Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), p. 145.

The UNTSO, Palestine Conciliation Commission, and the separate Mixed Armistice Commissions continued to function sporadically as U.N. peacekeeping mechanisms, and the intensity of terrorist raids and retaliatory attacks died down for a brief period. There were occasional violent flare-ups in Gaza, the Golan Heights and the West Bank, but for the most part, Arab-Israeli hostilities were contained.

Despite the calming of Arab-Israeli tensions, the Dulles era did leave its share of problems. Over one million Palestinian refugees were still homeless without much hope for the future. As early as 1958, policymakers began to criticize the UNRWA and call it a mere stopgap that did not contribute to a peaceful permanent settlement.<sup>112</sup> The refugees' existence continued to stifle any peace negotiations, as it seemed no one had any innovative or effective plans acceptable to both sides of the dispute. Additionally, the Dulles era had served to heighten the U.S. perception of a communist threat in the Middle East. The Czech arms deal to Nasser's Egypt in 1955 and the subsequent Soviet pandering to Arab leaders contributed to this perception, but the blame also falls on Dulles, Eisenhower, and their staffers. U.S. policymakers wanted to see communism in order to quantify the Cold War and show signs of winning or losing the fight. The Cold War rhetoric dominated their everyday lives, and it was inevitable that they perceived hints of communism in Arab neutralism and Arab nationalism. U.S. government officials fell victim to their own views of monolithic communist subversion.

Cold War rhetoric repeatedly found its way into Dulles' speeches and news conferences, but the perception of threat always seemed heightened when asking

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<sup>112</sup> *DSB*, Volume 39, July-Dec 1958, p. 775.

Congress for more funding. Dulles knew that atheistic communism would never take a firm hold in fiercely Islamic Arab nations; the tenets of Islam were too ingrained on the people to allow for such a scenario. However, Dulles also knew that Congress did not want to allow communist expansion during their terms of office. Any mention of communist subversion raised an eyebrow or two and greased the wheels of Congressional approval. Dulles was able to gain authorization for a larger (200 million dollar) discretionary fund for the Middle East just by portraying a serious communist threat to the area.<sup>113</sup> It was an interesting method for policy makers to achieve control over foreign aid, but it served to perpetuate the overblown myth of communist threat and capability in the Middle East.

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<sup>113</sup> *DSB*, Volume 36, Jan-June 1957, p. 126.

### DEAN RUSK STEPS IN

In 1990, Dean Rusk commented, “if I were responsible for Middle East policy today, I would approach it exactly as I did in the forties and later in the sixties: on my knees in prayer.”<sup>114</sup> His remarks only magnify the Secretary’s personal frustration with the same intractable dilemmas that created so many problems for his predecessors, Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles. Rusk had been a State Department staffer with Dean Acheson during Israel’s creation in the late forties, and both men had felt the criticism from Arabs and Jews along with the pinch of Truman’s unilateral recognition. All Rusk really wanted then and during his term as Secretary of State was a “plan that both Jews and Arabs could live with.”<sup>115</sup> Such a plan did not come in 1961 or any other time during the next 40 years.

Secretary Rusk understood that the position of secretary of state was changing. He pointed out to the media that as the international climate became more complex and interconnected, the assistant secretaries of state were forced into a more prominent role in the Department of State.<sup>116</sup> Rusk intended to lean on his assistants as experts in their area, but it did not diminish the Secretary’s role in deciding on or communicating policy. In fact, Rusk became a visible figurehead of the State Department machine; he gave a handful of television interviews at the start of his term as secretary in which he set the

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<sup>114</sup> Rusk, p. 153.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *DSB*, Volume 44, Jan-June 1961, p. 296.



tone for the entire organization. Even with the ever-changing world, Rusk was in charge and remained so for the next eight years.

