

The University of Washington Bothell

**Democracy, Strategic Interests & U.S. Foreign Policy in the Arab World:
A Multiple Case Study of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan & Saudi Arabia**

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Abstract

What determines U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world? In order to address this question, an inductive multiple case study of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia was conducted. These four Arab countries were selected due to their varying political positions and relationships with the U.S. I argue that the U.S.'s prioritization of strategic interests trumps or, in some cases, stifles support for the democratic process within the context of U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world, and that "democracy" is only advocated for when it serves U.S. desire for stability and hegemony throughout the region. Examining Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia demonstrates that political stability in the region, resistance to terrorism and unrest, Israel's interests, and economic gains through oil and weapon production and sales are the U.S.'s key priorities. The results of this study will contribute to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive assessment of complex interdependence and political incongruences in U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world.

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Executive Summary

What determines U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world? The Department of State has defined the key goals of U.S. foreign policy as protecting the U.S. and American citizens, advancing “democracy,” defending human rights, encouraging economic growth and prosperity, and promoting international understanding of American values and policies.¹ However, all goals are not equal when considering U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world. Although American politicians take public positions based upon a global demand for democratic and values-based policies, U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world is primarily based upon strategic-based interests. In Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, U.S. foreign policy is heavily interdependence, as cooperation between states is contingent upon what is mutually beneficial both in terms of political and economic goals. Meanwhile, economic stability and positive, steady relations with Israel are priorities the U.S. relations with Jordan and Egypt. Silence on human rights violations and lack of effective policies regarding the democratic process throughout all four countries indicates that priorities in the Arab world continue to fall under the categories of hegemonic, tactical power for the U.S.

The purpose of this research is to examine how the prioritization of various strategic interests repeatedly trumps the U.S.’ desire for democracy within the context of U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world. Strategic interests have been framed within the concept of global trade, regional security, Israel’s interests, and military power. The theory through which I will be examining each case is that of “complex interdependence,”

¹ “What are the Key Policies of the U.S. Department of State?” (2015). *U.S. Department of State*.

discussed in Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's *Power and interdependence: world politics in transition*. This theory argues that states and their finances are inextricably tied, increasing cooperation between states.

Reflecting upon the past decade of U.S. relations in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia is vital in understanding current issues that are occurring in the region, and attempting to comprehend the relationship between regional peace, resistance to violence and individual freedoms and rights. If the U.S. government truly wishes to achieve the Department of State's foreign policy objectives, it must confront existing negative impacts of favoritism towards oppressive regimes over human rights and democratic representation. In order to do so, The U.S. government and U.S. political representatives must transition to a system that addresses political transparency and values-based policies in addition to military access, regional stability and hegemonic power.

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Literature Review

Overview

In order to address determinants of U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world, key topics in existing academic literature must first be examined. While many authors treat U.S. foreign policy towards the Arab world as homogenous, it is important to understand that each nation's relationship with the U.S. that differs according to media and public opinion, religion, military and power, and trade; all of which are impacted by the U.S.' inconsistent political presence in the Arab world. While Saudi Arabia is among the least democratic nations in the world, their oil exports to and weapon imports from the U.S. have caused them to be one of the U.S.'s closest allies.² Bahrain's need for military goods and training, in addition to their geographically important location, has permitted the U.S. to disregard the widespread violations of human rights that have been particularly evident since the Arab Spring.³ Jordan's geographical location and relationship with Israel/Palestine has caused the U.S. to prioritize peace through trade and financial support.⁴ Meanwhile, the past decade has altered the way in which scholars and policymakers in the U.S.'s frame policies towards Egypt's government and people, supporting democracy while attempting to avoid the onslaught of adverse media coverage and disapproval from the Muslim Brotherhood that negatively impacts U.S. foreign relations.⁵ The following review is divided into separate categories in order to allow the

² "Freedom in the World 2014." 2014. *Freedom House*.; "U.S. Relations With Saudi Arabia Fact Sheet." U.S. Department of State. August 23, 2013. Accessed October 20, 2014.

³ "U.S. Relations With Bahrain Fact Sheet." U.S. Department of State. September 13, 2013. Accessed October 20, 2014.

⁴ "U.S. Relations With Jordan Fact Sheet." U.S. Department of State. July 03, 2014. Accessed October 20, 2014.

⁵ Snider E.A., and Faris D.M. 2011. "The Arab Spring: U.S. Democracy Promotion in Egypt". *Middle East Policy Council*. 18 (3): 49-62.

reader to differentiate between key topics and gaps discussed in the literature regarding U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world.

Trade, Weapons, and Oil

The relationship between the quest for democracy and the prioritization of strong state relations between the U.S. and different Arab countries relies heavily upon trade, weapon and oil.⁶ Rather than democracy in the region existing for the sake of human rights or domestic equality, literature and public opinion polls suggest that there are ulterior motives in the form of trade and economic stability.^{7 8} A key example of this reality rests in Saudi Arabia, which is simultaneously one of the most significant exporters of oil the U.S. trades with, while also one of the key importers of American military aircraft, defense weaponry, and armored vehicles.

It is impossible to avoid the discussion of Israel when analyzing the relationship between the U.S. and Jordan, as Jordan's involvement in the Oslo peace process was rewarded with the U.S.-Jordanian Free Trade Agreement, ensuring that the nation would stay involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.⁹ Subsequently, free-trade agreements in the region have had a significant impact on U.S. political involvement, existing in order to have a positive foreign political impact with smaller Arab nations, rather than existing

⁶ Atlas, Pierre M. 2012. "U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring: Balancing Values and Interests". *Digest of Middle East Studies*. 21 (2): 353-385.

⁷ Blanchard, Christopher. "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations." Congressional Research Service. Accessed October 21, 2014. Web.

⁸ "U.S. Relations With Saudi Arabia Fact Sheet," 2013.

⁹ Rosen, Howard, 2004. "Free Trade Agreements as Foreign Policy Tools: The US-Israel and US-Jordan FTAs." In *Free trade agreements: US strategies and priorities*, edited by Schott, Jeffrey J. 2004. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics.

as strictly economic policies.¹⁰ The U.S. argues that free trade will increase standards of living for Middle Easterners and decrease conflict in the region through a reform-oriented approach.¹¹ Yet this has been disproven by the increase of violence and lack of human rights representation in the region, with the majority of aid deriving from Western-Based NGOs who lack the trust of the public due to suspicion of ulterior motives.¹² This grim reality is even more evident in Bahrain, where the U.S. – Bahrain Free Trade Agreement has existed within a reality of human rights violations and anti-democratic oppression.¹³

Media and Public Opinion

When used correctly, media can be “a gateway to the Arab public” for U.S. policy through the perspective of public diplomacy.¹⁴ This is particularly true when the U.S. voices are heard in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which are thought of by many as the cultural, political and religious epicenters in the Arab world. Social media has proven its importance in relation to democratic thought in the region due to its roots in public opinion.¹⁵ This argument is supported by Arab public opinion, which accuses U.S. concern with democratic reform as “outright hypocrisy,” particularly as it pertained to the Bush administration.¹⁶ Existing literature on media in the Arab world suggests that

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Momani, Bessma. 2007. "A Middle East Free Trade Area: Economic Interdependence and Peace Considered". *World Economy*. 30 (11): 1682-1700.

¹² Momani, 2007.; Khakee, Anna, Mona Khalaf, Derek Lutterbeck, Hani Hourani, and May Al – Taher, 2009. "A Long-Lasting Controversy: Western Democracy Promotion in Jordan." Web.; Cooper, Andrew F., Bessma Momani, and Asif B. Farooq. 2014. "The United States and Bahrain: Interpreting the Differentiated U.S. Responses to the Arab Spring". *Digest of Middle East Studies*. 23 (2): 360-384.

¹³ "World Report 2014: Bahrain." *Human Rights Watch*.

¹⁴ Cherribi, Sam. 2009. "U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab World". *American Behavioral Scientist*. 52 (5): 755-771.

¹⁵ Robinson, Piers. 2000. "The CNN effect: can the news media drive foreign policy?" *Peace Research Abstracts*. 37 (5).

¹⁶ Dalacoura, 2005.

misinformation and the self-interested nature of the U.S. has a negative impact on how Arab-based media portrays U.S. – Arab foreign relations.¹⁷

Media is one of the key indicators of the vastly different opinions, standards, and norms across the Arab world. Al-Watan, a Saudi Arabian newspaper, has criticized Palestine for desiring democratic rights despite its secular complications, while in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood decreed that Western countries should first and foremost be known for their double standards and selfish interests surrounding democracy.¹⁸ Social media and widespread access to news information have also had a significant impact on public opinion towards U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world.¹⁹ As argued by Pierre Atlas, “Failure to support the calls for reform and democratization consistently across the region, in this age of instant communication and online social media, will both undermine America’s long-term national security interests and diminish the credibility and persuasive power that comes from its democratic values.”²⁰ Thus, in order to strengthen U.S. interest in the region, it is important to support, rather than stifle, the democratic process in the region.

Islam as an Obstacle to Democratization

Some Scholars emphasize the importance of Islam as a hindrance on the democratic process as a key factor in U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world. This can largely be

¹⁷ Atlas, 2012.; Gentzkow, Matthew A, and Jesse M Shapiro. 2004. "Media, Education and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 18 (3): 117-133.

¹⁸ Bisca, Paul Maximilian. 2008. *Democracy, Security, Peace: American and European Approaches towards Democratization*. Web.

¹⁹ Ghareeb, Edmund. 2000. "New Media and the Information Revolution In The Arab World: An Assessment." *Middle East Journal*. 54 (3).

²⁰ Atlas, 2012.

credited to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* and Bernard Lewis' writings, including *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, which argue that the Islamic world stands in direct contrast to the modern democratic West.²¹ However inaccurate the authors' orientalist perceptions of the Muslim world are, it is important to mention both Huntington and Lewis theories as a great deal of academic research is based upon their writing.

