

Notes from the Minefield

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*United States Intervention in
Lebanon and the Middle East,
1945–1958*

With a New Preface

Irene L. Gendzier



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For Assaf J. Kfoury

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Left to right: Colonel Tom Lawlor, Defense attaché of the U.S. Embassy; William R. Chandler; Prime Minister Rashid Karame, the first post-civil war prime minister; and unidentified person. 1958.

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Left to right: L. Bill Helmann, foreman; William Campbell, vice president, government relations, TAPLINE; Saleh al-As'ad, TAPLINE public relations officer; William R. Chandler. Second from right: Colonel William Eddy.

A patrolling armored car passes government security troops behind sandbag barricades in the Basta area of Beirut, Lebanon. June 25, 1958.

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Preface

Military intervention by invitation was the preferred formula adopted by the Eisenhower administration when it intervened in Lebanon's first civil war in 1958. U.S. action passed into the annals of U.S. foreign policy as a triumph of military diplomacy, a high point in the largely untroubled relationship of the United States with one of the most pro-Western regimes in the Middle East. The disingenuous formula has long served to trivialize the nature of Lebanese politics and U.S. policy in Lebanon and the Middle East.

The present study was conceived during the later phase of Lebanon's second and far more devastating civil war, which took place between 1975 and 1990, a period that included the Israeli invasion of the Lebanese south in 1978 and its full scale invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The long term impact of developments surrounding these events was in evidence more than twenty years later when a new administration in Washington talked openly of "reordering" the Middle East, including Syria, Iran, and Iraq.

For those seeking to understand the origins of Washington's interests in Beirut, however, the answer was to be found in an earlier period when Lebanon represented a pro-Western center of regional and international trade and finance that served U.S. commercial and strategic interests in the Middle East. The U.S.-Lebanese connection involved oil, corporate expansion, and the panoply of political relations with a well connected

cosmopolitan elite. The role of TAPLINE was a crucial—though hardly exclusive—element in this context, one seldom acknowledged in accounts of U.S. policies in the region.

This and more emerges from a reading of U.S. sources that expose the nature of U.S. interests in Lebanon, including the conditions leading to Washington's support for the so-called confessional system, a key to the maintenance of the status quo in a period of intense political change and conflict affecting the region from Algiers to Ankara, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Damascus, Tehran, and Baghdad.

In retrospect, the U.S.-Lebanese connection was unique but not exceptional. To consider its evolution is to be privy to an important and often neglected dimension of U.S. policy in the Middle East whose legacy remains to be examined.

The text that follows is organized into five major parts. The first two situate the origins of U.S. policy in Lebanon in post-World War II U.S. policy in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (part 1), while identifying the earliest expression of U.S. economic interests in Beirut in terms of postwar U.S. policies on oil and aviation (part 2). The next develops the expansion of such interests through the uneven relationship between Washington and a dependent Lebanon in the face of mounting regional crises (part 3). With part 4, the increasing political and military intervention by the United States in Lebanese politics is explored in the context of civil war. Part 5 examines the determining role of such military intervention at different phases, prior to July 14 and in the course of the postwar settlement.

A word on transliteration is in order. A simplified version of the code offered in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* has been used, and while efforts have been made to clarify usage, inconsistencies remain.

Acknowledgments

In many respects, this work represents a collective effort. It could not have been written without the immeasurable contributions of innumerable friends, colleagues, and former officials whose readings, criticisms and reflections enriched the final results. None, however, are responsible for the interpretation that follows, let alone the errors that it may contain.

Carolyn Gates, Fawaz Traboulsi, and Assaf J. Kfoury played a special role in the evolution of this work; without them this project would not

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Halim Barakat first invited me to write on U.S. policy for a conference on Lebanon that he organized at Georgetown University. Nadim Shihadi, director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies at Oxford, made its documentary resources on U.S. policy, collected under the direction of Carolyn Gates, available, while Fida Nasrallah and Ingrid Hobby generously provided assistance from near and far.

Wm. Roger Louis, Albert Hourani, and I organized a conference on Lebanon in the 1950s at the University of Texas at Austin in 1992, which provided the setting for productive exchanges with former ambassadors Nadim Dimechkié and Richard Parker, as well as Kamal Salibi, Caroline Gates, Fawaz Gerges, and David Lesch, among others.

Over the past few years different aspects of the present study have been presented at seminars in the Departments of History and Political Science of Boston University, at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, and at the Middle East Center at Harvard University, the Middle East Center at Columbia University, the University of Texas at Austin, the British Middle East Study Group, the Centre for Lebanese Studies and St. Anthony's College in Oxford, the Middle East Center of Princeton University, the Middle East Center and the Department of History of the University of Chicago, the Society of

the Historians of American Foreign Relations, and the Emile Bustani seminar at MIT.

The American Philosophical Society provided a travel grant in 1990, and the Centre for Lebanese Studies at Oxford offered support during my brief residence in the same year. The Department of Political Science of Boston University extended support for research-related travel.

The following individuals and agencies provided assistance in the collection and preparation of the maps and photographs that appear in this volume. In addition to William Chandler, who made his personal collection available to me, I am grateful to Miklos Pinther, Chief Cartographer Section, LPD, Department of Public Information, United Nations; to the Cartographic Division of Harvard Library and the photographic services of Stephen Sylvester of Harvard University; and to Marcia Lein Schiff of AP/World Wide Photos.

I remain indebted to Columbia University Press for its initial publication of this work, and to writer and editor Peter Dimock, for the extraordinary experience of working with him, as well as with Kabir Dadonda and Michael Haskell, others whose support has made the publication of the current edition with its new preface a reality.

Preface to the 2006 Edition

What We Have Forgotten About U.S. Policy in the Middle East

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003—the expression of post–Cold War U.S. hegemonic ambitions—constitutes a point of no return in American foreign and domestic policy. It elevated preventive war to presidential doctrine and reduced international law to a matter of choice. Relying on the superiority of military force and the premise of economic strength, the George W. Bush administration exploited the absence of organized political opposition to facilitate its manipulation of public opinion.

The susceptibility of the public was, in part, a function of the exploitation of fear linked to the events of 9/11 that provided the official justification for the concentration of executive power and the erosion of civil liberties. But the vulnerability of the public to manipulation, often misinterpreted as indifference, was the symptom of an entirely different condition. Public amnesia was the cumulative effect of a long-term failure to confront U.S. policy and to understand its origins and purpose as well as its political and moral consequences. The effect of not knowing, or not demanding to know, was to undermine the capacity to dissent and resist until the full-scale forgery of the war became more difficult to hide. Then, as more Americans were faced with the evidence of deception, death, and destruction, came the long shunned question of responsibility.

The new preface that follows was written before the 2006 U.S.-supported Israeli invasion of Lebanon, whose scope of destruction and human suffering is difficult to calculate. Who will survive and what kind of state will emerge in a region that is certain to be profoundly altered by the U.S.-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon and Gaza remain unclear at this time. What is certain is the urgent need for a critical and informed public.

Before the onset of war in March 2003, Washington faced an unprecedented level of global opposition. In response, Washington created “a litany of largely baseless charges about Iraq, then repeated, escalated, and rearranged those charges in places and times calculated to contribute to their goal of opening the way to an unprovoked war.”¹ The dissemination of such charges became an integral part of the global and local propaganda campaign designed to assure public support. The role of Defense Department specialists in psychological warfare was critical to this campaign; so was the allied role of the mainstream media, which were viewed as instruments of war to which public apologists of various stripes contributed. The resulting information wars were instruments of legitimacy designed to achieve compliance without coercion, save for independent journalists in Iraq who became targets of U.S. attack.

