

US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Changes in the Neoliberal Age



U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Changes in the Neoliberal Age

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Preface

The Middle East Research Initiative (MERI) that produced this collection originated in a series of meetings in late 2019 and early 2020. We started as a group of undergraduates and two graduate student coordinators, joined together by the broad goal of examining the long-term drivers and effects (both domestically and internationally) of American foreign policy in the Middle East. In our first planning documents, we hoped to produce several case studies and a collaborative theoretical piece over the course of a year--ambitions that seemed relatively modest at the time. We put out a call for interested students and attracted a range of undergraduates from different disciplines. Shortly after our first group meeting, however, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to upend our plans. Travel for archival research became impossible and collaborative work over Zoom posed challenges.

Nevertheless, the undergraduate members of MERI showed an impressive work ethic and persisted, producing insightful and rigorous essays on a range of topics. Rather than shy away from issues raised by the pandemic, they addressed them directly. At its heart, our volume, which is devoted to “U.S. Middle East Policy in the Neoliberal Age,” describes international and domestic manifestations of the forces of austerity and privatization. Many of these same forces have dominated debate around measures taken to address the pandemic’s economic fallout. In our view, the securitization of the state, the privatization of development initiatives, and the increased export of austerity economics to American client states all relate to this central theme.

This volume is a culmination of months of dedicated work during an uncertain time. It would not have been possible without the continued support of Professor David Myers (Director of the Luskin Center for History and Policy, LCHP) and Maia Ferdman (the LCHP’s Assistant Director). Several students who did not author specific pieces in this volume also deserve special mention. Thank you to Talla Khelgati for helping to get this initiative off the ground almost a year ago, to Firyal Bawab for your tireless editing work, and to Madison Deyo for your insightful additions to our group discussions. Special thanks also go to Aaron David Miller, Professor Tamer el-Gindi, and the other outside experts who generously offered their time to discuss themes related to this work. All errors are, of course, our own.

- Lily Hindy, Phil Hoffman, and Monica Widmann (MERI Graduate Student Mentors)

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Introduction

The Neoliberal Age

Like asking a fish to describe water, defining the concept of neo-liberalism can be complicated by its ubiquity. The word “neoliberal” does not appear on policy documents or come up during summits. Its influence is not explicit but must be implied and inferred from critical study. Even in the midst of an academic inquiry, neoliberalism resists being pinned down. The very ideology is contradictory. Neoliberalism is often conceptually sound but lacking in applicability, which seems to reflect a major failure of economic theorizing in general.

Because definitions of the characteristics of neoliberal consciousness are difficult to create, many definitions assume that neoliberalism is grounded in a previous or adjacent ideology. Some wonder if neoliberalism is merely the economic manifestation of the current phenomenon of globalization. Others describe neoliberalism as “capitalism on steroids.”¹

In the words of its supporters, neoliberalism promises a better life for each citizen and shows a path of deliverance through a free, open market. Above all, neoliberal thinkers emphasize the protection of individual freedom as the central priority for the state.² Furthermore, they believe that the most accurate means of maximizing personal freedom is through enabling market freedom.³ Therefore, the state’s role is to support and protect the free market at all costs. This differs from major ideologies of the 20th century such as fascism and communism which were premised on heavy government involvement. By contrast, Neoliberalism emerged as a limited government alternative.⁴ Instead of the state interfering in personal income or wealth, limited government means that there will be no cap on upward mobility. If the market is left to run free and to determine the distribution of wealth, the highest heights of riches can be attained. Herein lies a vast opportunity for the entrepreneurial spirit. However, while neoliberal reasoning sees market growth as a guaranteed measurement of overall wealth, there are very legitimate critiques of the free market’s ability to guarantee equal wealth

¹ Wendy Brown. “In the Account of Neoliberalism.”(European Graduate School, 2016).

² David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5. Oxford University Press. 2005.

³ David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 7.

⁴ Milton Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom*, 2. The University of Chicago Press. 1962.

generation.⁵ Growth has been shown to disproportionately benefit those who already possess wealth. The theory of “trickle down economics” acknowledges that the upper class benefits most from market growth yet suggests that after a long enough period of time, wealth will recirculate into the pockets of the lower class as well.

While a deep divide exists between the haves and the have nots, the neoliberal age has also dictated a particular mode of conceptualizing the government’s role in such a situation. Since the paradigm’s logic places the state in service to the needs of the market, social services and general public needs fall to the wayside. The neoliberal age famously ushered in the death of the social; in the words of Margaret Thatcher, “there is no social.” Thatcher’s words reflect a feeling that there is no collective responsibility for well being. All trust is placed in the (unpredictable) market, while government safety nets are removed to put more money and energy towards protecting property rights. In recent analysis, scholars have argued that neoliberalism threatens democracy. Thomas Piketty, in his new age rendition of *Capital*, and Wendy Brown, in her various writings on the Neoliberal Age, have both dared to come to this conclusion. They believe that the neoliberal consciousness erodes the democratic values which are held so dearly by figures within the institutions of American foreign policy. By triumphing market growth at the cost of any subsequent inequality, neoliberalism erodes the social justice values of democracy which state that there must be a balance between equality and freedom. Neoliberalism insists that those who are able to gain capital and generate profit are deserving and those who are not able to create wealth are not deserving. This way of thinking has been able to justify the massive inequalities of today yet raises questions about human dignity in the face of ever increasing profit accumulation.

The neoliberal structure is surprisingly resilient. Despite its inherent contradictions—of bringing prosperity to all yet increasing the wealth gap—this model has persisted in the face of a resurgent global populism. Populism’s rise has been widespread, reaching from Eastern Europe to South America. In the United States, the recent campaign success of Bernie Sanders on the left and the recent presidency of Donald Trump on the right reveal the discontent millions of Americans feel with the Neoliberal status quo. Yet, Trump’s single term as president stands as a testament to

⁵ Thomas Piketty. *Capital in the Twenty First Century*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2014.

neoliberalism's sustainability. Despite the populist beginnings of President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, his time in D.C. softened his fringe characteristics.⁶ He ran on a populist platform that promised to put the middle class first. Then, predictably, four years later, neoliberal forces shaped Trump into the ideal neoliberal president. He prioritized large corporate interests and market deregulation over protecting individual well being, precisely the role that the paradigm assigns to government. In the face of populist threats, neoliberalism perseveres as the predominant voice, offering market-based solutions to social issues.

The consequence of unrestricted financial activity and market-based solutions in the U.S. is rising income inequality. The upper echelon of income earners in the U.S. have seen vast income growth by reaping the benefits of global supply chains, financialization, and deregulation. The ways in which economists identify the rise of income inequality in the neoliberal age are abundant and comprehensive. The average household income of the top 1 percent of income earners, for example, increased by 226% from 1976 to 2016.⁷ The bottom 50% of income earners, however, did not access the same benefits of globalization and often bore the brunt of globalization's consequences, with many individuals facing wage depreciation and job loss due to outsourcing. For this portion of the population, income only grew by 47% in the same period.⁸ The average CEO earned twenty times the average worker in 1979, while in 2018 they earned 278 times their average worker.⁹ The widely used 90/10 ratio which compares the top 10% of income earners in the U.S. to the bottom 10% of income earners shows that the ratio has increased every decade since 1980.¹⁰ In 1980, the ratio stood at 9.1, meaning the top percentile earned about 9 times the income of the bottom percentile.¹¹ In 2018, the ratio became 12.6, demonstrating an increase of 39%.¹² The Gini coefficient which quantifies income inequality from 0 to 1, or from perfect equality to complete inequality, stands at .434 in 2017— higher than in any other G-7 country,

⁶ Peter Beinart. "How Trump Lost". *The New York Review of Books*. November 7, 2020.

⁷ Anshu Siripurapu. "The U.S. Inequality Debate." Council on Foreign Relations, July 15, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-inequality-debate>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Ruth Igielnik and Rakesh Kochhar. "Trends in U.S. Income and Wealth Inequality." Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, August 17, 2020. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>.

¹¹ Horowitz..

¹² Ibid.

and comparable to the level of inequality in India (.495).¹³ As numerous statistics and economists can attest, income inequality has skyrocketed during the neoliberal age.

In addition to rising income inequality, the “deregulation” of the financial sector and stripping of welfare programs under neoliberalism allowed investors to make riskier, and potentially dangerous, investments while leaving workers without a social safety net. The best known, and one of the most consequential, examples of these dangers was the 2008 global financial crisis. In 2000, Congress passed the Commodity Futures Modernization Act which deregulated “over-the-counter” derivatives like mortgage-backed securities (MBS).¹⁴ Prior to 2008, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, banks, and hedge funds MBSs which were mortgages bundled together as a financial product; investors who bought MBSs owned the right to receive mortgage payments.¹⁵ Because there were no regulations to stop them, investors created another speculative financial product based off of mortgages and MBSs: the Collateralized Debt Obligation (CDO).¹⁶ Risk-assessment firms like Moody’s gave the MBSs and CDOs a AAA rating, declaring them as safe as U.S. treasury bonds.¹⁷ Some critics argue that it was financial incentive that drove these firms to overrate the mortgages while others believe that it was simply a lack of transparency on the part of the firm’s leaders. Regardless, a lack of regulation of the financial sector led to serious abuses of the market.

For the average American who was uninvolved in the stock market, the financial crisis had a catastrophic effect. While companies like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers spiraled into bankruptcy and the stock market lost nearly \$8 trillion in value between 2007 and 2009 as a result of the actions of these firms, Americans faced a 10 percent unemployment rate at the peak of the crisis and lost \$9.8 trillion in wealth.¹⁸ Even those who did not engage with the subprime housing market saw the values of

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Eric Rauchway. “The 2008 Crash: What Happened to All That Money?” History.com. A&E Television Networks, September 14, 2018. <https://www.history.com/news/2008-financial-crisis-causes>.

¹⁵ Beder, S. “Neoliberalism and the global financial crisis.” Social alternatives, August 1, 2009.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ CFR Staff. “The Credit Rating Controversy.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, February 19, 2015. <https://www.cfr.org/background/credit-rating-controversy>.

¹⁸ Merle Renae. “A Guide to the Financial Crisis - 10 Years Later.” The Washington Post. WP Company, September 10, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/a-guide-to-the-financial-crisis--10-years-later/2018/09/10/114b76ba-af10-11e8-a20b-5f4f84429666_story.html.

their homes and retirement funds plummet.¹⁹ Deregulation granted the “Electronic Herd,” or “the faceless stock, bond and currency traders sitting behind computer screens all over the globe, moving their money around with the click of a mouse... [and] big multinational corporations who now spread their factories around the world,” largely unrestricted power over the financial wellness of everyday people.²⁰ It was the financial deregulation sponsored by neoliberal ideology that enabled the Herd to take advantage of market weaknesses.

The 2008 financial crisis sparked backlash across the world, protesting the state of inequality, privilege, and regulation in the economy. In the Middle East, each country experienced the financial crisis differently, but most of the region experienced an overall increase in food prices which hit their poor the hardest.²¹ In Egypt, for example, bread-prices increased 5 times after the crash, leaving the 32 million people who live on less than \$2 a day there struggling to find their next meal. In response, riots began.²² In Morocco, the government ended a 30 percent price hike after protests erupted over costs of bread.²³ And in Jordan, the costs of staple foods increased by 60% in one year but were met with more peaceful protests.²⁴ The U.S. was also met with protest after the financial crisis with the emergence of the Occupy movement. Their protest addressed rising inequality, unregulated wealth accumulation, money in politics, low minimum wage, and most notably a general anger towards Wall Street.²⁵ Only a month after 1,000 protesters gathered on Wall Street, 900 cities across the globe hosted Occupy protests.²⁶ As the failures of neoliberalism and late-stage capitalism have come to affect, upset, and mobilize more people, neoliberal economic policies have instigated protest, resistance, and critique across the globe.

¹⁹ Merle Renae. “A Guide to the Financial Crisis - 10 Years Later.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/a-guide-to-the-financial-crisis--10-years-later/2018/09/10/114b76ba-af10-11e8-a20b-5f4f84429666_story.html.

²⁰ Thomas L. Friedman.. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. United Kingdom: St Martins Press, 2012.

²¹ Ibrahim Saif. "The Food Price Crisis in the Arab Countries: Short Term Responses to a Lasting Challenge." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June, 2008.

²² Saif..

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Michael Levitin. “The Triumph of Occupy Wall Street.” The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 11 June 2015, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/the-triumph-of-occupy-wall-street/395408/.

²⁶ “Occupy Movement: from Local Action to a Global Howl of Protest.” The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 18 Oct. 2011, www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/17/occupy-movement-global-protest.

The consequences of neoliberalism, rising income inequality, late-stage capitalism, and populism exacerbated the devastation of the COVID-19. After the virus was first identified in 2019, most areas of the world entered “lockdowns” where businesses were closed, people lost their salary and stayed physically distant from their families, and healthcare and “essential” workers endured dangerous working conditions at “the frontlines.”²⁷ And while politicians and celebrities were quick to deem the economic shutdown and isolation as the “great equalizer,” the pandemic disproportionately affected those who were already socially and financially vulnerable.²⁸ People of color, for example, were already experiencing higher rates of health conditions, more barriers to healthcare, and lower incomes than the white population. As a result, people of color experienced more exposure to the virus, had less access to medical help, and were burdened with disproportionately more COVID-19 cases and death.²⁹ Though the U.S. government sent out one-time stimulus checks of \$1200 and increased unemployment funding, these social safety nets did little to meet America's immense need for support. Moreover, the need for a stimulus check in a time of hardship demonstrates that neoliberalism does not perform well in crisis.³⁰ Still, it is estimated that 1 in 4 households were food insecure, meaning they did not know where their next meal was coming from during the pandemic.³¹ At the same time, billionaires in the U.S. have seen their total wealth grow by \$1 trillion dollars since the beginning of the pandemic.³² This pandemic has demonstrated that neoliberalism's economic ideology and its social implications set the foundation for the devastation that was exacerbated by COVID-19.

²⁷Yasmeen Serhan.. “The Case Against Waging 'War' on the Coronavirus.” The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 31 Mar. 2020, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/war-metaphor-coronavirus/609049/.

²⁸ Bethany Jones, Jonathan Jones. “Perspective | Gov. Cuomo Is Wrong, Covid-19 Is Anything but an Equalizer.” The Washington Post, WP Company, April 5, 2020. www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/05/gov-cuomo-is-wrong-covid-19-is-anything-an-equalizer/.

²⁹ Daniel Wood. “As Pandemic Deaths Add Up, Racial Disparities Persist - And In Some Cases Worsen.” NPR, NPR, September 23, 2020. www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/09/23/914427907/as-pandemic-deaths-add-up-racial-disparities-persist-and-in-some-cases-worsen.

³⁰ Alicia Adamczyk,. “The First Coronavirus Stimulus Checks Were Deposited This Week-Here's When You Can Expect Yours.” CNBC January 12, 2021. www.cnbc.com/2020/04/13/first-coronavirus-stimulus-checks-deposited.html.

³¹ Christianna Silva. “Food Insecurity In The U.S. By The Numbers.” NPR, NPR, 27 Sept. 2020, www.npr.org/2020/09/27/912486921/food-insecurity-in-the-u-s-by-the-numbers.

³² Chuck Collins, Omar Ocampo. “US Billionaires 'Have Received \$1.1tn Windfall in Covid Pandemic'.” The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, January 26, 2020. www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/26/us-billionaires-have-received-11tn-windfall-in-covid-pandemic.

American Neoliberalism Abroad

Across the Global South, the postwar rhetoric of universal human rights has intersected with neoliberal reforms, spurring policy changes across vast regions. This rhetoric and the pitfalls of neoliberalism can be most explicitly seen in a region where neoliberalism has failed tremendously, perpetuating undemocratic forms of governance and exacerbating economic inequality. That region is the Middle East.

Following World War II, European and Southeast Asian countries emerged from colossal losses to rebuild themselves with the help of United States aid in record time. United States foreign policy makers did not see why adopting a similar approach to economic development in Middle Eastern countries would not work as well. Under the principles of the “Western universal”, the United States, like many wealthy capitalist countries, has historically invested in developing countries in order for them to achieve economic prosperity. However, populist leaders such as President Trump have committed to severely cutting spending towards foreign assistance.³³

American foreign policy until the end of the Cold War was characterized by an effort to uphold human rights in the hopes of maintaining America’s image as a democratic state. American policymakers throughout the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush acknowledged the idea of democratic peace theory, which argues that as democracies continue to rise around the world, aggressive military action between countries decreases, thus leading to significant economic prosperity.³⁴ However, the politicians of liberal democracies consistently neglect the basic principles of democratic peace theory, such as promoting peaceful dispute resolution and avoiding arbitrary wars. In the 1970s, the Carter administration placed human rights at the forefront of foreign policy decisions in reaction to the public’s discontent around events such as the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, which were tied to the previous administration. However, the Iranian Revolution sparked a debate about the effectiveness of foreign policy focused on human rights and advancing democracy. Many conservatives argued Carter’s push for reform from the shah had led to a worse situation

³³ Micheal Igoe. “Disrupt and compete: How Trump changed US aid.” Devex. August 21, 2020. <https://www.devex.com/news/disrupt-and-compete-how-trump-changed-us-foreign-aid-97955>

³⁴ Patrick G. Rear. (2013) "Democratic Peace Theory as Applied to Europe and the Middle East," *Global Tides*: Vol. 7, Article 4. <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/globaltides/vol7/iss1/4/>

in terms of human rights for Iran as a United States-friendly moderate autocratic leader was replaced by a “violent, communist-linked opposition.”³⁵ Subsequently, the Reagan administration deviated from President Carter’s human rights standpoint and pursued the opposing theory of realpolitik. Realpolitik, a foreign policy tactic that counters diplomacy based on ethics and assessments of human rights, had been heavily employed in the Nixon administration by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Realpolitik reemerged under the Reagan administration through one of its major proponents and the President’s leading foreign policy expert, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick argued that forcing autocratic leaders to pursue a moral agenda only produced greater anti-American sentiment within the country and enemies of the United States should be treated as enemies.

The extent to which the United States should weigh democracy and human rights in foreign policy decisions continues to be a contested topic as populist leaders consistently prioritize relationships with autocratic leaders based on their own needs. At the essence of realpolitik is transactionalism, a foreign policy tool which transformed the world of diplomatic exchanges. A transactional approach to diplomacy values exchanges and favors resulting in personal political gains.³⁶ Transactionalism remained quintessential in Trump’s interactions with international leaders. Relationships and foreign policy decisions that have usually been avoided by United States past presidents were alarmingly supported by the Trump administration. Despite deliberate airstrikes on civilians in Yemen and the brutal assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul by Saudi agents, Trump remained deeply committed to Saudi Arabia as a buyer of U.S. weapons and a partner against Iran.³⁷

With the rise of decolonization in the mid-20th century, Western powers looked to smaller, “compliant” countries known as client states with whom they could align to gain influence in the region.³⁸ After the end of the Cold War, however, the United States no longer heavily relied on the allegiance of client states yet continues the practice

³⁵ Tamara Cofman Wittes, “Washington, the Shah, and the Problem of Autocratic Allies” in *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, ed. Suzanne Maloney (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2020), 93.

³⁶ Hadar Leon. “The Limits of Trump’s Transactional Foreign Policy.” *The National Interest*. January 2, 2017. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-limits-trumps-transactional-foreign-policy-18898>

³⁷ Ben Hubbard. “After Trump’s Embrace, Saudi’s Brace for a Chillier Tone From Biden.” *The New York Times*. November 20, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/20/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-biden-trump.html>

³⁸ Max Fisher. “The Decline of American Client States.” *The Atlantic*. September 27, 2011. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/the-decline-of-american-client-states/245592/>

today. In the hopes of stimulating economic growth and reducing foreign debt for client states, austerity measures, as used within the U.S., have been enforced by institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. In practice, austerity requires increasing taxes while simultaneously cutting spending for different sectors in an effort to combat debt.³⁹ In the U.S., austerity has led to increased government spending towards the military with budget cuts for social programs. Social program cuts are especially hard on the most vulnerable demographics in developing countries who depend on them most, leaving vulnerable populations with even less economic support than they previously had. This has often led to protests, like the intermittent “Bread Riots” that occur in Jordan when taxes on food products rise because of austerity cuts. Because austerity cuts are unpopular amongst the majority of populations in the Middle East, the regimes in charge have to enable them without regard for public opinion, which deteriorates the country’s democratic values and instigates instability.

The Middle East’s history with neoliberal reforms serves as a microcosm of late-stage capitalism. The growth of the Middle East’s macroeconomy before the Arab Spring steadily increased in parallel with privatization and inequality. The United States’ policies in military sales to the Middle East is to ensure stable oil flow from the Gulf, maintain West-leaning allies in the region, allegedly promote democracy, and leverage greater human rights. The U.S.’s rhetoric, however, has sometimes contrasted with its actions. Although the U.S. no longer depends on Saudi, UAE and Iraqi oil as much, weapon exchange has not waned.⁴⁰ The Obama administration did attempt to shift away from the Middle East, desiring closer ties with Asia. Obama withdrew U.S. troops from central bases in Iraq and focused on containing China in accordance with his administration’s “Pivot to East Asia” regional strategy. Yet records show that the U.S. still sold countries in the region over \$138 million in weapons during his time.⁴¹ The Trump administration has not been subtle in reversing what little distancing Obama

³⁹ Peter Bondarenko. “Austerity.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. September 27, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/austerity>.

⁴⁰ Sheren Khalel. “How a history of US-Saudi ties turned into billion-dollar arms deals.” *Middle East Eye*. June 11, 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hold-us-saudi-relations-are-heading-major-change-experts-say>

⁴¹ William Hartung. “America’s Not-So-Secret Weapon for Dominating the Middle East.” *truthdig*. Nov 18, 2019. <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/americas-not-so-secret-weapon-for-dominating-the-middle-east/>

attempted, signing a \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi in 2017.⁴² Several times in history, the U.S. has supported dictatorships to preserve their own interests, including Mubarak's regime and Gulf monarchies. In the sixties and seventies, the U.S. poured resources into Iran to guarantee security interests. This action came after the U.S. helped orchestrate a coup to overthrow the democratically elected prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh and replace him with the Shah in order to prevent the country from nationalizing oil.