Secretary Rusk inherited the UNEF in the Sinai peninsula and the UNRWA in and around Israel, both of which were heavily dependent on U.S. financial support. The U.S. contributed 48.5 percent of the funding for UNEF forces in Egypt, mostly because the USSR refused to pay for any part of the buffer force.<sup>117</sup> In addition, U.S. representatives to the U.N. reported that the UNRWA programs received over 70 percent of its funding from the U.S.<sup>118</sup> Despite the financial support, the refugee population continued to grow by nearly 30,000 people per year without any signs of slowing down. The money, the effort, and the U.S. and U.N. commitment to alleviate the refugees' plight were all coming up short in terms of a permanent solution. The important thing to note in this area is that the U.S. was the primary resource provider for these organizations. This created two distinct problems. First, the U.S. and the U.N. were tied to these organizations, and any failures by UNEF or the UNRWA would generate even more Arab resentment. Second, the U.S. was so deeply entrenched in the programs that it would have been unreasonable to pull out of the region completely. The U.S. was firmly committed in the Middle East for the long run.

Secretary Rusk also inherited an intense battle amongst the Arab states for supremacy over the Arab world. The Arab struggles after Lebanon in 1958 flared up again in September 1962 in Yemen. To sum it up, a group of Yemeni rebels rose up against their government and seized control. Nasser and the UAR supported the rebel

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<sup>117</sup> *DSB*, Volume 43, July-Dec 1960, p. 512.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p. 803.

movement while Saudi Arabia's monarchy fought for the recently deposed Yemeni monarchy.<sup>119</sup> It was a display of Arab infighting at its peak; Nasser's populist ideas had caused trouble with the typically conservative Arab monarchs, especially since the end of the Suez Crisis. Recently elected President John F. Kennedy opted to straddle the fence by offering support to both sides of the dispute.<sup>120</sup> The rebels won in Yemen, and order was restored rather quickly, but the calming of inter-Arab tensions only meant that Israel once again became a primary target for Arab angst.

America's slow lean towards Israel, which started after the Suez Crisis, forced the U.S. to choose a side. The Arab states became increasingly outraged at the West, especially the U.S., so American options appeared to be limited. The decision to side with Israel was never made consciously and openly until 1962, but prior to Kennedy's statement about the U.S. and Israel's "special relationship", growing Middle East commitments and Arab discontent placed the U.S. in unwitting support of Israel.<sup>121</sup> The situation was not problematic for Rusk until after Arab tensions cooled down in the wake of the Yemen war. From that point on, Arab nationalism slowly consolidated and focused its rhetoric on Israel and the U.S. The U.S., by this time, had firmly declared its "deeply held conviction that Israel's independence and integrity must be preserved."<sup>122</sup>

Part of this conviction caused the U.S. to supply Israel with defensive Hawk anti-aircraft missiles in late 1962 and also to tolerate Israel's unilateral and increasingly violent counterattacks to terrorist border strikes. Kennedy made the decision to send the

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<sup>119</sup> Brands, p. 84.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>122</sup> *DSB*, Volume 46, Jan-June 1962, p. 674.

Hawks in the wake of the Yemen war, and it certainly did not sit well with Israel's Arab neighbors.<sup>123</sup> Also, it appeared that Israel was actively obstructing UNTSO's capabilities in enforcing the truce, especially when it came to counterattacks in response to terrorist raids. In April 1962, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution that harshly condemned Israel for its response to a March terrorist attack along the Syrian border. Israel was to be "called on scrupulously to refrain from such actions in the future," but that was the limit of the United Nations' punitive abilities.<sup>124</sup> Despite these developments, Chester Bowles, Kennedy's Special Representative and Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs, pointed to hope for improvement in relations with the Middle East.<sup>125</sup> In contradiction, Bowles also mentioned that "a single explosive accident could reverse the gradual progress that is underway and plunge the whole region into bloody chaos."<sup>126</sup> It seemed as if U.S. policymakers did not fully understand the implications of siding with Israel or the actual status of the Middle East.

