Becoming God’s Cold Warrior or Destroying an Ideal?

John Foster Dulles and the Middle East (1919-1959)

-Joshua Donovan-

President Eisenhower confers with Dulles during the Suez Crisis*

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements................................................................................................................................. iii

Chapter 1: Introduction................................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2: Blessed are the Peacemakers................................................................................................. 13

Chapter 3: A House Built on Sand: Uneasy Foundations of the “Special Relationship”…30

Chapter 4: The Enemy of my Enemy: Anglo-American Coup in Iran...................................................... 62

Chapter 5: Change and Continuity: Suez and the Reshaping of American Policy......................... 71

Chapter 6: Conclusion................................................................................................................................. 87

Bibliography............................................................................................................................................. 92

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Introduction

On October 31, 1956, just one week before Americans would head to the polls to decide whether he would serve another term as President, Dwight D. Eisenhower’s thoughts were elsewhere. That evening, he spoke to the American people of the Middle East. As Eisenhower spoke of the “ancient crossroads of the world” he somberly declared that the Middle East was now a cause for “serious concern.”¹ The impetus for his declaration was the Suez Crisis, which arose after Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the previously international Suez Canal on July 26, sparking international outrage. After secret negotiations with Britain and France, Israel launched a military operation against Egypt on October 29, seizing the Gaza Strip and a significant portion of the Sinai Peninsula. Two days later, Britain and France entered the fray, launching attacks against Egypt.²

President Eisenhower’s national address signaled an unprecedented shift in United States foreign policy in the Middle East. Rather than following the lead of America’s European allies, a strategy that had largely defined our foreign policy in the Middle East since the time of Woodrow Wilson, Eisenhower and his trusted Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles decided to advance their own agenda in the region. Eisenhower solemnly declared: “There will be no United States involvement in these present hostilities,” maintaining that the use of force was not a “wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes.”³ Without the backing of the United States, Britain, France, and Israel were compelled to withdraw their forces just one week after the President’s address. Historians rightly recognize this moment as a significant

² George Lenczowski, American Presidents and the Middle East, (Dunham: Duke University Press, 1990), 40-45.
³ Eisenhower, “Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East…” 744-745.
turning point in American diplomacy. The world was taken by surprise as the new American hegemon defended the national sovereignty of Egypt and, by extension, the self-determination of the Egyptian people who were loath to allow Britain to regain its influence in Egyptian affairs. However, with the notable exception of Suez, Dulles did not use America’s newfound hegemony to advance the cause of self-determination and post-colonial independence that was (at least in theory) at the heart of American rhetoric. This study of the life and thought of Secretary Dulles constructs a new paradigm to better understand the transformative nature of the Eisenhower era to the Middle East—both the change and the continuity.

In many ways, Dulles’s life provides an excellent framework to trace the evolution of American diplomacy in the Middle East. Dulles was involved in foreign policy making during some of the most significant developments in our diplomatic history. The America he represented during the Paris Peace Conference under President Wilson was remarkably different from the America he left at the end of his tenure as Secretary of State in 1959. During the course of those four decades the United States went from being a neophyte on the international stage, dwarfed by Britain and France, to becoming one of two superpowers in the Cold War, able to pursue its own interests and agenda around the world. In 1957, two-time presidential candidate Thomas Dewey noted that: “For a century and a half, we as a nation were enabled to preserve our splendid isolation largely by reason of the strength of the British Empire…” but during the Dulles years we became, as former Presidential candidate Thomas Dewey put it, “a single unit of economic and atomic power so great that the leadership of the Free World is ours whether we

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want it or not." A deeper study of Dulles’s life and thought can help to better understand what this transformation meant for US-Middle East relations.

The Dulles era is significant not only because it encompasses key moments in America’s ascendance to hegemony, but because it marks the beginnings of America’s greater awareness of the Middle East as a region of strategic importance. E. A. Speiser, an American expert in the region during the first half of the twentieth century, noted that before World War II, the United States’ interests in the region were limited to primarily religious and humanitarian (owing to decades of missionary work in the region). However, he noted that as oil began to be discovered in the region, American leaders became more invested in the region. Spesier also argued that the Middle East would be important to a post-war United States because it was critical to have access to the strategically located transportation and communication routes. Insofar as the Middle East was vital to world communications, “no major power today can afford to dispense with an active interest in the Near East.” Finally, indicative of the strong desire for a lasting peace that once again percolated throughout a world ravaged by world war, he argued that increasing American influence in the region would ensure that the United States would have a say in peace and security issues that might come up in the region’s future. For Speiser, attention to the Near East was essential for America’s continued development as a relative new global power.

As tensions between the United States and the USSR developed into what is now known as the Cold War, the interests mentioned by Speiser became even more salient. Prior to being sworn in for his first term, President-elect Eisenhower acknowledged that when it came to the

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7. Ibid., 220-225.
Middle East: “As far as sheer value of territory is concerned, there is no more strategically important region of the world.”\(^8\) One month before Dulles was sworn in as Secretary of State, Henry Byroade, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, addressed the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations to impress upon his audience the necessity for greater attention to the Middle East.\(^9\)

Byroade reiterated Speiser’s arguments, but framed them as a Cold Warrior would. Now it was not only important to ensure that the United States had access to the Near East for the sake of communication and trade routes, but Byroade noted that “history is amply tabled with the names of conquerors and would-be conquerors who have used this crossroads of three continents in search for empires.”\(^10\) Thus, it was imperative that the United States prevent the Soviet Union from gaining influence in the region, lest they use it to shore up their empire. That was the first concern. The second was oil. It was critical for American policymakers that the United States, and American petroleum companies specifically, had continued access to some of the world’s largest oil reserves. Byroade’s final priority was humanitarian in nature. Byroade expressed concern for the welfare of those living in the Middle East, and a desire to use our growing power and influence to “work in genuine harmony for a better world.”\(^11\) America’s interests in the region were clear. What was unclear at that time was whether or not the United States could and would pursue its own agenda in the Middle East independent of the interests of the waning colonial powers of Britain and France. It was at this pivotal movement in America’s history that John Foster Dulles came to lead the State Department.

\(^9\) According to Byroade, the United States government’s conception of the “Middle East” was defined as including, “The Arab states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Sudan, various Arab Sheikdoms, and the new state of Israel fashioned from the old mandate of Palestine. We shall also include the nation of Iran.” See Ibid., 931.
\(^10\) Ibid.,
\(^11\) Ibid., 932.
Eisenhower’s selection of Dulles for Secretary of State hardly came as a surprise. Dulles had been long involved with foreign policy-making behind the scenes. As the grandson of President Benjamin Harrison’s Secretary of State, John Watson Foster (1892-1893) and the nephew of President Wilson’s Secretary of State, Robert Lansing (1915-1920), John Foster Dulles was born and raised into a family deeply involved with American diplomacy. This not only instilled in him a passion for international affairs, but also gave him the rare opportunity to begin his foreign service at the young age of 19. Retired from the State Department, John W. Foster attended the Hague Peace Conference of 1907 on behalf of the Chinese government. After getting permission from Princeton University to take a break from his studies, Dulles accompanied his grandfather, and served as a secretary for the Chinese delegation. This conference was significant because, as John Foster noted in his later memoirs, it was the first time that “the political representatives of all the nations of the earth had met together.” The delegates sought to make war less likely through international cooperation. This optimism presented to Dulles in his formative years proved to have a lasting impact.

John Foster Dulles was not the first American foreign policymaker to articulate a strong faith in an international system creating world peace. On February 11, 1918, as World War I continued into its final year, President Woodrow Wilson had already begun to envision what a post-war peace might look like. He argued that the final peace settlement must aim to create a lasting peace. Like Dulles would come to argue decades later, Wilson also argued that

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12 For a more detailed account of his relationship with his Uncle Robert Lansing and his Grandfather John W. Foster (to whom he was particularly close) see: Beal, John Foster Dulles: A Biography, 2, 22-28, 44-53.
13 Foster’s close relationship with the Chinese government began in 1885 when he represented the government as a lawyer during anti-immigration riots. For more information see: “Biographies of the Secretaries of State: John Watson Foster,” U.S. Department of State: Office of the Historian, http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/foster-john-watson (date accessed Jan. 25, 2013). After his tenure as Secretary ended, he served as an adviser to the Chinese government throughout its treaty negotiations with Japan; For more on this see Ibid., 27
sovereignty should be decided with the peoples affected in mind, rather than simply following what was in the interests of stronger states.\textsuperscript{15} Dulles actually had the opportunity to partake in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and see Wilson’s ideals in action. He was also witness to the crushing disappointment felt by many when Wilson’s noblest ideas failed to come to fruition.\textsuperscript{16} While this paper will treat Wilson’s diplomacy at Versailles in more detail in the following chapter, many scholars note that a major impeditive to the Wilsonian vision was the influence of Britain and France.

During the beginning of Dulles’s tenure, Britain (and to a much lesser extent France) still had considerable influence in the Middle East. However, as Europe struggled to rebuild in the aftermath of World War II, the United States became increasingly independent in the international arena. In light of this, one might expect Dulles to take up Wilson’s mantle and, in his words, “seek autonomy for all subject and colonial peoples.”\textsuperscript{17} However, there were several instances where this was simply not the case. When John Foster Dulles was finally able to act completely independently of the former Imperialist powers, he still failed to advance the cause of self-determination in Middle Eastern countries including Iran, Syria and Lebanon. In fact, in each of these cases, the United States actively undermined popularly elected governments in order to advance what Dulles believed to be America’s interests. In his reflections on the Paris Peace negotiations of 1919, Dulles’s Uncle Bert wrote almost prophetically that the principle of self-determination “will always be cast aside whenever it comes in conflict with national

\textsuperscript{16} While the connections and similarities between Dulles and Wilson will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter, a cursory overview of Dulles’s involvement can be found in: Beal, \textit{John Foster Dulles}, 61-69. An introduction to the disparity between Wilson’s ideals and the outcomes of Versailles with a particular emphasis of the ensuing dissatisfaction about colonial peoples, see: Erez Manela, \textit{The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism} (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 21-37.
This sentiment came to define Dulles’s Middle Eastern diplomacy in the second half of his tenure. The geopolitical circumstances may have evolved over the course of his long and distinguished diplomatic career, but the contradictions in America’s message and actions remained very much the same. The dissonance between the peaceful world order that Dulles envisioned for decades, and the Cold War world he helped to create (particularly in the Middle East) is central to this study.

While Dulles was undoubtedly influenced by the diplomats on his mother’s side of the family, he was perhaps equally influenced by his father’s strong religious convictions. As his faith indelibly shaped his worldview, it is essential to briefly examine it. By the time John Foster Dulles was born in 1888, his father, Rev. Allen Macy Dulles had been serving as a Presbyterian minister for years. Additionally, his paternal grandfather, John Wesley Dulles was a Christian missionary to Madras, India. Because both of his parents were committed Christians, Dulles was raised in a very religious environment. The Dulles family had assumed that he would follow in his father’s footsteps into the ministry. However, after careful thought Dulles informed his family that he believed he could make a “greater contribution as a Christian lawyer and a Christian layman than…as a Christian minister.” Many, including his son Avery (who became a Jesuit priest and eventually a cardinal) and his friend and contemporary Thomas Dewey, suggested that upon leaving his boyhood home, the depth of John Foster Dulles’s religious beliefs waned. The extent to which Dulles continued to believe in every tenet of his father’s faith is debatable. What is not debatable, however, is the influence that aspects of that faith had on Dulles throughout his life. Specifically, Dulles’s Presbyterian upbringing left him with strong

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18 Lansing, The Peace Negotiations, 104.
convictions that there was an absolute good and an absolute evil, and that all righteous people
had a solemn duty to advance the cause of the former.

A few years after his death, Dulles’s sister Lillias recalled that “to [John] Foster
[Dulles]…there was this force for good, and if it’s a force for good, and if you want to be good,
you associate yourself with it—and that’s going to influence your life.”21 Like many left reeling
from the horrific and unprecedented violence in World War I, the greatest good for Dulles was
the complete eradication of war, and a world where all would feel a sense of duty to their fellow
man.22 While some detractors may argue that Dulles failed to create a more peaceful world,
Dulles believed it to be his duty to try. After taking part in the Hague Convention and the Paris
Peace Conference of 1919, he headed the Federal Council of Churches’ “Commission for a Just
and Durable Peace,”23 wrote a number of speeches and authored two books (one in 1938, the
other in 1950) exploring ways in which his quest for an illusive peace could be achieved.24 In the
same interview, Lillias noted that while the Calvinistic sense of duty that drove Dulles to
tenaciously pursue his cause had its benefits, its weakness was that “you may make the mistake
of feeling that you are God’s spokesman.”25 Nevertheless, Dulles sought to recruit others to his
cause. In a 1944 address to the Princeton Theological Seminary, Dulles told recent graduates that
“To achieve world order is a long, hard task…It calls for men who are clear of vision, strong of
faith, and competent in deed…We need many more who possess and will use the qualities Christ

21 Quoted in Mark G. Toulouse, The Transformation of John Foster Dulles: From Prophet of Realism to Priest of
23 For more on his philosophy and how it pertained to the Commission, see: Anthony Clark Arend, Pursuing a Just
24 See: John Foster Dulles, War, Peace and Change; and John Foster Dulles, War or Peace (New York: Macmillan
Company, 1950).
25 Toulouse, The Transformation of John Foster Dulles, 8.
taught. To assure that is your task.”26 When Dulles came to lead the State Department, he did so devoted to the idea of trying to create a permanent end to war.

His sense of unimpeachable certitude was augmented all the more by his belief in a universal moral law. During his time with the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), he laid out the prerequisites for peace as he saw them. The first of twelve principles later adopted by the FCC in 1942 asserted a strong belief in a universal moral law which “undergirds our world” and that “If mankind is to escape chaos and recurrent war, social and political institutions must be brought into conformity with this moral order.”27 Second, he argued that “international machinery is required to facilitate the easing of…economic and political tensions.”28 But rather than continuing the League of Nations, which came to be dominated primarily by Britain and France, this new international machinery would have to be a “community of nations…having the duty and the power to promote and safeguard the general welfare of all peoples.”29 Dulles envisioned a world where all countries, weak and small, could bring their concerns before an international body and be treated as equals, rather than a system in which powerful nations are shown preference. As this paper will further explore, during his tenure as Secretary of State, Dulles did whatever he felt necessary to protect the international system which he believed would lead to a “Just and Durable Peace,” including defying Imperialist allies of the United States, and later violating the national sovereignty of nations in the Middle East.

Finally, Dulles’s Presbyterian upbringing imbued him with a belief that while there is a universal good, man has a fallen, sinful nature. Because the Soviet Union was officially atheistic, Dulles believed that it had rejected the moral law undergirding society and sought to spread that

28 Ibid., 103.
29 Ibid., 102-103.
belief throughout the rest of the world. If respect for moral law was a prerequisite for peace, the
Soviet system posed a serious threat. In an address at the Methodist Church’s General
Conference in 1948, Dulles accused the Soviet Union of “attacking free institutions by methods
of penetration, propaganda, and terrorism which the American people deeply resent and which
create in them a disposition to strike back.”

For Dulles, there was no possibility for reconciling with the Soviet Union. Three years before being tapped as Secretary of State, Dulles penned a manifesto of sorts. In it he stated plainly, “The Communist rulers…are animated by an atheistic creed which denies the existence of a moral law…For their beliefs and ours, it is impossible to find a common denominator.”

When it came to the long-standing rivalry between the predominantly Christian west and the Soviet Union, Dulles saw the world in black and white. Peace could only be attained through international cooperation, and the prospects of a “community of nations” were in jeopardy so long as the USSR continued to spread its ideas of totalitarianism and atheism throughout the world.

Few Secretaries of State have left behind such a powerful and controversial legacy as John Foster Dulles. Over the course of his six year tenure, Secretary Dulles was one of President Eisenhower’s most trusted confidants. Eisenhower was said to have once remarked, “If anything were to happen to Foster, where could I find a man able to replace him?”

Dulles continued to advise the President until his illness forced him to resign just months before his eventual death in 1959. The New York Times reported that when Eisenhower announced Dulles’s resignation on April 15 due to worsening illness, he was close to tears. Upon his death, the President delivered

an emotional eulogy at Gettysburg mourning the loss of his close friend. According to the *New York Times* obituary of Dulles, “he constantly played a leading role in Washington and often in the councils of the Western alliance…No one could equal him as a persuader in the White House councils. In facing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he sometimes encountered criticism and skepticism, but he inevitably had his way.”

In the beginning of his tenure, Dulles occasionally worked cooperatively with Britain in shaping Middle Eastern foreign policy. Specifically, this paper will examine the close Anglo-American relationship during the Iranian coup in 1953. Then, it will explain in greater detail the momentous implications of the Suez crisis. Finally, it will turn to an analysis of the later Dulles years, when the United States began to act increasingly more unilaterally, including the botched coup in Syria in 1957, and the Lebanese crisis of 1958.

