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Recasting the Carter Doctrine: Pursuing Proportionality in Arabian Gulf Petro-Security

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Abstract

The tumultuous events of 1979, including the Iranian attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, provided an ominous backdrop for President Jimmy Carter's January 1980 State of the Union Address. A portion of this speech became known as the Carter Doctrine and signaled to the world that America considered the Persian Gulf region a vital interest and if threatened, would employ all instruments of national power to defend it. During the past four decades, the Carter Doctrine and the associated U.S. military presence in the Arabian (Persian) Gulf region have impacted the American enduring interests of security, economic prosperity, values, and international order to varying degrees. Additionally, the implementation of the Carter Doctrine created an environment conducive to the large-scale export of petroleum from the Arabian Gulf to its most oil-dependent customers: China, Japan, India, and South Korea. A significant incongruence exists between America's role as the Arabian Gulf's de facto security guarantor and its low level of reliance on oil from this region. A revised Carter Doctrine proposes that security commitments in the Arabian Gulf are proportional to the economic benefit both exporting and importing countries derive from this security.

Recasting the Carter Doctrine:
Pursuing Proportionality in Arabian Gulf Petro-Security

> An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.
>
> —President Jimmy Carter[1]

During his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the preceding statement, which became known as the Carter Doctrine and set in motion a chain of events which significantly impacted the Arabian Gulf during the following four decades.[2] The palpable domestic tension which influenced President Carter to issue such a statement was likely rooted in the fear of Soviet intentions in Afghanistan (and beyond), collective frustration over the oil price shocks of the previous decade, and the Iranian capture of 66 U.S. hostages from the U.S. Embassy in 1979.[3] President Carter's address focused on the proximity of Soviet forces to the vast oil reserves in the Arabian Gulf and their "grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil."[4] In response to this perceived Soviet threat, President Carter directed his Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, to increase the U.S. military's ability to quickly deploy forces to the Middle East.[5] The ensuing 37 years of U.S. military presence and armed conflict in the Arabian Gulf area are inextricably linked to the Carter Doctrine and its underlying premise that the United States would serve indefinitely as the region's de facto security guarantor.

Significantly enhanced U.S. energy security and growing Asian dependence on Arabian Gulf petroleum suggest the question: "Is the Carter Doctrine still germane?" The contemporary relevance of the Carter Doctrine can be viewed through the prism of the four enduring national interests in the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS).[6]

This view leads to an analysis of the energy security of four of the world's top five net oil importers (China, Japan, India, and South Korea) and assesses their level of reliance on Arabian Gulf petroleum. The mismatch between their high energy dependence on and low participation in providing security for this area suggests that the United States government should implement a new Carter Doctrine. It should be recast into a form which achieves a more proportional level of security contributions from countries which directly benefit from the export and import of Arabian Gulf petroleum. Conceivably, these countries will contribute forces to protect the economic viability of the Arabian Gulf petroleum market alongside a reduced, forward-deployed U.S. military presence.

Origin and Effects of the Carter Doctrine

As President Carter and his administration drafted his January 1980 State of the Union Address, a complex combination of issues likely influenced his decision to develop and issue the Carter Doctrine. Their two most pressing security concerns began during the final months of 1979 and were located in the greater Middle East / Central Asia region.[7] First, on Christmas Eve 1979, the Soviet Union launched a massive invasion of Afghanistan and "installed a … puppet head of government."[8] The Carter Administration expressed significant concern over the fact that Soviet forces could potentially exert influence over the vast oil resources of the Arabian Gulf due to their location "within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits of Hormuz."[9] President Carter sought to clearly articulate American resolve to defend the Arabian Gulf in the event the Soviet appetite grew larger than Afghanistan and reoriented west toward the Arabian oil fields.[10] The Carter Administration's other security threat in the region took place in Tehran, Iran on November 4, 1979, when angry Iranian protestors overran the U.S. Embassy and took 66 Americans hostage.[11]