While President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 was a tragic event in United States' history, it held a silver lining for the Israelis.<sup>127</sup> Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's successor, was a well-known supporter of the Jewish cause in the Middle East. If the U.S. tilt towards Israel started after the Suez crisis, it made a gigantic leap when Johnson became President. Even though Rusk remained secretary of state for Johnson's entire time as President, the President held the actual power for decision-making. Rusk could only make policy recommendations and communicate U.S.

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<sup>123</sup> Brands, pp. 88-89.

<sup>124</sup> *DSB*, Volume 46, Jan-June 1962, p. 735.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 765.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Brands, p. 89.

intentions. Nonetheless, Rusk remained a prominent figure in foreign policy formation, and the fact that he held the office for eight full years provided his legitimacy for making key recommendations and decisions on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, Johnson's focus was primarily on domestic concerns; he did have wide knowledge of international affairs, but for the most part, he relied on the judgment of his close advisers, Secretary Rusk, and the rest of the Department of State machinery. If anything, Johnson's ascension to the Presidency increased Rusk's handle on foreign policy formulation. The one difference was the slight presidential tilt towards the Israelis.

By October 1964, the Arab-Israeli dispute was the hardest perennial issue on the U.N. agenda; more than one fifth of the U.N.'s sessions to that date dealt with Arab-Israeli problems.<sup>128</sup> The U.S., however, was not making the problem any easier. In February 1965, Secretary Rusk announced the sale of U.S. tanks to Israel.<sup>129</sup> Tanks were undoubtedly offensive weapons, but Rusk defended the move by mentioning U.S. desire to ensure a "reasonable" balance of forces in the area. This was another decision based on the fear of Soviet influence because the Soviets continued to supply Israel's Arab enemies with modernized weaponry. The U.S. felt the need to defend Israel, its one true Middle Eastern ally. In addition, U.S. delegates to the U.N. announced in November 1965 that the U.S. would cut back funding for the UNRWA in the hopes that other countries would pick up the slack.<sup>130</sup> The official U.S. position for the decision was that the UNRWA had been wholly ineffective in creating conditions for a permanent peace

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<sup>128</sup> *DSB*, Volume 51, July-Dec 1964, p. 51.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1025.

settlement. This notion had never prevented U.S. funding in the past; in fact, U.S. support had sustained the UNRWA through failure after failure since its inception in 1949. Clearly, this was a departure for U.S. Middle East policy, but it did not end the longstanding U.S. support for the other U.N. mechanisms involved in the peace process.

Regardless of U.S. policy changes, the Arab-Israeli dispute only intensified in 1965 and 1966. In 1966, the U.N. Security Council addressed Israeli counterstrikes on Syria in July 1966 and Jordan in November 1966. These two counterattacks served as bookends to an October 1966 Syrian terrorist attack in which the Israelis appealed to the U.N. peace machinery before moving militarily. The peace mechanisms were proven once again to be ineffective and inconsistently utilized, but the U.S. insisted that its policy remained “the [maintenance] of peace and [reliance] on the U.N.”<sup>131</sup> As a result, the escalating violence went unchecked. Terrorists from Syria and Jordan began to invade Israel routinely and Israel responded with increasing force.

All of the attacks and counterattacks in the Middle East were spiraling towards a larger conflict. In May 1967, Nasser had seen enough. In order to harness the Arab states’ fierce anti-Israeli sentiments for his own pan-Arab intentions, Nasser ordered the UNEF buffer in the Sinai peninsula to withdraw.<sup>132</sup> U.S. policy on the existence of UNEF was clear since the end of the Suez Crisis. Secretary Dulles had declared that once consent for UNEF occupation was given, it could not be arbitrarily withdrawn.<sup>133</sup> An arbitrary decision was precisely the scenario that U.N. Secretary General U Thant set

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<sup>131</sup> *DSB*, Volume 54, Jan-June 1956, p. 313.

<sup>132</sup> Brands, p. 103.

