REALIST FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS WITH A TWIST:

THE PERSIAN GULF SECURITY COMPLEX AND THE RISE AND FALL

OF DUAL CONTAINMENT

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Analyses of United States post-Cold War foreign policy in the Persian Gulf symbolize realism's new found concern with foreign policy analysis. Prominent realists attribute specific policies to domestic concerns and how they have dominated policymaking in the era of US primacy. Although convincing, this perspective is not comprehensive. By drawing on regional security complex theory it is possible to map the regional developments which have equally constrained and incentivized the rise and fall of dual containment. This more extensive account produces two important findings regarding realism's neglect of the regional level of analysis. First, realists overstate the domestic determinants of US policy in the Persian Gulf. Second, and more broadly, realist foreign policy analysts underspecify systemic pressures which shape and shove a country's foreign policy.

Introduction

Realism is traditionally portrayed as a systemic theory; consequently it has been criticized for failing to explain specific policy outcomes (Elman 1996). In response, those sympathetic to the tradition have developed realist foreign policy analysis – a synthesis of foreign policy analysis and realism. Despite earlier work being neorealist, the recent work of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt falls into the realist foreign policy analysis school. In

explaining post-Cold War US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf they reject the deterministic claim that unipolarity has conditioned the expansion of US foreign policy. Instead, they show that particular domestic influences have incentivized policymakers to act on the permissive international environment in specific ways.

Realist foreign policy analysts, however, overlook important systemic influences which have shaped US foreign policy, notably factors located at the regional level of analysis. Barry Buzan's regional security complex theory (RSCT) corrects for this. Whilst Buzan's theory has predominantly been employed to analyze regional security interactions, it also has the capacity to examine the extent to which regional dynamics influence nonregional powers' foreign policy. Accordingly, this research integrates realist foreign policy analysis with RSCT to create realist foreign policy analysis with a twist. Its contribution is then illustrated through an examination of US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf – the most obvious example of America's expanding interests in the post-Cold War era and a case which has been discussed prominently by realists.

Unsurprisingly this controversial case has already been analyzed in the RSCT literature, although the results are unsatisfactory. The literature distinguishes between pre and post-Gulf War policy by only examining the region's influence during the former (Edwards 2013); like Mearsheimer and Walt it overstates the importance of the domestic level of analysis (Gause 2010); or the analysis ends following the rollback of Iraq's annexation of Kuwait (Yetiv 1995). An analysis of US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf which remains true to the principle that the regional level of analysis can crucially influence US foreign policy will therefore also contribute to the RSCT literature.

The remainder of this paper is divided into three sections. The first sketches realist foreign policy analysis explanations for the post-Cold War expansion of US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf. The second then outlines RSCT. The third then considers the extent to which

developments at the regional level have shaped US foreign policy. The paper makes two contributions: theoretically it argues that realist foreign policy analysis needs to greater appreciate how a great power's foreign policy is influenced by systemic pressures located beyond the international distribution of power; and empirically the research illustrates that the Persian Gulf's regional security dynamics have crucially influenced US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. If correct, the logical consequence of this argument is that realist foreign policy analysts have overstated the influence that domestic factors have had on US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf.

<div align="center">Realism and the Expansion of US Foreign Policy</div>

If an expansion of a state's foreign policy refers to the broadening of its goals, interests, and scope of action (Zakaria 1998:19), then in no other region has US foreign policy expanded more than in the Persian Gulf. In the post-Cold War era the US has forcibly reversed Iraq's annexation of Kuwait; increased its regional security commitments; committed itself to containing Iran and Iraq; and then invaded Iraq. Realists would traditionally explain this via systemic incentives: classical approaches suggest that as a state's relative capabilities increase, the scope of its national interest will do likewise (Zakaria 1998:18-20); offensive neorealists contend that anarchy, offensive military capabilities, and uncertainty hardwires into all powers a desire to expand (Mearsheimer 2001:2-3); whilst Waltz (2008:xii-xiv) argued that when a state's capabilities are unbalanced it has more latitude to take self-interested actions.

Systemic perspectives overlook agency and contingency, however. As Wolfers (1962:41) commented: "No matter how powerful the onslaught of external forces, men are not transformed into mere automatons". Although an increase in relative capabilities may create an opportunity for a state to increase the scope of its foreign policy, the specifics of how, when, and why it does so are uncertain (Zakaria 1998:12). This is the neoclassical realist

argument. Neoclassical realists accept that the international system defines the scope of a country's foreign policy. Nevertheless, they contend that how policymakers act on these conditions is dependent upon perceptions of relative power, intellectual trends, bureaucratic processes and institutions, individual groups and actors, and state resources (Rose 1998; Schweller 2003; Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman 2009). Neoclassical realists can therefore be distinguished from neorealists because they explain the foreign policies a state pursues rather than systemic outcomes. As such, neoclassical realists are realist foreign policy analysts (Taliaferro 2000:132-134).

Although Mearsheimer's (2001) and Walt's (1987,1996) earlier work was neorealist, their recent work relates to neoclassical realism and can therefore be defined as realist foreign policy analysis. Like neoclassical realists Mearsheimer and Walt (2008:229-230) stress the importance, although not in a deterministic fashion, of the international system. Additionally, like neoclassical realists, they focus on foreign policy decisions as opposed to systemic outcomes (Mearsheimer 2011; Walt 2011). Furthermore, in common with other neoclassical realists (Schweller 2006), Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) are concerned with illustrating how domestic political influences can cause a state to pursue suboptimal foreign policies. Indeed, Mearsheimer (2009:245) contends that states "often pursue misguided foreign policies because domestic politics intrude into the policy-making process and trump sound strategic logic".