Additionally, in early 1980, President Carter was preparing to fight a fierce presidential reelection campaign where he was perceived as being "to blame for the economic calamities that had befallen the nation" including increased inflation, unemployment and gasoline prices.[12] The combined effects of the Russian and Iranian actions, domestic economic pressures, and his flailing reelection campaign spurred President Carter to issue the Carter Doctrine. He likely hoped that this declaration would serve to both deter the Soviet Union and enable the U.S. military to establish a stronger American sphere of influence in the greater Middle East and Central Asia.[13]

Two months after President Carter's address, Secretary of Defense Brown established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.[14] Less than three years later, President Ronald Reagan reorganized the RDJTF as Central Command (CENTCOM) and directed it to focus on defending and enabling the unimpeded export of oil from the Arabian Gulf.[15] The Carter Doctrine and CENTCOM encountered their first test in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.[16] William Allison asserts that "The Carter Doctrine legitimized the decision to support Iraq" in its war against Iran by providing the Iraqis with imagery, military equipment and funding to purchase food.[17] During this period, American forces participated in Operations EARNEST WILL, NIMBLE ARCHER, and PRAYING MANTIS, all focused on maintaining security in the Arabian Gulf while escorting U.S. and Kuwaiti oil tankers to prevent Iranian interference in the maritime transportation of oil.[18] In 1990 and 1991, Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM demonstrated the U.S. military's capability to deploy, base, and employ hundreds of thousands of American service members in the Arabian Gulf to address emergent security crises such as Saddam

Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. During the following decade, U.S. forces continued to base significant joint combat power in the Arabian Gulf region to implement no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.[19]

After nearly forty years, the lasting impact of the Carter Doctrine is clearly evident in the expansive network of American military bases across the Arabian Gulf region. Four of CENTCOM's five service component commands have forward headquarters located there while their main headquarters remain in the continental United States. U.S. Army Central-Forward is based in Kuwait, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command-Forward shares a naval base in Bahrain, while both U.S. Air Forces Central Command-Forward and U.S. Special Operations Command Central-Forward operate from Qatar.[20] U.S. Naval Forces Central Command has no forward element; its headquarters is permanently stationed in Bahrain.[21] The enduring impact of the Carter Doctrine is clearly evident today in the tens of thousands of U.S. military personnel, vehicles, aircraft and ships deployed to the Arabian Gulf region. The history behind the Carter Doctrine and the subsequent U.S. military build-up in the Arabian Gulf region provide a useful context to assess its effectiveness in protecting American national interests.

The Carter Doctrine and Enduring National Interests

The Carter Doctrine's contemporary relevance is evident in the four U.S. enduring national interests stated in President Barack Obama's 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS).[22]

Security

The first American enduring national interest focuses on "the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners."[23] Within this context, the Carter

Doctrine justified the United States' maintenance of an unrivaled force posture in the Arabian Gulf during the past four decades. America's forward-deployed military forces in the Arabian Gulf have enabled her to quickly and effectively respond to security challenges ranging from defeating an aggressive nation-state to escorting oil tankers through contested seas, enforcing no-fly zones, and conducting counter-terrorism operations.

Although these forward-deployed forces never directly engaged Soviet forces as originally anticipated in 1980, they deterred and defeated a wide range of enemies while reassuring regional U.S. allies and partners. These friends primarily include the Arab nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.[24] Since the inception of the Carter Doctrine, the United States has gradually assumed the role of de facto security guarantor for the Arabian Gulf.[25] In this role, the United States has acted at times unilaterally but also with a coalition to stabilize and protect this oil-rich region from internal and external security threats.

