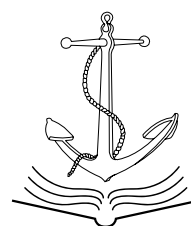


# Corbett Paper

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**From the Jebel to the Palace:  
British Military Involvement in  
the Persian Gulf, 1957–2011**

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# From the Jebel to the Palace: British Military Involvement in the Persian Gulf, 1957-2011

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## **Key Points**

- From the Suez crisis of 1956 to the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq (2003-2011), Britain remained militarily involved in the Persian Gulf region, either unilaterally or as part of a multilateral coalition.
- The UK's armed forces were committed to a number of separate missions during this period, including the defence of regional allies against external aggression, counter-insurgency (COIN), trade defence, the training of local forces, and regime change.
- Although at certain points British military intervention was either conducted in support of US policy (notably with reference to Iraq from 1990 to 2003) or in accordance with American interests, other factors leading to the UK's military involvement include requests for assistance from former imperial dependencies, the threat of regional dominance by an adversarial power, access to oil, and humanitarian concerns.
- The key constraints on British intervention during this period were fluctuations in regional and international opinion, and also the UK's financial and economic plight, most notably with reference to the 'East of Suez' withdrawals of 1968-1971.
- The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) of 2010 has cut key capabilities in the British armed forces, particularly regarding the fact that the Royal Navy (RN) will have no aircraft carrier prior to 2020. The UK's current financial condition, the political controversies surrounding the Iraq war (Operation *Telic*) and the decline in its capacity for power-projection are such that only the minimal level of military engagement in the Gulf region is practical in the immediate future.

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## **From the Jebel to the Palace: British Military Involvement in the Persian Gulf, 1957-2011**

**Dr Geraint Hughes**

When the UK participated in the US-led invasion of Iraq in March-April 2003, one of the historical analogies that critics seized upon was the Suez war of October-November 1956, with reference to the international furore this caused, and the ultimately ignominious end of Operation *Musketeer*. Yet Operation *Telic* represented the culmination of a long-term process of British military intervention in the Persian Gulf region; from the counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign against the Imam's rebels fighting the Sultan of Oman between 1957 and 1959 (from their base in the Jebel Akhdar, or Green Mountain) to the controversial conclusion of the occupation of South-East Iraq fifty years later (during which the Presidential Palace in Basra was requisitioned by the British Army).<sup>1</sup>

This paper provides an overview of the UK's military role in the Persian Gulf in the half-century which followed Suez. It will examine how Britain used its dwindling military power to achieve political goals, most notably its effort to preserve its influence over its former imperial domain. British policy-makers did employ other means in pursuit of this objective – notably through trade, arms sales, and also covert action<sup>2</sup> – but this paper's principal focus will be on the overt use of military power for political ends, during which (according to the traditional narrative of British decline) the UK supposedly lost the ability to employ its armed forces in any significant role in the Arab world, unless at the behest of the USA.<sup>3</sup> Its principal conclusion is that if there is to be a particular point in recent history when Britain reached its limits in exercising an important role in Gulf affairs, this did not occur in 1956 or with the 'East of Suez' withdrawals of 1968-1971, but with the recent war in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

### ***British interests in the Persian Gulf region***

Operation *Musketeer* did reveal limitations on Britain's military capabilities, notably in naval and amphibious assets, but even after the diplomatic humiliation of Suez the UK retained a substantial military presence in the Arab world.<sup>5</sup> This included the base at Aden (the headquarters of Middle Eastern Command, or MEC), until December 1967,<sup>6</sup> and the contingents in the dependencies of Bahrain and the Trucial States until December 1971.<sup>7</sup> These consisted of a Royal Navy (RN) base at Bahrain, and the two British Army battalions (supported by armoured cars, artillery and combat engineers) at Bahrain and Sharjah. The Royal Air Force (RAF) presence consisted of two bases in both these locations, including two squadrons of fighter aircraft, a squadron and a half of transport aircraft, a squadron of support helicopters, and a flight of long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Trucial Oman Scouts (prior to December 1971) and the Sultan of Oman's Forces (SAF) were commanded by seconded British officers and NCOs.<sup>9</sup>

Even after the East of Suez withdrawals, Britain remained militarily engaged in the Gulf region. This firstly involved the training missions attached to the armed forces of Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE, as the former Trucial States were known after their unification in December 1971).<sup>10</sup> In Oman during the early 1970s, both the British loan service personnel attached to the SAF and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service Regiment (22SAS) helped Sultan Qaboos bin Said defeat radical leftist guerrillas in the province of Dhofar.<sup>11</sup> The RAF also maintained a SIGINT (signals intelligence) station on Masirah Island, Oman, which was eventually closed in January 1977.<sup>12</sup> The resurgence of overt British military involvement in the Gulf region the following decade – the RN's *Armilla* patrol, the UK's involvement in the US-led war to liberate Kuwait (January-March 1991), Britain's role in the containment of Saddam Hussein's regime from 1991-2003, and subsequently *Telic* – were all responses to crises precipitated by Iraq.<sup>13</sup>

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1947, Britain's interests in the Gulf region lay firstly in securing its lines of communication to its imperial possessions in South and South-East Asia, notably the Indian Raj. The slow disintegration of the Ottoman Empire offered opportunities for rival states to encroach upon British colonial interests. Britain established its colony at Aden in 1839, at a time when the French-supported pasha of Egypt was in revolt against Ottoman rule. Likewise, the Government of India concluded a treaty with the ruler of Kuwait sixty years later in response to growing German interests in Turkey, notably the planned Berlin to Baghdad railway.<sup>14</sup> Additional interests included trade defence, in response to piracy within the Persian Gulf, and the suppression of slavery; RN patrols were active against slave-traders from the Victorian era to the aftermath of the First World War.<sup>15</sup> During the inter-war period, the RAF also conducted punitive raids against rebellious tribesmen in Iraq and Yemen as part of its 'air policing' mission. Similar air-strikes were conducted in Oman and South Arabia during the 1950s and 1960s, although these became progressively less frequent in the face of international condemnation.<sup>16</sup>

India and Pakistan's independence in 1947 undermined one rationale for the British regional presence, but this had already been superseded by the discovery of oil in the region during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gulf oil production was crucial not only to the British war effort during the Second World War, but also the post-1945 economic recovery of the UK and other Western European countries.<sup>17</sup> The 'oil shock' that followed the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war – and the grave fiscal and political consequences this had for the UK – reminded British policymakers of the intrinsic importance of this region for economic stability both for Britain and the global economy. The potential consequences of Saddam Hussein possessing 20% of the world's known oil reserves after the annexation of Kuwait in August 1990 clearly influenced Britain's response, not that the implications of Iraq's actions were a purely British (or indeed Anglo-American) concern.<sup>18</sup> Additional British interests during the post-1945 period

included the protection of regional allies against either external aggression or internal subversion – as demonstrated by the interventions in Jordan in July 1958,<sup>19</sup> Oman in July 1957 and January 1959,<sup>20</sup> and Kuwait in July 1961<sup>21</sup> – and also the ‘containment’ of Communism and Soviet expansion during the Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