Whether employing domestic politics to explain suboptimal foreign policy decisions is central to neoclassical realism is debatable: some consider it to be the school's main contribution (Rathbun 2008) whilst others contend that neoclassical realism is chiefly concerned with illustrating how all domestic influences – not just parochial interests – act as a filter through which systemic imperatives are understood (Ripsman 2009). Irrespective of this, however, Mearsheimer and Walt and neoclassical realists more broadly symbolize

realism's new found concern with foreign policy analysis. Rather than seeing the international system as determining a state's foreign policy, they build upon Waltz's (2000:24) claim that the structure shapes and shoves but does not determine a state's foreign policy.

From this perspective unipolarity – the system – did not determine the expansion of US foreign policy; rather US foreign policy expanded because of domestic influences which induced policymakers to act on systemic incentives in specific ways, which is illustrated through the most obvious case of Americas expanding interests and scope of action, namely policy in the Persian Gulf. Realist foreign policy analysts contend that dual containment in the Persian Gulf was conditioned by systemic change, the prevailing intellectual climate, and the influence of powerful lobbyists. The Clinton administration was wedded to a belief in American exceptionalism, what might be termed the indispensable nation thesis. For Mearsheimer (2011:32) and Walt (2005) this intellectual climate was central to dual containment: the indispensable nation thesis inspired policymakers to pursue dual containment as opposed to a balance of power strategy. Equally important, the Israeli lobby exercised formidable influence on the policymaking process. Indeed, Quoting Kenneth Pollack, an advisor in the National Security Council, Mearsheimer and Walt (2008:286-288) argue that it was Israel's fear of Iran and subsequent pressure by the Israeli lobby which caused the Clinton administration to antagonize Iran. In turn, the US missed an opportunity to ally itself with Iran in order to balance Iraq (Mearsheimer 2002:16).

Similar ideas also explain America's post-containment policy. The events of 9/11 engendered the ascendancy of neoconservatism, which advocated democratic militarism to transform the Middle East (Mearsheimer 2005,2011; Monten 2005; Walt 2012). Of equal importance, however, was the role of the Israeli lobby which, along with neoconservative intellectuals, manipulated intelligence and sold the war to a sceptical public. As Mearsheimer and Walt

(2008:232) contend, the lobby "successfully pressed for a particular set of policies…without their efforts, America would probably not be in Iraq". True to their neorealist roots, however, they argue that these influences were complemented by America's systemic primacy (Mearsheimer and Walt 2008:229-230). And again, they argue that America's interests in the Gulf would have been better served by ensuring Iran balance Iraq or vice-versa (Mearsheimer 2002:16).

Although convincing, the realist foreign policy analyst perspective is not comprehensive because it utilizes a thin understanding of systemic influence: following Waltz (1979) realist foreign policy analysts reduce the system to the international distribution of capabilities, which is problematic. Under "closer observation", Morgenthau (1993:213) wrote, "[the international] system is frequently composed of a number of subsystems…that maintain within themselves a balance of power of their own". Although realist foreign policy analysts recognize the importance of the regional level of analysis (Lobell 2009:49-50; Taliaferro 2012), systemic pressure is often reduced to the international distribution of power, especially when discussing US policy (Paul 2012:11). But if in the post-Cold War era the regional level is even more salient, as some conclude (Buzan 1991b:439-442; Lake and Morgan 1997:3-7), then this oversight is untenable. If true, then realist foreign policy analysts underspecify the systemic factors which influence a country's foreign policy.

Regional Security Complex Theory

This is what British structural realists would argue. They have provided one of the most sophisticated critiques of Waltz's neorealism. Although accepting elements of neorealism, they argue that a deeper "system theory needs to contain more than Waltz's structure" (Buzan, Little, and Jones 1993:29). Accordingly they suggest four refinements which are argued to result in a deeper systemic theory. First, while accepting the durability of anarchy, British structural realists show that it does not force all states to become functionally alike.

Second, they challenge neorealism's narrow material focus; instead they call for a sectorial approach which recognizes the importance of economic, societal, and strategic factors. Third, they argue that a system is composed of units, structures, and interactions, and that the system's interaction capacity – its level of technological development and shared norms – also influences a state's possible action (Buzan, Jones, and Little 1993:30-33,38,69-72,132-168; Buzan and Little 1996).

It is British structural realism's fourth refinement, which is primarily concerned with the unit level, which provides a pathway for thinking about the regional level of analysis. British structural realists contend that the unit level is critical because states have specific attributes, such as "bureaucratic process, leadership personality, the organization of the government, and the organizing ideology of the state", which shape policy outcomes (Buzan, Jones, and Little 1993:47), which is precisely what realist foreign policy analysts contend. But in addition, they contend that units interact with each other and in doing so they generate process formations.

> These are essentially action-reaction theories, in which the key element is a dynamic of stimulus and response. Many recurrent patterns have been found in these often very complex dynamics, and it is the elements of consistency in these patterns that inspire attempts at theory. The best known of them include war, alliance, the balance of power, arms racing and the security dilemma, and the whole range of international political economy patterns arising from protectionist and illiberal policies on trade and money. Buzan's concept of regional security complexes also belong in this category, since it is based on durable, but not permanent patterns in the degree of amity, enmity, and indifference with which states view each other (Buzan, Jones, and Little 1993:48).