<sup>133</sup> *DSB*, Volume 36, Jan-June 1957, p. 595.

into motion on May 18, 1967 as he complied with Nasser's demand and ordered UNEF withdrawal. The move puzzled U.S. policymakers, especially since U Thant made the decision unilaterally only two days after Nasser's ultimatum. To make matters even worse, UAR forces occupied the strategically vital Sharm el Sheikh and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on May 22. As Egyptian troops moved into the Sinai and towards the southern Israeli border, the situation was escalating at a precarious rate.

President Johnson urged restraint in his statement of May 23. Despite the UNEF withdrawal, Johnson hoped that hostilities could be avoided until the international community had time to act.<sup>134</sup> Ironically, the U.N. had just removed itself from the situation in a hasty UNEF withdrawal, and now President Johnson hoped to use the remnants of U.N. peacemaking devices to calm the hostilities. Unfortunately, Johnson did not realize the irony until fighting actually broke out in early June. Meanwhile, Secretary Rusk did not make any major public statements leading up to the 1967 war. He was far too preoccupied with behind the scenes maneuvering to even stop and inform the public.

The day of UNEF withdrawal, Jordan's King Hussein made his thoughts known to the U.S. ambassador in Amman.<sup>135</sup> King Hussein feared that the Israelis would take advantage of Nasser's brinkmanship and invade Jordan to fulfill long time territorial objectives. Additionally, the Jordanian leader pointed to two past historical crises in which Israel threatened one Arab state, then attacked another; in 1956, Israel threatened Jordan and attacked Egypt, and in 1966, Israel had threatened Syria only to move against

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<sup>134</sup> *DSB*, Volume 54, Jan-June 1966, p. 870.

<sup>135</sup> Burns, Amman, to Department of State, 18 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 16.

Jordan. The U.S. ambassador to Jordan could only communicate to King Hussein that the U.S. stood by the 1950 Tripartite Declaration, its 1956 reaffirmation, and the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine. Other than those assurances, the U.S. did not guarantee any preset reactions to the use of military force. This proved to be less than reassuring to King Hussein and the surrounding Arab leaders.

The UAR's quick move into the Sinai and Sharm el-Sheikh by May 22<sup>nd</sup> frightened many Israeli leaders and caused full-scale Israeli military mobilization. U.S. policymakers, on the other hand, were confident in Israel's military capability. A CIA assessment of Israeli capabilities on May 23 projected that Israel could defend on three fronts while attacking on a fourth; in other words, Israel would compensate for its lack of military size with its superior training and communication in order to defeat any Arab attack.<sup>136</sup> Secretary Rusk and President Johnson tried to assure Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol of U.S. projections, but the Israelis continued to worry.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, U.S. officials received two separate assurances that the UAR would not strike first, one from the U.S. embassy in the UAR on May 23 and another from Nasser himself in a secret meeting with U.S. representatives on June 1.<sup>138</sup> Eshkol and Eban, however, did not care to listen to U.S. advice. The Israeli public's apocalyptic attitude, pressure for a pre-emptive strike on the UAR, and the economic toll of full-scale Israeli mobilization made war a definite possibility.

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<sup>136</sup> CIA Memorandum, 23 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 73.

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum for Record, 26 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 127.

<sup>138</sup> Nolte, Cairo, to Department of State, 23 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 66, and Wellman, Lisbon, to Department of State, 2 June 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 233.

In addition to Israel's apocalyptic sentiments, Secretary Rusk reported to Johnson that the Israelis "have absolutely no faith in anything useful coming out of the U.N."<sup>139</sup> The Soviet desire to perpetuate tension, coupled with their veto in the Security Council, only worked to paralyze the U.N. from working effectively. Once again the U.N. proved consistently inept at calming Arab-Israeli hostilities, a twenty-year trend. Nonetheless, U.S. policymakers continued to defer to U.N. deliberations. It functioned as a stalling tactic in preventing an Israeli strike, but the U.N. did not produce any meaningful measures to maintain the peace.