Recent research has found that Islam has less influence on political attitudes than is widely suggested, with Muslim men being less likely than Muslim women to follow religious leadership on political issues.²² Although President Obama once made the claim "promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy, and I'm proud that no nation on Earth does more to stand up for the freedom of religion around the world than the United States of America," one of the key ways in which the U.S. shows hypocrisy in regards to the democratic mission is through its disregard for religious freedom in its ally countries. This is most evident in the cases of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, where religious freedom and representation are perceived as significant human rights issues, to which the U.S. government has remained predominantly silent.²³

The U.S. Department of State's 2014 report on religious freedom acknowledges Saudi Arabia as having a particularly oppressive government in regards to religious rights, with Shia Muslims suffering discrimination in employment and government services, in

²¹ Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. Simon & Schuster.; Lewis, Bernard. 1990. *The Roots of Muslim Rage*. The Atlantic, 266 (3).

²² Tessler, M. 2002. "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries". *Comparative Politics – New York*. 34: 337-354.

²³ Blanchard, 2014.; Tessler, 2002.; "International Religious Freedom Report for 2013." 2014. *U.S. Department of State*. January 1, 2014.

addition to undergoing arbitrary arrests for religious reasons. Members of U.S. Congress have expressed concern about Saudi leaders in the past, yet both the Bush and Obama administrations have prioritized trade over human rights, citing the highly lucrative arms sales to Saudi Arabia.²⁴ One author sees the interpretation of scripture as being a key issue that has not been appropriately addressed in academia, attempting to fill the research gap as it pertains to Islam in the region by concluding “there is no single or accepted interpretation on many issues, nor even a consensus on who speaks for Islam.”²⁵

Military and Stability

Military presence and American power in the Arab world have a significant and longstanding impact on democracy and foreign relations, where strong militaristic and economic benefits have come to the nations at the cost of American hegemonic presence.²⁶ Bahrain in particular plays a significant role in geographical militaristic security for the United States, hosting the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet, participating in military partnerships, and cooperating and partaking in counter-terrorism actions together. Likewise, Jordan plays an important role in counter-terrorism policies and geopolitics for the U.S. Meanwhile, the U.S.’ desire to form peace and gain control of the relationship between Israel and Egypt (among other Arab nations) often overshadows the promotion of democracy and concerns for human rights in the region.²⁷ Egypt, being the most populous country in the Arab world, has a significant impact on Arab-Israeli relations. In order to protect U.S.-Israeli interests, the U.S. must work with the Muslim

²⁴ Blanchard, 2014.

²⁵ Tessler, 2002.

²⁶ Momani, 2007.

²⁷ Snider, 2011.

Brotherhood, a group often seen as existing in direct opposition to democracy and human rights, suggesting that democracy is not always as important as policymakers suggest.²⁸

Meanwhile, the Monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have historically rejected democratic values, including civic participation, in fear of losing power and political relevance in the region, which the U.S. government ignores in order to prioritize regional stability.²⁹ Bisca argues that one of the key misconceptions is that democracy goes hand-in-hand with increased American security, particularly as it pertains to Iraq.³⁰ However, it has been made clear that, when attempting to install democracy in Arab countries, that electoral legitimacy does not necessarily create pacifist, pro-American policies. This can largely be attributed to the relationship between identity, culture and power in addition to the relationship between military, democracy and power.³¹

Summary

There are significant contradictions with regards to how the U.S. prioritizes foreign policy objectives, which are arguably more influenced by strategic interests than democratic values and human rights for the Arab people. The majority of research on U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world, as it pertains to democracy and other subjects, generalizes the region rather than discussing how policy and strategic interest develop in each state. The aforementioned variables do not exist in a vacuum, and therefore must be

²⁸ Atlas, 2004.

²⁹ Baroudi, Sami E. 2004. "The 2002 Arab Human Development Report: Implications for Democracy". *Middle East Policy*. 11 (1): 132-141

³⁰ Bisca, 2008.

³¹ Pratt, Nicola. 2005. "Identity, Culture and Democratization: The Case of Egypt". *New Political Science*. 27 (1): 69-86.

understood in relation to each other in order to fully recognize the U.S.'s goals and interests in the region.

Research Design and Methodology

Methodology

In order to address the relationship between strategic interests and democracy in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, a multiple case study was conducted. A case study is the most appropriate research design type for this topic because it allows for the collection of data from a myriad of sources, building a “full picture” of cases.³² Performing a case study allowed the research to be case-centered, using theory to understand each case individually with the goal of understanding the case and subsequently solving case related issues. Although case studies can be critiqued as being “soft options” for research design, multiple case studies are fundamentally important to in-depth knowledge of a specific phenomenon.³³

This research concerns four Arab countries - Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia - all of which have a significant political relationship with the U.S, but vary drastically when considering their social fabric, population, type of governmental structure, involvement in the democratic process, and geographical location. The design of this study will be parallel, in that all cases will be examined at once, discussed separately and then compared to one another.

The cases for this study are measured on the state level. Causal factors include the structure of the governing body, type of legal system, geographical location, presence of natural resources in country, U.S. military presence, and the presence of a Free Trade

³² De Vaus, D. A. 2001. “Research design in social research.” London: *Sage*.

³³ *Ibid*.

Agreement or Qualifying Industrial Zones. Causal outcomes include the pressure - or lack thereof - to democratize by the U.S. government, U.S. support of human rights in each country, and U.S. political or financial support given to each state by way of military, humanitarian or economic backing.

I have chosen these four Arab nations because they differ greatly in their relationships with the U.S. The countries chosen often vary in size, types of governments, and histories with the U.S., and they have each responded to democratic pressure from their own citizens and the international political and humanitarian communities in vastly different manners. The theory through which I will be examining each case is that of “complex interdependence,” which is introduced in Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye’s *Power and interdependence: world politics in transition*. This theory argues that states and their finances are inextricably tied, increasing cooperation between states. Complex interdependence is particularly important in this study as it ties in military, hierarchy, foreign policy, and neoliberalism, all of which are vital aspects when attempting to understand how trade is prioritized over democracy by the U.S. foreign policy. That being said, it is important to note that the nature of this study is inductive, and it will therefore be based primarily upon observations rather than being driven by theory alone.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is “What determines U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world?” In order to appropriately address the subject, the following sub-questions will also be addressed:

- How and why does U.S. foreign policy differ across the region, specifically in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Jordan?
- How does global trade impact U.S. foreign policy?
- How does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impact U.S. foreign policy in the region?
- How has the Arab spring impacted the U.S.'s influence regarding democracy in the region?
- To what extent does the U.S. advocate - or fail to advocate - for human rights, and how does this advocacy differ by state?

Data Collection and Analysis

The study includes information drawn from official documents issued by the State Department, White House, Embassies and other governmental bodies, various NGO reports, Human Rights organizations' reports, public statements made U.S. government officials, and reports from independent news sources. Data was also collected from the Freedom House scores, and global democracy ratings. In order to avoid the issue of "cherry-picking" (which is a risk when performing a case study), I compiled a list of key terms surrounding the topic of this study in order to perform structured, consistent research across cases through governmental, academic, and newspaper databases.

Chapter One

An Introduction to U.S. Foreign Policy

Defining Foreign Policy

For the purpose of this study, Foreign policy refers to the actions of a government takes towards other nations on behalf of national interests on a world scale. The U.S. Department of state defines their global Foreign Policy mission as follows:³⁴

“[To] advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system.”

These interests exist to support security, boundaries, a strong economy, and an orderly, functional global society. In order to pursue this mission, the Department of State has defined the key goals of U.S. foreign policy as protecting the U.S. and American citizens, advancing democracy, defending human rights, encouraging economic growth and prosperity, promoting international understanding of American values and policies.³⁵

U.S. Foreign Policy in The Arab World: A Brief Overview

The primary factors in U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world have historically revolved around the U.S.’s need of oil, military and economic power, and the state of Israel. The U.S. has been involved in the Arab world since the mid 1900s, following the complicated history of its European allies, Britain and France, who had been colonizing the region since the late 1700s. During World War II, the U.S.’s primary policy concern was oil in

³⁴ “What is the mission of the U.S. Department of State”? 2015. *U.S. Department of State*.

³⁵ “What are the Key Policies of the U.S. Department of State?” 2015. *U.S. Department of State*.

the Persian Gulf region, with U.S. diplomats prioritizing positive relationships with the al-Saud family.

In 1948, the U.S. supported the formation of the state of Israel. Since this time, Israel has remained a primary factor in U.S. regional interests, with the U.S. providing military aid to Europe and moderating peace treaties between Israel and individual Arab countries, including Egypt in Jordan. Israel is the U.S.'s largest benefactor of congressional support and military aid, receiving \$121 billion USD in bilateral assistance to date.³⁶ Thus, in order to discuss U.S. foreign policy in the region, it is vital to recognize the U.S.'s unwavering support for a nation that has been and continues to be the root of significant friction and violence in the region.

During the Cold War, the U.S.'s presence in the region was driven by their desire to contain impacts of the Soviet Union and combat Nasserism, causing friction in U.S.-Egyptian relations. In 1955, The U.S. and Great Britain orchestrated a coup to oust Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq, making U.S. security and defense agreements with Saudi Arabia vital to security interests in the region. Decades later, the Gulf War and the Iraq War would come to define U.S. foreign policy and military power in the region, acting as examples of the U.S.'s desire for regional power.

In order to examine U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world today, the following case studies further emphasize the prioritization of strategic interests in the region. Subsequently, these case studies call into question the validity of the U.S. State

³⁶ Sharp, J. 2014. "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel." *Congressional Research Service*.

Department's alleged foreign policy objectives towards "democracy" and human rights in the region, suggesting that U.S. foreign policy has failed to increase the democratic ideology, but has succeeded in its access to economic and military power in the Arab World.