Before elaborating on RSCT it is necessary to clarify some issues. First, RSCT is part of a wider literature emphasizing the importance of the regional level of analysis (Lake and Morgan 1997; Katzenstein 2005; Paul 2012), so why focus solely on it? This is because

"[Buzan] has been the one to most thoroughly lay out variables distinct to regions that make local politics unique", which in turn means that his work has informed much of the literature (Kelly 2007:206). Second, especially in *Regions and Powers*, RSCT is infused with securitization theory, where security is not given but is instead constructed (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). The focus here is restricted to RSCT not because securitization theory is unhelpful; however it does not aid this paper's principal aims. Third, British structural realists contend that process formations, regional security complexes included, are unit level factors, which contrasts with typical definitions. However, this becomes problematic when they discuss the intervening effects of the regional level (Buzan, Jones, and Little 1993:50,72-79). In this respect, as Buzan (1986:3-4,1995:206-212) has done elsewhere, it is more logical to think of a regional complex as a discreet level of analysis which is external to the state but which nevertheless constrains and incentivizes its possible action.

Although some have drawn attention to the regional level of analysis (Lake 1997:46-48; Buzan and Wæver 2003:77; Kelly 2007:202-204), especially in the realist foreign policy analysis literature it is often overlooked. Nevertheless, as Buzan (1986:4,my emphasis) notes, the regional level is "vital to the overall picture of security relations" because it "provides a strong mediating factor between the great powers and local states". Consequently, unless it "is properly comprehended neither the position of the local states in relation to each other, *nor the character of relations between the great powers and local states, can be understood properly*".

Defining what constitutes a region is of course problematic (Morgan 1997:25). Buzan (1991a:190), however, provides a succinct definition of a regional security complex, namely a "group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another". This is because of geographical proximity: as threats travel more easily over shorter distances the security

concerns of neighboring states are intimately connected (Buzan and Wæver 2003:4). That is, states within a regional complex are interdependent. As Buzan and Wæver (2003:47-48) note, complexes "must possess a degree of security interdependence sufficient both to establish them as a linked set and to differentiate them from surrounding security regions". These interdependencies can be either positive (regional actors sharing common threat conceptions) or negative (regional actors perceiving each other as hostile) (Buzan and Wæver 2009:256). Complexes are distinguished from states as they have no actor quality, although some, for example the European Union, may display patterns of institutionalized cooperation, and they are differentiated from the international system because they are a smaller part of a larger whole (Buzan and Wæver 2003:27).

Buzan and Wæver (2003:80-82) differ from other approaches to regional analysis on the issue of territorial exclusivity. In RSCT regions are territorially bounded, meaning that extraregional powers normally only interact with rather than significantly influence local dynamics. Regional complexes, in other words, are self-contained – they have a "dynamic that would exist even if other actors did not impinge on it" (Buzan 1991a:187). The structure of a region is also composed of its material balance of power, making it largely consistent with realism (Buzan and Wæver 2003:53). The polarity of the system can be altered by factors internal to the region, such as revolution and differentiated economic development, or through external intervention. Although RSCT provides no specific method for quantifying the distribution of capabilities, traditional indices include military capabilities, economic power, and manpower.

Regional security theorists also draw on the work of Wolfers (1962:25) who wrote that the drama of international relations was found in the interrelations of the actors involved, namely whether relations were characterized by amity or enmity. Buzan (1991a:190) defines a relationship of amity as one which ranges "from genuine friendship to expectations of

support" whilst a relationship of enmity is "set by suspicion and fear". Social relations are not zero sum but instead exist along a spectrum, and in between the two poles "is a broad band of indifference and neutrality, which amity and enmity are either too weak to matter much, or else mixed in a way that produces no clear leaning one way or the other" (Buzan 1991a:190). Social relations are influenced by a number of subjective factors including ideological affinity, conflict, shared history, territorial cohesiveness, the extent of shared political and societal norms, and the extent of ethnic and cultural ties (Buzan 1986:7-10). Social relations, however, cannot be reduced to the distribution of power. As Buzan (1986:7) notes, "amity and enmity is only partly related to the balance of power, and where it is related, it is much stickier than the relatively fluid movement of the distribution of power". In turn, "the two patterns must be considered as distinct factors". Adding patterns of amity and enmity is necessary however because it provides "a clearer sense of the relational pattern and character of insecurity [in a regional security complex] than that provided by the raw abstraction of the balance-of-power" (Buzan 1991a:190). Of course, patterns of amity and enmity are subjective, which in turn means they are difficult to accurately gauge (Buzan 1986:7-8). Nevertheless, the "main features usually stand out quite clearly even in the absence of scientific scales [of measurement]" (Buzan 1991a:197).

RSCT also classifies regional complexes according to their character. Buzan and Wæver (2003:55-62) distinguish between standard and centered complexes. The former are typically driven by military and security concerns, and can be unipolar through multipolar. Centered complexes, on the other hand, are defined by the inclusion of a superpower, great power, dominant regional power, or an institutional center. Conflict formation, security regime, and security community complexes are also identified as ideal types in the literature. A region which is defined by patterns of enmity is characterized as a conflict formation complex whilst

a region which is characterized by strong bonds of amity is better thought of as a security regime or security community complex.