The first two policy goals survived the demise of the USSR in 1991, although four additional objectives can be identified. The first is that of humanitarian intervention, evident in particular in the aftermath of the Kuwait war and the twin *intifadas* in Iraq (Kurdish and Shiite) in March-April 1991. The failure of the Kurdish rising and the prospect of a major humanitarian catastrophe in Northern Iraq led the then-British Prime Minister John Major to express support for the establishment of a ‘safe haven’ for Kurdish refugees (8<sup>th</sup> April 1991). This initiative was implemented with the deployment of a US-British-French task force on 16<sup>th</sup> April, although President George H. W. Bush – who had earlier declared that he ‘did not want one single [American] soldier or airman shoved into a civil war that has been going on for ages’ – claimed the credit for this intervention, much to Whitehall’s chagrin.<sup>23</sup>

A secondary objective concerns counter-proliferation, concerning Baathist Iraq and (after 2003) Iran. Given the furore over pre-2003 British and American official pronouncements over Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities, it is easy to forget that the UK’s concerns over Iraq’s non-implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 687 (SCR687) pre-dated *Telic*. The former Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown noted in his diaries in mid-November 1997 the following comments from the-then Prime Minister Tony Blair:

I have now seen some of the [Joint Intelligence Committee] stuff on [Iraq]. It is pretty scary. [Saddam Hussein] is very close to some appalling weapons of mass destruction ... The world thinks this is just gamesmanship. But it’s deadly serious.<sup>24</sup>

Blair's comments not only demonstrate a concern over Iraq's brinkmanship over UN inspections that predated the crisis of 2002-2003, but also an implicit disgust with countries (notably France, Russia and China) that seemed either unwilling or unable to force Saddam Hussein to fulfil the obligations to disarm incurred as a consequence of his aggression against Kuwait.<sup>25</sup>

Two other contemporary objectives include 'stabilisation', as attempted by British military and diplomatic personnel in South-East Iraq between 2003 and 2009.<sup>26</sup> The last involves counter-terrorism, with advisory support to regional governments contending with *al-Qaeda* and other affiliated groups.<sup>27</sup> The latter mission is a reminder that in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment, non-state threats have become as – if not more – significant as state-based ones.

### ***Regional threats – 1957-2010***

From the Cold War era to the present day, British government pronouncements on threats to international and UK security emanating from the Persian Gulf have been criticised either as exaggerated, or as a cynical justification for economic self-interest. A further argument stresses that regional anti-Western hostility derives exclusively from US, British and other external intervention in the Arab world, and foreign support for corrupt and repressive autocracies.<sup>28</sup> Similar claims were also made following the Marxist-Leninist takeover in South Yemen in 1968, and the emergence of the 'Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf' (PFLOAG), which proclaimed its intention to eradicate British influence and to overthrow the region's monarchies.<sup>29</sup> Such arguments are simplistic – one of the principal factors behind the rise of radical Islamism was the failure of secular and anti-Western Arab nationalism, represented in particular by Jamal Abdel Nasser and Baathism. The author's intention is therefore to describe the threats to

British interests and regional security as they were viewed from Whitehall's perspective, rather than assess their validity with the advantage of hindsight.<sup>30</sup>

Until the late 1980s, Communism was treated by British officials as a serious threat, particularly during the prolonged phase of military withdrawal from 1968 to 1971. This was considered in Whitehall to be a particularly delicate time, due to the emergence of a radical leftist regime in South Yemen, the PFLOAG insurgency in Dhofar, and the tense negotiations leading to the establishment of the UAE. From the British perspective the principal risk throughout the Cold War was the expansion of Soviet influence through the sponsorship of subversive movements (notably the PFLOAG). Even in the aftermath of the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, openly expressed doubts that the Soviets posed a direct threat to the security of the Gulf states.<sup>31</sup> Although US officials did consider whether Afghanistan heralded further Soviet aggression in South-West Asia, their British counterparts correctly concluded that the USSR intended to bolster a weak client regime in Kabul, and that the Soviets did not intend any further military adventures in the region.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the USSR's position in the Persian Gulf was a precarious one, particularly during the last two decades of the Cold War. South Yemen was itself a dubious ally, being plagued by endemic instability and civil strife throughout its existence (1968-1990), and the USSR's prestige in the Arab world suffered as a consequence of the Afghan war (1979-1989).<sup>33</sup> An additional problem was that Communism – with its atheistic ethos – was an affront to the Islamic faith and therefore unpopular in the region, as the PFLOAG discovered to its cost during the Dhofar war.<sup>34</sup> One consequence of *perestroika* was the joint Soviet-American effort to negotiate a ceasefire between Iraq and Iran, as implemented in SCR598 (August 1988). Given earlier fears that the Soviets might exploit regional instability and impede access to oil supplies, Western governments found it gratifying to see Moscow



act in the interest of trade defence in the region. Likewise, Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to back the Coalition during the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 was diplomatically crucial, as it left Saddam Hussein isolated in the face of Operation *Desert Storm*.<sup>35</sup>

Soviet involvement in the region also included arms supplies to the UK's regional adversaries from 1955 onwards.<sup>36</sup> Egypt was a primary recipient of Soviet military aid, which led the Conservative administrations from 1957 to 1964 to view President Nasser as Moscow's proxy. Neither Harold Macmillan nor Alec Douglas-Home appreciated that Nasser's principal motivation was his commitment to pan-Arabism; this inspired both Egyptian intervention in the Yemeni civil war on the side of the Republican regime after October 1962, and Cairo's support for the anti-British insurgency in South Arabia.<sup>37</sup> Egypt's catastrophic defeat by Israel in the Six Day War (5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> June 1967), the British withdrawal from Aden (December 1967) and Nasser's death (September 1970) contributed to an Anglo-Egyptian rapprochement. Anwar Sadat delighted British officials by taking Egypt out of the Soviet orbit, and also by establishing amicable relations with the pro-Western Gulf monarchies that Nasser had been willing to subvert.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast with Egypt, Iraq proved to be an almost persistent menace to British interests from the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in July 1958 to Saddam's downfall in April 2003. The military regime of Brigadier Abdel Karim Qasim made bellicose threats towards Kuwait in June 1961, accompanied by reported troop movements in Southern Iraq close to the Emirate's borders. At the request of the Sheikh Abdullah Salim al-Sabah, Britain deployed an amphibious task force (spearheaded by 42 and 45 Commando, Royal Marines) on 1<sup>st</sup> July, which was subsequently replaced by an Arab League contingent in December 1961; one reflection of the complexity of regional rivalries was Egypt's implicit backing for British intervention in Kuwait, due to Nasser's intense loathing of Qasim. Although Operation *Vantage* was successful, MEC

faced a dilemma insofar as firm intelligence on Iraq's intentions was scant, while the consequences of a surprise invasion would be difficult to overcome. In June 1961, there was no firm proof that Qasim had actually intended to seize the Emirate, and in any case a substantial number of Iraqi troops were required to fight the Kurdish insurgency in the North. But if Baghdad had subsequently exploited the advantage of surprise and occupied Kuwait, the task of evicting the invaders would stretch British military capabilities in the region to the limit. This was a planning conundrum which remained unresolved both for MEC and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) until the withdrawals of 1968-1971.<sup>39</sup>