For those unable to decipher the intricacies of policymaking or to fathom the fixing of intelligence, Iraq appeared to be a hopelessly complicated, frightening, and utterly novel case. In the absence of historical memory, little attempt was made to connect present and past policies, including those that linked U.S. policies in Iraq with fundamental U.S. interests in the region. Moreover, there was scant awareness that many of those who played key roles in planning the U.S. invasion of Iraq had long experience in previous administrations, notably those of former presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. It was under President Reagan that special envoys were sent to Baghdad to make contact with Iraq’s leadership. The policy continued under the first President Bush, who approved trade with Iraq that included the export of arms. Congressional investigations in the early 1990s disclosed some of these dealings, but they were all but forgotten in the changed era of the first Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Deprived of an active and immediate sense of the historical logic underlying American policy in the region, the public fell prey to a litany of claims, cover-ups, and misinformation campaigns. First was the claim concerning Iraq’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, which constituted the administration’s primary justification for war. Even as he later conceded “much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong,” President G. W. Bush affirmed that “he ‘absolutely’ would have invaded Iraq if he had known then that Mr. Hussein did not have banned weapons.”² When the war officially began, the bombing campaign of March 2003 was presented by the mainstream press in terms of its “shock and awe” effects. What that meant on the ground for Iraqi civilians was

ignored. The omission was translated into a more general sidelining of Iraqi civilian deaths, until *The Lancet* published the findings of a research team that revealed that Iraqi civilian deaths numbered approximately 100,000 as of 2003.³ Images of U.S. military casualties were treated in the same manner, until families involved joined in protest and in search of information to assist them. The disappearance of funds allocated by the U.S. Congress for the reconstruction of Iraq similarly generated little interest, until independent journalists and the General Accounting Office had more evidence than could be hidden.⁴ The same can be said of the profitable contracts issued to major corporate interests.⁵

In the absence of censorship, the dissemination of state propaganda relied on the collaboration of the mainstream media and the bevy of intellectual and academic apologists on whom it regularly called.

The role of specialized branches of the Defense Department concerned with psychological operations, known as PSYOPS, was critical to such efforts. The chief of psychological operations at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Power, in Belgium, explained the meaning of “perception management” as an effort “to influence the attitudes and objective reasoning of audiences and consists of Public Diplomacy, Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), Public Information, Deception and Covert Action.”⁶

The Defense Department’s Office of Strategic Influence operated in the same territory but was eventually closed down in response to adverse publicity. “In February 2002, unnamed officials told *The New York Times* that a new Pentagon operation called the Office of Strategic Influence planned ‘to provide news items, possibly even false ones, to foreign news organizations.’ Though the report was denied and a subsequent Pentagon review found no evidence of plans to use disinformation, Mr. Rumsfeld [the Secretary of Defense] shut down the office within days.”⁷ It was replaced by another operation, the Science Applications International Corporation, which was similarly engaged in various “tactical perception-management campaigns.”⁸

Recent coverage of U.S. efforts “to Plant Articles in Iraq Papers”⁹ aroused consternation and denials, even as “military contractors and officials” confirmed that the campaign in question “included television and radio spots that did not disclose their American sponsorship and the disbursement of more than \$1 million in cash.”¹⁰ Its authors included those experienced in “government and corporate intelligence projects.” Iraqis asserted, “No amount of money spent on trying to mold public opinion is likely to have much impact, given the harsh conditions under

the American military occupation.”¹¹ But Iraqi civilians were not the only targets of such campaigns.

On the home front, using the media as an instrument of war led to the embedding of journalists with the military. In the spring of 2005, *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly* published an essay on “The Media as an Instrument of War.” Its principal argument rested on the proposition that “winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield.”¹² The tools in the hands of the military to allow it to influence the media included “deception, distortion, omission, or obfuscation: the tools of political ‘spin’ adapted to the ends of war fighting.”¹³ From the perspective of the military, “information operations” were designed to maximize support. “Lying outright to the media may not, in many circumstances, make much sense, but controlling the flow of information emphatically does, and the purpose of the public affairs staff is precisely that—to control the dissemination of information so as to maximize the military and political advantage to U.S. forces.”

According to the U.S. Army Field Manual “Public Affairs, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures,” the goal of “military deception” is “to deceive adversaries and others about friendly force dispositions, capabilities, vulnerabilities, and intentions.”¹⁴ The process involved the crafting of “a plausible, but false view of the situation, which will lead the deception target into acting in a manner that will accomplish the commander’s goal. Once the story is completed, the [Deception Working Group] determines the deception means necessary to portray the events and indicators.”

One “deception target” was the U.S. public. As the author reviewing the U.S. Army manual indicated, “Whether for purposes of military deception or more broadly in an effort to control the public and elite perception of a conflict, the U.S. military has a keen interest in influencing how the media perceive the events on the battlefield.” Two methods were identified: one was “the program of embedding reporters” with the military to influence its coverage, the other involved “strategic-level-news presentations given by senior personnel in Qatar and Washington.”

There was a third method that was not discussed in this source. It involved the targeting of select elements of the international news media, including journalists from the Qatar-based al-Jazeera network, along with journalists from Reuters and the Spanish television network

Telecinco, who were the subject of U.S. attacks in Baghdad.¹⁵ But there was another contributing element whose importance is difficult to exaggerate. The mainstream media not only approved the embedding of reporters in the military, it withheld critical information relevant to the U.S. invasion.

As Friel and Falk demonstrated in their analysis of the *New York Times*, the paper of record steadily avoided mention of the illegal nature of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. As a result, those who relied on its influential pages were deprived of informed discussion concerning the implications of the Bush administration's violation of international law. At stake was the "international law principles embodied in the Nuremberg precedent," according to which the invasion of Iraq constituted "the supreme crime."¹⁶

From this, other violations followed. Reference to them was initially also omitted from the *Times*, although those with access to the international press and the Internet were able to learn the details revealed in the British press.

The "Downing Street memo," for example, provided evidence of deliberate prewar planning. It revealed the July 23, 2002, Anglo-American deliberations according to which President G. W. Bush intended "to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD [weapons of mass destruction]. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy. The NSC [National Security Council] had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime's record. There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action."¹⁷ The above disclosure, with its evidence of deliberate intent on aggression, constituted a violation of the Nuremberg Principles of 1950 adopted by the UN's International Law Commission.

There were other examples of illegal actions, such as the Anglo-American bombing campaign conducted over northern and southern Iraq—before the U.S. invasion in March 2003—that was carried out without UN authorization.¹⁸ Evidence of the use of torture, as in the case of Abu Ghraib, constituted a violation of the "customary laws of war" defined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which were an integral part of international law recognized by the United States. Washington's response to the disclosure of the incriminating photographic evidence from Abu Ghraib, however, was to treat it as a major public relations

problem, not a moral and political crisis stemming from the “executive authorization of violation of international law affecting detainees.”¹⁹

Unlocking U.S. Policy

In 1971, Gabriel Kolko wrote of U.S. war crimes in Vietnam, claiming that what was most significant about them was “the failure and seeming unwillingness of the American people to translate their knowledge of specific inhumanities and events, of the countless Son Mys, into a larger political perception of the objective of American foreign policy or a comprehension of the essential human and moral significance of the war in Vietnam.” Most Americans, Kolko maintained, had “neither the ideological or intellectual perceptions, much less a descriptively accurate language of politics, capable of characterizing the social and human consequences of their government’s foreign policy.”²⁰

Kolko’s indictment applies to the public response to Iraq, in spite of the profound differences between Vietnam and Iraq and the different causes and conditions of U.S. intervention in each. In fact, Kolko’s indictment applies to the public response to U.S. policy in the Middle East in general over the last fifty years. It is not difficult to argue that an increased level of public awareness would have exposed fundamental U.S. interests as well as the efforts by successive administrations to mask these interests through deception. Familiarity with past U.S. policies would have revealed that U.S. interests in the Gulf did not begin in 2003 or 1991, but decades earlier. Before the assertion of U.S. control over Kuwait and the Gulf in the first Gulf War, there was the Carter Doctrine in 1980, an unmistakable reminder to the U.S.S.R. and the new Iranian regime that U.S. power in the Gulf was second to none. In the decade-long Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) that followed, Washington’s policies were designed to assure the same objective, namely, its own undisputed primacy.

The identification of U.S. interests in the Gulf, however, was not a function of the 1979 Iranian revolution that undid the regime of the U.S.-backed shah who had assumed power after the Anglo-American coup of 1953. The control of oil was a factor in that coup, much as it was in post-World War II Anglo-American policy in the Middle East throughout the 1950s, as the examples of Suez in 1956 and Iraq in 1958 indicate. Even in the case of U.S. intervention in Lebanon—a transit state in which ARAMCO’s pipeline to Sidon was under the control of the Trans-

Arabian Pipeline (TAPLINE)—oil interests in the context of broader economic and financial as well as political and strategic interests were involved.