The region has been a central priority of U.S. foreign policy throughout the post-Cold War period, mainly due to security-centered issues. When Pan-Islamist and Pan-Arab movements failed to unify the Middle East post-WWII, power and Sunni Islamic authority in the Middle East transferred from Egypt to Saudi Arabia. Al-Azhar, an institution for Islamic and educational reference that served as a center of Sunni Islamic learning for millennia, found itself diminishing in power.⁴³ Egypt had high levels of economic development through the early and mid-1900s compared to the rest of the Middle East, until Saudi Arabia's oil revenues picked up in the 1950s and beyond.⁴⁴ Egypt's representative voice for Pan-Arab ambitions waned after Gamal Abd al-Nasser, who had spread Pan-Arab rhetoric from elite publicists to the masses, passed away, and the regime signed peace treaties with Israel under Sadat.⁴⁵ The 1979 Iran Revolution challenged Saudi's Sunni status quo power in this period by overthrowing the Shah and declaring Iran a theocratic state. While Saudi Arabia and Iran's feud is really a political and economic struggle for hegemonic power in the Middle East, their religious differences exacerbate their rivalry. Both exploit sectarianism to enable proxy wars in the region.⁴⁶ Iran's 1979 revolution alarmed the U.S. since the country was no longer tethered to a pro-Western puppet government. With a newfound heavily anti-American mantra, Iran replaced the Soviet Union as a U.S. enemy.⁴⁷ Both the U.S.-Russian and

⁴² Sheren Khalel. "How a history of US-Saudi ties turned into billion-dollar arms deals."

⁴³ Steven Barraclough. "Al-Azhar: Between the Government and the Islamists." *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (1998): 236-49. Accessed January 19, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329188>.

⁴⁴ Barraclough, 238.

⁴⁵ Bishku, Michael B. "NASSER AND EGYPT'S ROLE IN THE ARAB WORLD." *Journal of Third World Studies* 5, no. 2 (1988): 45-54. Accessed January 19, 2021. doi:10.2307/45193061. [NASSER AND EGYPT'S ROLE IN THE ARAB WORLD on JSTOR](https://www.jstor.org/stable/45193061)

⁴⁶ Fisher, Max. "How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore the Middle East Apart." *The New York Times*. November 19, 2016. [How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore Apart the Middle East - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/middleeast/iran-saudi-proxy-struggle.html)

⁴⁷ Ekmanis, Indra., and The World Staff. "The history of US-Iran relations: A timeline." *Foreign Policy: The World*. January 3, 2020. [US-Iran relations: A timeline \(pri.org\)](https://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=100000)

Saudi-Iranian proxy wars have expanded violent salafi-jihadist and militant Islamist groups in vulnerable geographies including Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The U.S. became especially interested in the spread of Salafi-jihadism after 9/11, which ushered in the Bush administration's 'War on Terror.'

The Post-9/11 Era

The post-9/11 era spurred on Americans' fear and ignorance about Islam and the Middle East, affecting attitudes towards those communities domestically.⁴⁸ New police-intelligence programs were implemented following 9/11 that cracked down on Islamic and Middle Eastern communities. Spies infiltrated mosques, high schools, and neighborhoods to report back to the FBI any suspicious "jihadist" behavior. The range for this 'suspicious' behavior extended from giving up gambling to wearing traditional Islamic clothing to growing a beard. The Patriot Act and the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy emboldened police officers to stop and search anyone on the street who appeared suspicious based on generic characteristics, which naturally led to discrimination towards and targeting Middle Eastern and Muslim people.⁴⁹

Domestic paranoia reflected the Bush administration's War on Terror, which was a foreign policy campaign that emerged following 9/11 and implemented aggressive military intervention in the Middle East. Today, it is usually viewed as a failure.⁵⁰ In invading Iraq in 2003 as part of the campaign, the US entrenched itself in Middle Eastern conflicts and politics for the next decade. While the United States' policies claim to promote democracy, these policies have often resulted in trying to preserve stability and the status quo in the region. For instance, the US funds Israel's apartheid state, despite the military occupation's violations of international laws against Palestine.⁵¹ The US involved itself in Lebanon's Civil War of 15 years as part of a poorly-defined

⁴⁸ Dubosh, Emily., and Poulakis, Mixalis., and Abdelghani, Nour. "Islamophobia and Law Enforcement in a Post 9/11 World." *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015): 138-57. Accessed January 19, 2021. doi:10.13169/islastudj.3.1.0138. [Islamophobia and Law Enforcement in a Post 9/11 World \(jstor.org\)](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/islastudj.3.1.0138)

⁴⁹ Dubosh, Emily., and Poulakis, Mixalis., and Abdelghani, Nour. "Islamophobia and Law Enforcement in a Post 9/11 World." *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015): 138-57. Accessed January 19, 2021. doi:10.13169/islastudj.3.1.0138. [Islamophobia and Law Enforcement in a Post 9/11 World \(jstor.org\)](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/islastudj.3.1.0138)

⁵⁰ Thral, A. Trevor., and Goepner, Erik. "Step Back: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror." Cato Institute. Policy Analysis No. 814. June 26, 2017. [Step Back: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror | Cato Institute](https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/step-back-lessons-for-u-s-foreign-policy-from-the-failed-war-on-terror)

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch. "Israel: 50 Years of Occupation Abuses." Human Rights Watch. June 4, 2017. [Israel: 50 Years of Occupation Abuses | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/6/4/israel-50-years-occupation-abuses)

peacekeeping mission, ultimately defending a corrupt government from a variety of opposition as a stabilization strategy.⁵² Continually attempting to secure pro-West allies in order to influence an increasingly unstable region meant the Middle East was often a recipient of military aid and development money from the US.

The 2011 “Arab Spring” showcased a new US approach to supporting democracy in the Middle East. Faced with a wave of human-rights motivated uprisings across the region, the US switched its strategy from “top-down” change to “bottom-up” change. Previously, the US economically pressured Middle Eastern regimes to democratize, leading the likes of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria to adopt hybrid democracies. The governments adopted titles like ‘president’ and ‘parliament,’ but in reality, the positions hardly lived up to democratic standards. In Syria and Tunisia, the US funded workshops for locals on regional governance to empower grassroots organizations. Except for Tunisia, however, most efforts during the Arab Spring failed. In Gulf monarchies like Bahrain, the US did not support protesters at all. The US has not gained the influence over human rights issues in the Middle East from the states that it supports. Saudi Arabia, for instance, has yet to pay for its war crimes in Yemen or the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, while Turkish rebel troops continue to illegally occupy parts of Syria despite US sanctions.⁵³

However, US aid and US-backed organizations like the IMF and World Bank have successfully pushed a neoliberal agenda onto the Middle East. They have played a dominant role in privatizing numerous institutions in a region that once, in most of its countries, championed nationalization to ward off foreign influence.⁵⁴ Privatizing the Middle East works to the advantage of the US in that it supports the capitalist global market which United States corporations control and profit off of. Neoliberalization has some positive but overall largely negative consequences for the Middle Eastern populace. In Egypt, the private education system widened the economic disparity between low and high income households as their middle class shrunk. In Morocco,

⁵² Tristram, Pierre. “Timeline of the Lebanese Civil War From 1975 to 1990.” ThoughtCo. August 13, 2019. [Timeline of the Lebanese Civil War From 1975-1990 \(thoughtco.com\)](https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-of-the-lebanese-civil-war-from-1975-to-1990-3466188/)

⁵³ Frantzman, Seth. “Rape, ethnic cleansing and looting: UN reveals Turkey’s crimes in Syria.” The Jerusalem Post. September 19, 2020. [Rape, ethnic cleansing and looting: UN reveals Turkey's crimes in Syria - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com/Israel-news/Article-666666)

⁵⁴ Brune, Nancy., Garrett, Joffrey., and Kogut, Bruce. “The International Monetary Fund and the Global Spread of Privatization.” *IMF Staff Papers*. The IMF. Vol. 51, No. 2. 2004. [IMF Staff Papers, Vol. 51, No. 2](#)

exclusivity in education lay in language barriers. A generalized school system there has failed to capture the difference in dialects between rural Berber populations and Moroccan-Arabic. In Jordan, neoliberal reforms cut government expenditures at a much larger rate than tax revenue has brought in, making the government's numbers look good on a macroeconomic level but failing to uplift the poorest members of the population.

US foreign policy's continued insistence to abide by frameworks like the Democratic Peace Theory, which states that democratic countries are less likely to go to war with each other so as to preserve their economic prosperities, and trickle-down economics when interacting with the Middle East has led to free-trade agreements and special economic zones.⁵⁵ Democratic Peace Theory posits that democracies are less likely to go to war with other states identified as democratic. This approach propagated US economic interests and hoped that establishing a pro-West, pro-capitalist world order would lead to a pro-liberal one, in turn making peaceful trade more likely. This was, at least, the original intention. While there is evidence to support that policymakers sincerely believed in this limited set of theories, it is hard to not be skeptical that the US found these rhetorics to be easy justifications to support pushing its hegemony onto the region in ways that lacked nuance and did not sit well with a majority of the local population.

Despite instability in the Middle East, globalization has managed to pull the world closer together with shared ideals. Globalization has also played an important role in US global stability interests with its abundance of Multinational Corporations (MNCs). US MNCs alone account for 46.3 percent of the country's total trade⁵⁶. Since the development of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1948, later evolving into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, the United States, as one of the world's largest economies post World War II, has been given immense economic power amongst other countries. The WTO became similar to previously developed global organizations such as the World Bank in 1946 and IMF in 1945. As the WTO grew and nations became more dependent on global trade, a need for global economic

⁵⁵ Oren, I.. "Democratic peace." Encyclopedia Britannica, November 28, 2016.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/democratic-peace>.

⁵⁶ Kevin B. Barefoot and Raymond J. Mataloni, Jr. "U.S. Multinational Companies." *Survey of Current Businesses*, August 2010: 208.

stability widened. The WTO, much like the WB and IMF, holds true to much of US economic theory, promoting heavily neoliberal policies in favor of a global free market. According to its website, the WTO encourages countries to not discriminate between local and foreign products and argues against trade barriers of all sorts in order to increase competition, competition that is often in favor of more developed countries that have the ability to produce final goods. Importantly, the WTO also pushes for “stability and predictability” for this competitive global free market, mirroring US global concerns over maintaining stability. With the IMF, World Bank, IBRD, and other loan-granting organizations at the forefront of economic analysis and thought, neoliberal ideologies have been taking over much of the modern world. Despite this, these organizations have also decreased global poverty and increased GDP in several countries across the globe. Although these organizations have allowed the growth of trade between nations and the increased spread of products and ideas across borders, they have also become a powerful force of globalization, bringing about both positive and negative effects on the global arena.

With globalization on the rise since 1945, the US has gained a larger role in the global economy, forcing it to aim for global economic stability to keep its economic growth on track. The US maintained a steady, positive trade balance until 1971, when it began to import more than it exported. Since then, the US trade balance has been heavily dependent on imports, hitting its deepest trough in 2006 with a trade balance of \$-763.5 billion dollar⁵⁷ in goods and services. Because of this, it is of special US interest to maintain steady levels of global trade. Although countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region may not be amongst the top ten countries with which the US trades, their oligopoly over oil and other sources of energy, which global trade cannot survive without, is heavily notable. For example, Saudi Arabia alone holds 22.4% of the world’s crude oil reserves as of 2018, with a little more than half of all the world’s crude oil reserves located in Middle Eastern countries part of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).⁵⁸ In addition to this, the Middle Eastern reserves are nearly 40% of the world’s conventional gas reserves.⁵⁹ Because of the

⁵⁷ US Census Bureau, 2020.

⁵⁸ OPEC, 2018.

⁵⁹ Rasoul Sorkhabi. “How much oil in the Middle East?”. *GeoExPro*. Vol. 11, No. 1. (2014).

Middle East's large reserves of energy, global trade is heavily dependent on stable sources of oil. Since the US became increasingly dependent on global trade, which depends on stable sources of energy, U.S. trade depends on the steady flow of oil and natural gas from the Middle East.

With instability as a common feature in the region, many Middle Eastern countries have looked towards austerity policies in an attempt to regain economic ground. Austerity policies are measures that are taken by the government to decrease the budget deficit, usually through an increase in taxes, decrease in subsidies, and an overall decrease in government spending. This approach is similar to neoliberal ideals promoting less governmental interference. Often supported by the IMF in return for continued assistance, many countries have adopted continued austerity measures to deal with economic issues. These measures, however, often have a negative effect on many citizens, particularly those of lower socioeconomic classes. In Egypt, Sadat's regime was startled by protests in 1977 calling for an end to these measures after a rise in bread prices, a move backed by international aid associations at the time. For decades after, the Egyptian state continued decreasing government spending and subsidies with an increasingly unhappy population until the revolution occurred in 2011. Even today, years after the uprising, the Egyptian state deploys austerity measures to balance debt repayments and budget deficits. One of the most impactful austerity measures the state has gone through was the floating of the Egyptian pound in 2016, devaluing the currency by 50 percent.⁶⁰ This move was a requirement set by the IMF in connection to the loans Egypt had requested.⁶¹ The IMF has been developing a stronger relationship with Egypt's neighbor, Lebanon, since economic turmoil engulfed the country beginning in the summer of 2019. The IMF is pushing for more neoliberal rebranding of the economy and, again, more austerity measures. Because Lebanon has taken a particular financial hit this period, protests throughout the country have argued against the government's lack of response to economic and political concerns. Lebanon's economic crisis was crowned in March of 2020, when the nation defaulted on its foreign currency

⁶⁰ Mirette F. Mabrouk, "New Austerity Measures Could Hit Egypt's Most Vulnerable Hard," Middle East Institute, May 2020.

⁶¹ BBC, "Egypt Allows Its Currency to Float Freely," BBC News. BBC, November 3, 2016.

debts. This disaster highlighted the fall of another Middle Eastern nation into economic instability.

However, austerity measures can also be applied locally to deal with economic crises. Economic instability has been a key weapon between the United States and Iran, especially in President Trump's term. Since 1979, the United States has imposed sanctions on Iran. The year these sanctions were imposed, Iran's GDP growth fell from -10.5 percent in 1979 to a shocking -27.5 percent in 1980.⁶² Along with this fall in GDP, Iran's inflation jumped from 29.5 percent annually to 46.3 percent annually, and its exports as a percentage of GDP were cut almost in half.⁶³ All of these changes are signs of the increasing budget deficit, which justified the call for austerity policies. As of 2017, Iran's GDP had been fluctuating with periods of growth and decay, but not to the same extent as the fluctuations between 1979 and 1980. Its GDP is made up of 24.9 percent exports, a rate similar to that which existed before the sanctions were placed. Even after seeing Iran's normalized relationships with European allies, the United States has pushed for harsher sanctions on Iran. In the meantime, Iran has been "convulsed by the worst unrest in 40 years"⁶⁴ in November of 2019, following a rise in the prices of gasoline. Riddled by price hikes and with the US supporting further sanctions to stop economic growth, Iran has adapted some austerity policies in the midst of development.

An outlier to many of these struggles, Morocco has kept a comparatively stable political and economic situation. In the Maghreb, Morocco's situation has been relatively calm, despite some protests during the Arab Spring. Since the country's leadership responded to some of the demands of the protestors, the country has been developing at a normal rate. Morocco's growth rate averaged at 3.87 percent annually in the period between 2000-2019⁶⁵. Its inflation rate peaked at 4.5 percent in 2008, possibly in relation to the global financial crisis. In the past two decades, its gross national income (GNI) has also been steadily increasing. Despite this, the nation may still be heading towards applying austerity measures because of the pandemic, which slowed down its domestic economy.

⁶² World Bank. "Iran, Islamic Rep." *Data*.

⁶³ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

⁶⁴ Farnaz Fassihi and Rick Gladstone. "With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years" *The New York Times*.

⁶⁵ World Bank. "Morocco." *Data*.

Austerity measures are demonstrated by decreases in government spending, a key point of the neoliberal paradigm. By providing less aid for the population and lower salaries for public sector workers, the government manages to use this saved money for investment in other sectors, such as the private market. However, this leaves low-income communities worse off, especially in many countries in the MENA region where low-income communities heavily depend on government subsidies for food, transportation, and health services.

The case studies presented here all shed light on the unique effects US foreign policy has had in the Middle East, providing context and consequences of interactions between the Western power and a diverse region. We have examined US motives and institutions both internationally (in the likes of Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco) and domestically that have affected the MENA community in a 'neoliberal age,' including austerity programs and increased security spending. This group study has examined soft power, neoliberal reforms, and counterterrorism programs to capture the nuances of a long-running history in US-Middle East relations.

Summary of Case Studies

In *Nowhere to Hide: Extents of US Sponsored Neoliberalism in Egypt from Sadat to Mubarak*, Mariam Aref shows how neoliberal reforms pushed onto Egypt in the late twentieth century by U.S.-led international institutions decreased educational standards, widened the class gap, and led to the separation of public space and increased police brutality. The United States has had a continued relationship with the Egyptian government as it moved through its different stages, coming with many costs. Starting with Anwar el-Sadat, the United States began pushing neoliberal reform ideologies onto the Egyptian government through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The acceptance of these reform policies helped grow Egyptian-American relations, with the first of the series of these policies implemented in 1974 as part of the *infitah*. The *infitah* came with increases in Egyptian GDP and GNI but at the cost of a decreasing standard of education, overreliance on Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs), and inflation rates slowly creeping up. Continuing through Mubarak's reign, in which Egypt was receiving millions of dollars of aid from the US government, Egyptian educational standards did not increase. The class gap

began to grow and become more obvious in all aspects of daily life, crowned by the brutality of the Egyptian police force, the spread of privatized tutoring, and the class-based separation of public space. Despite all of these consequences, the US continued to sponsor the Egyptian government in its ordeals, growing its aid by tens and then hundreds of millions of dollars. Despite the fact that educational quality worsened, inflation increased, and Human Rights Watch released many articles about the brutality of the regime, the United States continued sponsoring neoliberal policies in Egypt.

In “Why Context Matters—Learning to Read but not Learning to Understand,” Leila Achoun explores how a USAID sponsored education program in Morocco interacted with the specific socio-linguistic context of the host country. Morocco has struggled financially in recent decades to support its growing population. Youth unemployment is unprecedented, and many of those without jobs have college degrees. The United States instituted education programs for early grades to combat low literacy rates and in turn produce employable students. The specific USAID program in question, “Reading for Success - Small Scale Experimentation” (RFS-SSE), was a literacy curriculum for second graders around the country. The program was run by Chemonics over a three year period. Chemonics is an international development aid firm with a global presence in various regions but no specific local ties in Morocco. While noble in its goal of eradicating illiteracy, RFS-SSE lacked consideration of Morocco’s unique socio-linguistic context. The program, after its application, did not improve reading comprehension in students by even a single decimal. Instead, it reinforced rote memorization of Modern Standard Arabic phonemes. This is particularly unhelpful as no Moroccan student speaks MSA in the home; half converse in a Moroccan dialect of Arabic while the rest hail from Berber-speaking households. Either way, the phonemes and grammar differ wildly. Both are spoken and unwritten languages, making reading a daunting, bilingual task. Students who went through RFS-SSE did not gain skills to improve their job prospects or increase their family’s well-being; however, they did produce better scores on standardized tests, which was the initial goal of Chemonics’ project.

In “Systemic Bias in the U.S. Department of State and Its Effect on Iran Policy,” Karina Ourfalian examines the role of echo chambers in the history of the State Department and its impact on post-1979 Iran policy. The advancement of a homogenous

State Department has led knowledge production on Iran to be fueled by a single narrative. The chapter emphasizes that diversity in the State Department with regards to Iran must be observed as a systemic problem, meaning that if one challenges the status quo within the establishment, he or she will be received with hostility. Every year, it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve a more impartial State Department as it continues to face budget cuts and must compete with the private sector. A State Department without regard for inclusion and diversity will perpetuate the existing unpredictable and problematic foreign policy decisions of the Trump administration towards Iran. In addition, the State Department's focus on primarily addressing members of the Iranian community through "native informants" and "ethnic lobbyists" further fuels a biased production of knowledge.

In "The Face(s) of Surveillance: Contemporary Policing and Post-9/11 Counterterrorism Policy," Jessica Brouard analyzes the ongoing expansion of domestic counterterrorism programs in the United States. Since 9/11, the U.S. government has spent millions of dollars each year on these programs, which address the state's concern that vulnerable domestic residents are "radicalizing" and may end up committing acts of terror. To address this concern, domestic counterterrorism programs often use punitive enforcement such as informants, advanced policing technology, and other surveillance methods to attempt to limit radicalization, an issue rooted in social processes. The notion that punitive tactics can solve social issues is rooted in neoliberal security ideology. Due to the prominent role neoliberalism plays in governance today, as well as in economic and foreign policy interests, domestic counterterrorism programs continue to receive funding, even as social welfare programs are diminishing. For MENA communities, the targets of these programs, the expansion of domestic counterterrorism programs and industry has significantly affected their interpersonal relationships and stifled activism.

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Policy Recommendations

Below is a list of broad policy recommendations that correspond to key themes explored in the individual case studies:

"Systemic Bias in the U.S. Department of State and Their Effects on Iran Policy"

- When dealing with policy that targets a specific country and to reduce policy actions based on biased information within the State Department, there must be greater effort exerted to hear varying political viewpoints from members of the diaspora.
- In order to improve the quality of policy decisions, it should be a priority to include staff with a broad set of opinions in all levels of the State Department.