During the 1970s, Baathist Iraq remained a regional adversary, backing the PFLOAG and other anti-Western movements in the Gulf.<sup>40</sup> The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 led to a short-lived rapprochement between London and Baghdad. The British (as was the case with other Western allies, not to mention the Soviets and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states), saw Saddam's regime as a bulwark against the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime, choosing to forget that the Iraqi dictator was the aggressor in this conflict. Yet after the war's end in September 1988, Iraq's pursuit of a WMD capability aroused concern in London. In August 1990, Saddam managed to achieve the objective that apparently eluded Qasim nearly thirty years earlier, annexing Kuwait in an unexpected *coup de main*, and unilaterally violating the treaty of recognition Iraq signed with the Emirate in October 1963. Saddam's survival after his defeat in March 1991 meant that he continued to be seen as a threat by Britain until 2003.<sup>41</sup>

Until the Islamic Revolution of February 1979, Iran was an ally of the UK and other Western states. Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi sent a brigade of troops to fight the PFLOAG in Dhofar in 1973-1975, and was treated by both the USA and Britain as a regional gendarme.<sup>42</sup> Khomeini's uncompromising hostility towards the West (revived since August 2005 by President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad), the risk that Tehran's Islamic revolutionary fervour may be exported to the Shiite populations of Iraq, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and widespread suspicion that the Islamic regime has a clandestine nuclear weapons programme have all heightened regional fears of Iranian influence.<sup>43</sup> Ironically enough, the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (November-December 2001) and Saddam's ouster have also been strategically beneficial to Tehran. Iran has profited from the emergence of two sympathetic regimes in Baghdad and Kabul, while the insurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan provided opportunities for Tehran to wage a proxy war against the Americans and British, thereby deterring both from any pre-emptive US strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.<sup>44</sup>

Currently, the threat of transnational terrorism posed by *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates poses a complex challenge to British interests, particularly because one of the grievances that Osama bin Laden exploited was the continued presence of Western forces in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf as a whole after 1991. In the case of Iraq after 2003, the rise of *al-Qaeda* and affiliated Sunni Islamist groups was an indirect result of the Anglo-American occupation of that country. The Iraq war also offered further cause for Islamist radicalisation in the Arab world and beyond, and was one of the factors motivating the four suicide bombers responsible for the London attacks of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005.<sup>45</sup> To date, fears of a Sunni version of the Iranian revolution in Saudi Arabia or other Gulf states have yet to be realised, although the current civil strife in Yemen may give *al-Qaeda* and affiliated militants the opportunity to exploit this country's grave instability.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Influences and constraints on British intervention***

As Britain's principal ally since 1945, the USA has helped shape UK policies towards the Persian Gulf, although over the past sixty years American

Presidents have proved inconsistent in their dealings with the region. Having initially sought to weaken British influence during the 1950s, by January 1968 US officials greeted news of the East of Suez withdrawals with dismay. The UK military presence was viewed by Lyndon B. Johnson's administration not as an anachronism, but as a bulwark against regional instability.<sup>47</sup> Rather than seeking to replace British forces in the region with its own, during the 1970s the USA relied on Saudi Arabia and Iran as the 'twin pillars' supporting US interests in the Gulf.<sup>48</sup> This policy collapsed in 1979 as a consequence of both the Iranian revolution and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and during the 1980s US officials negotiated basing rights with the GCC states, anticipating further aggression by the USSR in the region.<sup>49</sup> The US Navy did become embroiled in the 'tanker war' in 1987-1988, but it was not until *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* that the USA deployed a permanent military presence in support of the GCC.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the disparity between the USA as a superpower and the UK as a minor ally, dependence did not automatically translate into submission as far as the British were concerned. The memory of Suez was repeatedly used by Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries to pressurise American counterparts into support, or at least acquiescence, for British policies.<sup>51</sup> In the case of the UK military interventions in Jordan and Kuwait (July 1958 and July 1961) US support was readily forthcoming. The opposite was true when Macmillan's government sent troops to Oman in the summer of 1957, and when the RAF bombed the Yemeni fort of Harib (in reprisal for cross-border raids into South Arabia) in March 1964. With the former crisis, US officials were embarrassed by the fact that a key regional ally, namely Saudi Arabia, was backing the Imam's rebellion. With the latter, British reprisals threatened to undermine Washington DC's efforts to establish closer relations with Nasser. But in both instances, the USA did nothing to restrain its ally. Furthermore, during the Dhofar conflict the American position was one of passive support for the British-directed war effort against the PFLOAG. Richard Nixon's administration

was not even informed in advance when British military and civil advisors in Oman engineered the overthrow of Sultan Said bin Taimur (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1970) in favour of his son Qaboos.<sup>52</sup>

The limits of US influence over British policy need to be emphasised, particularly in the context of the political furore over the Iraq war. Opponents of the Blair government's decision to back Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF) presented the Prime Minister as a 'poodle' of President George W. Bush. Yet in the months leading to the outbreak of the Iraq war, Blair did have the option to dissociate from US policy. During the course of a telephone conversation on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2003 Bush told the Prime Minister that he could disengage from the forthcoming invasion without jeopardising the Anglo-American alliance. It is clear that Blair thought that the provision of a significant military contingent to augment US forces would reinforce bilateral ties – and also enable the British to exercise influence over American post-war policy – but this was a (mis)calculation that he made independently of any pressure from Washington DC.<sup>53</sup> Blair and his Cabinet Ministers were not helpless puppets of the USA; they bear collective responsibility for the UK's involvement in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Regional allies have also had their impact on UK policy, as shown by the requests for military assistance received from Jordan (1957), Kuwait (1961) and Oman (1957-1959, 1970-1975). The British presence in South Arabia ended as a result of an insurgency, but in Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States there was muted anti-British agitation preceding the East of Suez withdrawals, and the general regional reaction to the Labour government's defence review of 1968 was one of shock. It is therefore not surprising that Britain's former dependencies had a continued interest in maintaining defence ties through continued exercises, such as *Saif Sareea II* in Oman in September-October 2001, and also the presence of military advisory teams.<sup>54</sup> With reference to the British contribution to the defence of Saudi Arabia and

the liberation of Kuwait (Operation *Granby*), the Major government's decision in November 1990 to reinforce the armoured brigade in Saudi Arabia – providing a complete division –was partly due to pressure from the GCC to match the expansion of the US contribution to *Desert Shield*.<sup>55</sup>