How much of this was familiar to the U.S. public? Among insiders, the power of the dominant international oil companies, notably the five major U.S. companies as well as British Petroleum and Shell (Royal Dutch-Shell)—the so-called Seven Sisters—was not in question.²¹ As a December 1960 national intelligence estimate indicated:

They have developed and control the vast and complex apparatus in Western Europe, Africa, Asia, and America through which most Middle East oil is actually marketed. This apparatus is beyond the physical control of the producing countries. They cannot tax it, nationalize it, or shut it down. The companies alone have the enormous capital and technical ability required for the heavy development and research activities required in every phase of the oil industry. The negotiating positions of most of the European companies are strengthened by the fact of their government's participation in their ownership and by the importance which their governments place on continued access to Middle East oil.²²

The above was written some years after the appearance of a 1952 Federal Trade Commission report that exposed the operations of the petroleum cartel against whose members President Truman declined to press charges. Yet the authors of the National Intelligence Estimate recognized that in the existing political environment of the Middle East there was increased support for the view “that the oil beneath their territories is a national patrimony which will not last forever and which is being exploited by the Western oil companies under unjust arrangements made when the area and its rulers, were under the political domination of the West.”²³

It may be useful to recall in this context that by 1949 the concentration of power in the hands of the seven most powerful oil companies in the world assured their control over approximately 92 percent of global oil reserves. Ten years later, “sixty-one percent of Middle East exports went to Europe to supply 73 percent of that area's total needs. Most of the rest went to Asia and the Far East where it filled 67 percent of the area's requirements.”²⁴

At stake in protecting such interests was cheap oil that guaranteed high profits and the dependence of Western Europe and Japan on Middle

East oil under U.S. control. Maintaining such dependence in the face of international competition was a major preoccupation.²⁵

Oil-exporting regimes in the Middle East in the 1950s had little control over the product on which they relied for their revenue. First, they were dependent on concessionary agreements over which they had scant influence, hence the futility of attempting to amend them. Second, they were dependent on the price and production controls that were determined by the members of the petroleum cartel, a matter that Iraqi leader Abdel Karim Qassim had much to say about during his protracted and ultimately fruitless exchanges with representatives of the Iraq Petroleum Company, which was not owned by Iraq. These deliberations occurred between 1958 and 1961. The U.S. was not directly involved—unlike the U.S. companies that had a 23.75 percent share of IPC—but clearly Washington was concerned with the outcome in a state whose leadership and cadres were heavily indebted to its Communist Party.

However, while Iraq was no longer a British mandate, it remained a British concern and was recognized as such by Washington. Admittedly, some officials took note of the unexpected overthrow of the Iraqi regime as constituting a fatal blow to British influence that potentially worked in U.S. favor. At the least, it altered the balance of power in a region whose political direction was a subject of major concern to U.S. officials both in the area and in Washington.

U.S. policy in Lebanon has to be seen in this light. Long before 1958, as the record of U.S. policy discussed in the pages that follow suggests, Washington developed a network of relations with Lebanon's financial, commercial, and political elite that reinforced its assessment of the considerable value of this small state in the protection and projection of its interests and power across the region. In a period when Washington feared the sweep of radical change, which its officials viewed as inevitable in a region that they described as overtaken by the "struggle between defenders of the status quo and advocates of change," Beirut represented the pole of resistance against Egyptian president Nasser.²⁶ Of incomparably greater influence in the region, the Egyptian leader was consistently courted and undermined by U.S. officials who suspected his role in every regional crisis, including that which gripped Lebanon in the year of its first civil war. Hence, U.S. officials viewed the evidence of increasing disaffection between the U.S. and the regime in Beirut with a growing sense of alarm.

In this charged political environment—with U.S. officials bent on securing the Lebanese regime, if not its current leader—the thunderbolt

from Baghdad came. The Iraqi Revolution of July 14, 1958, did away with the regime imposed by the British following the First World War, as well as the political and social order on which it rested.²⁷ But 1958 was a critical period outside of the Middle East as well, as struggles against colonialism and imperialism erupted in North Africa and Southeast Asia.

The Year 1958

In France, it was Algeria. In London, it was Iraq and Kuwait. In Washington, it was Lebanon and Iraq and Kuwait and Indonesia. Four years after Dienbienphu and their expulsion from Vietnam, the French were locked in combat in Algeria, and their president was preparing for negotiations. Washington, on the other hand, replaced France in Vietnam, rejecting the agreements arrived at in 1954 and resuming the war and the division of the country. Eisenhower's allies at home, who blamed the Truman administration for the "loss of China," were bent on assuring U.S. dominance in Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, as well as Vietnam and Indonesia. In Indonesia, "the Eisenhower administration provoked and strongly abetted a major rebellion and then civil war that tore the country apart." It was, as George McT. Kahin wrote, "the largest U.S. covert operation since World War II, involving not only the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) but also the U.S. Navy and a camouflaged American air force."²⁸ As McT. Kahin points out, neither the U.S. public nor Congress was aware of U.S. policy, "and it has remained one of the most zealously guarded secrets in the history of U.S. covert overseas operations."

On July 14, U.S. Marines intervened in Lebanon's civil war to assure the hold on power of the political and financial elite on whom U.S. interests rested. On the same day, the Iraqi revolution overthrew the pro-Western monarch and cabinet in Baghdad. Developments in Iraq were not responsible for U.S. policy in Beirut, but their effect on the Lebanese president played a significant role, as the pages that follow demonstrate.

The U.S. president did not plan intervention in Beirut as a response to events in Baghdad. But the effects of those events were considerable nonetheless. Washington viewed Beirut as its opening to the interests that defined its policies in the Middle East. But as Eisenhower informed the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, on July 18, 1958: "Whatever happens in Iraq and other parts of the area, we must, I think, not only try to bolster up both the loyalties and the military and economic strength of Lebanon and Jordan, we must also, and this seems to me even more

important, see that the Persian Gulf area stays within the Western orbit. The Kuwait-Dhahran-Abadan areas become extremely important and Turkey and Iran have become more important. We shall seek ways to help them be sturdy allies, first in quality and second in quantity, insofar as that quantity can be usefully provided and maintained.”²⁹

Macmillan urged Eisenhower to abandon his plans for intervening in Lebanon and instead move towards immediate joint intervention. For Macmillan, the question was how to avert the destruction of oil fields and pipelines and “all the rest of it.” Eisenhower turned down the invitation, a move that did not exclude the possibility of regime change, and he and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, reassured Macmillan of U.S. support for common Anglo-American interests in the Gulf.

In the interim, British officials asked Lebanese president Chamoun to protect their oil installations while they secured the Iraq Petroleum Company terminal and installations in Tripoli.³⁰ In Baghdad, meanwhile, representatives of IPC prepared to meet with the new regime in talks that eventually collapsed. The result was the issuance of Law no. 80 by the new regime, which limited IPC access to oil fields then under operation. The implications of such confrontations were momentous. They echoed outside of the Middle East, inspiring expressions of support as far as Indonesia, where the director of the CIA and Secretary of State Dulles were considering how to undermine the regime with the help of U.S. oil interests.

Members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who met over the course of the summer of 1958 to consider the “situation in the Middle East,” with briefings on U.S. policy by administration officials, were privy to little of what was actually going on in the region.³¹ Their prime concern was with U.S. intervention in Lebanon, but they had numerous questions about Iraq and the failure of U.S. intelligence to anticipate the revolution. At the outset, critical senators demanded to know the legal basis for U.S. intervention in Lebanon, obviously irritated by the evident disdain for congressional opinion. Such questions led beyond Lebanon to Iraq and the more general question of U.S. oil interests in the region.

Concerning Lebanon, senators were told was that U.S. intervention was a necessary and just response to the predicament facing the Lebanese president. They were made to understand that its broader implications were justified by Washington’s firm stance against radical currents in a region open to Soviet penetration and local subversion. Questions per-

taining to Lebanon's civil war and the precise source of external danger—to which the Lebanese president and his U.S. ally consistently pointed—went unanswered, save for repetitive accusations against Egypt, Syria, and radio propaganda that was considered a form of “aggressive indirect aggression.”

As for Iraq, senators were told that U.S. officials, including those in the intelligence community, were unaware and unprepared for news of the Iraqi revolution. Some senators, however, took issue with the derogatory descriptions of the event, suggesting that Iraqis exercised their legitimate rights in revolting against a corrupt and unrepresentative government. Questions concerning U.S. oil interests in the Gulf, including Kuwait, indicated more than a passing knowledge, but they were categorically set aside. Indeed, the juxtaposition of Senate hearings against parallel U.S. communiqués with Britain offers striking evidence of the profound contrast between public talk and inside policy.