"Why Context Matters: Learning to Read but Not Learning to Understand"

- Consider the idiosyncrasies of the socio-linguistic landscape when implementing education programs, especially when implementing literacy programs since language is so deeply intertwined with culture.

- Incorporate a society's full range of languages and dialects into codified instructional materials. Implementation of mother tongue-based education is a means of introducing young students to language in a meaningful way.
- Coordinate with local organizations' efforts to teach reading skills that are relevant and relatable to students' lives and to the local job market instead of focusing on international standardized test results.

“Nowhere to Hide: Extents of US Sponsored Neoliberalism in Egypt from Sadat to Mubarak”

- When encouraging or discouraging a new policy initiative, the practical effects must be studied and audited along with the theoretical effects. Policymakers must remember to ask: who is affected by these policies? How can we better understand how individuals will be affected? International organizations such as the IMF and World Bank should consider more than just macroeconomic and quantitative data and value qualitative data as equally important. Constantly updated data, perhaps through a census, as well as regulations should be instituted to guarantee efficiency of policies in place.
- Furthermore, when encouraging foreign assistance, if it must be tied aid, then constant communication between the recipients of the aid, especially the citizens, and the aid givers should be prioritized. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and other forms of qualitative analysis, preferably orchestrated by someone who is familiar with the country's socio-cultural situation, could be helpful to understand the real effects of any given foreign aid policy.
- When discussing social tensions in Egypt, class-based tensions cannot be ignored as a vital source of contention. The cultural impacts of the separation of classes as Egypt has become more neoliberal has created an intense division of the population, a change which needs to be further studied.

Nowhere to Hide: Extents of US Sponsored Neoliberalism in Egypt from Sadat to Mubarak

By Mariam Aref

(Habibi) wants sugar, but where can I get sugar? I simply left to get sugar and they've imprisoned us both!

These are the lyrics to one of Mohammed Mounir's most popular songs in Cairo, released in 2001, the year when the country's state of emergency was extended for another three years.⁶⁶ The lyrics identify an issue present in the government at the time: extreme control of daily life. Ironically, by that point, Egypt was twenty-seven years into extreme neoliberal reform. Neoliberalism is a policy paradigm that promotes the privatization of state enterprises and pushes support towards private businesses and practices while decreasing government intervention in national practices. Neoliberalism has since developed into a form of harsh capitalism that continues to favor the rich and powerful in every aspect of daily life.

In this paper, I will focus on how the implementation of neoliberal policies have affected education, violence, protection, and public housing in Egyptian society. Slowly, Egyptians became separated by access to education, justice, and even public space until separate cultures began to take rise and polarize people even more. Despite this apparent decrease in the quality of life of many Egyptians, the United States continued to support further implementation of neoliberal policies through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and USAID.

Pre-Neoliberal Egypt

Gamal Abdel Nasser was Egypt's first president and ruled beginning in 1954 after consolidating power from Mohammed Naguib, another Free Officer who took part in the military movement against King Farouq and the British occupation. Nasser's economic views can best be expressed through this speech from Labor Day in 1966, in which he stated:

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2001. *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001: Egypt: Human Rights Developments*.

I take the worker whom you shed his blood and I give him his rights. The farmer? Socialism gives him his rights. Opportunities? Socialism provides them for everyone. Treatment? Socialism medicates.

Under his rule, Egypt moved toward socialist reforms including increased access to education and decreased private control over the market. Egyptians were promised better access to quality education, including guaranteed admission to higher education with the necessary qualifications.⁶⁷ In fact, between 1951 and 1969, enrollment in universities increased from 35 thousand to 140 thousand.⁶⁸ During this period, Nasser also redistributed land from rich landowner families to approximately 1.2 million individuals.⁶⁹ Despite these radical changes, and much like his successors, his rule was also highlighted by intense state monitoring of every aspect of Egyptian life. Nasser's reforms may have been welcomed by the working-classes, but his complete consolidation of any factory, farm, or land drew much criticism.

Anwar el-Sadat's neoliberal turn: *Infitah* (1974-1983)

Mohammed Anwar el-Sadat's *infitah*, the series of privatization tactics he introduced, is perhaps the most direct form of neoliberalism Egypt adopted in its modern history. Sadat was Egypt's president from 1970 until 1981 and was known for his peace treaty with Israel after the war of 1973. Faced with a difficult post-war economy, he looked to international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to secure loans and help foster growth. The tasks Sadat summed up near the end of his 1974 "October Working Paper" highlight the importance of growing Egyptian economic development, particularly the need to adopt an "outward-looking economic policy at home and abroad to provide all guarantees for funds invested in development."⁷⁰ These clauses signal the beginning of Egypt's increased relationship with American foreign aid. Starting in 1974, United States (US) foreign aid began gradually increasing rather than fluctuating and in 1978, it consisted of both economic

⁶⁷ Emily Cupito and Ray Langsten. "Inclusiveness in Higher Education in Egypt." *Higher Education* 62, no. 2 (2011): 183-97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41477863>.

⁶⁸ Cupito and Langsten.

⁶⁹ Stella Margold, "Agrarian Land Reform in Egypt." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 17, no. 1 (1957): 9.

⁷⁰ Mohammed Anwar El-Sadat. "The Egyptian Man." *The Working Paper*, Apr. 1974, 100.

and military assistance for the first time.⁷¹ Sadat, it could be argued, was left with no choice after the severe economic challenges following the October War but to look for sources of outside funding. In his search for ways to revive the economy and fortify his rule, he looked to foreign development organizations; all their solutions pointed to the theoretical ideal of a fast-paced, developed market promoted by neoliberal policies. The policies that came with this *infitah* included the privatization of many parts of the public sector, pushing for more Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs), and increasing trade deals with developed, often western, countries.

The unprecedented growth rates Egypt experienced under Sadat were mostly in the bureaucratic sectors, rather than the more productive ones, which aided the rising unemployment rates.⁷² In fact, between 1976 and 1996 employment of professionals and managers almost tripled. The capitalist class emerging from the *infitah* was no longer the class of landowners, business owners, or producers present in previous decades, but people who owned global businesses, a position which was limited to those who already had the means, connections, and knowledge of foreign languages. Under Sadat's *infitah*, a rising group of middlemen, ready to assist and expedite services at the cost of rising corruption, grew in power and wealth.⁷³ This led to increasing tension between the economic classes. In what would be a popular theme during the next four decades, people began calling the elite and the rulers the 'thieves' of the *infitah*.⁷⁴

As Sadat continued privatizing the economy, Egypt suffered economic problems and the gap between socioeconomic classes began to noticeably widen. The economic problems led to another IMF agreement in 1977 which pushed for a devaluation of the Egyptian pound and decreased subsidies in an effort to lower the budget deficit. The agreement redistributed power, highlighted by the monetary tax cuts on the rich which began Sadat's reign and continued until after the riots of 1977, when he implemented taxes based on income.⁷⁵ Even then, bureaucrats were able to find loopholes and exemptions. While the GDP and GNI were growing, people still could not afford bread

⁷¹ Congressional Research Service, May 2020. *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations*.

⁷² Naglaa El-Ehwany and Heba El-Laithy, "Poverty, Employment and Policy-Making in Egypt." *Towards Decent Work in North Africa*, vol. (1): 3, 40.

⁷³ Risa A. Brooks. "EGYPT IN THE 1970s." *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment*. (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 114.

⁷⁴ Philip Marfleet. "Mubarak's Egypt - Nexus of Criminality." *State Crime Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 119.

⁷⁵ John Waterbury, "The 'Soft State' and the Open Door: Egypt's Experience with Economic Liberalization, 1974-1984," *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 1 (1985): 72.

without subsidies. Between 1970 and 1980, the highest earners under Sadat's reign increased their income from 5 to 22 percent.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, inflation steadily increased, reaching 12.4 percent by 1980 when it had been at 1.3 percent just nine years earlier. Yet, salaries, particularly for public sector employees, did not increase in corresponding fashion. People who felt that they would be negatively affected chose to leave and work abroad, usually in the Gulf, with the aim of gaining a higher income and sending money back to their families in Egypt. Remittances slowly grew as an important source of Egypt's GDP. With all this in mind, Sadat's Egypt gave room for the non-military elites to begin to gain control over the Egyptian market as more opportunities arose for tax-free income sources and a decrease in state monitoring of businesses and market practices in an effort to privatize emerged.

The resulting riots of 1977 should have been seen as a powerful response to neoliberal policies and their true effects on the Egyptian people rather than as simply another protest. The riots called for the end of Sadat's government and went so far as to damage police stations as well as destroy a poster of the president.⁷⁷ By the end of the riots, forty individuals were killed as the government called for the army to take to the streets in order to keep the peace.⁷⁸ The protests' chants were almost identical to the calls of Egyptians in 2011 to take down the government. Both calls reflected the social justice Egyptians have been promised without return as a result of the privatization of the market and the uncontrolled rise of the elite. Yet privatization continued to expand. While Sadat pursued neo-liberal policies until his assassination in 1981, it is under Mubarak that the full extent of this redistribution of power under the neoliberal economy can be highlighted.

Hosni Mubarak and the 'uprising against neoliberalism' (1983-2011)

Following Sadat, Mubarak's rule has been noted by Joshua Stacher as an example of what neoliberalism in Egypt can lead to, with the resulting revolution in 2011

⁷⁶ Noha Mellor, "Misri Effendi: The Squeezed Middle Class." In *The Egyptian Dream: Egyptian National Identity and Uprisings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016): 69.

⁷⁷ "Thousands in Egypt Riot Over Price Rise." *New York Times*, January 19, 1977.

⁷⁸ "40 Dead in Riots in Egypt." *Gwinnet News* (Lawrenceville), January 20, 1977.

appropriately named an “uprising against neoliberalism.”⁷⁹ Hosni Mubarak was the president of Egypt from Sadat’s assassination in 1983 until the revolution in January of 2011. Under his rule, imports, as a percentage of GDP, ranged from a low of 22.2 in 1986 to a peak of 35.4 percent in 1990.⁸⁰ Although Egypt was still adapting to more neoliberal policies, state control over the economy never faltered. In his book *Watermelon Democracy*, Joshua Stacher highlights that although the state agreed to neoliberal reforms through IMF policies, it never truly left the market. It continued to monitor social and public spaces, and, most importantly, continued to have the ability to support the groups and people it wished to support against all others through the neoliberal policies it implemented. It is this ability to support or destroy that gave the state power over all aspects of life in Egypt, except for the small percentage of people who could afford to buy their own autonomy.

Furthermore, the Mubarak regime inherited Sadat’s neoliberal problems, and the class gap widened even further. A study conducted over the course of ten years, from 1990 to 2000, showed that despite economic growth, poverty persisted and the number of poor increased.⁸¹ Furthermore, under Mubarak’s reign, unemployment (as a percentage of total labor force) increased from 2.4 percent in 1981 to more than three times that number at 8.8 percent by 2010.⁸² By 2010, income shared by the highest 10 percent of earners reached 26.1 percent, a number that had stayed relatively stable since 1990, compared to the income shared by the lowest earning 10 percent at 4.1 percent of national income, a drop from the already low 8.7 percent in 1990. In 2006, a newspaper published that 20 percent of the population controlled 80 percent of the wealth.⁸³ Throughout Mubarak’s reign, although GNI per capita consistently grew, the percentage of the population facing unemployment increased, along with the percentage of the population at or below national poverty lines, which reached 25 percent by 2010. Similarly, the percentage of income held by the lowest earning 10 percent never

⁷⁹ Joshua Stacher, “An Uprising against Neoliberalism?: The State, Military Inc., and the Political Economy of Egypt.” In *Watermelon Democracy: Egypt’s Turbulent Transition* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2020): 124-159. doi:10.2307/j.ctvz93804.10.

⁸⁰ World Bank. “Egypt, Arab Rep.” *Data*.

⁸¹ Naglaa El-Ehwany and Heba El-Laithy, “Poverty, Employment and Policy-Making in Egypt,” *Towards Decent Work in North Africa* vol. (1): 35.

⁸² World Bank. “Egypt, Arab Rep.” *Data*.

⁸³ “The Crisis.” *Al-Karama* (Cairo), October 27, 2008.

exceeded 4.2 percent (1995), ending at 4.1 percent by 2010.⁸⁴ In other words, although GDP has grown fairly consistently, 25 percent of the population was still facing poverty. The highest earning 20 percent of the population was earning 40 percent of the average national income.⁸⁵ By the end of the 90's, Egypt's economy was controlled mostly by 24 families.⁸⁶ It is clear that the neoliberal policies implemented by the state, combined with intense regulation over the market by the government, led to an increase in the class gap and a decrease in equality of opportunity.

The Role of the United States

Sadat and Mubarak did not embark on their neoliberal journey alone. The United States, through organizations such as the IMF, USAID, and the World Bank, has provided aid and developmental assistance to Egypt throughout both the Mubarak and Sadat eras. After the October War ended, Egypt began privatizing its economy in exchange for aid from the United States and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.⁸⁷ From 1974 until the end of Sadat's governance in 1981, foreign direct investments in Egypt increased from both Western and Gulf countries. World Bank data show that the net inflows of foreign direct investments started at \$130,000 in 1974 (at the beginning of the *infitah*) and reached, after a mere seven years, \$752,571,429.6. The United States alone committed about \$21 billion dollars of aid between 1975 and 1996.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, imports of goods and services rose from 17 percent of GDP in 1974 to approximately 43.5 percent in 1981. Although the *infitah* helped grow GDP and the Egyptian economy, it did this by priming the market for imports rather than investments in education or industry. The dependence of Egypt's GDP on foreign trade grew from 35 percent to a shocking 97 percent between 1974 and 1979.⁸⁹ Yet, this increase was also accompanied by large rates of inflation, which reached 20.5% in 1980, one year before Sadat's assassination, and did not drop below

⁸⁴ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

⁸⁵ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

⁸⁶ Noha Mellor, "Misri Effendi: The Squeezed Middle Class." In *The Egyptian Dream: Egyptian National Identity and Uprisings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016): 69.

⁸⁷ Soheir A. Morsy. "U.S. Aid to Egypt: An Illustration and Account of U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1986).

⁸⁸ Denis J. Sullivan. "American Aid to Egypt, 1975-96: Peace Without Development." *Middle East Policy Council*, 1996.

⁸⁹ Noha Mellor. "Misri Effendi: The Squeezed Middle Class." In *The Egyptian Dream: Egyptian National Identity and Uprisings*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016): 69.

double-digits until fourteen years later in 1994. It is again notable that, although neoliberalism is highlighted by the state's lack of interference in the market, the Egyptian government has never given up its strong hold over the market nor its consistent interference in public space. In his essay *Egypt Under Sadat: Elites, Power Structure, and Political Change in a Post-Populist State* (1981), author Raymond A. Hinnebusch explained the dynamic of Sadat's approach to governance:

Sadat has also rewarded the elite, winning loyalty by policies which respond to its interests and ideals – from *Infitah* and political relaxation to his relative tolerance of corrupt practices⁹⁰.

Rather than retreat from neoliberal policies after seeing the impact they had, international organizations and institutions continued supporting these policies, the government, and the military. Between 1974 and 1981, loans to Egypt from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Organization (IDA), both belonging to the World Bank, grew from \$35,853,000 to \$932,357,356, meaning they grew 26 times, while use of IMF credit expanded from \$113,808,000 to \$312,946,223, about 2.75 times the original amount. The widening socio-economic gap resulting from the neoliberal agenda began appearing under Sadat's reign in 1974. Despite the increasingly harmful effects of neoliberalism, including riots which threatened the stability of the regime in 1977, the United States continued supporting and sponsoring neoliberalism under the guise of development and globalization.

Meanwhile, Mubarak's rule expanded current neoliberal attitudes. Beside continuing government control over the media, Mubarak's privatization reached all aspects of society. Under Mubarak's rule, US support for the neoliberal policies Egypt was adopting still continued to flourish. Between 1981 and 2011, IBRD and IDA loans to Egypt grew from \$932,357,356 to \$4,076,000,000, four times the original amount, whereas the use of IMF credit went from \$312,946,223 to \$1,379,000,000, a little more than four times the original amount.⁹¹ In fact, before US assistance for education began to decrease in the last decade of Mubarak's rule, the US alone appropriated \$87.504

⁹⁰ Raymond A. Hinnebusch. "Egypt Under Sadat: Elites, Power Structure, and Political Change in a Post-Populist State". (Oxford University Press, 1981): 445

⁹¹ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

million dollars' worth of educational assistance to Egypt, which had a population of a little more than 78 million individuals. In other words, every citizen in Egypt should have had about one million dollars invested in their education in 2007, but these funds do not show in the massive educational disparity in the country nor in the decreasing quality of and expenditure on education. Meanwhile, while about 90 percent of the Egyptian private sector is made up of small enterprises, USAID projects were not designed to help small businesses, nor did it reach them.⁹² USAID projects have a long history of only helping large, private enterprises. Despite all of this, in 2008—just a mere three years before the end of Mubarak's three-decade long reign—Egypt was declared a 'top reformer' by the World Bank.⁹³ Loans by the IMF and the World Bank continued to come in; aid from the US continued to be handed out. Neoliberalism, as the Egyptian experience experienced it, had the effect of deepening class divisions and giving the state free reign on the road to authoritarianism.

Education in the Neoliberal Economy

In the midst of Sadat's *infatih*, an issue emerged that would continue to plague Egypt for decades: the decreasing quality of education. Perhaps the biggest hurdle to class mobility in Egypt is access to quality education, despite public education being, technically, of very little expense. Under Sadat's rule, government expenditure on education ranged from 4.5 percent of GDP in 1972 to 5 percent at the beginning of the *infatih*; then, by the end of his reign in 1981, it dropped back to approximately 4.3 percent. These are relatively small fluctuations, except when we consider this decrease alongside the increasing number of students. Between the time that he took power and the end of this reign, the Egyptian population grew by more than six million individuals, about an extra 20 percent from 1970. Just as the number of students increased, along with the general population, so too did educational attainment increase. Net school enrollment went up from 65 percent in 1982 to an impressive 95.5 percent in 2010, while adult literacy reached 72 percent in 2010.⁹⁴ Although gross enrollment in primary school only increased by 1.8 percent from 1974 to 1981, enrollment in secondary school

⁹² Soheir A. Morsy. "U.S. Aid to Egypt: An Illustration and Account of U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1986): 358-89.

⁹³ Philip Marfleet. "Mubarak's Egypt - Nexus of Criminality." *State Crime Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 114.

⁹⁴ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

increased by 14.3 percent and enrollment in post-high school institutions increased by 6.9 percent in this same period.⁹⁵ And yet, while school enrollment increased, the National Council on Education found that, by 1981, approximately 51 percent of teachers were not certified, 44.5 percent of school buildings were not usable, and the dropout rate for primary school was 20 percent. Furthermore, inflation steadily increased after 1974, peaking at 23.5 percent in 1979 and decreasing thereafter. Through this period, salaries minimally increased, if at all.⁹⁶ Inflation along with a lack of increasing salaries led to a decreasing quality of life for teachers employed in the public sector, which provided a major incentive for teachers to either switch to the private sector or teach privately, a recurring pattern throughout both the Sadat and Mubarak regimes. Meanwhile, overcrowding in the classroom began to rise as an issue that slowly pushed those who could afford to leave into the private educational systems. In Sadat's focus on privatization rather than quality of life, the advances in educational quality that occurred under Nasser began losing their value. Education slowly became a commodity, rather than a right, much like everything else under the neoliberal regime.

Sadat's rule may have begun the destruction of the Nasserist ideal of free quality education for all, but Mubarak's rule destroyed it. Mubarak decreased spending on education from a meager 4.5 percent in 1982 to an even bleaker 3.76 percent by the end of his rule in 2010. Yet the population under his reign almost doubled from 44,400,114 Egyptians in 1981 to 84,529,250 in 2011.⁹⁷ This population increase exacerbated issues that had started under Sadat, such as overcrowded classrooms and a lack of teachers. While school enrollment, particularly at the primary level, grew, so too should the number of classrooms and teachers have grown to provide for these students. To accommodate growing numbers, some schools shortened class periods to include two or more shifts per day, with classrooms often housing more than 50 children.⁹⁸ Even the curriculum was a serious problem in the years of Mubarak. Facing a curriculum that had not been updated in years, much of what was taught in school was government propaganda created for the purpose of promoting Mubarak's state and silencing

⁹⁵ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

⁹⁶ Mariz Tadros. "State Welfare in Egypt since Adjustment: Hegemonic Control with a Minimalist Role." *Review of African Political Economy* 33, no. 108 (2006): 241.

⁹⁷ World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

⁹⁸ Alexander Abuaita, "Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization." (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 50.

teachers who wished to speak out against the state of educational affairs.⁹⁹ According to the statistics of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, between 2003 and 2007, students' scores in Egypt in mathematics declined from 406 to 391. The quality of public education had reached a point where up to one third of those who graduated after nine years of compulsory education were *still* illiterate.¹⁰⁰ The cuts in government spending in education in pursuit of globally promoted neoliberal policies came at the cost of an entire country's educational system and future and yet, they were still globally supported. Not only were school students under-educated, but students interested in college would be disappointed to learn that they did not possess the requisite skills in the classroom, a result of a curriculum which emphasized memorization skills.¹⁰¹ The market was rather dismal for college graduates, with unemployment for those with advanced education reaching 18.5 percent by 2010, in comparison with unemployment for those with basic education at 2.9 percent.¹⁰² In fact, the percentage of people with a university degree dropped from 20.23 percent in 1986 to 12.56 percent in 1996.¹⁰³ Out of the 14 percent unemployment rate in 1992, most of the unemployed were graduates with an "intermediate level of education."¹⁰⁴ Yet, many still considered a university degree the way out of small wages and low living standards.

Perhaps under the extended rule of Mubarak, the effects of neoliberalism on the privatization of education entered into full effect. As government funding for public education decreased, more and more people turned to privatized education. With the resulting decrease in quality, many teachers opted not to teach in state schools because they believed that they were being severely underpaid. Many chose instead to teach after-school hours to students who were able to pay the extra fees of tutoring. Private tutoring was not a marginal enterprise; about 50 percent of primary school students

⁹⁹ Alexander Abuaita, *Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization*. (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 65.