However, regional ties have proved to be a diplomatic problem for the British, partly because of the internecine rivalries between the Persian Gulf states. These included Iran's historic claim to Bahrain and the seizure of Abu Musa and Tunbs islands (claimed by the UAE) in December 1971, Saudi Arabia's dispute with Oman over the Buraimi Oasis (and Riyadh's support for the Jebel Akhdar rebels during the 1950s), and territorial disputes between the UAE's sheikhs. Saudi Arabia in particular has consistently been an awkward ally for the UK; during the Dhofar conflict King Faisal fed Qaboos' suspicions that the British were deliberately prolonging the war in order to reduce the Omanis to a state of dependency.<sup>56</sup> In his memoirs Denis Healey (the Defence Secretary in Harold Wilson's government from 1964-1970) expressed his exasperation at what he considered to be the disloyalty and intrigues associated with the UK's ostensible allies, making it clear that these partly influenced the East of Suez decisions of January 1968:

The growth of nationalism outside Europe made it obvious that in some areas the presence of British troops was becoming an irritant rather than a stabilising factor. The scales fell from my eyes when I discovered that the Kuwaiti government, with which Britain had a defence treaty, would not let us keep troops in Kuwait for fear of riots from the local population; we had to keep them hundreds of miles away in Bahrain. But the Kuwaiti Government was itself financing the Free Bahraini movement, which was trying to get us out of Bahrain as well!<sup>57</sup>

In both 1956 and 2003, Britain experienced the consequences of being on the wrong side of prevailing international opinion. Likewise, the bulk of the UN's member states were opposed to the British presence in South Arabia,

sympathising with the insurgents and considering the Federal government to be illegitimate. The Harib air-strikes were also universally condemned by a UN Security Council vote.<sup>58</sup> The fear of international censure limited the size of the British contingent in the Jebel Akhdar conflict of 1957. Two years later, the Macmillan government opted to send two squadrons from 22SAS to end the campaign, rather than endorse MOD plans for an overt campaign involving nearly a brigade of troops. With the Dhofar war both the Conservative and Labour governments of the time were anxious to conceal the extent of British assistance to Qaboos, in order to preserve the fiction that the SAF was fighting the PFLOAG single-handed.<sup>59</sup> In all these cases, the UN General Assembly and Arab opinion was more of a constraint on British actions than the USA.

There were also practical, strategic, economic and political factors affecting the scope of British military intervention. Climatic constraints are easy to forget, unless one has actually experienced a summer in any Gulf state. For British soldiers deployed to Oman and Kuwait in 1957 and 1961, heatstroke was as much of a hazard as enemy action. Likewise the US and British staffs drafting plans for *Desert Storm* had late February 1991 as the deadline for any offensive into Kuwait. Forces committed any later would have to operate in the rainy season in springtime, or in temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius in the summer (during which Coalition troops would have the additional burden of wearing NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical warfare) protective suits).<sup>60</sup>

The UK's post-war financial crises were also a crucial constraint, most notably regarding the effect that the pound's devaluation in November 1967 had on the defence review announced two months later. Throughout the Cold War era NATO commitments frequently took precedence over 'out of area' missions whenever defence cuts had to be made. While Edward Heath assumed the premiership in June 1970 promising to reverse his predecessor's East of Suez decisions, economic and strategic realities (and the worsening security situation in Northern Ireland) gave him no choice but to stick to the timetable

for withdrawal.<sup>61</sup> The disappearance of the Soviet threat made it possible for the UK to contribute up to 45,000 personnel on *Granby*, but the effort of maintaining an armoured division in the Saudi desert stretched the British armed forces to their limits – the Army of the Rhine was stripped bare in order to sustain Britain's land forces commitment to *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*.<sup>62</sup>

In office, both Conservative and Labour ministries were persuaded to disengage from the Gulf not merely for political or economic reasons, but almost out of individual preference. Many of Wilson's Cabinet had an instinctive dislike of any military activity which had imperialistic connotations, hence the Labour government's collective desire to end the South Arabian insurgency at the earliest available opportunity.<sup>63</sup> It was for similar reasons that the Heath government refused to aid King Hussein of Jordan during the Black September crisis (September 1970), effectively abandoning the Hashemite dynasty in the process, although the Jordanians actually defied British expectations and defeated the Palestinian *fedayeen*.<sup>64</sup> Currently one can observe a backlash within the British policy-making establishment against the interventionist ethos of the Blair years, and a cross-party sense of regret over UK's involvement in regime change in Iraq.<sup>65</sup>

### ***Missions, 1957-1990***

British military operations in the Gulf during this period can be summarized under the following categories. Interventions such as Jordan 1958,<sup>66</sup> Oman 1959 and Kuwait 1961 were intended either to deter external aggression, or to safeguard friendly rulers from an internal coup or revolution. British troops were involved in COIN campaigns in Oman in 1957-1959 and 1965-1975, and in the Radfan and Aden in South Arabia from 1962 to 1967.<sup>67</sup> A third mission involved the training of local militaries (notably the SAF and that of the UAE after 1971).<sup>68</sup> British officers established the Saudi Arabian National Guard – a



regime defence force for the House of al-Saud – between 1963 and 1971, when King Faisal expelled them in favour of US trainers. Prior to the revolution of 1979 the Special Boat Service fostered the Imperial Iranian Navy's special forces, the *takavar*, although many of the latter are thought to have been purged after the Shah's downfall.<sup>69</sup>

An additional mission during this period (providing the origins of the RN's current patrols around Iraq's offshore oilfields) was the *Armilla* patrol, which collaborated with the US, French and other Western navies in protecting merchant shipping during the latter phases of the Iran-Iraq war. *Armilla* was augmented during the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991 so that it stood at 11 destroyers and frigates, 2 submarines, 10 minesweepers, 3 patrol craft and 11 vessels from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Prior to *Desert Storm* the RN contingent – which was second in size only to the US Navy task force – enforced the blockade on Iraq prior to January 1991. During the war it supported Coalition operations to liberate Kuwait, clearing Iraqi minefields and destroying the bulk of Iraq's navy in the 'Battle of the Bubiyan Channel'.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Missions 1990-2003***

During this period British military revolved around firstly the US-led Coalition's operations to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, and subsequently both the consequences of Saddam's survival and the Baath regime's continued defiance of SCR687, not to mention further resolutions mandating the dismantling of his WMD programme. Trilateral operations to deliver aid to Kurdish refugees in the spring of 1991<sup>71</sup> were followed by the establishment of the no-fly zones in Northern (April 1991) and Southern Iraq (August 1992). The unexplained mobilisation of Iraqi forces near the Kuwaiti border in October 1994 led to the deployment of 2 US Army brigades to the Emirate, augmented by a British battle-group based around 45 Commando, Royal Marines.