Chapter Two

A Cast Study of Bahrain

Background

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy with a population of approximately 1,315,000. Ruled by the Al-Khalifa family, Bahrain is a small Island state located near Qatar and Saudi Arabia and across the Persian Gulf from Iran. The majority of Bahrainis are Shia, although the monarchy is Sunni. Bahrain also has a Christian population that comprises almost 15% of its population, and a Hindu population that comprises roughly 10%.³⁷ The primary industries in Bahrain are petroleum processing and refining, aluminum smelting, Iron pelletization, banking, and insurance.³⁸ Although petroleum has a significant impact on Bahrain's economy, it is not "oil rich" in comparison to neighboring countries and is subsequently among the poorest of the gulf nations.³⁹

Bahrain has a mix legal system comprised primarily of Islamic Shari'a law, in addition to English common law, Egyptian civil, criminal, and commercial codes, and customary law.⁴⁰ Bahrain has a long history of Persian and British rule, as the country did not become independent from England until 1971. However, the Al-Khalifa family has maintained recognition as rulers of Bahrain since the 1820 treaty with England. Bahrain has had two constitutions since 1973, with the most current being promulgated in 2002 by King Hamad, without public consultation. In addition to the U.S., Bahrain also has close political and economic ties to Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, India and Australia.

³⁷ "The World Factbook.", 2015. Washington, D.C.: *Central Intelligence Agency Library*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Bassiouni, Mahmud C, 2011. "Report on the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry." *Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry*.

⁴⁰ "Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain.", 2002. *Kingdom of Bahrain*.

Trade and Economics

Bahrain became the first Persian Gulf state to sign a bilateral trade agreement (the U.S. – Bahrain Free Trade Agreement) in 2004. This has allowed the private sector to enter into assets such as banks, utilities, telecommunications, and financial services, which were previously government-controlled. Arms sales are among the most important components of the U.S.’s presence in the region, despite widespread criticism of the use of weaponry and force against the Bahraini people at the hands of the kingdom.⁴¹ The U.S. exports over \$1 billion USD of goods to Bahrain annually, which is almost exclusively comprised of military weaponry.⁴² In a 2011 speech to the UN general assembly, President Obama claimed that trade and investment in Bahrain allowed the U.S. to take steps towards accountability and reform in Bahrain between the regime and the public.⁴³

While Obama claims that the U.S. supports nations that transition to democracy and sanction nations who violate human rights, the actions of the U.S. say otherwise.⁴⁴ Although trade was initially an important factor of U.S. – Bahrain relations, it has largely taken a backseat to other issues, particularly military cooperation, security issues, and counterterrorism. The unrest in the past several years has strained Bahrain’s economy, particularly in the aluminum industry, adding to the distrust between the Shia middle and lower class and the “ownership class” of Sunnis.⁴⁵ Trade between the nations has largely

⁴¹ Abdolla, Husain. 2014. “Apart in Their Own Land”. *Americans for Human Rights and Democracy in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy*; “Bahrain: Unchecked Repression.” 2015. *Human Rights Watch*; Rogin, Josh. 2012. “Obama administration using loophole to quietly sell arms package to Bahrain.” *Foreign Policy*.

⁴² Bassiouni, 2011.

⁴³ Obama, Barack. 2011. “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly.” *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*.

⁴⁴ Obama, 2011.

⁴⁵ Bassiouni, 2011.

become a symbol of the U.S.'s loyalty to the Al-Khalifa monarchy, and a method of ensuring regional security and cooperation.

Military, intelligence and Stability

Bahrain has been home to the U.S. Navy's fifth fleet for over 50 years, allowing the U.S. reliable, extensive access to the Persian Gulf. Since the 1970s, defense and security issues have been the central factor of relations between the two countries, with diplomatic and trade relations depending almost exclusively on military security issues.⁴⁶ Bahrain's geographical location was particularly vital to the U.S. during the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988), simultaneously allowing the U.S. to have naval access to the gulf and Bahrain to have international defense against Iran's military might.⁴⁷ Bahrain has been a longstanding supporter of U.S. foreign policy objectives in Iraq, Iran and Libya, frequently sharing vital intelligence, resources and military training with U.S. forces to support common interests.^{48 49}

The prioritization of military cooperation and regional security has given the regime a great deal of influence over the U.S.'s voice on regional issues. Although the U.S. government is aware of frequent violations of human rights in Bahrain, they have not taken action to support civic engagement or decrease political oppression in the country. This was evident during the Arab Spring, where violence at the hand of the Al-Khalifa

⁴⁶ Bassiouni, 2011.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Foreign Policy Objectives – Near East Region." 2003. *U.S. Department of State*.

⁴⁹ Bassiouni, 2011.

and Al Saud regimes against peaceful protestors in Bahrain resulted in near verbal silence from U.S. officials.⁵⁰

While Bahrain's uprising was not as widely covered in the U.S.'s involvement with the Arab Spring, it is vital to discuss in regards to the U.S.'s willingness to stifle democracy for the sake of regional stability and maintaining the status quo. When congress opposed the sale of \$53 million USD worth of weapons to the Bahraini government during the uprising, the Obama administration broke the sale down into several transactions under \$1 million USD, which alleviated the need to gain approval from congress.⁵¹ Exact items sold to Bahrain's government were not disclosed to the public, although video footage of the Bahraini military using Humvees against protestors was captured.⁵² Advocates for democracy and human rights perceived this as a clear green light for the government to perpetuate oppression in Bahrain, claiming that the sale "erodes the credibility of U.S. rhetoric about democracy and human rights in the region."⁵³ Although the department of state initially claimed the sales were for "external defense," they later denied the transactions.⁵⁴ This political loophole and the subsequent lack of transparency at the hand of the U.S. government is resounding evidence of the prioritization of military security and Bahrain's national stability over the democratic process and human rights.

⁵⁰ Lippman, Thomas. 2011. "Policy Brief: The U.S. Dilemma in Bahrain." *Project on Middle East Democracy*.

⁵¹ Rogin, 2012.

⁵² Rogin, 2012.

⁵³ Rogin, Josh. 2011. "Congress Gears Up To Fight Arms Sale To Bahrain." *Foreign Policy*.; "Casey to Secretary Clinton: Delay Arms Sale to Bahrain." 2011. *Robert P Casey, Jr. United States Senator for Pennsylvania*.

⁵⁴ Rogin, 2012.; "Bahrain Security Assistance Taken Question." 2012. *U.S. Department of State*.

Democracy and Human Rights

Bahrain has a Freedom House Score of 6/7 for civil liberties and political rights (7 being the worst possible scenario), marking it as a country that is “not free” to its citizens.⁵⁵ The most common human rights issues in Bahrain include arrests and detentions of protestors that lead to torture, lack of due process in trials for human rights activists, medical personnel, teachers and students, and the lack of citizen’s ability to change their government. Other issues include lack of consistent accountability for security and police officers, violation of privacy and arrest of individuals due to individual expression, and restrictions on speech, press, assembly, association and religion.⁵⁶ Travel bans are also common for political activists, and discrimination is extremely common.⁵⁷

Political and media freedoms are virtually non-existent in Bahrain. The government owns all media outlets, restricting Internet freedom, monitoring individual freedom online, and having full control over the media. Although Bahrain’s newspapers are privately owned, the owners are closely tied to and evaluated by the state. Journalists operate under vague press laws, allowing the state to imprison them for seven years if they criticize the King in their professional or personal lives.⁵⁸ Although the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims “Citizens, both men and women, are entitled to participate in public affairs and may enjoy political rights, including the right to vote and to stand for elections,” Bahrain has a longstanding record of democratic repression and human rights violations at the

⁵⁵ “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015. *Freedom House*.

⁵⁶ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.” 2013. *U.S. Department of State*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015.

hand of the monarchy.⁵⁹ Political parties are illegal in Bahrain, and a 2005 law has made it illegal to form political associations based upon class, profession, or religion. Although it has been claimed, “the United States will continue to make the promotion of international religious freedom a key national security and foreign policy priority for the United States,” there has been a lack of dialogue regarding Bahrain’s common religious based violence and repression.⁶⁰

The constitution of Bahrain does not protect religious freedoms, although it does prohibit discrimination on the basis on religion. However, it does not include any additional laws that prevent discrimination for other reasons.⁶¹ Key opposition leaders are frequently imprisoned, banned from traveling and often sentenced to life in prison for their activism.⁶² Although Bahrain has anticorruption laws, enforcement is often weak, and violators are seldom held accountable. Bahrain also has significant forced labor issues, both in regards to forced labor and sex trafficking. Many of these labor issues derive from labor recruitment agencies and individual employers, who charge foreign workers fees, withhold their paperwork, threaten or abuse workers, or fail to pay workers. Although Bahrain’s government has a written plan to combat trafficking and labor issues, no labor perpetrators have been convicted of forced labor, and the cases of those who have been reported for these issues are treated as labor violations rather than committing serious crimes.⁶³

⁵⁹ “Rule of Law.” 2015. *Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

⁶⁰ Mcdonough, Denis. 2012. “International Religious Freedom: A Human Right, A National Security Issue, A Foreign Policy Priority.” *The White House*. Web.

⁶¹ "International Religious Freedom Report for 2013." 2014.

⁶² “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015.

⁶³ "The World Factbook," 2015.

The lack of political representation for the majority of Bahrain's citizens was most evident in the government's response to the 2011 political crisis, when Bahraini activists attempted to demand political reform and end sectarian discrimination, which was leading to economic depression for Shiite communities. Although the Bahraini and U.S. governments and media outlets have attempted to portray this period as violent and Shia-led, independent reports have indicated that protests were peaceful and representative of all of Bahrain's religious groups, including a substantial Sunni presence.^{64,65} In response to the protests, the government declared martial law, carrying out what Human Rights Watch describes as a "punitive and vindictive campaign of violent repression against its own citizens."⁶⁶

In a 2013 speech, National Security Advisor Susan Rice stated,⁶⁷

"Bahrain is a long standing partner in the region. As home to our Fifth Fleet, a stable Bahrain is of great strategic importance to the United States. So we serve both our principles and our security by pressing for national reconciliation between the government and the opposition. We are discouraging actions on both sides that sharpen religious divisions or escalate violence. And, through concrete actions, including withholding portions of our military assistance, we are urging the government to lift restrictions on civil society, to treat members of the opposition in accordance with the rule of law, and to engage in a deliberate reform process."