Rusk and Johnson focused on the Tiran Straits issue of the dispute, hoping that by resolving this part of the problem, a major war would be averted.<sup>140</sup> The UAR's position, however, remained firm. For Nasser, the Egyptian thrust into the Sinai and seizure of Sharm el-Sheikh simply returned his nation to its pre-1956 Suez Crisis borders.<sup>141</sup> The Israelis had struck first in 1956 and gained access to a southern waterway, Nasser was now taking that away. Arab leaders in Lebanon, Kuwait, and Libya held the same views. They pointed out that Israel did not have access to the Gulf of Aqaba between 1947 and 1956, so it could not have been a vital resource for Israeli national security.<sup>142</sup> Rusk did not see it this way. He only reaffirmed the past U.S. commitment to protect the Tiran Straits as an international waterway. This was the same policy that Dulles had confirmed after the Suez Crisis. It was a major political victory

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<sup>139</sup> Rusk to Johnson, 26 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 123.

<sup>140</sup> Memorandum for Record, 26 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 127.

<sup>141</sup> Rostow to Johnson, 26 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 146.

<sup>142</sup> Rusk to Amman, 27 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 157.



for Israel to receive U.S. support on this issue, but U.S. support was not total. Rusk made it very clear that Israel would be alone if it acted alone.<sup>143</sup>

On June 1, 1967, Col. Nasser met with former U.S. Ambassador Robert Anderson to discuss the growing crisis in detail. Anderson reported back to the Department of State that Nasser did not want to attack first, but he was ready if and when Israel made the first move.<sup>144</sup> Additionally, Nasser communicated his feeling that U.S. policy was driven entirely by the large Jewish-American voting block and that the U.S. government would never oppose its desires. These ideas caused Anderson a great deal of concern, and upon consulting with other Arab leaders who traditionally opposed Nasser, the U.S. envoy found that they agreed with Nasser's views of U.S. policy formation and applauded his efforts against Israel.<sup>145</sup> Nasser left the meeting by saying that he was not a communist and that he truly desired better relations with the U.S. government.

Nasser's statements bring up two points that must be addressed. The first deals with the role of communism in the Six-Day War. The Israelis were gravely concerned that any war would bring the Soviets to the rescue of Arab nations. Secretary Rusk, however, determined on May 24 that the Soviets were taking a harsh public stance in supporting Nasser but privately did not desire armed conflict.<sup>146</sup> It seemed that the Arabs, Israelis, Soviets, and Americans all did not want a war to break out. The second point relates to Arab perception of U.S. policy. One CIA memorandum pointed out that

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<sup>143</sup> Memorandum for Record, 26 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 127.

<sup>144</sup> Wellman, Lisbon, to Department of State, 2 June 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 233.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Memorandum for Record, 24 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 87.

Israel was the big winner no matter what happened because they had finally achieved a “special relationship” with the U.S. government.<sup>147</sup> The U.S. was openly committed to Israeli policies against Nasser, and U.S. government officials could not back down without becoming a paper tiger. A second CIA memorandum reported an even worse scenario. “During the past twenty years, a generation of Arab youth have grown to maturity under the idea that Israel would not exist if the U.S. had not created it.”<sup>148</sup> The point was the U.S. could not hope to salvage any good will from the Arab people, so U.S. policymakers were forced to turn completely to the Israeli side.

On June 5, 1967, the Six-Day War began. At first, it was unclear who started the attack. Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol blamed Egypt for the initial fighting, but it was evident by early afternoon that the Israelis had fired the first shot.<sup>149</sup> In the first few days of fighting, the Israeli military confirmed the U.S. projections of superiority; Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) penetrated the Sinai and achieved total air superiority. Despite the obvious U.S. support for Israel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Robert McCloskey declared on June 5 that the U.S. position was neutral in “thought, word, and deed.”<sup>150</sup> This put the U.S. pro-Israel lobbyists into a fit of rage; it prompted Secretary Rusk to make his first public statement on the Arab-Israeli conflict in more than a week. Rusk declared that U.S. neutrality did not imply indifference, an obvious attempt to salvage Israeli support and divert attention from McCloskey’s comments.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Memorandum by Saunders, 31 May 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 208.