¹⁰⁰ Hania Sobhy, "The De-Facto Privatization of Secondary Education in Egypt: a Study of Private Tutoring in Technical and General Schools," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42, no. 1 (2012): 51

¹⁰¹ Alexander Abuaita, *Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization*. (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 92

¹⁰² World Bank. "Egypt, Arab Rep." *Data*.

¹⁰³ Naglaa El-Ehwany and Heba El-Laithy. "Poverty, Employment and Policy-Making in Egypt." *Towards Decent Work in North Africa*, vol. (1): 41.

¹⁰⁴ Cairo Papers 20th Anniversary Symposium Cairo, Egypt), and Mark Kennedy. *Twenty Years of Development In Egypt (1977-1997)*: 88.

were receiving private tutoring by the 2000s.¹⁰⁵ By the time students reached secondary school, up to 81 percent of households had children who were receiving private tutoring.¹⁰⁶ This form of privatized instruction was the solution for teachers who were underpaid and overworked during school hours, as well as the solution for the state, which turned a blind eye to the rapidly deteriorating state of education and did not want to spend money on public services such as education in order to continue promoting neoliberal policies. This decline had a particularly destructive effect on those less privileged students who could not attend after-school sessions. Although Mubarak's policies produced some positive statistics regarding literacy and enrollment rates, other qualitative measures were less positive. In order to continue adopting free market and neoliberal policies, the state turned to a form of strategic cluelessness that aided its privatization of the market. A study conducted in 2007 highlighted that more than 40 percent of eighth grade students were learning mathematics in a classroom with more than 41 students.¹⁰⁷ By 2011, the percentage of young men who had dropped out of school was 47.1 and 43.4 for young women.¹⁰⁸ Mubarak's policies, continuously supported by the US, allowed for the growth of the economy, but benefited only a small number of people who were able to thrive amid the harsh realities of a capitalistic free market born of neoliberal principles.

A decrease in government funds for education did not affect the entire population equally. The highest 20 percent of the population was earning at least 40 percent of the income. For students following the national curriculum, admission to universities was solely dependent on one series of examinations, *thannaweya aamma*, taken at the end of their senior year. These examinations produced a grade that determined to which department each student could apply. Students who can afford a better education have many options. They can continue with the public-school route and take private tutoring classes, which are, essentially, required in order to do well in *thannaweya aamma*. Students can also choose to attend a private school, learning from the governmental

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Abuaita, "Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization." (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 51.

¹⁰⁶ Hania Sobhy, "The De-Facto Privatization of Secondary Education in Egypt: a Study of Private Tutoring in Technical and General Schools," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42, no. 1 (2012): 49.

¹⁰⁷ Muhammad Faour, Report. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2012): 20.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Abuaita, "Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization." (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 60.

Egyptian curriculum yet paying more for better teachers and smaller classes. They will still have to face the *thannaweya aamma* examination but have a better possibility of learning something in the classroom and avoiding an abusive classroom. This system expands already existing class disparities in Egypt. In fact, with regards to the disparities created during Mubarak's reign, Hania Sobhy cites a study from the UNDP which states that individuals "who come from poor households constitute 5.3% of achievers in the primary education stage, 3% of achievers in the preparatory stage and 0.5% of achievers in the general secondary education stage, where achievement is highly dependent on school type, which is a proxy for social class." (2012).¹⁰⁹



Students protest the Egyptian Baccalaureate ["thanawiyya amma"] Exam. The sign says "#failed_system". Daily News Egypt, 2016.

The gold standard for school education in this neoliberal setting seems to be private, international, or special state-sponsored language schools. If nothing else, these schools produce graduates fluent in a language other than Arabic, which has become a valuable currency in a country that prizes westernization. Some of these schools require

¹⁰⁹ Hania Sobhy. "The De Facto Privatization of Secondary Education in Egypt: A Study of Private Schooling in Technical and General Schools". (*Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 2012): 55

exorbitant fees, such as Cairo American College which, for the 2020-21 school year, cost \$26,500 for high school students and more for incoming students. It is, as such, not surprising that data from the period of 2005-2008, near the end of Mubarak's rule, show that the prospect of attaining higher education is highly correlated with wealth. Egyptians from the lowest quintile have a 9 percent chance of attending university, whereas Egyptians from the highest quintile have an 80 percent chance.¹¹⁰ The highest ranked university in Egypt usually appears to be the American University of Cairo, with its exorbitant fees and Americanized curriculum and requirements, including a specific language requirement. It is necessary to add that, with the billions of dollars of aid given to Egypt during Mubarak's reign, many millions were intended as aid for educational initiatives. These sums are not present in increases in salaries, quality of education, or any measure other than increases in educational attainment numbers. Spending on education by citizens has, in fact, surpassed spending by the government by 2003.¹¹¹ Private schools flourished under neoliberalism, a key to the goals of the paradigm. With 35 percent of private school students coming from the highest wealth quintile in 2007, they had up to 1,000 schools to choose from.¹¹² With the government's focus on foreign trade, investments, and the privatization of the market, education was left to fend for itself, while the wealthy benefited from the privatization of the market.

Surveillance, Violence, and Neoliberalism in the Military State

In light of its increasing neoliberal policies, the state's ironic interference in public space can be characterized by the rise of the police and military presence in everyday life and highlighted by continuous international support for the government. Throughout the decades of neoliberalism, class divisions began to widen in Egypt. Not all people benefitted from the protection of the military. An Americanized style of life emerged as a symbol for the richer classes in Egypt, and public space was divided and privatized to a point where gated communities were advertising based on their ability to provide a 'modern' life outside of the busy streets of Cairo.

¹¹⁰ Ragui Assaad. "Equality for All: Egypt's Free Higher Education Policy Breeds Inequality of Opportunity." *Policy Perspective*, no. 2: 2.

¹¹¹ Alexander Abuaita, "Schooling Mubarak's Egypt Facts, Fictions, and the Right to Education in an Age of Privatization." (Master's thesis, Brown University, 2018): 73.

¹¹² World Education News + Reviews, "Education in Egypt." (2019, May 23).

This ability to escape abuses of power was accompanied by growing class division. Even in classrooms, because of a lack of supervision due to inadequate funding, public school teachers were left to take reign over classrooms, tending to students in any way they deemed suitable, including emotional or physical abuse. Abuse in the classroom became so normalized that it was portrayed openly in Egyptian cinema. For example, the movie, *Ramaḍan Mabrouk Abo-el-‘lamein Ḥamūda*, featured a lead character who beats and humiliates his students as a comedic center-point to highlight how strict he is as a teacher. The character was implicitly compared to his successors who would provide higher grades to students who gave less effort but were related to someone powerful. A recurring joke in the movie is that the only one who gets away from punishment is the son of a particularly powerful ministry official, despite the student’s lack of effort. Salwa Ismail (2011) demonstrated the class-based nature of subjection to state abuse by discussing the arrest of an individual, Hisham. After arresting Hisham, an officer argued to let Hisham go simply because he had a ‘clean appearance,’ a phrase often associated with those of higher class.¹¹³ Another instance provided by Ismail is the arrested worker who called her employer for help, assuming that the employer had ‘better social ties and resources,’¹¹⁴ It is the rise in classist police intervention, as a side effect of the state’s new authoritarianism in a neoliberal age, that ironically led to the demise of Mubarak.

This classist police intervention was exemplified by the ‘stop and question’ tactics, highlighted by Ismail (2011), that involved the random search of individuals, often based on appearance. These tactics led to the creation of a Facebook group called ‘We Are All Khalid Said,’ a group founded in honor of a man brutally and unjustly murdered by the police in 2010, the violence which sparked the revolution that ended up overthrowing Mubarak after three decades of uncontested rule. It is telling that the call for revolution began with the brutal police killing of Khalid Said. Millions of Egyptians could sympathize with one person’s interaction with the police on what could have been, and in many cases under the Mubarak regime, was just a regular day. It is as such not a surprise that the 2011 revolution called for ‘*eish, horreya, ‘adala egtema’eya*

¹¹³ Salwa Ismail, "Authoritarian Government, Neoliberalism and Everyday Civilities in Egypt," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 5 (2011): 851.

¹¹⁴ Ismail, 857

or 'bread, freedom, social justice,' evoking the riots of 1977. From the streets of Upper Egypt to the shores of Alexandria, Egyptians gathered to call for social justice. The decline in the quality of education and increasingly difficult social mobility led people to attempt to take power back into their own hands by overthrowing an oppressive government that had promised economic growth and instead delivered a rising class of elites and continued state intervention in everyday life without an increase in the quality of life. Yet the US continued supporting the Egyptian government, as it had since the infitah, and continued to do so through Mubarak's reign, despite clear human rights violations.

Privatized Americanization and the Egyptian Elite

In this environment, modernization and Americanization became equivalent terms. English and other foreign languages became signs of class status. Job opportunities were now open to individuals with a foreign language or even a foreign education. Private universities, such as the American University in Cairo (AUC), already holding up an image of the elite, became havens for the privileged rather than options for all to consider. The AUC has consistently been seen as the home of an economically privileged elite.¹¹⁵ With exorbitant fees compared to almost all other universities in Egypt, it remains out of reach for those without financial aid, or those who still cannot afford it even with financial aid. The image of the AUC can be seen in the movie *Se'eedy f-el-Gam'aa el Amerikeya* (*Se'eedy*¹¹⁶ in the American University) in which a high achieving student from a rural background is selected to attend AUC on a scholarship. He discovers an entirely different world in which people dress differently, include English in their regular speech, and prioritize Westernized issues that he has not been raised to prioritize. The force of the movie lies in the juxtaposition between two separate cultures growing under the same rule. Even if the AUC is a little less class-based than the movie portrays, it remains a hallmark of the culture of the elites during Mubarak's reign. Bertelsen commented on this culture in his 2012 paper, "Private Foreign-Affiliated Universities, the State, and Soft Power: The American University in Beirut and

¹¹⁵ Rasmus G. Bertelsen. "Private Foreign-Affiliated Universities, the State, and Soft Power: The American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8, no. 3 (2012): 301.

¹¹⁶ *Se'eedy* is a term usually used to reference Egyptians coming from Upper Egypt who are usually more conservative.

the American University in Cairo,” by observing that the AUC “suffers from a reputation as being the preserve of an economically privileged and Americanized elite and inaccessible to a broader groups.”¹¹⁷ The culture of the elites extended to every corner of public life. The only factor left for the complete exclusion between classes would be the separation of physical space. This separation, over time, came to life.

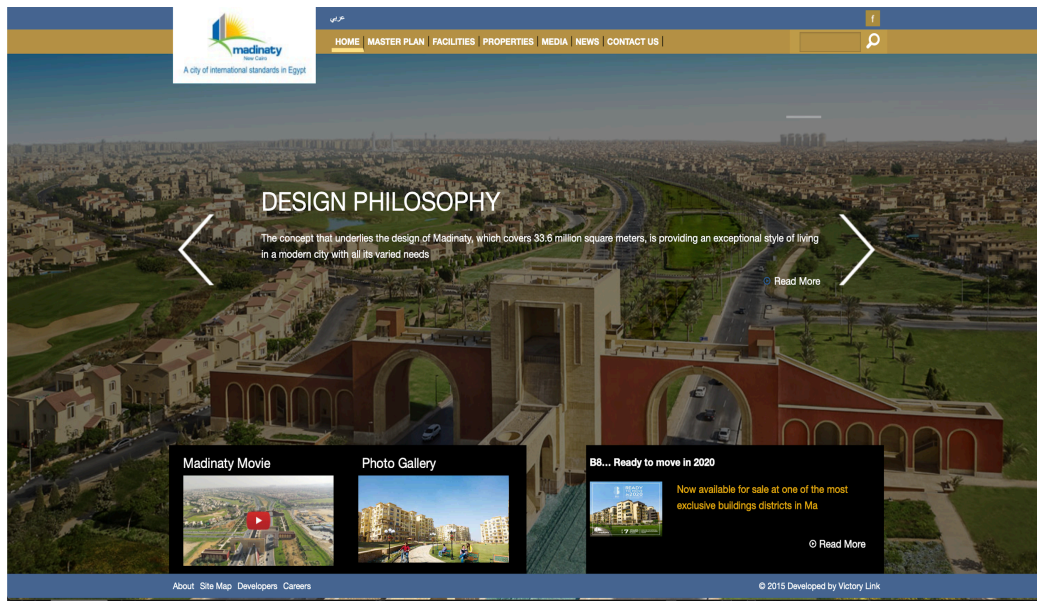
Private Housing and the Public Dilemma

While the problem of slums had existed since the time of Nasser, the situation spiraled out of control under both Sadat and Mubarak. While Sadat’s focus on the modernization of Cairo attempted to drive people out of the slums into areas marked for development, this process worked to exclude low-income citizens from the bustling city. Low-income public housing projects filled up with working-class families who had once lived near the center of Cairo but now moved to the outlying areas.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, public land was sold to private developers, such as the infamous Ahmed Bahgat under Mubarak’s regime; one consequence of this development was that the rising upper class became more segregated from working-class families. Massive gated communities now became the norm for families who could afford to live a more luxurious and less polluted life. Gated communities promised an escape from the challenges of life in Cairo. An example of one of these luxurious communities is Madinaty, an 8,240-acre project that started in 2006. It houses 600,000 inhabitants, is built as a city of its own, and is marketed as a place for ‘contemporary life,’ as the development’s website phrases it. This gated community features educational services, golf courses, clubs, private hospitals, business centers, and more.¹¹⁹ Madinaty prides themselves on being a city of ‘international standards,’ one that is apart from the bustle of Cairo right outside its gates. Global Cairo, as Sadat had hoped and as Mubarak continued to push for, had no room in it for the working-classes.

¹¹⁷ Bertelsen, 301.

¹¹⁸ Nezar Alsayyad. "Escaping the Present, Consuming the Past." In *Cairo*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2011): 262.

¹¹⁹ "Welcome to Madinaty", Madinaty. Accessed August 2020. <http://madinaty.com/en/>.



A city of
“international
standards”.
Screenshot from
Madinaty’s
website.
Compared to
informal
housing seen in
Cairo, image by
author.

Concluding thoughts

Sadat’s *infitah*, guided by policy recommendations from international organizations such as the IMF, pushed the Egyptian economy into a global capitalist market.¹²⁰ This came with many costs, including an increase in corruption, shifts in culture, the privatization of education, growing class gaps, and decreasing social mobility. Mubarak’s regime inherited the burdens of neoliberalism but rather than attempt to overcome them, the entire regime, with its elites and military supporters,



¹²⁰ Gouda Abdel-Khalek. "Looking Outside, or Turning Northwest? On the Meaning and External Dimension of Egypt's Infitah 1971-1980." *Social Problems* 28, no. 4 (1981): 394-409

kept the scheme running. Yet the United States and international organizations continued to support the Egyptian government and what it stood for. To this day, Egypt suffers from the neglected slums, the degraded educational system, and the massive social and cultural class gap that have built up over decades of neoliberal rule. Under the guise of privatization, the public was left to struggle on its own, to educate itself with what little information it had, and to create a new capitalist culture. A major result has been a deep economic and cultural schism in Egypt. For years, Egyptians had no one to answer their calls for bread, freedom, and social justice, leaving just enough room for anyone who could answer these calls to aggregate immense power. For years, under the guise of development, Egyptians were silenced—until they weren't.

This paper has given an introduction of sorts into the many ways neoliberal policies have affected Egyptian life. Through the privatization of education, housing, and safety, neoliberalism has pushed for the creation of separate societies within the same nation. It has also highlighted the role of the United States in the destruction of Egyptian society through continued American support for these policies. Through the provision of USAID support, the crowning of Egypt as a 'top reformer,' and continued pressure for increased privatization despite the responses from Egyptian citizens, the US has labeled itself a catalyst for neoliberal marginalization. All of these factors have created an Egypt only fit for the socio-economically privileged classes, an Egypt in which only those who are privileged may find themselves separate from horrible education standards, abuses of power, and violence-infested public housing.

Moving forward, the Egyptian regime should choose to support its population through investing in the educational curriculum, providing stronger guidance on what should be happening in schools, and promoting awareness campaigns in its poorest areas to prevent violence and hatred. Meanwhile, the IMF, World Bank, United States, and all other entities interested in providing loans that prove helpful should focus on assessing their programs regularly, noticing where their money is going, and researching who is benefitting. Both Egypt and external parties should begin investing in qualitative research along with, rather than instead of, quantitative research as a good step towards a better future.

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Why Context Matters: Learning to Read but Not Learning to Understand

By Leila Achtoun

“The universal was a highly unstable figure, a necessary placeholder in our attempt to think through questions of modernity.”¹²¹

This is a case study where one story informed the collective story. The lesson that can be gathered lies in the inattention to idiosyncrasies because, as we will see, context does matter. I will argue that one of the reasons that development aid from the U.S. fails is because it is based on a Western understanding of the human experience and then implemented in non-Western contexts. Basically every sphere of human life can fall victim to these cultural misunderstandings. The failure of this *Western universal* which I will explore lies in the education system and, more broadly, in the inaccuracy of assumptions about language and literacy which are inherently cultural phenomena.

This paper sets out to understand the pedagogical approaches and assumptions of a U.S.-funded literacy program in Morocco that ran from 2015-2018, [LH1] examining the interaction of the program in question with the particular Moroccan socio-linguistic context. It presents an analysis of one of USAID’s development projects, run by the private international development firm Chemonics: a literacy program in Morocco for first and second graders. I contend that the program was not successful because of two major shortcomings: the lack of multilingual education that is specific to the Moroccan socio-linguistic landscape and the lack of holistic pedagogical approaches to give students literary tools applicable outside the classroom. First, I will discuss development aid as a concept and the various ideologies behind it. Then I will begin to explore what kind of an impact Chemonics aimed to have and ended up having on Moroccan students in early grades. Next, I will provide historical background to understand how USAID’s development work in Morocco was not based on a context-specific understanding. By using a data report published by one of Chemonics’ subcontractors as well as historically analyzing the Moroccan context, I will identify key misconceptions made by USAID’s “Reading for Success-Small Scale Experimentation” [RFS-SSE] program about the reality of language and literacy. This section of the paper will raise concerns, based on

¹²¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000), xiii.

an understanding of Morocco's socio-linguistic reality, about various culturally misinformed aspects of RFS-SSE. While these critiques could easily be swept under the rug as minor oversights on paper, the lack of cultural contiguity in literacy education has damaging results when applied in classrooms.

Why development aid at all?

Modern development aid in the West is partially grounded in the assumptions made by modernization theory, which conceptualizes economic progress (normally in the form of increased GDP) as something linear which should be pursued by all countries using identical means and methods. A leading U.S. economist from the second half of the 20th century, Walt Whitman Rostow, developed this theory as an economic history of societies. His work identified key steps in growth that could be applied universally.¹²² Modernization theory is based on this understanding that progress is linear and the world's countries can be divided by levels of progress.¹²³ Rostow saw societies as beginning in a traditional form and then shifting through a phase of preparation and then a phase of economic flourishing called the "take off" until eventually the society arrives at a point of market steadiness and financial security.¹²⁴ Rostow theorized that countries were always at one of the stages of economic growth and those who were further behind needed simply to follow in the footsteps of those further ahead to achieve prosperity. These ideas are the foundation of the Western universal understanding of unequal global realities as natural and inevitable.

Rostow's ideas about modernity have shaped the current global paradigm. He created a dichotomy between the developed and the developing that still dictates the lens through which countries are viewed. Although Rostow's theory heavily shapes United States foreign policy today, there have been many legitimate concerns brought up by scholars regarding his particular perspective on progress. While Rostow speaks about the "take-off" as an exciting move towards technological advancements that all societies should strive for, he conveniently leaves out the flip side of this economic growth: the inevitable "take-down." Rostow hints at the "take down" by noting that "the

¹²² Walt Whitman Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth," *The Economic History Review, New Series* 12, no. 1 (1959): 1–16.

¹²³ Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth."

¹²⁴ Ibid, page number for quotations?

existence of the British take-off from, say, 1783 set in motion a series of positive and negative demonstration effects which progressively unhinged other traditional societies or accelerated the creation of the preconditions for take-off, where the preconditions process was already under way.”¹²⁵ Indeed, a country such as Great Britain was able to create the “preconditions for take-off” domestically. However, there were also international preconditions for Britain’s take-off, such as the British East India Company’s oppressive rule of Southeast Asia, the violent establishment of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the looting of indigenous land throughout the Americas.¹²⁶ In order for Britain to be able to take-off, it had to take down other sources of wealth and capital around the world in order to accumulate adequate means of production to establish economic dominance on the global stage.¹²⁷ This is the unhinging of “traditional societies” that Rostow saw as inherent to progress.¹²⁸ The British economy does not exist in isolation; it never has and never will. In this interconnected global world, the success of one society’s economy is directly linked to the exploitation of another.

Essentially the same historical forces that shaped today’s booming U.S. economy, which enabled a large development aid budget, also shaped the Moroccan job market and its high levels of youth unemployment. By understanding the world as interconnected, we can see that modernization theory is only a very particular case study of development. Progress has been both helped and hindered by the same factor in various contexts. At its worst, development can create more poverty, violence and unlivable conditions.¹²⁹ Yet, even at its best, development aid is an exchange based heavily on global power dynamics in which the powerful give some of their share to the powerless. It is this very dichotomy of the developed and the developing which has perpetuated global inequality.

¹²⁵ Rostow, 5.

¹²⁶ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

¹²⁷ Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism.*, Second Edition (The Contemporary Middle East) (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹²⁸ Rostow, 5.

¹²⁹ Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism.*

Who develops whom?