Before historians could even completely assess Dulles’s legacy, the *New York Times* obituary realized that it would engender a great deal of debate in the years to come: “Mr. Dulles was a highly controversial Secretary of State. Those who followed his career were rarely dispassionate; they divided, usually, between ardent admirers and those who disliked or distrusted him.” His controversial tenure lies at the heart of this study. On the one hand, Dulles advanced glowing rhetoric about lasting peace and self-determination for all peoples, and he fought tirelessly to defend these principles against an empire that he, and many of his contemporaries, believed to be genuinely evil. In practice, however, many of the policies that were pursued at his urging violated the very principles he publicly espoused. Despite the significant changes that took place in United States-Middle Eastern relations in the 1950s, there was a thread of consistency that ran through Dulles’s controversial tenure. The abrogation of the

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35 “Dulles Formulated and Conducted U.S. Foreign Policy…” *The New York Times*
long-standing military alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom during the
Suez Crisis suggested that Dulles was willing to distance himself from Western imperialist
powers, in favor of promoting self-determination in the Middle East. This however, proved not
to be the case. In both his acquiescence to the desires and interests of Britain (pre-1956), and his
uncompromising crusade against Leftist “threats,” Dulles left in his wake a sense of
dissatisfaction and disappointment throughout the Middle East, continuing the unfortunate
legacy left by his mentor.\textsuperscript{37} President Wilson after Versailles. The effects of this dissatisfaction
continue to reverberate throughout the Middle East even to the present day.

\textsuperscript{37} For more on this see Beal’s biography which discusses, in some length, the impact that Wilson had on Dulles even
while Dulles was a student at Princeton University (where Wilson was both University President, and a professor).
Chapter II- Blessed are the Peacemakers

On January 8, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson gave an impassioned speech before a joint session of Congress in which he declared that the mission of the United States in World War I was to promote international justice and to achieve human liberty. What made his speech particularly noteworthy was the universality of his aims. Breaking with a diplomatic tradition that had long held that “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,” Wilson argued that the principle of justice must apply to “all peoples and nationalities…whether they be strong or weak.” Despite the United States’ alliances with the British and French Empires, Wilson insisted on a “free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight…” For the first time in modern history, the leader of a burgeoning global power spoke of a principle that would come to be called “self-determination.” After studying under Wilson as a student at Princeton, and serving under him as a member of Wilson’s delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Wilson’s views proved to be formative on the young Dulles.

During Wilson’s tenure, the Middle East was not seen as a strategically important region of the world to the United States. However, Wilson’s rhetoric undeniably had implications in the Middle East and, at least in theory, applied to the disparate racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the Middle East that sought autonomy from the Ottoman Empire and the constraints of Imperial Britain and France. His first principle stated that all future peace agreements must be “Open

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40 Wilson, “Fourteen Points” (This is the fifth of Wilson’s Fourteen Points).
covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind.”\(^{41}\) That almost defiant declaration was issued less than two years after Britain and France had concluded a secret agreement to carve up Ottoman territories into zones of “influence” and “direct control” that they would oversee in the post-war world.\(^{42}\)

Further, Wilson specifically addressed the peoples currently living in the Ottoman Empire in his twelfth point: “…nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”\(^{43}\)

Even before the United States had officially entered the war, world leaders supported Wilson’s call for a lasting peace and encouraged Wilson to fight on their behalf when such a time arose. In a letter to Secretary of State Robert Lansing prior to the United States’ entry into the war, the Persian Minister noted that there was the long-standing alliance between the United States and Persia, and that Persia had remained neutral in the war, as the United States had done up to that point. The Minister then expressed appreciation for the President’s desire to defend the interests of both weak and strong nations and his appeal to European powers to enter into peace negotiations in 1916, in order to prevent further bloodshed. Finally, he requested that Wilson apply his principles to Persia at the conclusion of the war: “[Persia] hopes that the Government of the United States will assist our oppressed nation to maintain its integrity and rights not only for the present but whenever a peace conference takes place.”\(^{44}\)

Unlike Persia, the Ottoman Empire was a belligerent power in World War I. Thus, the Ottoman government was much more hostile toward the Entente powers of Britain, France,

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\(^{41}\) Woodrow Wilson, “President Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” (This is the twelfth of Wilson’s fourteen points).

\(^{42}\) For more information on the secret “Sykes-Picot” agreement referred to here, see: David Fromkin, \textit{A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East} (New York: Avon Books, 1989), 188-199, 257.

\(^{43}\) Woodrow Wilson, “President Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” (This is the twelfth of Wilson’s fourteen points).

Russia, and to a lesser extent, Italy. In a letter from the Turkish foreign minister to U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Abram Elkus, the Ottoman government expressed frustration at the Entente powers’ refusal to begin peace negotiations in 1916, as per Wilson’s suggestion. Ambassador Halil noted that the Ottoman government was well aware of the fact that Britain, France and Russia intended to divide Ottoman territories, including Syria, Constantinople, Arabia and Mesopotamia among themselves. He accused the Entente of hypocrisy for advancing “the principles of nationalities” in order to garner support from their constituencies and neutral nations, but ignore them when they conflicted with their national interests. Halil alleged that the Entente was guilty of “many violations of the principles of nations of which our adversaries seem to make themselves the apostles of so as to justify their desire of vengeance and of conquest.”

Nevertheless, Halil’s note was very clear to exclude the United States from such hypocrisy. In fact, as Turkish leaders continued to listen to Wilson express his principles and press for peace, they became hopeful that the United States might defend the Ottoman government. This desire was made very clear in a cable sent from Secretary Lansing to President Wilson, after the former had conferred with the American Ambassador serving in Turkey, in which Lansing described to Wilson the deteriorating situation in the Empire. As the Turkish people reeled from the effects of a war that had left hundreds of thousands starving and bitter at the Germans, their government expressed that “they saw in American capital the only hope of rebuilding their fortunes and desired to remain on friendly terms.” Turkey saw America as its only hope because of the enmity that existed between Turkey and the Entente. For his part,
Lansing implored the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and President Wilson not to seek a declaration of war against Turkey, even after diplomatic relations had been severed.\footnote{Robert Lansing, “Memorandum regarding the inadvisability of a declaration of war by the United States against Turkey and Bulgaria at the present time,” Dec. 6, 1917 in \textit{FRUS:} 1917, Supplement 2, The World War, \textit{U.S. Department of State} (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1932), 448-50; and The Secretary of State to President Wilson, May 2, 1918 and May 8, 1918 in Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, Vol. II, \textit{United States Department of State}, (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1940), 121-2, 124-6.} However, the Turkish Government found that the United States would do little else to advance the Turkish cause during the Paris Peace Conference, beyond what Britain and France had planned to do.

Intentional or not, Wilson’s vision engendered hope, not only among Turkey’s leaders, but also among individual peoples that had been living under colonial rule. Wilson’s rhetoric inspired colonial peoples all over the world to flock to Paris in 1919 in hopes that they would have the opportunity to plead their cases before the man who had preached self-determination for all. Scholars have noted that many activists in the colonial world petitioned the world leaders with hundreds of letters at Versailles, often relying on Wilson’s words, in the hopes that they might carry some weight among the negotiators.\footnote{Erez Manela, \textit{The Wilsonian Moment}, 4-5, 7-9.} Activists included Egyptian nationalist Sa’ad Zaghlul, who founded a nationalist political party called \textit{al-Wafd} (literally, “the delegation”) and wrote to Wilson praising his leadership in creating the “birth of a new era which…is soon going to impose itself upon the universe.”\footnote{Zaghlul to Wilson, Dec. 14, 1818, in Egyptian Delegation to the Peace Conference, \textit{Collection of Official Correspondence from Nov. 11, 1918 to July 14, 1919} (Paris: Published by the Delegation, 1919), 47, quoted in Erez Manela, \textit{The Wilsonian Moment}, 71.}

Another letter sent to Wilson by Egyptian nationalists in the legislature heaped praise on Wilson, the “great and venerated President…the eminent philosopher and statesman.”\footnote{Zaghlul to Wilson, Jan. 13, 1919, in Egyptian Delegation to the Peace Conference, \textit{Official Correspondence from Nov. 11, 1918 to July 14, 1919} (Paris: Published by the Delegation, 1919), 50, quoted in Erez Manela, \textit{The Wilsonian Moment}, 72.} After heaping praise on President Wilson, Zaghlul implored him to fight for Egyptian self-determination: “To the chief of the great American democracy, who left his country in order to
bring about a durable peace based upon equal justice for all and guaranteed by the Society of
Nations, we submit the cause of Egypt, which is subjugated to a foreign domination that Egypt
unanimously rejects.”51 The expectation was that Wilson would defy the machinations of Britain
and France and seek to create peace on terms that would be favorable for weaker nations and
colonial people. When the finalized version of the Treaty of Versailles was signed, many felt
betrayed and became disillusioned. Three of the primary reasons for Wilson’s failure to live up
to his widely-celebrated principles were domestic concerns, his own philosophical objections to
universal self-determination, and an acquiescence to British and French demands.

During World War I, President Wilson had to contend with myriad domestic influences
over the course of his second term in office, including war hawks and isolationists. However,
perhaps the most influential American group in shaping Middle Eastern policy was an influential
group of Jewish Americans who supported the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. When the
issue first arose in the wake of the Balfour Declaration in 1917,52 Secretary Lansing urged
Wilson not to join the British in calling for a Jewish state to be carved out of the post-war
Ottoman Empire. He pointed out that the United States had not declared war on the Ottomans,
and therefore it would be unjust to support a policy that would necessarily take part of their
territory from them. Attuned to the pressures being placed on Wilson by the influential pro-
Zionist lobby in the United States, Lansing reminded Wilson that some Jewish Americans
(including Henry Morgenthau, the United States’ Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from
1913-1916) opposed the creation of the state of Israel. Lansing thought it unwise to take sides.
Finally, and perhaps most controversially, Lansing wrote that “many Christian sects and

51 Zaghlul to Wilson, Jan. 13, 1919, in Egyptian Delegation to the Peace Conference, Official Correspondence from
Nov. 11, 1918 to July 14, 1919 (Paris: Published by the Delegation, 1919), 50, quoted in Erez Manela, The
Wilsonian Moment, 72.
52 A statement issued by British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour, the Declaration expressed British support for the
establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.
individuals would undoubtedly resent turning the Holy Land over to the absolute control of the 

On the other hand, as the United States Ambassador to Great Britain noted in a letter to 
Secretary Lansing, Balfour’s famous declaration of support for a Jewish State in Palestine 
Lansing, Morgenthau and others were several influential advisers to Wilson, including Supreme 
Court Justice Louis Brandeis, whom Wilson appointed to the Supreme Court prior to the United 
States’ entry into World War I. This segment of the American Jewish population formed a close 
alliance with Wilson. The prominent Zionist Organization of America was strictly anti-German, 
and strongly supported Wilson’s call for a League of Nations, whereas many of the anti-Zionists 
were not as supportive of Wilson’s foreign policy causes.\footnote{Arthur Walworth, \textit{Wilson and his Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919} (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986), 478.} These factors were partially 
responsible for Wilson’s support of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Another major concern of the Wilson administration was the threat of Bolshevism. The 
official policy of the United State government with regards to the Russian Revolution was to 
await the “full manifestation of the will of the Russian people” and to avoid interfering with 
Russia’s domestic affairs “in accordance with [the United States’] conception of independence 
and national sovereignty.”\footnote{Draft Statement to be issued by the Secretary of State, Jan. 10, 1918, in Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, Vol. II, \textit{United States Department of State}, (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1940), 350.} Privately, however, United States officials were deeply troubled by 
the growing influence of Bolshevism. In a letter to President Wilson, Secretary Lansing called
the Bolsheviks a “despotic oligarchy” and a “direct threat at social order.”\(^{57}\) In the context of what historians have dubbed the “First Red Scare,” the argument of American Zionists that establishing a Jewish state in Palestine could prevent a Bolshevik infiltration into the United States and Britain was compelling. Brandeis warned British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour that there would be many Jewish immigrants coming from Russia that might cause problems if they came to live in the West.\(^{58}\) Balfour shared a similar concern with Col. House, a trusted Wilson adviser. According to House, Balfour believed “that nearly all Bolshevism and disorder of that sort is directly traceable to Jews.” House “suggested putting them, or the best of them, in Palestine, and holding them responsible for the orderly behavior of Jews throughout the world.”\(^{59}\) Despite being laden with anti-Semitism, the argument was persuasive enough for Wilson to unequivocally support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine (much to the chagrin of Arabs living in Palestine).

Evidence also demonstrates that Wilson’s convictions regarding Palestine impacted the peace plan that he came to argue for, even to the point of ignoring the will of those living in the Middle East. As Britain and France continued to debate the exact terms of the mandate system they intended to implement, Wilson insisted that they include provisions for Jews immigrating to Palestine.\(^{60}\) A commission of American investigators known as the King-Crane Commission travelled to Syria to gauge public opinion and offer their suggestions about how to deal with the Middle East. They concluded that “Jewish immigration to Palestine be limited and that the idea of a commonwealth be given up, since it could not exist without the gravest trespass upon civil

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\(^{57}\) The Secretary of State to President Wilson, Jan. 2, 1918, in Ibid., 346-349.

\(^{58}\) Walworth, Wilson and his Peacemakers, 482.

\(^{59}\) Walworth, Wilson and his Peacemakers, 478.

\(^{60}\) Walworth, Wilson and his Peacemakers, 502.
and religious rights of existing and non-Jewish communities.”\textsuperscript{61} Nevertheless, the President’s advisory group known as the “Inquiry” suggested in their final proposals for peace that “Jews be invited to return to Palestine and settle there, being assured that…it will be the policy of the League of Nations to recognize Palestine as a Jewish state as soon as it is a Jewish state in fact.”\textsuperscript{62}

Beyond lobbying efforts and the opinions of advisers, Wilson and Lansing had philosophical limits to self-determination that contributed to the decision to support a treaty that denied self-governance to many in the Middle East in favor of British Imperial control. In a letter to President Wilson concerning the Bolshevik threat, Lansing expressed the problems inherent in defining what a “nation” was, exactly. Drawing on American history, he argued that just as the South was not permitted to secede from the Union, neither was there an inherent right for any people to declare their independence from an extant power.\textsuperscript{63} Lansing was willing to contend that if two powers had competing claims on a given territory, that perhaps it would be advisable to allow the inhabitants to choose who they wanted to govern them. However, when it came to self-governance, Lansing said:

I do not see that the same question arises in the event that the inhabitants of a territory already under the sovereignty of a nation have the same right to become an independent state and to be admitted into the family of nations by a mere expression of popular will. Such a theory seems to me utterly destructive of the political fabric of society…\textsuperscript{64}

Accordingly, Lansing took particular umbrage at the fact that the Bolsheviks advocated on behalf of the individuals over their current leaders. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Lansing’s examples were

\textsuperscript{61} Walworth, \textit{Wilson and his Peacemakers}, 503.
\textsuperscript{63} Though one wonders how his philosophy would have been applied to the American Revolution…
Ireland and India, two countries that were at the time under the control of Great Britain. He conceded that, while the principle of local self-governance could be justified, it was ultimately inimical to the stability of the international system, and thus should not be entertained.\(^\text{65}\)

In his memoirs of the Peace Conference, Lansing made it clear that the philosophical limits of self-determination extended to the Middle East, in his view. He was concerned that it was dangerous to put “such ideas [of self-determination] into the minds of certain races… Will it not breed discontent, disorder, and rebellion? Will not the Mohammedans of Syria and Palestine and possibly of Morocco and Tripoli rely on it?” Further, he contended that it did not apply to “races, peoples, or communities whose state of barbarism or ignorance deprive [sic] them of the capacity to choose intelligently their political affiliations.”\(^\text{66}\) Accordingly, when Wilson sent the King-Crane commission, he argued that the primary question of inquiry should not be how they wished to be governed, but rather which Western power they preferred to oversee them until such a time as they were ready to join the family of nations.\(^\text{67}\)

Erez Manela further elaborates Wilson’s philosophy on colonial peoples by discussing the President’s position on the Spanish-American war. Having grown up in the South during the Civil War, Wilson believed that nonwhite people were “inferior,” but that with “proper guidance” they could learn to become “civilized.” In the case of the Philippines, he believed that granting complete autonomy immediately would be irresponsible, but that the United States could help them make progress in developing the prerequisites for a stable democracy.\(^\text{68}\) Wilson sought to impose a modest limit on imperialism by insisting that European powers should view


\(^{67}\) Walworth, Wilson’s Peacemakers, 502.

them as “mandates” as opposed to “territories.” For Wilson, the purpose of acquiring Middle Eastern (and other) territories was to help foster democracy in those regions of the world, not to punish the Ottoman Empire with dissolution or to increase the size of European empires. However, European powers exerted a great deal of political control over their mandates, and benefitted greatly from various economic arrangements. The fact that Britain and France only relinquished their “mandates” after World War II suggests that Wilson’s view of the mandate system as temporary supervision were not taken to heart.

Believing that European “supervision” was in the best interests of all parties involved, the United States strongly supported the recognition of Middle Eastern mandates for both Britain and France. This was simply a continuation of a policy that Wilson practiced even prior to the United States’ entry into World War I. For instance, on January 2, 1917, Secretary Lansing wrote to the French Ambassador informing him that the United States formally recognized the French Protectorate in Morocco.69 When he travelled to Paris, President Wilson carried a book of American peace proposals known as the “Black Book” compiled by American scholars known as the Inquiry on Wilson’s behalf. An analysis of this “Black Book” reveals that Wilson entered the Peace Conference comfortably endorsing British and French mandates in Mesopotamia, the Levant, Palestine and parts of the Arabian Peninsula.70

Beyond his philosophical views, Wilson was entering the international stage as a neophyte, dealing with diplomats that had been deeply involved with foreign affairs for decades. Consequently, Wilson simply acquiesced to European demands on a number of issues. First was the question of a separate peace with Turkey. As the war raged on, Turkey approached the Allies

70 Wesley J. Reisser, The Black Book, 146-152.
about the possibility of concluding a separate peace. However, the Entente opposed this. The American ambassador to the United Kingdom noted that Britain and “other powers such as France, Italy and Greece have ideas of their own as to [the] future of Asiatic Turkey which might be difficult to put into effect if the Turks made peace now.”\textsuperscript{71} In other words, if the Ottoman Empire agreed to an early peace, it would be more difficult to justify dividing up Ottoman territory into mandates. True to his nature as a scholar, Wilson sent a commission to Turkey in 1917 to learn more about the prospects of peace. But because he was cognizant of the fact that the Entente had very strong opinions about the matter, he first asked permission to send a commission. When Britain and France agreed to allow it, Wilson instructed his commissioners to personally consult with Britain and France before reporting to him.\textsuperscript{72} Unsurprisingly, Wilson did not pursue a separate peace with Turkey any further.