<sup>148</sup> CIA Intelligence Memorandum, 3 June 1967, *FRUS* pp *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 266.

<sup>149</sup> CIA Intelligence Memorandum, 5 June 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 318.

<sup>150</sup> Editorial Note, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 311.

<sup>151</sup> *DSB*, Volume 56, Jan-June 1967, p. 949.

Rusk's dodge further displayed the level of Israeli influence in U.S. politics and the firmness of the U.S.-Israel friendship.

This friendship was tested on June 8 as the *USS Liberty*, an American reconnaissance vessel stationed off the coast of Egypt, came under Israeli attack. Two Israeli jets made a total of six strafing runs on the vessel; twenty minutes after the air assault, three Israeli torpedo boats finished off the job, nearly sinking the *Liberty*.<sup>152</sup> This incident had the potential to drive a wedge between Israel and the U.S., but it did not turn out that way. U.S. officials expressed their anger at the attack, but given the U.S. position in the Middle East, it did not strain relations for very long. U.S. government officials accepted the speedy Israeli conclusion that the attack was an accident caused by overzealous pilots and torpedo boat captains; officially, the U.S. did not assume any Israeli premeditation.<sup>153</sup> The same day as the attack on the *Liberty*, Israel opened up a new battlefield in the north against Syria; the timing of the attacks later led many to believe that the Israeli air strike was a diversion, not an accident.<sup>154</sup>

On June 11, the hostilities ended with Israel the overwhelming victor. It had captured the Sinai peninsula, reopened the Tiran Straits to Israeli shipping, and seized the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza strip. The balance in the Middle East had rapidly shifted in Israel's favor as U.S. attention immediately turned to creating a lasting peace. Johnson and Rusk developed a five-point peace plan to accomplish just that.<sup>155</sup> First, the plan sought to end the state of belligerency and terrorism while

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<sup>152</sup> Editorial Note, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 360.

<sup>153</sup> Tel Aviv to Department of State, 9 June 1967, *FRUS* 1964-1968, vol. XIX, p. 392.

<sup>154</sup> Brands, p. 118.

<sup>155</sup> *DSB*, Volume 57, July-Dec 1967, p. 87.

affirming every country's right to exist. Second, it demanded justice for the Arab refugees. Third, the plan called for free navigation of international waterways. This point undoubtedly referred to the question of Israeli passage through the Straits of Tiran. Fourth, the Middle East arms race must officially end. Lastly, all states must agree upon and respect recognized boundaries. The Johnson and Rusk plan was heavily slanted towards Israel, the conquering nation. On top of the plan, Rusk did not want the Israelis to concede the territory earned during the war. He stated that any return to status quo before the war was a "prescription not for peace but for renewed hostilities."<sup>156</sup> U.S. policymakers did everything in their power to ensure Israeli security and gain as much political ground as possible from the Israeli victory.

Israel's military success also prompted two distinct U.S. policy reversals. In an attempt to provide justice for the Palestinian refugees, Rusk appealed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about increased funding for the UNRWA, a program that had just experienced a 1965 budget cut at the recommendation of the State Department.<sup>157</sup> Rusk's appeal tried to utilize the momentum of cooling tensions in order to settle the refugee issue permanently, but little came of the proposal. Secondly, the U.S. began restocking Israel's armory by late October 1967.<sup>158</sup> This was not a change from past U.S. policies because the U.S. had given arms to Israel before, but it did go against the proposed five-point peace plan. The resumption of arms shipments to Israel

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652.

largely signaled the failure of the five-point plan, if it had even been a success in the first place.