Rice's statement is an accurate representation of the limited amount of statements made by government officials on the subject of Bahrain, and the lack of follow-through during the rare attempts to hold the monarchy accountable. Although the language used operates under the veil of religious and political reconciliation, statements made and actions taken

⁶⁴ Abdolla, Husain. 2014.

⁶⁵ "Bahrain's Human Rights Crisis." 2011. *Human Rights Watch*.

⁶⁶ "Bahrain's Human Rights Crisis," 2011.

⁶⁷ Rice, Susan. "Human Rights: Advancing American Interests and Values." 2013. *The White House*.

by the U.S. government clearly indicate that root of human rights and democracy is based solely upon U.S. interests at the governmental, rather than the interests of the people.⁶⁸ While the U.S. government has claimed that the Bahrainis must find the solution to inequality, they have also extensively defended the Bahraini military and criticized protestors for their actions against governmental institutions.⁶⁹ These conflicting values show that complicated nature of the perpetuating strong ties with the regime while responding to international criticism.

Conclusion

Although it is a small state that lacks the oil-driven wealth of its neighbors, Bahrain is vital to U.S. strategic interest in the Arab world. The presence of the U.S. Naval fleet is vital to U.S. foreign policy towards Bahrain, with trade also increasing interdependence between the two countries. The importance of regional stability through military power has caused the U.S. to support a regime that is infamous for human rights violations and stifling of any political power for its Shia majority.⁷⁰ The U.S. has failed to insist upon the freedom of imprisoned individuals in Bahrain, discussing the matters infrequently and vaguely in the public eye despite increasing pressure from human rights organizations and the public. This lack of support for human rights and democracy has been credited to the prioritization of U.S. strategic interest in Bahrain and surrounding countries, prioritizing security and military cooperation over the rights and political freedom of the Bahraini people.

⁶⁸ Obama, 2011.; Rice, 2013.; “Subcommittee Hearing: U.S. Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula: Yemen and Bahrain.” 2013. *House Committee on Foreign Affairs*.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; “Statement by the Press Secretary on Bahrain.” 2011. *The White House*.

⁷⁰ Lippman, 2011.

Chapter Three

Case Study: Egypt

Background

The Arab Republic of Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world, with nearly 89 million residents primarily residing along the Nile River.⁷¹ Egypt borders the Mediterranean Sea, Libya, Sudan, and Israel/Palestine, and is located across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia. Egypt is 90% Muslim (predominantly Sunni) and 10% Christian.⁷² Egypt is currently a republic with a mixed legal system that has been influenced by colonial-era laws and is based upon Napoleonic law and Islamic law. The U.S. established relations with Egypt in 1922, basing their relationship on regional peace and stability.⁷³ After 30 years of political control under President Hosni Mubarek, Egypt has experienced significant political unrest in the past four years, without a clear resolution in sight. After the 2011 overthrow of Mubarek, the Muslim Brotherhood was elected into power under the leadership of President Mohamed Morsi. After the highly controversial 2013 Military coup, Egypt has been lead by President Abdelfattah Said el-Sisi (who officially rose to office in June 2014) and Prime Minister is Ibrahim Mehlab.

Trade and Economics

Although high volumes of goods are not traded between the U.S. and Egypt, Egypt's geographical location makes the country vital to the international marketplace. Since it opened in 1869, The Suez Canal has allowed ships from North Africa, Europe, the

⁷¹ "The World Factbook.", 2015.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "U.S. Relations With Egypt Fact Sheet." 2014. *U.S. Department of State*.

Americas and South Asia to travel without navigating around the African continent, significantly reducing the length of their journey. Roughly 2.4 million barrels of oil pass through the canal each day, making it an important trade route for the U.S. and Europe.⁷⁴ The canal is also important for U.S. military ships moving between waterways, allowing them easy connectivity from the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Although the canal is less utilized as global trade modernizes, it is nonetheless a strategically important to consider within the context of Egypt's past (and present) influence over international transportation, military access and trade.

The U.S. is Egypt's largest trading partner, while Egypt is the U.S.'s 54th largest trading partner.⁷⁵ In 2013, Egypt exported \$1.6 billion of goods to the U.S., and imported \$5.2 billion from the U.S.⁷⁶ Trade with Egypt primarily serves as a political tool for the U.S., supporting the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement while increasing interdependence and cooperation between the neighboring countries. In order to tie the issues of trade and peace with Israel, the U.S. Congress established the Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) agreement, which allows the U.S. to waive duties on imports from Egypt if the value includes 10.5% or more of Israeli content (lowered from 11.7% in 2007).⁷⁷

The Egyptian economy has seen a great deal of unrest in the past several years, which the U.S. sees as a threat to regional stability. During the early 2000's, Egypt's economy experienced major reforms that were targeted towards foreign direct investors. The

⁷⁴ Wearden, Graeme. 2011. "Q&Z: Suez Canal." *The Guardian*

⁷⁵ "U.S. – Egypt Trade Facts." 2014. *Office of the United States Trade Representative*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Kirkland, Pamela. 2015. "Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ)." *International Trade Administration Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA)*.

primary export in Egypt was petrochemicals, which were largely sold to European countries.⁷⁸ However, the economy remained primarily closed, with army-owned companies holding monopolies in many sectors. After the 2011 uprising, the U.S. provided \$100 million in economic assistance, as the U.S.’s ability to pursue its goals in Egypt “depends on a stable economic situation and avoiding a crisis.”⁷⁹

Military, Intelligence and Stability

The U.S. has a longstanding relationship with Egypt that is based upon military cooperation and regional security. Because Egypt’s “soft power” and symbolic importance as the leaders of Islamic scholarship are viewed as influential to the entire region, Egypt is a vital component of Arab-Israeli peace.⁸⁰ The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, signed in 1979, was mediated by former President Jimmy Carter, with the intentions of creating compliance between the neighboring countries. Although the peace treaty was threatened by rising tensions and brief violence after the ousting of Mubarak, it has ultimately continued to work on favor of the U.S.’s pro-Israeli interests in the region despite shared distain in regards to “people-to-people relations” in the region.⁸¹

Although Egypt has historically been a key military ally to the U.S., Egyptian leaders have not always physically taken part in the U.S.’s military interventions, working

⁷⁸ “Egypt Economy.” 2010. *Economy Watch*.

⁷⁹ “Supporting Egypt’s Economy.” 2015. *Embassy of the United States in Cairo, Egypt.*; Feltman, Jeffrey. 2012. “Assessing U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities and Needs Amidst Economic Challenges in the Middle East.” *U.S. Department of State*.

⁸⁰ Sharp, Jeremy. 2015. “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations.” *Congressional Research Service*.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Saleh, Yasmine. 2011. “Egypt PM says peace deal with Israel not sacred.” *Reuters*.

instead to provide intelligence and cooperate with the U.S.'s demand of their transportation requirements.⁸² The last major joint military effort was during Operation Dessert Storm in 1991, with the majority of military funding to Egypt serving the purpose of national issues.⁸³ Most of the importance in terms of military power for the U.S. resides within Egypt's ownership of the Suez Canal, which is a major access route for U.S. military in the region. Egypt also allows the U.S. military to use their airspace for operations in the region.⁸⁴

Though they are typically compliant in the long run, Egyptian leaders have not historically stayed silent regarding their concerns with the U.S.'s desire for power. In 2003, then-President Mubarak spoke out against the war in Iraq, stating that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needed to be resolved first. He also claimed that the war would have horrible consequences and lead to "100 Bin Ladens."⁸⁵ During Mubarak's presidency, the U.S.-Egyptian counterterrorism relationship focused largely on the Muslim Brotherhood. This proved to be problematic for U.S. foreign policy during the Arab Spring, when the brotherhood gained brief political power in the country under the control of Mohamed Morsi, before being ousted in a coup d'état and replaced with Abdelfattah Said el-Sisi. The counterterrorism relationship between the two nations currently focuses on resistance against ISIS, which is a threat to Egypt's safety and the U.S.'s hegemony in the region.⁸⁶

⁸² "U.S. Relations With Egypt Fact Sheet." 2014.

⁸³ "U.S. Relations With Egypt Fact Sheet." 2014.

⁸⁴ "U.S. embassy cables: Egypt's Strategic Importance to the U.S." 2011. *The Guardian*.

⁸⁵ "Mubarak warns of '100 bin Ladens.'" 2003. *CNN International*.

⁸⁶ "U.S. Relations With Egypt Fact Sheet." 2014.

The U.S. has identified counterterrorism and regional peace and stability as key priorities for current U.S.-Egyptian relations.⁸⁷ In order to achieve these goals, the U.S. provides \$1.3 billion USD in foreign military financing to Egypt annually, making it the second largest recipient after Israel.⁸⁸ Although the longstanding history of providing weapons to Egypt was temporarily paused when el-Sisi was elected for fear of human rights violations, the hold was quickly and controversially lifted in 2013. This decision sparked an outcry of resistance, raising questions about the purpose of the weapons and their effect on slowing the democratic process in the country.⁸⁹ Shortly after the release, Egyptian security forces used some of the weaponry against pro-Morsi protestors, killing over 800 civilians.⁹⁰ Rather than ceasing to provide weaponry, the U.S. government failed to address the event, continuing instead to strengthen ties with el-Sisi. In a 2014 Commencement Address, President Obama stated,⁹¹

"In Egypt, we acknowledge that our relationship is anchored in security interests—from the peace treaty with Israel, to shared efforts against violent extremism. So we have not cut off cooperation with the new government."