Operation *Vigilant Resolve* (or *Driver*, as the MOD dubbed it) is all but forgotten today, but at the time it provided an uncomfortable reminder in Washington DC and London of the unpredictability of the Iraqi leader.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, British forces in the Gulf were involved in supporting the containment of Iraq. The policing of the Northern and Southern no-fly zones (Operations *Haven* and *Jural*) was left to the RAF and US Air Forces. French participation ceased after December 1996, with Paris claiming that allied air patrols no longer had the humanitarian purpose justified by SCR688. Anglo-American air power was also employed in an attempt to coerce Saddam into complying with UN weapons inspectors, the end results involved frequent clashes with Iraqi air defences and a four-day bombing campaign against suspected WMD sites in December 1998 (Operation *Desert Fox*). For both the Major and Blair governments, the RAF's involvement in continued Anglo-American air operations was required to restrict the Iraqi regime's capacity to threaten its neighbours or persecute its own population. For their critics, operations like *Desert Fox* constituted vindictive retribution against a defenceless country, with a population weakened by one of the harshest sanctions regimes imposed by the international community on a sovereign state.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly enough, domestic and foreign opponents of sanctions and containment during the 1990s also vehemently condemned regime change in 2003, without declaring whether they supported what by implication was the alternative; namely, rehabilitating Saddam's regime and accepting a return to the pre-1990 *status quo ante bellum*.<sup>74</sup>

### ***The impact of Telic***

The subject of Britain's involvement in the invasion and occupation of Iraq has been covered in numerous books and media articles, many of a polemical nature. The author sees no need to revisit these debates concerning the

legitimacy of *Telic*, preferring to concentrate on the strategic rationale behind the UK's involvement in the Iraq war, and the implications for Britain's position in the Gulf region.<sup>75</sup> British anti-war activists were swift to describe the conflict as a 'war for oil', although if this was the case it was one opposed by the Chairmen of Shell and BP, who were concerned that the invasion of Iraq would threaten the UK's access to regional oil supplies.<sup>76</sup> The key reasons as given by the Butler Report of 2004 were the conviction within Whitehall that containment had failed, and (based on Saddam's past record) that Iraq retained a residual WMD capability. In the aftermath of 9/11, Iraqi non-compliance with SCR687 and subsequent resolutions was increasingly intolerable for both the US and British governments, and Blair's conclusion was that the key barrier to Iraq's disarmament was the Baathist regime. The British Prime Minister saw Saddam's overthrow as morally justified, and he experienced a degree of hubris because of the success of previous military interventions such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, he also considered it of paramount importance to offer full support to US policy, on the presumption that Britain would gain influence over wider American policy towards the Middle East (notably with reference to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). Blair's troubles with both the Labour Party rank-and-file and British public opinion were compounded once it became clear that pre-war US and UK intelligence estimates on the Iraqi WMD programme were wildly exaggerated, and also when the security situation in post-Baathist Iraq deteriorated.<sup>77</sup>

At first, British participation in OIF appeared successful. 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division and 3 Commando Brigade were able to seize Basra on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2003 with the minimum of Iraqi civilian casualties, although British soldiers and marines failed to prevent widespread looting and public disorder.<sup>78</sup> The British did also benefit to a certain degree from the minimal presence of former regime loyalists and Sunni Salafists in South-Eastern Iraq, which was predominantly Shiite. However, while primary responsibility for the lamentable inadequacy of post-

conflict planning lies with the Bush administration, senior British civilian and military officials deserve a share of the blame for failing to ensure that their US allies had actually established firm plans to deal with the challenges of post-war stabilisation and reconstruction in an occupied Iraq. The British occupation of South-East Iraq from the spring of 2003 to July 2009 was therefore hampered by inadequate post-conflict preparations in Whitehall as well as Washington DC, and was under-resourced both in terms of manpower and finances.<sup>79</sup>

In the early phases of the occupation the British Army prided itself on the apparently amicable relationship it had established with the local populace. However, the outbreaks of anti-Coalition violence by Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army from the spring of 2004 onwards exposed the complacency of both the Labour government and British military authorities in Basra. Worse damage was done by the infiltration of the new security forces by Shia militias, as the police in Basra became notorious for their corruption and brutality towards the civilian population. The British armed forces had conducted regime change, COIN, state-building and indigenous security force training missions before, but in Iraq between 2003 and 2009 these tasks were being executed concurrently. Furthermore, the British troop presence in Southern Iraq declined progressively, particularly after the escalation of the UK's commitment in Afghanistan from the summer of 2006. Britain's military contribution to *Telic* declined from 46,000 in the opening phases of the war to 18,000 in May 2003, and then 8,600 the following year. Even though the British had allied contingents serving alongside them (the largest being from Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands and Australia) the UK lacked the manpower to control the four Iraqi provinces under its authority, let alone Iraq's second-largest city. Covert Iranian assistance to the Mahdi Army and other militias (of a similar character to Egypt's support to South Arabian insurgents during the 1960s) compounded the problems arising from political incoherence in Whitehall, and over-extended resources in theatre. There is insufficient space in this paper to fully analyse

the controversial circumstances in which Britain gradually disengaged from Southern Iraq between 2007-2009. It is sufficient to note that the UK's failure was due to over-optimistic expectations over democratisation and reform, coupled with military overstretch and political incoherence on the part of the Labour government, particularly in failing to address the consequences of instability in Southern Iraq once they manifested themselves after April 2003.<sup>80</sup>

The outcome of *Telic* has had an adverse effect on Anglo-American relations, with US academic and military sources expressing scorn at Britain's 'defeat' in Basra.<sup>81</sup> The impact of the Iraq war on regional opinion remains difficult to assess, although seeing as Kuwait was the only Gulf state to overtly back regime change in Iraq it is clear that Britain's support of OIF was resented by mainstream Arab opinion. The British military suffered a further humiliation in March-April 2007, when a party of sailors and marines on counter-terrorist patrol duties off the Iraqi coast was captured and detained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. In this respect, the UK may find that another additional and unwelcome consequence of the Iraq conflict is the undermining of regional respect for the capabilities of its armed forces. The consequences of such a perception require no further comment.<sup>82</sup>

## **Conclusions**

After *Telic* the British have maintained a limited presence in the Gulf region, with the RN patrolling the Iraqi oil installations as part of a US-led Coalition fleet, and military training teams in Kuwait and Oman. The RAF also has air assets in Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, although the British air presence is dwarfed by that of the USA. Given the financial and logistical constraints the UK faces in maintaining 9,000 troops in Afghanistan – not to mention political and public sentiment which is largely unfavourable to overseas military

interventions – it is difficult to see at the time of writing how the British presence in the Persian Gulf could possibly be expanded.<sup>83</sup>