At the same time as the Senate welcomed administration officials (with the illusory hope of clarifying U.S. policy), President Eisenhower assured Prime Minister Macmillan of the U.S. commitment to Anglo-American interests in the Gulf. As Senate hearings continued, U.S. officials offered their versions of the Iraqi coup, while Senate critics disputed the policy of intervention at the will of the executive, repeatedly raising the question of congressional authorization. In simultaneous, secret exchanges, Secretary of State Dulles assured British officials that “we can put up sand bags around positions we must protect—the first group being Israel and Lebanon and the second being the oil positions around the Persian Gulf.”³²

The reference to Israel is worth noting. Ten years after the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized Israel's military capacity as second to that of Turkey, Eisenhower and Dulles identified Israel among the U.S. government's valuable Middle Eastern assets, along with Lebanon and the “oil positions” in the Gulf. The significance of this was not probed by U.S. senators, if they knew about it. Yet for Eisenhower and Dulles there was no ambiguity to its meaning. Israel and Lebanon offered Washington different but unmatched advantages as pro-Western states in a region increasingly consumed by nationalist and radical movements that constituted long-term challenges to Western interests.

U.S. senators appear to have been equally uninformed about the objective and consequences of oil company negotiations with the new Iraqi regime, save that they believed it would abide by existing contracts.

But while Eisenhower and his secretary of state were promising their British allies that Washington would protect common Anglo-American interests in the Gulf, the largely British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company was engaged in negotiations with the Iraqi leadership. How much did U.S. senators know of this? Were they interested? The answer to the second question is affirmative. Some, senators, were well aware of the power of U.S. and British oil interests in Kuwait and were eager to learn more. After all, a major U.S. oil corporation, Exxon-Mobil, owned 23.75 percent of the shares of IPC. Further, U.S. senators might have been interested to learn that British Petroleum, in which the British government had a controlling interest, not only owned a majority of IPC, but also held 50 percent ownership of the Kuwait Oil Company, with the other half in the hands of the U.S. Gulf Oil Company.

Qassim's exchanges with representatives of IPC, as well as agents of Standard Oil of New Jersey³³ and Shell, involved a blunt review of the origin and nature of the existing concessions and their implications for Iraq. Qassim questioned the legitimacy of such arrangements, observing that they had been agreed upon by a regime that had represented British, not Iraqi, interests. The IPC rejoinder was to insist that the regime in question was in power at the time, to which Qassim added, "You were offered this privilege by people who were traitors of their nation."³⁴

But it was not only past policies that Qassim questioned—it was their current impact on Iraq: "Have you ever heard of a company anywhere in the world, which keeps control over all the country's lands, sea and sky by means of only one concession?" the Iraqi leader asked. In fact, that aspect of the concession was seldom clearly stated, an omission that biased those unaware of the evidence.

The problem, however, was not only the scope of the concession; it was coping with decisions by IPC and other oil giants in the region to maintain prices by controlling production and, if necessary, deliberately underproducing to avoid surplus. The effect was diminished revenues for the oil-dependent regimes, Iraq among them. It was in response to such policies that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, was established in 1960.

As a result of IPC's rejection of Iraqi demands, the Iraqi-IPC talks collapsed, followed by Qassim's issuance of Law 80 in 1961, which limited IPC to operating only currently active areas of its concession. U.S. legal experts did not consider Public Law 80 an expropriation of IPC prop-

erty.³⁵ Complete nationalization took place in 1972 under a very different regime. As U.S. sources confirmed, the immediate effect on the British Petroleum Company was hardly damaging given Britain's "major interests in Kuwait Oil Co., Iraq Petroleum Co., and the Iranian Consortium."³⁶ Kuwait alone possessed "the world's largest proved oil reserves, equal to those of the entire Western hemisphere," providing "one-half of its total oil imports, one-third to one-half of British oil company profits, and \$100 million annual new investment in London."³⁷

In September 1961 the Indonesian minister of industry, mining and development visited Baghdad, where he expressed solidarity with the position of the Iraqi regime, exclaiming that "we are not willing to recognize what had been given to the companies during the period when imperialism was in control of our country. The principles pursued by our country are similar to those followed by your country."³⁸

U.S. records indicate that the Iraqi hosts made records of their negotiations with IPC available to their Indonesian guests. What U.S. officials did not make available, if they knew about it, were covert U.S. efforts to bring down the Sukarno regime in Indonesia.

In 1963 Abdel Karim Qassim was assassinated. In 1965 Sukarno was ousted from power. Oil was not the only factor involved. Throughout the Middle East, the struggle for reform and radical change that spanned from the 1950s through the 1970s was suppressed by the combination of outside intervention and the collusion of Washington's regional allies.

By the late 1960s, Iraqi communists had been virtually eliminated from power. The rise of Saddam Hussein inaugurated a period of economic growth, political and military power consolidation, and the emergence of the repressive security state that became synonymous with the regime. Elsewhere, the outcome of the Israeli-Arab war of 1967 resulted in a regional realignment of power to the benefit of Washington and Israel, save that the renewed massive displacement of Palestinians to surrounding states led to a heightened level of political mobilization that affected political forces operating in the region, including Lebanon. There, the course of the second civil war, which started in April 1975, came to symbolize the conflict between progressive forces, with all of their internal contradictions, and the local and external forces of order determined to defeat the emergence of a new kind of Lebanese state. The civil war did not end in 1976 but continued through the Israeli invasion of the south in 1978 and Lebanon in 1982, by which time Washington

(through the Multinational Force) was fully engaged in securing an acceptable end to the struggle. The long-term repercussions—Syrian influence in Lebanon among them—persist.

There were other notable developments affecting U.S. policy in the Middle East during this period. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1978, the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, and Iran's ensuing war with Iraq collectively inflicted incalculable levels of human suffering, social dislocation, economic impoverishment, and unanticipated political consequences on the peoples of the Middle East. For Washington, the loss of the shah and the emergence of a militant anti-American clerical regime risked greater losses—those of oil in Iran and the Gulf.

The events of 1978 and 1979 were of particular importance. The United States supported Iraq in an effort to defeat Iran, thereby avoiding the risk of losing control of the Gulf. In 1983, Donald Rumsfeld was sent to Baghdad as a special envoy of the Reagan administration. Reagan, followed by the first President Bush, continued with support for the Iraqi regime, including extensive trade and arms export. The policy was sustained until shortly before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. It was then abruptly dropped and forgotten as one administration after the other denounced the Iraqi dictator, his weapons craze, and his demonic destruction of his own people.

Those who did not forget were members of House and Senate committees that undertook investigations of U.S.-Iraqi relations in the period leading up to the Gulf War. Their findings reveal that the United States facilitated the export of materials essential to Iraq's buildup of weapons of mass destruction. For most Americans, these facts were invisible at the time and remain so to this day. Despite the committees' work and public findings, a general understanding of the historical context of long-term U.S. policy in the region within which this transfer of weapons took place is not part of American public awareness.

Remembering to Forget

It is not surprising that the first Bush administration sought to discourage congressional investigations of U.S.-Iraqi relations.

In October 1992, Gary Milhollin, then a professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School and director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, testified before the Senate Committee on Banking,

Housing and Urban Affairs.³⁹ The committee had asked him, as he explained, “to answer the question whether American exports aided Iraq’s effort to build weapons of mass destruction. The answer is ‘yes.’ Saddam Hussein is the first monster with imported fangs. Although the West Germans supplied the canines, Americans supplied some of the lesser teeth. Both governments knew what was going on, but both chose not to stop it.” With that introduction, Milhollin proceeded to describe the “lesser teeth” that the United States had provided. The information was hardly secret at that stage; earlier accounts by Milhollin had appeared in the *New York Times* in April 1992.⁴⁰

Milhollin was not the only source of information on the subject, nor were the hearings of October 1992 the only ones to address U.S.-Iraqi relations, including trade, aid, and weapons sales. In 1990 the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs explained U.S.-Iraqi relations in terms of the benefits they accrued for U.S. agribusiness. Other officials confirmed this position, underlining the importance of arms exports. In the May 1992 hearings of the House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, Lawrence Eagleburger, deputy secretary of state under G. H. W. Bush, admitted that the administration knew about the Iraqi regime’s atrocities as well as its attempts to obtain biological and nuclear weapons. But as Eagleburger explained, Iraq had oil, and it wanted to trade with the West.

In the October 1992 hearings of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, witnesses disclosed that “dozens of United States firms, many holding United States export licenses, contributed directly to Iraq’s ballistic missile and nuclear weapons program, let alone its chemical weapons.”⁴¹ Further, according to these hearings, the U.S. Commerce Department “approved at least 220 export licenses for the Iraqi armed forces, major weapons complexes and enterprises identified by the Central Intelligence Agency as diverting technology to weapons programs.” Such hearings additionally exposed the U.S. export of biological weapons to Iraq in violation of the international conventions on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, signed by the United States and the United Kingdom, among others, in 1972 and 1975.