RSCT's causal model is based on the principle that the regional level "will nearly always be in play in some significant sense, and cannot be dropped out of the analysis" (Buzan and Wæver 2003:52). This is because the regional level of analysis is crucial for appreciating how states interact with their closest neighbors and how such interactions influence the strategies of a nonregional power. Although RSCT has primarily concentrated on the former (Hettne 1991; Peimani 1998; Acharya 2001; Buzan 2003; Buzan and Wæver 2003; Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier 2012), the latter was one of the principal aims that RSCTs hoped to make (Buzan and Wæver 2003:46–47).

Although the extent to which the regional level influences an external power's foreign policy is an empirical question, it must necessarily shape the strategic environment in which an extraregional power conducts its foreign policy. External powers can influence regional developments through penetration, principally by providing economic assistance, military aid and support, or through formal or informal alliances. Generally, external powers will "normally reinforce rather than change the existing pattern of local hostility" (Buzan 1986:26). In extreme cases, however, external powers can overlay a region by directly imposing their presence on it. In turn, local "security concerns are overridden by the security orientation of the dominating power, and this orientation is reinforced by the stationing of that power's military forces directly within the local complex" (Buzan 1986:24-26,1991a:197-198).

If it is true that, alongside the international distribution of capabilities and the internal policymaking environment, regional balances of power and patterns of enmity and amity influence US foreign policy, and realist foreign policy analysts have overlooked this, then the

conclusions they have drawn regarding the sources of US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf may be overstated. The subsequent section will discuss this in greater depth.

The Persian Gulf Security Complex and US Foreign Policy

Although the Persian Gulf has been called a subregional complex (Buzan and Wæver 2003:191-193), Buzan (1986:9-11,1991a:194-196) has in the past defined the Gulf, which consists of the states bordering the waterway, namely Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an alliance of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, as a regional security complex. Whether the region is a complex or a subcomplex is trivial: not only are the definitions comparable (Buzan and Wæver 2003:51), the principle that the region exhibits the characteristics of a security complex is already established in the literature (Gause 2010; Ehteshami 2013). This is because of the region's security interdependencies, namely its oil, which in the next decade is predicted to provide up to two-thirds of the world's supply. Accordingly, the economies of the Gulf are mutually reliant on open sea lanes, stable transit, and the financial stability of the world's oil importers. Additionally, the Gulf is home to a number of negative interdependencies including religious rivalries, territorial disputes, and political divisions (Sick and Potter 2002).

Owing to pervasive conflict in the region, it is possible to classify the Gulf as a structured conflict formation complex. The region has historically been defined by the tripolar balance between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq (Buzan and Wæver 2003:55), while the smaller members have been less influential (Buzan 1986:9-11). Nevertheless the tripolar balance is often exaggerated: in comparison to its northern neighbors Saudi Arabia is militarily weak. Indeed, analysts contend that the Iraqi-Iranian rivalry has had the most influence on the region's dynamics (Katzman 1998:3). Accordingly Saudi Arabia has had to balance Iran via Iraq and vice-versa or rely on western support to counter its northern rivals (Cordesman 2003:44). After the 1991 Gulf War, and indeed the GCC's failure to co-opt Egyptian and

Syrian security assistance (Joffé 1998:53-54), local hostilities led to the former. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait created permanent hostility between it and Saudi Arabia while ideological and political enmity characterized relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Cordesman 1997:8,129).

Because of the link between political economy, political stability, and energy security the US considers the Gulf vital to its national security (Brzezinski, Scowcroft, and Murphy 1997). Since the 1930s the US has ensured Saudi Arabia's independence, the Gulf's largest oil producer (Bronson 2006), by acting offshore and allowing surrogate powers including Britain and then Pahlavi Iran to guarantee regional security (Sick 1986:15-24). The Iranian revolution, however, created an ideological division between Iran and its southern neighbors (Ramazani 1988:6-8) and between Iran and the US (Pollack 2005:172). In turn, the US mirrored shifts in the region's hostilities and tilted towards Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War (Hollis 2004). It even effectively entered the conflict in its final years (Wise 2007), which resulted in a relatively enduring hostile Iranian attitude towards the US (Beeman 2005; Blight et al. 2012).

Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent war transformed the international relations of the region, and quickly reversed America's nascent relationship with Iraq. The GCC, fearing the potential threat from a revanchist Iraq and a revisionist Iran (Cordesman 1993:1), concluded bilateral defense agreements with the US, allowing it to use local facilities and preposition military equipment. This complemented existing facilities in Bahrain and Oman, furnished the US with greater deterrent and crisis response capabilities, and created a highly visible military presence in the region (Hajjar 2002:19-29).

American penetration, which was designed to contain Iraqi intransigence and deter Iran from establishing itself as the principal regional power (Hoar 1992), counteracted the Gulf's imbalance, becoming a substitute for the GCC's traditional balance of power strategy and

America's traditional surrogate policy. Developments at the regional level, in effect, facilitated America's rise as the region's security guarantor (Long and Kock 1997:4). And as discussed below, regional developments continued to influence US foreign policy throughout the 1990s. In other words, the rise and fall of dual containment was as equally conditioned by the regional level of analysis as it was by the international and domestic levels of analysis.

Dual Containment's Rise

The Clinton administration was firmly committed to securing America's traditional interests in the Gulf. Secretary of State Warren Christopher (1993) assured the GCC states that "President Clinton's commitment to the security of our friends in the Gulf…is firm and constant". In the post-Cold War era it was believed that Iraq and Iran posed the greatest threat to the southern Gulf. Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian (1993), as an example, stated that the GCC was "vulnerable to aggression from an unrepentant Iraq or a rearmed and ideologically assertive Iran". Accordingly the administration opted for a policy of dual containment. Rather than tilting towards one of the larger northern Gulf countries they hoped "to maintain a favorable balance without depending on either Iraq or Iran" (Lake 1994:48). To do this the administration supported the continuation of the no-fly-zone and the United Nations' embargo, hoping that this would inexpensively create Saddam's downfall (Sciolino 1993). Regarding Iran, unilateral sanctions were preserved while diplomacy was employed to persuade others to limit military, financial, and technological trade with the Islamic Republic (Smith and Williams 1993).