Much of the development aid doled out from the United States to ‘less developed nations’ like Morocco is funneled through USAID, a U.S. government agency responsible for distributing tens of billions of dollars annually in civilian foreign aid and development assistance. The process through which USAID selects partner organizations or identifies project needs reveals much about the inner workings of the agency and their priorities. When USAID identifies a need for development aid somewhere in the world, they start an application process in which organizations can submit their potential development programs. The aid money is given to the organization that makes the best presentation according to USAID’s guidelines and standards.¹³⁰ In Morocco, most often the applications are exclusively in English, with the rare exception of French. Additionally, the documentation needed to prove a successful program relies on tedious paperwork that only those deep in the bureaucratic system are able to navigate.

These USAID contracts are truly not available to anyone; they are merely accessible to the few international development firms that have perfected the craft of compiling data-rich reports.¹³¹ Even the language barrier must be understood as a major obstacle for aspiring applicants. Many local Moroccan non-profits and grassroots organizations might lack proficiency in Western languages or the proper financial documentation according to American tax standards. However, these groups which are alienated from the aid application process are the very ones with the most acute grasp on Morocco’s cultural context. The qualifications for aid contract recipients are not measured by their ability to experience success in the society where the project will be implemented but instead by their ability to conform to U.S. paperwork expectations.

How is development aid (ab)used?

Morocco and the United States are very old friends, as any Moroccan expert will quickly announce. Morocco was the first country to recognize the U.S.’s independence and since then, the two countries have maintained a close partnership. From 2013 to

¹³⁰ Devon McClord, Personal Interview, 2020.

¹³¹ Jessie Stoolman, Personal Interview, 2020.

2020 Morocco and the United States partnered to create a Country Development Cooperation strategy ultimately meant to support “Moroccan initiatives for peaceful reform.”¹³² This lofty objective is followed up with three direct objectives [DO] which address the three most urgent needs of Moroccan society: youth unemployment, lack of civic participation in governance, and students struggling at the primary school level. These pillars of Morocco’s development are considered connected and in need of address in order to reach the broader goal of reform.

This paper will analyze one aspect of the U.S. 's foreign aid relationship with Morocco: an educational program. The DO we are interested in concerns educational attainment for children at the primary level; however, it should be noted that all of the DOs are closely connected. USAID further articulates its educational mission in Morocco by confronting illiteracy and issues of access for education delivery systems. To meet these needs, as expressed by the governments of the United States and Morocco, USAID awarded the private international development firm Chemonics with a contract.¹³³ This contract gave Chemonics the money and power to implement “Reading for Success-Small Scale Experimentation” [RFS-SSE] from 2015 to 2018.



A teacher affiliated with USAID’s “Early Grade Reading Program” in Morocco.

(Source: Chemonics)

¹³² USAID, “USAID/Morocco Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2013-2020” (2013), 3.

¹³³ Chemonics, “Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) 2015-2018 Final Report,” 2018.

Why Chemonics?

I will mention that this is not Chemonics' first contract with USAID. Chemonics won major opportunities for development in Afghanistan after the war and in Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. In Haiti, 300,000 people died and they left behind 2 million homeless survivors. The international community collectively provided around 10 billion dollars to the island relief aid. This was a massive surge in the market for development firms, and Chemonics International scored a big contract. While hundreds of thousands of Haitians struggled to receive permanent shelter, Chemonics used USAID contract money to build an Olympic-sized soccer stadium next to the refugee encampments.¹³⁴ This ironic lack of attention to the specific post-earthquake context clearly illustrates where Chemonics' priorities lie. More than a decade after the earthquake, Haiti still lacks a safe regional development policy and is ill-prepared for the next earthquake which is fated to be much worse if we have even the most conservative estimates of climate change.

In Morocco, Chemonics does not have much of a history. Ironically, the Chemonics web page for the country of Morocco advertises itself as a "<1 Minute Read" but is actually completely blank. There is no evidence of past programs in the country, no mention of a local office, and no pictures or reports about current projects. Despite a lack of information about Morocco on their website, Chemonics was still in charge of a USAID contract for three years and conducted a multi-year study involving teacher training, curriculum development and student testing. The data from this development project were published in a 127-page report completed by one of Chemonics' subcontractors, School-to-School International.¹³⁵ The following section of the paper will analyze the information in that report in an attempt to measure the program's efficacy.

¹³⁴ VICE, *Sweet Home Alabama/Haitian Money Pit*, vol. Season 3, Episode 7 vols., HBO, n.d.

¹³⁵ School-to-School International, "USAID/Morocco Reading for Success Small-Scale Experimentation Activity (RFS-SSE): Early Grade Reading Assessment Endline Report," n.d.

How did RFS-SSE interact with the Moroccan socio-linguistic landscape?

Misunderstanding of the diglossic Arabic context

The central education reform implemented by RFS-SSE was a change in the pedagogical approach for reading acquisition at the primary level: the program chose to adopt a phonics-based teaching method.¹³⁶ Teachers attended workshops and designed a new curriculum centered around phonological awareness for children learning to read. This phonics-based reading approach is grounded in the assumption that students are already familiar with the phonemes taught in school from home. However, in Morocco, none of the spoken languages at home have the exact same phonemes as the language taught at school. This is in stark contrast to the Western universal perspective that spoken language is synonymous with access to the global linguistic landscape.

The language landscape of Morocco is varied, and students will speak one of two mother-tongues at home.¹³⁷ First, there is Moroccan Arabic, or Darija. Since the revelation of the Quran in the 6th century, literary Arabic has remained for the most part in its original form while spoken Arabic has evolved into various regional dialects. This language phenomenon is called diglossia. It occurs when a language has two distinct registers.¹³⁸ One register is often codified and used in formal settings, while the other may lack grammatical complexity and is used for daily interactions. Researcher Elinor Saeigh-Haddad is one of few people to have done work on phonological differences in a diglossic setting. She affirms the phonological differences between the two registers of a diglossic language specifically in the Arabic context and asserts that there may be overlapping phonological systems between the two registers, but they are in no way identical.¹³⁹

This is all to say that Moroccan Arabic differs significantly in a phonological sense from the “higher” register of Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, or MSA. MSA is the language used in educational settings, professional environments, and cross-regional

¹³⁶ Chemonics, “Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) 2015-2018 Final Report.”

¹³⁷ Daniel Wagner, *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹³⁸ Abdellah Chekayri, *Actas Del Primer Congreso Árabe Marroquí: Estudio, Enseñanza y Aprendizaje*. (Universidad de Cadiz, 2006), 42.

¹³⁹ Elinor Saeigh-Haddad, “Linguistic Distance and Initial Reading Acquisition: The Case of Arabic Diglossia,” *Applied Psycholinguistics* 24, no. 3 (2003): 431–51.

interaction in the Arab world.¹⁴⁰ Moroccan Arabic speakers will be confronted with MSA in school but not necessarily for the first or last time in their lives. Children may have had limited exposure at home from TV shows, parents listening to the radio, or news channels. However, Saeigh-Haddad writes that this exposure is in no way comparable to that of a student completely immersed in the same register of the language taught at school.¹⁴¹ There is still a phonological leap between Moroccan Arabic-speaking children and their MSA phonics-based reading in the classroom.

While Moroccan Arabic is commonly spoken in urban settings, children from rural families often grow up without hearing Moroccan Arabic until they reach schooling age. The students who do not speak Moroccan Arabic at home speak one of the Berber dialects. The Berber people are indigenous to North Africa and have historically been a nomadic community.¹⁴² These Berber students face language challenges beyond those of their Moroccan Arabic speaking peers.



*Moroccan students in USAID's "Reading for Success" program.
(Source: USAID)*

Inattention to Indigenous languages and peoples

Not everyone in Morocco speaks a dialect of Arabic at home, yet due to the country's history of Arabization, standard MSA in primary and secondary school across all of Morocco is the education norm. The Arab conquest of North Africa, starting in the seventh century, permanently shifted the socio-linguistic landscape.¹⁴³ Today, Arabic is

¹⁴⁰ Wagner, *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco*.

¹⁴¹ Saeigh-Haddad, "Linguistic Distance and Initial Reading Acquisition: The Case of Arabic Diglossia."

¹⁴² Wagner.

¹⁴³ Moha Ennaji, *Language Contact and Language Conflict in Arabic: Variations on a Sociolinguistic Theme*. (Routledge, 2002).

considered the official language of Morocco, with French and Spanish holding a special status leftover from European colonization in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the Indigenous people of North Africa are the nomadic Berber people who today constitute major portions of the populations of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. I will use the term Berber to describe both the Indigenous people and their Indigenous languages because the term is most commonly understood in academic circles and is the most inclusive term for these Indigenous groups. Although originally holding a derogatory connotation, today the term Berber is accepted as a general way to refer to what is a varied and diverse population of peoples speaking either *Tashelhit*, *Tamazight*, or one of eight other major dialects, some of which are completely unintelligible to each other.¹⁴⁴ Berber dialects are spoken natively by almost half of the Moroccan population.¹⁴⁵ A majority of Berber speakers live in rural areas, but all Berber-speaking children will attend a public or private school that teaches MSA. Due to this divide, language policy is a huge personal and political issue in Morocco.

Berber movements to increase cultural knowledge have worked to include the Berber languages in the Moroccan constitution. Yet that effort is not necessarily felt by the Berber speaking children who are confronted with a foreign language when they enter first grade.¹⁴⁶ Even UNESCO noted that students not receiving education in their mother tongue are at a “significant disadvantage in the educational system.”¹⁴⁷

Mother-tongue education has been implemented in parts of Southern Asia where Susan Malone worked on multilingual education. She argues that mother-tongue based education is necessary and more effective than the existing curriculum. Half of the students in the world who drop out of school or never attend school in the first place speak a different language at home than the language of instruction in the classroom.¹⁴⁸ A difference in language alienates children from their schooling material, creating a negative learning experience and leading to high rates of out-of-school students. Mother-tongue based education also serves a very important cultural role. Heritage speakers encouraged to continue communicating in their mother-tongue are

¹⁴⁴ Moha Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* (Springer US, 2005), 71–79.

¹⁴⁵ Ennaji, *Language Contact and Language Conflict in Arabic: Variations on a Sociolinguistic Theme*.

¹⁴⁶ Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 71.

¹⁴⁷ Susan Malone, “SIL International. Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education: Implications for Education Policy,” 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Malone.

empowered to carry on their language legacy.¹⁴⁹ This is important because languages are dying at a dangerous rate today. Losing a language means losing an entire knowledge system and means of explaining the world, which is essential to the diversity of human thought. Preserving Berber languages by establishing mother-tongue based multilingual education in the Moroccan context would serve the language learners who are impacted by RFS-SSE, as 40% of students come from Berber speaking families.

Reliance on the EGRA

In order to measure students' progress on their journey to literacy, Chemonics chose the testing material from the Early Grade Reading Assessment, or EGRA.¹⁵⁰

The first objective of the workshop was to develop two EGRA tools in Modern Standard Arabic for use during RFS – SSE's internal impact evaluation, which was conducted throughout the life of the project. The second objective of the workshop was to develop a set of SSME tools adapted to the Moroccan context as well as the realities and interests of the RFS – SSE project.¹⁵¹

To completely adapt the EGRA to the Moroccan context, Chemonics hosted a five-day workshop. The final decisions made at the workshop identified six subtasks of the EGRA that would be used in the RFS-SSE program: phonemic awareness, syllable identification, nonword reading, passage reading, reading comprehension and listening comprehension.¹⁵² Indeed, the Chemonics report recognizes the importance of the “Moroccan context” in choosing these subtasks but quickly equates their own self-interest as a dual priority.

Because the EGRA measures reading skill and not curriculum content, this tool might not have been the most appropriate.¹⁵³

Even Chemonics admitted to the EGRA's shortcomings when it comes to measuring literacy acquisition. Despite its inaccuracies, using the EGRA and any

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Chemonics, “Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) 2015-2018 Final Report.”

¹⁵¹ Chemonics, 17–18.

¹⁵² School-to-School International, “USAID/Morocco Reading for Success Small-Scale Experimentation Activity (RFS-SSE): Early Grade Reading Assessment Endline Report,” 107.

¹⁵³ Chemonics, “Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) 2015-2018 Final Report,” 31.

combination of subtasks as a way to measure literacy is very common. The testing materials and methods are easily accessible in the development world and are often recommended for early childhood education, as they were in Morocco by Chemonics.¹⁵⁴ It is possible that the EGRA was chosen as a default system without much intention behind the choice. After all, Chemonics prioritizes efficiency, as do many for-profit businesses, even within development circles. When Chemonics summarized the School-to-School international report in their final document for USAID, a quote was included from the Contracting Officer's Representative. After working closely with the development firm, she shared that "what makes Chemonics' performance exceptional is the high level of efficiency."¹⁵⁵ It is reasonable to question whether efficiency should be the key desired characteristic in educational programs when the educational process is by nature nuanced, layered, and ultimately unique to each learner.

So, was RFS-SSE successful?

RFS-SSE set out to address the Moroccan need for improved literacy rates, specifically among rural students.¹⁵⁶ The Chemonics report surveyed the country's socio-linguistic landscape and explained the dire situation as follows:

In terms of learning achievement, Morocco is behind other lower-middle income countries, and it has nearly the lowest overall literacy rate in the Middle East and North Africa region. The sixth general census in Morocco has revealed that 8.5 million people are illiterate. According to a report drafted by the High Commissioner for the Project of Statistical Studies on the Population, almost 32 percent of the population above 10 years old cannot read and write. Although the official literacy rates for male and female youth are 87 percent and 72 percent, respectively, these numbers hide significant disparities in literacy between populations in Morocco's rural and urban areas. Targeted literacy studies point to an illiteracy rate of more than 51 percent for rural girls.¹⁵⁷

All of this is deeply disturbing but completely true. Morocco does struggle with literacy rates; however, I will argue that these struggles were not sufficiently addressed by RFS-SSE.

¹⁵⁴ McClord, Personal Interview.

¹⁵⁵ Chemonics, "Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) 2015-2018 Final Report."

¹⁵⁶ Chemonics, 6.

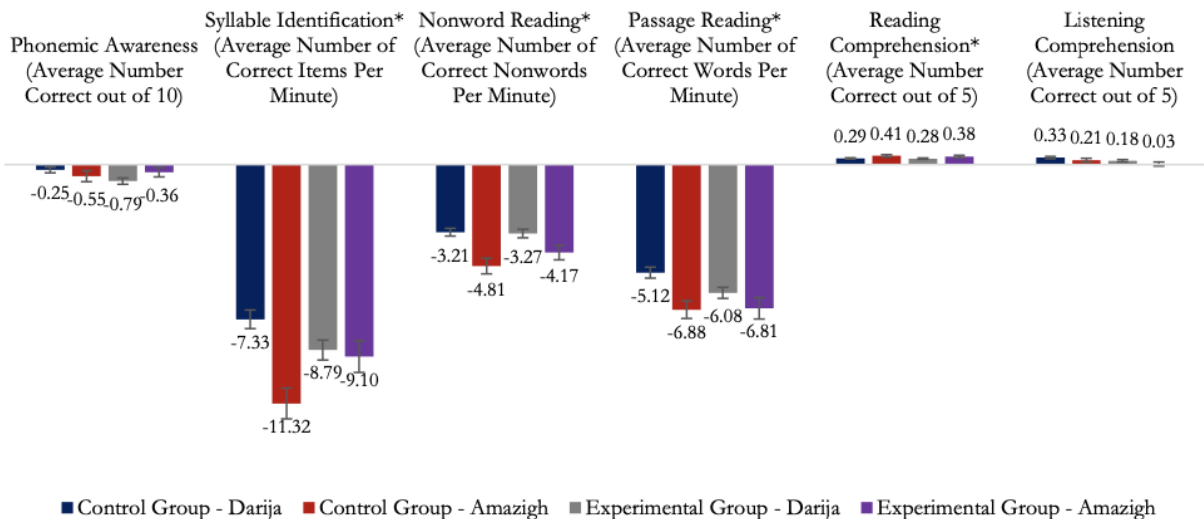
¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Did RFS-SSE reach the right students?

To begin this analysis, I will focus on the most in-need demographic mentioned in the Chemonics report: rural girls in Morocco. As established earlier in this paper, rural Moroccans overwhelmingly speak Berber dialects at home. This means that even after Chemonics' implementation of a phonics-based curriculum, literacy instruction at school is in a foreign language for these rural girls. I will argue that RFS-SSE did not accurately address the differences in student language acquisition based on language spoken at home.

According to the following chart, Berber speaking students lost significantly more language skills over the summer than their Moroccan Arabic-speaking peers. The report does not go beyond simply summarizing the chart. There is no additional discussion of changes that could be made to the curriculum to include the Berber-speaking students who fall behind every summer without Arabic exposure at home.

FIGURE 61. CHANGE IN PERFORMANCE FROM BASELINE TO ENDLINE BY SUBTASK, GROUP, AND HOME LANGUAGE – COHORT 1

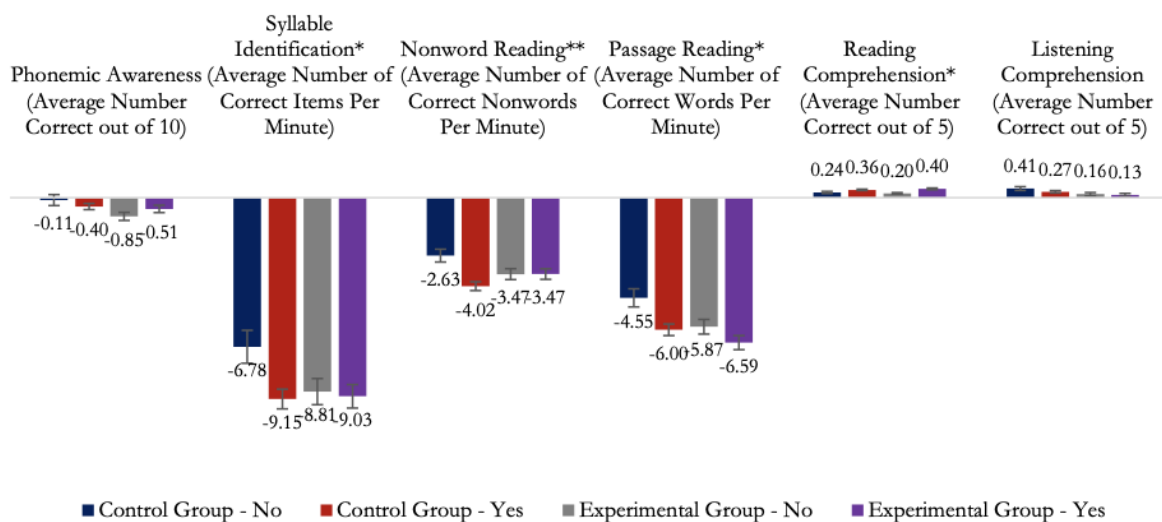


*Figure 1. A graphic included as a summary of the RFS-SSE Chemonics program, dividing student's reading accomplishments by language spoken at home.
(School-to-School International, 2017, 90)*

According to the following chart, students who did not have access to Arabic books at home performed much worse on the EGRA subtasks than students who were

able to read in Arabic at home. Here, we have an issue of extracurricular access to education materials which can be assumed to also fall along the lines of mother-tongue spoken in the home. It is far more likely for speakers of Moroccan Arabic to have Arabic books in the household than it is for a Berber-speaking family. This is another aspect of the Chemonics program that leaves behind Berber-speaking students with no supplemental Arabic material at home.

FIGURE 63. CHANGE IN PERFORMANCE FROM MIDLINE 1 TO MIDLINE 2 BY SUBTASK, GROUP, AND THE PRESENCE OF ARABIC BOOKS IN THE HOME – COHORT 1



*Figure 2. A graphic included as a summary of the RFS-SSE Chemonics program, dividing student's reading accomplishments by access to Arabic books at home.
(School-to-School International, 2017, 92)*

Keeping in mind Chemonics' previously stated goal of accurately addressing the low literacy rates of Morocco's rural students, particularly girls, we can draw some conclusions about RFS-SSE's success in reaching the demographic in question. Based on the graphs above, there are still vast differences in ability to gain reading skills between Berber and Moroccan Arabic speakers even after USAID intervention.

Did RFS-SSE increase youth employability?

To return to the original direct objectives of the United States and Morocco partnership, we see that youth employability is one of the larger goals of USAID

education programs.¹⁵⁸ Although RFS-SSE is an early grade program, if Chemonics truly intends to set up children for educational success in the future, there must be intention put into the educational path that students in Morocco take. In the country, the majority of university courses are taught in either Arabic or French. However, school subjects are not divided equally by language. While the humanities, including geography, history and Islamic studies, are all conducted in MSA, French is the language of instruction in STEM classes and all hard sciences. This gap between complete Arabization of education at the primary level and the presence of foreign, colonial language at the university level creates a deep class divide. Only students from wealthy families are able to gain a level of proficiency in French, through private tutoring or private French schools, to select a major such as math or biology. Students from less affluent families spend their primary and secondary education mastering MSA and by the time they are college-aged they will most likely choose a focus that is conducted in the academic language in which they feel most comfortable.¹⁵⁹

Though there is no hierarchy when it comes to educational foci, there is a hierarchy when it comes to ones' ability to use their educational focus for social mobility. There is a major lack of well-paying jobs associated with humanities majors, particularly in Morocco. So even if a child from a lower class, rural, Berber family attends public schools, memorizes MSA phonemes, and eventually becomes fluent in this academic language, social mobility is not guaranteed. Upon graduating high school, they will most likely choose a history major since those will be the courses they are able to understand and in which they will excel due to their practiced and polished memorization skills that were socialized throughout their schooling. Upon graduating from college, they will find themselves with a humanities degree yet no job and will probably end up working in a position that does not require a degree, for example working in a local bath house (*hammam*), a common economic opportunity for recent Moroccan university graduates with no career lined up.¹⁶⁰ We can see that primary school level success in recognizing MSA phonemes does not directly translate to financial success in Morocco.

¹⁵⁸ USAID, "USAID/Morocco Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2013-2020."