The first Bush administration attempted to discourage congressional leaders from pursuing the above investigations. The second Bush admin-

istration, even as it was justifying its invasion of Iraq by the Iraqi regime's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, turned a blind eye toward the role of its own officials who supported earlier U.S.-Iraqi policy that involved the export of arms. The evidence was not entirely forgotten. It formed part of the dossier presented by the Iraqi regime to the United Nations in 2002. It did not, however, lead to demands for an inquiry of U.S. policy or for an explanation of what appeared to be contradictory policies. Such questions might have led to a consideration of Washington's fundamental interests in Iraq, the Gulf, and the Middle East.

There was, however, a discussion of precisely these issues—in a highly abridged format—in 1992. This discussion has since disappeared from view. According to Alan Platt, a former official in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the administration's view was that "Iraq, Iran and Syria should not be allowed to gain military power such that any one or combination of the three can threaten to destabilize Turkey to the north, or any of the sub-regions of the Middle East as a whole." Israel was included in this discussion as Platt indicated, "No combination of Middle East nations hostile to Israel should be allowed to gain military power such that they pose a direct threat to Israel's survival."⁴²

Platt's dispassionate reminder of the nature of U.S. guidelines in the Gulf was not the only statement on the subject, but its language was strikingly unambiguous. Its meaning became clear more than a decade later, when, in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, U.S. policy-makers once again turned their attention to Syria and Iran.

Forty years after John Foster Dulles identified Israel as among U.S. assets in the Middle East deserving protection, the scale of U.S. economic and military assistance to Tel Aviv testified to its special relationship with Washington, a relationship that extended beyond the Middle East to Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Platt's warning, directed at the states of the Middle East, omitted that Israel was unrivalled as a military power in the region and was the exclusive nuclear power, which was widely known. The basis of Israel's influence in U.S. Middle East policy was a function of common interests, which, like the rest of U.S. policy in the region, remained outside of critical public discussion.

At no time was this clearer than in the evolution of post-Cold War U.S. policy in the Gulf under the G. W. Bush administration, in which the invasion of Iraq was a preface to the attempted reordering of the Middle East involving Iran, Syria, and the steady expansion of Israel at the

expense of Palestine in the name of the “peace process.” The question of whether such policies were compatible with long-term U.S. economic and political interests in the region was a subject of insider controversy. At the public level, such questions were consistently eclipsed by a vaguely threatening official language designed to remind the Arab world and Iran that Washington’s order was not to be challenged, irrespective of its violations of international law, as in the cases of the invasion of Iraq and support for Israeli policies in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

In a joint article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, former officials of the Carter and G. H. W. Bush administrations Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, along with former U.S. ambassador Richard Murphy, called for “a recommitment by President Clinton to the principles of the Carter Doctrine—a renewal of U.S. vows to the Gulf,” that would make clear to the world that “the United States is in the Persian Gulf to stay.”⁴³ To explain what such a commitment meant, the three added, “The security and independence of the region is a vital U.S. interest. Any accommodation with a post-Saddam regime in Iraq or with a less hostile government in Iran must be based on that fact.”

The “fact” was entirely misleading, however, unless the terms “security” and “independence of the region” were translated to mean that the commitment implied U.S. hegemony over the Gulf. In their opening remarks to the above article, the three authors reminded their readers that “every president since Richard Nixon has recognized that ensuring Persian Gulf security and stability is a vital U.S. interest.”

But as the record indicates, concern with the Gulf predated the administration of President Nixon. Then and later, the basis of its importance and the question of who its beneficiaries were, were left unstated. The question of U.S. oil policy remained deliberately obscure, as the controversy over the release of the 2001 Energy Task Force report indicated.

In 2003, the U.S. Commerce Department agreed to release some of the information compiled by the Cheney Energy Task Force, as a result of a lawsuit brought by Judicial Watch under the aegis of the Freedom of Information Act. The materials disclosed “a map of Iraqi oilfields, pipelines, refineries and terminals, as well as 2 charts detailing Iraqi oil and gas projects, and ‘Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts.’”⁴⁴ The same documentation was available concerning Saudi and United Arab Emirates oilfields, terminals, and pipelines. In each case, a list of so-called suitors for the oil and gas projects involved was revealed. In the

Iraqi case, these included the Russian, Czech, Korean, Chinese, Canadian, and international consultants. In the area covering the UAE were the giants—Exxon/Mobil, Shell, BP, and Total Fina Elf—that figured as bidders for as-yet undeveloped areas, as well as among those active in online projects. They were not newcomers to the region.

Further evidence released by the U.S. General Accounting Office two years later, in August 2003, confirmed that the task force had consulted with “nonfederal energy stakeholders, principally petroleum, coal, nuclear, natural gas and electricity industry representatives and lobbyists.” Information on the identity and nature of such consultations was inaccessible at the time.⁴⁵

On November 10, 2005, “five of the country’s top oil executives walked into a congressional hearing room” to testify about their exorbitant profits.⁴⁶ While the exchange appeared to be heated, it did not lead then or later to a more systematic questioning of U.S. oil company profits or policies, or the companies’ collaboration with U.S. policymakers.

In the same month, a number of independent U.S. and British research organizations issued a report entitled “Crude Designs: The Rip-Off of Iraq’s Oil Wealth.” It provided previously unacknowledged evidence of U.S. plans for the allocation of Iraq’s oil wealth, which were determined without debate and at Iraq’s expense, giving approximately 64 percent of Iraq’s oil reserves to multinational oil companies.⁴⁷ Among U.S. objectives was an Iraqi oil and gas industry open to major investment protected by “production sharing agreements,” which promised considerable profits while minimizing risks, such as a downward turn of oil prices. The agreements in question were defined within a month of the invasion of Iraq in a secret meeting involving the U.S. State Department and select Iraqi oil experts.⁴⁸ Its objective was tantamount to a restoration of the prenationalization era in the Middle East, one premised on the enhanced power of the multinationals and the states backing them. The anticipation of profit was identified in a *Financial Times* commentary, cited in “Crude Designs,” that pointed to a likely “windfall for big oil companies such as Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, BP and Total Fina Elf.”⁴⁹

The report cited above was not covered in the U.S. mainstream media. It was avoided in official pronouncements on the subject of U.S. policy in Iraq, as though ignoring the subject rendered it irrelevant to U.S. policies. Eisenhower had warned of potential public opposition to such justifications for U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1958, while his vice pres-

ident, Richard Nixon, at the time advocated justifying U.S. intervention in terms of the right of nations to self-determination and even civil war.⁵⁰ Where had it all begun? In spite of the popular linkage of oil and the Middle East, there was little understanding of the relationship between U.S. policy and the impact of oil politics at the regional level. The U.S. public was served repeated warnings of the risks of increasing oil dependence and depletion, but little attention was paid to the connection between such conditions and the increasing profits of the immense oil companies with special access to U.S. policymakers. Less attention was paid to the role of oil in U.S. foreign policy and its bearing on Middle East politics over the past five decades. The question of why the Middle East had its cadre of reactionary, authoritarian rulers backed by Washington—before and after declarations of U.S. support for democratization—was also not addressed. To have opened such questions to critical investigation would have allowed Americans to challenge the official pattern of deception and denial that was reproduced by the mainstream media, willing members of academia, and public spokespersons for global corporations. In the absence of an informed, critical public awareness of the logic of U.S. policy in the region, an increasingly dangerous level of public amnesia threatens to prevent the emergence of a principled and effective political opposition to U.S. policy in Iraq, even as that policy is revealed to be a resounding failure.

Notes from the Minefield, first published in 1997, was written with the purpose of addressing many of these issues. It was designed to make readers aware of the tremendous disparity between conventional myths concerning U.S. policy and Middle East politics and what insiders had to say on these subjects. It was designed to expose the foundations of U.S. policy in the Middle East—beginning in the decade following World War II and culminating in the U.S. intervention in Lebanon's first civil war—as well as the long-term implications for politics in the region. The record of U.S. policy in this period and after remains of permanent importance and yet continues to go unaddressed, even after the events of 9/11.