Economic Prosperity

Establishing "a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity" underpins the second enduring national interest.[26] During the past four decades, the Carter Doctrine military presence have shouldered the majority of the security burden in the Arabian Gulf to prevent large-scale oil supply disruptions which could damage American and global economic prosperity.[27] The nations around the Arabian Gulf receive global attention because their enormous petroleum reserves enjoy low production costs, making them the supplier of choice for most of the world. Over half of the world's proven oil reserves are located there and the cost to pump that oil and its accompanying natural gas from the ground are the lowest in the world. Favorable geologic conditions reduce the production costs for Arabian Gulf petroleum almost 50% below those of the United States, Canada, China, and Venezuela.[28]

Although many American citizens believe the misperception that most of their oil is imported from Saudi Arabia or Iraq, the United States is not currently and has never been totally reliant on Arabian Gulf oil.[29] In 2015, Arabian Gulf oil only accounted for 7.7% of the total U.S. petroleum supply (including domestic production and imports).[30] The U.S. energy landscape has drastically changed since 1980 and the United States is currently experiencing its relatively highest level of energy security due to several encouraging supply and demand signals.

The United States is significantly less vulnerable to global oil supply interruptions due to the establishment and expansion of the U.S. government Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) and large-scale commercial oil storage facilities. In response to the crippling economic effect of the oil embargo by Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the United States began filling its SPR with imported oil in 1977.[31] The U.S. SPR is located in salt caverns along the Texas and Louisiana coasts and currently contains 695 million barrels of oil which is considered the "largest stockpile of government-owned emergency crude oil in the world."[32] As a member of the International Energy Agency, the United States is required to maintain a strategic petroleum reserve with at least 90 days of import protection; its SPR holds 150 days' worth.[33] For comparison's sake, in 1980 the newly-formed U.S. SPR contained only 107 million barrels of oil, which provided a paltry 17 days of import protection.[34]

Not only does the United States possess a significant amount of oil in its SPR, but the average purchase price of the SPR oil is nearly $18 per barrel less expensive than the current market price for a benchmark oil type, as of March 20, 2017; this low purchase cost will make it a more politically acceptable option for the President to employ in a crisis when the price of oil has skyrocketed.[35] Additionally, U.S. commercial oil storage facilities contain another 480 million barrels of oil—over 100 days of additional import protection for American markets.[36]

From 1980 to 2016, the United States increased its domestic petroleum production by over 20%.[37] During the same period, the United States significantly decreased the percentage of its net oil imports from the Arabian Gulf and from OPEC (Table 1). The United States also diversified the source of the majority of its petroleum imports to include a larger share of oil from Western Hemisphere countries such as Canada, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela (Table 1).[38]

Table 1. Country / Region of Origin - U.S. Oil Imports, 1980 versus 2015 [39]

	Canada	Saudi Arabia	% of Total U.S. Petroleum Imports from Arabian Gulf	% of Total U.S. Petroleum Imports from Western Hemisphere	% of Total U.S. Petroleum Imports from OPEC
1980	6.5%	18.2%	22.0%	21.1%	62.2%
2015	39.8%	11.2%	15.9%	60.6%	30.6%

(Percent of total U.S. global petroleum imports)

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), American petroleum demand is expected to remain steady through 2040 based on increased vehicle fuel efficiency as mandated by the stringent Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards established under President Obama's administration in 2012.[40] The stable U.S. petroleum demand for the next two and a half decades is reflective of a similar anticipated trend for most developed nations.[41] Specifically, the EIA predicts that petroleum consumption for most developed nations will remain steady due to relatively slower population growth rates, vehicle efficiency advances, and the greater integration of natural gas and electricity for transportation applications such as busses, trains, and personal vehicles.[42] President Donald Trump outlined his intention to decrease the CAFE standards during a visit to Detroit in mid-March 2017.[43] If this occurs, American petroleum demand will likely increase for the foreseeable future.

Values

The third American enduring national interest in the NSS is focused on "respect for universal values at home and around the world."[44] However, the implementation of the Carter Doctrine has resulted in an incongruence between commonly espoused American values, vital national interests and support of key allies in the Arabian Gulf. The United States' presence in the Arabian Gulf has unquestionably "deter[red] conflict, reassure[d] allies and partners, and respond[ed] to crises," but it has done so while enabling local allies to govern in a manner which is, at times, not aligned with American values.[45]