After the war ended, the United Nations' legitimacy and ability to handle the Arab-Israel dispute was extremely limited. The U.S. tried to revive the U.N.'s efforts by pushing through Security Council Resolution 242 on November 22, 1967.<sup>159</sup> This resolution was very similar to the U.S. five-point plan for peace, but the U.N. version appeared to be more even-handed. It called on every nation in the area to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its region neighbors, declared that territory acquired through war was inadmissible (implying that Israel must withdraw from its conquered territories), and demanded a settlement of the refugee problem.<sup>160</sup> The problem with Resolution 242 was in its imprecise wording and its lack of punitive ability to enforce compliance; the ill-defined wording created interpretation problems for Israel and its Arab neighbors. As a result, Israel did not withdraw from all conquered territories, but the U.N. was impotent to react.<sup>161</sup> Resolution 242 was a valiant effort, but it did not produce a lasting peace.

By the end of Secretary Rusk's time in office, the secretary's role was irreversibly altered. The secretary was now more of a manager than a policy maker. The world situation was too complex for one man to handle alone. Rusk was capable through the years largely because he had been there for so long. Rusk was *the* legitimate authority for Kennedy and even more so for Johnson, who was forced to rely on Rusk's

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<sup>159</sup> Fraser, p. 83.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

experience. The president's favor did not hurt Secretary Rusk either; the Department of State made the recommendations, but the president always had the final say. For the State Department to play an important role in forming policy, the president had to trust the secretary of state. For William Rogers, Rusk's successor, the trust never seemed to exist. Newly elected President Richard Nixon was determined to center foreign policy formulation on the White House, not the State Department.<sup>162</sup> The new foreign policy power under Nixon revolved around the National Security Council and its new leader, Henry Kissinger. Kissinger later ascended to become Secretary of State for Nixon's second term, but by that time, the structural changes in foreign policy formulation were too complete. The role of Secretary of State after Dean Rusk had fundamentally changed.

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<sup>162</sup> Kissinger, Henry, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 30.

## CONCLUSION

It seemed as though each secretary of state had to wrestle with the same issues as his predecessor and was unable to fix the situation for his successor. The role of oil, the Palestinian refugees, communist subversion, domestic political pressure, the United Nations, and arms shipments kept reappearing as problems throughout the entire 20-year span between Israel's creation and the Six-Day War. The intensity of each individual pressure often varied, so the secretary's approach had to change as well. The result is a traceable thread of U.S. policy that reveals specific trends over time. These trends are important to study and understand simply because the separate pressures (with the exception of communism) still exist today. By focusing on the time between 1947 and 1967, one can start to truly comprehend the seriousness of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This project, however, did not focus entirely on the events of the dispute. The events were important, but the spotlight was on U.S. policy creation and the secretary of state. The method of reviewing public statements was extremely helpful in piecing together the building blocks of the United States' Arab-Israeli policies over time, but the technique became less effective as the Six-Day War approached. The world situation, as stated above, grew increasingly complex as time went on; it became more and more difficult for the secretary of state to completely master U.S. foreign policy. The secretary of state had a tough job, but after Dean Rusk left office, the job became even tougher. This is why the research ended after 1967; to look at the public speeches after this point would not do justice to the expanding role of the National Security Council and the intricacies of world politics. Interestingly enough, as the role of news media

expanded in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, the amount of information that U.S. officials felt comfortable making public declined. It is ironic that what should have brought more comprehensive coverage of foreign policy only created a tight-lipped attitude amongst policymakers. One can view Dean Rusk and slow recession of candid press conferences as time passed as evidence of this phenomenon.

That being said, the pressures and events of Arab-Israeli conflicts provide a good starting point for studying U.S. policy. Secretary Marshall, during his brief stint as secretary of state, did not have to deal much with refugees or oil, but he did have to face the pro-Israeli political pressure and the undetermined role of the United Nations. His pledge to support the U.N. as the key to the world's future and his non-political approach to policy formation set a solid precedent for post-World War II secretaries of state. Acheson, Dulles, and Rusk would all try to emulate Marshall's dedication to the U.N. and his fervent impartiality, especially with respect to Arab-Israeli issues.