Secretary of State John Kerry further emphasized the U.S. government and military's support for Egypt as being an incentive to uphold the peace treaty with Israel in a speech shortly after, causing criticism of the U.S.'s human rights values in the region.⁹² Although the Egyptian government has seen drastic turnover in the past few years, the U.S. has aimed to keep a relationship based on positive strategic relationships with

⁸⁷ Psaki, Jen. 2013. "U.S. Assistance to Egypt." *U.S. Department of State*.

⁸⁸ Sharp, 2015. "Egypt"

⁸⁹ Rice, 2013.

⁹⁰ Schulberg, Jessica. 2015. "White House Lifts Hold On Weapon Sales To Egypt Despite Lack Of Democratic Process." *The Huffington Post*.

⁹¹ Obama, Barack. 2014. "Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony." *The White House*.

⁹² Jones, Sophia. 2014. "Democracy in Egypt Not Actually that Important to U.S., Analysts Say." *The Huffington Post*.

whoever is in power. While the language used by the U.S. government and leaders continues to be that of peace and stability, the actions continue to show a passive role in the violence occurring at the hands of each passing leader. Meanwhile, conversations continue to focus on how Egypt can maintain peace with Israel and maintain its border security, rather than how Egypt can create peace within its own borders.⁹³

Democracy and Human Rights

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, representatives of the U.S. government have significantly changed the way in which they discuss democracy in Egypt. While the U.S. government rarely discussed democracy during the Mubarak Regime, the recent global public outcry for political representation for the Egyptian people has been met with demands for democratization and human rights in public speeches given by President Obama and other major political figures. Yet human rights abuses continue to run rampant at the hands of the Egyptian government, to which the U.S. falls silent, focusing instead of the potential “stable evolution” of the democratic process.⁹⁴ Although representatives of the U.S. government have put a great deal of effort into verbally and monetarily promoting democracy in Egypt at times, they have failed to follow through politically when it does not serve strategic interests.^{95 96}

⁹³Jones, 2014.; “U.S. embassy cables: Egypt’s Strategic Importance to the U.S.” 2011.; Psaki, Jen. 2014. “Readout of Secretary Kerry’s Call with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy.” *U.S. Department of State*.

⁹⁴ Burns, William. 2014. “A Renewed Agenda for U.S. – Gulf Partnership.” *U.S. Department of State*.

⁹⁵ This is particularly clear when examining former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s addresses to Egypt, which overtime transitioned from being “concerned with the issue of Egypt’s reforms” to not mentioning issues pertaining to democracy whatsoever, instead focusing on the war in Iraq and Egypt’s role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

⁹⁶ Rice, Condoleezza. 2005. “Remarks at the American University in Cairo.” *U.S. Department of State Archive*.; Rice, Condoleezza. 2007. “Remarks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit.” *U.S. Department of State Archive*.

The most significant human rights issues in Egypt are excessive use of force by security forces, unlawful killings and torture, suppressed civil liberties, removal of an elected government, restrictions on personal and press freedom, restrictions on freedom of assembly, and military trials of civilians.⁹⁷ Despite the U.S.'s attempts to promote democracy in Egypt and frequent political turnover, civil liberties and political freedoms have not shown significant changes over the past two decades. This is evident in Freedom House's annual Freedom In the World rating, where the average Freedom House score for Egypt was 6/7 for both civil liberties and political freedoms from 1998 to 2009. Between 2005 and 2015, the civil liberties score improved slightly to 5/7, with political rights continuing to be 6/7.⁹⁸ Despite the presence of elections in the country, the military continues to control the political landscape, resulting in low voter turnout rates and harsh restrictions on political assembly.⁹⁹

USAID has invested billions of dollars into programs in Egypt. USAID has made impacts on the quality of life for Egyptians in the past - primarily through vaccinations, which lead to the eradication of polio in Egypt, maternal health education that lowered infant mortality rates, and agricultural support for women in rural areas.¹⁰⁰ Since 2011, the programs have focused primarily on legal and professional training for judges, prosecutors and staff, in addition to less controversial issues like child health and education. USAID's efforts to change the legal system, while admirable, are problematic given the nature and corruption within the electoral process. Civilians are frequently tried

⁹⁷ "World Report 2014: Egypt." 2014. *Human Rights Watch*.

⁹⁸ Between 1998 and 2004, the average Freedom House score for Egypt was 6/7 for both civil liberties and political freedoms. Between 2005 and 2014, the civil liberties score improved slightly to 5/7.

⁹⁹ "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Womer, Anne. 2015. "Egypt." *USAID*.

in military courts, which are immune to USAID's training and efforts.¹⁰¹ Employees of USAID in Egypt have criticized the multi-billion dollar program as being ineffective, claiming that they lack a developmental approach that is appropriate for the social justice and human development needs that are rampant in Egypt.¹⁰² While USAID's past efforts for human rights made the high monetary costs for their presence in the region worth the investment, their current democratic focus has proven to be misguided and ineffective.

Political violence is a significant concern under the el-Sisi government, particularly for supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization shortly after Morsi's overthrow, resulting in mass trials and unjustified imprisonment of its members and supporters.¹⁰³ During the week of Morsi's overthrow, security forces used excessive lethal force against protestors, killing thousands of protestors at various sit-ins. In a confidential embassy cable shortly before the uprising, Ambassador Margaret Scobey stated that, although the U.S. continues to "promote democratic reform," democracy and human rights efforts were being intentionally stymied in order to repress the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts to gain power in Egypt.¹⁰⁴ The failed attempt to keep the Muslim Brotherhood out of power through democratic repression could largely be credited to the argument that the U.S. feared that the Muslim Brotherhood would fail to protect U.S. interests, which Mubarak would continue to do until his death.¹⁰⁵ Thus, although human rights are now being promoted as a response to

¹⁰¹ "Annual Report: Egypt 2013." 2013. *Amnesty International*.

¹⁰² Snider, 2011.

¹⁰³ "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015.

"Freedom in the World 2014." 2014. *Freedom House*.

¹⁰⁴ "U.S. embassy cables: Egypt's Strategic Importance to the U.S." 2011.

¹⁰⁵ Lagon, Mark. 2011. "Promoting Democracy: The Whys and Hows for the United States and the International Community." *Council on Foreign Relations*.

public pressure, it is clear that human right and democracy take a backseat to stability and regional power for the U.S. government.

Conclusion

When examining U.S. foreign policy in Egypt, it is clear that the U.S. government supports military power, trade, civic participation and humanitarianism only when it serves regional stability and security for Israel. Despite public positions taken by U.S. politicians, the U.S. has reflected their desire to keep political allies in power, regardless of the impact their politics have on the democratic process and humanitarian efforts. In a 2014 media interview, Amy Hawthorne, a Middle East expert at the Atlantic Council pointedly claimed, "as President Obama explained in his U.N. General Assembly speech last September, the United States considers its 'core' interests in the region as connected to U.S. security interests, and it views democracy and human rights as separate, secondary concerns."¹⁰⁶

Due to the implications of the Arab Spring, the relationship between democracy and strategic interests in Egypt has lead to complications in U.S. foreign policy towards the Arab world. The U.S. has historically prioritized military power and regional peace in Egypt, particularly as it pertains to their longstanding relationship with Israel. While recent events have lead to the verbal support of the democratic wishes of the Egyptian people, the U.S. government continues to support Egypt's government in order to prioritize peace within the nation's borders at all cost. While supporting democracy and human rights in Egypt is a hot topic in speeches and public statements, it is largely

¹⁰⁶ Jones, 2014.

influenced by the U.S.'s need to promote strategic interests related to peace, power and stability in the region rather than the U.S. attempting to instill moral diplomacy guided towards a legitimate democracy.

Chapter Four

Case Study: Jordan

Background

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a population of 7,930,491.¹⁰⁷ Jordan also hosts over 2 million Palestinian refugees, in addition to nearly 90 thousand Iraqi refugees and roughly 680 thousand Syrian refugees.¹⁰⁸ Jordan's population is predominantly Sunni.¹⁰⁹ Jordan borders Israel/Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. After gaining independence in 1946 upon the UN approval to end a British Mandate for Palestine, Jordan established a constitution in 1947, which was later ratified in 1952 and has seen frequent amendments since. Jordan has a mixed legal system of Islamic law and civil law. The U.S. recognized Jordan as an independent state and established diplomatic relations between the two nations in 1949.¹¹⁰ Jordan is currently led by King Abdullah II, who serves as the head of State and Commander-in-Chief, holding executive and legislative powers. King Abdullah is a member of the Hashemite family, who claim to be decedents of the Prophet Muhammad.

Trade and Economics

Jordan's economic stability and trade participation in the region is a key priority in U.S. foreign policy. The U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into effect in 2000. The U.S.-Jordan FTA was implemented in order to support economic reform and development in the region and increase Jordan's compliance to the World Trade

¹⁰⁷ "The World Factbook.", 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ "U.S. Relations With Jordan Fact Sheet." 2014.

Organization.¹¹¹ However, the FTA did not have any measurable impact on U.S.'s economic system.¹¹² In addition to economic stability and growth in Jordan, economic cooperation between Jordan and Israel is also particularly important to the U.S., as it establishes economic interdependence between the neighboring countries.

In order to ensure cooperation between Jordan and Israel, Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) were established, allowing Jordan to enjoy the benefits of exporting without custom duties or quota restrictions. Establishment of QIZs in Jordan increased the volume of goods moved across the Jordan River and ensuring that at least 35% of goods exported from QIZs to the U.S. had Israeli input.¹¹³ Because of the economic incentives that the U.S. has offered in exchange for economic participation with Israel, Jordan has decreased the impact of the economic boycott of Israeli goods by Arab states, enabling Israel to trade internationally despite the wishes of the Jordanian people.¹¹⁴ While the Jordanian government has benefitted from QIZs, it has created significant labor issues within Jordan. Approximately 75% of the 43,000 employees in QIZs live on sight (separate from their families) and work six days a week for minimal money, as QIZs are excluded from the minimum wage law.¹¹⁵ This has elicited concerns from human rights organizations, which the U.S. has yet to address.