The U.S. Department of State (DoS) "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015" expressed concern about a wide range of human rights issues in many of the Arabian Gulf countries which host U.S. military forces.[46] These issues highlight their citizens' "inability to choose or peacefully change their government" and lack of protection for basic "civil liberties including freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and internet use in several of the Arabian Gulf countries."[47] The very U.S. military presence which maintains the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf could be perceived by the international community as conflicting with the U.S. "enduring commitment to the advancement of democracy and human rights" spelled out in the NSS.[48]

International Order

The fourth and final American enduring national interest in the NSS strives to achieve "a rules-based international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes, peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges."[49] The implementation of the Carter Doctrine focused the United States on the development of the GCC member states' military capabilities to achieve interoperability with the U.S. military and stronger regional cooperation against common threats.[50]The U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program has been the U.S. government's primary method to build these capabilities.[51]

The FMS program has provided GCC nations now boast modern fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, armored vehicles and air defense systems, manned by trained crews and operating from updated bases.[52] . The U.S. military units deployed to the Arabian Gulf also participate in frequent exercises with their GCC counterparts to increase interoperability.[53] The net effect of the U.S. FMS and military exercise program is that GCC member states are well-equipped and capable of conducting military operations, as evidenced by the Saudi Arabian-led coalition's air and ground campaign in Yemen with contributions from nearly all GCC member states.[54] Now that consequences of the Carter Doctrine for U.S. national interests are clear, how has this policy affected other oil-importing nations around the world?

Asian Reliance on Arabian Gulf Petroleum

Table 2. Where did Arabian Gulf Countries Sell Oil in 2015?[55]

	Asia and Pacific	Europe	North America
Saudi Arabia	64%	12%	16%
Kuwait	79%	6%	9%
Iraq	62%	28%	7%
Iran	90%	10%	-
Qatar	99.6%	-	-
United Arab Emirates	97.7%	0.6%	-
Oman*	98.7	-	-
Total	75%	11%	9%

(The sum of percentages in the rows above do not equal 100% due to rounding and minor sales to the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.)

Table 2 reveals that the oil producing countries in the Arabian Gulf export 75% of their crude oil to the Asia-Pacific region but only 9% to North America.[56] When refined petroleum products are also considered, the Arabian Gulf exports more than 10 times the amount of total petroleum products to Asia as it ships to North America.[57] The Carter Doctrine has indirectly enabled the Asian economic powers of China, Japan, India, and South Korea to capitalize on a steady, secure stream of Arabian Gulf petroleum to address their energy demand. By 2015, these four countries were clearly dependent on the Arabian Gulf for more than half of their import requirements; they each imported three to five times more Arabian Gulf petroleum than did the United States. (Figure 1).[58] This symbiotic relationship enables the economies of both regions to flourish—an economic interdependence underwritten by America as the security guarantor.