After expressing support for “mandates” as a general concept, Wilson showed little desire to engage in the details of what these mandates were actually going to look like. As geographer Wesley Reisser noted in his study on Wilson’s “Black Book,” many of the United States’ proposals were largely ignored at the Paris Peace Conference.\textsuperscript{73} Relying on a more historical approach, noted Wilson scholar Arthur Walworth wrote that when it came to debating over the specific terms of the mandates in the Middle East, “Wilson stood aside for weeks while Clemenceau [of France] and Lloyd George [of Britain] argued”\textsuperscript{74} rather than chiming in to argue on behalf of the self-determination of those in the Middle East. In fact, Wilson felt compelled to wait for permission before even sending King and Crane on their fact-finding mission to the


\textsuperscript{72} The Special Agents (Morgenthau and Frankfurter) to the Secretary of State, in Ibid., 121.

\textsuperscript{73} See: Reisser, \textit{The Black Book}, 129-155 for a list of all of the plans that did not come to fruition. 140-153 deal specifically with Turkey and other Middle Eastern territories.

\textsuperscript{74} Walworth, \textit{Wilson and His Peacemakers}, 502.
Middle East.\textsuperscript{75} As the plans were finalized, Secretary Lansing told Wilson he disagreed with the proposed mandate system because he believed its implementation posed legal difficulties, it risked the possibility of the United States becoming entangled in the “political jealousies and broils of Europe,” and that the United States should not be obligated to serve as guardians for countries in the Middle East. Lansing was dismayed to discover that after lengthy discussions with Lloyd George and Clemenceau, Wilson intended to support the European plan in spite of his Secretary’s objections.\textsuperscript{76}

Robert Lansing was not the only member of Wilson’s delegation who took issue with the final treaty signed by the United States. His nephew, the budding diplomat John Foster Dulles also raised serious concerns, particularly over the reparations imposed upon Germany. After working with the War Trade Board, Dulles travelled to Versailles where he used his legal expertise to assist the commission. Dulles came to work for several different committees, including the Supreme Economic Council and the Committee on the Execution of the Treaty with Germany. His most significant influence was through his work on the Commission on Reparations.\textsuperscript{77} Dulles found himself dealing with European powers still reeling from the destruction of World War I. Many leaders, including Prime Minister George, promised their constituents that they would make Germany pay. In the words of fellow Wilson adviser Bernard Baruch, “The conference was not writing a mere contract of dollars and cents; it was dealing with blood-raw passions still pulsing through people’s veins.”\textsuperscript{78}

Unlike his European counterparts, Dulles strongly objected to making Germany assume all of the costs for the war. In his capacity as legal counsel, Dulles noted that the Allies signed a

\textsuperscript{75} Walworth, \textit{Wilson and His Peacemakers.}, 503.
\textsuperscript{76} Lansing, \textit{The Peace Negotiations}, 149-161
\textsuperscript{77} Ronald W. Pruessen, \textit{John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power}, 31-32.
\textsuperscript{78} John Robinson Beal, \textit{John Foster Dulles: A Biography}, 61-64.
Pre-Armistice Agreement with Germany, promising a limited scale of reparations. In a statement made on behalf of the American delegation at the Peace Conference on Feb. 13, 1919, Dulles reminded the European powers that the United States had staggering debt because of the war, and agreed that Germany should be forced to pay for the damage for which they were responsible. However, he argued that “We are not here to consider as a novel proposal what reparation the enemy should in justice pay…we have before us a page…already filled with writing, and at the bottom are the signatures of [United States President] Mr. Wilson, of [Italian Prime Minister] Mr. Orlando, of [French Prime Minister] Mr. Clemenceau and of [British Prime Minister] Mr. Lloyd George.”79 Dulles defiantly staked out the American members’ position that Germany should be responsible for paying “…only that, stipulated for by a fair construction of the agreement with Germany as to what the terms of peace should be.”80 Of course, this previously signed agreement demanded much less of Germany than what the European powers wanted. Dulles was concerned about threatening the political and economic stability of the world by crippling Germany with debt that they could never hope to repay, and thus proposed that Germany be nominally held responsible for all war costs, but because of finite resources, would only be required to pay a smaller amount. 81

Dulles also clashed with Europe over matters regarding the German dye industry. According to an American newspaper, Britain sought to delay taking an inventory of German dye production (of which the Allies would be entitled to a cut) in order to protect their own dye interests. Through some maneuvering on the part of Dulles, “Great Britain’s intention of holding on to the supply of 800 tons of dye stuffs in the liberated regions was squashed and the material

81 Preussen, John Foster Dulles, 44-45.
was set free.” While in the grand scheme of things, this was a relatively minor victory that was of primary interest to the American dye industry, it represents, in a way, Dulles’s interactions with Britain and France. By all means, they were very cordial; but even so, Dulles continually displayed a desire to have international decisions made with American interests in mind, rather than simply allowing European powers to do as they pleased.

Whatever hopes there may have been in recognizing a more independent United States during the Peace Process through Dulles’s efforts, they were no match for the strong isolationist sentiment that pervaded the United States Congress in the post-war era. As the negotiations wore on into the summer, it became increasingly clear that Congress would not make John Foster Dulles’s appointment as an American adviser on the treaty commission permanent. He repeatedly complained about being denied advice as to how he should proceed on behalf of the American government. By August, 1919, several major American advisers including Thomas Lamont, Bernard Baruch and Vance McCormick had already returned home. Without Congressional approval or clear instruction, Dulles was forced to resign and return to home, where he practiced law in New York.

During the Wilson years, the United States repeatedly capitulated to European demands. This, however, displeased Dulles, who vocally advocated for his positions even after he returned to the United States. In March, 1920, John Foster Dulles travelled to Germany to survey the status of the post-war environment and reported a dire situation to Norman Davis, the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. According to Dulles, “Germany today gives one the impression of being almost at a standstill economically. The plant and equipment are still here, but very little is operating…roughly 60% of the factories are entirely closed.” Dulles continued, blaming the

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83 Lincoln Eyre, “Resignation of Dulles Affects U.S. Interests…”
stagnant economy on the manner in which the Treaty of Versailles had been implemented in Germany: “The deadening influence is the reparation clauses of the treaty as they are now being applied.”\textsuperscript{84} As he continued his travels throughout Germany, he visited German financial leaders to gain their perspectives and suggestions regarding reparations.

After his trip to Germany, Dulles continued to be a vocal opponent of reparations—or at least an opponent of the manner in which they were being carried out by the European victors. On January 11, 1921, John Foster Dulles participated in a conference held by the Council on Foreign Relations concerning Germany in the post-war world. In it, he reiterated his beliefs that while Germany was largely culpable for instigating the war, the Treaty was being enforced in an unexpectedly harsh manner. He argued that this was responsible not only for German unrest, but also for the “continued disruption of European economic conditions.”\textsuperscript{85} Dulles elaborated in a speech before the League of Free Nations Association in New York, contending that the sheer cost of reparations demanded by the Allies was not only deleterious to the German economy, but that the impractically high amount of goods that the Allied powers were receiving from Germany was actually harming their economies as well. To illustrate his point, Dulles noted that when Germany paid Great Britain with ships, the influx of German-made crafts flooded the market, driving down prices and threatening Britain’s shipbuilding industry. German coal posed a similar problem for Britain’s coal industry because as France received more coal from Germany, they became less dependent on British sources. Dulles also said that French economic minister Louis

\textsuperscript{84} John Foster Dulles, Letter to Norman M. Davis, Apr. 1, 2013, p.1 in \textit{DP} reel 1, box 3.
\textsuperscript{85} “What Americans should know about Germany,” from a conference of \textit{The Council of Foreign Relations}, Jan. 11, 1921, p. 2 of a summary contained in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 3.
Loucheur expressed concern that accepting German machinery could “give Germany a stranglehold on the economic life of Northern France…”\textsuperscript{86}

Dulles’s advocacy for a reconsideration on German reparations was not limited to just making public addresses. In his address before the Council of Foreign Relations, he said that while the United States withdrew from the post-war peace process (insofar as American delegates such as Dulles left, and the US did not join the League of Nations), “we are partly responsible for existing conditions there and should therefore help in solving them.”\textsuperscript{87} While he was no longer involved with the decision-making in Washington, he did send at least two letters to policy-makers in an attempt to change the post-war policies of Britain and France. In January, 1921, Dulles sent a letter to French Economic Minister Louis Loucheur, suggesting that the French government allow the United States to serve as an arbiter between Germany and France regarding reparations. He noted that the outcome would certainly involve a more moderate agreement than the French government would like, however he argued that “a relatively moderate reparation settlement which has American sanction behind it is more valuable than a larger sum which might be stipulated but which would have no such sanction.”\textsuperscript{88} Later, Dulles received a letter from a German banker proposing a loan arrangement aimed at helping the German economy. A sympathetic Dulles forwarded the banker’s letter on to a friend, a prominent American banker from J.P. Morgan & Co.\textsuperscript{89} Even during his early years as a nascent diplomat, Dulles displayed tenacity and an unusually bold opposition to capitulating to the wills

\textsuperscript{86} The address was initially given to the League of Free Nations Association on Mar. 12, 1921. Parts of the speech were reproduced in the following: John Foster Dulles, “The Reparation Problem,” The New Republic, Mar. 30, 1921, 133-35, in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 3; and John Foster Dulles, “How Reparation Defeats itself,” Foreign Affairs, May, 1921, 175-6, in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 3.

\textsuperscript{87} “What Americans should know about Germany,” from a conference of The Council of Foreign Relations, Jan. 11, 1921, p. 2 of a summary contained in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 3.

\textsuperscript{88} Untitled letter from John Foster Dulles to Louis Loucher, Jan. 17, 1921, p. 2, in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 3.

\textsuperscript{89} Taken from a series of untitled letters: Dr. Hjalmar Schacht to John Foster Dulles, Mar. 20, 1922; John Foster Dulles to Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, Apr. 15, 1922; John Foster Dulles to Thomas Lamont, Apr. 1, 1922; all in \textit{DP}, reel 1, box 4.
of Britain and France. When he became Secretary of State, these characteristics led Dulles to pursue an increasingly independent agenda, which he was able to do particularly in the second half of his tenure.
Chapter III- A House Built on Sand:

Uneasy foundations of the “special relationship”\textsuperscript{90}

At the end of the Second World War, the international system went through enormous changes. Perhaps the most significant for the Middle East was the waning of the long-standing European Imperial powers, and the emergence of the United States as a major hegemon. This newness raised a series of questions that world leaders were still struggling to answer during Dulles’s tenure. First, what would the nature of the United States’ relationship with Britain be? How much power would Britain continue to hold around the world, relative to the newfound influence of the United States? From these questions naturally followed thoughts concerning the world’s newest major global power: What would the United States’ policies be toward Middle Eastern states in the wake of the wave of nationalist independence movements in the region? Scholars have repeatedly pointed to the rupturing of Anglo-American relations over the Suez Crisis in 1956; however this did not happen in a vacuum. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, there is a reemergence of the anti-colonial sentiments that Dulles often expressed during the Paris Peace Conference. Dulles’s antipathy toward imperialism and his overriding desire to prevent the Middle East from falling into the Soviet sphere put the Anglo-American relationship on very shaky ground throughout Dulles’s tenure. With only a few major exceptions (which will be discussed in the following chapter), Dulles was quite willing to ignore the wishes of his European allies in order to promote better relations between the United States and Middle Eastern countries.

\textsuperscript{90} The term “special relationship” was first coined by Winston Churchill to describe the Anglo-American relationship in his famous “Iron Curtain Speech” delivered at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946.
The relevance of the Middle East during the transitional period of World War II became obvious even as the war raged on, as the United States became progressively more concerned over the availability of oil. The enormous technological advancements wrought by the global conflict demanded greater access to oil than ever before. Many policymakers raised concerns that the United States’ oil reserves were limited and might not be able to sustain the heightened demand. Oil came to be seen as a national security issue for the United States, and in response, policy makers increasingly began to look overseas. This was met with enthusiasm from many American oil companies that were delighted at the prospects of new global markets in which to invest.91

Seeing the writing on the wall, British leaders realized that the United States was not only going to be more engaged in the Middle East in the post-war world, but also that Anglo-American cooperation in that region was necessary. This was the geopolitical situation in which John Foster Dulles operated. However, the waning power and influence of the British Empire was not immediate, but rather it was a lengthy process. In the decades after World War I, extant scholarship and diplomatic records indicate that the United States government was more acquiescent when dealing with the British. There were undoubtedly differences, but often times the United States sought to keep the peace and deferred to British desires.

An early example of Anglo-American oil cooperation was with regard to the United States’ policy toward Saudi Arabia. Oil lobbyists from the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC), in conjunction with Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, expressed concern that the British were encroaching on American oil interests in the region. Ickes told Roosevelt that America should safeguard CASOC’s Saudi oil concession from the

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British who “never overlooked any opportunity to get in where there was oil.” One the one hand, State Department officials were concerned that if the United States Government became directly involved in the ownership of oil, that the amicable ties with the British could be undermined. On the other hand, the concerns of the oil industry did weigh on the Department, and thus they encouraged Roosevelt to send Lend-Lease aid to Saudi Arabia. Initially reluctant, on February 18, 1943, President Roosevelt announced that the security of Saudi Arabia was essential to the security of the United States and that the United States would accordingly send aid. While this may seem like a move toward a more independent approach to the Middle East, it is belied by the fact that Roosevelt approved of Lend-Lease aid only after receiving the blessing of the British government.

When Sir Anthony Eden became Britain’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1951, he was dealing with a difficult transitional period. In a 1952 memo entitled “British Overseas Obligations” Eden noted:

> The essence of a sound foreign policy is to ensure that a country’s strength is equal to its obligations. If this is not the case, then either the obligations must be reduced to the level at which resources are available to maintain them, or a greater share of the country’s resources must be devoted to their support.

In the wake of the costly World War, Eden lamented that “rigorous maintenance of the presently accepted policies of Her Majesty’s Government at home and abroad is placing a burden on the country’s economy which it is beyond the resources of the country to meet.” In response to this dilemma, Eden hoped that the United States would assist Britain by taking a larger role on

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92 David Painter, *Oil and the American Century*, 37.
93 David Painter, *Oil and the American Century*, 37.
95 Ibid.
the international stage. Specifically Eden sought to include the United States in strategic defense partnerships, while maintaining as much of their preexisting dominance as possible. In Eden’s own words, Britain needed to “persuade the United States to assume the real burdens in such organisations while retaining for [them]selves as much political control--and hence prestige and world influence--as [they] can.”

Under Dulles’s leadership, Eden’s objective achieved mixed success. Dulles and Eisenhower were certainly willing to take a more active role in the Middle East. However, over the course of Dulles’s tenure, it became clear that the role of the United States would not be to pursue the British agenda by proxy, but rather to pursue an independent agenda, that became increasingly incompatible with British objectives.

The Making of a Cold Warrior: the Enigmatic Philosophy of John Foster Dulles

Before delving into the specific tensions in Anglo-American diplomacy in the Middle East, it is necessary first to examine the development of John Foster Dulles’s thinking on foreign policy at the dawn of the Cold War. At the conclusion of his analysis of Dulles, historian Townsend Hoopes remarked that Dulles was a “tactician who operated on fixed moral and religious premises.” An examination of Dulles’s rhetoric confirms that Dulles did, in fact, view the Cold War (at least partially) through a religious framework that maintained that the Soviet system was not only morally bankrupt, but that a robust defense of the principles of Western Christianity was vital to world peace.

Much of this undoubtedly stems from his religious upbringing. In his early adult life, it appeared that Dulles had lost some interest in religion. However, during World War II it was apparent that his childhood interest had returned. He became significantly involved with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCC) during and after World War II.

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formulating many of their mission statements and policy positions. A prominent Dulles biographer noted that beginning in the 1940s, “Moral themes began to figure prominently in his writings, and religious enthusiasm was soon making more vibrant the speculations of the philosopher he had already in part become.”

In 1942, even before the Soviet Union came to be viewed as a serious threat to the United States, Dulles posited a strong belief in a universal moral law which “undergirds our world” and is “fundamental and eternal.” Dulles strove to operate as Secretary of State with God’s moral law in mind. His faith compelled him to defend God’s law, and the country that supposedly lived under it, from external threats.

Yet Dulles’s philosophy was not as simple as “good versus evil” or “us versus them.” Paradoxical as it is, Dulles’s faith complicated his views of the Cold War as much as it clarified them. Much of this was manifest in Dulles’s work with the FCC’s “Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace,” of which he became the chairman in 1941. As its name suggests, the Commission’s primary motivation was to work toward a final cessation of all violence. World War I had clearly failed to be the “war to end all wars,” so Dulles and the FCC came to hope that perhaps the Second World War could live up to that goal. Many of Dulles’s principles were altruistic in nature. He expressed a desire to cure “the sickness and suffering which afflict our present society,” and became a prominent early voice for an “international machinery” to “facilitate the easing of such economic and political tensions...” which would later become the United Nations.