Dean Acheson, on the other hand, had to face the more problematic pressures of communism and Palestinian refugees head on. His time in office was a busy and confusing era. The refugee problem exploded as soon as he came to office, and it seemed that he did not know how to handle it. The consequences of a large, homeless population also seemed to tie into the growing fear of communist subversion. All of the different pressures fit into a grand Arab-Israeli puzzle that could have been solved, in Acheson's mind, with a few small adjustments in a few minor places. This attitude, however, ended up costing the United States in the long run. When the Korean War erupted, the Cold War rhetoric took hold. The view of monolithic communism was just



developing, but it seeped into every aspect of U.S. foreign policy; the Arab-Israeli dispute was not immune. Essentially, by the end of Acheson's time, the fear of communism had created a delay in any decisive action in the Middle East. This lack of early action allowed for the Arabs and Israelis to consolidate their positions and intensify their hatred for the other side.

Dulles rode this same wave of communist fear into his time as Secretary of State. He was dedicated to ending communism's grip all over the world, but he planned on doing it by keeping a consistent foreign policy based on past decisions. This meant that the refugee problem and the role of the U.N. in the negotiations remained in the same condition as during Marshall's term as secretary. Also, Dulles kept Marshall's and Acheson's dedication to even-handedness in the Arab-Israeli dispute, but the events of Dulles' time would put the U.S. in a precarious position. It was as if the U.S. were forced to go to the Israeli camp simply because Truman had supported Israel's creation. This one policy decision generated such a storm of Arab resentment that it caused generation after generation to hate the United States. The reaction was unavoidable, but the Arab resentment showed its face in the wake of the Suez Crisis. Even though Dulles and the U.S. tried to remain impartial, the Arabs' perceptions consolidated the West into one large imperialist structure bent on Arab exploitation. The ill will flowed from the Mideast towards the United States.

By the time of Dean Rusk, the domestic political pressure from pro-Israeli sources did not have much of an effect on U.S. policy; the U.S. had, for all intents and purposes, declared its solidarity with the Israeli cause. This developed from the fact that

Arab resentment was so strong that it was an impossible fight to reverse the trend. Also during Rusk's time, the refugee issue reasserted its prominence while the Soviets kept up the subversive pressure that started under Dulles. The United Nations was becoming less and less of an international force, so Rusk tended to rely on his own and the State Department's abilities to maintain peace. Eventually, the U.N. reasserted its international position in the Arab-Israeli dispute, but not until long after Rusk left office.

One of the most important pressures for all of the secretaries of state dealt with the economics of the Arab-Israeli dispute. First, Middle Eastern oil was a vital commodity on the world market; Europe and the United States (indirectly) depended on it during this time period. Any disruption in Arab-Israeli relations had the potential to shut down the oil flow from Arab nations. This especially became a concern under Dulles during the 1956 Suez Crisis. This was the first concrete demonstration of how much the West relied on Arab oil reserves. It was a lesson that was never forgotten. The second point ties in directly to the refugee problem. The refugees placed a great deal of economic stress on the Middle East. The U.S. felt that by using its unending financial capability, it could contain the refugee dilemma. Unfortunately, no amount of money would make the situation better.

The Arab-Israeli dispute still exists today. Unfortunately, the refugee issue, the role of oil, domestic pressures, and U.N. participation levels still vex any hope for a quick and peaceful solution in the near future. The U.S., of course, is still heavily involved in the dispute, so much so that it often seems that America is the true battlefield for Arab-Israeli conflicts, not the Middle East. Arab resentment towards the United

States is a major political roadblock in this country, especially after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. This was a clear manifestation of the level of Arab hatred of the West, and while the terrorists may not have represented a majority of Arab people, U.S. perceptions made it seem so. Thus, the battle rages on. Overall though, the U.S. has played and will continue to play a decisive role if an Arab-Israeli settlement ever comes.

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