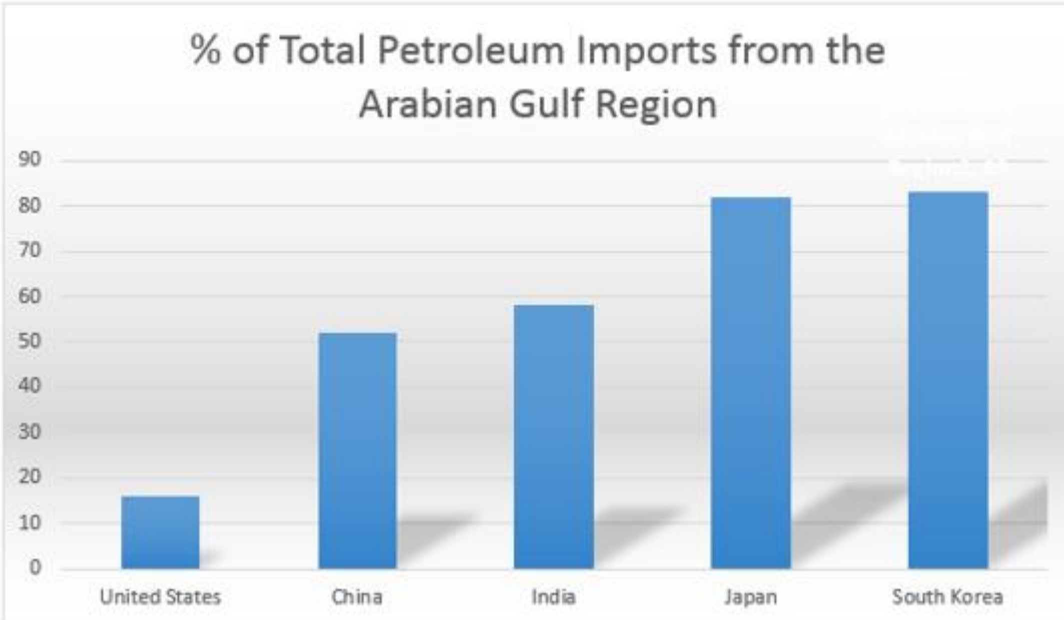

Figure 1. Dependence on Arabian Gulf Petroleum (2015)[59]

China

Chinese petroleum challenges are rooted in several converging demand and supply trends. The EIA anticipates that total Chinese petroleum demand will continue to increase approximately 2.6% annually through 2040.[60] Despite estimations for limited population growth of 2%, experts anticipate Chinese petroleum demand will grow due to several factors including "domestic economic growth and trade, transportation sector shifts," and increased "light-duty car sales" to the growing middle class.[61] In 2014, China surpassed the United States and became the world's largest net importer of oil.[62]

During the past several decades, continued demand growth and limited domestic production have forced China to increase its reliance on imported oil; this dependence jumped from 30% to 57% of the total Chinese supply during 2000–2014.[63] Unlike the

United States, the majority of Chinese petroleum imports are from the greater Middle East (52%) and Africa (22%).[64] In 2014, China did business with nearly every oil exporting country in the Arabian Gulf: Saudi Arabia (16%), Oman (10%), Iran (9%), Iraq (9%), the United Arab Emirates (4%), and Kuwait (3%).[65] China's three largest national oil companies are also actively involved in developing Iraqi oil fields in an attempt to increase their production output.[66] Additionally, China is actively pursuing initiatives to expand production and importation of oil from Iran following the 2015 lifting of nuclear-related sanctions.[67]

Chinese dependence on Middle Eastern and African oil is partially driven by its domestic production limitations. The EIA predicts that Chinese domestic production will increase incrementally during the next 25 years before peaking due to several factors.[68] First, the Chinese options for increased domestic production are located in the most challenging oil extraction areas such as "mature crude oil fields, … shale oil, tight oil, (and) deepwater fields."[69] Secondly, the oils in these fields are considered "waxy" and "heavy" and are better suited to refine into "low value" fuels such as bunker fuel instead of more valuable fuels like diesel or jet fuel.[70] Additionally, the extraction methods to overcome these factors are energy- and water-intensive, likely adding to current Chinese pollution issues.[71]

China's limited strategic petroleum reserve which currently contains only 30-45 days of import protection exacerbates the risk associated with its dependence on imported oil and limited domestic production.[72] The Chinese government is implementing an ambitious plan to create a larger strategic petroleum reserve by 2020 that will hold 500 million barrels of oil, or approximately 90 days of import protection.[73]

Although China is not a member of the International Energy Agency, it appears to abide by the 90-day membership criterion.[74]

India

By 2050, the United Nations anticipates that India will become the world's most populous nation based on its 34% population growth from 2010 levels.[75] In 2050, roughly the same amount of people will live in China and the United States combined as they do in India.[76] This anticipated Indian population bloom will fuel increased economic growth and, accordingly, additional petroleum demand.[77] These factors will result in even more reliance on imported oil due to limited possibilities for additional Indian domestic oil extraction.[78] In 2015, India produced approximately 1 million barrels of domestic oil per day while importing 3.9 million barrels per day.[79]