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98 Pruessen, John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power, 179.
It may be surprising, given his reputation as a staunch Cold Warrior, but Dulles’s religious beliefs even led him to criticize the United States, and *laissez-faire* capitalism. His early rhetoric expresses a sense of shared responsibility for the world’s troubles: “All share in responsibility for the present evils. There is none who does not need forgiveness. A mood of genuine penitence is therefore demanded of us—individuals and nations alike.”\(^1\) He went further, arguing that the United States’ “own positive influence has been impaired because of concentration on self and on our short-range material gains...” specifically criticizing American isolationism and the pervasive racial inequalities in American society.\(^2\) As for capitalism, a 1946 manifesto of sorts published by the FCC’s “Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace” bluntly states that, “Neither state socialism nor free enterprise provides a perfect economic system; each can learn from the experiences of the other.”\(^3\) Writing for *LIFE* magazine, Dulles himself expressed hope that “coldblooded laissez-faire economics are on the way out.”\(^4\)

In the same series of articles for *LIFE* magazine, Dulles acknowledged significant differences in the Soviet Union and the United States, including economic and political structures—capitalism versus communism, authoritarianism versus democracy, etc. For Dulles, these differences did not necessarily preclude cooperation, nor was it the reason why he viewed the Soviet Union as evil. In point of fact, in 1948, Dulles presented a paper at the inaugural

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\(^1\) John Foster Dulles, “Moral and Spiritual Bases for a Just and Lasting Peace,” 102.

\(^2\) John Foster Dulles, “Moral and Spiritual Bases for a Just and Lasting Peace,” 105.

\(^3\) “The Churches and World Order,” *The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America* (hereafter FCC), March 1946, in *DP*, Reel 7, Box 29, 10. While the Commission of which Dulles was chair technically authored this, there is strong evidence of Dulles’s direct influence in the drafting of this specific statement from an additional statement penned specifically by Dulles himself. It is included as an addendum in the pamphlet (See: John Foster Dulles, “Faith and Works: Summary of Statement by John Foster Dulles to the plenary meeting of the Federal Council of Churches, outlining the concrete action by the United States called for by the Report of World Order,” on pages 11-14 of the above pamphlet).

\(^4\) John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and what to do about it,” originally printed in *LIFE*, June 3 and 10, 1946, in *DP*, Reel 7, Box 28, 28.
assembly of the international ecumenical organization the World Council of Churches (WCC) in which he stated unequivocally that “it is not possible to say that free enterprise is Christian and socialism is unchristian—or vice versa. It is not possible to say that a popular representative system of government is Christian, or temporary dictatorship inherently unchristian.” Even more shocking was Dulles’s concession that “Communism in the sense of ‘from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs,’ was early Christian practice.”

Dulles’s staunch opposition to the Soviet Union had little to do with economic or political disagreements. Had this been the case, perhaps reconciliation, or at least compromise, would have been more possible. Rather, from Dulles’s perspective, the Soviet philosophy “disregard[ed] the nature of man.” Specifically Dulles objected to the belief that man was merely a materialistic being in a world devoid of any sort of supreme being or ultimate purpose (other than to serve the state). According to Dulles, by forcing this belief on their entire populous, the Soviet Union stripped individuals of their individuality. The idea that human beings both had a higher purpose in life, and had the free will to pursue that higher purpose was a non-negotiable part of Dulles’s worldview. According to Dulles, refusal to recognize these fundamental characteristics of human nature led to an abhorrent disregard for human life. Not mincing his words, Dulles decried the Soviet Union as “ruthless” charging that:

Millions are uprooted and doomed to perish by privation. Millions seek to flee from the Soviet zones of occupation… People who have partaken of a humane civilization are repelled by the low estimate of human life and callousness to human misery which is involved in Soviet measures…

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107 Ibid., 170.
108 Ibid., 171.
109 John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and what to do about it,” originally printed in LIFE, June 3 and 10, 1946, in DP, Reel 7, Box 28, 19-20.
In a 1948 speech given to the General Conference of the Methodist Church, Dulles further argued that the Soviet Union “believe[d] in violence, coercion, and terrorism.”\textsuperscript{110} For Dulles, the Soviet Union operated outside the bounds of the universal moral law.

More than simply raising serious humanitarian concerns on behalf of those living directly in the Soviet sphere, Dulles believed that the Soviet Union posed an existential threat to the whole world as it yearned for world domination. Dulles helped draft a statement in 1946 for the Federal Council of Churches (an ecumenical organization representing dozens of Protestant denominations with which he was strongly affiliated). The statement employed strong and evocative language in his admonition against the pernicious Soviet threat: “A world of fear, hatred, cruelty, misery and violent death is closing in on the prospect of a world of fellowship and love.”\textsuperscript{111} Dulles believed that, while the United States was willing to live alongside of regimes with differing world views, Soviet foreign policy was marked by an intolerance that could only be satiated by bringing the entire world under its Communist worldview. In his own words: “Soviet leaders assume that peace and security depend upon quickly achieving worldwide acceptance of Soviet political philosophy, which suppresses certain political freedoms in the interest of achieving social harmony.”\textsuperscript{112} The United States would not abandon its principles in the wake of Soviet machinations. So long as the Soviet Union continued spreading its worldview, which held that the entire world must fall under Soviet influence, it would continue posing a threat to world peace.\textsuperscript{113} Reconciliation, when viewing US-Soviet relations through this lens, would be nearly impossible.

\textsuperscript{112} John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and what to do about it,” 1.
\textsuperscript{113} “Soviet-American Relations,” \textit{The Federal Churches of Christ in America: The Commission on a Just and Durable Peace}, Oct. 11, 1946, 3-6, in \textit{DP} Reel 7, Box 29. Dulles was not only on this specific Commission, but
Perhaps even more perplexing (considering his future reputation as a staunch Cold Warrior) was Dulles’s repeated calls to limit American military power. Scholars may call into question whether Dulles lived up to his own words, but prior to his tenure as Secretary of State he argued against using military might against the Soviet Union, saying that the proliferation of American armaments posed serious challenges to world peace. He went as far as to argue that “military establishments should be internationally controlled and be made subject to law under the community of nations.” Why? Dulles later wrote in 1946 that in its nascent rivalry with the Soviet Union the United States must prevail on merit rather than might. In Dulles’s ideal world, the United States would “forgo the development of force and so-called strategic security and let the fate of our free institutions depend on the fruits they produce.” Dulles opposed the use of violence and remained confident that, because the Soviet system was intrinsically inferior, that the Christian principles of Western Democracy would ultimately prevail.

To be fair, during Dulles’s tenure, the United States did not engage in full-scale war with the Soviet Union, nor were large forces of troops deployed to any foreign countries (with the exception of Lebanon in 1958, which will be discussed later). While obviously any military action would ultimately fall under the purview of President Eisenhower, not his Secretary of State, there is little evidence to suggest that Dulles was any more inclined to support military force than his boss was. That does not mean that Dulles was ambivalent toward communism. On the contrary, seeing the world through the framework on an “absolute morality,” he argued that the entire world must be brought into conformity with the moral law of God. This did not

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other letters indicate he played a large role in drafting the Commission’s report. For example see: John Foster Dulles, letter to Dr. Walter W. Van Kirk, Aug. 15, 1946 in DP Reel 7, Box 29. Page 11 of this letter specifically addresses the issue of tolerating divergent worldviews.

114 Certainly T. Hoopes, for example. (See: Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles).


116 John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and what to do about it,” 26.

necessarily mean universal capitalism and universal democracy; but it did mean fundamentally changing the Soviet system in a way that they were not willing to do.

Dulles’s views on morality inexorably shaped his views on Cold War geopolitics, and eventually, his policies. As early as 1942, he argued that “...in bringing international relations into conformity with the moral law, a very heavy responsibility devolves upon the United States...the United States must accept the responsibility for constructive action commensurate with its power and opportunity.”118 In accordance with his earlier writings, Dulles initially believed that this responsibility would simply involve promoting American values in the marketplace of ideas, and strengthening the United Nations as a mechanism that could help mediate any disputes that might arise between the superpowers on their merits. While Dulles was unwilling to stomach the bloodshed that would have undoubtedly come from a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, he did not hesitate to employ diplomatic tools (particularly covert action) to undermine the Soviet Union.

One of the earliest manifestations of Dulles’s anti-Soviet mindset came in the form of Eisenhower’s “Liberation” policy formulated with Secretary Dulles during the first month of the new administration. Under Truman, the policy of the United States was to “contain” communism within its boundaries, preventing it from spreading elsewhere insofar as it was possible. Liberation went a step further, seeking to actually roll back communism. Introducing the concept to the American press, Dulles said that the new “Liberation” policy had two objectives: “One is to register dramatically what we believe to be the many breaches by the Soviet Union of the wartime understandings; and, secondly, to register equally dramatically the desire and hope of the

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American people that the captive people shall be liberated." Less than a week after Dulles’s initial announcement, Congressman John Vorys (R-OH) introduced a joint resolution before Congress “Joining with the President of the United States in a Declaration regarding the subjugation of free peoples by the Soviet Union,” expressing Congressional support for Eisenhower’s shift in foreign policy.

Dulles was unclear as to how exactly the United States planned to liberate captive peoples. However it was clear that this doctrine was limited to those peoples under Soviet control in Asia and Eastern Europe. Colonial mandates in the Middle East were not discussed. The language and rhetoric behind Eisenhower’s liberation policy further explains Dulles’s staunch opposition to Communism. In his testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee, it was abundantly clear that Dulles’s resentment of the Soviet Union was far deeper than political or economic disagreements:

We do not accept or tolerate captivity as an irrevocable fact which can be finalized by force… We do not accommodate ourselves to political statements which are based upon contempt for the free will of peoples and which are imposed by the brutal occupation of alien armies or by revolutionary factions who serve alien masters…Some dozen people in the Kremlin are seeking to consolidate their imperial rule over some 800 million people.

As a matter of human decency, Dulles could not countenance the Soviet Union continuing to pursue the policies that it had been. For Dulles, simply stopping the spread of Communism was not enough; it was morally imperative to work to roll back Soviet gains. Often times during Dulles’s tenure, this was done in conjunction with Britain. However, under the surface of this

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120 Joining with the President of the United States in a Declaration regarding the subjugation of free peoples by the Soviet Union, H. J. Res. 200, 83d Cong., 1st sess. (January, 1953) in DP Reel 26, Box 70.
cooperation were two radically different motives that would ultimate contribute to a very public break during the Suez Crisis.

Dulles and Eden: Divergent Vantage Points

In *LIFE* magazine, Dulles explained that, from a Soviet vantage point, the world was divided into three sections. The “Inner Zone” included the territories directly incorporated into Soviet Union. The “Middle Zone” included territories that directly bordered Soviet territory (such as Hungary and Poland). The final zone was the “Outer Zone” comprised of the rest of the world, in which Dulles alleged the Soviet Union used a number of subversive tactics to exert greater influence. In fully self-governing countries, Dulles argued that the Soviet Union supported indigenous Communist Parties. In countries where this was not possible, (likely referring to the United States during the Cold War, and others where Communism was staunchly opposed) the Soviet Union relied on “small, well-disciplined minorities.” Most relevant to the Middle East, Dulles argued that in colonial or post-colonial countries in the Outer Zone, the Soviet Union sought to encourage “independence movements and give them moral leadership.”\(^{122}\) The expectation was, of course, that once successful, the independence leaders would lead their countries into the Soviet sphere of influence.

In preventing the spread of communism (whether directly from the Soviet Union or arising from indigenous leftist groups in post-colonial countries) Dulles often found that the British were willing to collaborate with the United States in the post-World War years. However, it must be stressed that Britain’s primary motivations were different than Dulles’s. In the aforementioned 1952 memo, Anthony Eden explained that Britain could not possibly reduce its

\(^{122}\) John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and what to do about it,” 8.
overseas obligations in any major sense. Virtually every one of the reasons he gave had to do with propping up the waning British Empire in a world where the geopolitical dynamics had shifted tremendously. Concerned for the British economy, Eden argued that “...the British world position brings with it concurrent and beneficial results of an economic and financial nature. The abandonment of our position in any area of the world may well have similar concurrent and adverse effects on our economic and trading interests.”¹²³ More than merely presenting his argument in terms of dollars and cents, Eden’s concerns carried with them a sense of lost pride:

There is the general effect of loss of prestige. It is impossible to assess in concrete terms the consequences to ourselves and the Commonwealth of our drastically and unilaterally reducing our responsibilities; the effects of a failure of will and relaxation of grip in our overseas commitments are incalculable. But once the prestige of a country has started to slide there is no knowing where it will stop.¹²⁴

Eden was also concerned with how Britain would be viewed by its allies whose attitude toward the British “will depend largely on [their] status as a world power.”¹²⁵

That Eden was fixated on Britain’s declining prestige is not to suggest that he was wholly unconcerned with the Soviet Union. To the contrary, in the same memo Eden expressed concern that “...the Russians would be only too ready to fill any vacuum created by a British withdrawal, with a consequent shifting of the balance of power against the West.”¹²⁶ However, his opposition was framed in economic, rather than moral, terms: “...when an area falls into Communist hands its economic and trading value to the Western world becomes greatly reduced while Western capital assets are liquidated with little to no compensation.”¹²⁷ For Dulles, Soviet expansion meant an existential threat to world peace, and the expansion of a system that violated God’s

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moral law. For Eden, Soviet expansion meant that British economic interests would be further threatened at a time when the empire was already under considerable financial constraint.

**The sticky question of colonialism**

Finally, while the divergent motivations for opposing Soviet expansion were part of the problem, perhaps the starkest difference between the British perspective and Dulles’s perspective was over the issue of colonialism. Dulles’s opposition to European colonialism hearkened back to the philosophical values of President Wilson’s vocal support of self-determination during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. In Wilson’s time, imperialism had been entrenched in the international system for over a century, and was clearly not going to end immediately. Nevertheless, even the adoption of the “mandate” system reflected a slight shift in geopolitics. Regions of the Middle East were (at least in theory) not going to be perpetually European possessions, but rather Britain and France were to “supervise” their steady development into autonomous countries. History shows that Britain and France were fairly unenthusiastic about preparing their mandates for full independence, but as the dust began to settle from World War II, it became quickly apparent that Middle Eastern countries were going to continue marching toward greater independence with or without the blessing of European powers.128

During the Treaty of Versailles, European powers promised to assist in the growth and development of their colonial possession so that they could one day be ready for autonomous self-government. Nearly two decades after the ink dried, Dulles wanted to

128 The history of individual countries is vastly different. Egypt, for instance, was given formal independence in 1922, though Britain maintained a military presence there until 1954. Iraq had been given formal independence in 1932, yet Britain continued to exert some influence until the 1958 coup. Britain formally granted independence to other major Middle Eastern mandates in the 1940s, including Palestine (1948) and Transjordan (1946). France relinquished control of its Levantine mandates in 1946 when remaining in the country became virtually impossible. However, France refused to formally recognize the independence of Maghreb countries until the 1950s and 60s.
make sure that his European allies were holding up their end of the Treaty.\textsuperscript{129} As independence movements continued proliferating throughout the Middle East, John Foster Dulles began articulating his staunch opposition to colonialism. In 1942, Dulles wrote the following on behalf of the Federal Council of Churches:

\begin{quote}
Government which derives its just powers from the consent of the governed is the truest expression of the rights and dignity of man. This requires that we seek autonomy for all subject and colonial peoples…It must be recognized as a common responsibility of mankind…for the benefit of colonial peoples who would, themselves, have a voice in their government.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

In his quintessential moral framework, Dulles posits that self-determination is intrinsically good and that people have an inherent right of self-government. Leaving no room for ambiguity, Dulles contends that the opposite of self-determination—specifically colonial subjugation—is morally bankrupt. After decrying Soviet policies in \textit{LIFE} magazine, Dulles conceded that, “the capitalistic centers, notably the British Empire and the United States, have developed some major defects. One of these is imperialism, with its by-product of racial intolerance”\textsuperscript{131}

Dulles also expressed concerns over the implications that the continuation of Imperialist policies would have on the growing Soviet-American tensions. Seeing the world as a zero-sum game, Dulles believed Soviet leaders were able to use the unpopularity of imperialism to stir up feelings of animosity against the West, and drum up support for communism. Continuing to support European imperialism would simply open the United States up to criticism that could drive the “Outer Zone” closer to the Soviet sphere. Dulles expressed explicit concern with the Middle East, claiming that “the Arab world is being wooed.” His fears were not completely unfounded. As early as 1946, the Soviet Union went before the nascent United Nations Security Council, proposing measures to remove French and British troops from Middle Eastern countries.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{129} John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Policy and what to do about it,” 28. \\
\textsuperscript{130} John Foster Dulles, “Moral and Spiritual Bases for a Just and Durable Peace,” 104. \\
\textsuperscript{131} John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Policy and what to do about it,” 17.
\end{flushright}
striving for full independence. Insofar as it was possible, the United States could not appear to continue supporting the imperialist policies of Britain and France as the Soviet Union was taking such a public stance in favor of self-determination. That would have undoubtedly pushed Arab countries into the Soviet sphere. On the other hand, a robust defense against communism required a unified Western bloc. As Cold War tensions continued to build, the United States found itself in a difficult position, striving to be a mediating third-party in an increasingly tumultuous period of Middle Eastern history.