¹⁵⁹ Aomar Boum, "The Political Coherence of Educational Incoherence: The Consequences of Educational Specialization in a Southern Moroccan Community," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2008): 218.

¹⁶⁰ Boum, "The Political Coherence of Educational Incoherence," 215.

UNESCO published research concluding that mother-tongue education is the best way to eradicate illiteracy.¹⁶¹ However, Berber languages are not codified and therefore are not easily taught in schools. Mass efforts to standardize the Berber dialects would result in accessible resources for schools attempting multilingual education. There is no template for mother-tongue Berber education in Morocco, but there is reason to believe that it would effectively serve the needs of illiterate populations currently not supported by the existing Arabized education system.

Did RFS-SSE reach students successfully?

I will now focus on the larger goal of literacy as achieved through a certain pedagogy. Chemonics' EGRA workshop identified six methods of measuring literacy. I will highlight one of these subtasks and explore the student results of this section. =I will then use those results to expand into a larger conversation about literacy. We will find that definitions of literacy are culturally specific and dependent on multiple variables, both in the classroom and far beyond. I will argue that Chemonics' pedagogical approach employed in RFS-SSE reflected a narrow understanding of literacy uninformed by the Moroccan context.

According to the following chart, in which all of the results of students from Cohort 1 were measured, there was no change in reading comprehension skills from beginning to end of the experiment. While all other EGRA subtasks showed at least minimal improvement, the category of reading comprehension was not altered by USAID intervention. Students throughout the program were clearly groomed to perform well on the EGRA, as that was how Chemonics could prove its own success. Yet the fact that one of the EGRA subtasks was not improved in any way throughout the RFS-SSE program deserves an in-depth analysis. Although reading comprehension was only one of six subtasks, I will argue that it is a crucial one because we cannot have language without meaning.

¹⁶¹ Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 219.

	Control			Experimental		
	Count	Mean	SE	Count	Mean	SE
Phonemic Awareness* (Average Number Correct out of 10)	787	6.27	0.15	769	7.25	0.14
Syllable Identification* (Average Number of Correct Items Per Minute)	787	52.50	0.89	769	55.23	0.89
Nonword Reading (Average Number of Correct Nonwords Per Minute)	787	17.00	0.38	769	17.48	0.38
Passage Reading* (Average Number of Correct Words Per Minute)	787	25.69	0.71	769	26.31	0.59
Reading Comprehension* (Average Number Correct out of 5)	787	1.09	0.04	769	1.09	0.04
Listening Comprehension (Average Number Correct out of 5)	787	2.56	0.06	769	2.66	0.06

*Figure 3. A graphic included as a summary of the RFS-SSE Chemonics program which shows the average EGRA scores of students at the end of the experiment. The results of the “reading comprehension” section did not change by a single percent between the two groups.
(School-to-School International, 2017, 107)*

Although a highly debated term, literacy is generally associated with principles of written language, such as reading and writing as well as basic arithmetic.¹⁶² However, more in-depth analysis shows that in practice, literacy has multiple manifestations and is most importantly a phenomenon understood only through a specific cultural context. It is known that social interaction plays a major role in literacy skills, because of the meaning making, and thus cannot be ignored.¹⁶³ In order to standardize an inclusive definition of literacy, UNESCO relies on the term “functional literacy” as a way of measuring one’s literate abilities against the backdrop of a particular society’s use of literacy skills.¹⁶⁴ A person who is considered “functionally literate” by UNESCO is proficient in reading and writing skills applicable to their community’s needs. This can lead to semantic problems because if literacy is only social, then there is no blueprint for academic, financial or political literacy. Additionally, if literacy always has a cultural

¹⁶² Wagner, *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco*.

¹⁶³ Wagner.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

caveat, there can be no standard understanding of the term. Literacy is an inherently cultural phenomenon, but it also has universal components.

Since literacy is closely linked to culture, literacy looks different in various cultural settings. I will highlight an anecdote from Moroccan literacy researcher David Wagner, which follows a fifty five year old Moroccan woman called Oum Fatima.¹⁶⁵ She ran her household, as her husband was bedridden with a chronic disease, and therefore handled all of the family's financial matters. Oum Fatima could conduct mental math at the marketplace and deliver mail to neighbors by recognizing the handwriting of certain families and differentiating between Arabic and French script. Within her society, Oum Fatima is functionally literate. Meanwhile, we can also view this example through the lens of a definition of literacy that focuses on economic ability. Oum Fatima is indeed able to participate in her local market. Wagner even found that when tax collection occurred, she was able to quickly decipher her share and pay it on time. Oum Fatima's literacy allows her to take part in the economy. However, although Oum Fatima's literacy works in her particular context in social and financial ways, we can still feel that something is missing between the definitions of literacy by UN standards and their application in Morocco. In many ways, Oum Fatima would be considered functionally literate by the UN, but she is unable to read a book or write her own name.¹⁶⁶ Her story highlights a tension in defining literacy; literacy is clearly a combination of quantifiable reading and writing skills as well as qualitative social skills for communication within one's cultural context.

The pedagogical methods used by Chemonics in RFS-SSE appear to address only the mechanical portion of this definition of literacy. Indeed, there is much emphasis placed on students' ability to recognize phonemes as developed through the phonics-based reading approach. Yet the category of reading comprehension did not see a single improvement. If we are to conceptualize literacy as more than merely memorization of sounds, students must be able to understand what they are reading. Literacy is as much about meaning making as it is about memorization.

The Moroccan education system and the pedagogical approaches used today cannot be accurately understood without addressing the lasting legacy of Quranic

¹⁶⁵ Wagner.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 9.

schooling. In precolonial times, the formal means of education was through the mosque. Islamic learning is heavily reliant on memorization (*hifz*). Memorizing the Quran at a young age is considered the epitome of knowledge in a traditional Islamic society. Students spend years chanting verses from the holy text, often with a limited or only partial grasp of their meaning. This model of memorization is imposed by religious institutions and over time has become valued by religious members of Moroccan society. During the French occupation of Morocco and onward, these Quranic schools have grown in popularity as a pushback against secular Western schooling. Indeed, Islamic culture places value on rote memorization as the ideal form of learning; however, this emphasis on repetition has been exploited by the modern education system.

Upon the French arrival to Moroccan land, colonial observers produced catalogues of educational norms. One such observer was a central player on the stage of French colonial education in the new Moroccan colony: George Hardy. Hardy noted that students only displayed skills related to memorization and lacked the secondary cognitive abilities of analysis and interpretation.¹⁶⁷ It is easy to see the flaws in Hardy's thinking. Moroccan students were simply meeting the expectations of their teachers by perfecting the strengths they were told were worth cultivating. Many traditional Islamic institutions do not welcome dialogue or dissent, and therefore children are socialized from an early age to practice submission to those in positions of authority.¹⁶⁸ However, Hardy's observations became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The French colonial education system set up schools that perpetuated his hierarchical thinking. There were three divisions based on socio-economic status and, predictably, those in the lower class were groomed for agriculture since Hardy saw this as the only use of what he perceived as their limited potential. There was no attempt to introduce these rural, disadvantaged students to critical thinking or the dialectic process, since they had already been identified as responding well to repetitive tasks and verbatim reproduction of information.

¹⁶⁷ Aomar Boum, "The Political Coherence of Educational Incoherence: The Consequences of Educational Specialization in a Southern Moroccan Community," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2008): 210.

¹⁶⁸ Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*.

RFS-SSE is one such program that relies heavily on the educational tool of memorization. This method of education is dubbed by Paulo Freire, a social critic, as the “banking system.”¹⁶⁹ In such a framework, the students are conceptualized as containers for knowledge, and it is the teacher’s duty to dispense information to the students. The banking system does not recognize students’ agency within their own education or the teachers’ ability to learn and grow along with the students.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, RFS-SSE produced students who were able to recognize phonemes and syllables on paper but struggled to interpret the words they were reading. Although Chemonics’ pedagogical approach produced students who were able to improve their overall test scores on the EGRA, it did not go beyond this rote memorization. There was no place in lessons for critical thinking and problem solving, which are essential elements of literacy in particular and education in general. RFS-SSE was not successful because it failed to grasp the nuance of literacy in the Moroccan socio-linguistic landscape and instead employed a didactic pedagogical approach.

How can we reimagine the U.S.’s aid relationship with Morocco?

I will now mention the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, whose words began this chapter. I will bring in his perspective not merely in his position as an Indian historian but as a postcolonial thinker. His book, *Provincializing Europe*, criticizes the application of Western thought in non-Western settings.¹⁷¹ A lack of attention to specific cultural contexts is why programs like RFS-SSE are able to spend taxpayer dollars on minimally successful outcomes. Implementers of development aid should heed Chakrabarty’s warning about the importance of the particular. If the U.S. truly wants to honor its first international friend, Morocco, time and energy must be invested in creating development projects that meet the culturally relevant goals of the people whom they aim to help. Development aid must be dynamic and culturally informed to ensure positive outcomes for recipient countries that go beyond dependence and towards sustainable progress.

¹⁶⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 72.

¹⁷⁰ Freire, 75.

¹⁷¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

USAID's choice to award Chemonics with a program contract is based on the assumption that Morocco is a developing country, in need of development aid, and that the U.S. has the ability to develop Morocco. Unfortunately, as shown above, Chemonics lacks the particular cultural awareness necessary to implement a successful program. RFS-SSE did not take into account the nuances of the Moroccan socio-linguistic landscape which includes a multilingual society made up of many Indigenous languages and a diglossic language landscape. This USAID program measured all student success using the EGRA, a standardized literacy test developed for uniform use in all global development projects, yet there was no progress detected in the category of "reading comprehension."

Despite money spent on RFS-SSE, the situation on the ground remains strikingly similar. There are still many Moroccan children who will drop out of school or never attend in the first place. These individuals are primarily rural-living, Berber-speaking, and looking for opportunities for social mobility. RFS-SSE did not sufficiently address the needs of this demographic, potentially only furthering the educational divide between rural and urban Moroccans. If USAID plans to continue working in Morocco in the hopes of eradicating literacy, I suggest adopting mother-tongue education and a pedagogical approach based on a holistic understanding of literacy. Through these reforms, students would develop language tools that are practical and appropriate for their cultural context instead of merely polishing skills that are easily measured by a standardized test.

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Systemic Bias in the U.S. Department of State and Its Effects on Iran Policy

By Karina Ourfalian

As the U.S. continues to face challenges in establishing a productive relationship with Iran, it becomes increasingly important to examine all facets of policy-making agencies within the U.S. government. The limited progression of diversity within senior levels of the State Department under the Trump administration and the problematic ways this agency has decided to interact with the Iranian diaspora calls into question its decision to continue to employ a segment of the population that perpetuates the reigning elitist paradigm of the service. The types of Iranian organizations they choose to support and the voices they decide to elevate is the way in which the State Department encourages policy echo chambers. Diversity in political beliefs as well as background remain fundamental to creating a department that challenges narratives stemming from the president and other sources of expertise in Washington. This paper investigates the history of the Foreign Service and the degree to which the Foreign Service has narrowed the network of opinions towards Iran in a neoliberal era.

A Foreign Service that lacks diversity allows for an unchecked circulation of the same dangerously oversimplified rhetoric that has led to haphazard policy decisions towards Iran in the past. Implicit biases and faulty assumptions made by members of the establishment can help explain why the U.S. has decided to side with the People's Mujahedin of Iran, an organization that promotes the complete abolishment of the Islamic regime, and to target individuals like Jason Rezaian, an advocate of diplomatic engagement and ending sanctions towards Iran. Although the Foreign Service may be diverse in some ways, relying on "native informants" and "ethnic lobbying" to enlighten the establishment merely amplifies the opinions of one group who aligns with Washington's interests.

Discursive power towards Iran policy and its origins in the State Dept.

Discourse plays an important role in the power dynamic of foreign policy expertise. According to anthropologist Arturo Escobar, one must take a systemic approach when observing discourse as discourse is what sets the conditions for the

power structure that influences our understanding.¹⁷² Discourse refers to the relationship between language and power that governs our knowledge and how we decide to put knowledge into practice. Discourse also refers to the process by which we rule out other forms of knowledge. The State Department has capitalized on discursive power to manipulate information in order to benefit American interests. In order to understand the ways in which discursive power is present in the State Department, one must view this type of power as a systemic problem. In other words, although there may be a handful of members of the department who challenge the prevailing narrative, they are fighting against a greater establishment that works to advance a single policy agenda for the president and the country. An example of how discourse can fundamentally alter the negotiation environment was the use of the term “carrots and sticks” by U.S. officials when discussing the Obama administration’s engagement strategy with Iran.¹⁷³ From an American perspective, this expression is fairly harmless and common in the policy world. However, when translated to Farsi, the metaphor took on a whole new meaning. According to Trita Parsi in the book, *Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy*, to Iran, this phrase meant U.S. officials saw them as “donkeys” that they needed to “coerce into submission.”¹⁷⁴ This interpretation did not express the “mutual respect” that the U.S. and Iran sought in the negotiation process and once President Obama was informed of the meaning it took on, it was quickly removed from the language of the State Department.¹⁷⁵ Labels such as “the world’s most heinous terrorist regime”¹⁷⁶ have been repeatedly used by Secretary of State Pompeo when advocating for more stringent policy actions towards Iran. Foreign policy elites are quintessential in shaping the perception of post-1979 Iran but have subsequently fueled exaggerations that lead to poor decision making.

Prior to the neoliberal era, the primary discourse that guided State Department assessments was based on modernization theory and the predominant Orientalist scholarship that justified its claims.¹⁷⁷ The basic concept behind modernization theory is

¹⁷² Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 87.

¹⁷³ Trita Parsi, *Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy* (London: Yale Univ Pr, 2017), 70.

¹⁷⁴ Parsi, *Losing an Enemy*, 70.

¹⁷⁵ Parsi, *Losing an Enemy*, 70.

¹⁷⁶ Edith Lederer and Matthew Lee. “Pompeo urges UN arms embargo on Iran’s ‘terrorist regime’”. *ABC News*. June 30, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/top-diplomats-us-iran-iran-nuclear-deal-71527753>

¹⁷⁷ Osamah F. Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State*, 211.

the belief in adopting Westernization to develop the Third World. One of the main issues with modernization theory is the fact that area knowledge was not required to inform policy. Although modernization theory was abandoned in the service in the 1960s, variations of the rhetoric it has produced around Islam continues to circulate in the policy world, as observed amongst intelligence agencies following 9/11.¹⁷⁸

The origins of political characterizations and the categorization of countries as “good” and “evil” based on their relationship with the capitalist West began during the Cold War and have since been redirected to rationalize wars like the Gulf War of 1991.¹⁷⁹ The advancement of American hegemony during the Cold War allowed for the inauguration of a partnership between national security personnel and academia within a formal foreign area research program with the ultimate goal of producing knowledge that would inform and shape policy towards the Middle East.¹⁸⁰ Academics were recruited by government agencies such as the State Department in order to produce research on foreign countries to boost America’s new status as a superpower in the region. The ACLs (American Council of Learned Societies), led by Mortimer Graves in 1949, played a key role in organizing academic institutions across the country in order to facilitate this relationship.¹⁸¹ The ACL recognized the geopolitical value of American involvement in the Near East and advanced its ultimate goal of making American universities global champions in Near East scholarship. The ACL addressed a major lack of language and area expertise at the time, which it believed were critical components in effectively promoting American national security interests. This long-standing partnership between the federal government and scholars in Near and Middle East studies has fueled knowledge production to legitimize U.S. involvement in the region through “national security academics” that rotate between the academic and policymaking worlds. This process initiated the unchecked circulation of discourse in the U.S. government we see today.¹⁸² However, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s with the creation of the Foreign Affairs Research Council, university-led Middle East studies programs split from the U.S. government.

¹⁷⁸ Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace*, 212.

¹⁷⁹ Klaus J Dodds, “Geopolitics, Experts and the Making of Foreign Policy” *The Royal Geographical Society* (with the Institute of British Geographers) 25, no. 1 (1993): 70.70.

¹⁸⁰ Khalil, 77.

¹⁸¹ Zachary Lockman, 3.

¹⁸² Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace*, 77.

During the neoliberal era, area studies programs began to decline and knowledge was increasingly privatized.¹⁸³ The official termination of the programs was a result of a redistribution of government funding towards think tanks because universities no longer catered to Washington's interests and a rise in hostility towards Middle East scholars that criticized U.S. foreign policy following September 11 emerged. The involvement of academia in supplying knowledge to U.S. intelligence created the confused notion that scholars employ the same role as those working in foreign policy. As a result, Middle East scholars received severe backlash when they failed to predict the Arab Spring or other major events in the region. This new generation of scholars were also critical that Washington's fixation with promoting American national security interests and ensuring its position as a world power would never be undermined. Following this division between area studies scholarship and foreign policy institutions, the U.S. government has increasingly shown interest in knowledge produced by think tanks equipped with funding from wealthy donors and access to media, and which promote national security based research.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, there continues to be a greater inclination towards valuing knowledge that purely promotes U.S. involvement and neglecting what no longer serves the interests of the president or policymakers.

Challenges to diminishing bias in the State Department

In order to understand the impact a lack of difference in opinion can have in foreign policy, it is important to reflect on the mistakes of the State Department under President Carter. The failure to anticipate or consider a potential threat to the Shah's rule during the Carter administration demonstrates the importance of inclusion of varying opinions in senior levels of the State Department.¹⁸⁵ Experts were severely uninformed about the realities of Iranian dissatisfaction with the Shah and durability of the revolution.¹⁸⁶ While several mid- to low-ranking members of the State Department warned of the growing opposition in 1977, they were ignored entirely by senior officials

¹⁸³ Ibid, 213.

¹⁸⁴ Khalil, 293.

¹⁸⁵ Christian Emery, *US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution: The Cold War Dynamics of Engagement and Strategic Alliance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 40.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Moens, "President Carter's Advisors and the Fall of the Shah" *Political Science Quarterly* 106, no. 2 (1991): 237.

who were either preoccupied or refused to reevaluate their preconceived understanding of the state of Iran.¹⁸⁷

Similar to actions taken by the Trump administration, President George W. Bush took steps to ensure the U.S. did not appear weak in the Middle East and consistently threatened military action if necessary changes in Iran's behavior were not made. Such demonstrations of Western hegemony were consistent with the narrative of "...non-Western leaders and populations only understand force and power" and deterred the possibility of a formation of alliances against Iran that would facilitate Bush's hawkish policy agenda as members of the international community feared American unpredictability rather than Iranian unpredictability¹⁸⁸.

Diversity in beliefs as well as backgrounds remain fundamental in creating an agency that challenges narratives stemming from the president or other sources of expertise in Washington. Senator Bob Graham, who began his political career in 1979 as governor of Florida, referred to the State Department of our time as "white, male, and Yale."¹⁸⁹ In an attempt to be more diverse, the Foreign Service has made efforts to engage citizens of various backgrounds in the service. In the mid-twentieth century, under the Foreign Service Act of 1946, the service began to consider hiring staff that was more representative of the American population.¹⁹⁰ However, it was not until the No FEAR Act passed in 2003 that members of the State Department were finally offered protection through the public release of information regarding equal employment and employee discrimination. The State Department experienced a great number of diverse personnel under secretaries like Hillary Clinton and Colin Powell who championed inclusivity. In addition, programs like the Pickering fellowship helped to recruit university students from underrepresented groups.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, diversity in the Foreign Service continues to be under threat today by the Trump administration's ongoing dismissals of department personnel.

¹⁸⁷ Emery, *Cold War Dynamics*, 41.

¹⁸⁸ Khalil, 291.

¹⁸⁹ Krale, N. (2016, May 22). The State Department Has a Diversity Problem. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/22/state-department-race-gender-diversity-susan-rice-kerry/>

¹⁹⁰ J. Robert Moskin, *American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service*, 478.

¹⁹¹ Zeya, U., White, J., Sitrin, S., & Gerstein, B. (2018, September 17). Trump Is Making American Diplomacy White Again. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/09/17/america-is-making-diplomacy-white-and-male-again-219977>

A shift in U.S. policy towards Iran under the Trump administration has been advanced by the current homogenous state of the foreign service. Although there has been a steady increase in the number of minority populations hired by the service at the entry-level, there still remains an issue of diversity at the senior level due to a series of changes made by the Trump administration in 2017.¹⁹² Five months into Trump's presidency, at the advice of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, there were several resignations and dismissals of high ranking, minority service members who were then replaced by white, non-Hispanic, male nominees. Departures of State Department officials were the norm of Trump's presidency as he, under the guidance of Secretary of State Pompeo, has removed or threatened to remove several inspector generals.¹⁹³ Non-partisan individuals like Steve A. Linick and Stephen J. Akard, responsible for pursuing misconduct in the State Department, have been pressured to escape to the private sector. These dismissals have not been limited to officials who combat corruption within the State Department. An example of the president's destruction of representation in the State Department has been the removal of Sahar Nowrouzzadeh, a member of the Policy Planning staff who played a role in the formation of the Iran nuclear deal under President Obama.¹⁹⁴ Nowrouzzadeh's removal had been motivated by allegations that spread among conservative online media outlets that questioned her loyalty to the president and whether she was born in the U.S. due to her Iranian heritage.¹⁹⁵ Before her career as the Iran desk officer of the White House, Nowrouzzadeh was employed by the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), an Iranian American lobby group that seeks to put an end to sanctions and create a better relationship between Iran and the U.S. through diplomacy.¹⁹⁶ President Trump's attack on a high ranking policy official demonstrates one of the ways in which political agendas can impede progress towards diversity within U.S. intelligence.

¹⁹² Zeya, "Diplomacy White Again."

¹⁹³ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/state-department-watchdog-resigns-less-than-three-months-in-office/>

¹⁹⁴ Nahal Toosi. "State Dept. official reassigned amid conservative media attacks. *Politico*". April 21, 2017.