Mearsheimer and Walt attribute America's expanding role to the combination of US primacy, intellectual currents, and the influence of parochial lobbyists. Rather than acting offshore, specific strategic ideas and the pervasive influence of the Israeli lobby (Mearsheimer and Walt 2008:287; Mearsheimer 2011) resulted in dual containment and the expansion of America's commitment to the region, which is a conclusion shared by other realist foreign

policy analysts (Edwards 2013). This perspective, however, overlooks how the Persian Gulf security complex equally shaped the Clinton administration's strategic options.

Although Iraq and Iran were economically weak (Cordesman and Hashim 1997a:124-127,1997b:29-42), they dwarfed their southern neighbors in terms of manpower (Cordesman 1993:13-14). Iraq was believed to have rebuilt much of its military capability and it remained a formidable threat to the GCC while Iran had expanded its naval and missile capabilities (Cordesman 1993:393-429,433-516). Although there was uncertainty regarding Iranian intentions, Iran's seizure of strategically significant islands in the Gulf and large military exercises in the Strait of Hormuz were believed to illustrate Iran's desire to revise the status-quo (Cordesman and Hashim 1997b:126-134). Owing to this material imbalance, and indeed the slow pace of collective security arrangements, the Gulf monarchies had to "rely on Western power projection capabilities as the only substitute for strong collective defense" (Cordesman 1993:666).

Whilst in the past the GCC could offset the imbalance of power by tilting towards either Iran or Iraq, the region's patterns of enmity ruled this out. Although Qatar re-established diplomatic relations with Iraq immediately after the Gulf War (Sharp 2004:6), Saudi Arabia's belief that Iraq could only ever be hostile dominated the GCC's policy (Cordesman 1997:8). Additionally, suspicion regarding Iranian support of anti-regime activists, divergent attitudes towards the Middle East peace process, and continuing territorial disputes meant that the relationship between the GCC and Iran was largely unfriendly (Ehteshami 2002:302). This was again driven mainly by Saudi Arabia. As Cordesman (1997:8) explained, "senior Saudi officials treat Iran as a hostile power committed to trying to dominate the Gulf and exporting its own brand of revolutionary extremism".

This is overlooked by realist foreign policy analysts. Mearsheimer and Walt (2008:287) use Kenneth Pollack to support their conclusions. And although Pollack (2005:261,my emphasis)

did write that "it was often Israel's security concerns and the interrelated needs of the peace process that were the main prods to U.S. action on Iran", he also wrote that "Israel was not alone in this: Egypt, *Saudi Arabia*, and *other Arab states* also felt threatened by Iran during the early 1990s, and they too pressed Washington for a tougher line toward Tehran – Israel's was often just the loudest among many voices". Furthermore, even if the enmity between the southern Gulf and Iran did not exist, the Iranian leadership's attitude towards the US was a powerful constraint on American strategy, a point only fleetingly acknowledged by Mearsheimer and Walt (2008:290). Indeed, President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani argued that resuming relations with the US was "incompatible with public opinion and the principled aims of our revolution" (BBC 1993a) while the Supreme Leader ruled out any dialogue, preferring instead to demonize the US as the enemy of the Islamic revolution (BBC 1993b,c,d). In other words, Iranian enmity towards the US crucially influenced the Clinton administration's strategic options, making a surrogate relationship with Iran largely unfeasible.

Specific strategic ideas, American primacy, and powerful interest groups were important factors resulting in dual containment, as realist foreign policy analysts argue. Regional factors, however, played an equally important role. A subtler account of US foreign policy has to pay equal attention to how the Persian Gulf's specific dynamics equally shaped US strategy. That is, the specific patterns of enmity in the Gulf together with the material imbalance between the north and the south forced the GCC states to look outside for security assistance. In turn, dual containment was a logical outcome.

The Unravelling of Dual Containment

Nevertheless, in the latter half of the 1990s dual containment noticeably transformed. To quote Martin Indyk, dual containment's principal architect, it became "'containment plus regime change [on the Iraqi side]'" and "'containment until they are ready for engagement [on the Iranian side]'" (Dumbrell 2009:159). Realist foreign policy analysts stress the

determining impact of domestic influences at this juncture. They argue that the policy of regime change was shaped by neoconservative groups and that the Israeli lobby poisoned any possible US-Iranian rapprochement by pressuring Congress into taking a hardened stance towards Iran (Fields 2007:147-159; Mearsheimer and Walt 2008:243-245,287-291; Edwards 2013).

Realist foreign policy analysts, however, neglect the importance of the regional level analysis. Although the material imbalance between the north and south remained (Cordesman 1997), owing to the Iraq embargo and Iran's successful adjustment to its containment (Bahgat 1997), Iranian power increased relative to Iraq (Cordesman 1998:37). This engendered assertiveness in Iran's foreign relations. It became an important benefactor of groups opposing the peace process (Katzman 1995) and allegedly facilitated an uptake in terrorist attacks, especially a lethal 1994 bombing in Tel Aviv (Lynfield and Binyon 1994). Additionally Iran strived to "intimidate the GCC states and separate them from their protector, the United States" (Katzman 1998:9), mainly by sponsoring two bombings of US military facilities in Saudi Arabia. US sanctions on Iran (Katzman 2000a:11-14) certainly reflected the legislature's victory in the policy struggle (Murray 2010:102-107), corroborating the realist foreign policy analysis perspective. Nevertheless, given that the legislation followed provocative Iranian actions, which were in part produced by an increase in Iran's relative power, the change in the regional balance of power also influenced the direction of US policy.