In 2015, India imported 58% of its petroleum from the Arabian Gulf; Saudi Arabia (20%), Iraq (17%), Iran (6%) and other countries in the greater Middle East (16%).[80] The remaining 42% of India's oil imports came from Africa (mainly Nigeria) and the Western Hemisphere (primarily Venezuela).[81] India intends to comply with the International Energy Agency's 90 days of import protection benchmark, gradually establishing a limited strategic petroleum reserve of 30 days of import protection by 2020.[82]

Japan

In contrast to India's significant forecasted growth, the United Nations expects Japan's population in 2050 will decrease by 15%.[83] Accordingly, Japanese petroleum demand is expected to decrease in the near term due to energy efficiency improvements, lower birth rates, and aging of its population.[84] Additional decreases will likely occur when the Japanese government and citizens reconcile their differences on the reintroduction of nuclear-powered electricity generation amidst the looming shadow of the 2011 Fukushima disaster.[85]

Japan is arguably one of the least energy-secure developed countries based on its severely “limited domestic energy resources” and dependence on the Arabian Gulf for over 80% of its petroleum import requirements.[86] The World Bank ranks Japan’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as third behind the United States and China, but the majority of its industrial, manufacturing, and technological success is predicated on energy imports from across the world.[87] Japan currently imports 34% of its petroleum from Saudi Arabia, 25% from the United Arab Emirates, 8% from Qatar, 8% from Kuwait, and 5% from Iran.[88] To help insulate its economy from global oil supply interruptions, Japan maintains approximately 100 days of import protection in a combination of government and commercial petroleum reserves.[89] Opportunities for expanded domestic oil exploration are extremely limited in Japan, compounded by the fact that several of its potential offshore fields lie in the contested East China Sea.[90]

South Korea

Similar to Japan, South Korea’s petroleum demand will likely decrease due to an aging citizenry, a lower population growth rate, and energy efficiency improvements.[91] Despite South Korea’s expansive refinery infrastructure and export market share of refined petroleum products, the fact remains that it is largely dependent on oil exported from the Arabian Gulf for its domestic consumption.[92] South Korea closely trails India as the world’s fifth largest net importer of oil.[93]

Similar to Japan, in 2015, South Korea imported over 80% of its petroleum from the Arabian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia (30%), Kuwait (14%), Iraq (13%), Qatar (11%), the United Arab Emirates (10%), and Iran (4%).[94] As a hedge against global supply disruptions, Korea maintains a mixture of strategic, commercial and international jointly-held reserves which could provide over 80 days of import protection.[95] Additionally, Korea aims to distinguish itself as a regional petroleum storage juggernaut by constructing storage for over 35 million barrels of additional crude oil by 2025.[96] The combined dependence of China, India, Japan, and South Korea on Arabian Gulf petroleum underscores the need to reconsider the Carter Doctrine to achieve a more equitable approach to securing this important region.

Proposed Carter Doctrine

During his Senate confirmation hearing on January 12, 2017, Secretary of Defense James Mattis asserted that America "… must promote and enlist commensurate support from all our allies. The American taxpayer should not carry a disproportionate part of our shared defense, and all who benefit should be expected to help carry their part of the burden."[97] The symbiotic petroleum export-import relationship between China, Japan, India, South Korea, and the countries of the Arabian Gulf results in significant economic value for all parties.

China, Japan, South Korea, and India are the world's first, fourth, fifth, and eighteenth largest export economies, respectively.[98] On the supply side of the equation, the economic benefit of exporting enormous amounts of petroleum to Asia is reflected in some of the world's highest GDP per capita figures.[99] Qatar's GDP per capita of $140,000 is the highest in the world while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates are ranked fifth, seventh, and twelfth, respectively.[100] The United States' provision of security in the Arabian Gulf facilitates this economic connection at a negligible cost in security commitments from Asia and the GCC nations.

While the United States serves as the de facto security guarantor for the Arabian Gulf, the aforementioned Asian and Arabian Gulf oil exporting countries could be considered "security free riders" who reap a significant benefit while not contributing substantially to the security efforts. This petro-security incongruence, coupled with the United States' recently achieved higher degree of energy security, begs the question, "Is the original Carter Doctrine still relevant? If not, how can it be recast to best address the current environment?"