<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/21/sahar-nowrouzzadeh-reassigned-state-department-237466>

¹⁹⁵ Allyn, B. "Watchdog Report: Trump Official Punished Public Servant Over Her Iranian Heritage". *NPR*. November 15, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/14/779504909/watchdog-report-trump-official-punished-public-servant-over-her-iranian-heritage>

¹⁹⁶ Kamen, A. "Iran talks conference call: A lesson in how not to become famous in Washington". *Washington Post*. April 2, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/in-the-loop/wp/2015/04/02/heres-how-not-to-become-famous-in-washington/>

In recent years, fewer graduates are choosing to take the Foreign Service Officer Test as the Foreign Service struggles to compete with the private sector. Those who show interest in international affairs are faced with an increasingly wide variety of career options within non-governmental organizations or private companies that did not exist twenty years ago.¹⁹⁷ Recent budget cuts to the State Department by President Trump, which have been a topic of discussion within graduate schools, have also contributed to a lack of interest among university graduates.¹⁹⁸ Workplace morale is in decline as the department continues to score low in categories such as inclusivity and value in employee feedback. Increasing the number of new hires is important as recruits are put through a recently developed training method that encourages the use of the State Department's "dissent channel," allowing employees to oppose policy decisions without fearing repercussions.¹⁹⁹ Subsequently, a smaller number of young Americans choosing a career in the Foreign Service could mean a lower chance of employing new service members who would challenge the reigning political consensus. While a more inclusive State Department with a wide variety of opinions represented is an important part of unbiased policy decision making, without a certain degree of reciprocity towards dissent among senior officials, alternative views will not be acted upon.

U.S. weaponization of voices from the Iranian diaspora

In order to understand the degree to which discursive power is manifested in U.S. engagement with the Iranian community, one must observe the ways in which the government has decided to encourage "ethnic lobbying." Ethnic lobbying occurs when an interest group rooted in a particular culture or religion advocates foreign policy decisions for their homeland within the country in which they reside. The People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) is an Iranian secessionist organization that has persistently lobbied U.S. government officials such as National Security Advisor John Bolton in an effort to establish their own government in Iran and abolish the current regime.²⁰⁰ Once

¹⁹⁷ Dan De Luce, "Fewer Americans are opting for careers at the State Department", *NBC*, February 25, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/fewer-americans-are-opting-careers-state-department-n973631>

¹⁹⁸ De Luce, "Fewer Americans."

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Ali Harb, "How Iranian MEK went from US terror list to halls of Congress". *Middle East Eye*. July 17, 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/Iranian-MEK-US-terror-list-halls-congress-PMOI-Iran>

considered a terrorist organization by the State Department for the significant role they played in overthrowing the Shah in the 1970s and for their countless human rights abuses, the MEK now freely holds rallies in Washington to promote a militaristic agenda. Despite the group's condemnation by a majority of Iranians, the rhetoric put forth by the MEK towards the Iranian government has drawn the attention and support of prominent U.S. officials as it appeals to the 'maximum pressure' strategy President Trump proposed.

In deciding to side with the MEK, the U.S. has also authorized the suppression of opposing opinions of members of the Iranian American community. To eliminate the spread of propaganda from the Iranian government in the U.S., the State Department formed an initiative that investigates online extremism while they "amplify the voices and civic actions of courageous Iranians who reveal the regime for the evil it truly is."²⁰¹ Under the name of the Iran Disinformation Project, the U.S. State Department has attacked and falsely accused several individuals, including Iranian American journalist Jason Rezaian, of being Iran sympathizers. Rezaian's article, "The State Department has been funding trolls. I'm one of their targets." reveals that the U.S. government has intentionally targeted individuals for their opposing stance on sanctions and other 'maximum pressure' strategies.²⁰² Although Rezaian has been openly critical of the regime and has even experienced torture in an Iranian prison, disagreement in the way the U.S. should approach Iran poses a threat to the current discourse surrounding Iran policy. Therefore, although the prevailing attitude towards foreign policy on Iran has been ineffective, agencies such as the State Department continue to circulate the same vision of Iranian politics without a strong opposition to the current paradigm, as long as it helps to justify their actions there.

The troubling effects of misinformation circulating within the State Department was also exemplified in the Carter administration. In an effort to align with the U.S. decision to support the Shah of Iran, State Department officials received information on the political state of the country primarily from groups that sided with the Shah and

²⁰¹ "About Us". *Rand Corporation*. <https://irandisinfo.org/about-us/>

²⁰² Jason Rezaian. "Opinion | The State Department has been funding trolls. I'm one of their targets." *Washington Post*, June 4, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/06/04/state-department-has-been-funding-trolls-im-one-their-targets/>

avoided communication with dissidents and Iranian nationals.²⁰³ Many high ranking members of the State Department had little to no understanding of the reality of the political turmoil and discontent towards the regime among Iranians as they were purely reliant on the Shah's predictions and assessments.

As seen under the Bush administration with members of the Iraqi diaspora, the U.S. government frequently relies on "native informants" of Iranian heritage to support U.S. interests.²⁰⁴ Native informants are individuals who provide insight and intelligence about their homelands typically for the benefit of Western powers.²⁰⁵ Historically, native informants have helped to reinforce the narratives and depictions that stemmed from Washington about their home countries in the Middle East in order to advance a political agenda. For instance, during the Global War on Terror, native informants aided in enforcing the notion that pressure and punishment is the only way to elicit change in the Middle East.²⁰⁶ In order to counteract the Orientalist characterizations made by these groups, there must be representation of varying backgrounds as well as political standpoints.

Conclusion

The systemic problem of diversity in opinion and background within the State Department and the discourse it perpetuates contributes to a lack of informed policy decisions towards Iran. A commitment to removing minority senior members of the State Department and replacing them with members of the majority under the Trump administration has rolled back the steps made towards staffing a State Department that is more reflective of the American population. Dwindling numbers of new hires in the department also reduce the chances of having leaders who will challenge the current culture of expert impunity. Without opposition to the conventional view of Iran, the U.S. will continue to create policy based on national security interests. A reliance on Iranian native informants who seek regime change merely helps sustain the hawkish political agenda of the president rather than provide a balance to the reigning consensus. A

²⁰³ Emery, *Cold War Dynamics*, 42

²⁰⁴ During the Iraq War, U.S. intelligence recruited Iraqi informants who provided them with information and aided in their efforts.

²⁰⁵ Nesrine Malik. "Islam's New 'Native Informants'" *The New York Review of Books*, June 7, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/06/07/islams-new-native-informants/>

²⁰⁶ Khalil, *America's Dream Palace*, 291

pursuit of knowledge that prioritizes a particular political agenda rather than a deep analysis of alternative perspectives allows misinformation and harmful rhetoric to prevail. For an agency that holds so much power on an international scale, there must be greater accountability when it comes to how it decides to inform policy.

Policy Recommendations

- In order to improve the quality of policy decisions, it should be a priority for the State Department to include staff with a broad set of opinions in all levels of the Department.
- When dealing with policy that targets a specific country, to reduce policy actions based on biased information within the State Department, there must be greater attention brought towards hearing varying political viewpoints among members of the diaspora.

The Face(s) of Surveillance: Contemporary Policing and Post-9/11 Counterterrorism Policy

By Jessica Brouard

To understand post-9/11 security and policing practices, this essay explores policing's historical and transnational context. I will argue that the appropriation of policing for intelligence aims and its exemption from neoliberal austerity policies defines both domestic U.S. policy towards South-West Asian and North African (SWANA)-Americans and exported security aid. Subsequent developments in policing and intelligence targeted SWANA-American communities, who faced immense surveillance and scrutiny.

In this paper, I will analyze security reforms of the post-9/11 era within the context of historical policing. First, I examine the early racial history of policing, arguing that policing has never been apolitical. Then, I lay out the institutional framework from which the modern police and intelligence agencies were founded. From this foundation, I argue that neoliberal ideology bolstered the already proliferating branch of law enforcement by deeming punitive enforcement the only legitimate form of government intervention. The long history of racially biased policing and enforcement policies against SWANA-Americans and the application of neoliberalism in law enforcement laid the foundation for the security changes which occurred after 9/11. These security policies and programs directly targeted SWANA-Americans, treating and producing their communities as suspects. Lastly, I argue that because SWANA-Americans were viewed as inherently suspicious by militarized institutions like the police and because of the global spread of neoliberalism, policing came to be a critical aspect of US intervention in the Middle East.

The Growth of Intelligence and Police Agencies

While discussions surrounding the surveillance of MENA Americans usually begins after 9/11, this surveillance is part of a longer history of racialized surveillance in the U.S. Since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the CIA and FBI have been monitoring Arab American leaders. Groups like the Organization of Arab Students, who were active in universities across the U.S., and the Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) were

perceived to be part of the Leftist uprising of the 1960s.²⁰⁷ In one significant case, an Arab American attorney and leader of AAUG, Abdeen Jabara, filed a suit against a Detroit bank that turned over his account information to the FBI without a warrant. After filing in court, he found that the FBI and NSA had been gathering intelligence on his political activities since 1967, including reports of his travels, 40 wiretapped conversations, interviews with over 100 people, and notes on his public and private meetings.²⁰⁸ In response to the growing strength and militancy of anti-war, civil rights, and Black liberation groups, the Nixon administration expanded the CIA-led COINTELPRO program.²⁰⁹ The program was run by the FBI who kept detailed files on citizens suspected to be a part of these insurgencies, including Black Muslims, members of the Nation of Islam, and Arab-American student groups that supported the Palestinian national movement. Even though the CIA informed the White House of the lack of evidence concerning terror attacks committed by Arabs in the United States, the government directed the FBI to include “potential Arab saboteurs” in their program.²¹⁰ By 1970, the FBI found no evidence of existing terrorist activities or threats by Arabs in the United States; however, in its final report, they baselessly came to the conclusion that there was real potential for Arab students in the US to conspire terror attacks against Israelis in the US.²¹¹

In 1972, the FBI launched a direct attack against “all ethnic Arabs in the United States” after the murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. The program was called Operation Boulder, and unlike the FBI operations that came before, it was a widely publicized initiative with press releases that emphasized that all Arab-Americans could be subject to government scrutiny.²¹² As a result, major media outlets implied that all “ethnic Arabs” should be suspected of terrorism and had extreme inclinations. At the same time, the federal immigration agency at the time, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), became increasingly militarized. While INS previously had no

²⁰⁷ Pamela E Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 15.

²⁰⁸ Pennock, Pamela E. *The Rise of the Arab American Left*, 58.

²⁰⁹ Churchill, Ward, and Jim Vander Wall. *The Cointelpro Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States*. South End, 2002.

²¹⁰ Pennock, 148.

²¹¹ Pennock, 150.

²¹² Pamela E. Pennock, "From 1967 to Operation Boulder: The Erosion of Arab Americans' Civil Liberties in the 1970s." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2018): 43.

experience in investigations, they were employed in Operation Boulder to, ostensibly, track student visas.²¹³ Their unspoken purpose, however, was to investigate students' political views, with agents asking political questions during the visa screening process. The INS would then directly report any people with suspect answers to the FBI. In this era, Americans themselves posed an omnipresent, perpetual threat to national security in this era. The surveillance against Arab-Americans was distinctly racialized in two ways: by intelligence programs that implicitly targeted their communities and through these programs' relationship to Leftist and Civil Rights movements that mainly targeted people of color.²¹⁴ The narrative that drove surveillance in the 1960s—that people of color, and specifically MENA-Americans, had a desire to disturb the American status-quo and a propensity towards following radical ideas—is one that continues to justify racialized surveillance in the 21st century.

The growing role of surveillance paralleled the growing scope of policing. In an analysis of over 26,418 calls to the police, it was found that most requests involved order maintenance, service, and information processing; a mere 19 percent involved criminal activity and only 2 percent involved violent crime in 1968.²¹⁵ This proved an interesting, tangible shift in policing. Rather than responding to active crime situations, police were, more than ever before, directly responding to social issues that had nothing to do with criminal activity. As with active crime situations, police officers still held the power to escalate or deescalate these situations. Thus, with the development of the rapid response call and the growing social response role of the police, the police adopted a significant level of discretion in un-criminal situations. Considering the prominent racism and systemic bias that ran rampant in law enforcement, people of color, those in poverty, and those suffering from mental health issues were more vulnerable to police interaction and force.²¹⁶ This constructed and produced criminalization along racial and classist lines, leaving behind a legacy of policing that effectively targets poor communities of color—as seen with police brutality during the civil rights movement.

²¹³ Pennock. "From 1967 to Operation Boulder," 42.

²¹⁴ Deepa Kumar and Arun Kundnani. 2015. "Race, Surveillance, and Empire." *International Socialist Review* 96. <https://isreview.org/issue/96/race-surveillanceand-empire>.

²¹⁵ David Bradford and Joan E. Pynes, "Police academy training: why hasn't it kept up with practice?" *Police Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1999): 283-301.

²¹⁶ Kumar and Kundnani. "Race, Surveillance, and Empire".

Police severely beat and murdered Black Americans, bringing the movement as well as issues of police agency, power, and violence to the forefront of political concern.²¹⁷

The growth of intelligence and police forces served to suppress the voices of predominantly activists of color. In regards to SWANA-Americans, racially-biased surveillance against their communities began at least as early as 1967—far earlier than the 9/11 attacks. These early programs lay the foundation for the surveillance programs that target SWANA-Americans, whether implicitly or explicitly. Moreover, these programs demonstrate efforts by the states to intimidate these communities out of using their voice for change and challenging the opinions of the growing police body. As police began to intercept more non-criminal, social issues, they embraced this new role as part of their own responsibility. The incursion of police into largely non-criminal, social issues became critical to the large-scale surveillance programs that came about in the post-9/11 era.

Neoliberalism and Security Reform

Amidst calls to reform the police system and rising crime rates, neoliberal economic ideology redefined the role of law enforcement in government. Gaining notoriety under former President Reagan, neoliberalism emerged as a system of economic ideas and policy initiatives that emphasize small government and market based solutions to social problems.²¹⁸ From academia to Capitol Hill, proponents of neoliberalism argue that long-standing social safety nets like welfare and unemployment disincentivize people from working, encourage free-loading, and make the economy less efficient. Instead, the market, not the government, could more efficiently allocate jobs and capital, including social services that address poverty.²¹⁹ Federal funds to programs that involved active nonprofit patterns were cut by 26 billion dollars each year in the Reagan administration.²²⁰ During this same presidency, however, Reagan passed a \$200 million budget increase for local law enforcement

²¹⁷ Douglas A. Smith, Charles R Tittle, and Wayne J. Vilemez. "The myth of social class and criminality: An empirical assessment of the empirical evidence." *American sociological review* (1978): 643-656.

²¹⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*(Oxford University Press:2007).

²¹⁹ Harvey, *A brief history of neoliberalism*.

²²⁰ Howard Jacob Karger and David Stoesz (2003) The Growth of Social Work Education Programs, 1985-1999, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 39:2, 279-295, DOI: [10.1080/10437797.2003.10779136](https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2003.10779136)

agencies.²²¹ Law enforcement was the single social service to see an increase in its budget during this neoliberal transformation. Thus, neoliberal ideology poses a paradox: if law enforcement is a social service meant to serve the public, why has it not suffered the same cuts to its budget?

The government turned to what it saw as a legitimate use of its resources under neoliberalism: the state's monopoly on violence. Some social scientists theorize that increasing government intervention in the penal sector was a reaction to structural inequality that worked under a neoliberal framework.²²² Because welfare was seen as wasteful and ineffective, the only legitimate form of intervention was increasing government intervention in the penal sector. The creation of the punitive state was a product of justifying punitive solutions to poverty driven behavior.²²³ Therefore, punitive enforcement became an acceptable government interference and a primary form of upholding justice and national security.²²⁴ The investment in law enforcement, then, was legitimized because of its role as an arm of the state, rather than as a social service.

Because the integrity of law enforcement was validated, police reform scholars could explore the idea of increasing police budgets, even as government spending was overall decreased. This is evident in one of the most popular police theories that fundamentally defines modern-day policing: Broken Windows. "Broken Windows" theory, devised by social scientists James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982, emerged during the era of neoliberalism. They argued that crime rates would decrease if police eliminated low level disorder like public intoxication, loitering, or breaking windows. Disorder, they argued, made people feel insecure about the safety of public spaces and was at the root of more serious crime. Their central analogy was a broken window. If someone breaks a window and the property owner does not fix it, it signals to the community that the owner does not care that the window is broken and thus implies that breaking a window has no cost.²²⁵ Similarly, if a city allows low-level crime and

²²¹ Leslie Maitland Werner. "Reagan Plans Bigger Budget for U.S. Law Enforcement." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, January 2, 1984.

²²² Jeremy Kaplan-Lyman. *A Punitive Bind: Policing, Poverty, and Neoliberalism in New York City*, 15 *Yale Hum. Rts. & Dev. L.J.* 2012, 189.

²²³ Bernard E Harcourt. "Neoliberal penalty: A brief genealogy." *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 1 (2010): 74-92.

²²⁴ Harcourt, "Neoliberal penalty."

²²⁵ George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson. "Broken windows." *Critical issues in policing: Contemporary readings* (1989): 530.

misconduct to occur, it signals that the city does not care about or cannot control what happens there. Cities that have low level disorder—“drunks, prostitutes, and panhandlers”—attract violent offenders because the existence of disorder proves the city has no reign over criminals. Thus, policing should instead enforce laws against small disturbances, low-level criminals, and other disorders to “reinforce the informal control mechanisms of the community itself.”²²⁶ This framework implies that the role of policing should grow and expand, rather than shrink. The investment in law enforcement, unlike social service agencies, would effectively improve public safety and rid communities of social ills like the poverty that may cause prostitutes, drunks, and panhandlers to line city streets. The effectiveness of this policy, however, was contingent on the fact that the police acted before a significant crime had been committed.²²⁷ It validated the role of the police in social, non-criminal situations and, even more gravely, implied that police might have the power to catch criminal acts *before* they are committed. Neoliberal ideology, then, granted the police power and responsibility which in effect secured a growing, government-funded police budget.²²⁸

Homeland Policing

The growth of intelligence, long history of racialized surveillance, expansion of policing, and growing adoption of neoliberal ideology brings this paper to the 9/11 attacks. During this period, police and intelligence agencies were granted more jurisdiction, power, and responsibility. The historical expansion of these punitive agencies provided them with the infrastructure and background to adopt wide-sweeping changes in the post-9/11 moment.

As concern for the expansive and omnipresent global networks of terror increased, intelligence agencies expanded to reflect this omnipresent force within the US. The growth of intelligence can be initially attributed to the bureaucratic failures involved in 9/11.²²⁹ A congressional report by the House and Senate Intelligence Committee found that the FBI and CIA failed to share key intelligence information that

²²⁶ Wilson and Kelling, "Broken windows."

²²⁷ Samuel Walker, "'Broken Windows' and fractured history: The use and misuse of history in recent police patrol analysis." *Justice Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1984): 75-90.

²²⁸ Harcourt, "Neoliberal penalty."

²²⁹ Lee Hamilton and Thomas Kean. *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States*. Vol. 3. Government Printing Office, 2004.

would have revealed the extent of the attack plot had they collaborated.²³⁰ Because of this grave misstep, intelligence reform became integral to the post-9/11 process of rectification.²³¹ A year after the attack, Congress created the Commission on Terrorist Acts Upon the United States, more commonly known as the 9/11 Commission, which led to the organizational restructuring of intelligence communities. They found that having multiple, loosely connected intelligence agencies with overlapping responsibilities could not handle the growing, omnipresent danger of terrorism. In response, the Commission posed 5 large-scale changes:

- (1) "unifying strategic intelligence and operational planning against Islamic terrorists across the foreign-domestic divide with a National Counterterrorism Center";
- (2) "unifying the intelligence community with a new National Intelligence Director (NDI)";
- (3) "unifying the many participants in the counterterrorism effort and their knowledge in a network-based information-sharing system that transcends traditional governmental boundaries";
- (4) "unifying and strengthening congressional oversight to improve quality and accountability"; and
- (5) "strengthening the FBI and homeland defenders."

Essentially, the Commission advocated for centralized, nonredundant agencies all unified under a Director of National Intelligence as well as an overall stronger focus on intelligence in government.²³² In addition to this large organizational transformation, legislative reform was passed to increase the scope of surveillance. The rhetoric of unification and expansion was rare during this period, largely due to the entrenched neoliberal ideology within the government. And while I think the panic and fear that surrounded the attacks had a significant role in the proliferation of intelligence, infrastructure for growth was already established. The modern intelligence agency grew through civil unrest and the Cold War, and so the War on Terror was just another

²³⁰ Lee Hamilton and Thomas Kean. *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States*.

²³¹ O'Connell, Anne Joseph. "The architecture of smart intelligence: structuring and overseeing agencies in the post-9/11 world." *Calif. L. Rev.* 94 (2006): 1657.

²³² O'Connell, "The architecture of smart intelligence," 1655.

catalyst for growth. Moreover, now that neoliberalism lauded investment in security, the US could provide bipartisan support for spending in national security and law enforcement sectors. Most media reports during this time cite high approvals for the 9/11 Committee and the changes it inspired; approval for these motions was bipartisan by 61 percent, and the New York Times even called the group the most trusted security officials in the U.S.²³³ This could speak to popular desire to see a larger national defense, but it also demonstrates the normalization of the expanding security state. For those who are or are perceived to be SWANA-American, this expansion poses a tangible danger to their everyday life.

Several other intelligence expansions occurred. Most notably, Congress passed the largest intelligence reform bill in history, the PATRIOT ACT. Under the directive to stop terrorism, law enforcement officials could conduct searches of homes and offices without prior notice, use roving wiretaps to listen in on telephone conversations, and monitor computers and e-mail messages, even to eavesdrop on attorney/client conversations. Moreover, the Patriot Act has given the CIA the central authority to gather and use intelligence information garnered from domestic sources, including intelligence on U.S. citizens and residents.²³⁴ As intelligence agencies gained more vaguely-defined and wide-sweeping power, their networks became omnipresent forces within the U.S. Agencies' reach into personal communications and unsuspecting communities was only another extension of Broken Window rhetoric; acting before a crime is committed ensured safety from crime and social ills. Thus, this expansion to defeat terrorism, at the expense of a growing police state, neatly fit within the logic of neoliberalism and security.