Concurrent to this, patterns of hostility in the Persian Gulf were transforming, which in turn altered America's strategic calculus. Although Iraq was able to generate sympathy amongst some of the smaller monarchies (Tripp 2007:252-253), Saudi Arabia's distrust of Saddam continued to underwrite Iraq's isolation (Cordesman 1997:201-204). Nevertheless the GCC became increasingly dissatisfied with US policy, and, wary of domestic unrest, began

distancing themselves from their protector (Gerges 1997:61). Iran, especially after moderate Mohammad Khatami came to power, exploited this and established new bonds of friendship with the southern Gulf states (Ehteshami 2002:302-303). As the Arab nations boycotted a US regional conference because of American foreign policy (Lancaster 1997), Tehran symbolically held the Organization of Islamic Conference. This marked the beginning of a new era of amity between Iran and the Arab world, especially between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Thedoulou 1997).

In contrast to what RSCT would predict, the US did not shadow this development. As realist foreign policy analysts argue, domestic influences certainly made an Iranian tilt politically toxic. Iranian demonization of the US was of equal importance, however (Beeman 2005). The Clinton administration, enthused by Khatami's softened stance (Riedel 2010) and the belief that "better relations with Iran could contain Iraq" (Katzman 2000a:21), disregarded its own legislation (Jehl 1998); threatened to veto sanctions on Russian firms supplying Iran with missile technology (Gertz 1998); and publically welcomed a closer relationship (Albright 1998). However, Iranian hardliners opposed these overtures (BBC 1998a,b,c), and moderates including Khatami, who called for America to vacate the Persian Gulf (BBC 1998d), and Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, who refused to meet with his American counterpart (Albright 2003:322-323), followed suit. Although the moderates were certainly pressed into this by the Supreme Leader (Arjomand 2009:146-147), as Gold (2009:141) makes clear: "The bottom line was that even when [the Clinton administration was] reaching out discreetly to Iran, [it was] unable to establish a channel of communication".

The failure to adapt to the region's changing patterns of amity and enmity coincided with intensified efforts to overthrow Saddam, which suggests that these developments were in some way connected. Perhaps sensing America's and the GCC's weakened resolve, Saddam began to systematically challenge Iraq's containment by barring US nationals from

conducting weapon inspections, which in turn created a lengthy crisis regarding the continuation of the weapon inspections and the economic embargo (Goshko and Lippman 1997). In response to Iraq's provocative actions the Clinton administration made regime change official policy (Prados 2002:5-6) and undertook a limited war to secure Saddam's acquiescence (Prados and Katzman 2001:3-5). The limited war never ceased (Pelletiere 1999:18-20) however, and according to Walter Slocombe, Clinton's Under Secretary of Defense, it was hoped that it would create the "'political and military conditions that will permit a successful change of the [Iraqi] regime'" (Myers and Weiner 1999).

For some in the administration, Saddam's overthrow promised wider benefits. Bruce Riedel (1999), an advisor in the National Security Council, hoped that it would result in a "strong and healthy Iraq [returning] to the community of nations and…[playing] its appropriate role in international and regional affairs". He even noted that "America and Iraq have been close partners in the past, and they can be partners and friends again in the future". These words are very suggestive as the last surrogate relationship with Iraq was primarily a counterweight to Iranian power. A post-Saddam Iraq, in other words, may have duplicated this, allowed the US to scale back its regional presence, and in doing so ease the internal pressure that the GCC states were facing. At the very least, this idea was certainly held by individuals associated with neoconservative organizations. Michael Eisenstadt (1996), an analyst with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, contended that because the "status quo in Iraq serves Tehran well" regime change in Baghdad would be the "best way to further constrain Iran's freedom to maneuver". After Saddam's departure, Eisenstadt argued, Iran "would once again have to worry about Iraq as a military threat… and about the possibility of a rapprochement between Iraq and the Arab Gulf states that would further isolate it".

As realist foreign policy analysts have done, one can attribute the genesis of the regime change policy to specific intellectual currents and the narrow concerns of certain interest

groups, and how these captured policymaking in the era of US primacy. This perspective, however, is incomplete. Regional factors, including the relative rise in Iranian power, the changing patterns of local hostilities, Iraq's increasing intransigence towards the Clinton administration's preferred policy, and the Iranian leadership's attitude towards the US, also played a part in bringing this idea to fruition. Indeed with the latter, alongside domestic opposition in the US, effectively ruling out an Iranian surrogate relationship, a Saddam-less Iraq became an increasingly attractive substitute.

Dual Containment's Fall

Like the Clinton administration, the George W. Bush administration also viewed the Persian Gulf as being of critical importance to US security (Cheney 2001:8/4). Although dual containment's logic was questioned, lacking any alternatives the administration sustained it (Katzman et al. 2001). The low-level war in Iraq continued while the administration aided the Iraqi opposition, supported the embargo's continuation, modified to address humanitarian concerns, and hoped to re-establish monitoring of Iraq's weapons programs (Powell 2001; Prados 2002:5-7). Unilateral sanctioning of Iran also continued despite opposition (Scowcroft 2001). The policy drift stopped after the September 11 terrorist attacks, however (Rumsfeld 2011:419–421). Iraq and Iran were demonized as part of an axis of evil; the former was invaded in an unpopular war; while the latter was subjected to increasingly hostile threats which remain to this day.