In human terms the cost of Britain's intervention in the Gulf between 1957 and 2009 has been comparatively light for the UK – around 471 British servicemen and women have been killed in combat or have died on operations during a period of just over fifty years. Yet this figure does not take into account indigenous civilian losses in various campaigns. The suppression of the Imam's revolt in January 1959 occurred only after repeated RAF air strikes on the Jebel Akhdar, and in the aftermath one guilt-ridden consular official noted that 'we have attacked this small and inoffensive community with most of the weapons of modern war and have caused damage which is hard to appreciate unless you see it at close quarters'.<sup>84</sup> It should nonetheless be noted that there have been far bloodier conflicts in the Gulf region which have not involved British or Western intervention. The two most obvious examples are the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 (with over 500,000 dead) and Egypt's involvement in the Yemeni civil war, which led to an estimated death toll in the tens of thousands.<sup>85</sup>

Two lessons emerge from Britain's military record in the Gulf over the past half-century. The first is that the lack of international and regional support is a significant constraint, as was demonstrated with both the South Arabian insurgency and *Tellic*. The second is that the UK's fluctuating economic fortunes were often more decisive a constraint on intervention than any indigenous opposition. The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) conducted by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition asserts that the British armed forces will retain its global expeditionary role, but it has also made significant reductions in the UK's military capabilities.<sup>86</sup> For example, the fact that the RN will have no carrier-based air capability until 2020 means that it is very difficult to see the British armed forces being able to perform any significant tasks in the Gulf region, aside from 'fly-the-flag' naval patrols and

training missions for regional allies. Even in the case of current operations in Libya (Operation *Ellamy*) – where the British armed forces are involved in a multilateral campaign against an adversary on the periphery of the NATO area – the service chiefs of both the RN and RAF publicly expressed concerns that they lack the ships, aircraft and personnel for a sustained bombing campaign against Muammar Qaddafi's forces. The logistical challenges involved in maintaining RAF air operations from bases in the UK and Italy also shows that in terms of power projection and financial cost, the decommissioning of HMS *Ark Royal* was a false economy.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, in any contingency involving a major US-led military intervention, the attitude of the Liberal Democrats needs to be considered. The Conservatives' coalition partners opposed the Iraq war and during the 2010 election expressed categorical opposition to any military strike against Iran. Although the Liberal Democrats supported Operation *Ellamy* on humanitarian grounds, the party as a whole has an anti-interventionist ethos. As such, Britain's involvement in another operation in the Gulf analogous to *Telic* can be considered unlikely not only because of the limited capabilities of its armed forces, but because such a conflict would probably bring about the coalition government's downfall.<sup>88</sup>

It is also important to consider the sources of regional insecurity that derive from political and social tensions *within* the Gulf Arab states, and which cannot in any way be addressed by external military intervention. The Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions have inspired similar turbulence in the Persian Gulf, particularly evident in Bahrain now. The consequences of socio-economic and political discontent with the established order in the Gulf are likely to be exacerbated if regional autocrats are as slow as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak and Colonel Qaddafi to respond to popular demands for political reform. The lack of any significant industrial activity beyond oil and natural gas production, widespread unemployment and underemployment in stagnant

economies, the dead hand of autocratic rule, resentment arising from official repression (notably with reference to the Saudi and Bahraini Shiites); these all have implications to regional security which cannot be addressed by Western military aid.<sup>89</sup>

A further danger is that Britain and other powers can contribute to regional instability in their efforts to both fight radical Salafi terrorism and to contain Iran. In the case of Yemen, it is evident that US and UK military assistance to local security forces intended to bolster their counter-terrorist capabilities against *al-Qaeda* was instead used by Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime against the Houthi tribes and Southern separatists. External aid to regimes fighting insurgents and terrorists often acts as a disincentive for the latter to enact reforms and to overcome self-destructive tendencies (misrule, racial or sectarian discrimination or corruption) which encourage internecine strife, and American and British policy towards regional allies like Yemen could prove counterproductive in the long term.<sup>90</sup>

Finally, it is likely in the years to come that Britain and the USA will no longer be the only external powers to seek a sustained presence in the Gulf. In May 2009 France opened a military base in Abu Dhabi, the first built outside its traditional colonial sphere of influence. The following year a Rear Admiral of the Peoples Liberation Army Navy openly suggested that China needed a permanent base in the region to support its own counter-piracy operations.<sup>91</sup> Japan and India also appear more conscious that they have economic and strategic interests in the Persian Gulf, with the latter bolstering its naval presence in the Western Indian Ocean.<sup>92</sup> Given the growing role of other states in the Gulf region, and the outcome of the SDSR, it is possible that future historians may cite 2010 – rather than 1971 – as the year in which Britain finally surrendered any claim that it had a significant role in regional security, or any viable military means of upholding its interests in the Arabian Gulf.



## GLOSSARY

22SAS – 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service Regiment.

*Al-Qaeda* – Translates from Arabic as ‘the base’ or ‘the foundation’. *Al-Qaeda* is considered by scholars of terrorism to consist of a network of groups or individuals drawn together by the movement’s common hostility to Western governments, Israel and ‘apostate’ regimes in the Islamic world, and to share the long-term goal of founding a global caliphate.

*Armilla* – Name given to the Royal Navy’s ships protection patrols in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war.

COIN – Counter-Insurgency.

*Desert Fox* – The Anglo-American air campaign against suspected Iraqi chemical, biological, nuclear and missile facilities in December 1998.

*Desert Shield* – The deployment of US and Coalition forces to Saudi Arabia from 7<sup>th</sup> August 1990 to protect the kingdom from a possible Iraqi invasion.

*Desert Storm* – The US-led Coalition operation to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation (17<sup>th</sup> January-10<sup>th</sup> March 1991).

*Driver* – The UK’s deployment of forces to Kuwait in October 1994 in response to an apparent threat of invasion from Iraq. See also *Vigilant Resolve*.

*Ellamy* - The UK’s involvement in Coalition air operations over Libya from March 2011 onwards.

*Fedayeen* – An Arabic term which loosely translates as ‘those who sacrifice themselves’. A generic term applied to Palestinian fighters from the late

1960s onwards. Also appropriated by Iraqi paramilitary forces during the Coalition intervention of March-April 2003.

GCC – Gulf Co-operation Council.

*Granby* – The UK contribution to *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*.

*Haven* – British term for the policing of the Northern no-fly zone over Iraq, 1991-2003.

*Intifada* – Arabic term for an uprising.

*Iraqi Freedom* – The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq from March 2003 onwards (also known as OIF).

*Jural* – British term for the policing of the Southern no-fly zone over Iraq, 1991-2003.

Mahdi Army – An Iraqi Shiite militia group which emerged during the Anglo-American occupation (2003-2011).