The United States as Mediator

Shortly before General Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles were sworn into their respective positions, Henry Byroade, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs delivered a speech at the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations discussing the challenges facing the United States in the Middle East. His remarks highlighted the difficult position the United States was put in with regard to the imperialist policies of Europe. In 1952-1953 Anglo-Iranian and Anglo-Egyptian relations were of particular concern. In 1951, Iranian Prime Minister Mohamed Mosadeq nationalized all of Iran’s oil production. The British, which had considerable holdings in Iranian oil through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, were incensed. According to Byroade, as of 1952, the British were willing to accept the nationalization, but they demanded compensation for their loss in assets. Iran accepted the principle of compensation, but there was significant disagreement over the details. Not wanting to sully the United States’ long-standing alliance with Britain, Byroade sympathized with the British: “As a friend of the United Kingdom we have wished to see the British receive adequate

132 John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Policy and what to do about it,” 11.
133 David S Painter, Oil and the American Century, 15.
and effective compensation for their losses.”\textsuperscript{134} Trying to forge a middle ground, Byroade also said, “As a friend of Iran we have wished to see the resumption of large scale revenues to that country.” This was not merely for altruistic reasons, however. Byroade also alluded to fears of the ever-present Communist threat in the Middle East, insisting that amicable reconciliation was absolutely necessary “if Iran is to regain a sound economic and financial position and if, in fact, it is to retain the stability to insure its continued independence.”\textsuperscript{135} Economic and/or political instability, it was feared, could create conditions which the Soviet Union would exploit.

At the same time, tensions began to rise as Egypt underwent enormous political transformation. Under the new leadership of the Free Officers movement,\textsuperscript{136} Egypt was becoming increasingly less patient with the British troops that remained in the country. In 1952, the Free Officers Movement led by General Muhammad Naguib swept into power on a platform that made a complete evacuation of the British a top priority. While Byroade did not delve into the specifics of the dispute (which will be covered later), he did offer high praise for the new regime in Egypt: “The policy goals and actual accomplishments of the new regime in Egypt are such that they deserve our full support…We should all be ready to assist where possible in helping it attain its proclaimed goals for the future.” Similar to the Iranian situation, Byraode concluded by hoping that in Egypt “this disagreement between our two friends is on its way to rapid solution.”\textsuperscript{137} This difficult posturing as an objective third-party was the geopolitical situation that Dulles found himself in when he became Secretary of State just a month after Byroade’s address.


\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{136} This was a group of military leaders which overthrew the largely pro-British King of Egypt in 1952, replacing him with President Naguib. Another prominent leader of the Free Officers movement was Gamal Abdul Nasser, who would replace Naguib shortly after his tenure began.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 934.
Mr. Dulles goes to the Middle East

Many Arabs in the Middle East were considerably angered by the United States’ support of the state of Israel. As a new presidential administration came to power in 1953, many were eagerly waiting to see how the new American leadership would conduct foreign policy in the region. It had become clear that Israel (in some form) was likely to stay; however, there were lingering issues that arose as European imperialism continued to decline with which the Eisenhower administration had to contend. Recognizing that the Middle East was of major strategic importance, the newly-appointed Secretary of State set out to do what none of his predecessors had done before. In an attempt to build greater friendships between the United States and Middle Eastern countries and to better understand the problems of the region, John Foster Dulles announced in a press conference at the United Nations his plans to travel to the Middle East in May, 1953 to visit twelve countries.¹³⁸

At 7:00pm on May 9, 1953, Secretary Dulles left Washington, D.C. for Egypt, along with his wife and an attaché of American diplomats and policy-makers, including Director of the Mutual Security Agency and close Eisenhower confidant, Harold Stassen and Assistant Secretary of State Henry Byroade. He arrived in Cairo early on the morning of May 11, greeted by Egypt’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Fawzi and other Egyptian officials.¹³⁹ Amidst the chaos that Egypt was still undergoing at the time in the wake of the transition to the new government, Dulles’s trip received little press in Egypt. However, al-ahram, a major Egyptian newspaper did mention the trip on page six while he was in town. The title was relatively nondescript: “Dulles leaves New York for Cairo in a trip to the Middle East lasting 20 days.” However, indicative of

¹³⁹ “Schedule: Monday, May 11,” in DP Reel 26, Box 71.
the hope felt by many in the Middle East, the article (which included pictures of Dulles, Byroade, Stassen, and State Department Counselor Douglas MacArthur) ended by saying that “It is necessary that this trip bring helpful fruits for all.”

Consistent with his previously established antipathy for colonialism, Dulles had no interest in propping the waning empires of old. The first official diplomatic conversation he had made it abundantly clear that doing so would only sully relations between Egypt and the United States. Fawzi complained bitterly to Dulles about the British troops that remained in Egypt, charging that this was simply Britain’s way of trying to control Egypt. Fawzi insisted that all British troops had to leave the Suez Base, and any engineers that stayed on would have to be placed under Egyptian control. After making his case against imperialism, Fawzi acknowledged, as many involved in world affairs had already realized, that in the post-war world, the United States was quickly emerging as a preeminent world power. Fawzi is recorded as telling Dulles that he “would like to see the US measure up to its role of leadership which the US cannot escape.” For Fawzi, America’s leadership would mean using their power and influence to convince the British to stand down and completely evacuate from Egypt.

Dulles’s postwar writings suggest that he may have been sympathetic to this line of argumentation. But the Suez Base, where the British troops were stationed, had strategic importance in the Cold War world. Dulles saw it as a major center of defense against Soviet incursions. Dulles would not support any plan that would compromise the strength of the base which was “important not just for the defense for the Suez Canal, but for the defense of the entire

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Fawzi understood that in order to win United States support, he had to articulate Egyptian concerns in a way that would resonate with Dulles’s objectives for the Middle East. Fawzi understood that the most salient arguments would be those that touched on the central geopolitical concern of the Dulles: Communism. Before concluding his thoughts on the British troops in Egypt, Fawzi warned Dulles that a failure to reach an agreement that satisfied Egyptian demands could affect Egypt’s neutrality. “Perhaps we are not Communists now,” Fawzi warned, “We do not want to be, but this situation might change…”

Dulles then turned to the situation in Palestine, encouraging the United States to take a more balanced position, as the creation of Israel was still a major point of contention in the Middle East. Dulles expressed an interest in helping to find a mutually agreeable position for both of these issues. However, his priority was on winning the Cold War. Fawzi responded by suggesting that Dulles could best achieve his long-term objectives by addressing Egypt’s problems in a timely fashion. According to records of the meeting, Naguib reportedly told Dulles that “he was aware of the many anti-Communist measures undertaken by the US but he said that many people feel that delay in solving the problems in the Middle East is one of the best ways to make Communists…”

The following morning, Dulles met with General Naguib who, like his foreign minister, made his case primarily by playing to Dulles’s strident opposition to the Soviet Union. He reiterated Fawzi’s plea for the United States to quickly remedy the British and Palestinian

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questions, suggesting that “a solution to the Egypt problem will achieve ‘what you want and what we want’ in the Arab states.” At a time when maintaining positive relations with “third world” (or “outer zone”) countries was seen as essential to US interests, Naguib informed Dulles that: “Unfortunately the high standing of the United States has deteriorated in the eyes of the Arab world as a result of the Palestine situation. Originally, the Arabs felt bitterness only against the UK. Now the Arabs feel that the UK has shifted some of the burden of bitterness on the shoulders of the US.” Naguib’s statement confirmed a number of fears for Dulles. First was the fear that the United States’ support of Israel was tarnishing its reputation among the Arab world. Second, the close Anglo-American relationship was problematic because of Britain’s continued Imperialist policies.

Many Arab nationalists had already been disappointed that the United States did not take a bolder stance in favor of self-determination in the Middle East during the Paris Peace negotiations. To be fair, Wilson’s idealism was going up against Imperialist mindset that had been entrenched in Europe for a century. While Wilson did manage to exert considerable influence on the proceedings in Paris, his influence was somewhat limited by America’s status as a very new world power. Accordingly, the United States acquiesced to many of the European demands. But World War II, America’s position in the world had changed; the United States was no longer a neophyte on the world stage. Thus, refusing to stand up to some of Europe’s imperialist policies in the post-war era (specifically the presence of British troops in Suez, and

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the Iranian coup of 1953) suggested a degree of American complicity rather than simply powerlessness.

Yet at the same time, cracks began to appear in the Anglo-American relationship as Dulles charted the course of American foreign policy. This was largely because of the geopolitics of the Cold War. Egyptian antipathy toward the British was long established. The thought that such feelings of animosity could begin to be felt toward the United States was not at all something Dulles was willing to allow. Driving home his point, Naguib emphasized the strong anti-British sentiment in the region and expressed concern that if the new Egyptian government was unable to deliver on its promises to have the Suez Base evacuated, their regime could fall. He suggested that, “perhaps another revolution would take place with incalculable results…it would be the kind of chaos which the British, the Communists, and others, who have an interest in chaos, could exploit.”

If the United States was to have a chance in keeping Egypt out of the Soviet bloc, Dulles needed to rethink the longstanding alliance between the United States and Britain as well as United States policies toward Israel and Palestine.

This was by no means an easy task. Since its formal independence in 1948, the United States had strongly supported the inchoate country. While Jewish voters were a small contingent of the American population, they enjoyed a considerable about of influence and support from the American government. While he strove to avoid taking sides, Assistant Secretary Byroade explained, “In lending their support [for Israel], the American people acted in large measure because of a traditional sympathy for a Jewish national home and because of horror at the outrages committed against the Jewish people in Europe during the past 25 years.” In a meeting with his National Security Council, President Eisenhower recounted telling Egyptian

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147 Ibid., 12.
148 Byroade, “U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East,” 932
ambassadors that there were 5 million Jewish voters in America and very few Arabs, implying that it would be politically difficult to withhold support from Israel. American policymakers understood that for most Arabs, the creation of the State of Israel was a major point of contention. Recognizing this, Dulles told Naguib: “In the past the US has perhaps centered too much of its interest on Israel as a result of pressure groups in the US. The new administration is seeking a balanced view of the Middle East directed against neither the Arabs nor the Jews.”

When he travelled to Lebanon, Dulles allegedly went as far as to tell the Lebanese Premier that United States foreign policy would not be “Zionist-dictated.” Dulles also noted that many Jewish voters did not support him during his run for New York’s Senate seat in 1949, nor did they give President Eisenhower significant support in 1952. Consequently, Dulles said that, unlike the Democratic Truman administration, Eisenhower’s administration did not really owe the American Jewish community many political favors. This did have some consequences when Dulles returned to the United States, however. Dulles’s remarks were picked up by someone who leaked them to TIME magazine. He received a number of letters from Jewish leaders who expressed their discontent with Dulles’s comments. One Jewish newspaper claimed that “No other public pronouncement in recent years has called forth so much uneasiness, anxiety and even alarm in the Israeli and Zionist Press in this country as did

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152 See for example: Henry S. Moyer of The American Council of Judaism, Letter to John Foster Dulles, May 25, 1953 in DP Reel 26, Box 71; and Irving Rosenbaum, Letter to John Foster Dulles, June 3, 1953 in DP Reel 26, Box 71.
Secretary of State Dulles’s report on the Middle East.” For his part, Dulles alleged that he had been misquoted.

Then-Congressman Jacob Javits, a Jewish Republican from New York defended Dulles, saying that the Administration’s change in policy toward Israel did not mean a reduction in support for Israel, but rather a new emphasis on regional cooperation. Nevertheless, many leaders in the Arab world remained optimistic about the United States’ new position. Assistant Secretary Byroade reflected less than a year later that, “The Arab peoples…sensing a new importance in our eyes might conclude that their bargaining power had risen…that a policy of ‘impartial friendship’ would in effect mean complete partiality toward their side.” Indeed, when one looks through the pictures taken of Dulles’s visit, it is clear by their cautiously optimistic smiles that Arab leaders were delighted to hear Dulles take a more ambivalent approach toward Israel than the Truman administration. But even this was secondary to Dulles’s primary concern of Soviet encroachment. As Byroade later said, the United States hoped for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict so that “The peoples of the Middle East could concentrate and attend their energies to safeguard the precious heritage of freedom [from the Soviet Union] to which we all dedicate ourselves.” Affirming their Cold War priorities, the Eisenhower administration advanced a relatively neutral position regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, supporting pro-West Israel, while continually seeking to woo their Arab neighbors.

154 John Foster Dulles, letter to Irving Rosenbaum, June 18, 1953 in DP Reel 26, Box 71. However, for the record, the confidential notes of Dulles’s meetings contained in FRUS demonstrate that Dulles did in fact make it known to Arab leaders that the Republican Party was not nearly as closely aligned to Jewish Americans and, by extension, Israel, as the Democratic Party had been. See: The Visit of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Mutual Security Administrator Harold Stassen to the Near and Middle East, May 9-29, 1953, in FRUS: 1952-1954, Vol IX, The Near and Middle East, part 1, U.S. Department of State (Washington DC: US GPO, 1986), 20.
157 Henry A. Byroade, “Facing Realities in the Arab-Israeli Dispute,” 27.
Concerning Britain, the United States had been an ally with the British through two World Wars. As the world became conceptually divided between East and West, it was important that Western allies remained united in opposition to the spread of communism. Any division could weaken the West relative to the Soviet Union. Even so, Dulles did not believe that alliances were sacrosanct. Dulles revealed his opposition to military alliances in a brief letter to William Kostka, the managing editor of Look magazine, concerning the Anglo-American alliance as early as 1946. He began with his principles, saying, “I do not believe military alliances further world peace. On the contrary, such alliances are apt to make war more likely.”\(^{158}\) Turning specifically to Britain, he raised concerns that a permanent alliance would give Britain a blank check from the United States to do what it pleased. For Dulles, international cooperation was contingent on a given country living up to the same moral principles that he condemned the Soviet Union for violating. In his own words: “Peace is best promoted by nations knowing that whether they get outside support depends on whether they stand for human values and for ways of righteousness. So long as the British do that, they will get our support…We had better leave it that way, and not seek artificial ties, such as military alliances, which may not work as intended.”\(^{159}\)

The combination of his principled mistrust of alliances and his growing concerns that the Middle East might fall under communist influences compelled Dulles to offer some support for the Egyptian cause. Dulles told Naguib frankly that, “The US is not ashamed of its close ties of alliance with the UK.” But he quickly added, “The US does not automatically accept British

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\(^{159}\) Ibid.
policy.” He also shared with Naguib his longstanding anti-colonialist views, this time using his position to speak on behalf of the United States: “The US does not believe in colonialism.” In regards to the situation with the evacuation of the Suez Base, Dulles made it clear that the security of the base could not at any point be compromised, but he did say told Naguib that on behalf of the Eisenhower administration: “We all agree that the British troops must be evacuated and Egyptian sovereignty must be restored…” On the more divisive point about whether British engineers would be allowed to remain in Egypt without answering to the Egyptian government, Dulles equivocated, saying he was not in Egypt to negotiate. Despite his prevaricating, his strong repudiation of colonialism, and his support for greater Egyptian autonomy were both encouraging to Egyptian leaders. In fact, his criticism of the British seemed so surprising that even President Eisenhower suggested that Dulles had perhaps been a little “too rough on the British.”

The Elusive Quest for Regional Security

The issue of regional security pacts in the Middle East was a complex issue. On the one hand, Dulles believed that it was in the best interests of the United States to develop cooperative pacts (similar to NATO, for instance) that could be relied on to oppose any Soviet expansion into the vital region. But paradoxically, Dulles’s concerns over colonialism played a heretofore unexamined role in Dulles’s repeated reluctance to support a number of regional defense pacts. During a press release on June 1, 1953, Dulles reiterated the fact that many in the Middle East were “suspicious of colonial powers,” but added, “The United States too is suspect because, it is reasoned, our NATO alliance with Britain and France requires us to try and preserve or restore

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the old colonial interests of our allies.” ¹⁶³ Dulles was also concerned about losing the increasingly popular Nasser to the Soviet sphere. Finally, Dulles was hoping to win Nasser’s endorsement of a top-secret plan known as “Alpha” designed by the British and the United States to create a lasting peace between Israel and their Arab neighbors. ¹⁶⁴ The balance with which Dulles operated led to a principled support of two major defense pacts, but his support was ultimately abandoned in the face of strategic considerations.

The first major pact during Dulles’s tenure was the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO). Britain and the United States had long discussed the possibility of a Middle Eastern defense system that could serve as a united front against the Soviet Union. In 1952 under the Truman Administration, Anglo-American discussions began about MEDO. Eden hoped to use MEDO to “persuade the United States to assume the real burdens in such organizations while retaining for [Britain] as much political control—and hence prestige and world influence—as we can.” ¹⁶⁵ Eden knew that Dulles was interested in bolstering regional security against Soviet threats, and hoped that the United States’ involvement in a security pact with Britain and many Middle Eastern countries would allow Britain to maintain greater influence than they would have otherwise been able to. By 1953, both the Egyptians and Dulles could sense that Britain’s purpose in constructing MEDO was to continue perpetuating their influence in the region. The Egyptians were obviously not amenable to British machinations and, maintaining his opposition to colonialism and concern for the “bigger picture,” Dulles was not either. ¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ “Radio Address by the Honorable John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, on his recent trip to the Near East and South Asia,” Department of State, Press release no. 299, June 1, 1953, 5, in DP, Reel 26, Box 71.
Official records of his meeting with General Naguib indicate that Dulles was “coming more and more to feel that the original MEDO proposal no longer meets the situation and is outdated.”\(^{167}\) Diplomatic cables point to three primary reasons for this. First, Dulles wanted to avoid further complications that would arise from Anglo-Egyptian tensions. The Egyptian government had already shown its unwillingness to support MEDO, meaning any attempt to secure Egyptian involvement in such a pact would have been fruitless.\(^{168}\) Second, Dulles came to believe that the proximity of countries such as Iraq in the “Northern tier” of the Middle East to the Soviet Union would make these countries better able to understand the Soviet threat than the countries bordering Israel, and thus more likely to enter into a security agreement with the United States.\(^{169}\) Further, basing the security pact closer to the Soviet Union had strategic benefits such as better facilitating intelligence collection and (if necessary) military action.\(^{170}\) Finally, Dulles was loath to press the issue with Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries for fear of “adverse political effects” such as alienating Nasser and the Arab world by appearing to impose an unpopular Western defense system on them.\(^{171}\) In opposing MEDO, Dulles demonstrated that he at least partially understood the implications that the legacy of British imperialism had on Egypt, and appeared to want no part of it. Over the objections of the Department of Defense, Eisenhower agreed with Dulles.