The realist foreign policy analysis perspective, especially as employed by Mearsheimer and Walt (2008:233-253,291-295), attributes these policies to US primacy, a heightened sense of vulnerability following the terrorist attacks, the rise of neoconservatism, and the influence of the Israeli lobby. Mearsheimer and Walt (2003) opposed the invasion of Iraq, which was in part based on the argument that the US should have improved relations with Iran in order to balance Iraq (Mearsheimer 2002:16); and that it did not was because of domestic influences

which negatively influenced the policymaking process. This perspective, however, overlooks the fact that regional factors also constrained America's strategic options.

To begin with, the durable imbalance of power in the Gulf persisted. Indeed, one analysis concluded that "Even with a weakened Iraq and a moderating Iran, most experts believe the GCC countries cannot face their security challenges alone or even in concert with each other" (Katzman 2000b:17). As discussed, the US-GCC defense agreements solved this dilemma while at the same time they furnished the US with the capability of containing Iraq and deterring Iran. However, developments located within the region began to threaten this capacity. Iraq proved victorious in the war of the sanctions (Cordesman 1999). The Bush administration was unable to secure the reintroduction of the inspection teams (Crossette 2001) while Iraq was able to free itself from economic isolation (Barr 2001). At the same time, America's military presence in the Gulf placed substantial pressure on the GCC states. In fact Saudi Arabia, after a lethal US airstrike in Iraq in early 2001, scaled back its military relationship with the US (Pollack 2002:86). By this juncture Baghdad's "long struggle to outlast the containment policy of the United States…seemed tantalizingly close" (Duelfer 2004:12). In this context, and with Saddam's need to secure his regime both internally and externally, the assumption that he had and would pursue a threatening weapons program was not an infeasible one (Pollack 2004).

Developments in the Gulf's patterns of amity and enmity also threatened America's regional position. Influenced by uncertainty over America's determination to overthrow Saddam (Woodward 2004:228-230), Iran's improved image after Khatami's election, and the continued threat that Iraq posed (McLean 2001:29-54), Saudi Arabia concluded a mutual security agreement with Iran. While it contained no military dimension, it symbolized that the two regional adversaries now saw their role as joint guarantors of regional security (Sick and Potter 2002:4). For the Iranians at least, the pact symbolized the end of American hegemony

(BBC 2001a,b). And given that its conclusion was followed by a number of Iranian missile strikes along the Iraqi border (BBC 2001c), it also raised the spectre of another destabilizing conflict. Most importantly from America's perspective the pact had the potential to undermine its regional position. Even before the pact was signed, a Congressional report theorized that Iran's attempts to "'charm' the Gulf states into scaling back their defense cooperation with the United States" may be "part of an effort to replace the United States as the chief Gulf power" (Katzman 2000b:19). The Persian Gulf security complex, in other words, had radically transformed: Iranian power had risen; Iraq was less contained; and America's capacity for countering both was weakened.

These developments, in combination with the impact of the 2001 terrorist attacks, led the Bush administration to the not unreasonable conclusion that "'dual containment', which isolated and punished both Iran and Iraq, was unwise and that United States could no longer have both as enemies" (Sciolino and Lewis 2001). As before, however, factors located at the regional level constrained strategy. Domestic opposition to an Iranian tilt, no doubt inspired by the efforts of certain lobbying groups, was certainly palpable (Perle 2001). But of equal importance, and glossed over by realist foreign policy analysts, was the attitude in Iran towards the US. Iranian leaders remained wedded to the idea that the US was the enemy (BBC 2001d,e,f); the Supreme Leader, despite tacitly cooperating with America in Afghanistan, made similar claims (BBC 2001g); and moderates such as President Khatami and former President Rafsanjani did likewise (BBC 2001h,i).

As dual containment had been ruled out and hostility made a surrogate relationship with Iran impractical, the idea of a surrogate relationship with a Saddam-less Iraq seemed an increasingly necessary gamble. Indeed some in the Bush administration thought that the road to Tehran ran through Baghdad. Donald Rumsfeld (2001), for instance, wrote a memorandum shortly before 9/11 which noted that "The particular unfortunate circumstances of Iraq being

governed by Saddam and Iran being governed by the clerics have suspended the standard rule that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. If Saddam's regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere". Rumsfeld's view was shared by Condoleezza Rice (2011:164) who explains in her memoirs that "The 'Persian' challenge…had to be counterbalanced since it could not be destroyed. Iraq historically served as this buffer".

In combination with American primacy, a range of domestic factors, including the ascendancy of neoconservative ideas and ideologues, the impact of the 2001 terrorist attacks, and the powerful influence of the Israeli lobby (Monten 2005; Mearsheimer and Walt 2008:229-262; Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman 2009:3; Rose 2010:240), prodded the Bush administration into its war with Iraq. To focus on these developments alone, however, does injustice to the regional developments which equally conditioned the decision to choose war over containment. In particular, the infeasibility of dual containment, the shift in the region's patterns of amity, the shifting balance of power, and Iranian hostility towards the US were all equally important factors which led to the invasion of Iraq.