¹¹¹ "H.R. 2603 - US-Jordan Free Trade Area Implementation Act, 07/31/2001." 2001. *Office of Management and Budget*.

¹¹² Sharp, Jeremy. 2015. "Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations." *Congressional Research Service*.

¹¹³ Herzog, Michael. 2004. "A Decade of Israeli-Jordanian Peace: An Untold Economic Success Story." *The Washington Institute*

¹¹⁴ Miltha, Farooq. 2010. "The Jordanian-Israeli Relationship: The Reality of 'Cooperation.'" *Middle East Policy Council*. 17 (2).

¹¹⁵ Sharp, 2015. "Jordan."

According to a 2013 press release from the White House, roughly 75% of Syrian refugees in Jordan live on the local economy.¹¹⁶ In order to support Jordan's economy and decrease Jordan's poverty rates, the U.S. distributes monetary humanitarian support regularly – equaling \$444.8 million USD between 2012 and 2014.¹¹⁷ This money ensures access to clean water and food assistance, in addition to ensuring that infrastructure projects continue inside of refugee camps. The Millennium Challenge Corporation has also invested over \$275 million USD in a grant to increase Jordan's economic growth, primarily through water supply and delivery and wastewater collection and treatment.¹¹⁸ The goal of this grant was to engage Jordan's private sector while addressing the most common critique of Jordan's sustainable development issues.¹¹⁹

Military, Intelligence and Stability

Jordan has a longstanding interest in regional stability, and is frequently praised by the U.S. for its efforts to reduce extremism, promote peace with Israel, and provide asylum for the Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Both Jordan and the U.S. are committed to counterterrorism in the region, with President Obama putting their opposition to ISIS “at the top of the list” of issues discussed with King Abdullah.¹²⁰ Jordan is currently in the middle of a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, with

¹¹⁶ “U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Syrian Crisis.” 2013. *The White House*.

¹¹⁷ “United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Syria Crisis.” *U.S. Department of State*.

¹¹⁸ “Jordan Compact.” 2014. *Millennium Challenge Corporation*.

¹¹⁹ Clinton, Hilliary. 2010. “Remarks with Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh After Their Meeting.” *U.S. Department of State*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*; “Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan after Bilateral Meeting.” 2014. *The White House*.

the goals of promoting peace and countering violent extremism.¹²¹ The U.S. is one of five permanent Security Council members, allowing the U.S. government to have veto power in international security decisions. This means that the U.S. has been given the ability to impose sanctions and authorize the use of force in order to maintain international peace and security, making it a powerful ally for Jordan to have when faced with treats and violence from regional adversaries.¹²² President Obama describes involvement between the U.S. and Jordanian military as making “slow but steady progress,” praising Abdullah for his efforts that the Jordanian military has made in recent years.¹²³

Jordan and the U.S. have a longstanding relationship based upon the support of pro-Western policies in the region, which have allowed Jordan to increase their international political influence.¹²⁴ U.S. relations with King Abdullah II has proven to be particularly important to the U.S.’s ability to network in the region. As stated by USAID in their 2007-20011 *Strategic Statement*,¹²⁵

“In this volatile environment, Jordan stands as an oasis of stability and a model for progress in the region. King Abdullah II maintains close and productive ties with heads of state and policymakers both in the West and throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. The United States and Jordan have enjoyed a strong partnership and strategic relationship for many years.”

Jordan’s geographical location and pro-Western rhetoric has enabled the relatively small country to have significant political influence the region, acting as a voice for peaceful

¹²¹ “Jordan to Convene a Security Council Ministerial Debate on the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace.” 2015. *Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth*.

¹²² “Jordan Elected to Serve on UN Security Council.” 2013. *UN News Centre*.

¹²³ “Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah,” 2014.

¹²⁴ “Strategic Statement: Jordan 2007-2011.” 2011. *USAID*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

compliance and what the U.S. perceives as moderate, sustainable economic and political reforms in the region.¹²⁶

The U.S. government views King Abdullah's participation in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks as an integral factor in regional stability. The relationship between Israel and Jordan is vital to U.S. strategic interest in the region, reducing conflict in the region through financial incentives and diplomatic agreements. Although Jordan does not have the international diplomatic soft power of Egypt, its geographical location makes it vital to regional stability and peace in the region.¹²⁷ The U.S. also recognizes the Jordanian government as vital to the humanitarian support of Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian refugees.¹²⁸ As Jordan frequently bears the burden of the refugee crises in the region, it is in the Kingdom's best interest to actively engage in peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, attempting to create the "security structure that meets the highest standards anywhere in the world" that John Kerry and the U.S. government desires.¹²⁹

Democracy and Human Rights

To date, the U.S. has given \$556 million USD in order to support Jordan's humanitarian involvement with the refugee crisis.¹³⁰ Humanitarianism allows for Jordan to seem strongly, actively pro-human rights. Yet, although some laws - such as the 2005 National Agenda Blueprint and the new passport law that allows women to obtain a passport

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Welsh, Teresa. 2014. "Israel and Jordan: The Middle East's Odd Couple." *U.S. News*.

¹²⁸ Kerry, John. 2013. "Joint Press Availability with Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh." *U.S. Department of State*.

¹²⁹ Kerry, John. 2014. "Remarks at the World Economic Forum." *U.S. Department of State*.

¹³⁰ "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Syrian Crisis." 2013.

without their husband's permission - are showing the progress that Jordan is being made, corruption and human rights issues within the system suggest that Jordan's ineffective process has a long way to go to be convincing as a pro-democratic system.¹³¹ Jordan's Freedom House Freedom in the World 2015 rating is 5/7 for civil liberties and 6/7 for political rights (with 1 being the best and 7 being the worst), deeming Jordan to be "not free."¹³²

The most significant human rights and democratic violations in Jordan include the inability for citizens to change their government peacefully, torture by security forces and government officials with impunity, restrictions on freedom of expression, and restrictions on freedom of assembly and association.¹³³ Poor prison conditions, arbitrary arrests and denial of due process, prolonged detention, allegations of nepotism, general infringement of citizen's privacy rights, religious and disability discrimination and violence against women and children were also key issues.¹³⁴ Jordanians live under a constrained democratic system, which permits individual rights and freedoms to an extent yet limits freedom of speech, access to citizenship, and other democratic cornerstones.¹³⁵

Although Jordan undertook political reform six years before the Arab Spring under the 2005 National Agenda blueprint for progress, minimal steps were made to ensure

¹³¹ "Jordan 2013 Human Rights Reports." 2013.

¹³² "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015. *Freedom House*.

¹³³ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014. *Human Rights Watch*.

¹³⁴ "Jordan 2013 Human Rights Reports." 2013. *U.S. Department of State*; Jamjoom, Mohammed., Said, Samira., Smith-Spark, Laura. 2013. "Jordan: Observers praise vote but urge deeper electoral reform." *CNN*.

¹³⁵ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014.; Handal Zander, Nadia. 2005. "Building Democracy in Jordan: Women's Political Participation, Political Party Life and Democratic Elections." *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*.

democratic success.¹³⁶ A constitutional court has not been properly set up to monitor the constitutionality of laws, and the amount of power given to the King through the fundamental structure of Jordan's government enables him to have more political say than all of the Jordanian people, making any electoral decisions passed look like lip service paid to appease western allies. Although citizens of Jordan are able to vote in parliament, the King has the power to dissolve parliament at will, as he did in 2009.¹³⁷ The King also appoints and dismisses the prime minister and cabinet, and appoints the Senate. During the 2013 senate vote, international observers called attention to unfair electoral laws that were controlled by East Bank tribal elites and businessmen who are loyal to the Regime, and pointed out that vote buying was a common issue.¹³⁸ Gender-based discrimination is also a significant issue, facing inadequate legal protection against violence.¹³⁹

Freedom to access information is also an issue in Jordan. Independent print media must obtain licenses from the state and are commonly threatened with imprisonment if they criticize the royal family, discuss the GID, or use religiously offensive language.¹⁴⁰ In 2012, Jordan's parliament amended the Press and Publication law, subsequently requiring all news websites to register with the Press and Publication Department. This has empowered the director to close down and censor news sites in Jordan, while holding the authors, editors-in-chief, directors and owners responsible for any information that the government did not approve of. This resulted in the arrests of the publisher and editor of *Jafra News*, who posted a third-party YouTube video that the Press and Publications

¹³⁶ "Democracy, Human Rights and Governance." 2015. *USAID*.

¹³⁷ "Jordan 2010 Human Rights Report." 2010. *U.S. Department of State*.

¹³⁸ "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015.

¹³⁹ "Annual Report: Jordan 2013." 2013. *Amnesty International*.

¹⁴⁰ "Jordan 2013 Human Rights Reports." 2013.

Department perceived as insulting to the brother of Qatar's ruler. Bot men were charged with "disturbing relations with a foreign state."¹⁴¹ Freedom of speech undergoes concerning restrictions, with the law stating that imprisonment for up to three years is the punishment for insulting the king, slandering the government, slandering foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, or stirring sectarian strife.¹⁴²

Security forces are a major contributor to human rights violations in Jordan, known for using excessive force and taking advantage of impunity.¹⁴³ Under the 1954 Law on Crime Prevention, provincial governors are legally permitted to order indefinite detention without charge towards anyone they believe to be a "danger to society," causing prolonged detention of protestors and other individuals who attempted to engage in protest or verbal critique of the system.¹⁴⁴ Allegations of vague reasons for arrest, torture and ill treatment are almost entirely ignored by the system. To date, no offer has been convinced of torture or held accountable for their abuse.¹⁴⁵

Refugees and migrants who are living and working in Jordan do not have the same protection under the law as Jordanians, leading to both democratic and human rights based issues. Refugees undergo restrictions on freedom of movement that include only being allowed to work within the camps, restricting them from participating in the local economic system. This is particularly problematic when considering that 85% of Syrian

¹⁴¹ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014.