Table 3. Comparison of Original and Revised Carter Doctrines[101]

Original Carter Doctrine (1980)	Revised Carter Doctrine
"An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."	Effective 2022, the United States will no longer serve as the primary security guarantor for the Arabian Gulf and its vast petroleum resources. Instead, the U.S. will form and participate in a coalition of countries focused on protecting the economic freedom of movement within the Arabian Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz. Each member's contribution to this coalition will be proportional to its economic interest in exporting or importing Arabian Gulf petroleum.

The revised Carter Doctrine in Table 3 has two primary distinctions from the original version. First, the original Carter Doctrine asserted that the United States considered the Persian Gulf region to be one of the "vital interests of the United States of America." The revised version acknowledges that the huge oil reserves in the Arabian Gulf and the free flow of trade through the Strait of Hormuz are important to the health of the global economy—not simply American interests, but common concerns of the Arabian Gulf region and Asia. America's current level of security commitment and role as the primary security guarantor in the Arabian Gulf region are simply not justified, especially in light of current threats elsewhere in the world. Admittedly, avoiding a global petroleum price shock is in the United States' best interest due to the connected nature of the global petroleum market and the overall economy, but the fact remains that the United States is not currently and has never been truly reliant on Arabian Gulf oil. While the United States is and logically should be concerned with the overall security and economic viability of the Arabian Gulf region, America's significantly improved energy security effectively insulates its economy from instability in this region.

To the contrary, China, India, Japan, and South Korea are more exposed to risk relative to the Arabian Gulf. Their dependence on its oil, their limited domestic petroleum supplies and lack of import diversification should cause their governments to take a strong interest in the region's security. Arguably, access to Arabian Gulf petroleum has a stronger claim as a vital national security interest for these Asian economic powers than it does for the United States.

Second, the original Carter Doctrine implies a sense of unilateralism in that the United States would respond to any threats within the Persian Gulf. Currently, a huge incongruence exists between the extensive American military commitments in the Arabian Gulf and the limited economic benefit the United States receives from this region. The revised Carter Doctrine contends that the very countries who benefit most from the American-provided security and stability in the Arabian Gulf should provide a proportional share of security commitments. The United States should cease to singlehandedly underwrite the economic success of Arabian Gulf oil exporting countries and their best customers in Asia that include four of the largest eleven global economies.[102]

Implementation

The implementation of this revised Carter Doctrine will require significant ministerial-level engagement with both the Arabian Gulf oil exporting countries and the Asian petroleum importing countries. First, the United States should host a summit with the ministers of defense, chiefs of defense staff, and ministers of foreign affairs from both regions. At this meeting, the United States will clearly articulate the inequity of the current petro-security environment in the Arabian Gulf and unveil a five-year schedule to reduce U.S. commitments of troops and weapons systems there by 50%. The goal of this aggressive redeployment is to create urgency within countries from both regions to quickly assume a proportional level of regional security commitment.

Following this summit, the implementation of this recast Carter Doctrine will require a two-pronged effort to further enhance the capabilities and confidence of the GCC states and to integrate increased Asian military contributions into the Arabian Gulf security efforts. First, the United States will continue to develop the capability and capacity of the GCC states to defend their vital maritime and air interests and their critical infrastructure. The United States should reassure its GCC allies through partnered air and maritime patrolling, expedited FMS deliveries and increased bilateral and regional exercises. Partnered U.S./GCC maritime and air patrols will encourage these regional forces to work confidently with each other to ensure the economic viability of their petroleum exports. During the past several years, all of the GCC countries except Oman have displayed their ability to conduct combined and joint operations in support of the Saudi-led military efforts in Yemen.[103] The next five years of partnered patrolling in the Arabian Gulf alongside U.S. military elements will focus on applying the same level of vigor exhibited in Yemen to security operations in the Arabian Gulf.