Beyond Dual Containment

The 2003 invasion of Iraq marked the shift from US penetration to US overlay of the Persian Gulf. Although in ways not always advantageous to the US, the region's dynamics have been powerfully transformed by America's permanent presence and the dismembering of Iraq. At the same time, however, the US ended the unpopular military presence in Saudi Arabia while retaining a significant deterrent capacity elsewhere in the region. Coincidentally the relationship between the GCC and Iran has returned to one of hostility – the GCC states have aligned themselves with the US regarding opposition to Iran's uranium enrichment program and its bid for regional hegemony (Katzman 2013:38-41), although the extent to which this has been produced by overlay, by developments in the region itself, or because of long-term antagonism between Iran and Saudi Arabia is unclear. Nevertheless, the future of the Persian

Gulf complex is likely to depend on the continued rivalry between these two powers. But how this rivalry takes shape is far from certain: the 2013 Iranian election, the Arab Spring, the crisis in Syria, and a potential bargain on Iranian enrichment will shape regional dynamics in unpredictable ways. In turn, these developments will contextualize future US policy.

Whilst US policy in the Gulf is undoubtedly influenced by factors located at the international level and factors located at the policymaking level, it is also crucially shaped by regional developments. Indeed, American interests in the post-Cold War era have not expanded consistently. The specific local hostilities, the confrontational and unstable regional balance of power, and the specific security interdependencies found in the Persian Gulf have all contributed to America's expanding role. Of course, RSCT could be criticized for failing to distinguish between the international and the regional level, effectively downscaling system-wide rules to the regional level (Lake 1997:48; Kelly 2007:206). Nevertheless this is not the intention of Buzan and his collaborators. Instead, the framework overcomes the "analytical and policy errors of the Cold War in which superpower dynamics were given far too much weight, and regional ones far too little, in evaluating events in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere" (Buzan and Wæver 2003:81-82). In this respect, adding RSCT to realist foreign policy analysis – creating realist foreign policy analysis with a twist – corrects for a similar issue in realist foreign policy analyses of US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf.

Conclusion

Realist foreign policy analysts argue that the expansion of post-Cold War US foreign policy can be attributed to domestic factors which have induced policymakers to unilaterally act on the permissive international environment. Their argument is illustrated through a study of US policy in the Persian Gulf – the most obvious example America's expanding goals, interests, and scope of action in the post-Cold War era. From this perspective, the controversial dual

containment strategy and the even more controversial invasion of Iraq can be attributed to the influence of specific strategic ideas and the power of certain lobby groups.

Realist foreign policy analysis' value rests in its recognition that whilst external pressures may shape and shove a country's actions the policies it undertakes are still made by policymakers. In that respect realist foreign policy analysis synthesizes the systemic and foreign policy analysis traditions. In another respect, however, it is wanting: it overlooks how a great power's foreign policy is shaped by factors located at the regional level of analysis – an equally powerful determinant of foreign policy. As a corrective, this paper drew on Buzan's RSCT to illustrate how the regional balance of power, local patterns of hostilities, and the fractious US-Iranian relationship equally conditioned America's strategic options. Indeed, although widely criticized, dual containment made sense in terms of the regional balance of power and the relationship of enmity between the northern and southern Gulf. As these changed, tilting towards Iran also made sense; however hostility in the US and in Iran to this development made this an unrealistic option. It was in this context that a post-Saddam Iraq was viewed as a necessary risk, and one which would ease pressure on America's regional allies and counteract Iran's growing regional strength.

If an expansion in a country's foreign policy is generally caused by an increase in relative capabilities and the specifics of said expansion – the when, how, and why – are equally important, then so too is the *where*. The specific patterns of local hostilities, the confrontational and unstable regional balance of power, and the specific security interdependencies found in the Persian Gulf have all played an important role in pulling the US into the Persian Gulf security complex. Realist foreign policy analysis with a twist highlights this and gives a fuller account of the factors which have shaped US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf. In turn, if it is true that factors specific to the Persian Gulf have influenced the trajectory of US foreign policy, then in overlooking this realist foreign policy

analysts have overstated the role that domestic influences have had on US foreign policy. More broadly, this research points to an underlying problem with the theory, especially as applied to US foreign policy. Part of its appeal rests in its capacity for fleshing out the neorealist principle that the international system shapes and shoves but does not determine. Yet neorealism was not only inadequate for explaining actual foreign policy outcomes, as this work confirms its understanding of the international system was too abstract. If realist foreign policy analysts are serious about explaining actual policy outcomes, then a more elaborate understanding of systemic pressure is needed. Buzan's RSCT is a particularly useful starting point.

At the same time, if it is correct to assume that America's invasion of Iraq represented US overlay of the Persian Gulf security complex, then it must be a rich case study for RSCTs to consider the effects of overlay in the contemporary era. Beyond this, the synthesis of realist foreign policy analysis with RSCT may prove useful for analyzing how and in what ways regional, domestic, and international factors combine to influence a great power's foreign policies. Take the Obama administration's approach to the Middle East as an example: although initially hoping to minimize America's exposure in the region, in what ways have the anti-authoritarian uprisings reshaped the administration's priorities? Likewise, how has the administration's proposed Asian pivot and response to China's rise been constrained by historical rivalries between the countries in the region? Given that the United States is the only power with a truly global reach, it is a particularly useful case study for realist foreign policy analysis with a twist. However, with many predicting that the future world order may be defined by rising powers such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China amongst others, research will need to consider the regional as well as international and domestic factors that will condition these powers' expanding goals, interests, and scope of action.

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