¹⁴² "Jordan 2013 Human Rights Reports." 2013.

¹⁴³ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014.

¹⁴⁴ "Annual Report: Jordan 2013." 2013.

¹⁴⁵ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014.

refugees live outside of the refugee camps.¹⁴⁶ The presence of QIDs has allowed causing many workers to be treated “like slaves” for the sake of U.S.-Jordanian-Israeli trade and cooperation, undergoing labor violations including confiscation of documents, forced labor and unpaid salaries. The Jordanian, U.S. and Israeli governments failed to address this issue, and Jordanian government inspections remained lenient of any violations.¹⁴⁷ Incidents of border authorities rejecting Palestinian refugees is common, and Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship attempting to reenter the country from Syria have been stripped of their citizenship and forbidden from living in Syrian refugee camps or working legally.¹⁴⁸ Iraqi refugees already residing in Syria, undocumented refugees, and single males of fighting age were also denied access to Jordan’s refugee camps.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

When examining the history of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship, it is clear that U.S. based support for the democratic process and humanitarianism only occurs when it aligns with U.S. strategic interests in the region. In particular, U.S. foreign policy interests have prioritized the hosting of refugees in Jordan, as supporting Jordan’s humanitarian efforts in regards to those who have fallen victim to the fight against ISIS is central to the U.S.’s quest for peace, stability, and power in the region.¹⁵⁰ Yet the implementation of QIZs in Jordan is a key example of the prioritization of peace between Israel and Jordan over

¹⁴⁶ “United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Syria Crisis.” *U.S. Department of State*.

¹⁴⁷ Sharp, 2015. “Jordan.”

¹⁴⁸ “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015. *Freedom House*.

¹⁴⁹ “World Report 2014: Jordan.” 2014.

¹⁵⁰ “President Obama Increases Humanitarian Assistance to Syrians.” 2013. *The White House*.; “Readout of the President’s Call with His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.” 2014. *The White House*.

human rights, reflecting the contradictions that are common in U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world.¹⁵¹

Although the U.S. supports and encourages democracy in Jordan verbally, it fails to speak up when political representation for the Jordanian people is not achieved due to governmental constraints. By praising King Abdullah and focusing on what Obama describes as a “strong friendship and strategic partnership” in the public eye yet ignoring systemic issues that could strengthen the democratic process in Jordan, the U.S. is showing the importance of strategic interests in the country above all.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Herzog, 2014.; Miltha, 2010.

¹⁵² “Readout of the President’s Call with His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.” 2014.

Chapter Five

Case Study: Saudi Arabia

Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy with a population of nearly 28,000,000, and has been ruled by the Al Saud family since the kingdom's establishment in 1932. Saudi Arabia is a large country that borders Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan. The population of Saudi Arabia is 95-90% Sunni Muslim and 10-15% Shia Muslim. The government in Saudi Arabia operates off of its interpretation of Sharia law, with some elements of Egyptian, French and customary law.¹⁵³ Saudi Arabia is home to two of Islam's holiest sites, Mecca and Medina. The Al Saud family claims to be the "custodians" of the two holy mosques, solidifying their legitimacy as Islamic rulers.

U.S. – Saudi diplomatic relations can be traced back to the 1930s, when the kingdom was new and relatively poor. American oil companies have ensured wealth and power for the monarchy since 1941, when vast oil reserves were discovered under the land, leading the U.S. to develop the area under the control of ARAMCO. In return, Saudi Arabia purchases billions of dollars worth of military weaponry annually, in addition to receiving training and intelligence support from the U.S. military.

Trade and Economics

¹⁵³ "The World Factbook," 2015.

The U.S. imports approximately \$52 billion USD worth of goods from Saudi Arabia, and exports approximately \$19 billion USD worth of goods annually.¹⁵⁴ Between 2010 and 2014, the U.S. sold over \$90 billion USD of weapons to Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁵ The U.S. also participates in training programs and infrastructure support in the kingdom.

As the U.S. continues to diversify its energy sources, trade relations have become increasingly tumultuous. Although the second president Bush had a strong relationship with the late King Abdullah that was strongly and blatantly driven by the U.S.'s need for oil, the Obama administration avoids discussing the issue beyond the near future, both referring to Saudi Arabia as “an important strategic partner in providing us with our critical energy needs,” yet encouraging Saudis to make investment in alternative energy sources in and outside of their country.¹⁵⁶

Thus, although oil is still vital to the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the U.S., the relationship has evolved over the past several decades into one that involves more than a single commodity. Rather, it is evident that military weaponry sales, intelligence sharing, and the attempt to maintain stability in the region have made the relationship between the countries far more complex than when their relationship began.

Military, Intelligence and Stability

¹⁵⁴ “Awkward Relations.” 2014. *The Economist*.

¹⁵⁵ Lamothe, David. 2015. “How U.S. Weapons will play a huge role in Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen.” *The New York Times*. Web.

¹⁵⁶ “Remarks by President Obama and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in Press Availability.” 2009. *The White House*.; “U.S. – Saudi Relations.” 2001. *Frontline*.

Although Saudi Arabia is first and foremost an Islamic nation, their foreign policy is less personal in nature than other Arab countries, allowing it to be a relatively effective mediator in regional conflict.¹⁵⁷ The Obama administration has followed in the footsteps of its predecessors, engaging the Saudi government in regional security in the name of global economic and political stability. Counterterrorism in the region are among the highest priorities for both partners, making access to the Persian Gulf and surrounding countries a crux of U.S.-Saudi relations.¹⁵⁸ Shared intelligence is also important to U.S.-Saudi relationships. The U.S. has put a particularly large amount of pressure on the Saudi government to share intelligence since the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, which the Saudi General Intelligence Service (also known as Mabathith) has cooperated with well.¹⁵⁹ 9/11 also significantly impacted pressure on Saudi Arabia to share information due to involvement of Saudi citizens in the attacks.¹⁶⁰

Shared security interests have a major impact on U.S.-Saudi relations, allowing the U.S. military to have a permanent presence in the country while also eliciting regional support for U.S. military presence in Bahrain.¹⁶¹ A key example of this is the Gulf War, which allowed the U.S. to gain power through direct military intervention while also protecting oil and winning the favor of threatened Persian Gulf states, who were threatened by the Iraqi military. The recent rise of ISIS and recent events in Yemen has allowed the nations

¹⁵⁷ Kamrava, M. 2014. "Mediation and Saudi Foreign Policy". *Orbis*.

¹⁵⁸ "U.S. – Saudi Relations." 2001.

¹⁵⁹ "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." 2013. *The White House.*; "The Protection of U.S. Forces Abroad." 1996. *U.S. Department of Defense*.

¹⁶⁰ Blanchard, 2015.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

to reevaluate their relationship for the sake of regional security against extremists, despite recent friction due to Saudi Arabia's discontent with U.S.-Iran negotiations.¹⁶²

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel is also an important interest for the U.S., despite distinct differences between the two nations and Saudi Arabia's rejection of the Camp David Accords. The relationship between Saudi-Israeli relations were considerably more turbulent in the past, causing friction for U.S. officials.¹⁶³ However, in recent years both Saudi and Israeli governments have cooperated with each other due to their mutual distain for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Assad regime in Syria. Both states have also pushed the U.S. to have stricter policies towards Iran, and have taken a strong anti-Russian stance due to Russia's support for their adversaries. While Saudi Arabia and Israel do not have a peace agreement or an official diplomatic relationship, their foreign policy objectives and political interdependence with the U.S. have worked in the favor of the U.S.'s quest for regional power.¹⁶⁴

U.S. policies in the region aim to help Saudi leaders respond to security challenges and domestic issues at all cost. However, there is growing criticism on whether or not that aids in the kingdom's resistance to reform.¹⁶⁵ Although political, social and economic reforms are occurring throughout the region, the U.S. has prioritized trade and military

¹⁶² Ibid.; "Statement by NSC Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the President's Call with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia." 2015.

¹⁶³ "Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Josh Earnest and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes." 2015. *The White House*.

¹⁶⁴ Myre, Greg. 2006. "Olmert reportedly held secret meeting with king of Saudi Arabia - Africa & Middle East." *International Herald Tribune*.; Tomlinson, Hugh. 2010. "Saudi Arabia gives Israel clear skies to attach Iranian nuclear sites." *The Times*.

¹⁶⁵ Blanchard, 2015. ; "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015.

power while turning a blind eye to violations carried out by the Saudi government both in Saudi Arabia and surrounding countries.

Democracy and Human Rights

Saudi Arabia has a Freedom House score of 7/7 for civil liberties and political rights (with 1 being the best and 7 being the worst), making it the “least free” nation possible.¹⁶⁶

Restrictions continue to be tightened on freedom of speech and dissent, and antiterrorism laws are being used to enable authorities to press charges to anyone who discusses reform, exposes corruption, or otherwise participates in the political process in a manner that is displeasing to the government.¹⁶⁷ When discussing the lack of democracy in the country, one former U.S. national security advisor stated that one should not ruthlessly establish a democracy, because “you know, different people are going to react different ways. And I don’t think we should be intolerable because people do things a little differently.”¹⁶⁸ Yet when the Saudi people attempt to “do things a little differently” by attempting to participate in civic engagement and political reform, the U.S. fails to react to the Saudi government’s lack of tolerance.

Saudi Arabia’s government is particularly oppressive in regards to religious rights, with Shia Muslims suffering discrimination in employment and government services, in addition to undergoing frequent arbitrary arrests.¹⁶⁹ There is a 20-year prison sentence for

¹⁶⁶ “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ “U.S. – Saudi Relations.” 2001.