\(^{169}\) “Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council,” June 1, 1953, 384.


Throughout the Anglo-Egyptian treaty negotiations, Eden continued to press for Egyptian membership in MEDO, insisting that it was a necessary component in any agreement. For the aforementioned reasons, Dulles came to support a “Northern Tier” approach, which emphasized the Northern Middle Eastern countries that were situated near the southern border of the Soviet Union, including Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.\footnote{Harold Raugh Jr., wrote that this approach, “in effect infringed on traditional British interests in the Middle East,” as did Dulles’s opposition to the MEDO plan that Eden had championed.} The combination of Egyptian opposition and American ambivalence doomed MEDO, much to the chagrin of Britain.

Concerning MEDO Kevin Ruane wrote, “The first blow was dealt by Egypt, the pied-piper of Arab nationalism, but it was the United States that delivered the \textit{coup de grace}.”\footnote{Kevin Ruane, “SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact,” 183.} When an Anglo-Egyptian treaty was finally signed in October 1954, Egypt (and by extension, Dulles) got what they wanted. British forces were to be evacuated, Egyptian sovereignty was to be respected, and Egypt was not required to join any defense pacts.\footnote{Peter Hahn, “National Security Concerns in US Policy Toward Egypt, 1949-1956,” 80.}

The willingness of the Eisenhower administration to support the Egyptian government over their British allies did not stop with the death of MEDO. Oddly enough, while the British came to embrace a version of Dulles’s “Northern tier” plan (specifically the “Baghdad Pact”) and began to help implement it, Dulles offered, at most, tepid support for his own brainchild. On January 13, 1955, the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Iraq formally pledged to sign a pact “aimed at cooperation in the event of external or internal aggression,”\footnote{Elie Podeh, “The Perils of Ambiguity: The United States and the Baghdad Pact,” 91.} marking the first significant development of an anti-Soviet pact. Dulles preferred the creation of a Turko-Pakistani pact, but


\footnote{“Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council,” June 1, 1953, \textit{FRUS: 1952-1954}, Vol IX, 386.}
both Dulles and Eden were pleased with the development. Nasser, on the other hand, was not.

Nasser had envisioned himself the leader of a united Arab world. His staunch opposition to colonialism, his success in securing the removal of British troops from Egypt, and his eloquently articulated belief in pan-Arab nationalism had made Nasser a considerably popular figure in the Middle East. Nasser correctly saw the Turko-Iraqi pact as an attempt by Prime Minister Nuri al-Sa’id to undercut Nasser’s support, and better position himself as a leader of the Arab world. Consequently Nasser came to be a fierce critic of the Baghdad Pact.177

A number of people pressured the United States to join. First were the British. Anthony Eden urged President Eisenhower to “shore up the Baghdad Pact and Iraq in particular,” arguing that continuing to appease Nasser would be pointless, and that instead Britain and France should show that it “pays to be our friends.”178 Two days later, Dulles met with British Foreign Secretary Lloyd to inform him that the President’s response to Eden’s letter would likely be negative. Dulles cited concerns over winning Senate approval of the pact, as well as poisoning US relations with Nasser by forming an alliance with his Iraqi rival. It is perhaps ironic considering Dulles’s actions in Iran, Syria and Lebanon,179 but he was reluctant to play kingmaker by favoring Nuri al-Sa’id (of Iraq) over Nasser in the intense rivalry for primacy in the Arab world. The United States’ relationship with Israel also complicated matters. Joining the Baghdad Pact would require the United States to give “some security guaranty [sic] to

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179 All states in which later chapters will show Dulles had no qualms about playing kingmaker.
Israel…[which] would quickly knock out Iraq.”¹⁸⁰ Lastly, Dulles also alluded to concerns of anti-Western propaganda that had been percolating throughout the Middle East.¹⁸¹

Criticism of Dulles’s ambivalence also came from other members of the Eisenhower administration, specifically the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Admiral Radford of the JCS visited the Middle East himself and came to the conclusion that the United States needed join the Baghdad Pact, or at least take a more direct role in the organization’s military planning.¹⁸² In April 1956, Secretary of Defense Wilson requested that the National Security Council address, once and for all, the question of the United States joining the Baghdad Pact.¹⁸³ The President called Dulles to ask his advice. Dulles dismissed the advice of the military, retorting, “The military people have refused to give any idea of policy up to now—and suddenly they are urging the US to join the Pact.”¹⁸⁴ He reiterated the objections to the Pact that he had made during his conversation with British Foreign Secretary Lloyd, and complained bitterly that “…the British have taken it over and run it as an instrument of British policy—that has drawn down upon it a tremendous amount of criticism.” This conversation once again demonstrated Dulles’s antipathy for British attempts to continue exerting influence in the region, not only founded on his longstanding principled objection to colonialism, but his geopolitical concerns that any sympathy toward imperialist policies could push the Middle East into the Soviet sphere.

¹⁸³ “Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation between the President and the Secretary of State,” April 7, 1956, in FRUS: 1955-1957, Vol XII, 270.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid.
Remarkably, Eisenhower (who was himself a former military man) ignored the advice of the military. Siding with his trusted Secretary, he refused to formally join the Baghdad Pact.\footnote{Elie Podeh, “The Perils of Ambiguity,” 99-101. However, it is important to note that the same chapter concedes that the United States was involved to some extent in the economic and military decision-making of the Pact. However, refusing to become formal members did cause problems throughout the Pact’s short history.} Thus, for the second time, the United States effectively killed a Middle Eastern defense pact over strenuous objections from their British allies. Much of Dulles’s reputation in the Middle East is that of an uncompromising Cold Warrior who often colluded with European Imperialists (especially the British) to undermine popular governments in the Middle East.\footnote{For example, see: Rashid Khalidi, \textit{Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East} (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), particularly pages 159-200.} Such analysis is rooted in truth (and will be explored in the following chapters), yet it only paints part of the picture. While Dulles often found it advantageous to work harmoniously with European allies, this was not always the case. Ever haunted by the specter of the imperial legacy of the West, Dulles noted upon returning from his twenty-day tour, “The United States suffered from being linked with British and French Imperialism. Nevertheless, we still had a reserve of good will as was shown by the…friendly demeanor of the ordinary people in these countries.”\footnote{“Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council,” June 1, 1953, \textit{FRUS: 1952-1954}, Vol IX, 383.} His desire to maintain that “reserve of good will” was part of Dulles’s motivation for breaking faith with the British to side with Egypt’s widely-admired leader on at least three occasions prior to the major schism in Suez. Put in this context, Suez was not a shocking and unforeseeable betrayal of a healthy alliance, but in many ways, simply a culmination of existing tensions between Dulles and British leaders.
Chapter IV- The Enemy of my Enemy: Anglo-American Coup in Iran

Dulles vehemently opposed the repeated attempts of Great Britain to prop up their waning empires. He believed in the Wilsonian idea of self-determination, and was desperate to court Middle Eastern governments, lest they fall into the Soviet sphere influence. Yet the growing tensions in the Anglo-American alliance do not tell the whole story. There was one notable instance in 1953, in which Dulles was persuaded to assist the British government in overthrowing the widely-popular Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mosadeq.\(^{188}\) As previously confidential documents have been made available, countless scholars and authors have written about the details of the Iranian coup.\(^{189}\) The purpose of this chapter is not to rehash what other scholars have done, but rather to examine this profoundly important event as a prime example of John Foster Dulles’s often paradoxical actions in the Middle East. By all accounts, his decision to support the coup seems to fly in the face of his values as a church-going proponent of self-determination and “liberation.” The solution to this riddle lies in Dulles’s intense opposition to the Soviet system. A brief recount of this episode can aptly illustrate the depths of Dulles’s anti-communism.

As in much of the rest of the Middle East, strong anti-British sentiment had been building up in Iran throughout the outset of the Cold War. Of particular contention was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) which allowed the British to earn lucrative profits off of Iranian oil. As Iran’s economy began to suffer, many Iranian people wanted the profits of Iranian oil to go

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188 As with many non-western names, Mosadeq’s name has been transliterated countless different ways (including “Mossadegh” “Mossadeq” “Mosaddeq” “Musadiq” etc.). For consistency’s sake, I will rely on the Library of Congress’ Persian transliteration tables with the exception of the emphatic “ṣ” for which I shall use “s” for simplicity’s sake.
primarily to Iran. However, the series of pro-British leaders in Iran in the 1940s and early 1950s were reluctant to force Britain to make any concessions. In 1950, Prime Minister Ali Razmara proposed a new agreement with the AIOC that was roundly rejected by the Iranian Majlis (or Parliament). Frustrated by continued capitulation to the British, Mohammed Mosadeq, a member of the Majlis and leading member of the National Front Party, called for a nationalization of Iranian oil. Almost instantly, Mosadeq became a national hero. In 1951, Razmara was assassinated by an Islamist group and replaced with Hussein ‘Ala, an ally of the pro-British Shah. In response, the Majlis demanded that the Shah instead appoint Mosadeq Prime Minister, and sign a bill nationalizing Iranian oil. Facing stiff opposition from the Iranian public the Shah caved, giving into the demands of the Majlis. Not only did nationalization preclude the British from gaining future profits, but it put substantial British investments in the region in jeopardy, as the issue of compensation for British losses was by no means guaranteed.¹⁹⁰

Seeking to navigate the contentious waters of the Anglo-Iranian relationship, Truman’s State Department sought to be a middle-man. Acknowledging that the nationalization of Iranian oil would greatly affect the AIOC, a State Department memo from 1951 warned that “any attempts by the United States at this time to block the Iranians by strong diplomatic action would only make matters worse. We believe that we should be prepared, if necessary, to help both the Iranians and British work out a new arrangement…”¹⁹¹ Truman, for his part, was even blunter. In a recently released (albeit heavily redacted) CIA document, Truman was quoted as lamenting that “We tried…to get the block-headed British to have their oil company make a fair deal with

Unfortunately it seemed, that Mosadeq and the British had reached an impasse. Mosadeq was not willing to allow Britain to continue profiting on Iranian oil. Speaking to an American envoy in 1951, Mosadeq said, “You do not know how evil [the British] are. You do not know how they sully everything they touch.”

For its part, Britain refused to give up its Iranian assets that served to bolster not only Britain’s economy, but also British pride. One British diplomat angrily remarked: “Really, it seemed hardly fair that dignified and correct western statesmanship should be defeated by the antics of incomprehensible Orientals.” Britain insisted that Mosadeq be replaced with a prime minister more amenable to a compromise with the British. Despite Churchill’s attempts to convince Truman to back a coup, the President refused. Until the lead up to the Iranian coup of 1953, it had not been official United States policy to oppose or undermine the self-determination of the Iranian people. Official policy notwithstanding, a number of actors were anxious to remove Mosadeq from power. Specifically, the CIA, the British, and Loy Henderson, the United States Ambassador to Iran, all played significant roles in advocating for the eventual coup. These influences, in conjunction with one another, persuaded Dulles to act in a manner that seemed to contradict his positions in actions with regard to Egypt during the same time.

During the Truman administration, official government policy was to support Mosadeq, much to the chagrin of the British. However, CIA officers began covert actions that undermined Mosadeq’s base of support. This is not at all surprising when one reflects on the early history of the CIA. Since its official founding in 1947, the CIA had employed covert operations around the world. 

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194 Scott A. Koch, “‘Zendebad, Shah!’” 11.
195 David Painter, Oil and the American Century, 183-185.
world in order to further American interests abroad. The Iranian coup of 1953 was not the first time the CIA played a significant role in toppling a foreign government in the Middle East. Four years earlier, over ever-present fears of Communist influence in the region, and frustration over Prime Minister Shukri al-Quwatli’s strained relations with the nascent State of Israel compelled CIA operatives to take the unprecedented step of backing a coup d’état. The precise level of CIA involvement in the coup is, at this point, uncertain. But it is certain that CIA operatives including Major Stephan Meade met several times with al-Za’im to help plan the coup, which was successfully executed on May 29, 1949. While al-Za’im was essentially a military dictator, and his reign was short-lived, the CIA was delighted to find that al-Za’im lived up to his promises and began peace talks with Israel. This success was marked the dawn of a new era in the CIA’s history.

Perhaps a footnote in history, it is worth noting that there was some dissension among the ranks over this action. CIA operative Deane Hinton passionately dissented during the planning of the coup curtly stating: "I want to go on record as saying that this is the stupidest, most irresponsible action a diplomatic mission like ours could get itself involved in, and that we've started a series of these things that will never end." For his remarks, he was ostracized by many of his peers, though, in many ways, history has vindicated Hinton. Not only did US-Syrian relations sour, but the Syrian coup of 1949 did, in fact, start “a series of these things.”

Unsurprisingly the CIA turned to covert tactics four years later in the hopes of achieving similar aims in Iran. With Eisenhower’s greater emphasis on so-called “third-world” countries, covert

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strategies to sway those countries into the Western sphere of influence became even more popular.

CIA operatives working in Iran seemed to be frustrated by the unwillingness of the Truman administration to support a coup in Iran. Nevertheless they did what they could to undermine Mosadeq and other Leftist forces in the country. Prior to the actual Iranian coup, in an operation called “BEDAMN,” the CIA produced and distributed disparaging cartoons, depicting Mosadeq as corrupt. They also encouraged Mosadeq’s political allies to turn against him, to little avail. Christopher Woodhouse, the head of British Intelligence operations in Iran, met with CIA operatives, attempting them to persuade them to assist in a coup. He was told that the Truman administration would not be willing to authorize such an action, but that the incoming Eisenhower administration might look upon the idea more favorably. Indeed, after Eisenhower was elected, the new director of the CIA (and brother of John Foster) Allen Dulles met with Woodhouse to express his personal support for a coup. While waiting to receive the White House’s blessing, Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of former President Theodore Roosevelt and head of the CIA’s Middle East operations division, began actively planning how to topple Mosadeq.198

While the Eisenhower Administration was certainly more amenable to the idea of a US-led coup than the Truman Administration was, British officials knew that American support was by no means a guarantee. In his memoirs, Woodhouse wrote: “Not wishing to be accused of trying to use the Americans to pull British chestnuts out of the fire, I decided to emphasize the Communist threat to Iran rather than the need to recover control of the oil industry.”199

Considering Dulles’s antipathy for propping up British imperialism discussed in the previous

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198 Gasiorowski, “US Foreign Policy Toward Iran During the Mussadiq Era,” 57-59.
chapter, Woodhouse’s strategy proved to be brilliant. Dulles originally sought to continue
Truman’s position as impartial third-party mediator, however the concerns continually raised by
the British were too difficult for him to ignore.

Though Dulles knew that Mosadeq was not, himself, a communist, Britain continued to
arouse fears that Mosadeq might be assassinated or overthrown by communists who would then
turn Iran over to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{200} Declassified CIA documents reveal that the British played into
fears that American policymakers took very seriously. The CIA’s internal history of the coup
noted that “Neither the White House nor the State Department had the slightest doubt that the
Soviets coveted Iran and would do whatever they could, short of war, to bring that country
within the Soviet orbit.” They also speculated that the Soviet Union might actually encourage the
Tudeh to overthrown Mosadeq.\textsuperscript{201} Thus, while Dulles may have generally distrusted the British
and been unwilling to cooperate with them carte blanche, the British were able to make a
compelling argument to Dulles and Eisenhower, convincing the US to partner with the British in
overthrowing the democratically-elected Prime Minister in the name of promoting western
interests.

Before briefly discussing the implications of Mosadeq’s ousting, it is important to note
one final major figure that influenced Dulles’s decision to support the coup. Often called “Mr.
Foreign Service,” and hailed by Henry Kissinger as one of the “giants of postwar diplomacy,”
Loy Henderson had enormous influence on shaping American foreign policy during the Cold
War. A key moment in his four decade career was the Iranian coup of 1953. When Mosadeq
announced the nationalization of Iranian oil in 1951, then-Secretary of State Dean Acheson sent

\textsuperscript{200} Roby C. Barrett, \textit{The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: US Foreign Policy under Eisenhower and Kennedy}
\textsuperscript{201} Scott A. Koch, “‘Zendebad, Shah!’” 12.
Henderson to the region to serve as the United States’ Ambassador to Iran.\textsuperscript{202} When Henderson arrived on the scene in 1951, he found both Mosadeq and the British entirely unwilling to compromise. The British position remained intractable, much for the same reasons they were stubborn with Egypt over the Suez Base: financial interests and a fear of their prestige diminishing irrevocably. For his part, Mosadeq refused to compromise for much the same reasons that Nasser and Naguib refused to compromise in Egypt: a strong opposition to imperialism, a sense of national pride, and very salient anti-western sentiments.