If we want to make sense of the U.S. preoccupation with the Gulf, and with Iraqi as well as Iranian politics in the twenty-first century, there is no more critical place to begin than with the foundation of U.S. policy and its development in the first turbulent post-World War II decade. The factors at work persist, albeit in an international environment deeply altered by the collapse of the Soviet Union. We have only to consider the immense expansion of U.S. oil and related defense interests in the region

of the Caspian and Central Asia to understand U.S. oil politics. The key, then, is to confront the origins of those politics in order to trace their still-operating, long-term logic and the course of events that flowed from them over the last fifty years and more. To understand the relevant institutions and structures of power that have masked the connections between domestic and foreign policy is but the first step in an inquiry of far greater proportions, whose objective is to explore the legacy of the minefield of U.S. geostrategic policy in the Middle East.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those whose readings and exchanges on the above preface proved invaluable. I am the grateful beneficiary of their efforts: Gilbert Achcar, Noam Chomsky, Assaf Kfoury, Kamil Mahdi, and Fawwaz Trabulsi.

Irene Gendzier
March 15, 2006

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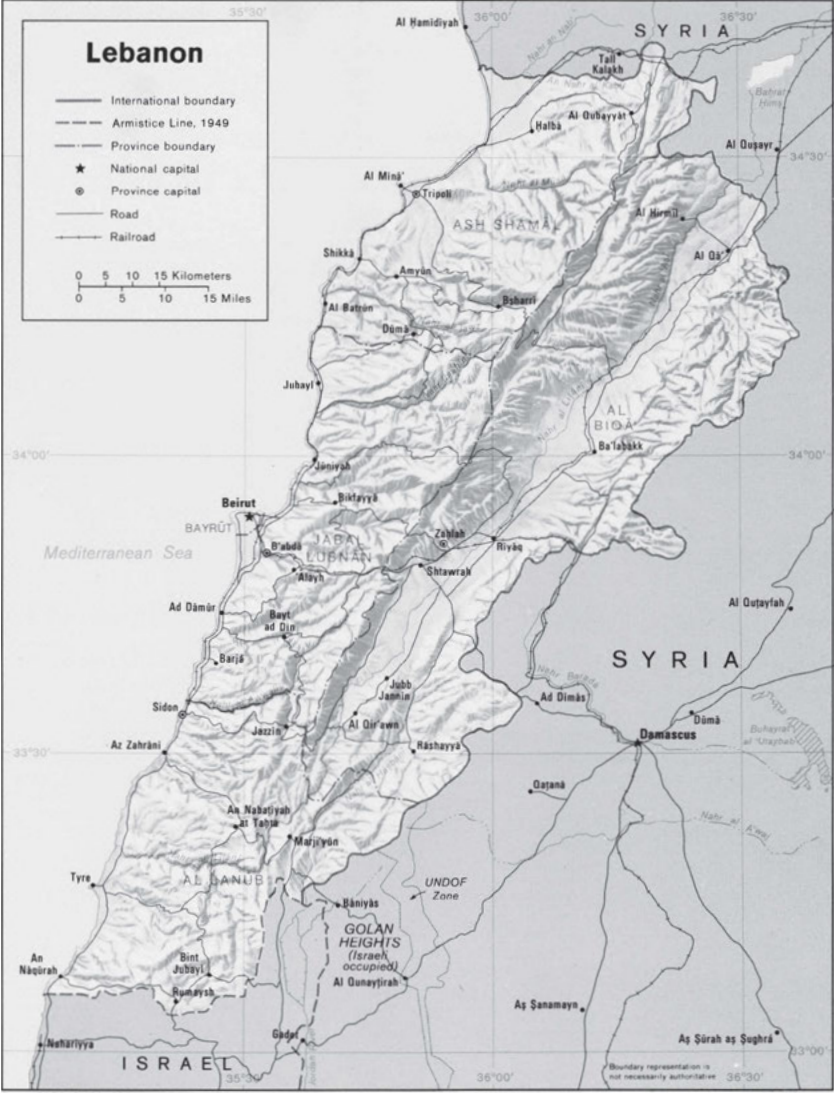
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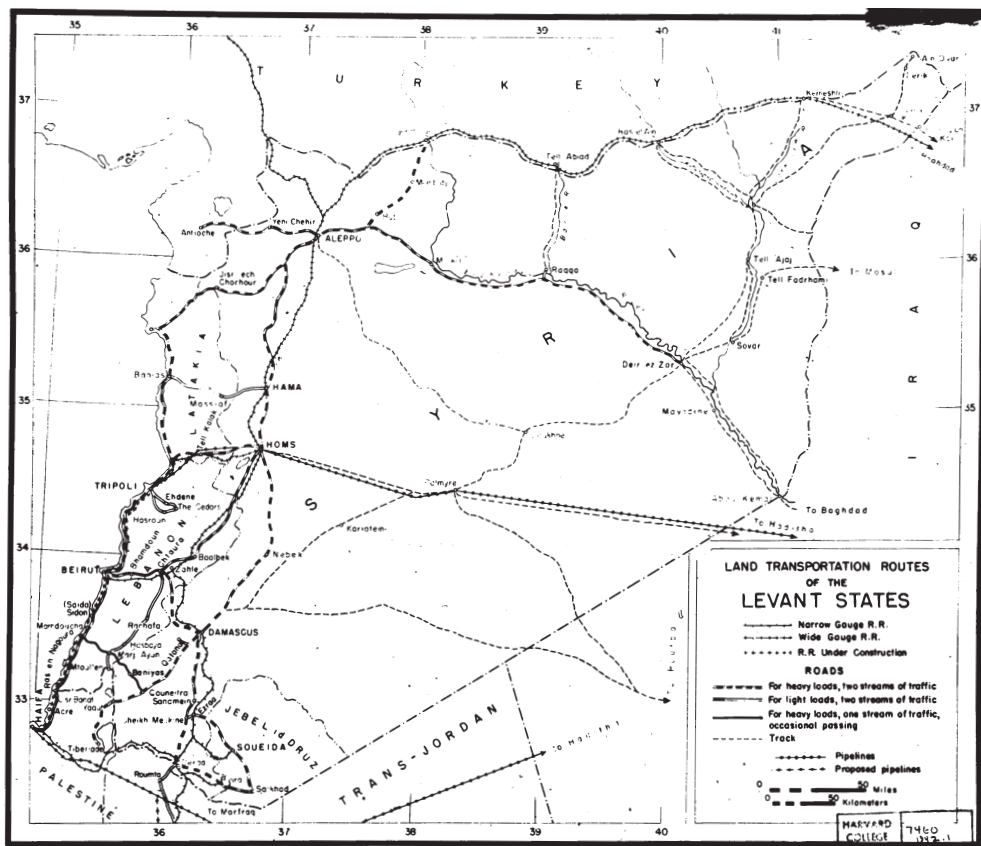
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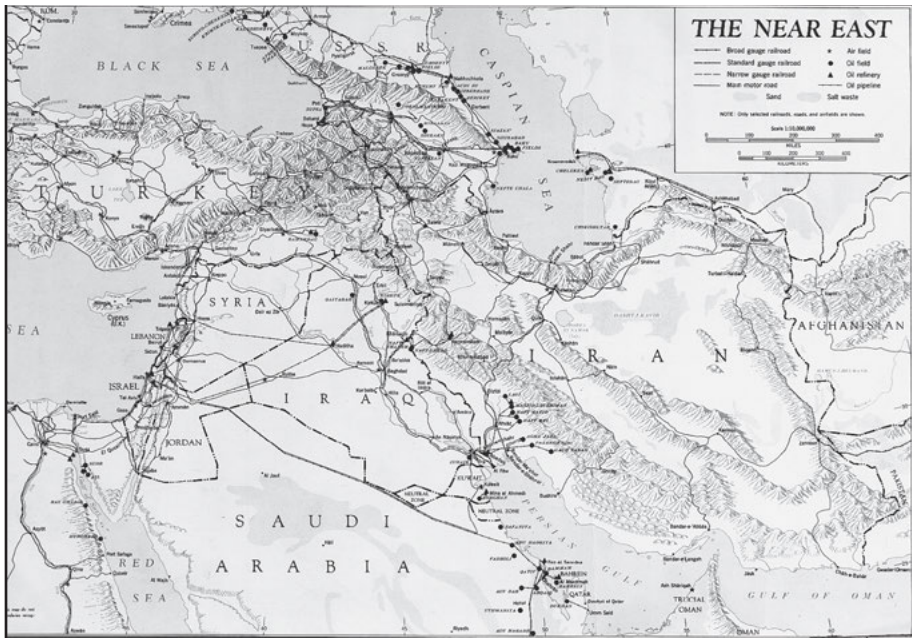
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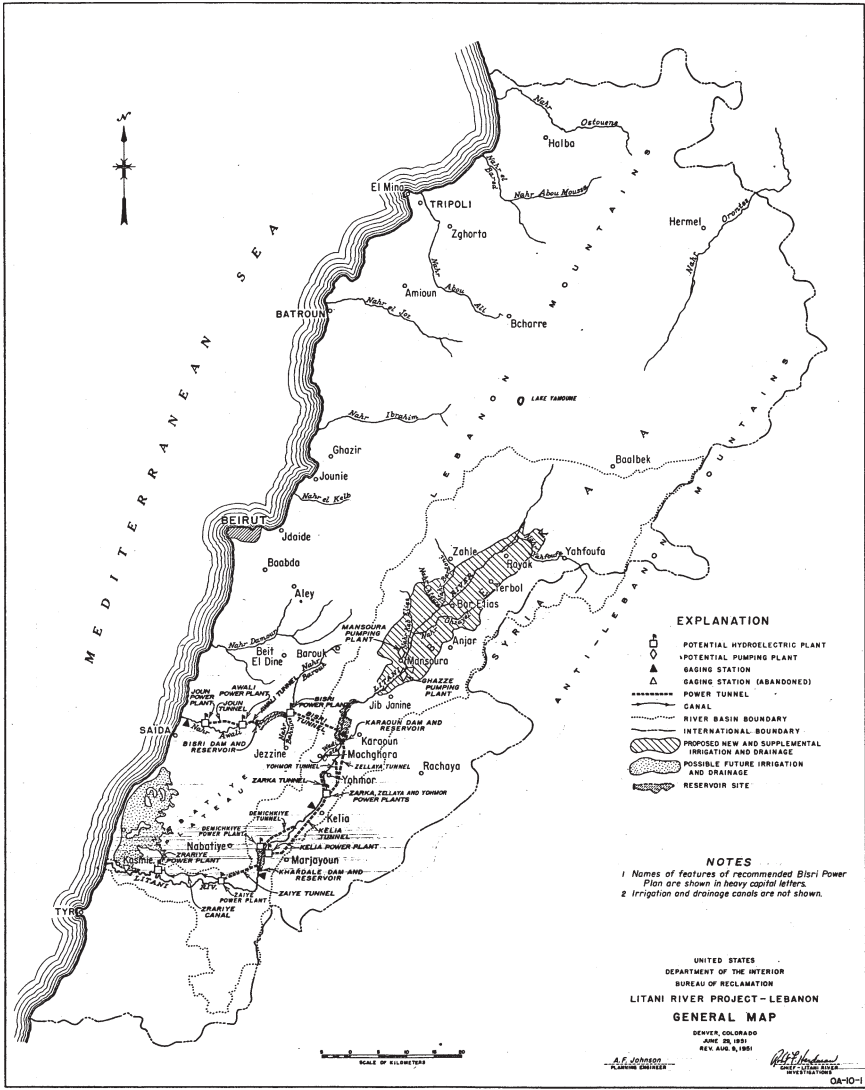
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PART I