The second prong of this effort to implement the revised Carter Doctrine by 2022 will focus on incorporating significantly increased military commitments from China, Japan, India, and South Korea into the security efforts in the Arabian Gulf. Existing relationships and coalition memberships will serve to expedite operational integration of these Asian countries. The United States should encourage China to partner with Iran within their nascent relationship confirmed by November 2016 bilateral defense agreement which focuses on unspecified Chinese-Iranian "common interests in many regional and global issues."[104] Critics might argue that partnering China with Iran seems like a recipe for disaster for the United States and its GCC allies; however, the sheer magnitude of China's petroleum dependence on nearly all countries within the Arabian Gulf should lead China to exert a moderating influence on Iran's behavior.

Iran provides China with less than 20% of its Arabian Gulf oil imports while China is undeniably reliant on the GCC states and Iraq for the rest.[105] As of March 2017, the EIA estimated that OPEC only had 1.7 million barrels per day of surplus crude oil production capacity, most of which is ironically located in the Arabian Gulf.[106] In other words, if China and Iran were to antagonize the GCC states and Iraq, the most immediate and injurious impact would be on China itself.[107] Instead, China's advocacy for Iranian recognition on the world stage could potentially lead to a decrease in Iranian inflammatory actions in the Arabian Gulf, which are likely rooted in an inferiority complex and feelings of isolation after decades of sanctions. The Chinese partnership with Iran could result in a much more restrained Iran who feels represented, rather than ignored.

The United States should encourage Japan and South Korea to significantly increase their contributions to the Combined Maritime Force (CMF) co-located with the U.S. Navy Fifth Fleet and Naval Forces Central Command headquarters in Bahrain.[108] The additional Japanese and South Korean maritime elements would patrol alongside U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels in addition to ships from GCC states for several years to refine their interoperability and regional awareness. The Japanese and South Korean naval presence would increase from its current level of episodic ship visits into regional ports to a more robust naval presence reflective of their dependence on petroleum from this region.

Lastly, the United States should urge India to deepen its diplomatic and military ties with the GCC states and Iraq. Similarly to Japan and South Korea, India's future role in Arabian Gulf petro-security would be predicated on significantly increased partnered maritime and air patrols with U.S. Navy and Air Force elements. Additionally, India could serve as the lead Asian coordinating country for developing a close working relationship with the Iraqi Navy. Joint Indian-Iraqi task forces could patrol the northern Arabian Gulf as a buffer of sorts between the Chinese-Iranian patrols and CMF vessels.

Revising the 1980's era Carter Doctrine to decrease the U.S. military presence in the Arabian Gulf will likely encounter international and domestic criticism. Despite the existence of several risks, the potential long-term benefits to the United States support the implementation of a revised Carter Doctrine.

Risks

Two categories of risk present themselves: reduced U.S. military response capacity and negative regional perceptions. First, this proposal will admittedly decrease the capacity and agility of U.S. forces to respond to regional threats due to their reduced numbers and capabilities after 2022. America's GCC allies might accuse it of abandoning the region, thus creating a perceived power vacuum for Iran and China to fill. Despite this doomsday assertion, the simple fact remains that the GCC states currently spend seven times more than the Iranians on defense items.[109] Additionally, the U.S. military outspends Iran by a 30:1 ratio and would maintain the necessary rapidly deployable maritime, air, and ground forces required to lead a coalition operation and defeat a belligerent Iran (or any other malign actors).[110] This concern over Iranian aggression after 2022 would be mitigated by the premise that China's presence would moderate Iranian mischief.

Benefits

This recast Carter Doctrine provides the opportunity for the U.S. military to redeploy 50% of its forces currently stationed in the Arabian Gulf to the continental United States, Asia or Europe. Bringing formations back to stateside bases could result in significant savings for the Department of Defense. Additionally, shifting forces to Asia or Eastern Europe could would reinforce Pacific Command and European Command efforts to confront increasing threats from North Korea and Russia. Lastly, implementing this recast Carter Doctrine yields a venue for the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China to cooperate outside the political powder keg of the East and South China Seas. This cooperation would go a long way toward defusing tactical and strategic misunderstandings and miscalculations in the Arabian Gulf and the Western Pacific.

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