MEC – Middle Eastern Command.

MOD – UK Ministry of Defence.

*Musketeer* – The Anglo-French intervention in Suez, October-November 1956.

NBC – Nuclear, Biological and Chemical.

*Perestroika* – Russian term for 'rebuilding'. The name given to Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to reform the Soviet political and economic system between 1986 and 1991.

PFLOAG – Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf. An insurgent movement active in the Dhofar province of Oman from August 1968 to December 1975. This group did change its name at certain phases of this insurgency, but for convenience's sake this one definition will be used in this paper.

RAF – Royal Air Force.

RN – Royal Navy.

SAF – Sultan's Armed Forces, Oman.

*Saif Sareea II* – A British military exercise in Oman, September-October 2001.

SCR – UN Security Council Resolution.

SDSR – The UK's Strategic Defence and Security Review, October 2010.

SIGINT – Signals Intelligence.

*Takavar* – The special forces unit of the Imperial Iranian Navy.

*Telic* – UK military operations in Iraq from March 2003 to May 2011.

*Vantage* – The British intervention in Kuwait in June 1961.

*Vigilant Resolve* – The commitment of US forces to Kuwait in October 1994.

WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction. A common term given to NBC weaponry.

## Persian Gulf Region



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## MIDDLE EAST



## Endnotes

This paper is based on a presentation to the 'Gulf and the Globe' conference held at the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Shrivenham, UK, on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010. The two maps are taken from the website of the Perry Castaneda Map Library, University of Texas, Austin, online at <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>. The terms 'Arabian' and 'Persian' Gulf are both in common usage to describe the region covered in this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fisk, 'Little has changed since the secretive days of Suez', *The Independent*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2009. Tom Happold, 'The Eden Project', *The Guardian*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2003. *Telic* lasted from March 2003 to May 2011, when the RN training team completed its work with the Iraqi navy. 'UK's Operation Telic Mission in Iraq Ends', BBC News, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13488078>.

<sup>2</sup> A prime example of covert paramilitary operations – British assistance to Yemeni royalists fighting the pro-Egyptian regime in San'aa – is examined in Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London: Sceptre, 1991), p.324. Peter Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain and Egypt, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p.240. For a rebuttal of this assessment, see Simon C. Smith, 'Power Transferred? Britain, the United States, and the Gulf, 1956-71', *Contemporary British History* 21/1 (2007), pp.1-23.

<sup>4</sup> Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Keith Kyle, *Suez. Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> W. Taylor Fain, 'John F. Kennedy and Harold Macmillan: Managing the 'Special Relationship' in the Arabian Gulf Region, 1961-63', *Middle Eastern Studies* 38/4 (2002), p.98.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'Trucial' derived from the 1854 treaty 1854 between Britain and the sheikhdoms of what currently constitute the UAE, referring to the 'perpetual maritime truce' between the signatories. See Wm Roger Louis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Gulf', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31/1 (2003), p.88.

<sup>8</sup> OPDO(DR)(69)5, *The Plan for British Military Withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1969, CAB148/97(National Archives of the United Kingdom – hereafter NAUK).

<sup>9</sup> OPDO(DR)69)8, *Trucial Oman Scouts: Measures Needed to Maintain the Force in Being*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1969, CAB148/97(NAUK). J. E. Peterson, *Oman's Insurgencies. The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy* (London: Saqi Books, 2007), pp.63-65, pp.102-103.

<sup>10</sup> Clive Jones & John Stone, 'Britain and the Arabian Gulf: New Perspectives on Strategic Influence', *International Relations* 13/4 (1997), pp.1-24.

<sup>11</sup> Geraint Hughes, 'A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency .War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965-1975', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32/2 (2009), pp.271-305.

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<sup>12</sup> Operations Log for 276 Signals Unit (RAF), January 1976-January 1977, AIR29/4744(NAUK). The GCHQ station in Cyprus provides the UK (and the USA's NSA) with a regional SIGINT capability. Michael Smith, *The Spying Game. The Secret History of British espionage* (London: Politico's 2003), pp.305-322.

<sup>13</sup> For comprehensive accounts of Iraq's history since the British mandate see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); & Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923. A Study in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.97, p.264, pp.390-391.

<sup>15</sup> G. G. Arthur (Political Resident, Bahrain) to Sir Alec Douglas-Home (Foreign Secretary), *The Withdrawal of British forces from the Gulf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1972, FCO8/1814(NAUK). Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Macmillan, 1991), p.196.

<sup>16</sup> James S. Corum & Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars. Fighting insurgents and terrorists* (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas 2003), pp.52-66, pp.199-208.

<sup>17</sup> Kennedy, *Naval Mastery*, p.385. Morice Snell-Mendoza, 'In Defence of Oil: Britain's Response to the Iraqi Threat towards Kuwait', *Contemporary Record* 10/3 (1996), pp.40-42. COS46/73, *Future United Kingdom Defence Activity in Oman*, 31<sup>st</sup> December 1973, DEFE5/197(NAUK).

<sup>18</sup> Geraint Hughes, 'Britain, the Transatlantic Alliance, and the Arab-Israeli War of 1973', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10/2 (2008), pp.3-40. Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), pp.180-188.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Blackwell, 'Pursuing Nasser: The Macmillan Government and the Management of British Policy Towards the Middle East Cold War, 1957-63', *Cold War History* 4/3 (2004), pp.91-93.

<sup>20</sup> Peterson, *Oman's Insurgencies*, p.85, p.117. GEN609/1<sup>st</sup> meeting, *Muscat and Oman*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1959, CAB130/131(NAUK).

<sup>21</sup> Richard A. Mobley, 'Deterring Iraq: The UK Experience', *Intelligence & National Security* 16/2 (2001), pp.55-82. COS1079/29/8/61, *Redeployment of British Forces after Withdrawal from Kuwait*, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1961, CAB21/4860(NAUK).

<sup>22</sup> J. E. Killick (HM ambassador Moscow) to A. D. Parsons (Near East and North African Department (NENAD), Foreign and Commonwealth Office – hereafter FCO), 1<sup>st</sup> August 1973, FCO93/229(NAUK).

<sup>23</sup> Freedman & Karsh, *Gulf Conflict*, pp.423-424. Anthony Seldon, *Major. A Political Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997), pp.161-163.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Peter Riddell, *Hug them Close. Blair, Clinton, Bush and the 'Special Relationship'* (London: Politico's 2004), pp.84-88.

<sup>25</sup> It is often forgotten that individuals like David Kelly – the biological warfare expert whose suicide led to the Hutton inquiry – also saw Iraq as a threat prior to 2003. See his article 'Only regime change will avert the threat', reprinted in *The Observer*, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2003. The text of SCR687 can be seen on <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/4477988.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Colonel Ian Thomas (British Army), 'Pointing the Way Out: The Utility of Force and the Basra Narrative. January-August 2007', *British Army Review* 148 (2010), pp.8-12. James K. Wither, 'Basra's not Belfast: The British Army, 'Small Wars', and Iraq', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 20/3 (2009), pp.611-635.