The Setting of U.S. Policy

1

The Dynamic of Collaborative Intervention

The U.S.-Lebanon Connection

In July 1958, close to 15,000 marines landed in Beirut, while some 11,000 air sorties were flown over Lebanon. Two months after civil war broke out in Lebanon, U.S. forces intervened at the urgent invitation of President Sham'un of Lebanon. Less than twenty-four hours earlier, a military coup in Baghdad had brutally terminated the reign of King Faysal and the pro-British regime of Nuri Sa'id. The proximity of the two events, in Beirut and Baghdad, and their allegedly causal connection, were what remained in the collective memory, to judge by conventional accounts of U.S. action.¹ But the official record suggests a history that differs substantially. It is one that reveals the previously veiled contours of U.S.-Lebanese relations, their domestic origins, and regional significance in the larger construct of U.S. Mediterranean and Middle East policy. It is in this context that the U.S.-Lebanese connection has to be situated, one in which the tensions between internal and external politics defined the framework of U.S. policies, as these policies evolved in Beirut between 1945 and 1958. Against this background, the purpose, nature, and consequences of U.S. military intervention have to be reconsidered, insofar as they make sense of U.S. policy and Lebanese politics. Why, finally, did the Eisenhower administration intervene in Lebanon? What assets was it protecting? What Lebanese interests did it serve? What regional forces

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endorsed U.S. policy? And what was the political outcome of Lebanon's first civil war, in the political settlement of which the United States was intimately involved?

The above questions are key to decoding the mythified image of U.S.-Lebanese relations, as well as the trivialized souvenir of U.S. military intervention in 1958. Nearly four decades after the events of 1958, the significance of the postwar U.S.-Lebanon connection remains vastly understated, if not ignored. Its place in the analysis of post-World War II U.S. policy is similarly unexamined, in spite of its relevance to the role of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East in American postwar planning. Yet the available documentary evidence of U.S. sources suggests both the value placed on the Beirut connection and its long-range impact on the formative phase of Lebanese political development, a facet of U.S. policy far less familiar to Americans than is the recent troubled history of this state.

When Lebanon's far more virulent second civil war broke out nearly two decades after the first, it was the epicenter of a region whose leaders were alarmed at the prospect of victory for the Lebanese National Movement and its allies. They understood that this was a challenge to the existing disorder and its system of privileges for beneficiaries of the status quo. In the very different domestic and regional circumstances of the 1950s, Lebanon had already become a mirror of the political currents dominating the Arab world. And the intense regional interest aroused by the outcome of its political struggles was indicative of the obstacles that it would face—then and later—in the conduct of its internal affairs. Lebanon's first civil war involved some of the same issues and was a response to some of the same grievances. It involved the same cohort of political figures, even though the opposition challenging the president in 1958 was led by a largely conservative coalition of political leaders bent on the restoration of their own power rather than its dissemination. Outside of Beirut, some of the same regional actors pressed for U.S. intervention to contain the Lebanese regime. And in 1958, as later, the Lebanese regime was the beneficiary of U.S. support, without which it would most likely not have survived.

However idiosyncratic U.S.-Lebanese relations were in 1958, then, as later, they were inextricable from broader U.S. interests and policies in the Middle East. Moreover, in the context of U.S. foreign policy in the Eisenhower administration, U.S.-Lebanese relations did not constitute an exceptional case. The assessment of power and influence, and the identi-

fication of compatible interests, particularly among business elites, were not features exclusive to Lebanon. Nor was there anything unusual about the gap between U.S. officials in the field and their superiors in Washington—or the ease with which the former evaluated the abuses of power and the latter subordinated such considerations to their reliance on the class in power. The same administration responsible for intervening in Beirut in 1958 authorized interventions in Burma, Cambodia, the Congo (Zaire), Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, the Philippines, and Vietnam.² And, as in the case of Beirut, such interventions assumed the collaboration of compatible elements whose identity and function were defined in accord with the particularities of individual regimes. In such instances, an “*entente cordiale*” developed among networks of protective and profitable relations, becoming a feature of U.S. foreign policy in the postcolonial era. The results enhanced the power of local elites, often backed by U.S.-supported military and security arrangements, which amplified their ability to control domestic politics. The cost, in terms of social and political development, is difficult to calculate and has seldom been considered a valid subject of foreign policy analysis.³ Routine accounts of postwar development throughout the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, in which political dissent and revolt against repressive regimes have been commonplace, often label such expressions of opposition as evidence of political incompetence and of the failure to meet the elementary standards of civic culture.⁴

In the well-known instance of Anglo-American intervention in Iran, the objective was to bring down the prime minister who had endorsed the 1951 nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. As recent research has shown, Operation AJAX was delayed to coincide with the advent of the Eisenhower administration, which was expected to be a more reliable partner in this project than its predecessor.⁵ With Mossadeq out of the way, Shah Pahlevi returned with U.S. military and security backing until the seizure of state power by the Ayatollah Khomeini’s forces in 1979. In Guatemala it was President Arbenz who was overthrown in 1954, in response to reformist policies considered unacceptable because they posed a challenge to local elites and U.S. agribusiness.⁶ Castillo Armas, who replaced Arbenz, was assured of U.S. military and intelligence backing, with domestic consequences in evidence four decades later. In 1959, the Eisenhower administration supported the secessionist Katanga province in the Congo crisis (Zaire) (1959–1961), which culminated in the assassination of Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba. The events

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set the stage for the repressive practices of the Mobutu regime. According to the most authoritative work on the subject, "the Eisenhower administration supported Katanga because it had a financial interest in doing so."⁷

The events in Iran had a decisive echo in Lebanon, the experience of Guatemala was not lost on Beirut, while the Congo was linked by the unfortunate experience of the United Nations in both cases. The circumstances surrounding the Anglo-American response to Iranian oil nationalization inspired political intervention by U.S. oil interests in Lebanon in the fall of 1952. The Iranian case, however, had a more general impact in Beirut and the Middle East, as U.S. officials hoped it would. Guatemala and Lebanon had little in common. Yet the nature of the Eisenhower administration's political preferences, its identification with local business interests, and rationalization of policy in anticommunist terms, and the reliance on covert policies, had their analogs in Lebanon as well as in the Middle East. In the Congo, UN officer Rajeshwar Dayal, who had previously been in Beirut as head of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL), encountered similar frustrations in carrying out his assignment in utterly different circumstances. Chief among them was U.S. policy.