Henderson was concerned that the longer the Anglo-Iranian conflict continued, the more likely it was for Communist influences to take hold in Iran. The communist Tudeh Party in Iran gained considerable influence by employing anti-British slogans. While it is difficult to determine what at level, if any, the Tudeh Party was actively collaborating with the Soviet Union, Henderson certainly thought that they were little more than a Soviet implant. He bitterly complained to Acheson that the Tudeh had convinced a majority of the Iranian population that they were “an indigenous political movement advocating reforms close to the heart of the populace.” Henderson was wholly unconvinced and was incredulous that “the average Iranian fails to see any present tangible evidence of Soviet imperialism.”\textsuperscript{203} Ultimately, Henderson’s fear was that once Mosadeq succeeded in expelling the British, the increasingly-popular Tudeh Party would simply topple him and take over the country. It is interesting to note how similar Henderson’s suspicions of the Tudeh Party were to Dulles’s own beliefs about Soviet methods of influence vis-à-vis indigenous communist movements in the Outer Zone discussed in chapter three.

\textsuperscript{203} Loy W Henderson to Dean Acheson, Oct. 21, 1951, cited in Brands, \textit{Inside the Cold War}, 236.
Henderson was initially reluctant to support a coup, as were a number of other State Department and CIA officials.\textsuperscript{204} However, there were some operatives, such as Kermit Roosevelt, who were very anxious to stage a coup. Additionally, British operatives continued to pressure American officials to join in their endeavor. As the British continued discussing the matter with Ambassador Henderson, he raised concerns similar to those that Dulles raised regarding Anglo-Egyptian relations. Namely, while Dulles was hesitant to the ruffle feathers of his British allies, he did not want the anti-British sentiments in Egypt to become anti-American sentiments, and push Egypt into the Soviet sphere.

Knowing that the British were widely unpopular in Iran, Henderson was hesitant to align himself to closely with the British for fear of anti-western backlash that could push Iran into the Soviet sphere. At the same time, Henderson became increasingly convinced that things were quickly getting out of control. In January 1953, when Mosadeq refused to agree to a compromise crafted by the State Department, Henderson finally concluded that he had to be removed from power, and began searching for potential successors and viable plans for a coup. When the new administration was sworn in, he began sharing these thoughts with John Foster Dulles.

Henderson’s reputation, and breadth of experience in American diplomacy—especially U.S.-Iranian relations, gave great weight to his observations and advice.\textsuperscript{205}

The fateful decision to overthrow Mosadeq was made on June 25, 1953. Secretary Dulles met with his brother, Allen, Kermit Roosevelt, Henry Byroade, Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, Ambassador Henderson, and others. When Dulles surveyed those in attendance, he reportedly found “the responses varied from hearty support to tepid acquiescence.”\textsuperscript{206} While

\textsuperscript{205} Brands, \textit{Inside the Cold War}, 272-280.
\textsuperscript{206} Brands, \textit{Inside the Cold War}, 282.
Henderson originally did not like the idea of the United States taking such a direct role in the domestic affairs of another country, he believed it was the best course of action in the context of the Cold War. He reportedly told Dulles, “Mr. Secretary, I don’t like this kind of business at all. You know that… [But] we have no choice.”

In many ways, Henderson’s resigned tone reflects the initial reluctance of Dulles and the Eisenhower administration to violate the principle of self-determination in the Middle East. Iran, in particular, was a difficult case. Not only was Mosadeq democratically supported, but his independence from the British made him a hero. His ascendancy represented the unshackling of Iran from British control. It is difficult to imagine that officials of a country that, less than 200 years prior, underwent a similar process, could not sympathize (to say nothing of Dulles’s religiously-motivated opposition to imperialism, and support of self-determination). However, once Mosadeq had fallen and the United States had successfully installed a pro-Western government under the leadership of the Shah and Prime Minister Fazlollah Zahedi, it opened a Pandora’s Box. Dulles’s initial decision may have been largely a product of Britain’s policy interests. As the next chapter will explain, this would not continue to be the case, especially after the Suez Crisis; however, the practice of violating the principle of self-determination was one that would continue throughout the rest of Dulles’s tenure.

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Chapter V- Change and Continuity: Suez and the Reshaping of American Policy in the Middle East

Because the specific narrative of the Suez Crisis of 1956 has been recounted a number of times by a number of scholars, it is not necessary to spend too much time dwelling on specifics. However, because it represented a major turning point in American diplomacy in the Middle East, it is important to go into some detail in order to continue the narrative of Dulles’s tenure as Secretary of State, and explain how the tumultuous events of 1956 fit in to the larger picture of Dulles as a transformative, yet paradoxical figure in history.

Much of the origin of the Suez Crisis stems from the tense Anglo-Egyptian relationship explored in chapter three. Even though an agreement had been reached between Nasser and the British concerning the evacuation of the Suez Base, a number of factors remained unchanged. British oil companies still heavily relied on the Suez Canal for the free transportation of goods and facilities to assist troops should they need to be deployed to the Middle East for defense purposes. Scholars have also noted that Britain and France still maintained a substantial amount of stock (and thus profits and control) in the Suez Canal Company. Meanwhile, Nasser continued to not only remain very popular among his people, but he also began building a reputation as the premier Arab leader in the world. Along with the great moral victory of (more or less) expelling the British, Nasser proposed to build a dam in Aswan which he claimed would be “more magnificent and seventeen times greater than the Pyramids [and would] provide a

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208 For example, see: Herman Finer, Dulles Over Suez: The Theory and Practice of his Diplomacy (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964) for a more polemical approach focusing primarily on Dulles; or David A Nichols, Eisenhower 1956: The President’s Year of Crisis—Suez and the Brink of War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011) for a more modern, journalist approach focusing on both Dulles and Eisenhower.


210 David A Nichols, Eisenhower 1956, 13.
higher standard of living for all Egyptians!”211 Finally, as in 1953-1954, Dulles was interested in preventing Nasser from falling into the Soviet bloc. Dulles’s concern may have abated a bit since the strategic focus of both the United States and Britain had shifted to a Northern Tier strategy which prioritized united countries like Iran, Iraq, and Turkey in a collective, anti-Soviet defense pact; however, losing Nasser to the Soviets was still to be avoided at all reasonable costs.

Recognizing that both the United States and the Soviet Union perceived him as a critical player in the Cold War, Nasser sought to play the superpowers off one another, in hopes of extracting monetary aid out of the United States both to bolster the Egyptian economy and military as well as to help fund the construction of the Aswan Dam. Once the Anglo-Egyptian agreement had been concluded signed, Nasser was delighted to find that the United States was, indeed, willing to send millions of dollars in aid. The US even agreed, in conjunction with the British, to give Egypt a loan for Nasser’s Aswan Dam project. Shortly after, however, Nasser turned to the Soviet Union for arms when the United States (citing concern over Israel) refused to provide them.212 Dulles was furious. On March 28, 1956, in a meeting with President Eisenhower, Dulles insisted that Nasser “cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored-nation treatment from the United States.” But Dulles recalled Egypt’s strategic importance and tempered his frustration, stressing that the United States must “avoid any open break which would throw Nasser irrevocably into a Soviet satellite status and we would want to leave Nasser a bridge back to good relations with the West if he so desires.”213 Dulles’s solution was to delay the aid that Nasser so desperately coveted.214

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212 Herman Finer, *Dulles Over Suez*, 26-27.
214 Ibid.
Understandably, Nasser became very impatient. On July 19, 1956, Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Hussein went to Dulles’s office to get a definitive answer on the loan. After a brief discussion, when it became clear that Dulles was likely to pull the plug on the Dam, Hussein reportedly attempted to play to Dulles’s well-established fears of communist infiltration, telling him that Egypt had received a Soviet offer to finance the Dam.\textsuperscript{215} Unbeknownst to the Ambassador, Dulles had received word a few weeks before the meeting from Middle East expert and future Assistant Secretary George V. Allen that the Soviets had not made an offer to Egypt during their visit.\textsuperscript{216} Calling King Hussein’s bluff, Dulles replied that the United States would prefer that Egypt stay in the Western sphere, but that continuing to support the Dam would only harm the Eisenhower administration.\textsuperscript{217} The exact reason for the United States refusal to disburse the loan for the Aswan Dam is still a bit uncertain. The State Department’s official line to the public was the following:

\begin{quote}
Developments within the succeeding 7 months [from when the loan was first promised in 1955] have not been favorable to the success of the project, and the U.S. Government has concluded that it is not feasible in present circumstances to participate in this project…the ability of Egypt to devote adequate resources to assure the project’s success has become more uncertain than at the time the offer was made.\textsuperscript{218}
\end{quote}

Others suggest that Dulles’s pride may have played a role, pointing to later Senate hearings on the Suez Crisis where Dulles defended his actions regarding Aswan, saying “I do not believe in the U.S. being blackmailed.”\textsuperscript{219} Others point to domestic political concerns, noting that the Senate was almost certain to vote against providing the funds for the Dam. Congress was willing to appropriate hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid that Dulles and Eisenhower believed

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{215} David A Nichols, \textit{Eisenhower 1956}, 127.
\textsuperscript{216} David A Nichols, \textit{Eisenhower 1956}, 115.
\textsuperscript{217} David A Nichols, \textit{Eisenhower 1956}, 115.
\textsuperscript{219} Quoted in: Herman Finer, \textit{Dulles over Suez}, 53.
\end{footnotes}
to be essential for winning the Cold War. The inclusion of funds for the Aswan Dam threatened to stall (if not kill) the Administration’s request for already increased monetary aid. Such repudiation could have made both the President and the Secretary seem politically weak, to say nothing of the geopolitical implications. Reflecting on the constraints of domestic politics, Dulles later suggested, “If we hadn’t turned the Egyptians down yesterday, Congress would have turned them down today…”

Whatever the reason, Dulles was not anticipating Nasser’s drastic response. Nasser first lashed out against the United States:

If an uproar in Washington creates false and misleading announcements, without shame and with disregard for the principles of international relations, that the Egyptian economy is unsound and throwing shadows of doubt on Egypt’s economy, I look at the American and say ‘May you choke to death on your fury’.

After his eyebrow-raising speech, Nasser shocked the international world by announcing that he was going to nationalize the Suez Canal, taking complete ownership of the Canal Company and its profits, in order to fund the Aswan Dam. Accordingly, on July 26, 1956, on Nasser’s orders, Egyptian officials seized control of the Company’s headquarters. Unsurprisingly the British were furious. Evacuating from the Suez Canal Base was humiliating enough for the waning empire, but to be completely cut off from the enormous profits they had been reaping since the nineteenth century was something that Anthony Eden would not countenance. Eden’s Foreign Minister Lloyd told Dulles that “the only solution lay in a Western consortium taking over and operating the Canal, establishing itself if need be by military force.”

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221 Nasser’s speech was originally reproduced as: “Nasser says U.S. Lied in Explaining Bar to Aswan Aid,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1956, quoted in: Herman Finer, *Dulles Over Suez*, 56.
Ambassador Henderson that he would “rather have the British Empire fall in one crash than have it nibbled away as it seems is happening now.”

Despite Eden’s zeal, Eisenhower and Dulles were wholly unwilling to consider military action. For one, Nasser was an incredibly popular figure in the Arab World. Toppling him would not only be difficult, but it would likely arise a great deal of anti-western sentiment in the Middle East. Covert action was one thing; with it came at the very least plausible deniability. A bold military invasion of a country was something much different. There was a very real fear that the Soviet Union could join in the conflict on behalf of Nasser, potentially dragging the entire world into a devastating World War III. World powers gathered in London throughout the summer in the hopes of reaching a compromise. While tensions ran high, there were some believed that an agreement could be reached. This was not the first time the British and Egyptian governments had been deadlocked over issues arising from the Suez area. Just two years earlier, after months of a seemingly hopeless stalemate, the two sides signed a mutually acceptable agreement. This would be the case again. Eisenhower, though admittedly too optimistic in hindsight, announced to the American people that “The progress made in the settlement of the Suez dispute…at the United Nations is most gratifying.”

A veteran of Peace Conferences, Dulles hoped that with his more prominent position (both within the American government, and the international community), he would be able to negotiate an end to the crisis without having to fire a single bullet. He believed this not only for the pragmatic reasons listed above, but as a matter of principle. During the 1919 negotiations, one of Dulles’s major points of contention was that the Allied Powers, in imposing a draconian burden on Germany, were violating an agreement that they had signed prior to the end of war.

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223 Quoted in Herman Finer, *Dulles over Suez*, 192.
224 Quoted in Herman Finer, *Dulles over Suez*, 310-311.
225 Quoted in *Dulles over Suez*, 311.
concerning the imposition of treaty terms on the Central Powers. A man of his word, Dulles strongly believed in the sovereignty of treaties. Decades later, in 1950, Britain, France and the United States signed a different pledge, known as the Tripartite Agreement, pledging to “assist the victim of any aggression in the Middle East.” A signatory to the Tripartite Agreement the United States could not now become an aggressor in the Middle East (nor should Britain or France) in Dulles’s view. His opposition to invasion is wholly understandable when put in the context of his ecumenical writings as a forceful advocate for peace, his staunch opposition to supporting colonial powers, and his strong fears of “Outer Zone” countries falling into the Soviet sphere of influence.

Agreement or not, Britain and France were becoming impatient. In October, 1956, France and Israel began meeting to secretly plan an invasion of Egypt. As the meetings continued, Britain also began to conspire. As the month drew to a close, Britain, France, and Israel misled United States ambassadors, leading them to believe that negotiations could possibly resume on October 29. While the US planned for talks, Britain, France, and Israel (hereafter referred to as the Tripartite) planned for war. The CIA began to suspect that the French and the Israelis may have been meeting covertly, but the President was preoccupied by two other major events underway: the Soviet Union’s move to suppress popular uprisings in Hungary, and his re-election campaign which had just entered its final week. Combining the two, he made at least one speech strongly condemning the Soviet Union for preparing to invade a country in opposition to the will of its people. Eisenhower was enraged to find out later that day, two of his

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closest allies had just done that very thing hundreds of miles south, in the heart of the Middle East.\textsuperscript{227}

Returning from a campaign event, Eisenhower told Dulles, “Foster, you tell ‘em [Israel] God-damnit, that we’re going to apply sanctions, we’re going to the United Nations, we’re going to do everything that there is so we can stop this thing.”\textsuperscript{228} Eisenhower wanted to make sure that the United States went before the UN to defend Egypt’s sovereignty before the Soviet Union was able to do so (and thus curry favor in the Middle East). After a long and contentious week, it was clear that the United States was not going to budge in its opposition. As the fighting continued, funds continued to be drained from Britain’s economy that it did not really have to spare. Thus on November 6, 1956—Election day in the United States—Anthony Eden begrudgingly announced his intent to declare a ceasefire, functionally ending the conflict in Egypt.\textsuperscript{229}

**High Hopes**

At the end of the Suez Crisis, the Egyptian press was thrilled, proclaiming an “End of Conflict!”\textsuperscript{230} Interestingly, Eisenhower’s re-election also made the front page of *al-Ahram*, which included a picture of the beaming President, who publicly broke with his allies to side with Egypt.\textsuperscript{231} For many historians, Eisenhower’s public stance against actions taken by his European allies marks the beginning of American hegemony in the West. The inability and/or unwillingness of the British and French to continue their military operation without the blessing of the United States clearly demonstrated this. With his newfound global leadership, Eisenhower clarified exactly where the United States stood in its commitment to stopping the spread of the

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\textsuperscript{227} David A Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956*, 200-201.
\textsuperscript{228} Quoted in David A Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956*, 203.
\textsuperscript{229} For a fascinating account of Eisenhower’s great balancing act (dealing with re-election, Hungary, and Suez) see: David A Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956*, 249-258.
\textsuperscript{230} In Arabic, “Wafq al-qataal.” See following note for source information.
Soviet Union in the Middle East. Eisenhower sought to build stronger partnerships between the United States and countries in the Middle East. That was his top priority. To some degree, Eisenhower’s efforts were appreciated. For example, when Eisenhower and Nasser later met at the United Nations, Nasser expressed gratitude for Eisenhower’s “courage” in standing up to his close European Allies at Suez.232

Keeping the desire for greater cooperation in a strict Cold War framework, one of the first legislative priorities in Eisenhower’s second term was what came to be called the “Eisenhower Doctrine.” In a speech before Congress on January 5, 1957, Eisenhower stressed the strategic importance of the Middle East, and the ever-present fear of communism. With the moral authority derived from having helped to prevent any long-term Tripartite occupation of Egypt, Eisenhower reiterated themes of self-determination present in many of Dulles’s earlier writings, declaring to Congress unequivocally that:

In past decades, many of the countries in that area were not fully self-governing. Other nations exercised considerable authority in the area… But since the First World War there has been a steady evolution toward self-government and independence. This development the United States has welcomed and has encouraged. Our country supports without reservation the full sovereignty and independence of each and every nation of the Middle East.233

In terms of specific demands, Eisenhower asked Congress for the authority to “employ the armed forces of the United States to assist to defend the territorial integrity and the political independence of any nation in the area against Communist armed aggression” with the caveat that “Such authority would not be exercised except at the desire of the nation attacked.”234 The Eisenhower Doctrine resolution passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives (355-

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232 David A. Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956*, 204-15 (see the last of the pictures in between pages 204 and 205).
61) and the Senate (72-19). In principle, this seemed wonderful. As many Middle Eastern countries sought to join other “third world” countries in Neutrality, the Eisenhower Doctrine offered a protection against the possibility of Soviet attempts to violate the sovereignty of Middle Eastern Nations.