<sup>27</sup> James Hider, "We regret driving out the British," say Aden's former rebels', *The Times*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2010. House of Commons, written answers for Minister of State for the Armed Forces Bill Rammell, 11<sup>th</sup>

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<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/text/100111w0021.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005). Efraim Karsh provides a hostile review in *Commentary* (February 2006, online at

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/viewarticle.cfm/the-great-war-for-civilisation-by-robert-fisk-10030>.

<sup>29</sup> Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (London: Penguin, 1974). Halliday did subsequently abandon his far-left sympathies. See his obituary in *The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010. The Gulf Committee, *Dhofar: Britain's Colonial War in the Gulf* (London: Crest Press, 1972), Charles Hepworth Collection, Middle East Centre Archives (MECA), St Antony's College, Oxford, GB165-0410-7.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (Penguin 2007), pp.7-59. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad. Expansion et declin de l'islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), pp.49-77.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum by Alec Douglas-Home, *Policy in the Arabian Gulf*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1970, PREM15/538(NAUK). Gabriella Grasselli, *British and American Responses to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing 1996), pp.65-71, pp.187-188.

<sup>32</sup> Minute by R. T. Jackling (MOD), 21<sup>st</sup> January 1980; & memorandum by Admiral Lord Lewin (Chief of the Defence Staff), 30<sup>th</sup> January 1980, AIR8/2811(NAUK). OD(80)1<sup>st</sup> meeting, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1980, CAB149/189(NAUK). JIC(80)10<sup>th</sup> meeting, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1980, CAB185/27(NAUK).

<sup>33</sup> M. E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War* (London: Longman, 1996), pp.368-370. Oles Smolansky & Bettie Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p.217. Meeting between King Hussein of Jordan and Margaret Thatcher at No.10 Downing Street, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1980, PREM19/136(NAUK).

<sup>34</sup> Major-General Tony Jeapes (British Army Ret.), *SAS Secret War. Operation Storm in the Middle East* (London: Greenhill Books, 2005), pp.38-39. Hughes, 'Dhofar', p.291, p.301.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition. American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC: Brookings, 1994), p.733. Freedman & Karsh *Gulf Conflict*, pp.76-80.

<sup>36</sup> MISC17/5<sup>th</sup> meeting on defence at Chequers, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1965, CAB130/213(NAUK). OPD(O)(65)37(Revise), *Defence Expenditure Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1965, CAB148/43(NAUK).

<sup>37</sup> Blackwell, 'Pursuing Nasser', pp.85-89. Spencer Mawby, 'The Clandestine Defence of Empire: British Special Operations in Yemen, 1951-64', *Intelligence & National Security* 17/3 (2002), pp.105-130.

<sup>38</sup> Louis, 'Gulf', p.91. W. H. Luce (Foreign Secretary's representative for Arabian Gulf policy), *British Policy in the Arabian Gulf. Report on Consultations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1970, PREM15/538(NAUK).

DOP(73)15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> meetings, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1973, CAB148/129(NAUK).

<sup>39</sup> Mobley, 'Deterring Iraq', pp.63-64. Snell-Mendoza, 'In Defence of Oil', p.53, pp.57-58. Minute by Lord Mountbatten (Chief of the Defence Staff), *Kuwait – Readiness for Intervention*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1962; & Harold Watkinson (Defence Secretary) to Harold Macmillan, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1962, PREM11/4539(NAUK). Ministry of Defence to Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, COSMID33, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1962, CAB21/4860(NAUK).

<sup>40</sup> OF/1/R, *Peoples Front for the Liberation of Oman*, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1974, John Graham Collection, MECA, GB165-0327-2. Hughes, 'Dhofar', p.297.

<sup>41</sup> UK embassy Baghdad to FCO No.1037, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1963, PREM11/4539(NAUK). Freedman & Karsh, *Gulf Conflict*, pp.67-69, pp.74-76.



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<sup>42</sup> D-OPS-5, *Record of the Meeting held at Headquarters, the Sultan's Armed Forces on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 1974*, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1974, DEFE11/655(NAUK). Tore T. Petersen, *Richard Nixon, Great Britain and the Anglo-American Alignment in the Arabian Gulf and Arab Peninsula* (Sussex Academic Press 2009), pp.68-85.

<sup>43</sup> Jones & Stone, 'Gulf', p.8, pp.21-23. See also the text of SCR1929, online at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/396/79/PDF/N1039679.pdf?OpenElement>. Shashank Joshi, 'The Persian Illusion', *The World Today* 67/6 (2011), pp.23-25.

<sup>44</sup> Ali M. Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad. The politics of confrontation* (Routledge/International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS): Adelphi Paper 393, 2007), pp.41-65. 'It's Iran we're fighting, says Basra commander', *The Daily Telegraph*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2007. 'The 'proxy war': UK troops are sent to Iranian border', *The Independent*, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (NY: Berkley Books, 2003). Warren Chin, 'The United Kingdom and the War on Terror: The Breakdown of National and Military Strategy', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 30/1 (2009), p.125-146.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Horton, 'Unravelling ties. Yemen's power vacuum', *Jane's Intelligence Review* 23/8 (2011), pp.37-41.

<sup>47</sup> CC4(68), Cabinet Conclusions, 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1968, CAB128/43(NAUK). Tore Tingvold Petersen, 'Crossing the Rubicon? Britain's Withdrawal from the Middle East, 1964-1968: A Bibliographical Review', *International History Review* 22/2 (2000), pp.318-340.

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1970, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXIV. Arabian Gulf States* (Washington DC: US Government Printing office 2009), pp.279-283. Steve Yetiv, *The Absence of Grand Strategy. The United States in the Arabian Gulf, 1972-2005* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp.30-35.

<sup>49</sup> General William E. Odom (US Army Ret.), 'The Cold War Origins of US Central Command', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8/2 (2006), pp.52-82. Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies. Inside America's War on Terror* (London: Free Press 2004), pp.37-39, pp.77-78, p.112.

<sup>50</sup> Lt Cdr Stephen A. Kelley (USN), *Better Lucky than Good: Operation Earnest Will as Gunboat Diplomacy* (MA Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey CA, June 2007).

<sup>51</sup> Tore T. Petersen, 'Post-Suez Consequences: Anglo-American Relations in the Middle East from Eisenhower to Nixon', in Simon Smith (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp.215-226.

<sup>52</sup> Fain, "Special Relationship", pp.103-105. Smith, 'Power Transferred?', pp.4-5. Petersen, 'Post-Suez Consequences', pp.218-219, p.223. British involvement in the July coup was examined as part of BBC Radio 4's *Document* series, in the programme broadcast at 20:00 on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.

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