Even though the formal entry of U.S. forces into Beirut differed dramatically from that in the above cases, the underlying conditions of policy raise similar questions. Admittedly, U.S. forces intervened in Lebanon at the express invitation of President Sham'un, hardly an externally manipulated coup. But appearances are deceptive. They give no indication of the existing relations between Washington and Beirut that explain the conditions of intervention. Nor do they provide a clue as to the extraordinary situations in which Secretary of State John Foster Dulles of the United States prompted President Sham'un on how to request U.S. intervention⁸ or to the equally striking phenomenon in which incremental doses of the military assistance allowed the Lebanese regime to survive long after it had lost its domestic base and before the dramatic events in Iraq on July 14. Above all, the formal description of U.S. intervention is entirely inadequate to explain U.S. policy. However dramatic it was, U.S. intervention did not so much alter the nature of U.S. policy as perpetuate it under changed political circumstances. Its long-range significance in terms of the U.S.-Lebanese connection and its meaning for U.S. policy in the Middle East, however, compel a fuller investigation.

The origins of such a policy predate the crises of 1958 and belong to a formative period of U.S. policy and Lebanese state formation. It was

World War II that reinforced the value of Britain's role in the Middle East, while underscoring the invaluable prize that the region offered—its petroleum resources. Lebanon had no oil, but by 1946 it was one of the transit states through which pipelines passed to the Mediterranean. In the same year, U.S. airlines were negotiating bilateral concessions in Beirut as well. With a role in no sense comparable to that of Turkey, Iran, or Saudi Arabia, Lebanon nonetheless had a place in the hierarchy of U.S. policy. It fit the commitment of U.S. military and civilian planners to assure access to petroleum resources, the construction of bases, the acquisition of air transit rights, and the more general consensus on commercial expansion in the region. Such policies directly competed with those of the dominant Western power in the region, Great Britain, the special ally with whom the United States would cooperate, collide, and bitterly compete even as the two publicly celebrated their mutual interests in the area. The familiar crises associated with Turkey and Iran in the mid-1940s and the far less frequently mentioned crisis over interests in Saudi Arabia in the same period illustrate the stakes for the parties involved. The exclusion of the Soviet Union from "Eurasia" was an axiom of Anglo-American policy in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Although the USSR was a significant actor in the crises over Turkey and Iran, U.S. and Anglo-American interests were not merely reactive to assessments of Soviet intentions or actions in, respectively, Ankara and Teheran.⁹ And in Saudi Arabia, it was the bitterness of Anglo-American competition that dominated, as U.S. officials sought to define their military presence in Dhahran at the expense of British influence.

Without oil or strategic depth, Lebanon proved to be a hospitable and invaluable terrain in this context. Its integration into the regional oil economy dominated by the U.S. international petroleum cartel identified it as a strategically important state. The events of the late 1940s in the region served to confirm its value, as U.S. officials and influential Lebanese personalities recognized. The regime of Besharah al-Khuri was the first following Lebanese independence from French mandatory control. Influential elements of the Lebanese commercial and financial bourgeoisie with close access to presidential power were highly sensitive to the advantages of continuing French monetary and banking controls, expanding regional trade relations, participating in the expansion of the oil economy, as well as developing connections with Washington and U.S. commercial and economic interests. U.S. international oil companies

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and U.S.-supported aviation interests were the founding elements of U.S. policy in the mid-1940s.

The members of the Lebanese ruling class who paved the way for U.S. companies belonged to a remarkably coherent elite. For the most part, its powerful members were part of the French financial orbit that remained influential in Beirut. Nonetheless, it was out of this milieu that openings to the United States appeared, whether in the form of oil or aviation, or banking, or the multitude of corporate enterprises that found willing agents in Beirut. In the mid-1940s, Trans-Arabian Pipeline (TAPLINE) succeeded in obtaining a concession to construct pipelines leading from Saudi Arabia through Lebanon to its southern port at Sidon. The concession transformed the relations of Lebanon and Washington far more profoundly, perhaps, than its Lebanese supporters imagined at the time.

From the point of view of U.S. oil company executives and the State Department that protected their interests, the advantages of collaborating with Lebanon's mercantile and financial bourgeoisie were evident. Here was a class whose members enjoyed enormous influence over the direction of state and regional policies that were compatible with those of Washington. Domestically, the class in question was averse to democratic, reformist, socialist, populist, and nationalist movements. The Lebanese business elite, in short, posed no problems for U.S. corporate or political leaders. Yet the fragility of the nation's political consensus did not escape notice in Washington, nor did the corrupt practices of its ruling class. On the contrary, U.S. officials in Beirut and the State Department openly discussed the risks of an excessive individualism and the system that supported it. But such criticisms were gratuitous, since the basis of U.S. support in Lebanon rested on precisely this class and system. Collaborative intervention involved an *entente cordiale* with its members, but that did not preclude disputes over power and profit. Thus, conflicts over concessionary benefits and the negotiation of trade agreements resulted in confrontations between even the most pro-American of Lebanese officials and the State Department. The inability to challenge such arrangements effectively was evidence of Lebanon's subordination. It was manifest in the regime of Lebanon's most pro-American president, Sham'un, who balked at the extent of American penetration of a state that was virtually open to U.S. inspection at will.¹⁰ The hesitation of the Sham'un cabinet and its subsequent approval of a U.S. military mapping mission of Lebanon in 1954 were symptomatic of a dependent regime whose leader had volunteered the state's assets as the price of a

promising and increasingly essential support. Against this background, U.S. policies in Lebanon cannot be interpreted as favoring Lebanese Christians or approving the confessional system as a political instrument, save insofar as these preserved the ruling class and system on which U.S. policy rested. In a period of increasing U.S. regional involvement, which included covert policies in Syria and the crises at Suez and Sinai in 1956, the importance of maintaining a favorable balance in Beirut was obvious.

By 1958, the political landscape in Beirut had become considerably more problematic, partially in response to Sham'un's accession to the Eisenhower Doctrine. In spite of U.S. funding of Lebanon's 1957 parliamentary elections, Sham'un's domestic base consistently weakened, leading to U.S. assistance, which continued through 1958. With the mobilization of opposition forces and the outbreak of civil war in the spring of 1958, Washington monitored developments in the country to determine whether and when they constituted a threat sufficient to justify full-scale military intervention. Under pressure of U.S. allies who advocated such action, Eisenhower and Dulles moved, albeit in response to internal developments—specifically the fear of an opposition-led political victory. By 1958 the pro-American Lebanese ruling class was arrayed against President Sham'un and his defenders. Portrayed in conventional accounts as pro-Nasserist anti-American “rebels,” they were neither anti-American nor rebels. They were, however, hostile to Sham'unist domestic policies that excluded them from politics, as, for example, after the 1957 parliamentary elections. And they were opposed to Sham'un's unconditional support for U.S. regional policies, which they similarly regarded as detrimental to their interests.

In Washington, the pressures of Lebanese politics from the winter of 1958 through the crises of civil war revealed the multiple facets of policymaking that shaped the nature of the U.S. presence in Beirut. Eisenhower's prerogative in the making of foreign policy, and the indispensable role of his first lieutenant, Secretary of State Dulles, were unquestioned. Yet both men remained distant from the events in which they involved U.S. forces in 1958, and they systematically ignored the recommendations of U.S. officials—such as the U.S. ambassador, who opposed military intervention. Then, as earlier, the making of policy was a matter of direct concern not only to Defense officials with an eye to protecting the transit functions of Lebanon and its overall political role but also to officials bent on protecting Beirut's intelligence role in the region and U.S. international oil companies committed to protecting