And Shattered Dreams

This chapter, and indeed the theme of this paper, has been to examine both the change and the continuity in the policies of John Foster Dulles. As has been explained above, the Suez Crisis of 1956 represented a monumental change in American foreign policy, and the subsequent Eisenhower Doctrine represented the culmination of America’s ascendancy on the global stage. One may think that finally, with the imperialist empires of old sidelined and the rise of an American hegemon led by two disciples of Wilsonian self-determination, that perhaps the fledging democracies in the Middle East may be allowed to finally flourish. However, the next two years of the Eisenhower administration demonstrate that this was not, in fact, the case. Rather than being a tool used to defend Middle Eastern self-governance against the pernicious threat of Soviet expansion, the Eisenhower Doctrine, when implemented, had the ironic effect of violating the “full sovereignty and independence” of some of the Middle Eastern countries it purported to support. To demonstrate this, I turn to the policies pursued by Dulles and Eisenhower in both Syria (in 1957) and Lebanon (in 1958). Since scholars have explored these episodes in some detail it is unnecessary to go into too much depth here, other than to illustrate

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236 Including, most notably, Jawaharlal Nehru’s India.
Dulles’s fear of communism and its role in intensifying tensions between the United States and the Middle East.

**Syria, 1957: The “Stone Affair”**

During the Suez Crisis with Egypt, tensions were also brewing in Syria, as the British and United States plotted to overthrow the Syrian regime of Shukri al-Quwatli\(^{238}\) in favor of a more pro-Western regime. Specifically, they hoped to restore the military dictator Adib Shishakli (r. 1953-54) to power. The coup, known as “Operation Straggle” fell apart as the Suez situation began to deteriorate. When the war broke out in October, 1956, John Foster Dulles called his brother and concluded that the present circumstances made executing the coup virtually impossible, though the Dulles brothers remained optimistic that once British and French troops left Egypt, the plans might be able to resume.\(^{239}\) Operation Straggle was discovered and some of the instigators were held responsible and put on trial (though nothing suggests that high-ranking US officials were captured). The very public discovery of this failed coup proved to be a political godsend for Syrian Leftists who used messages of anti-imperialism and neutrality to garner greater support.\(^{240}\)

It appears that, at the conclusion of the Suez Crisis, plans did resume—although this time, it seems that the United States government chose to work alone. Much less is known about this botched attempt, though it appears that the plotting took place during the first half of 1957, and was led primarily by an operative named Howard Stone, who had previously participated in CIA coups in Iran and Guatemala. On August 12, 1957, the Syrian Government announced it had

\(^{238}\) Shukri al-Quwatli was the President of Syria from 1943 to 1949 when he was overthrown in the CIA’s first Middle Eastern coup in favor of military dictator al-Zaim (see chapter four). He was restored to power in 1955 shortly after military dictator Shishakli was overthrown. The US sought to bring Shishakli back from exile.


\(^{240}\) David W Lesch, *Syria and the United States*, 104.
discovered an American plot to overthrow Shukri al-Quwatli. They immediately declared America’s diplomats *persona non grata* and ordered them to leave Damascus. Two days later, the United States responded by expelling Syria’s diplomats from Washington.\(^{241}\)

To say that Dulles was alarmed is an understatement. In a telegram he signed, Dulles wrote: “The United States judges that Syria has become, or is about to become, a base for military and subversive activities in the Near East, designed to destroy the independence of those countries and to subject them to Soviet Communist domination.”\(^{242}\) As per the new Eisenhower Doctrine, the President agreed with Dulles that any country neighboring Syria that requests aid for fear of Communist influences spilling over across the border should be given aid immediately. Additionally, Dulles dispatched Loy Henderson to Turkey to discuss the situation with Syria’s neighbors to the East, met personally with British Prime Minister Howard Macmillan,\(^{243}\) and fired off a desperate letter to King Saud of Saudi Arabia hoping to persuade him into engaging in a sort of “Holy war” against the “atheistic creed of communism…in the Muslim world.”\(^{244}\)

Much to Dulles’s chagrin, few were willing or able to stand up to the communist “threat” in Syria. First, the intelligence community lamented that “in the absence of forceful intervention from outside Syria, the presently dominant coalition probably will be able to maintain control for some time. No opposition group within the country, civilian or military, is likely to challenge the coalition effectively.”\(^{245}\) Thus any opposition, were it to take place, would have had to be external. Unfortunately for Dulles, both the legacy of Suez (which had too recently fanned the flames of anti-western sentiment in the Middle East), and the earlier botched coup attempt made

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\(^{242}\) Quoted in: Sami Moubayed, *Syria and the USA*, 163.  
\(^{243}\) Sami Moubayed, *Syria and the USA*.  
\(^{244}\) Quoted in: Sami Moubayed, *Syria and the USA*, 161.  
\(^{245}\) Quoted in: Sami Moubayed, *Syria and the USA*, 164.
American intervention in Syria entirely impossible. Dulles wrote to MacMillan “I think it important that not only Israel but the Western countries should avoid any initiative…”\textsuperscript{246}

Saudi Arabia was the United States’ greatest hope; however, King Saud absolutely refused to take action against the Quwatli government in Syria. In fact, he responded to Dulles’s entreaties by making a personal visit to Damascus, where he assured Quwatli that he “denounce[d] any aggression against Syria and any other Arab country…committed against their independence whatever its source may be.”\textsuperscript{247} After a series of personal visits from King Saud, the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, the Prime Minister of Jordan, and finally King Hussein of Jordan all issued statements of solidarity with Syria. By October 1957, it was clear that Dulles had lost. His attempt to topple Syria’s popular leader in favor of a Western puppet had completely failed. What political capital the United States may have had for standing with Egypt during Suez was running dangerously low, as much of the Arab world had united to thwart Dulles’s schemes. Communist or not, Quwatli would remain in charge of Syria, until willingly uniting his country with Nasser’s in 1958 to form the United Arab Republic.

**Lebanon, 1958: Operation Blue Bat**

Dulles’s reluctance to support the use of the American military in Syria would not be repeated in Lebanon. The Lebanese Crisis of 1958 began the year prior, when pro-Western President Camille Chamoun rigged a Parliamentary election in his favor in the hopes of securing for himself another term as president. However, even worse than simply rigging an election, Chamoun’s plan involved directly violating Lebanon’s National Pact of 1943 (which was the equivalent of their constitution). The Pact mandated that a President could not serve more than one consecutive term in office. Because of Lebanon’s sectarian complexities, it also stipulated

\textsuperscript{246} Quoted in: David Lesch, *Syria and the United States*, 143.
that the next President had to be a Muslim (Chamoun was a Maronite Christian). Chamoun and his Foreign Minister, Charles Malik, felt threatened by the recent unification of Syria and Egypt as the “United Arab Republic” (UAR) and, seeking to take advantage of the newly articulated Eisenhower Doctrine, asked for outside help in maintaining power. In the early months of 1958, neither Britain nor the United States were very interested. Dulles insisted that no Western powers directly intervene for Lebanon, and that they would remain neutral toward the UAR. Even as winter turned into spring, American officials were not particularly concerned, because they knew that most of the anti-Chamoun groups in Lebanon were not collaborating with Communists.

Over the course of 1958, President Chamoun made three separate requests for American aid. The first, made in mid-May, was in response to Lebanese opposition groups beginning armed insurrections in protest of Chamoun’s plan to violate the constitution. The Eisenhower administration sympathized with the pro-western leader; however, it was concerned that any interference on their part would further fan anti-American sentiments in the region (which were considerable enough in the wake of the Syrian Stone Affair). Chamoun was very unpopular in Lebanon. Propping him up would only tarnish America’s reputation in the region. Additionally, Eisenhower personally believed that further troubles could be avoided if Chamoun would rescind his bid for reelection.

As tensions heightened in Lebanon, Chamoun asked how the United States and Britain would hypothetically respond to an official request for military intervention. Eisenhower met with Dulles and other advisers who discussed the difficult dilemma they faced. They could either intervene and risk damaging relations with the Muslim world, or refuse to intervene, and risk undermining pro-Western leaders around the world. Ultimately for Dulles, however, concerns

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over communism won the day. Concerned about the current state of the Cold War, Dulles said that military action (or at least a sincere threat of military action) could serve as a good deterrent to any anti-Western forces. While there was still a degree of ambivalence, Chamoun was publicly informed that the United States was “prepared to consider dispatching military forces to Lebanon.”

Tensions continued to mount throughout the summer of 1958. In June, reports began to swirl around that opposition forces planned to seize Chamoun’s Presidential palace. Alarmed, Chamoun once again asked the US how it would respond to a direct request for military intervention. Again the United States government was willing to help, provided the cause was legitimate. Some in the administration (particularly President Eisenhower) seemed to prefer a non-military action (particularly peaceful compromise). Dulles, offering a slightly different perspective believe that the government “should not destroy Chamoun’s heart or courage by pressing him to compromise with the opponents.”

For the United States, the Iraqi coup of 1958 was the final straw. On July 14, 1958 when King Hussein was murdered, and replaced by a Leftist and Nasserist regime, US officials became increasingly worried that the same thing would happen to Chamoun in Lebanon. In a phone conference, Dulles insisted that “If we do not respond to the call from Chamoun, we will suffer the decline and indeed the elimination of our influence…” He continued, arguing that “the losses from doing nothing would be worse than the losses from action…” Thus, on July 18, 1958 President Eisenhower deployed approximately 14,000 troops to Lebanon in what was called “Operation Blue Bat.” As Dulles anticipated, this was highly unpopular in Lebanon. Christians

were somewhat more amenable to the American troop presence, though even they were upset that Chamoun resorted to call upon foreign intervention. Muslims by and large condemned the intervention. Ultimately a Muslim general, Fouad Shihab, was elected President (Chamoun had reluctantly decided not to go through with his scheme), and three months later, the United States withdrew its troops. Overall, Dulles felt that Shihab’s election was the best possible outcome, all things considered. But it came at the cost of America’s reputation. An embassy cable from January 1959 reveals that the United States “bec[a]me identified along with the British and French as ‘imperialists’.”

Far from being liberators or defenders of self-determination and national sovereignty, the United States came to be viewed as yet another Western power that was willing to use both covert and overt tactics to achieve its goals—irrespective of the wishes of those living in the Middle East. Deserved or not, these perceptions continue to shape the region today.

When considering Dulles’s life and career in totality, it is almost tragic that the Stone Affair and Operation Blue Bat came to be some of the last major events that he took part in. After standing up to Britain, France, and Israel at Suez, the United States had a tremendous opportunity to foster positive relationships between themselves and Middle Eastern countries. But as the United States became unfettered from its past complicity in European imperialism, it became ensnared by Dulles’s fixation on the Soviet threat, preventing both Dulles and Eisenhower from operating in a manner more consistent with their stated affinity for the ideals of self-determination, independence, and liberation. In stark contrast to the aforementioned principles, Dulles sought to replace the popular Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli with a military dictator, and attempted to prop up the unpopular Lebanese President Camille Chamoun who clung to power even in violation of his country’s constitution. Rather than promoting

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legitimately democratic governance in the Middle East, the Eisenhower Doctrine came to represent yet another western devise used to manipulate the Middle East for purely western purposes.
Conclusion

Many scholars and students have rightfully struggled to grapple with the enormous legacy of John Foster Dulles. His influence on American foreign policy is almost unparalleled among the long list of Americans who have held the title of Secretary of State. He ran the State Department and became the President’s closest adviser during a time when the world was undergoing monumental changes. Dulles was often the deciding voice as colonial empires began to crumble, as the United States became one of two global superpowers, and as the tensions of the Cold War waxed and waned. While Dulles’s legacy can still surely be felt in Latin America, Asia, and in US-Russian relations, the transformations he oversaw had an enormous impact on the Middle East. As Britain and France could no longer sustain their empires, states like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, and others began to have their dreams of self-determination unfold before their eyes. Even as the colonial powers of old desperately tried to maintain as much influence around the world as was possible, Middle Eastern countries began to create governments that more closely reflected the wishes of their people.

On paper, it would appear that John Foster Dulles was the ideal candidate to address the complex Middle Eastern issues of the Cold War era. He had a brilliant legal mind, was a skilled and experienced diplomat, and was willing to fight relentlessly for what he believed in. Details from his life before taking the helm at Foggy Bottom help to illuminate the principles that he fought so hard to defend. One of his first major forays into foreign policy was at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. A member of Woodrow Wilson’s delegation, Dulles came to believe strongly in the Wilsonian ideal of self-determination—the idea that individuals should be able to choose for themselves who governs over them. His early writings show that he believed in this to the point of defying European governments who sought to write the rules of the new world order.
to preserve their own power. He excoriated the selfish actions of colonial governments, and denounced imperialism with a moralist fervor rivaling that of Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser.

A study of Dulles is incomplete if one does not first acknowledge his firm religious convictions. The son of a minister and father of a Jesuit priest, religion featured prominently in the life and writings of John Foster Dulles. He believed very strongly that there was a universal law under which everything must operate. This moral law did not dictate specific economic or political structures. Rather it demanded that all human beings—God’s children, if you will—must be afforded human dignity. Dulles believed that any international system that could not guarantee that people could live and flourish in peace was iniquitous and had to change. He combined his expertise in foreign relations with his convictions and became a leading member in the Federal Council of Churches. As the chairman of the FCC’s Commission to Study and Just and Durable Peace, Dulles wrote manifestos and reports outlining how Christians should act in order to help bring about a more peaceful world. He also continued offering his unique perspective in government, becoming a well-noted expert on foreign policy.

Then he became Secretary of State.

Even a cursory glance at a Dulles biography will undoubtedly leave the reader wondering how the ecumenical, peace-loving Wilsonian could have possibly become the John Foster Dulles that many scholars love to hate. After all, Secretary Dulles was largely responsible for overthrowing the Democratically-elected Prime Minister of Iran, attempting to spark coups in Syria, invading Lebanon, and a number of other things that seem to fly in the face of his early reputation as an unwavering advocate for peace. Yet if one looks closely, there are glimpses of the early Dulles even in his positions as Secretary of State. He repeatedly undermined and thwarted the attempts of former colonial powers to extend their empires further into the future
(most notably at Suez, but also with MEDO and, to a lesser extent, the Baghdad Pact). When he travelled to the Middle East he listened to the concerns of those living there, and when it came to the Arab-Israeli dispute Dulles positioned himself to be one of the most nonpartisan negotiators with the dispute, favoring no one side over the other.

What happened? Dulles allowed his hatred of Soviet Communism to be all-consuming. What Dulles did not seem to realize was that the Middle East that he was dealing with raised a series of very complex geo-political issues that a simplified worldview that only sought to know “Are you with us or against us?” could not fully grasp. The question of Communism—rather than his support for self-determination—became his primary unit of analysis, eclipsing all other issues. Human dignity could be reaffirmed by rolling back the Soviet system that destroyed human dignity. Peace could be achieved if the aggressive tactics of the Soviet Union were stopped. Most of Dulles’s problem-solving in the Middle East were fixated around the bipolar Cold War tensions.

His anti-colonialist principles appeared to be all but abandoned as he worked to prop up Britain’s financial interests in Iran. His impassioned defense for human dignity were cheapened by his support for military dictators and autocrats such as the Shah of Iran, Shishakli in Syria, and Camille Chamoun in Lebanon. Even the policies of Dulles which can be viewed in a positive light (or at the very least, seem to comport with his earlier ideals) were shaped by his Cold War views. Dulles did not decide to kill MEDO or argue against the tripartite invasion of Egypt in the Suez Crisis solely because it was the moral thing to do, but rather because he sought to curry favor for the United States (over the Soviet Union) in the Middle East.

In viewing things as a zero-sum game, Dulles missed much of the minutia of Middle Eastern politics, which too often had disastrous effects. In Iran, he could see that it was possible
to install a more pro-western leader. What Dulles could not see was that the autocratic Shah he helped to put in power was not supported by his people. In a number of situations, Dulles failed to understand that people in the Middle East cared more about the Arab-Israeli dispute than they did about Communism. Finally, he continually made the grave mistake of conflating many leftist (or “communist”) parties with the Communist Party in Russia, often over-reacting despite many officials warning him that drastic actions like supporting Chamoun or toppling Quwatli were not necessary.255

Dulles’s legacy in the Middle East is particularly troubling because it began to set into motion much of the anti-American animosity that still exists today. In Iran, Mosadeq, who many held to be the father of Iranian democracy—a George Washington figure, if you will—became one of the many casualties of John Foster Dulles. The Iranian coup set the precedent for a generation of covert activities in the Middle East, many of which further soured US-Middle East relations. The practice of tolerating oppressive regimes simply because they were not Communists unfortunately came to be standard practice throughout the Cold War, as Dulles’s successors would ally themselves with the likes of Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Zine Ben Ali (of Tunisia), Moammar Gaddafi (Libya), and Saddam Hussein (Iraq). This pattern is only now beginning to significantly change in the wake of the Arab Spring Revolutions.

Reflecting on the nature of history, Karl Marx famously wrote:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the living.256

255 One could certainly add the Iranian coup to the list, though by the time Dulles had been convinced that the coup was the best option available, there were not many officials who dissented. Much of the opposition to the Iranian coup has been the product of historical hindsight.

For better or worse, those who are making history today are inexorably shaped by the powerful legacy of John Foster Dulles—God’s Cold Warrior who, blinded by a zealous hatred of Communism, came to sacrifice the ideals he strove so hard to live up to. While it would be irresponsible to assume that the geopolitics of the past are “similar enough” to the situations unfolding today, remembering the life and lessons of John Foster Dulles is not only crucial to understanding how we got to where we are today, but it is also an important admonition that a failure to live up to the noble ideas of freedom, the preservation of human dignity, and of self-determination for all peoples can often have calamitous effects.
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