The unification, expansion, and expenses spent on intelligence agencies after 9/11 can be seen as both a response to the attack and an extension of the neoliberal transformations occurring in local law enforcement. The Intelligence Reform Act transferred considerable budgetary and personnel control from national intelligence agencies under the discretion of the NDI. While the extent of their authority is vague,

²³³ John Gramlich. "Since 9/11, Americans Have Seen Anti-Terrorism Policy as a Top Priority." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 30 May 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/11/defending-against-terrorism-has-remained-a-top-policy-priority-for-americans-since-9-11/.

²³⁴ Steven H. Aden and John W. Whitehead. and. "Forfeiting enduring freedom for homeland security: A constitutional analysis of the USA Patriot Act and the Justice Department's anti-terrorism initiatives." *Am. UL Rev.* 51 (2001): 1081.

the first appointee was assigned a 1 billion dollar budget, almost 5 times what had been spent on management of the intelligence community prior to the Intelligence Reform Act.²³⁵ In 2002, the Bush administration proposed a tax cut that would decrease spending by an average of 6.6 percent in many social service agencies while increasing the defense and intelligence budget.²³⁶ The accepted neoliberal paradigm that government spending is best spent on maintaining its monopoly on violence bolstered the decision to reform intelligence even as the services meant to protect Americans from violence created by poverty and inequity were slowly depleted.

The new directive to protect the U.S. against terrorism led to wide-spread reforms in regulatory agencies that were traditionally uninvolved in such matters. The Attorney General at the time of 9/11, John Ashcroft, told Congress that the Department of Justice's mission was redefined, "placing the defense of the nation and its citizens above all else." The focus of federal law enforcement, then, shifted from incarcerating criminals to halting terrorist activity. OSHA issued guidelines for the handling of mail that is suspected to contain anthrax spores.²³⁷ The EPA and DOE reappraised security needs of utilities, factories, and shipping companies that handle hazardous materials.²³⁸ The FDA and CDC have taken a new look at the supplies of antibiotics and vaccines (NYTimes). Bank regulators cracked down on financial institutions that are suspected to launder money for terrorist organizations.²³⁹ The GAO reported that coordination among these federal agencies and the development of their response teams was necessary to contain an attack involving terrorist networks.²⁴⁰ By incorporating aspects of national security into traditional regulatory agencies, the U.S. emphasized that the government was now, more than ever, focused on taking care of external threats.

In 2002, the INS adopted more militarized, intelligence-like procedures in response to the attacks with the implementation of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS). Initiated by the DOJ, the program systematically

²³⁵ O'Connell, Anne Joseph. "The architecture of smart intelligence: structuring and overseeing agencies in the post-9/11 world." *Calif. L. Rev.* 94 (2006): 1688.

²³⁶ "CHN: Bush Budget Undermines Anti-Poverty Programs." *Coalition on Human Needs*, 20 July 2018, www.chn.org/articles/bush-budget-undermines-anti-poverty-programs/.

²³⁷ Eric A. Posner. "Fear and the regulatory model of counterterrorism." *Harv. JL & Pub. Pol'y* 25 (2001): 681.

²³⁸ EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, 15 May 2008, archive.epa.gov/epapages/newsroom_archive/newsreleases/8d8f83983e64e1b5852570d60070fcbd.html.

²³⁹ Posner, 682.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

targeted SWANA-Americans because it required nonimmigrant males, defined mostly by their temporary residency status in the U.S. (education, employment, vacation, ect.) who were from 25 specific countries and at least 16 years old to register at local immigration offices for interrogation, photographing, and fingerprinting.²⁴¹ Over 80,000 individuals were registered and thousands were interrogated and detained. Many families were separated because their family members were deported to their country of origin after trying to comply with NSEERS; some did not even have relatives or contacts in those countries. The program never identified any terrorist leads. NSEERS emboldened employees of federal, state, and local governments to scrutinize and surveil SWANA-Americans.²⁴² This program followed the larger pattern of intelligence expansion and the bureaucratization of surveillance. It granted legal power and legitimacy to racially biased surveillance policies as a strategy of protecting national security.

Just like many federal programs, police agencies adopted the call to protect national security. Because national security implied protecting against terrorism, police agencies created intelligence-like programs that could identify terrorists before they were caught. One such program, instituted in 2004, was Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR). The idea came about in a series of DOJ funded working groups that were looking to capitalize on the interactions police had with the public. In the public component of SAR, citizens could report anyone they perceived was behaving suspiciously.²⁴³ The police component allowed officers to identify suspicious activity and write an incident report, which would then be sent to intelligence officers for evaluation. Oftentimes, this led to the development of a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) which consisted of an FBI team of local officers and federal agents. The anticipatory aspect of this program was critical to its design. Police officers could systematically identify and report terrorism before it occurred, at least that is what the system implied.²⁴⁴ Moreover, it distinctively blurred the lines between the role of national intelligence and local

²⁴¹ Rights Working Group. "The NSEERS Effect: A Decade of Racial Profiling, Fear, and Secrecy." (2012).

²⁴² Loubna Qutami. "Censusless: Arab/Muslim Interpolation into Whiteness and the War on Terror." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 23, no. 2 (2020): 161-200.

²⁴³ Qutami, "Censusless: Arab/Muslim Interpolation into Whiteness and the War on Terror."

²⁴⁴ Susan N. Herman. "Collapsing Spheres: Joint Terrorism Task Forces, Federalism, and the War on Terror." *Willamette L. Rev.* 41 (2005): 941.

police.²⁴⁵ Intelligence could actively be a part of local operations on JTTFs, while police executed the surveillance work in real time. Operating in the name of national security, rather than just local safety, took Broken Windows to the highest level. Police became intelligence officers.

With the rise of “homegrown terrorism” rhetoric, the role of the police in protecting national security became more legitimized. The terrorist bombing of the London underground in 2005 prompted a fear of terror that was “homegrown.” Because the bombers were from London, had never visited the Middle East, and had pursued radicalism from their own home, Western governments perceived this attack as distinct from the terrorist attacks bound to global terror networks.²⁴⁶ Starting in 2005, the FBI published a report called *The Radicalization Process: From Conversion to Jihad*. In this report, the FBI report claimed that certain activities like traveling, picture taking, visiting other Muslims, religious observance, or being a part of a Muslim student club could be signs that a person was becoming a homegrown terrorist. In 2007, the NYPD released a similar statement. Their report was intended to inform local law enforcement officers of how to identify people undergoing “jihadization.” Their four-step plan walks police officers through the pre-planning phase, in which Muslims live unaware or uninterested in violent jihad; then, the “jihadization” phase, or the process of becoming a violent jihad. Like the FBI, the NYPD went as far as to identify typical characteristics of jihadization such as “giving up cigarettes, gambling, and wearing urban hip-hop gangster clothes, wearing traditional Islamic clothing, growing a beard, and becoming involved in social activism and community issues.”²⁴⁷ And while these characteristics were obviously arbitrary and ridiculous, this method was presented as legitimate knowledge which put SWANA-American communities at a higher risk of police interaction and surveillance. These reports also demonstrate that both intelligence and law enforcement agencies believed they had the power to pre-emptively track people who fit these arbitrary descriptions and shared the responsibility of doing so. The FBI’s directive to prevent terrorism came at the expense of personal privacy, an expense

²⁴⁵ Meg Stalcup. "Policing uncertainty: On suspicious activity reporting." *Modes of uncertainty: anthropological cases* (2015): 69-87.

²⁴⁶ Manni Crone and Martin Harrow. "Homegrown terrorism in the West." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 521-536.

²⁴⁷ Sabrina Alimahomed-Wilson. "When the FBI knocks: Racialized state surveillance of Muslims." *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 6 (2019): 871-887.

which the PATRIOT ACT had emboldened. For the NYPD, the fear of homegrown terrorism established a uniquely local battlefield of the War on Terror, one that fell under the jurisdiction of the police.

Even years into CVE policy, intelligence agencies continued to use false and misleading information about SWANA-American communities. By March 2011, the FBI reported that local and state enforcement officials were receiving poor counterterrorism training from unqualified instructors.²⁴⁸ Further, the report states that offensive material like the research discussed above was produced by an FBI employee and delivered in a variety of official training sessions. In response, the Obama Administration announced a revised counter-radicalization strategy. Their Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the U.S. (SIP) tried to enhance federal community engagement efforts with influential Muslim groups related to CVE. The aim was to develop greater government and law enforcement expertise while engaging with the Muslim community. At the end of the report, they suggest that Congress may develop a CVE intervention model akin to gang intervention models to stop terrorism by preventing jihadi principles from entering the marketplace of ideas.²⁴⁹ This revision, however, did not stray far from the idea of catching people in the process of “jihadization” as the FBI and NYPD had reported years ago. Though the administration had attempted to elevate the voices of Muslim groups, their logic reflected the flawed racist epistemology enforced in years past.

Only a year later, in a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation, the Associated Press revealed that NYPD’s intelligence division, called the Demographics Unit, had mapped, photographed, or infiltrated over 250 mosques and 31 Muslim student organizations throughout New York between 2002 and 2012.²⁵⁰ During that time, NYPD police acted as spies, attending mosques and student meetings and reporting details back to the department. They recruited locals to be informants who would spy on their neighbors, friends, and families. The CIA helped design the mapping and GIS technology that were used to track growing populations of Muslims in New York City. The NYPD targeted

²⁴⁸ Alimahomed-Wilson, “When the FBI knocks.”

²⁴⁹ Christian Nünlist and Owen Frazer. “The concept of countering violent extremism.” *CSS Analyses in Security Policy* 183 (2015).

²⁵⁰ Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman. *Enemies Within: Inside the NYPD's Secret Spying Unit and Bin Laden's Final Plot Against America*. United Kingdom: Atria Books, 2013.

locations where “local populations search for ethnic companionship, that they may find co-conspirators in patterns of illegal activity, hang out to listen to neighborhood gossip.”²⁵¹ After the Obama administration released its new strategy, the NYPD also started a cricket league that was advertised as a way to strengthen MENA community ties to police agencies; however, it was later found to be a proxy for informants and spies. The FBI also hosted a Youth Career Day in the “Little Pakistan” area of Brooklyn. There, officials introduced kids to the power of the FBI, emphasizing the role played by the bureau in Osama Bin Laden’s death.²⁵²

When the “enemy” can be across the globe, your neighbor, or next to you in a university, the battlefield of the War on Terror becomes an omnipresent space. Unlike traditional wars, the work of physical soldiers and intelligence agencies is not enough; fighting homegrown terrorism requires spies amongst civilians and intelligence ingrained into everyday life. And while early Broken Windows theory emboldened the police to take preventive actions and assume criminality, usually along racial and class divides, the War on Terror granted these practices legitimacy. Their mission to not just seek criminals but also catch terrorists seemed to be a dire enough threat to overstep significant civil liberties and exacerbate the growing invasiveness of policing. In the process, however, the everyday life of MENA-Americans became the subject of national security. Activities that would otherwise be considered mundane, like attending religious services, talking to relatives, and hanging out with friends, became characteristics of terrorists when the subject was a brown body. Job fairs, cricket leagues, student gatherings transformed into racial infrastructures of the War on Terror. And with all that was invested, the implementation of this strategy was mostly ineffective. In a study on the PATRIOT ACT, it was found that none of the information gathered through their policies led to the discovery of a terrorist plot. Moreover, the Chief of NYPD intelligence division admitted during sworn testimony that in his six years of tenure, the unit tasked with monitoring Muslim-American life had not yielded a single criminal lead.²⁵³ The targeting of Muslim-Americans did not rise in a vacuum:

²⁵¹Arshad Imitaz Ali. "Citizens under suspicion: Responsive research with community under surveillance." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2016): 78-95.

²⁵² Jennifer Gonnerman, et al. "Fighting for the Immigrants of Little Pakistan." *The New Yorker*, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/26/fighting-for-the-immigrants-of-little-pakistan.

²⁵³ Alimahomed-Wilson. "When the FBI knocks: Racialized state surveillance of Muslims."

policing has a long and tired history of racism and abuse. However, the post-9/11 police force was a direct reflection of new national security priorities, socioeconomic conditions, and international developments.

The invasive policing and CVE policy in New York City and across the U.S. undeniably created a casual relationship between religion and terrorism, and caused damage to SWANA-American communities at large. In a year long, anthropological study, Arshad Imitaz Ali found that Muslim-American university students were cognizant of NYPD spying and policing behavior. As a result, many students policed their own speech and thoughts in public; they stopped pursuing political agendas and gathering in large groups because these actions would likely attract police attention. Moreover, many students became suspicious of new friends and community members as anyone who was not a close friend or family could be a potential informant.²⁵⁴ One student described building a close friendship over the course of the study, bringing the new friend to their religious services and family events, only to find out this person was working with the FBI. He described feeling both betrayed and ashamed that he had brought such a danger so close to his family. Another student leader recalled cancelling a student meeting because a white, middle-aged male without a school ID had tried to attend. The leader suspected that he was an officer trying to listen in on their conversation.²⁵⁵

Ali frames this response in the context of Michael Foucault's concept of governmentality. Governmentality is the construction and control of a population through "mentalities, rationales, and technologies into particular roles and relationships as citizens."²⁵⁶ The power of the NYPD's surveillance was not their power to see everything, but to have their subjects know that they were constantly being watched. In this way, surveillance also served as a form of discipline. It denied MENA-Americans public safe spaces, community bonds, and new friendships. They were treated as quasi-citizens who were "either working at the behest of global terrorist networks" or "somehow susceptible to being brainwashed into killing their friends."²⁵⁷ The extent of

²⁵⁴ Arshad Imitaz Ali. "Citizens under suspicion: Responsive research with community under surveillance." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2016): 78-95.

²⁵⁵ Ali. "Citizens under suspicion."

²⁵⁶ Mitchell Dean, "Governmentality." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (2017): 1-2.

²⁵⁷ Imitaz. "Citizens Under Suspicion..."

their political presence was reduced to affirming their humanity and rights as Americans. Policing the everyday life of MENA community members also meant interfering with their social networks, destroying the trust between friends and community members, and making them criminals in their own home.

Policing abroad

As the United States expanded its intelligence networks domestically, neoliberal security ideology influenced key aspects of relations with the Middle East. The development of the terror-industrial complex is evidence of the growing international market for security related services.²⁵⁸ The concept is defined as the relationship between money or financial capital and the threat of terrorism; specifically, that increasing investment in the security industry in order to gain advantages in security situations creates a financial incentive to produce a prominent terrorist threat. This means that there is financial incentive for the government and private security companies to hyperbolize the threat of terrorism and the War on Terror, regardless of reality. For people who are targeted by these security programs, the terror-industrial complex could keep them in a state of constant suspicion.

The terror-industrial complex and the proliferation of neoliberal security ideology can in part explain the copious amount of U.S. tax dollars poured into policing-related programs in Iraq. Since 2003, the U.S. has spent about \$8 billion in training the Iraqi police.²⁵⁹ And in 2012, the U.S. gave over \$500 million in police-related aid, which was considered the most ambitious American aid effort since the Marshall Plan.²⁶⁰ The money was mostly dedicated to building a police training center where ex-police officers from the U.S. trained Iraqi officers. Specifically, they tried to teach Iraqi officers about counter-terrorism and handling large crowds. The program was largely regarded as a waste of time and resources. Iraq's Interior Ministry, Adnan al-Assadi, even questioned why the U.S. had spent so much money on a program that Iraq never asked for. U.S. officials seemed to support the program as the State Department and Department of Defense continued to fund the project for about 10 years. One of the instructors taught a

²⁵⁸ Junaid Rana. "The racial infrastructure of the terror-industrial complex." *Social Text* 34, no. 4 (129) (2016): 111-138.

²⁵⁹ Arango, Tim. "U.S. May Scrap Costly Efforts to Train Iraqi Police." *The New York Times*. May 13, 2012.

²⁶⁰ Arango.

lesson, for example, that claimed large bank withdrawals and heavy drinking could indicate that a person was planning a suicide attack. In Iraq, however, few people have bank accounts and drinking is typically viewed as a cardinal sin by Sunni Muslim extremists.²⁶¹ The program is telling because it reflects the consequences of the terror-industrial complex and the assumption of western universality. The very sum of money given to Iraq for its police reveals the extent to which neoliberal security ideology influences the U.S.'s perception of governance. Policing was seen as so pivotal to Iraq's legitimacy that the program warranted this amount of funding, even when Iraq officials themselves could not justify it. The combination of needing to secure legitimacy and escalate policing builds on the principles, regardless of reality, of the growing terror-industrial complex. The western universalis another ideological foundation from which this program stems. In providing this aid and refusing the input of Iraqi officials, the U.S. implemented their understanding of government regardless of it not making sense in the Iraqi context.

With globalization, police programs from the Middle East have shaped local law enforcement in the U.S. as well. Months after 9/11, US law enforcement officials went to Israel to learn about their "best practices" in "counterterrorism."²⁶² In a 2018 report by the Jewish Voice for Peace and Researching the American-Israeli Alliance, they claim these trainings taught hundreds of US officials about mass surveillance, suppressing crowds and protests, and racial profiling.²⁶³ The pro-Israel think tank, the Jewish Institute for America, has sponsored over 11,000 law enforcement officials through their Law Enforcement Exchange Program (LEEP) just on their own. And since 2012, the NYPD has a branch in Kfar Saba to "maintain a close relationship" with the Israeli police department.²⁶⁴ All of this exchange coming from Israel to the US has inspired US law enforcement practices. The NYPD Demographics Unit, which I have discussed at length in this paper, was in part inspired from Israeli military practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Larry Sanchez, a founder of the Demographics Unit, told close friends and colleagues that he was keeping tabs on the policing methods being used in

²⁶¹ Arango.

²⁶² Apuzzo, et al. 218.

²⁶³ Mersiha Gadzo. "How the US and Israel Exchange Tactics in Violence and Control." Black Lives Matter News | Al Jazeera. June 12, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/12/how-the-us-and-israel-exchange-tactics-in-violence-and-control>.

²⁶⁴ Apuzzo, et al. 218.

the West Bank.²⁶⁵ The loose flow of knowledge between the US and Israel is surely due to their close allyship, but it was also made possible by processes of globalization and neoliberalism. As the neoliberal perception of security continues to spread, programs like these may become a new standard for police training.

Another example of the transnational points of connections that policing creates are the conferences hosted by Urban Shield SWAT Training Conference. The event traditionally held in Oakland attracted hundreds of protestors because of their guest list. Participants include Bahrain, Brazil, Jordan, Israel, and Qatar, all of whom have been criticized for their use of excessive police violence. At the event, the latest developments in “tactical gear, guns, crowd control methods, and drones” are promoted and some products are demonstrated.²⁶⁶ Various private contractors and weapons suppliers attend the event to make sales to the enforcement agencies in attendance. While the event reportedly cost the federal government over 1 million dollars, private companies have the opportunity to make large financial gains.²⁶⁷ As these companies profit and grow, the terror-industrial complex does as well. Moreover, aside from the influence of protestors, the federal and local governments involved in hosting the conference did not consider the social implications of learning from dangerous regimes. Social considerations are again considered second to the influence of neoliberal security ideology.

The growth of surveillance practices and communication between law enforcement internationally cements the development of the punitive state. As the terror-industrial sector becomes more financially viable, these interactions will grow. The unchecked proliferation of force, CVE policy, and weapon technology used by local officers has been, and will be, used to unjustly discriminate against MENA-Americans as long as the War on Terror persists; it is in the best interest of these companies to ensure the War does in fact persist.

²⁶⁵ Gadzo. "How the US and Israel Exchange Tactics in Violence and Control."

²⁶⁶ "Mayor Says 'Urban Shield' Won't Return To Oakland Next Year Amid Police Militarization Debate." *CBS San Francisco*. September 06, 2014. <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2014/09/06/mayor-jean-quan-says-urban-shield-wont-return-to-oakland-next-year-amid-police-militarization-debate-protests-law-enforcement-military-shooting-ferguson-weapons/>

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

In the post-9/11 era, it can be hard to imagine a world without surveillance. The post-9/11 era has been defined by far-reaching expansions in the scope and role of intelligence in civil society. The power of the police is inextricable from the power of intelligence agencies, the budgets for these agencies are perpetually increasing, and racially biased security practices continually target SWANA-American communities. In this essay, I hoped to demonstrate that such a pervasive police state is not endemic to the American government; rather, it has been constructed, produced, and upheld by a long history of racially biased surveillance, proliferating responsibilities and budgets to intelligence and police agencies, and neoliberalism.

These security developments have not come about uncontested. In fact, it is the protest and resistance of many national civil rights organizations and SWANA-community initiatives that have reformed these surveillance laws in the years since 9/11. As national security moves forward, the U.S. must bring racially motivated surveillance to an end. Over and over again, these programs have only served to cause strife within communities and have led to no leads on terrorist activity. The Biden administration has promised to end CVE policy in their administration, and should no permutations of this program follow, this would be a great first step. However, the U.S. faces a much more grave and abstract issue: how do we interrupt the growing terror-industrial process? What would it take to walk away from the decades old carceral logic of Broken Windows and adopt new, more effective methods of addressing social ills and national security issues? As Wendy Brown says, “[neoliberalism], its figuration of the human, its reality principle, and its worldview—’there is no alternative’—consecrates, deepens, and naturalizes without acknowledging despair.”²⁶⁸ The U.S., in partnership with SWANA leaders and activists, will have to imagine and create a new partnership to ensure mutually beneficial protection between the state and its citizens. They must challenge established neoliberal logic, fight the despair created by decades of unchanging, biased policies, and imagine a more equitable future beyond the terror-industrial complex.

²⁶⁸ Wendy Brown. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books, 2017.

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