¹⁶⁹ “International Religious Freedom Report for 2014.” 2015. *U.S. Department of State*.

individuals who outwardly declare their atheism.¹⁷⁰ Members of U.S. Congress have expressed concern about Saudi leaders in the past, yet both the Bush and Obama administrations have prioritized maintaining a smooth relationship with the Saudi rulers over addressing religious freedom issues.¹⁷¹

Women's rights are also a significant issue in Saudi Arabia. Women are frequently discriminated against in law and fail to be justly treated on issues of domestic and other violence. Saudi women also face issues of travel restrictions and employment, and are not permitted to drive.¹⁷² The U.S. government has largely ignored this issue, or attempted to make it seem less significant. This has been done through focusing on the high levels of education achieved by women throughout the nation. In a speech at Dar Al-Hekma College in 2010, Hillary Clinton stated, "we need more partnerships like those that are underway here in Saudi Arabia that strengthen civil society, as well as local indigenous efforts to expand opportunities, so that more girls and women everywhere can participate fully in the spheres of society, if they so choose to do so."¹⁷³ Yet the U.S. continues to remain quiet on issues of discrimination and inadequate representation of Saudi women.

While many of Saudi Arabia's surrounding countries have been impacted by the desire for democratic rights and political reform, Saudi Arabia has responded to the Arab Spring with extreme restraints. Saudi authorities continue to arrest individuals who advocate for democracy and human rights, often vaguely charging them with "disobeying the ruler"

¹⁷⁰ "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015.

¹⁷¹ Blanchard, 2014.

¹⁷² Blanchard, 2015.

¹⁷³ Clinton, Hillary. 2010. "Remarks at Dar Al-Hekma College Town Hall." *U.S. Department of State*

and subjecting them to imprisonment, execution and physical torture.¹⁷⁴ Punishment of online activism has drawn a significant amount of negative attention to the regime, particularly due to the may 2014 sentencing of online human rights activist Raef Badawi, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes.¹⁷⁵ The Saudi government also made great efforts to stop the demand for democracy in Egypt and Bahrain, actively opposing protestors and supporting Hosni Mubarak and the Al-Khalifa regime. Saudi Arabia infamously resisted democracy in Bahrain by providing military weapons that resulted in the deaths of peaceful protestors. The U.S. has primarily remained silent on the matter, instead praising the Saudi royal family for their loyalty and friendship in attempts to avoid conflict.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

Within the context of Saudi Arabia, the U.S. government frequently ignores human rights violations and fails to uphold the concept of democracy in order to maintain a peaceful relationship with Saudi leaders for the sake of strategic interests. This is clear in John Kerry's speech on the recent death of King Abdullah, a controversial figure in the international political realm. Kerry stated,¹⁷⁷

“This is a sad day. The United States has lost a friend, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, and the world has lost a revered leader. King Abdullah was a man of wisdom and vision. I loved my visits with him as a Senator and as Secretary. Even as he battled age and illness, he held on to his sense of determination. His stories of his father and of his family were remarkable. He was so proud of the Kingdom's journey, a brave partner in fighting violent extremism who proved just as important as a proponent of peace. The courageous Arab

¹⁷⁴ “Annual Report: Saudi Arabia 2013.” 2013. *Amnesty International*.; “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015.

¹⁷⁵ “Freedom in the World 2015.” 2015.

¹⁷⁶ Lagon, 2011. “Promoting Democracy.”

¹⁷⁷ Kerry, John. 2015. “On the Death of King Abdullah.” *U.S. Department of State*.

Peace Initiative that he sponsored remains a critical document for the goal we shared of two states, Israel and Palestine, living in peace and security. He also made great strides to invest in the Saudi people, and the Kingdom's infrastructure and economic development. The scholarship program that bears his name represents an enormous, far-sighted contribution to Saudi Arabia's future prosperity. I know he was very proud of his role as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and as leader of his people."

Kerry's statements regarding both the King and Saudi Arabia as a whole have preceded and followed in the vein of the aforementioned statement, drawing upon the peace, economics and security of the region and speaking of Saudi leaders in a warm, familiar manner. Yet the violations of human rights and a distinct lack of democratization in Saudi Arabia is ill discussed and often blatantly ignored or refuted by U.S. leaders and policymakers. While U.S. foreign policy in Saudi Arabia has ebbed and flowed according to trade, military interests, counterterrorism and U.S. relations with surrounding Arab countries, the U.S. has consistently aired on the side of caution in order to preserve their relationship with the Saudi royal family, rather than standing for the fundamental democratic values the U.S. department of state claims are vital to U.S. foreign policy.

Chapter Six
Conclusion: A Brief Comparison of Case Studies

Summary of Four Case Studies

Although public positions of U.S. political representatives attempt to frame U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world as focused upon democracy and human rights, the actions of the U.S. government indicate a different reality. The cases of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia indicate that U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world is shaped by strategic interests, including political stability, counterterrorism, Israel's interests, oil purchasing, and economic gains through weapon sales. Subsequently, The U.S.'s prioritization of strategic interests trumps - or, in some cases, stifles - support for the democratic process in the Arab world.

In the cases of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, U.S. strategic interests are prioritized over human rights and democracy entirely. This is most evident when looking at the significant amount of human rights violations in Saudi Arabia and the aftermath of the 2011 uprising in Bahrain, both of which the U.S. government has largely fallen silent upon despite criticism from human rights organizations. Meanwhile, Egypt and Jordan's struggle for democracy is spoken of highly by U.S. politicians in speeches and public statements, but fails to receive tangible, policy-driven support. This is most evident in the failed attempt at democratic repression in order to keep the Muslim Brotherhood out of power, and the subsequent silence on el-Sisi's military and political punishment of Brotherhood supporters. Although the U.S. applauds Jordan for its democratic and humanitarian efforts, political impunity for human rights violators in their security forces

and governmental positions show that Jordan still has a long way to go to be adequately democratic.¹⁷⁸ Overall, it is clear that political power, peace and military control in the region continue to be the U.S.'s top priorities, regardless of the changing atmosphere. Furthermore, democracy and human rights are only advocated for when being used as mechanisms to validate and legitimize other U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Failure of U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives

In a 2011 Keynote Address at the National Democratic Institute, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated,¹⁷⁹

“Democracies make for stronger and stabler partners. They trade more, innovate more, and fight less. They help divided societies to air and hopefully resolve their differences. They hold inept leaders accountable at the polls. They channel people’s energies away from extremism and toward political and civic engagement.... So for all these reasons... opening political systems, societies, and economies is not simply a matter of idealism. It is a strategic necessity.”

Clinton’s statement is representative of the public verbal support for democracy that all U.S. leaders have established over the past few years. Yet the strategic partnerships, which are often warmly described as “friendships,” reflect an unconditional support for oppressive regimes that discredit any democratic discussion.¹⁸⁰

While the U.S. attempts to support democratic reform through humanitarian efforts in Egypt and Jordan, their past and current relationships with hegemonic leaders shows that strategic necessities do not always align with the democratic aspirations of the Arab

¹⁷⁸ "World Report 2014: Jordan." 2014.; "Freedom in the World 2015." 2015. *Freedom House*.

¹⁷⁹ Clinton, Hillary. 2011. "Keynote Address at the National Democratic Institute's 2011 Democracy Awards Dinner." *U.S. Department of State*.

¹⁸⁰ Lagon, Mark. 2011. "Promoting Human Rights: Is U.S. Consistency Desirable or Possible?" *Council on Foreign Relations*.; "Readout of the President's Call with His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." 2014.; "Remarks by President Obama and President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in Press Availability." 2009.; "U.S. – Saudi Relations." 2001.; Kerry, 2015.

people. The relationships between the U.S. and anti-Democratic regimes, including that of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, show a distinct contradiction between the words publicly stated by U.S. officials and the actions of the U.S. government. Meanwhile, the U.S. government's unabashed support for the state of Israel has led to human rights violations, particularly when examining the impact of the Palestinian refugee crisis in Jordan and QIZs in Jordan and Egypt.

In order to achieve the U.S.'s key foreign policy objectives is truly to "Create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community," the belief in and verbal support of democracy must be followed by implementation of policies and aid in order to be valid and sincere.¹⁸¹ Therefore, it is not enough for U.S. political leaders to pay lip service to democracy; rather, they must follow through with actions in order to be perceived as legitimate and sincere.

Policy Recommendations

In order to address the U.S. government's failure to support the democratic process in the Arab world, the following policy recommendations should be considered:

1. Higher level of U.S. governmental transparency regarding democracy and strategic interests

In order to address the existing issues within U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world, a clear explanation as to how U.S. foreign policy operates, and how the U.S. government

¹⁸¹ "FY 2004-2009 Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan." 2003. *U.S. Department of State*.

defines important concepts, is needed. Increasing transparency in how the U.S. government addresses us foreign policy interests is vital to both democracy and stability in the region. Rather than claiming to support democracy yet taking actions that do not align with the democratic process, the U.S. government and its representatives should be transparent in how it discusses foreign policy to the American people and the international political community. If the U.S. government aims to protect Israel, increase trade through weapon sales, ensure access to oil, engage in intelligence sharing, and implement military force in order to ensure regional stability, they should do so without using political loopholes or deceptive policy methods. Furthermore, the U.S. government should not continue to seek out strategic interests while claiming they are pursuing humanitarian or democratic interests, as this is both contradictory and deceptive.

2. Revisiting values-based foreign policy regarding human rights and democracy

I argue that U.S. foreign policy accommodates strategic-based interests over values-based interests. Subsequently, I recommend that prioritizing values-based foreign policy is vital in order to maintain peace in the region and ensure that human rights are attained for all people, particularly as it pertains to humanitarian efforts and the democratic process. Prioritizing moral policy does not necessarily mean supporting a democratic process in each nation exclusively, as Woodrow Wilson's initial concept of Moral Diplomacy attempted – and ultimately failed – to do. Rather, engaging with moral, values-based policy entails the U.S. government listening to and addressing the political and humanitarian needs of the people, rather than exclusively prioritizing U.S. hegemony in the region at all costs.

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